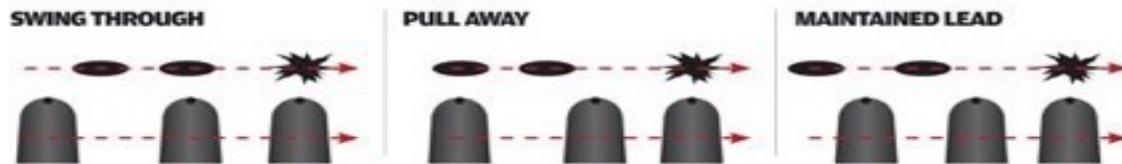




Leads... Redux

A few issues back I wrote an article on how the [proper lead](#) should look to you and how it must become instinctive if you want to shoot the really big scores. Since then several newer shooters who read the article have asked me, “so how do I get the gun to where it needs to be?” That’s a really great question, and like many topics in sport shooting there are several answers so let’s dig into it.



The most common approach in trap, and certainly the easiest to master, is the ‘swing through’ lead shown on the left above. You start your gun on one of the [five hold points](#) and when you identify where the target is headed you move your gun smoothly along the flight path of the target, passing through it and pulling the trigger when your muzzle is ahead of it. Once you’ve pulled the trigger keep the gun moving and follow through. Given that you don’t know what the path of the bird will be until you see it this method gives you the best opportunity to smoothly, there’s that word again, bring the gun through the target and break it instinctively.

Next is the ‘pull away’ lead, shown in the center of the picture. In this method, which is used and taught by some in the sporting clays game, you get your bead on the bird, track it briefly and then pull in front of it and fire the shot. This is very useful in games where you have to call for the bird(s) without the gun already mounted to your shoulder, such as sporting clays and skeet. Some trap shooters prefer to ‘call and mount’ as it is what they are used to from other games or from hunting, but the highest scoring shooters in trap will pretty much always begin with the gun properly mounted when they call for the target.

In the ‘maintained lead’ shown above at right, which is most commonly encountered on the skeet field where the flight paths of the birds are constant, the shooter starts their gun a set distance that they believe is best in front of the bird and keeps it there as they swing. They pull the trigger when it looks right to them. This technique involves a certain amount of trial, error and practice; more so for some and less so for others. The downside is that it can be difficult to master while the upside is you have to shoot more to master and there’s nothing wrong with shooting more, right?

A fourth, less common, method that I see most often with novice shooters who’ve not yet mastered the instinctive sequence from call to follow through is what some call ‘spot shooting’. I refer to it as trying to ambush the bird. This method does have applications in some sporting

clays presentations but on the trap field it's strictly a no go. In this method you see where the target is headed and instinctively move your gun to a spot out in front and pull the trigger. The downside of this for novices is that it seems often to encourage them to stop their swing, which more often than not will result in a miss. I mention it here not to encourage you to use it, but rather to suggest that you don't.

In trap shooting you'll always be best served by focusing your efforts on perfecting the swing through lead first. When you've done that and move on into other games, such as at our five stand sporting clays course, you'll have the basic tools you'll need to get started.

Remember, 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

