



The Flyer

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Airfield Shooting Club

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Club Newsletter



New AR-15 & AR-10 Owners: Your First Steps to Safe and Enjoyable Rifle Shooting

By Thomas Sanford
Airfield Shooting Club – The Flyer

With recent changes to Virginia firearm laws, many individuals have purchased their first modern sporting rifle, most commonly the AR-15 or AR-10. These rifles are among the most versatile, accurate, and enjoyable firearms available today. Whether your interest is recreational target shooting, competition, hunting, or simply learning a new shooting discipline, success begins with one thing above all else—safe firearm handling.

At Airfield Shooting Club, we believe that every experienced shooter was once a beginner. Our goal is to help new rifle owners develop safe habits from their very first trip to the range.

Start with the Four Universal Rules of Firearm Safety

Every firearm should always be handled according to these four fundamental rules:

1. Treat every firearm as if it is loaded. Never assume a rifle is unloaded. Verify it yourself every time you pick it up.
2. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. The safest direction is one where an unintentional

discharge would not injure anyone or damage property.

3. Keep your finger off the trigger



until your sights are on target and you have decided to fire. Rest your trigger finger straight alongside the receiver until you are ready to shoot.

4. Know your target and what is beyond it. Bullets travel long distances. Always ensure your target and backstop are safe.

These four rules work together. If one rule is accidentally broken, the others help prevent an accident.

Learn the Parts of Your Rifle

Before firing your new rifle, become familiar with its basic controls:

Safety selector
Magazine release
Bolt catch and bolt release
Charging handle
Magazine
Barrel and muzzle



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★ NRA TOP 4 ★ SAFETY RULES

1. ALWAYS
keep the gun
pointed in a
safe direction.



2. ALWAYS
keep your
finger off
the trigger
until ready
to shoot.



3. ALWAYS
keep the gun
unloaded
until ready
to use.



4. ALWAYS
know your
target and
what is
beyond.



SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Stock and adjustable features (if equipped)

Read the owner's manual thoroughly and practice operating each control with the rifle unloaded.

[Safe Rifle Handling at the Range](#)

Airfield Shooting Club follows strict safety procedures designed to protect everyone on the firing line.

When arriving at the range:

Transport rifles unloaded and cased whenever possible.

Point the muzzle in a safe direction while uncasing.

Open the action immediately.

Remove the magazine.

Visually and physically verify the chamber is empty.

Insert a chamber safety flag whenever the rifle is not being fired.

During cease fires:

Remove the magazine.

Lock the bolt to the rear.

Insert the chamber flag.

Step completely away from the bench.

Do not handle any firearm while people are downrange.

These procedures allow everyone to verify that rifles are safe before anyone goes forward of the firing line.

[Essential Accessories for New Owners](#)

You do not need expensive equipment to begin enjoying your rifle. A few quality accessories will make your experience safer and more enjoyable. I should follow my own advice!

[Eye and Hearing Protection](#)

Quality wraparound safety glasses and hearing protection are mandatory. Electronic hearing protection allows you to hear range commands while protecting your hearing.

[Chamber Safety Flag](#)

A chamber flag clearly shows the rifle is unloaded and is required during cease fires at many organized events.

[Rifle Case](#)

A padded rifle case protects your firearm during transportation and keeps it clean between shooting sessions.

[Cleaning Kit](#)



Basic cleaning equipment should include:

1. Cleaning rod or bore snake
2. Bore brush
3. Cleaning patches
4. Solvent
5. Lubricant
6. Nylon utility brush

A clean and properly lubricated rifle is generally more reliable and easier to inspect.

Stable Shooting Rest

A front rest or bipod combined with a rear support bag helps new shooters focus on proper fundamentals rather than holding the rifle steady by muscle alone.

Quality Magazines

Reliable magazines are one of the most important factors in dependable operation. Number your magazines with a paint marker so any problems can be traced to a specific magazine.

Best Practices on the Firing Line

Accuracy comes from consistency, not speed.

Develop these habits every time you shoot:

1. Load only when the range is hot.
2. Confirm the target distance.
3. Establish a comfortable shooting position.
4. Maintain consistent cheek placement on the stock.
5. Focus on a smooth trigger press.
6. Follow through after every shot.
7. Observe where the sights return after recoil.

8. Take your time. Good shooting is built one well-executed shot at a time.

Respect the Cold Range

Airfield Shooting Club operates under a "Cold Range" philosophy during cease fires.

When the line is declared cold:

- ◆ No handling firearms.
- ◆ No loading magazines on the bench.
- ◆ Stay behind the Red Line
- ◆ Wait until the Range Safety Officer declares the range hot.

These rules protect every member and guest.

Maintain Your Rifle

Routine maintenance extends the life of your firearm.

After each range trip:

1. Verify the rifle is unloaded.
2. Inspect for obvious wear or loose components.
3. Clean the bore if necessary.
4. Wipe carbon from the bolt carrier group.
5. Apply a light coat of lubricant to recommended points.
6. Check optic mounts and accessories for tightness.
7. Store the rifle in a clean, dry location.

Keeping a simple logbook of ammunition used, zero settings, maintenance performed, and any malfunctions can help identify trends over time.

Continue Your Education

Owning a rifle is only the beginning.

