

# **Trail Gun Plate Match**

## **Rules and Regulations**

Version 3

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## 1 Definitions

RSO – Range Safety Officer. The person conducting the match. Responsible for scoring and safety. **The Boss.**

Trail Gun – in this application, a 22 caliber rimfire revolver or semi-automatic pistol capable of being carried/secured in a belt holster.

Relay – a group of shooters firing on targets during a given time slot.

String – a run of ten successive shots fired in a given time slot.

Course of fire – the sequence of steps that define how a match is conducted.

‘HOT’ range – the range is ready for firing.

‘COLD’ range – the range is safe, no handling of firearms.

Standard Division pistol – pistols that cannot hold the entire 10 rounds needed to complete a string of fire. The shooter will need to reload during the string of fire.

Ten-Shot Division pistol – pistols capable of holding the ten rounds needed to complete the string of fire. No reloading is necessary during the string of fire.

Short Barrel subdivision – pistols with barrels of length less than – **but not equal to** – 5”.

Long Barrel subdivision – pistols with barrels equal to or longer than 5” but not longer than 7½”.

## 2 Spirit of the Game

Imagine this scenario. You’re hunting deer in mid-November. You’re doing some mid-day scouting, moving slowly through the snow and trees, cautiously looking about for sign. Out of the corner of your eye, you catch a familiar silhouette at the base of a scrub oak. A rabbit!! About 25 yards away. He sees you, you see him. But nobody moves.

You have a small game license and you're thinking rabbit might be just the thing for dinner. But you don't want to fire that big 'ole 30-06 at such a small critter. No, sir. So you slowly reach for your trusty Smith and Wesson Model 63 you keep in a belt holster. Yes, 22s are for rabbits!

You don't dare move towards a tree to brace yourself - the little guy is sure to run off. So you stand where you are, draw a steady bead, squeeze the trigger, and ..... **crack**. You score a solid hit and you're having fried rabbit for dinner!

That's the perfect use for a trail gun. A handy 22 LR pistol that's not too heavy, fairly accurate, and easily accessible. The staple of hunters, hikers, and fishermen for a century or more. To hone the skills needed to employ one effectively, we offer you the Trail Gun Plate Match. An exciting test of skill against appropriately sized reactive steel targets. Throw in some inexpensive ammo and a tiny pinch of competitive spirit and you can experience the thrill and confidence that comes from a well-placed shot.

## **2.1 What it is...**

The purpose - or the "spirit" - of the Trail Gun Plate Match is to mimic shots at rabbit-sized game from a holsterable 22 caliber rimfire "Trail Gun" pistol using only iron sights. The course of fire is forty shots at 4" metallic "falling plate" targets from 25 yards in strings of ten shots each, for four strings. The plates must **fall** - they can't just scoot, wobble, spin, or shift. While there is a time limit, it's not a game of speed. There are two divisions - Standard and Ten-Shot - and two subdivisions - Short Barrel and Long Barrel - to accommodate as many pistol configurations as possible. The matches are intended to be informal, with no "money prizes", though trophies, ribbons, and/or certificates are encouraged.

## **2.2 What it is not...**

The Trail Gun Plate Match is not a "quick-draw" or draw-from-the-holster match. No one needs to be in a hurry - there's plenty of time to make your ten shots in each string. Nor is it a bench rest match. All shooting is done off-hand (standing) with no external support for the shooter or the pistol.

It's not an Olympic event. No need to show up with a \$2000 custom tack driver, a spotting scope, and a box of hand-made German ammunition. It's intended to be shot with (mostly) stock pistols by

Average Joes and Janes. Just bring something like your K-22, Mark I, Single Six, S&W 41, Frontier, P22, Model 34, Buckmark, or that dusty old Colt Woodsman. You get the idea, something you'd take on the trail with you while hiking in the woods. Bring a box or two of inexpensive ammo. And don't forget to bring its holster.

