

The AIM Self Defense Marksmanship Kit

There are many ways to improve one's marksmanship skills, however some efforts also carry the "excess baggage" of inadvertently creating poor tactical habits and detrimental gunhandling skills.

We see merit in a more demanding level of accuracy than some may deem sufficient for the average lethal encounter. We make the conscious decision to work on that higher standard of accuracy while fully recognizing that the normal standard of keeping most of your hits within about 4" of the center line is probably adequate for most situations...we want to prepare for the difficult situation not the "average".

One of the really dangerous habits created inadvertently is to stand still in one place within a short distance of a lethal threat for a period of more than 2 to 3 seconds; a time frame we can reasonably expect the threat to actually inflict a lethal or very dangerous wound if the encounter is at close range, say 21 feet. With that in mind we attempt to set up a good practice program with the incentive to actually move, at least off the line of attack soon after the attack.

Marksmanship is the balance of Accuracy, Power and Speed (*Diligentia – Vis – Celeritas* in Latin). Today many folks seem to have just accepted that all calibers or at least all normal service handgun calibers are equal. I can assure you that they are not. That is unless you shoot poorly. If one counts all the hits in the torso or to the "center mass" (represented by the Q-zone on an FBI target) and most of the hits are outside the extremely important organs then all handgun calibers are indeed about equally ineffective... and most fights stop when the subject quits the attack even though he is physically capable of continuing. We strive to set the standard a bit higher and include accuracy that results in a good hit representing an area the size of the heart and the aorta above the heart or the ocular window. With hits in this area the more damage you do the organs the more rapidly the fight stops due to physical reasons (there is such a thing as psychological collapse but no one knows how to predict or measure it). Even so, we leave the shooter with the option of including his handguns relative power or just rating everything the same.

Reloading on the clock can often lead to an unsafe sequence since the timer usually updates on the shot. The important aspect of reloading is how long the weapon is down (unavailable for a shot) and if you do a lot of reloading on the clock you develop the habit of punching the magazine release as you reach for a spare magazine... often times raising the muzzle which takes the weapon out of the fight. The important aspect in a lethal encounter is the ability to keep the weapon at the scan – fully extended for as much of the reload as possible and to keep up your physical scan so as to respond with one hand the instant a close range threat appears (even if you have not yet completed the reload). If you can execute a speed reload in less than one second from concealment then this may be a moot point (unless you have managed to lose your spare magazine sometime during the scuffle). However if it normally takes you two seconds to do a speed reload shot to shot then it would be advisable to learn to acquire a spare magazine and orient it to the gun **before** pressing the magazine release.

Stoppages are a concern with any type of firearm. Stoppages are caught on video with depressing regularity in actual lethal encounters. That is because the grip and positions that are acquired in real life encounters are often less than the ideal we strive for on the range or in competition. It is also clear that at extremely short range, where most encounters occur, the remedial action – be it a "tap-rack-bang" or an emergency reload (running dry is obviously a stoppage) will take longer than it takes the typical bad guy to score a lethal blow. The point being, it is not how fast you can clear the stoppage (no one is fast enough) but rather how fast you can move away from the threat and clear the stoppage – the movement being far more important than the clearance.

Basic Accuracy – 10 shots

Before learning to hit fast one must learn to hit. So here we would encourage you to take your time and assess both your fundamentals and to gauge how well different firearms lend themselves to achieving a good level of practical accuracy.

This test is shot from the low ready and there are no time limits. Do not run dry.

- Fire 1 shot on each target area at a distance of 5 yards, in any order.
- Fire 1 shot on each target area at a distance of 10 yards, in any order.

Target Scoring

10 points for each shot that hits the box, any shot that touches the line counts. Keep track of shots that hit the rectangle around the number, but do not add points - these are “X-ring” or tiebreaker areas.

Test Scoring

100 points are possible. 100 with 10 “X-ring” hits is perfect. 90 is excellent, 80 is very good, 70 is good and 60 is marginal.

You never get “too good” to not do this test! Shooting a handgun well is a perishable skill. You should still fire this test once a month after you achieve excellent or better.

You can use this test for the self-defense carbine. Fire it as above but double the ranges (10 yards & 20 yards).

This test doesn't include a Power Factor as it is only part of the Marksmanship Triad; Power and Speed are not measured here.

Basic Index – 10 shots (per level)

This test is designed to increase your speed to obtain a hit. It is done in steps, if you fail to get a hit then tape the target and repeat the stage.

Range is 3 yards. Start from the low ready (the weapon may not be pointed at any part of the target stand in low ready).

Target Scoring is the same as the Basic Accuracy test – be sure to achieve an 80 or above at each level before advancing to the next level.