Take advantage of opportunities to:

- ◆ Attend new shooter orientations.
- ◆ Participate in club safety briefings.
- ◆ Ask experienced members questions.
- ◆ Observe proper range etiquette.
- ◆ Learn from qualified instructors.
- ◆ Practice regularly with a focus on safety and consistency.

Every experienced competitor at Airfield Shooting Club started exactly where you are today.

Welcome to the Shooting Community

Modern sporting rifles are accurate, reliable, and enjoyable to shoot when handled responsibly. They offer opportunities for recreational target shooting, organized competitions, marksmanship training, hunting where appropriate, and simply spending quality time with family and friends on the range.

The members of Airfield Shooting Club are proud to welcome new shooters into our community. We encourage questions, support safe firearm ownership, and enjoy helping newcomers build confidence behind the rifle.

Remember—safe habits learned on your first day become lifelong habits. Start with the fundamentals, re-





spect the rules, and enjoy your time on the firing line.

Shoot safely. Shoot responsibly. And we'll see you at the range.

ASC hosts the Virginia 4-H Southeast District Shoot

By Rick Cecconi

The 2026 Southeast District Shoot was hosted at Airfield on June 27 welcoming 84 talented young athletes from across the region for a day of friendly competition, skills development, and sportsmanship. Participants represented the Brunswick, Dinwiddie, Eastern Shore, Four Rivers, Goochland, King William, Virginia Beach clubs, along with our own Swampshooters.

Athletes competed in trap, skeet, archery, smallbore silhouette, smallbore 3-position, air rifle silhouette, air rifle 3-position, and BB gun events, showcasing their dedication and hard work in a variety of shooting sports disciplines. Although the first Smallbore Rifle Silhouette relay was interrupted and ultimately lost due to rain, the remainder of the day's events were completed successfully. T

he Swampshooters had an outstanding day of competition, earning top honors across multiple events. The team captured 1st and 2nd place in Air Rifle Silhouette, 2nd place in .22 Rifle Silhouette, 1st place in Senior Skeet, 3rd place in Senior Trap, and 1st place in Individual Archery.

They also dominated the precision rifle events, taking 1st and 2nd place in Smallbore 3-Position and sweeping the Air Rifle 3-Position competition with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd

place finishes. The team's success continued with a 1st-place finish in the BB competition.

Building Confidence One Shot at a Time

By Thomas Sanford



The Swampshooters would like to express our appreciation to the volunteers, coaches, families, and supporters whose dedication made the event possible.

A special shout out to club members Jeff Jasmer, Demetrius Panagopulos, Chris Covert, Ryan Delo, Brian Prout, Alex Mullin, Ken Chapman, John Minus for stepping up to assist with range set up and match support.

Finally, well done to ASC member/4-H Coaches Jim Manning, Dale Mullin and Jon Lester and 4-H coaches Mike Noelle, Jeni Roberson and Chris Asbell who's work with the Swampshooters throughout the year has clearly paid off with this year's results.

AR-15 & AR-10 Basics: Understanding Your Optics, Slings, Bipods, and Zero

If you've recently purchased your first AR-15 or AR-10, you've probably noticed that the number of accessories available is almost overwhelming. Walk into any sporting goods store or browse online, and you'll find hundreds of optics, slings, grips, bipods, lights, lasers, and gadgets claiming to improve your rifle.

The truth is that you don't need every accessory on the market to become a good marksman. Trust me I am still not a good marksman and I have purchased many accessories.

The best investment you can make is learning how to use a few quality accessories correctly while developing solid shooting fundamentals. At Airfield Shooting Club, we encourage new shooters to keep things simple, build confidence, and let skill—not equipment—be the biggest contributor to improved performance.

Start with Good Glass



Your optic is your connection to the target. While modern rifles can accept many different sighting systems, selecting one should be based on how you intend to use the rifle.

Red Dot Sights

Red dot sights are excellent for close-range target shooting and steel competitions. They are lightweight, quick to acquire, and allow shooters to keep both eyes open while aiming.

Advantages include:

- Fast target acquisition
- Simple operation
- Wide field of view
- Excellent for beginners

Low Power Variable Optics (LPVO)

LPVO scopes, commonly available in magnification ranges such as 1–6x or 1–8x, have become increasingly popular because they offer flexibility.

At low magnification, they function similarly to a red dot for close targets. Increasing magnification allows for greater precision at longer distances.

Precision Rifle Scopes

Higher magnification optics are best suited for shooters interested in precision marksmanship or extended-range target shooting. These scopes allow careful observation of target details and are commonly seen on AR-10 rifles chambered in cartridges such as .308 Winchester.

Remember that higher magnification is not always better. Excessive magnification can make targets harder to locate, exaggerate natural movement, and reduce your field of view.

Choose magnification that matches your intended purpose.

Understanding Zero

One of the first tasks after mounting an optic is establishing a proper zero.

Zeroing simply means adjusting your sights so the point of aim matches the point of impact at a chosen distance.

Many shooters begin by confirming alignment at a shorter distance before moving to the distance they intend to use most often.

Once your rifle is zeroed:

- Record the ammunition used.
- Note the date and weather conditions.
- Document the optic settings.
- Confirm the zero periodically.

A small notebook or electronic log can save considerable time and frustration in the future.

The Value of a Quality Sling

Many new owners view a sling as nothing more than a carrying strap.