### **3 Rules of the Game**

While we try to keep to the "spirit of the game", having clearly defined rules helps prevent confusion and keeps the game fair for all participants. The rules are intended to be simple and not muddled with minutia. It is our hope that shooters will not attempt to "split hairs" with the organizers and adhere to the spirit of the game in friendly competition.

#### **3.1 Acceptable Pistols**

##### **3.1.1 Common to both the Standard and Ten-Shot Divisions:**

The pistol must be of 22 caliber rimfire: 22 Short, 22 Long, or 22 Long Rifle. 22 Magnum and 17 caliber pistols are not permitted because (1) the metal targets are not designed to handle these higher power/velocity cartridges and (2) higher velocities can result in a higher likelihood of ricochets.

The pistol must weigh no more than 3 pounds (48 oz), unloaded and with magazine (if applicable).

The pistol cannot have any glass and/or electric optics (including red dot scopes) or target-style hooded aperture sights. Aftermarket sights are acceptable, so long as they are not a radical departure from the factory/stock iron sights. Iron sights with natural-light "fiber optic" illumination are permitted. If in doubt, shooters should always confirm the applicability of their aftermarket sights with match organizers prior to sign-up.

The pistol must be accompanied by a belt holster, preferably of common production. This is to prevent obvious, non-Trail Gun pistols (i.e., Olympic smallbore pistols) from entering the competition.

Pistols in the 'Short Barrel' subdivision must have barrels of length less than - **but not equal to** - 5". Barrels equal to or longer than 5" and

shorter than or equal to 7½” put the pistol in the ‘Long Barrel’ subdivision. Thus the four possible division/subdivision pairings are:

<b>Standard Short Barrel</b>	<b>Standard Long Barrel</b>
<b>Ten-Shot Short Barrel</b>	<b>Ten-Shot Long Barrel</b>

### **3.1.2 Standard Division, additional criteria**

Any single-shot pistol.

Any revolver with a cylinder capable of accepting nine (9) or fewer cartridges when fully loaded.

Any semi-automatic pistol whose magazine capacity is eight (8) or less when fully loaded. An “8+1” configuration is legal at the start of each relay.

### **3.1.3 Ten-Shot Division, additional criteria**

Any revolver with a cylinder capable of accepting ten (10) or more cartridges when fully loaded.

Any semi-automatic pistol whose magazine capacity is nine (9) or more when fully loaded. A “9+1” configuration is legal at the start of each relay.

## **3.2 Ammunition**

Ammunition must be of 22 caliber rimfire: 22 Short, 22 Long, or 22 Long Rifle only, and appropriate to the pistol being used. 22 Magnum and 17 caliber ammunition is not permitted.

Ammunition must be “sub-sonic”, “standard velocity”, or “hi velocity” type, using lead or copper-plated lead bullets between 36 and 40 grains. “Hyper velocity” and “shotshell” ammunition is not permitted.

Bullets may be solid or hollow point.

## **3.3 Targets**

Targets will be 4” round steel targets – capable of free-standing without external support – with a foot no larger than 1”x3”. The steel

will be of a Brinell hardness appropriate to 22 rimfire ammunition. The impact plates will be no thicker than 3/8" and no thinner than 1/4". The targets will be placed atop a target stand at 25 yards. The top of the target stand will no less than 30" tall and no more than 48" tall; no less than 72" wide and no more than 96" wide. Targets will be evenly spaced across the top of the target stand with no less than 3" between target edges.

Ideally, the targets will be spray-painted white (and dried) prior to each match. However, targets may be painted yellow or red to provide ample contrast to the impact berms and/or to distinguish between individual shooter's target banks.

### **3.4 Additional Equipment**

Additional equipment is typically not permitted because it's not needed in the spirit of the match.

#### **3.4.1 Items specifically not permitted:**

- Slings, lanyards, mono- / bi- / tripods, or other support devices
- Add-on weights and/or levels
- Glass and/or electronic optics
- Target-specific hooded aperture sights
- Target-specific shooting glasses attachments such as "eye blinders" or "scotch-taped" lenses.
- Trigger-pull "assistance" devices
- Speedloaders or spare magazines for **reloading** during a string of fire.

