



“New to IDPA” Shooter’s Guide

What is IDPA?

IDPA as a sport is quite simply the use of practical equipment including full charge service ammunition to solve simulated “real world” self-defense scenarios. Shooters competing in IDPA events are required to use practical handguns and holsters that are truly suitable for self-defense use. No “competition only” equipment is permitted in IDPA matches since the main goal is to test the skill and ability of an individual, not his equipment or gamesmanship.

Why shoot at IDPA events?

The sport of IDPA shooting is a safe way to practice your handgun handling skills in defensive scenarios as well as test your shooting skills in scenarios and standards exercises. IDPA is also a fun sport where you can shoot with your friends and make new acquaintances. It is important to recognize that as a sport, IDPA is a game and should not be viewed as tactical training.

The IDPA and range safety rules are easy to learn and follow. The material in this guide will cover the basic safety and IDPA rules to get the new-to-IDPA shooter started. However, this material is not intended to cover these rules in detail nor is this overview intended to cover all the rules of IDPA. Each topic heading in this overview also contains the page number of the corresponding section in the 2005 version of the IDPA rulebook. New-to-IDPA shooters should refer to the particular sections of the rulebook for more details on the topic. Additionally, the IDPA rulebook should be consulted for rules and policies that are not covered in this overview. New IDPA members will receive the latest edition of the rulebook in the membership packet, which can also be downloaded in PDF format from the IDPA Web site at <http://idpa.com/>. Welcome, be safe, and have fun!

Safety Rules (Page 6)

The 4 Rules of Gun Safety

- 1) The Gun Is Always Loaded!
- 2) Never Point a Gun at Something You're Not Prepared to Destroy!
- 3) Always Be Sure Of Your Target And What Is Behind It!
- 4) Keep Your Finger Off The Trigger Until Your Sights Are On The Target!

Central Alabama Gun Club Safety Rules

Our IDPA matches are held on what is called a “cold” range, which means that all firearms are to be unloaded until you are on the firing line and the Safety Officer gives you the “Load and Make Ready” command. If you are a concealed handgun licensee carrying a concealed handgun, please leave it in your vehicle during the match.

Please remember that the Safe Gun Area and on the firing line under the supervision of the Safety Officer are the only areas where you may handle your firearm. **Also, absolutely no handling of ammo, live or dummy rounds, is permitted in the Safe Gun area.** Ammo may be handled and magazines/speed loaders loaded in any area outside of the Safe Gun area.

Your finger should never be inside of the trigger guard until you are on target and ready to shoot. **Always have your finger out of the trigger guard when moving and when performing a reload.** Always be aware of your muzzle direction and keep it pointed safely downrange. This especially applies to reloads as some shooters have a tendency to rotate their handgun to one side when removing and inserting a magazine.

Also, be careful to avoid “sweeping” parts of your body with the muzzle. Always keep the muzzle safely away from the body. Some IDPA scenarios will require the shooter to draw the firearm from a sitting position or open a door with the weak hand. Sometimes there is a tendency to sweep the body with the muzzle in these situations. If these basic safety rules are always observed, most accidents with a firearm can be avoided.

Handgun Divisions (Page 17)

IDPA is divided into five (5) divisions that are entirely separate. None of the following divisions compete against any other division: **Stock Service Pistol (SSP); Enhanced Service Pistol (ESP); Custom Defensive Pistol (CDP); Enhanced Service Revolver (ESR); and Stock Service Revolver (SSR).** The type of firearm the competitor uses will determine in which division he shoots. Pistols shall be classified first by action, then by caliber. If you have a question about the division of your pistol, please ask a Safety Officer.

SSP - Double action, double action only and safe action pistols. Examples include the Glock 17/22, Beretta 92/96, Sig 226, and CZ 75/85 (DA first shot). The maximum number of rounds that may be loaded in the magazine is ten (10). 9mm Luger is the minimum caliber and minimum Power Factor is 125,000 (bullet weight x velocity).

ESP - Single action guns in calibers other than 45 ACP. Examples include the Browning Hi-Power, CZ 75/85 (SA first shot), Springfield XD, and 1911 style pistols and its variants. The maximum number of rounds that may be loaded in the magazine is ten (10). 9mm Luger is the minimum caliber and minimum Power Factor is 125,000 (bullet weight x velocity).

CDP - 45 ACP pistols only. Examples include the 1911 and its variants, Glock 21, Springfield XD 45 ACP, Para-Ordnance P14. The maximum number of rounds that may be loaded in the magazine is eight (8). Double action pistols such as the Glock 21 may also compete in SSP loaded to a maximum capacity of ten (10). Minimum Power Factor is 165,000 (bullet weight x velocity).