In reality, a properly adjusted sling:

- Makes transporting the rifle safer and more comfortable.
- Helps prevent accidental drops.
- Keeps both hands free when necessary.
- Can improve stability during certain supported shooting positions.

A simple adjustable two-point sling is an excellent choice for most recreational shooters and competitors.

Bipods and Shooting Rests

Many shooters eventually add a bipod to their rifle.

A bipod provides:

Improved stability
Consistent support
Reduced shooter fatigue
Better observation of bullet impacts

When shooting from a bench, many experienced shooters also place a small rear support bag beneath the buttstock.

Using support under both the front and rear of the rifle minimizes unnecessary movement and helps produce more consistent shot placement.

Magazines Matter

Reliable magazines contribute significantly to dependable rifle function.

A few helpful habits include:

- Number each magazine.
- Keep them clean.
- Inspect for damage or excessive wear.
- Avoid dropping loaded magazines onto hard surfaces whenever possible.

If a malfunction occurs repeatedly with the same magazine, remove it from use until it can be inspected or replaced.

Understanding Ammunition

Your rifle may perform differently depending on the ammunition you choose.

Factors that influence performance include:

- Bullet weight
- Bullet design
- Manufacturer
- Production lot

Once you discover ammunition that performs well in your rifle, purchas-



ing several boxes from the same production lot can often provide more consistent results over time.

Don't Chase Every New Accessory

The firearms industry constantly introduces products advertised as "must-have" upgrades and I fall for it every time.

Ask yourself three questions before making a purchase:

- Will this improve safety?
- Will this help me become a better shooter?
- Will I actually use it regularly?

If the answer is "no," your money may be better spent on practice ammunition, range time, or professional instruction.

Skill almost always outperforms expensive accessories.

Bench Shooting Fundamentals

A stable shooting position is the foundation of good marksmanship.

When shooting from a bench:

1. Sit comfortably behind the rifle.
2. Keep your shoulders relaxed.
3. Place the buttstock consistently against your shoulder.
4. Maintain the same cheek position for every shot.
5. Grip the rifle lightly rather than forcing it into position.
6. Press the trigger smoothly without disturbing the sights.
7. Follow through by keeping your focus on the target after the shot.

Consistency is far more important than strength.

Record Your Progress

Many experienced shooters maintain a shooting log.

Useful information includes:

1. Date
2. Rifle
3. Optic
4. Ammunition
5. Distance
6. Weather conditions
7. Wind estimate
8. Group size
9. Any observations about equipment or technique

Over time, these records become an invaluable resource for tracking improvements and understanding how different conditions affect performance.

Practice with a Purpose

Every trip to the range should have a goal.

Examples include:

- Confirming your zero
- Practicing trigger control
- Improving consistency from the bench
- Learning a new shooting position
- Evaluating different ammunition
- Becoming more familiar with your equipment

Avoid simply sending rounds downrange without a purpose. Focused practice develops skills much faster than high round counts alone.

Learn from Fellow Club Members

One of the greatest benefits of joining Airfield Shooting Club is access to a community of knowledgeable and experienced shooters.

Don't hesitate to ask questions.

Most members enjoy sharing their experience, helping new shooters solve equipment issues, and offering practical advice that only comes from years of time on the firing line. The range is a great place to meet new friends!

The Journey Begins Here

No optic, bipod, trigger, or accessory can replace safe gun handling and consistent fundamentals. Those skills are developed through patience, practice, and a willingness to learn.

Start with dependable equipment, take the time to understand how it works, and focus on making every shot deliberate. As your confidence grows, you'll find that the most rewarding improvements come not from adding another accessory, but from refining the shooter behind the rifle.

At Airfield Shooting Club, we're committed to helping every new member build those skills in a safe, welcoming environment. Whether you're sighting in your first AR-15, preparing an AR-10 for a precision match, or simply enjoying a day at the range with family and friends, remember that every accomplished marksman started exactly where you are today.

Welcome to the sport—we look forward to seeing you on the firing line.

The First 1,000 Rounds Developing Good Habits with Your AR-15 or AR-10

By Thomas Sanford

Purchasing your first AR-15 or AR-10 is exciting. The first few trips to the range are often spent learning



how the rifle feels, becoming familiar with the controls, and discovering just how enjoyable recreational shooting can be.

What many new shooters don't realize is that the habits developed during the first 1,000 rounds will likely stay with them for years. Good habits build confidence, improve accuracy, and make every trip to the range safer and more enjoyable.

At Airfield Shooting Club, we encourage new shooters to think of those first 1,000 rounds as an education rather than simply ammunition fired.

Every Range Trip Should Have a Goal

One of the most common mistakes new shooters make is arriving at the range without a plan.

Instead of simply firing box after box of ammunition, decide what you want to accomplish before loading your first magazine.

Your goal might be:

- Confirming your rifle's zero.
- Practicing consistent trigger control.
- Improving shot groups.
- Becoming comfortable with your optic.
- Learning proper bench technique.
- Building confidence with safe rifle handling.

When every trip has a purpose, improvement comes much faster.

Quality Practice Beats Quantity

Many experienced shooters would rather fire 50 carefully aimed rounds than 300 rushed shots.

Deliberate practice means slowing down enough to evaluate each shot.

Ask yourself:

Was my position comfortable?

Did I maintain a consistent cheek weld?

Did I move the rifle during the trigger press?

Did I follow through after the shot?

What did I learn from that group?