#### **3.4.2 Items permitted:**

- Shooting gloves
- Grip tape
- Cowboy-style belts and holsters
- A **single** loaded magazine or speedloader is permitted at the **start** of each string of fire. **However, shooters are not permitted to reload with a loaded magazine or speedloader during the string of fire.** Reloading must be accomplished by hand with individual rounds of ammunition.
- A single device for **holding** loose ammunition – drilled wooden block, pouch, dish, etc... – that does not mechanically assist in reloading the pistol.

## 4 Safety

Colonel Jeff Cooper's four rules of firearm safety apply at all times during the match:

1. All guns are always to be treated as though they are loaded.
2. Never let the muzzle cover anything you're not willing to destroy.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.
4. Be certain of your target and of what is beyond it.

Additional safety rules to be followed during the match:

1. Eye and hearing protection will be worn at all times while the range is 'HOT'.
2. Firearms are not to be loaded **unless and until** specifically directed to do so by the RSO and only after the shooter has taken his/her position on the firing line.
3. Pistols must remain holstered between strings of fire.
4. No draw-to-fire of pistols from their holsters at any time during the course of fire.
5. If a shooter completes his/her string of fire prior to the call for 'CEASE FIRE', the pistol will be placed on the bench in a safe condition. For automatics, this means to have the slide locked back and the magazine removed. If the safety can be placed 'on' in this condition, then it should be. For single-action revolvers, the feed gate shall be open. For double-action revolvers, the cylinder shall be swung open.

### 4.1 Safety Infractions

#### 4.1.1 Minor Safety Infractions

- Handling firearms during cold range, unholstering a firearm before being instructed to do so, not wearing safety equipment, etc.
- One warning. Second infraction results in disqualification (DQ).

### **4.1.2 Major Safety Infractions**

- Covering someone with the muzzle of a firearm or negligent discharge.
- Immediate DQ.

### **4.2 Dropped Items at the Firing Line**

- Do not attempt to retrieve **any** dropped items from the ground at the firing line while the range is hot. Dropped ammunition that reaches the ground is forfeit for that string and unengaged targets will be scored as misses.
- The only exception is dropped safety equipment. In that event, raise the non-firing hand to get the attention of the RSO.

### **4.3 Firearm Malfunctions**

- Minor firearm malfunctions – jams and misfeeds – should be resolved by the shooter during the string of fire. No time credit will be awarded and unengaged targets will be scored as misses.
- Potentially dangerous firearm malfunctions – squibs, for example – should be resolved with extreme care. In that event, raise the non-firing hand to get the attention of the RSO.

### **4.4 Ammunition Malfunctions**

- Ammunition malfunctions should be resolved by the shooter during the string of fire. Misfires that can be safely rechambered for a “second chance” may be reused. The option to retry or discard misfired ammunition is up to the discretion of the shooter. No time credit will be awarded and unengaged targets will be scored as misses.
- Ammunition that cannot be made to fire cannot be replaced during that string and unengaged targets will be scored as misses.

## 5 Course of Fire

To ensure a safe and enjoyable shooting environment, the course of fire will be strictly adhered to. Any shooter unwilling to follow the course of fire will be disqualified and asked to leave the range.

The Trail Gun Plate Match is a “shooter participation” event. Shooters are expected to assist in the conducting of the match by (1) being fully prepared to assume position on the firing line from the “on deck” position (i.e., be ready to go when it’s your turn) and (2) participating in the “target reset” rotation after firing (i.e., helping to reset other shooters’ targets after they’ve been scored).

All shooting is done “off-hand” (standing) with no support available for the pistol or the shooter. Slings, bipods, shooting rests, and chairs/stools are not permitted.

The following describes the course of fire.

1. Command: **PREVIOUS RELAY MOVE TO THE RESET AREA**

Shooters from the previous relay will take position in the resetter’s area.

