# Calling the Shot

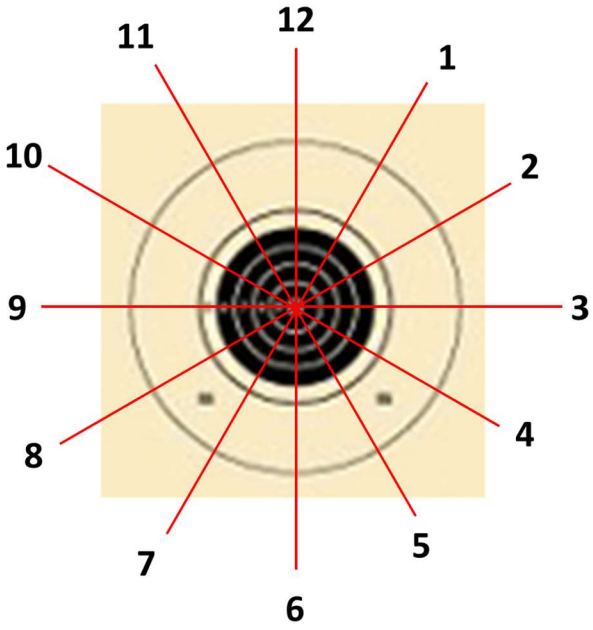
So what does “Calling the Shot” mean? Why is it important?

In an ideal world, a shooter gets a perfect center shot when:

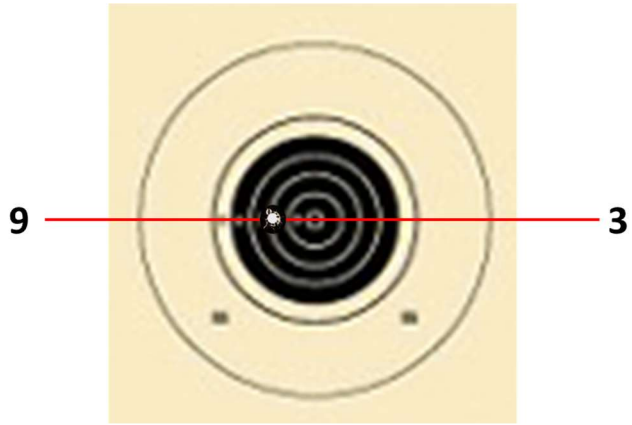
a) The sight picture is perfect
b) Shot execution is perfect
c) Equipment is perfect (bullet, rifle, sling, etc…..)
d) Conditions are perfect (light, air movement, distractions, etc…..)

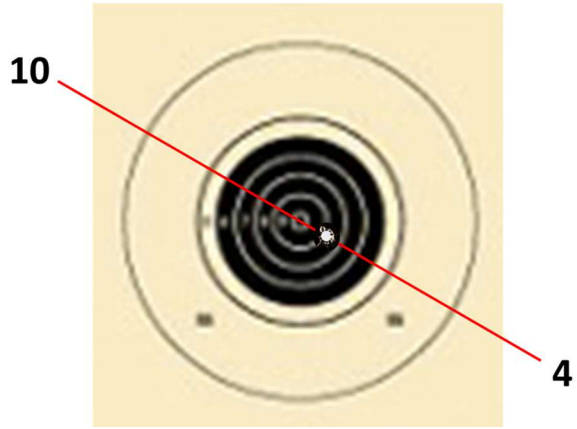
In the real world, perfect seldom happens. There are always small errors the shooter must deal with when firing a shot.

“Calling the shot” is the term used to indicate that the shooter has a “feel” of where the shot hit in the bullseye before looking at the bullseye. Basically by using their imagination, the shooter can predict the shot’s location. But first, the shooter must be able to put “words” to describe the shot’s location is in the bullseye. The picture below shows a bullseye that is divided into sections like a clock. The shooter calls the shot by predicting where the bullet impacted the bullseye. The shot is put into words using both score and clock location.