Accuracy is built one well-executed shot at a time.

Keep a Shooting Log

Record information such as:

1. Date
2. Rifle used
3. Ammunition
4. Optic settings
5. Distance
6. Weather conditions
7. Wind conditions
8. Group sizes
9. Any equipment changes
10. Maintenance performed

After several months, your notebook becomes a valuable reference that helps explain why one day produced outstanding results while another did not.

Patterns begin to emerge that would otherwise be forgotten.

Learn to Read Your Targets

Targets tell a story.

A tight group slightly off-center usually indicates that your fundamentals are solid and only your sight adjustment needs attention.

A large, scattered group often points to inconsistent shooting technique rather than a problem with the rifle.

Instead of asking, "Where did my bullets go?"

Ask,

"What are these impacts telling me about my shooting?"

Learning to evaluate your own targets is one of the fastest ways to improve.

Don't Blame the Rifle Too Quickly

Modern AR-platform rifles are remarkably reliable and accurate when properly maintained.

Before assuming the rifle is the problem, consider simpler possibilities:

- Was my shooting position consistent?
- Was I using the same ammunition?
- Was the optic securely mounted?
- Was I rushing my shots?
- Were weather conditions changing?
- Was I fatigued?

Often, the greatest improvement comes from refining technique rather than replacing equipment.

Routine Maintenance Matters

Cleaning your rifle doesn't have to be complicated.

After each range trip:

- Verify the rifle is unloaded.
- Inspect it for obvious wear or damage.
- Wipe away carbon and fouling.
- Clean the bore as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Lightly lubricate moving parts.
- Check that optics and accessories remain secure.

Regular inspection also allows you to identify loose fasteners or worn



components before they become problems.

Organize Your Range Gear

Nothing is more frustrating than arriving at the range and realizing something important was left at home.

A dedicated range bag should include:

- a. Eye protection
- b. Hearing protection
- c. Chamber flag
- d. Staple gun or target clips
- e. Targets
- f. Marker
- g. Small tool kit
- h. Cleaning rod
- i. Lubricant
- j. Notebook
- k. Pen
- l. Spare batteries for optics or electronic hearing protection
- m. Drinking water
- n. Basic first aid supplies

Many experienced shooters keep their range bag packed so it's always ready to go.

Be a Good Neighbor on the Firing Line

Good shooters are also courteous shooters.

Simple habits make everyone's experience better:

- ◆ Introduce yourself to nearby shooters.
- ◆ Ask questions if you're unsure about a range procedure.
- ◆ Respect cease-fire commands immediately.
- ◆ Offer assistance if someone needs help posting targets.

- ◆ Pick up your spent brass and trash.

- ◆ Leave your shooting bench cleaner than you found it.

Strong range etiquette builds a stronger shooting community.

Learn from Experienced Members

One of the greatest benefits of joining Airfield Shooting Club is the wealth of knowledge shared by its members.

Experienced competitors are often happy to discuss:

- Bench setup
- Optics
- Shooting positions
- Wind reading
- Rifle maintenance
- Ammunition selection
- Competition preparation

Most are eager to help new shooters avoid the same mistakes they once made.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Try Different Shooting Disciplines

Many people purchase an AR-15 or AR-10 with one activity in mind, only to discover they enjoy several different disciplines.

At Airfield Shooting Club, opportunities may include:

- Sight-in and recreational target shooting
- Precision rifle practice
- Steel target events
- Rimfire competitions
- Benchrest matches
- Bowling Pin Matches

- Long-range shooting (well sort of)
- New shooter clinics
- Organized training sessions

Participating in different events broadens your skills and introduces you to new friends who share your interests.

Safety Never Takes a Day Off

No matter how experienced you become, the fundamentals of firearm safety remain exactly the same.

Continue to:

1. Treat every firearm as loaded.
2. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.
4. Know your target and what lies beyond it.

These rules apply every time you handle a firearm—whether at the range, at home while cleaning, or during transport.

Becoming a Lifelong Marksman

The first 1,000 rounds are not a finish line—they're the beginning of a lifelong journey.

As your confidence grows, you'll likely refine your equipment, improve your technique, and perhaps even discover a passion for competition or mentoring new shooters.

Remember that every accomplished marksman once stood where you stand today: learning safe habits, asking questions, and striving to improve one shot at a time.

At Airfield Shooting Club, we're proud to be part of that journey. Whether your goal is to punch tiny groups in paper, ring steel with friends, compete in organized matches, or simply enjoy a peaceful



afternoon at the range, we're here to support your growth as a safe, responsible, and skilled shooter.

Practice with purpose. Learn continuously. Respect your fellow shooters. Above all, enjoy the journey.

We'll see you on the firing line.

Selecting the Right Ammunition: Understanding Bullet Weights and Performance

By Thomas Sanford

One of the first questions new rifle owners ask is, "What ammunition should I buy?" The answer depends on your rifle, your purpose, and the level of accuracy you expect.

Not all ammunition is created equal. Different manufacturers use different bullet designs, powder formulations, primers, and quality control standards. Even different production lots of the same ammunition can produce slightly different results.

For recreational shooting, quality factory ammunition is an excellent choice. For precision target shooting, one might consider match ammunition when consistency becomes far more important than velocity alone.