SSR - any revolver of .38 Caliber (.357" or larger) or larger that utilizes ammunition with a rimmed case and is not reloaded with a full moon clip. Barrel length of 4.2" or less (as measured from the front of the cylinder) and has a maximum unloaded weight of 42 oz. The maximum number of rounds that may be loaded is six (6). Seven (7) and eight (8) shot revolvers are permitted, but may only load six (6) rounds. Minimum Power Factor is 125,000 (bullet weight x velocity).

ESR - any revolver of 9mm caliber (.355" or larger) or larger bore diameter utilizing rimmed or rimless cartridges, which may safely make a power factor of 165,000 (bullet weight x velocity). Barrel length of 4.2" or less (as measured from the front of the cylinder) and has a maximum unloaded weight of 50 oz. The maximum number of rounds that may be loaded is six (6). Seven (7) and eight (8) shot revolvers are permitted, but may only load six (6) rounds. Revolver may be reloaded via speedloader or full moon clip.

Range Commands (Page 11)

All shooters will be under the direction of a Safety Officer while on the firing line. It is the responsibility of the Safety Officer to ensure that the match is a safe and fun experience for everyone. It is the shooter's responsibility to understand the IDPA range commands and to follow all commands issued by the Safety Officer.

General Range Commands

"Do you understand the course of fire" This is an opportunity for you to ask any final questions that you may have about the stage. Do not hesitate to ask for clarification on what the expectations are for the stage or how to safely shoot the stage. A clear understanding of the stage and what you are to do is critical for your enjoyment of IDPA as a sport and for the safety of everyone on the range.

"The range is hot" Prior to issuing the "Load and Make Ready" command, the Safety Officer will call out to everyone on the range that the range is going "hot." This is a warning to all participants and spectators to move back behind the firing line and ensure that eye and ear protection is in place.

"Load and Make Ready" When the Safety Officer gives the command to "Load and Make Ready", slowly draw your unloaded firearm keeping your finger out of the trigger guard,

and insert a loaded magazine or speed loader into your handgun. Depending on your division, de-cock or engage the external safety if your firearm has one. CDP and ESP may start “cocked and locked” if the pistol offers that feature, however the manual safety must be engaged.

Most IDPA stage procedures require the gun to be fully loaded to Division capacity (refer to the IDPA rulebook for more details). If your magazines have a higher capacity than what is allowed in your division, you must download the magazines so that they have the maximum division capacity at the start buzzer. For example, a shooter in SSP division with 14-round magazines must have 10 rounds loaded in each magazine at the start buzzer. When preparing to load and make ready, the shooter should have 11 rounds in the first magazine. After you have chambered a round from the magazine, you will be at the division capacity of 10+1 rounds total at the start buzzer. Once you have completed loading your firearm, stand ready with your arms naturally at your side or follow the start position given in the stage procedure.

If your magazines have a lower, or the same, capacity than what is allowed in your division, then you must “top off” the first magazine so that you have the required number of rounds loaded at the start buzzer. For example, a shooter in CDP division with 8-round magazines must have 8 rounds loaded in each magazine at the start buzzer. To fully top off the magazine, load a full magazine, load a round in the chamber, and then replace the magazine currently in the firearm with a fully loaded magazine. Holster the firearm and then top off the magazine and place it in your magazine pouch. After you have chambered a round from the magazine, you will be at the division capacity of 8+1 rounds total at the start buzzer. Naturally, if your magazines hold 7 rounds, you will be at 7+1 rounds at the start buzzer. Once you have completed loading your firearm, stand ready with your arms naturally at your side or follow the start position given in the stage procedure.

“Shooter Ready” The Safety Officer will ask if the shooter is ready just prior to giving the “Stand By” command. If you are not ready to begin, notify the Safety Officer immediately. If you are ready, signal “Ready” and the Safety Officer will issue the “Stand By” command.

“Stand By” The Safety Officer will issue the “Stand By” command which will be followed briefly (usually 1-4 seconds) by the timer’s start buzzer. At the sound of the timer buzzer, you are “on the clock” and you may begin the stage procedure. One variation of the start procedure is a standards stage that uses the turning targets. The “Stand By” command will be followed by the activation of the turning targets, which will then be visible to you. Once the turning targets are activated, you may begin the stage procedure.

“Cover” The Safety Officer will call “Cover” if more than 50% of your upper torso and/or **any** of your lower body is exposed while engaging threat targets and/or reloading. You must comply with this command immediately or you will be assessed a procedural penalty. Repeated offences may result in a Failure to Do Right Penalty. Note: Some stage procedures will require you to shoot a portion, or all, of the stage in the open and/or on the move. The Cover rule does not apply in these cases, however, you must make use of cover, if available, to shoot and to perform a reload.

