

ENGLAND &
WALES **BEST
PRACTICE
GUIDES**

Marksmanship.

Firearms





Introduction

Marksmanship describes a person's ability to shoot a firearm accurately.

This guide is linked to others in the Firearms series and aims to describe the following:

- Basic marksmanship principles
- Limitations of environmental factors, such as weather
- Personal limitations which change depending on physical exertion and environmental conditions

Marksmanship principles

The shooting position and hold must be firm enough to support the rifle

The rifle must point naturally at the target without any undue physical effort

Sight alignment and sight picture must be correct

The shot must be released and followed through without undue disturbance to the position

Practice on a range in controlled conditions is absolutely key to maintaining high standards of marksmanship



Basic principles

Body Position

- Needs to be comfortable and firm without over tensing muscles
- Rifle needs to be well supported and firmly in the shoulder
- Allow enough space and flexibility to make adjustments to the position and aim
- Position yourself to absorb recoil as best as possible
- Stay steady and still until the shot has hit its target, then reload and re-assess
- Be aware of the possibility of flinching and work to avoid this

Sight picture

- Make sure to have a clear image down the scope with crosshairs and target in focus
- Make sure to correctly align yourself behind the scope so the image fills the scope with no shading around the edges of the picture
- Allow crosshairs to settle on intended target and hold steady if comfortable
- After the shot, continue to observe the target
- It may be possible to watch the bullet strike through the scope. This will provide evidence as to the shot placement and reaction of a deer



Breathing

- Breathe as normal when first looking through the scope
- Be aware of where in the breathing cycle you are firing (full lung, empty lung, half full lung) and keep this consistent through your shooting
- When ready to shoot, take slower breaths to steady the aim
- Hold the breath at your preferred point in the breathing cycle then fire

Trigger discipline

- Keep finger off the trigger until you are confident in your position, target and have confirmed you intend to shoot
- When ready to shoot, remove safety and place tip of the index finger onto the trigger blade
- Begin to build pressure on the trigger slowly
- When ready to shoot, squeeze the trigger gently until the rifle fires
- Do not jerk or suddenly pull the trigger as this will likely affect your point of impact significantly
- After the shot, keep squeezing the trigger to allow yourself to observe the target through the scope and prevent any jerking habits





Factors affecting marksmanship

- Shooting is easiest when the shooter is calm and concentrating, in good light, low wind and with a clear target at a known range
- These conditions are possible to replicate on a range but in the field are unlikely to occur at all times
- Be aware of the effect of changing circumstances and to learn how to best deal with them
- Know your ability to group shots in different circumstances, in particular when shooting after exertion, from different positions and at different ranges
- Only consider taking shots that are within your known capability
- Know at what distance your rifle is zeroed and where your shots will fall at other distances
- Estimate the range as accurately as possible, a range-finder will help to provide accurate distance readings. See also the Zeroing guide
- Lighting and weather conditions all make accurate shooting more difficult. Take account that wind can play on a bullets flight, especially if shooting longer ranges
- Ensure that nothing will impede the bullet on its flight path
- The view through the scope may be clear, but because the muzzle is beneath the line of sight, the path of the bullet may be obstructed by an unseen object
- Similarly, an obstruction may not be clearly in focus in the scope. Checking with binoculars can help