Here are two examples of calling the shot location on an A-17 target sighter:



For the left shot the shooter, in their mind, called the shot left due to trigger squeeze error. In addition the shooter also estimated how far left by thinking of the shot value. If the shooter was going to tell a coach they would say something like "I call the shot a nine at 9 o'clock". The shooter did not think they "jerked" the trigger too much so they guessed the shot missed no more than a nine score. The coach would tell the shooter "It was an eight at 9 o'clock". This way the shooter, using their mind, would know the error was a little more (an eight not a nine) than originally thought, which is good feedback for future guesses. Although the score was wrong, the shooter would be happy to know that the predicted direction was correct. In this case, no sight adjustment would be needed since the shot was not due to the rifle, but due to the shooter error.

In the second bullseye, the shot is called as a "nine at 4 o'clock". A simple misalignment of the sights can cause this error.

When describing a shot to themselves or to others, the shooter needs to become comfortable with understanding both the shot's value and the shot's position on the bullseye with respect to a face of the clock.

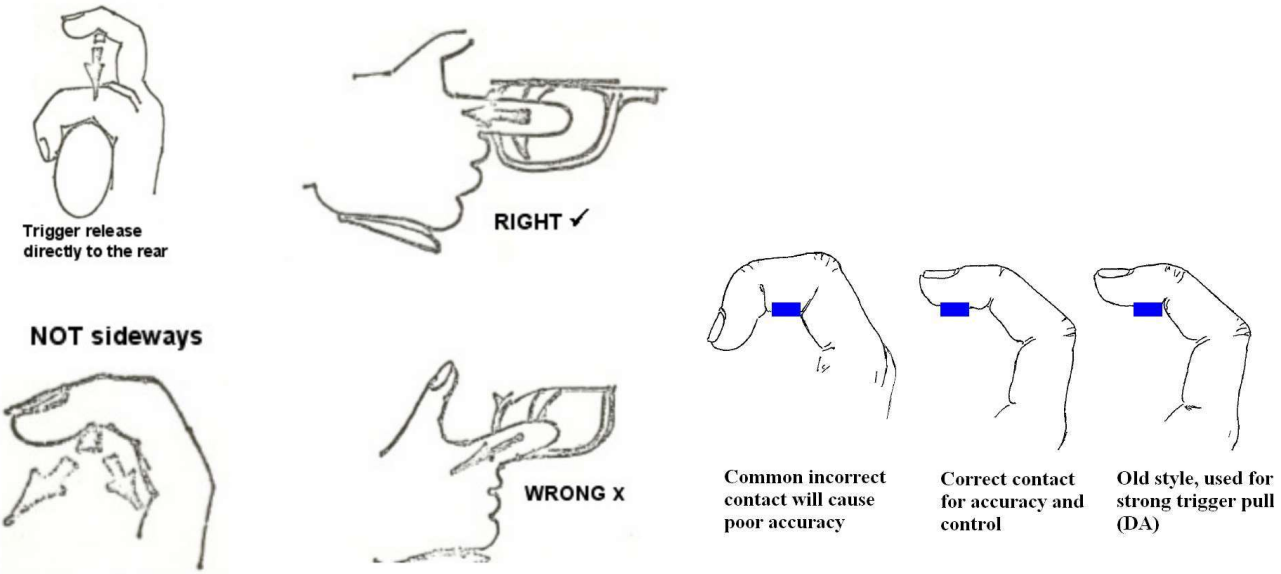
Another point to make using the second bullseye above. If the shooter said to themselves the shot was "A ten at 2 o'clock" they would be wrong. The shooter's sense of the shot was not correct and should try to pay attention to how they execute the next shot. Developing "call the shot" skills is important in order to increase scores because the shooter cannot adjust the rear sights properly unless they know what caused the shot to miss the center. A shooter that can call a shot knows when rear sight adjustment is needed and when it is not needed. A shooter that cannot call their shot will just be "guessing" where the center of their natural point of aim is located. Adjusting the sights will not help and will actually cause a lower score.

How to develop the "call the shot" ability:

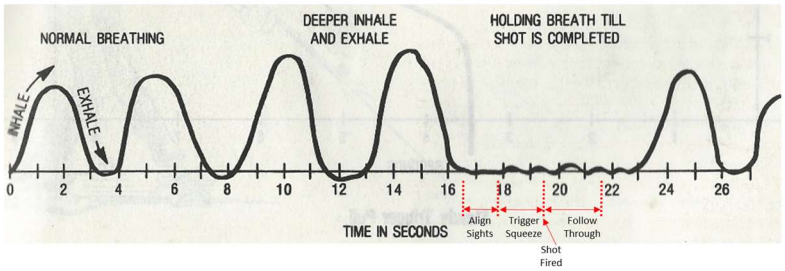
The ability to call a shot is developed by feeling both the body's position and remembering the sight picture just before the shot is fired. Being able to call a shot is important so that the shooter can adjust the sights properly for external factors such as lighting changes or the wind changes, which both occur when shooting outdoors. When practicing indoors, these effects are not present. Therefore, indoor shooting is the perfect place to gain confidence in being able to call the shot.