“Unload and Show Clear” The Safety Officer will ask you to “Unload and Show Clear” after he/she believes that you have completed the course of fire. For self-loading pistols you should remove the magazine, pull the slide fully back letting the cartridge fall to the ground, and allow the Safety Officer to visually check the chamber to see if it is empty. The Safety Officer will then say “slide down, hammer forward, holster.” Move the slide forward, **point the firearm downrange at the berm, and pull the trigger to drop the hammer.** You must pull the trigger to drop the hammer. Using a de-cocker does not act as a check to ensure that the chamber is empty. Shooters with double action self-loading guns that have magazine safeties must inform the Safety Officer that an empty magazine is needed to drop the hammer. The Safety Officer will inspect the empty magazine before proceeding. Once the hammer is safely down, you may then holster the unloaded pistol.

Revolver shooters need to open the cylinder, empty the firearm, and show the empty cylinder to the Safety Officer. Close the cylinder and holster.

Important Safety Range Commands

“Finger” The Safety Officer will call “Finger” if any finger is inside the trigger guard while moving or reloading. You must comply with this command immediately or you will be assessed a procedural penalty. Repeated offences may result in match disqualification.

“Muzzle” The Safety Officer will call “Muzzle” if your firearm muzzle is near or beyond the muzzle safe point. The muzzle command is extremely important as it represents an unsafe condition to yourself and/or others on the range. You must comply with this command immediately or you will be assessed a procedural penalty. Repeated offences may result in match disqualification.

“Stop” The Safety Officer will call “Stop” if the shooter is being grossly unsafe, drops the firearm, or if other conditions on the range require an immediate stoppage of firing. Upon hearing the Stop command, you must immediately stop shooting, remove your finger from the trigger guard, point the muzzle in a safe direction, and await further directions from the Safety Officer. If the Stop command is issued due to a dropped firearm, do not retrieve the firearm. The Safety Officer will retrieve the firearm, make it safe, and return it to you. You must comply with this command immediately.

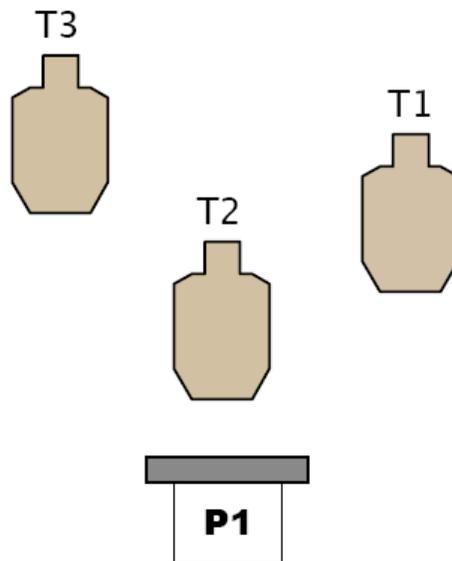
“Range is Safe or Clear” The Safety Officer will call that the range is safe to inform all shooters that the range is clear to move downrange to score targets, paste targets, and retrieve spent brass. Do not move forward of the firing line until after the Safety Officer has issued the range is safe command.

Target Engagement (Page 12)

IDPA scenario, and some IDPA standards, course of fire (CoF) may require you to engage, or shoot, the targets in a specific order. The two orders of target engagement are Tactical Priority (the most common) and Tactical Sequence.

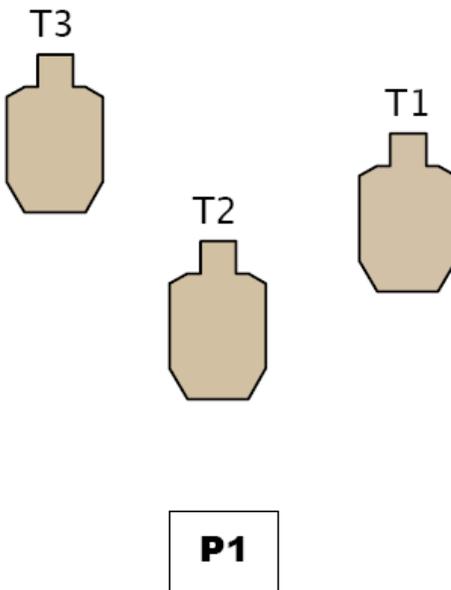
Tactical Priority

Tactical Priority is most easily explained as “engage the targets as they appear to you.” When engaging targets in Tactical Priority from behind cover, you will “slice the pie” by engaging the outside target first with the required number of shots, then engaging the next target that appears with the required number of shots, repeating until all targets have been engaged. For example, the CoF below requires you to engage each target with two shots in Tactical Priority. To engage the targets in Tactical Priority, you would need to either: a) Engage T1 with 2 shots, then T2 with two shots, then T3 with two shots if shooting from the right side of the barricade OR b) Engage T3 with 2 shots, then T2 with two shots, then T1 with two shots if shooting from the left side of the barricade. Either way, right side or left side, the targets have been engaged as they appear to you (and thus present the greatest threat to you).



