



In another recent instructional article, Ted Kozloff gave a set of ten simple fixes for experienced shooters who've hit the scoring plateau. The first two tips were on stance and those got me to thinking about what a newer or novice shooter could learn about what they do with their feet on the trap field, as what you do with your feet plays a huge role in how the rest of your body can get after the target.

First time shooters have long been the easiest to work with as they would rarely have pre-conceived notions and they don't have any bad habits... yet. But in our modern age, we are bombarded by images in media and entertainment of how firearms are used. So, we see people taking up all manner of positions; body heavily bladed to the target line with feet wide apart shows up most often, and the novice will rarely, if ever, vary that stance from station to station.

While they enjoy some success, the interference from swinging the gun to the target is much more suited to rifle shooting as illustrated by the picture to the left. The shooter in the foreground is firing a shotgun, while the shooter behind is firing a rifle. Note the differences in posture, foot placement and orientation to the target. When the rifleman is bladed, or closed, to the target line, the shotgunner is a bit more squared up and open to the target line. We can also see how the weight is ahead of the shoulders and on the front foot with the shotgun stance. Shooting a rifle at a fixed target and shooting a shotgun at a moving target really are as different as night and day!



Let's start by looking at the feet. As we've mentioned in past articles, a balanced and comfortable stance with the feet at or about shoulder width apart will set you up in a solid foundation. You'll want to experiment a bit with the width of your stance to find your own best fit. Once you find it, make sure you make that same setup every time.

In the illustration at the right, the stations are 1 through 5 from left to right, and you can see what is considered the optimum foot position for a right handed shooter. The idea is that you are setting your body up to respond to the most difficult bird at each station. On station 1, you need to be able to swing freely to the hard left bird without breaking down your foundation, buckling the knees, and your upper body can't do that if you are standing in a more closed stance such as you would at station 5.



Likewise, at station 5, the bird going hard to the right is the most difficult and if your stance is open, as at station 1, your upper body will not be able to swing to the bird without the knees buckling and your head coming off the stock.

But what about a left handed shooter, you say? Simply reverse the illustration as if looking in a mirror, shooting closed from station 1 and open from station 5, and you'll be breaking plenty of birds in no time. When you tie these footwork tips together with my article on bird flight and hold points, you'll see in no time just why foot work is so vitally important at the trap game.

When you come down to trap 6 or 7 at VOMTC you will find that we've painted foot prints at each station on the 16 yard line. They are meant to be a guide to help you, with the assistance of an instructor, to find the foot position and stance that is most comfortable for you and maximizes your scoring opportunity at each station.



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