Many new shooters mistakenly believe that heavier bullets are always more accurate. In reality, your rifle's barrel, twist rate, chamber dimensions, and intended distance all influence performance. The only reliable way to determine what your rifle prefers is through careful testing.

When evaluating ammunition, avoid making decisions based on a single three-shot group. Fire multiple groups under similar conditions and compare the overall average. A single exceptional group may simply be luck, while consistent performance over several groups reveals the true capability of the ammunition.

tion.

Purchase enough ammunition from the same production lot when you find one your rifle shoots well. Consistency from one range trip to the next is often more valuable than chasing the newest product on the shelf.

Remember that accuracy comes from a combination of quality ammunition, a well-maintained rifle, and disciplined shooting fundamentals—not from bullet weight alone.

COMPETITOR'S EDGE Shooter or Equipment?

Learning to Separate Shooter Error from Rifle Problems

One of the most common questions heard on any firing line is, "What's wrong with my rifle?"

It's a fair question—but often it's the wrong one.

When shots begin landing outside the group, many shooters immediately suspect the scope, the ammunition, or the rifle itself. While equipment problems do occur, they are usually less common than changes in shooting fundamentals or environmental conditions.

Before replacing parts or adjusting your sights, take a systematic approach. The goal is not to assign blame—it's to identify the real cause.

Start with the Shooter

The most consistent variable on the firing line is the person behind the rifle. Even experienced competitors have days when their fundamentals drift.

Ask yourself a few honest questions:

- Was my body position the same for every shot?
- Did I establish the same cheek weld each time?

- Was my breathing controlled?
- Did I press the trigger smoothly, or did I anticipate the shot?
- Did I maintain my sight picture through recoil?
- Was I rushing because others were waiting?

If you answer "no" to any of these, you've identified something worth improving before changing equipment.

Look for Patterns, Not Single Shots

One shot rarely tells the whole story.

A single flyer can result from many things:

- A slight lapse in concentration.
- A brief gust of wind.
- An inconsistent trigger press.
- A subtle position change.

Instead of reacting to one unexpected impact, fire several carefully executed groups under similar conditions.

Patterns are far more informative than isolated shots.

Eliminate Variables One at a Time

When something doesn't seem right, resist the temptation to change multiple things at once.

Imagine changing ammunition, adjusting your scope, tightening screws, and altering your shooting position—all before firing another group.

If the rifle suddenly shoots better, what fixed the problem?

You won't know.

Instead, change one variable, evaluate the results, and then decide whether another change is needed.

The most effective troubleshooting



is deliberate and methodical.

Verify the Basics

Before assuming your rifle has developed a mechanical problem, inspect the obvious.

Ask yourself:

- Is the optic securely mounted?
- Are the action screws properly tightened?
- Are the scope rings secure?
- Is the bipod or front rest stable?
- Are the magazines functioning correctly?
- Has the rifle recently experienced a hard bump or fall?

Many “accuracy problems” turn out to be something simple that can be corrected in just a few minutes.

Ammunition Matters

Not all ammunition performs the same.

Even quality factory ammunition can produce different results between production lots.

If groups suddenly change after opening a new box, consider whether the ammunition—not the rifle—is the source of the difference.

Whenever possible, compare results using ammunition that has previously performed well in your rifle.

Consider the Environment

The environment changes every time you shoot.

Wind, mirage, temperature, humidity, and changing light conditions all influence what you see and how the rifle performs.

A group fired early on a calm morning may look very different from one fired during a breezy afternoon.

Learning to observe these condi-

tions is an important part of becoming a complete marksman.

Let the Data Guide You

Good competitors keep notes, as it has been said in several articles.

Record information such as:

- a. Rifle used
- b. Ammunition
- c. Distance
- d. Weather
- e. Wind conditions
- f. Group size
- g. Any equipment changes
- h. Maintenance performed

Instead of relying on memory, you’ll have evidence to help explain why your rifle performed the way it did.

Resist the “Upgrade First” Mentality

The shooting industry offers an endless supply of products promising tighter groups.

Sometimes an upgrade is worthwhile.

Often, however, the greatest improvement comes from refining the shooter rather than replacing the equipment.

A new trigger cannot compensate for poor trigger control.

A premium optic cannot overcome inconsistent fundamentals.

An expensive barrel cannot read the wind for you.

The best investment is often time spent practicing with purpose.

A Practical Troubleshooting Process

When your groups suddenly change, follow a simple sequence:

Step 1 – Pause

Avoid making immediate adjustments after a single unexpected shot.

Step 2 – Observe

Was there wind? Did your position change? Did you call the shot differently than expected?

Step 3 – Verify

Confirm that the rifle, optic, and accessories are secure and functioning properly.

Step 4 – Repeat

Fire another carefully executed group under similar conditions.

Step 5 – Decide

Only after collecting enough information should you make changes to your equipment or zero.

This disciplined approach prevents unnecessary adjustments and builds confidence in both your rifle and your decision-making.

Successful competitors don’t jump to conclusions—they gather evidence.

The best shooters become skilled observers. They recognize the difference between a true equipment issue and the normal variation that comes with shooting.

When something changes, they don’t ask, “What’s wrong with my rifle?”

Instead, they ask:

“What is the target trying to tell me?”

That single question encourages careful observation, disciplined troubleshooting, and continuous improvement—the same qualities that define safe, responsible marksmen.