It is important to note that the target numbers (T1, T2, etc.) do not necessarily indicate the order in which to engage the targets! Target numbers are intended to identify the targets in the CoF, not to identify the order of engagement. In the above example, the order of engagement (T1, T2, T3) does correspond to the target numbers when shooting from the right side of the barricade. However, when shooting from the left side of the barricade you can see that the required engagement (T3, T2, T1) does not correspond to the target numbers.

When engaging targets in Tactical Priority when cover is not available, the targets are engaged “near-to-far” as it is presumed that the closer the target is to you, the greater the threat is to you. Using the same CoF as above, but without cover, the targets would be engaged near-to-far, T2, T1, and finally T3. Again, the target numbers do not indicate the order in which to engage the targets.



The final note on Tactical Priority is the situation where the targets are within two yards of each other, relative to the shooter. These targets are considered to be of equal threat and you decide which target to engage first.

Tactical Sequence

When the CoF specifies that you engage the targets in Tactical Sequence, all targets must be engaged with one round before being engaged again. In the above CoF, you would engage T1, T2, and T3 with one shot each before engaging the targets with the second shot (1-1-2-1-1). It does not matter which target you begin with, as long as all targets have been engaged with one shot before engaging any target with a second shot.

Approved IDPA Reloads (Page 40)

Under the IDPA rules there are three types of approved reloads; the **Tactical Reload**, the **Reload with Retention (RWR)**, and the **Slide Lock (Emergency) Reload**. In most IDPA stages you will have the option to perform any of the three approved reloads as needed. All reloads are to be done behind cover, if available. Keep in mind that this overview of the reload rules is very brief and the IDPA rulebook covers the subject in greater detail.

Slide Lock (Emergency) Reload

The Slide Lock Reload is performed when the slide locks back by ejecting the empty magazine, inserting a loaded magazine, and releasing the slide. Cover must be used if available. Also note that a Slide Lock Reload can only be performed if both the magazine and chamber are empty. **Performing a Slide Lock Reload when the magazine is empty and there is still a round in the chamber will earn a procedural penalty.**

Revolver shooters will perform a Slide Lock Reload by opening the cylinder, ejecting

the brass to the ground, and reload using a speed loader, a speed strip, or loose rounds.

Tactical Reload

The Tactical Reload is performed by removing a fresh magazine from the pocket or magazine pouch, and with the fresh magazine in hand; removing and retaining the spent magazine, inserting the fresh magazine, and placing the spent magazine in the pocket or magazine pouch. Cover must be used if available. The magazine must be stored before moving from cover or resuming shooting. Shooting before storing the magazine will earn a procedural penalty.

Revolver shooters will perform a Tactical Reload by opening the cylinder, ejecting the brass into the hand, pocketing both the brass and unfired rounds, and reload using a speed loader, a speed strip, or loose rounds.

Reload With Retention

The Reload with Retention is performed by removing the spent magazine, placing it in a pocket, and then inserting a fresh magazine in the pistol. Note that unlike the Tactical Reload, the Reload with Retention allows the shooter to move from behind cover before stowing the spent magazine. As with the other approved reloads, cover must be used if available.

Revolver shooters will perform a Reload with Retention by opening the cylinder, ejecting the brass into the hand, pocketing both the brass and unfired rounds, and reloading using a speed loader, a speed strip, or loose rounds.

It is also important to note that IDPA considers the Tactical Reload and the Reload with Retention to be interchangeable. Unless the CoF specifies a particular method, the shooter may choose which reload to use.

Scoring (Page 44) and Penalties (Page 14)

Scoring

Scoring in IDPA is relatively easy to understand. Most stages are timed from the start buzzer to your final shot on the targets. The stage time is recorded, hits are counted, and any misses are noted at -5pts each. The scoring rings are examined; all head and 8" center ring hits are -0 points. Hits inside the next ring count as -1 point each while hits inside the last scoring ring are -3 points each. All the points are totaled and the total points down are multiplied by 0.5 seconds and recorded. All penalties (see below) are calculated and recorded. The sum of the stage time, points down (in time), and penalties determine the shooter's score given in seconds.

