

## 5. THE PRONE POSITION AND USE OF THE SLING

### MARKSMANSHIP PRINCIPLE 1

(Left-handed shooters should read the opposite hand where appropriate)

#### Principles

The position used must enable the rifle to be supported by the bone structure, thus allowing the muscles to be as relaxed as possible.

The rifle must point naturally at the target. The position used must be EXACTLY the same for every shot.

Adopting the position on the firing point must not cause undue disturbance to other competitors.

#### Basic Positions

There are two basic positions:

##### 1. The Military Position

This is the one most likely to be used by Classic Rifle shooters, especially if not using a sling, or those using a double point sling. In this position, the body is at an angle of approximately 45° to the line of fire. The legs are straight, either closed or, more often, spread apart. This position may be useful for small beginners .

##### 2. The Modified Estonian Position

This is the normal position used in Target Rifle Shooting, using a single-point sling. In this position the body is only at an angle of 5° to 15° to the line of fire with the right knee drawn up to approximately 45° to the line of the spine. The left leg is straight and parallel to the spine.

#### The Single Point Sling

The sling is the most important aid to the target rifle shooter in the prone position. It may be of single or two-point design. Almost all small-bore shooters use the single-point sling, since that is what the modern continental-made rifles are designed to use. Most fullbore shooters also now use single point as many start on small-bore, but some of our best marksmen use double point. A double point sling has the advantage of being more stable in a buffeting wind.

The sling must be in exactly the same place and at exactly the same tension for every shot. The sling must be placed high up on the arm so that it is above the pulse in the muscle. Commercial shooting jackets have sling keepers to do this. A good alternative with a combat jacket is to use the epaulet buttoned up again to its normal position at the neck. (This may look odd when standing up but will usually be found to be just right when lying down. Well fitting, older pattern combat jackets are therefore needed). Some people use the epaulet buttoned to the pocket on the sleeve, or hooks attached to the epaulet, but both of these are usually too low on the arm when in the prone position.



## NATURAL ALIGNMENT

### MARKSMANSHIP PRINCIPLE 2

Once the firer is in position (s)he must adjust this position so that the rifle is naturally aligned on the target. Any attempt to force the rifle on to the target using the muscles of the arms and shoulders is to be avoided. All adjustment to align the rifle must be made by pivoting the body about the left elbow, moving mainly the stomach and legs.

#### The Left Hand

The left hand and wrist must be in a straight line with the left arm, with the fore-end of the rifle resting on the heel of the hand (NOT across the base of the fingers). The fingers must not be in contact with the barrel of the rifle as this can influence the 'jump' of the rifle (even a .22 barrel 'jumps' when fired).

The sling should be high on the upper arm to minimise the pulse beat and support the weight of the rifle.

The upper arm supports the weight of the body and the lower arm enables the hand to support the rifle and operate the trigger.

To ensure the right elbow is in the correct position, the right hand grips the rifle and then the elbow is then lowered to the ground. The right hand should not influence the direction in which the rifle is pointing.

#### The Butt

The butt plate should be located in the pocket of the shoulder to ensure that it is in exactly the same place for every shot. It should be lifted into position by placing the thumb behind the butt plate and locating it in the shoulder.

#### The Left Elbow

The left elbow should be almost under the rifle, so that the wrist remains straight. This may be checked by opening the left hand so that it is not gripping the stock and removing the right hand from the rifle. If the rifle remains steady and pointed at the target, the elbow is correctly positioned. If the rifle attempts to fall to one side and muscle power is needed to bring it upright again; the elbow must be moved until muscles are not needed. The most common fault is to have the elbow too far left. It is sometimes gradually pushed left by beginners, to realise the tension of the sling. This may have the effect of throwing shots laterally across the target.

The left elbow should be reasonably far forward if the position is not to collapse or be illegally low.



### The Right Elbow

The right elbow should be reasonably far away from the body. The weight should **not** be taken on the bone at the tip of the right elbow. Instead, the inner side of the elbow should be in contact with the ground. Beginners sometimes roll the rifle over the left elbow by rolling the body to the left and pulling the right elbow close to the body. Instead, the right elbow should be placed to the right and the left brought in to compensate. The correct right elbow position is usually achieved by placing the right hand on the stock (after the butt is placed in the shoulder) and then setting the right elbow on the ground.



### The Head

The head should be as upright as possible, with the correct eye relief: thus the cheek placement must also be exactly the same for each shot. The butt of the rifle supports the weight of the head.



## **The Spotting Telescope**

The placing of the scope is critical. It must be placed so that only a slight movement of the head is necessary to bring the eye to the lens.

## **Firing Point Drill**

1. Place the telescope in position (it should be at least one third of the way across your allocated space to make sure that your feet do not encroach into the next space, or, on a small-bore firing bench, do not hang off the edge).
2. Check that the sling is in the correct position on the arm.
3. Place the left hand comfortably behind the handstop.
4. Place the left elbow in the correct position.
5. Place the right thumb behind the butt of the rifle and use this to place the butt in the same position in the shoulder every time. If you are a well built small-bore shooter, you should be able to reload with the butt in the shoulder throughout the shoot, but a smaller firer or in a fullbore shoot, the butt will have to be taken from the shoulder between shots.
6. Grasp the rifle with the right hand and lower the elbow to the ground.
7. Lower the cheek to the butt.
8. Check that you are correctly aligned. The sights should settle on the target when you stop at the end of an out breath. If alignment is not correct, move feet and stomach to pivot the body about the left elbow until it is correct. (Stomach/feet moved back brings rifle up, moved forward brings rifle down: moved left brings rifle right, moved right brings rifle left). The newer you are to marksmanship, the more you will have to think about this. For a beginner it is often helpful to take aim, close the eyes, take two or three breaths, breathe out and open the eyes. The chances are that the rifle will not now be pointed at the target and some adjustment will have to be made. With eyes open there is a tendency to use some muscle power to point the rifle; closing the eyes allows the rifle to point naturally.

When correct alignment has been attained, breathe again while placing the finger on the trigger (single stage trigger) or taking up the first pressure (two-stage trigger). Move eyes away from the sight for a second, or blink (to rest the eye), breathe out, stop, final check on alignment and press trigger.

9. Follow through – do not move anything until the rifle has come back to rest. It should come back to the same place each time, preferably to the point of aim. If it does not, this can give some idea where a misplaced shot may have gone.