



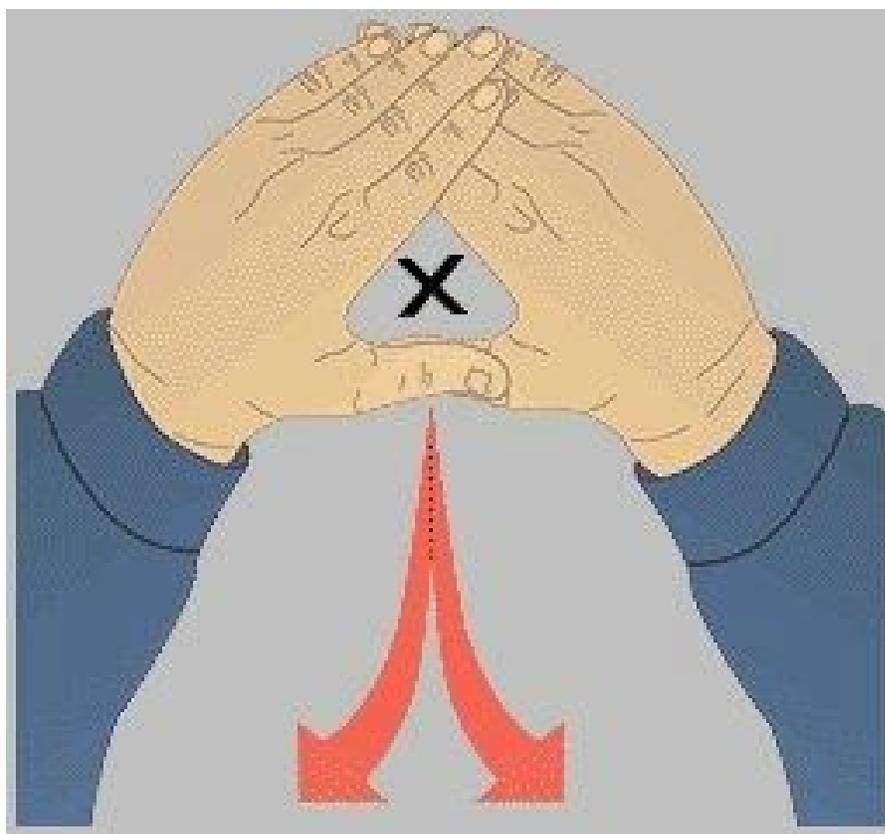
## The Eyes Really Do Have It!

One of the most common questions we see with new and novice shooters is aiming the shotgun with only one eye open. I often ask why the shooter is doing it and the answers run the gamut from "I shoot a rifle like this", to "I don't know, isn't that what you're supposed to do?" While some have success with this method, we all were blessed with two eyes for a reason and being able to coordinate your hands with your eyes is reason in chief.

Having two, forward facing, eyes allows us to see in three dimensions, judge speed and distance. Take away one eye and you take away key inputs that will help you do the job be it hitting a nail with a hammer, a baseball with a bat, or a clay disk 40 or more yards away moving at 45 miles per hour. Keeping both eyes open is much more natural, and natural is always better in shooting sports as it becomes one less thing to think about and allows you to focus more attention to the target.

It sounds easy, right? If you're right handed, throw the gun up on your right shoulder and you're good to go. But wait, you say, when I do that I see down the left side of the barrel. This is because while you are right handed your left eye is taking charge. Favoring one hand or the other has no effect on eye dominance. Some shooters I've worked with never knew which of their eyes was the dominant, or master, eye until we tested them.

If you're not sure of which is your dominant eye the easiest test is shown in this illustration.



Make your hands into the shape shown so that you have a triangle to look through. Find a spot 10 or 20 feet away and, with both eyes open, center that spot in the triangle. Without moving your head or your hands, close your left eye. If the spot is still centered, you are right eye dominant. To confirm, open your left eye and close your right eye. If the spot disappeared then you are indeed right eye dominant. Left eye dominance would be if the spot moves when you close your left eye.

So what if you find that your opposite eye is dominant? There are solutions, some are simple, others not so much. The "book" recommends that you learn to shoot on the same shoulder as your dominant eye but I find that often leads to other problems as it is completely unnatural and often clumsy unless the shooter is somewhat to fully ambidextrous. I don't know about you but being clumsy with a firearm just doesn't seem like a safe way to go. Closing the dominant eye is also a solution, and it can work with a good deal of practice but it's just not the most natural feeling method. There are also solutions where an 'S' shaped stock is used, but I rarely see those as they are very expensive to have made and leave you with a really funny looking gun.

The solution I prefer is to use semi-opaque bandage tape over the off side lens of the shooting glasses. This allows the shooter to naturally keep both eyes open and light to get through, but forces the eye that the gun is aligned with to do the work. For people who are truly cross dominant, where they eyes are fighting each other to be in charge the best solutions are to mask one lens of the shooting glasses as I described earlier or, unfortunately, to close an eye.

While we're on the subject of eyes you need to keep at least one of them open while you're pulling the trigger. Shooters who close their eyes in anticipation of the shot and recoil are, more often than not, going to stop the gun or push the muzzle down unconsciously. Doing either one means a miss on the score sheet, or no dinner if you are hunting.



An example of the success you can have with both eyes open is this fellow; the late, great exhibition shooter Tom Knapp, pictured above. Tom's specialty was picking off clays he threw by hand, the more the better. One of the things he preached was the need to keep your eyes open and focused on your target all the way through the shot, even after the gun went off. If you've never seen Tom work there are plenty of videos available on the internet and watching him mount and shoot the gun the exact same way each and every time no matter

what can be a lesson in and of itself. If you have just a minute [check out this video](#) of Tom breaking ten.... ten!!!.... hand thrown clays with ten shots. While no one may ever replicate that feat, he would tell you, as will I, that anyone of us can break targets consistently with the proper fundamentals and practice.

Remember, that there are NRA Certified Instructors at trap six and seven on every public day who can help you improve your skills and help you discover your personal solution.



See you again soon with another shooting tip, but in the meantime, remember to keep those muzzles pointed to the ground when not on the firing line, and keep those actions open whenever you are not actually shooting.

**Safety first, foremost and always! -- Frank**