Don’t diagnose your rifle with one shot. Collect evidence, change one variable at a time, and let the target guide your next



decision. Small improvements, consistently applied, produce exceptional results.

Safety Begins Before You Leave Home Preparing for a Safe, Enjoyable, and Responsible Day at the Range

By Thomas Sanford

Ask any experienced Range Safety Officer when safe shooting begins, and the answer may surprise you.

It doesn't begin when you arrive at the firing line.

It begins the moment you decide to go to the range.

Every safe and enjoyable day starts with preparation. A little planning before you leave home helps prevent forgotten equipment, distractions, unsafe handling, and unnecessary frustration. More importantly, it sets the tone for a disciplined day centered on safety, courtesy, and responsible firearm ownership.

Before You Leave Home

One of the easiest ways to avoid problems at the range is to prepare the night before.

Take a few minutes to inspect your equipment and ask yourself:

- Are all firearms unloaded?
- Have I visually and physically checked every chamber?
- Are my firearms clean and in good working condition?
- Are optics, sights, and accessories secure?
- Do I have the correct ammunition for each firearm?
- Have I packed eye and hearing protection for everyone attending?

- Do I have chamber safety flags, targets, tape or staples, and basic tools?
- Have I packed water, sunscreen, weather-appropriate clothing, and a small first-aid kit?

Many experienced shooters keep a dedicated range bag stocked with these essentials so they're always ready for the next trip.

Transport Firearms Safely

Before loading your vehicle, ensure every firearm is unloaded.

Whenever practical, transport firearms in a protective case or range bag that prevents unnecessary movement and protects them from damage.

Store ammunition separately from the firearm when practical, organize your equipment to prevent items from shifting during travel, and secure everything before driving.

Safe transportation protects both your equipment and everyone traveling with you.

Arriving at the Range

Excitement can cause people to rush.

Don't.

Take a moment to observe your surroundings.

Is the range currently hot or cold?

Are shooters already on the firing line?

Where is the designated safe area?

Who is serving as the Range Safety Officer?

Knowing the answers before uncasing your firearm helps you become part of a safe, organized firing line.

Safe Firearm Handling Never Changes

Whether your firearm is brand new or has fired thousands of rounds, the rules remain exactly the same.

Always:

- Treat every firearm as though it is loaded.
- Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until your sights are on target and you have made the conscious decision to fire.
- Know your target, your backstop, and what lies beyond it.

These are not suggestions.

They are habits that should become automatic every time you handle a firearm.

Respect the Cold Range

One of the defining characteristics of Airfield Shooting Club is its commitment to safe range operations.

When the line is declared **Cold**:

- Remove the magazine.
- Open the action.
- Visually verify the chamber is empty.
- Insert a chamber safety flag whenever applicable.
- Step completely away from the bench.
- Get behind the Red Line.
- Do not touch any firearm until the Range Safety Officer declares the range **Hot**.

Even seemingly harmless actions—such as adjusting a scope, moving a rifle, or dry-firing—can create confusion for others on the range.

When people are downrange, every firearm should remain untouched.

Muzzle Awareness Is Everyone's Responsibility



The safest shooters constantly know where their muzzle is pointed.

Whether carrying a cased firearm, placing it on the bench, or moving between shooting positions, maintain control of the muzzle at all times. Tip, mark you carrying case so you know which end the muzzle is pointed so when uncasing it is already pointed down range.

Good muzzle discipline protects everyone around you and demonstrates respect for fellow club members.

Good Etiquette Builds a Better Club

Safety and courtesy go hand in hand.

Outstanding shooters are known not only for their marksmanship but also for their professionalism.

Simple habits make a lasting impression:

1. Arrive early and avoid rushing.
2. Listen carefully during the safety briefing.

3. Follow Range Safety Officer commands immediately.
4. Keep conversations respectful.
5. Offer assistance to new shooters when appropriate.
6. Leave your shooting area cleaner than you found it.
7. Pick up your spent brass unless another shooter requests it.
8. Check behind you ensuring not to leave equipment behind.
9. Thank the volunteers who make club events possible.

Every member contributes to the reputation of Airfield Shooting Club.

If You're Unsure—Ask

No one expects new shooters to know everything.

Questions are always welcome.

Whether you're uncertain about a firearm, a range command, or club procedures, ask an experienced member or the Range Safety Officer before proceeding.

There is no embarrassment in asking a question.

There is tremendous wisdom in doing so.

Before Heading Home

The day isn't over when the last round is fired.

Before leaving the range:

1. Verify every firearm is unloaded.
2. Remove all magazines.
3. Insert chamber flags where appropriate.
4. Police your shooting area for brass and trash.
5. Check that you haven't left any equipment behind.
6. Secure firearms for transport.

Once home, clean and inspect your firearms, replenish any supplies you used, and make notes in your shooting log while the details are still fresh.

Preparing for your next range trip begins before you've even put today's gear away.

Safe firearm ownership is not defined by one action—it's the result

AR **NRA** AMERICA'S RIFLE **CHALLENGE**



of hundreds of good decisions made before, during, and after every trip to the range.

Preparation, discipline, courtesy, and attention to detail are the qualities that distinguish responsible shooters.

At Airfield Shooting Club, every member shares responsibility for maintaining a safe and welcoming environment. By preparing before you leave home, handling firearms responsibly, and practicing proper range etiquette, you help ensure that every visitor—whether it's their first trip or their hundredth—can enjoy the shooting sports with confidence.

