

**Coach John Wooden taught fundamentals, conditioning and training were essential tools to winning.**

### **APPLICATION TO SHOOTING SPORTS**

The fundamentals of shot execution cannot be overemphasized. They must be trained and executed correctly on every shot. They are *aiming, breath control, hold control, trigger control and follow through*.

#### **Fundamentals of Shot Execution**

##### ***Aiming***

The act of aiming the rifle or pistol includes the position of the body, alignment with the target, natural point of aim---all of which comes before going to the sights. Then comes sight alignment and finally sight picture. These can be broken down as well. Position includes outer position and inner position. Inner position includes balance and pressures. NPA begins with aligning the position to the target. NPA is established without the rifle or pistol, is found again with the rifle or pistol and reestablished on each bullseye. Sight alignment is the eye, the rear sight and the front sight all in a straight line. Sight picture adds the target to those elements while focusing on the front sight.

##### ***Breath Control***

Controlling breathing by using the natural pause is fairly easy to achieve for beginning shooters as it comes naturally once they are aware of it. The shooter simply exhales and fires the shot before taking the next breath utilizing the body's natural pause between breaths.

##### ***Hold Control***

We often emphasize and train for a long hold. In my work with athletes, both rifle and pistol, a long hold is a detriment. Conventional coaches' training says that the shot needs to be executed no later than 8 seconds after settling on the target or hold area. Work on the RIKA trainer, a computerized training system that allows many means of analyzing what the shooter is doing, shows that the optimal time to shoot is 3 to 5 seconds after settling on the target or hold area. Beyond 5 seconds the hold begins to open up. We need to train for a steady hold rather than a long hold. The hold is naturally best early.

##### ***Trigger Control***

We often under-emphasize the importance of trigger control but it is extremely important to the shot. Good trigger control allows you to execute the shot without disturbing the sight picture. Poor trigger control results in steering the shot, in other words, moving the muzzle disturbing the sight alignment. To achieve trigger control, the shooter should have consistent and correct placement of the finger on the trigger face both vertically and horizontally. Changes in the vertical placement of the finger changes the feel of trigger resistance. Horizontal changes result in moving the muzzle left or right of center.

Trigger control includes smooth, slow movement of the trigger straight to the rear. The shooter should feel the difference between the first stage and second stage of the trigger. (on a two stage trigger) At the moment he hears the shot fire, follow through begins. We often think of and teach follow through separate from trigger control, but actually it is the final phase of trigger control because trigger control is not over once the shot is fired.

##### ***Follow Through***

Trigger control extends through the follow through of the shot. You control the trigger in its movement to the rear, the shot fires, you hold for at least 3 seconds and then you control the trigger in its movement forward. As the trigger sear resets, you should feel it through the trigger and remain on the trigger face until it stops traveling forward. During this time, your head stays on the stock and eyes stay on the front sight allowing you to "call the shot".

*Although some principles were distilled from those taught by Coach John Wooden, these are not exact quotes. I have interpreted and made application to the shooting sports as presented in this and following articles. Tina Odle Nov 2008*