Penalties

A shooter who shoots carefully and deliberately will avoid most penalties. However,

penalties are given out for various rule infractions. As a new-to-IDPA shooter, it is important to know what penalties may be assessed and how to avoid them.

“Procedural” penalties are given for:

- 1) The first non-dangerous finger violation
- 2) Not using Cover properly
- 3) Not shooting while moving as required
- 4) Not reloading as required
- 5) Not following equipment and/or other stage procedure rules as required

“Failure to Neutralize” penalties are given on non-disappearing targets on Vickers scored stages that do not have a minimum of one scoring hit in the -0 or -1 zone.

“Hits on a Non-Threat Target” penalties will result in a five second penalty per non-threat target. Multiple hits on a single non-threat target will not score additional penalties. Rounds that pass through a non-threat and hit a threat target are counted as hits on both targets (hit for score on the threat target and hit for penalty on the non-threat target).

“Failure to Do Right” penalty is a 20-second penalty assessed to any shooter who attempts to compromise the spirit of the sport or the rationale of the stage design through the use of inappropriate equipment or techniques.

If you earn one of the above penalties, do not become upset. Penalties are an opportunity to learn from your mistakes and to enjoy the sport of IDPA on an equal footing with the other competitors.

Tips for Improvement

Drawing From Holster for Speed

The Safety Officer calls “Stand By,” your heart is pumping fast, and the adrenaline is rushing as you wait for the start buzzer. Many new-to-IDPA shooters are eager to begin the CoF with a lightning-fast draw to save the maximum amount of time. The resulting draw from holster is often disappointing, and possibly unsafe, as the new-to-IDPA shooter has not fully understood the dynamics of drawing with IDPA gear. Remember that the goal of IDPA shooting is to simulate real-world defensive shooting using practical, non-competition gear. Drawing from an IDPA-legal holster while wearing a concealment garment is very different from other competitions that use “race” equipment designed for speed over practical application in the real world.

The great part about improving your draw is that you can safely practice, develop, and refine the skill in your home at no cost. The most important safety consideration is that you make sure that you never have live ammo in the same area as where you will be practicing. Always check, double check, and then triple check that the firearm is empty before practicing your draw. Concentrate on smoothness and safety over speed. You will want to intentionally start slow so you can analyze every movement in your draw. Develop a

smooth and reliable method of getting your concealment garment away from your holster. Be mindful of where your weak hand is as your strong hand draws the firearm from the holster. Many good shooters move their weak hand to their stomach while drawing to minimize the possibility of sweeping the weak hand with the muzzle and also to get the weak hand on the firearm quickly after clearing the holster. If your firearm has an external safety, be careful that the muzzle is downrange before disengaging the safety. Also keep your trigger finger out of the trigger guard until the firearm is on target and you are ready to shoot. Avoid using a scooping or looping movement as you move the firearm towards the target-such movements take additional time and can be very unsafe.

Speed draws, like most aspects of good shooting, are a product of repetition of the fundamental skills that you practice. No practice results in no mastery of a skill and no speed. With mastery of the fundamental skills, the speed will naturally follow. It is often said that in IDPA “You cannot miss fast enough to win”. The same can be said for draws and reloads, and movement, and about everything else in the sport.

Movement

Movement with a drawn pistol is easy if you follow the basics. First, always keep your finger outside the trigger guard while moving. Second, always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Third, take your time, watching for trip hazards or other conditions that reduce your footing. Nothing is more embarrassing, and unsafe, as falling to the ground due to a condition that could have been avoided. Finally, listen for any commands from the Safety Officer that you will need to follow.

Equipment Malfunctions

At some point you will experience a “click” sound when you were expecting a “bang” sound. When this happens, it is important to remain calm and keep your firearm pointed in a safe direction. Many novice shooters instinctively want to turn and face the Safety Officer, pointing the firearm at the Safety Officer in the process, which will result in a disqualification and in the worst case will result in serious injury or death. Keep the muzzle downrange.

If the malfunction is due to a bad round or improperly seated magazine, perform a “Tap-Rack-Bang” drill to clear the malfunction. “Tap” the bottom of the magazine to ensure it is fully seated, “Rack” the slide back to clear the bad round and chamber a new round, and “Bang” by firing the trigger to resume firing.

Another possibility is a malfunction caused by a squib load, where you will hear a “piff” sound when you were expecting a “bang” sound. The squib load is potentially very dangerous as the bullet may be lodged in the barrel. Firing another round with the barrel obstructed will usually result in a damaged firearm and/or serious injury. If you encounter a squib load, stop immediately and ask the Safety Officer for assistance. Remember to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times.