The safest shooters aren't simply careful when the rifle is loaded. They're disciplined from the moment they begin preparing for the day until the last firearm is cleaned, stored, and ready for the next trip to the range. Safety isn't a step in the process—it's the foundation of everything we do.

Could the NRA American Rifle Challenge Be the Next Great Event at Airfield Shooting Club? Why an ARC Level 1 Course Could Be a Perfect Fit for the ASC 100-Yard Range

By Thomas Sanford

Airfield Shooting Club has earned a reputation for offering something for nearly every shooting enthusiast. Whether your passion is rimfire benchrest, steel targets, bowling pins, defensive pistol, trap and skeet, or simply enjoying a relaxing afternoon at the range, ASC has become a place where shooters of every experience level can learn, compete, and enjoy the shooting

sports.

As our membership continues to grow, so does the interest in modern sporting rifles such as the AR-15 and AR-10. Many new members have purchased these rifles but are still looking for an organized, enjoyable, and practical way to build their skills.

That is one reason the **NRA American Rifle Challenge (ARC)** deserves a closer look.

What Is the American Rifle Challenge?

The NRA American Rifle Challenge was developed to encourage safe, practical rifle marksmanship through a series of progressively challenging courses of fire. Rather than emphasizing extreme distances or specialized equipment, ARC focuses on the fundamentals that every rifle owner should develop:

- Safe firearm handling
- Accurate marksmanship
- Proper use of shooting positions
- Efficient movement between positions, where applicable
- Confidence with the rifle
- Consistency under mild time constraints

Unlike some shooting sports that require expensive race equipment or years of competitive experience, the ARC program is designed to welcome everyday rifle owners while still providing meaningful challenges for experienced competitors.

Why It Fits Airfield Shooting Club

One of ASC's greatest strengths has always been introducing new shooters to organized competition in a friendly and supportive environment.

The ARC program complements that philosophy perfectly.

Rather than testing how much equipment someone owns, it rewards preparation, safe gun handling, and solid marksmanship fundamentals.

For many shooters, it serves as an ideal stepping stone between casual target shooting and more advanced competitive disciplines.

The 100-Yard Range Is an Outstanding Venue

The ASC 100-yard range already provides many of the features needed for an introductory rifle event.

It offers:

- Clearly defined firing points
- Safe downrange impact areas
- Excellent visibility
- Comfortable access for competitors
- Plenty of room for spectators and coaching

Most importantly, members are already familiar with the facility.

Learning a new competition is much easier when the surroundings are familiar.

Building Better Riflemen

One of the most appealing aspects of the ARC program is that success depends on mastering the fundamentals.

Competitors are encouraged to develop:

- Consistent rifle handling
- Safe loading and unloading procedures
- Stable shooting positions
- Trigger control
- Sight alignment and sight picture



- Follow-through
- Positive muzzle awareness throughout the event

These are the same skills that improve performance in nearly every rifle discipline.

Whether your interest is hunting, recreational shooting, precision competition, or simply becoming more proficient with your firearm, these fundamentals transfer directly to every future range trip.

A Match That Welcomes Everyone

One concern many first-time competitors have is whether they are “good enough” to participate.

The ARC format helps remove that concern.

New shooters have an opportunity to learn in an organized setting while experienced competitors can focus on refining their performance.

The result is a match where learning is just as important as scoring.

That philosophy aligns well with the culture Airfield Shooting Club has worked hard to establish over the years.

A Natural Progression for New Rifle Owners

Many recent rifle owners arrive at the range with questions:

- How should I set up my rifle?
- Which shooting position works best?
- How can I become more accurate?
- What should I practice?

An organized challenge provides answers that informal practice often cannot.

Instead of simply firing boxes of ammunition from a bench, partici-

pants learn to apply sound fundamentals in a structured environment with clear objectives.

That experience builds confidence far more quickly than shooting alone.

An Opportunity to Grow Participation

Introducing an ARC event could also create new opportunities for the club.

It has the potential to:

- Welcome first-time competitors.
- Encourage younger shooters to participate.
- Introduce families to organized rifle events.
- Provide another reason for members to return each month.
- Strengthen Airfield Shooting Club’s reputation as a place where education and safety come first.

Perhaps most importantly, it helps build a community of shooters who enjoy learning from one another.

Safety Remains the Foundation

Like every event hosted at Airfield Shooting Club, safety would remain the highest priority.

Every competitor should expect a thorough safety briefing before the match begins, clear range commands, close supervision by the Range Safety Officer and Match Director, and consistent application of established range rules throughout the event.

The objective is not only to complete the course successfully, but to demonstrate safe firearm handling from the moment the rifle is uncased until it is secured at the end of the event.

Looking Ahead

As interest in modern sporting rifles continues to grow, Airfield Shooting Club has an opportunity to introduce a discipline that emphasizes responsibility, precision, and continuous improvement.

The NRA American Rifle Challenge offers an enjoyable way to develop practical rifle skills while maintaining the welcoming atmosphere that has become one of ASC’s greatest strengths.

Could an ARC Level 1 event become the next popular addition to our match calendar?

Only time will tell—but the combination of our outstanding 100-yard range, dedicated volunteers, and enthusiastic membership certainly makes it a possibility worth exploring.