Major shooter performance errors:

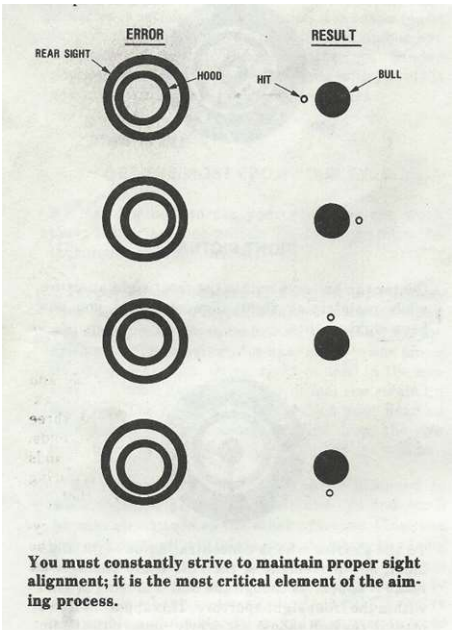
Execution errors in trigger squeeze, like the examples below, may creep into a shooter's performance. Pulling the trigger "sideways" will cause the rifle to move off the bullseye resulting in a poor shot. This can occur when the shooter's concentration becomes weak.



Incorrect breathing errors will also cause a shot to miss center. Breathing in or out just before firing the shot will cause the shot to miss high or low on the bullseye. The shooter needs to remember to follow through after the shot is fired. No movement, even the eyes, should occur two (2) or more seconds after the shot is fired. The shooter's mind will remember if the proper follow through was performed or not.




Another common cause of error is sight alignment. The chart below shows the direction of the shots move at the bullseye when the rear and front sights are misaligned. The mind will remember the sight picture right at the instant the shot is fired. The shooter needs to be able to recall this sight picture and decide if each part was aligned or which part was not. Once the shooter has this "conversation" with themselves, the bullet impact estimate can be made.




Note, this diagram above shows the rear/front sight alignment error. The sight picture also includes the bullseye. So remember to center the bullseye in the front aperture. If the rear/front is correct and the bullseye is offset, the shot will not be centered.

Here are examples of where the shots hit the bullseye if the bull is not centered properly:

Shot hits center when bull is center in sight picture


Shot is right of center when bull is slightly to the left


Shot is left of center when bull is slightly to the right


Shot is high of center when bull is slightly low


Shot is low of center when bull is slightly high

Majority of the shooter's performance should "feel" good. Meaning the shooter's confidence should be high and this will allow good scores. When the shot feels good (for example the shooter did not perceive any errors) the shot should be as close to center as their ability allows. What is being discussed here are the shots the shooter knows were not quite right. Remember, calling the shot is relating the shot's impact in the bullseye to the center of that bullseye, not to the score. So good shooters can and do call the shots even if they are all "ten" scores. Good shooters can call center shots, not just the error shots.

In conclusion, to get better at calling the shot the shooter must actually call all of their practice shots. It is that simple. Shoot a shot and then during the follow through period, predict where the shot hit the bullseye before actually looking the target. This will make sure you follow through and recall what the sight picture looked like just before the shot was fired. In the beginning the shooter may not be accurate, but performance will get better over time. Leave the sighter only after adjusting the sights properly and being able to call a center shot to the best of the shooter's ability. When you aim, the rifle is never still. To call your shot, remember where the sight was and where it was headed at ignition, and where the rifle jumped. Keep both eyes open. Flinching happens before you fire. You'll never call shots accurately if you flinch. Calling accurately can reveal faulty technique and help rout out gremlins. Calling a shot also helps you identify unseen factors. For example, if you call a hit slightly at 9 o'clock and the bullet lands a hand's-width out at 4, you'll suspect a pick-up in wind when shooting outdoors. Once you trust your calls you will shoot many more center hits.