Standing position: When standing still is better than moving forwards

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The first step to gaining a good hold in standing shooting is the platform you support the rifle on, your standing position.

Those of you who have tried to type on a smartphone keyboard while travelling along a bumpy road you will appreciate that stillness matters.

There are several factors that contribute to stillness in a standing position. These are, a good structure on which to support the rifle, the fitness to maintain that position for a long period of time and the ability to control your balance are probably the 3 prime factors.

A good standing position

A good standing position is not something we can really cover here. Solutions are individual and should really be monitored by someone who knows what they are doing, to prevent positions from becoming too extreme and risking injury.

Balance is a factor that is well within your control. From your first stumbling steps as a child, you have been learning to stand still in an upright position. By now you probably think you are pretty good at it. Everything changes when you add a rifle into the equation. This is not really a physics lesson, but you can’t really get away from the physics of the situation.



Imagine carrying a heavy bag in one hand. The weight of the bag will pull you towards it unless you do something to brace yourself. The same thing happens when you mount your rifle in your standing position; the additional weight of the rifle will pull you forwards unless you can balance the forces to keep everything still. This is where the good standing position comes in.

Balance, Balance, Balance

Even with a good standing position you need to balance well to keep the forces in equilibrium. This is something that you can never really do enough of. The more you understand the feelings you have that indicate movement and of course stillness, the more you can learn to tweak yourself to get yourself as still as possible.

Understanding the signals from your body, the sight movements and tension changes that tell you that you are moving is a vital skill in standing shooting. The better you get at reading the signs and adjusting accordingly the better you will become.

You should build some form of balance training into your normal training routine. A longer session once a week and a shorter session which you can complete before each of your training sessions. I have included 2 examples below. The first is a training session and the seconds is something you can try as a shooting warm up before a training session or in a pre-match routine.



**Training Session to raise awareness of stillness in your standing position**

This is basically repeating the same exercise with differing amounts of kit. The base setting is with trousers only, done up at the waist to help support your back, but undone at the legs so they offer the lowest amount of support.

Balance in standing position exercise

Lift your rifle into position and then focus on your feet and ankles to progressively reduce the amount of sway. Hold the rifle with your head away from the sights but looking towards the target. Hold for about 10 seconds with full focus on your feet. Repeat 15 times, trying to get stiller on each repetition.

Break and stretch.

Go through your entire shot routine without firing a shot, focussing on the stillness of your rifle and controlling the sway through each repetition. Feel control in your feet and ankles before lowering your head. Repeat 15 times, trying to get stiller with each repetition.

Break and stretch.

Exercise steps: Trousers undone at the back, no triggering (hold only). Trousers done up, no triggering. Jacket added with dry firing and then live firing. Finish by adding boots and shooting sighters and 30 shots.

Pre-training session routine to make you aware of movement in your standing position

Preparation

Sit comfortably on a chair, close your eyes and breath in deeply from your stomach for about 3 seconds hold the breath for about 10 seconds and then release the breath in about 3 seconds. With each breath, relax your muscles and clear your head. Repeat the breathing cycle 5 times before moving onto the exercise.

Exercise

Without trousers, jacket and boots. Stand with your feet together, head straight forward and focus on a point on the wall in front of you. Repeat the breathing pattern from the previous exercise. On the inhale slowly lift your left leg as if you were climbing a stair (so that your leg lifts and goes out in front of you and your thigh is parallel with the ground). As you hold your breath, hold your leg in position. As you exhale, lower your leg. Repeat with your other leg. Complete the exercise 5 times on each leg. Focus on adjusting your posture as you move to maintain balance. You will feel any movement through your feet, work on maintaining posture such that the foot you are balancing on has minimal changes in pressure across it.

Put on your shooting trousers.

Move into the standing position with a blank wall in front of you. Make sure there is nothing you can be use as an aiming mark. Lift the rifle into position with your head pointing towards the wall but without putting your cheek onto the cheek piece.

Once in position, close your eyes, and work on relaxing your upper body in particular your shoulder and back muscles. Then focus on your feet and ankles, work on small adjustments to posture until you can feel minimal change in pressure across your feet. Hold the relaxed position for 15 seconds before returning the rifle to the stand. Repeat 15 times, focussing on being progressively more stable each time.

Repeat the exercise but in this case, go through your shot routine rather than holding for 15 seconds, dry firing a shot.

Dress and start your training session.

Don’t forget to evaluate what happens when you complete these sessions. Effective review will help you learn what works best for you so you can progress.