Whether you’re a seasoned competitor or someone who recently purchased your first AR-15 or AR-10, the American Rifle Challenge may be exactly the kind of event that helps you take the next step in your shooting journey.

“Great competitors are built on strong fundamentals. A well-designed challenge doesn’t simply test your skills—it develops them.”

Competitor’s Edge Mental Management: The Most Important Piece of Equipment You Own

By Thomas Sanford

When shooters talk about improving their scores, the conversation usually turns to rifles, scopes, ammunition, triggers, or the latest accessory. While quality equipment certainly has its place, one of the greatest improvements any competitor can make doesn’t come from a



gun shop—it comes from developing a disciplined mindset.

The truth is that every match is won or lost twice: first in the mind, and then on the firing line.

Every Shooter Misses

Even the most accomplished competitors throw an occasional shot. Wind changes unexpectedly. A position isn't quite as stable as expected. The trigger breaks a fraction of a second too soon. Equipment occasionally has a bad day. Those moments happen to everyone.

What separates experienced competitors from everyone else is not that they never make mistakes—it's how quickly they recover from them.

One poor shot should never become a poor stage, and one poor stage should never become a poor match.

Shoot the Shot You're On

One of the easiest traps to fall into is replaying the previous shot while preparing for the next one.

"If only I had held another two-tenths."

"I rushed that trigger press."

"I should have waited for the wind."

While your mind is replaying the past, you've already stopped paying attention to the present.

Champions focus on one thing:

The next shot.

The previous round has already left the barrel. Nothing will change where it landed. Your entire focus should be on executing the best possible shot right now.

Develop a Pre-Shot Routine

Consistency begins long before the trigger is pressed.

A simple pre-shot routine helps eliminate unnecessary thinking and

builds confidence under pressure. Every shot should follow the same sequence:

- Verify your natural point of aim.
- Confirm your breathing.
- Check your sight picture.
- Confirm your wind hold.
- Apply smooth, consistent trigger pressure.
- Follow through and observe the impact.

When every shot follows the same routine, confidence begins to replace uncertainty.

Trust Your Preparation

Many shooters lose points because they begin second-guessing themselves.

"Did I dial correctly?"

"Should I hold more wind?"

"Maybe I should aim a little differently."

If you've done the work before the match—confirmed your zero, gathered reliable DOPE, and practiced your fundamentals—trust your preparation.

Confidence comes from preparation, not from hope.

Stay in Your Own Match

One of the quickest ways to lose focus is by watching everyone else's targets.

Someone shoots a tiny group.

Another competitor cleans a difficult stage.

A neighboring shooter starts celebrating.

None of those things improve your score.

The only scorecard you control is your own.

Stay focused on your rifle, your po-

sition, your process, and your next shot.

Accept What You Cannot Control

Successful competitors learn to distinguish between things they can control and things they cannot.

You cannot control:

- a. The wind.
- b. Mirage.
- c. Lighting conditions.
- d. Temperature.
- e. The timer.
- f. Another competitor's performance.

You can control:

- a. Safety.
- b. Preparation.
- c. Rifle maintenance.
- d. Position building.
- e. Trigger control.
- f. Breathing.
- g. Follow-through.
- h. Your mental game/attitude.

Energy spent worrying about uncontrollable factors is energy taken away from executing the shot.

The Best Competitors Are Calm

Watch experienced shooters during a match.

- They rarely rush.
- They rarely panic.
- They move deliberately.
- They breathe.
- They think.
- They execute.
- Calmness is not something you're born with—it is developed through repetition, confi-



dence, and experience.

Build Confidence Before Match Day

Mental management doesn't begin at the match.

It begins during practice.

Every successful practice session reinforces confidence. Every carefully recorded data point, every confirmed zero, every dry-fire repetition, and every notebook entry becomes another reason to trust yourself when the pressure increases.

The more prepared you are, the quieter your mind becomes.

Final Thoughts

The rifle is only a tool.

The scope simply helps you see.

The ammunition only does what physics allows.

Your greatest competitive advantage is the six inches between your ears.

Develop a disciplined process. Trust your preparation. Learn from every shot without dwelling on it. Stay present. Most importantly, remember why you came to the range—to enjoy the sport, challenge yourself, and continually improve.

At Airfield Shooting Club, we're fortunate to compete alongside shooters of every experience level. Whether you're firing your very first match or chasing a personal best, mental management is a skill that never stops developing.

The next time you step to the firing line, ask yourself one simple question:

Am I thinking about the last shot—or am I fully committed to the one I'm about to fire?

That answer may determine the outcome of your match.

Competitor's Edge Tip

Focus on the process, not the score. Shooters who execute one quality shot at a time often discover that the scoreboard takes care of itself.

★ BENCHREST SHOOTING ★ FUNDAMENTALS

1. SAFETY FIRST –
Follow every range command and keep the muzzle pointed safely downrange.



2. STABLE SETUP –
Use a firm bench, secure front support and properly positioned rear bag.



3. NATURAL ALIGNMENT –
Center the rifle on the target without strain or forced movement.



4. CONSISTENT POSITION –
Repeat the same posture, eye relief and contact points each time.



5. SMOOTH SHOT PROCESS –
Stay relaxed and avoid disturbing the rifle as the shot is taken.



6. FOLLOW THROUGH –
Maintain position, observe the sight picture and record the result.





CONSISTENCY BUILDS PRECISION