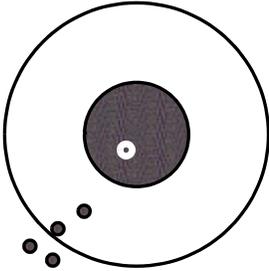


## Stringing? Refocus On the Basics

(From "Michigan CCW", February 2002, by Phil Smith) ©Copyright 2002, Phillip L. Smith

A former student stopped by last week to ask me to adjust his sights because he was shooting to the left consistently. I asked him to draw a typical target on my marking board and show me where the bullets were hitting the target.



Your first question, and mine also, "Was the bullseye hit your first shot or last shot?" He stated it was his first shot. His answer told me there was nothing wrong with his sights. So, what was the shooter doing wrong? Well,

let's go back to the basics and see if we can solve this problem. If his first shot was bullseye it appears that he is using his sights properly. The problem is that the rest of the shots string-off low and to the left. Low and left indicate a problem with trigger control, specifically slapping the trigger instead of pressing fast straight and steady.

What happens is as the shooter starts to anticipate the recoil from the next shot he tightens his hands and is choking-up on the trigger. That is, he is placing the trigger in the JOINT of his trigger finger and not in the middle of the finger pad and is slapping the trigger to fire the gun at the time when his body is all tightened up ready for the gun's recoil.

Flinching is another term for anticipating recoil and almost all shooters are affected by it. It is not particularly fun to have a 25,000 psi explosion go off 2 feet from your face. The good thing about flinching is that it can be controlled by practicing as much as possible and by doing dry firing exercises to help develop good trigger control.

The main problem with retaining good shooting skills is that they are perishable skills. Some of you may not have ridden a bike for years but could probably get on one today and ride it quite well. Bike riding is a non-perishable motor skill that stays with you even years after you have ridden a bike. Shooting accuracy however, is a perishable skill that needs to be practiced regularly in order to be retained. That is why I have strongly encouraged all my student's to practice regularly.

The solution to stringing low and left is the same solution for almost all accuracy problems.

**FIRST**, lighten the death-grip on the pistol –You should feel the push-pull pressure from the full combat grip but do not squeeze your palms together so hard that you are over-tensed.

**SECOND**, use that front sight. Close your non-dominant eye and focus on the front sight. If you are doing it right the target is blurry, the rear sights are blurry and your front sight is in focus and crystal clear.

**THIRD**, place the middle of the first PAD of your finger on the trigger.

**FOURTH**, take up the slack on the trigger and press the slack out smoothly – don't jerk. If you are doing it right the gun will go off and surprise or startle you a little. Since the pistol's sights are always moving while you are trying to hold them on-target, many people think they have to try and get the gun to fire the exact time the sights are on or over the target bullseye. This practice leads to trigger slapping and should be avoided. Instead, work on a constant, steady and straight trigger press while keeping the moving front sight on the target area.

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