Test Scoring

Level 1 (novice)

- Fire 1 shot from the ready on target #3 in 3 seconds and return to the ready
- Fire 1 shot to target #4 in 3 seconds
- Repeat for a total of 10 shots (5 shots total on each of the targets #3 & #4)

Level 2 (basic)

Repeat the above with a time limit of 2 seconds

Level 3 (general)

Repeat the above with a time limit of 1.5 seconds

Level 4 (intermediate)

Repeat the above with a time limit of 1 second

Level 5 (advanced)

Repeat the above with a time limit of $\frac{3}{4}$ second

Level 6 (master)

Repeat the above with a time limit of $\frac{1}{2}$ second; using targets #1 & #2

Basic Self Defense Marksmanship – 10 shots (per level)

Here we start working subconsciously on the “mental clock” - it is a very bad idea to remain in the open, standing still in front of a threat, even a wounded threat at close range (at 10 yards and beyond this might not be as critical). Standing still for no more than 2 seconds is a good rule, but for beginners we will start with 3 seconds.

Set your timer (or your turning or pop-up) targets on 3 seconds. This drill is fired in levels again and one must change positions laterally for every string of fire. Pause for 3 seconds between each string. 1 shot to target #1 and move, 2 shots to #2 and move, 3 shots to #3 and move, 4 shots to #4 and move. 10 shots total, reload when you wish.

This test is fired at 3 yards, from the Low Ready, the weapon must start pointed off target.

Target Scoring follows as before. You need 80 points to pass each level.

Test Scoring

Level 1 (Novice) - 3 seconds, Level 2 - 2.5 Seconds, Level 3 (Good) - 2 seconds, Level 4 (Very Good) - 1.5 Seconds, Level 5 (Expert) - 1.25 Seconds

Basic Presentation – 10 Shots

Here we continue working subconsciously on the “mental clock” – move laterally between each string of fire or on a reload.

Once we have mastered the steps of the presentation (safely!) then the shooter should always step laterally on the draw.

At every level the shooter must side step on an emergency reload or a stoppage clearance – 10 point penalty for failure to do so.

This test is shot at 3 yards, with Target Scoring following as previous tests. Except for Par Scoring the listed times are time limits.

Course of Fire

- Draw and fire 2 shots on target #3 in 4 seconds
- Draw and fire 3 shots on target #4 in 4 Seconds
- Draw and fire 1 shot on target #1 in 4 seconds
- Draw and fire 2 shots on #2 in 4 seconds
- Draw and fire 1 shot on each of targets #3 & #4 in 4 Seconds (2 shots total)

Move up a level only after achieving 80 points.

Test Scoring

Level 1 (Novice)

As above, no concealment garment, no movement.

Level 2 (Basic)

As above, from concealment, no movement, 3 second time limit

Level 3 (General)

As above, from concealment, side step on the draw with a 3 second time limit

Level 4 (Intermediate)

As above, from concealment, side step on the draw with a 2 second time limit

Level 5 (Advanced)

As above, from concealment, side step on the draw with a 1.5 second time limit.

Par Scoring (advanced level)

Record the time from the start signal to the last shot of the string and add the total.

Deduct 1/10 second off the total time for each “X-ring” hit (possible of 1 second deducted)

Score = (Total points / Total time (after bonus deductions)) x par factor of 7.5

Optional Power Factoring

Divide the total score by the following (based on the Taylor Knock Out value* of your load) vs. a “standard” of the .357 Magnum. These numbers are calculated to be very generous to smaller calibers.

- .8 (bonus) ----- TKO of 12+
- 1 (no change) -----TKO of 9-12
- 1.25 ----- TKO of 6-9
- 1.5 ----- TKO of 1-6

*Taylor Knock Out values are calculated as follows: Bullet Weight x Velocity x Bore Diameter / 7000. Expansion does effect power however all calibers are improved by expansion to about the same degree – generally speaking the larger the starting diameter the larger the expansion ratio (.45s expand larger in relation to their start diameter than 9mms or .38s). No mathematical model is exact or perfect; this is a very general estimate of relative effectiveness given excellent hits. With sloppy hits, all handgun calibers are equally ineffective.

Power Factoring is for the handgun aficionado – feel free to ignore it.

Cadence and Rhythm – 12 shots

Learning one’s cadence for different ranges or apparent sizes of targets is important. Cadence will slow when the target is harder to hit either due to a change in the size of the target or an apparent change in difficulty due to range. Change in size may be due to a change in target, i.e. shifting from the chest to the head or it may be due to partial occlusion, or it may be due to a difference in range.

Course of Fire

- Stage 1 – 3 yards - 4 shots on target #4, 5 second time limit
- Stage 2 – 3 yards - 2 shots on target #1, 5 second time limit
- Repeat stages once again – 12 shots total, 120 points possible

Test Scoring

Level 1 (novice)

As above but 5 second time limit from low ready

Level 2 (beginner)

As above, 4 seconds from holster

Level 3 (intermediate)

As above, 3 seconds from holster

Level 4 (advanced)

As above, 2 seconds from holster

Level 5 (expert)

As above, 1.5 seconds from holster

