

“Dry Fire, Dry Practice, Dry Firing”

By: Tom Perroni

The motivation from this article came from a discussion I had with several firearms instructors. We were discussing the fact that some of the veteran officers who had recently come to the range to qualify were having problems with low scores. The same officers fresh out of training had much higher scores.

So the question was asked to the veteran and rookies: How often do you practice? The answer was not very often... The follow up question was how come? The answer was that going to the range was expensive and the officer simply did not have the funds available to practice on his or her own time. I was shocked since most of the training at my Academy is for Law Enforcement and Private Security. These folks are paid to deal with Deadly Force situations. And the Handgun is the most important tool of their trade. With their lives and the lives of the public at stake they should be at the very least proficient with this tool.

So my follow up question was have you ever heard of or practiced Dry Firing or Dry Practice? I was again surprised by the puzzled looks on the faces of these officers. One officer finally said, “What is Dry Firing?”

Dry Fire – This when the trigger is pulled **without** live ammunition in the firearm. This method of training can be done just about anywhere and costs absolutely nothing. In this Instructor's opinion it is vital to anyone who uses or carries a handgun. Essentially you are doing everything you would do at the range except your handgun is empty. (NO AMMO) The most important single fundamental skill in shooting - Trigger Control – is one which can best be improved off the range in dry practice. As I have stated in past articles there are (7) fundamentals of Handgun shooting which all can be practiced with Dry Fire.

Tips to get you Started

1. **Safety:** This is the most important facet of Dry Fire practice! Make sure the Handgun is **UNLOADED!** Make sure that all live ammo is out of the room or area you will be training in. Also make sure you have a suitable backstop. The use of snap caps is up to the shooter. Some people feel they protect the firing pin. However you can fire most modern firearms without causing any damage to the firing pin or the action of the handgun. Consult your owner's manual to be sure.

2. **Targets:** This is left up to the individual. You may use anything you like B-27 or an FBI –Q or life-size human target or a 3X5 index card or a spot on the wall; you will however need a reference point to aim at. This is important.

3. **What should be practiced?** I suggest practicing everything you do at the range - all seven fundamentals of marksmanship:

1. Stance
2. Grip
3. Sight Alignment
4. Sight Picture
5. Trigger Control / Press
6. Breathing
7. Follow Through

Also the draw which has (5) points, as well as reloading and safe high speed gun handling. There are several types of Reloads that can also be practiced.

A. 5 Points to the Draw

1. The firing hand secures a firing grip on the handgun while the support hand touches flat to the abdomen
2. The handgun is lifted straight up until it just clears the top of the holster. The trigger finger is straight on the Handgun. The support hand is still flat against the abdomen. The hand and the forearm are in line with the handgun.
3. The firing side elbow drops and the muzzle points directly toward the target. The support hand is still flat against the abdomen. The trigger finger is straight.
4. The handgun starts toward the target and the support hand establishes the proper grip. The muzzle never covers any part of the body. The trigger finger is still straight. The hands come together fingers over fingers and thumb over thumb
5. The handgun is at eye level and the finger is on the trigger.

Then we place the handgun back in the holster in the exact reverse order while maintaining eye contact with the target. "Do not look at the holster."

B. Speed Reloads: These drills help develop muscle memory. Press the magazine release to drop the magazine while at the same time with the non shooting hand grab the fresh magazine from its pouch, indexed with your finger, and insert into the magazine well. If this is done correctly the magazines will pass each other in mid air.

C. **Tap-Rack-Asses** this drill clears malfunctions and or Jams and effectively “resets” the firearm.

Tap- means to smack the bottom of the magazine firmly enough to lock it into place or dislodge any bind in the magazine.

Rack- is a cycling of the slide to eject any hammered or dead casing or to re-chamber a new cartridge following a malfunction.

Assess- means being prepared to commence or resume fire as required by assessing the situation.

(These maneuvers must be able to be performed flawlessly and subconsciously any time the shooter experiences a failure to fire or malfunction)

3. ***How often should I practice “Dry Fire”?***

Practicing the above drills for 10-15 minutes each day will greatly benefit the shooter. I have seen marked improvement in students who practiced these drills for just 2 days. However please remember Handgun Skills are like buying a car: if you do not make your payments the car will be repossessed. If you do not practice the new handgun skills you paid for they will also be repossessed.

In conclusion remember smooth is fast, and speed is economy in motion; Accuracy always takes precedence over speed. As John Skaggs from the Chapman Academy says “You should own two guns . One you wear out dry-firing and the other you shoot with.”

I urge you to spend the minimal time required to develop your “Dry Fire” skills with this cost-free method that will improve your life saving skills.

Stay Safe & Shoot Straight!