2. Command: **SHOOTERS MOVE TO THE FIRING LINE**

The RSO will instruct those waiting “on deck” to move to the firing line with ten (10) rounds of ammunition and their pistols holstered.

3. Command: **NEXT RELAY ON DECK**

The RSO will announce the names in the next relay and instruct them to move “on deck”.

4. Command: **RANGE IS HOT. EYES AND EARS.**

The RSO will call the range ‘HOT’.

5. Command: **SHOOTERS, YOU MAY UNHOLSTER YOUR FIREARM, LOAD, AND MAKE READY. WHEN YOU ARE DONE LOADING, PLACE YOUR FIREARM ON THE BENCH WITH THE MUZZLE POINTING DOWNRANGE.**

Instruct the shooters to unholster their weapons and load. Shooters have 30 seconds to load their pistols/magazines and chamber a round (semi-autos only). **Revolver shooters are required to keep the hammers down (un-cocked)**. Once the weapons are loaded, the safeties are placed in the 'on' position (if applicable), and the weapons are placed on the bench with the muzzles pointed downrange. Extra ammunition is left on the bench.

6. Command: **YOU WILL HAVE 90 SECONDS TO COMPLETE YOUR 10 SHOTS. ARE THE SHOOTERS READY?**

The RSO will the RSO will instruct the shooters that they have ninety (90) seconds to shoot their string of fire and ask the shooters if they are ready. Once all shooters indicate that they are ready...

7. Command: **COMMENCE FIRING**

Shooters in Standard Division must reload on their own during the string of fire. Revolvers must be emptied completely of all spent casings prior to reloading.

8. Command: **CEASE FIRE**

Once all shooters have completed their ten shots OR ninety seconds have expired – whichever comes first – the RSO will call 'CEASE FIRE'. Upon hearing 'CEASE FIRE' or upon completing their string of fire, all shooters will place their firearms on the bench, safeties 'on' (if applicable), and muzzles pointed downrange. **Shooters unable to complete all ten shots within the 90 seconds will not be allowed to continue firing; their targets that are not knocked-down will be counted as 'misses'.**

9. Command: **UNLOAD AND SHOW EMPTY**

The RSO will proceed to each shooter – one-at-a-time – and instruct each to 'UNLOAD AND SHOW EMPTY'. Each shooter will unload their pistol, show the RSO it is empty, place the pistol's safety 'on' (if applicable), and holster the weapon.

10. Command: **RANGE IS COLD. SHOOTERS REMAIN ON THE FIRING LINE.**

The RSO will then call the range 'COLD' and proceed to the target stands to score each shooter. The RSO will confirm each score with the respective shooter.

#### 11. Command: **RESETTERS DOWNRANGE TO RESET TARGETS**

After each shooter is scored, the RSO will instruct the resetters to reset the target stand and return to the firing line.

The cycle is then repeated for all relays until the match is complete.

## **6 Scoring**

Forty (40) shots will be fired at forty (40) targets in four (4) strings of ten (10) shots. Scores are based on the number of fallen targets during each string of fire. A target must **fall** to be counted as a hit. Targets that scoot, wobble, spin, or shift do not count as hits. These targets may be re-engaged by the shooter, but the additional rounds fired count towards their 10-shot total for the string and un-engaged targets will count as 'misses'.

Overall scores will be marked as "XX of 40".

In the event of ties for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place or 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place, the tied shooters will shoot in series of 10-second "one shot" shoot-offs under the direct control of the RSO until a shooter misses. That shooter will be awarded the lower place.

## **7 Notes**

Double-action revolvers may be shot double- or single-action.

Ten - **and only ten** - shots are fired in each string. (Unfired rounds are counted as 'misses'.) Shooters must bring ten - **and only ten** - rounds of ammunition with them to the firing line. The ammunition may be loose or held in **one** magazine or speedloader. Extra magazines or speedloaders are not permitted on the firing line.

Rounds that misfire - and cannot be made to fire within the allotted 90 seconds of the firing string - will be counted as misses. Replacement ammunition is not allowed.

Targets may be engaged in any order.

A shooter may only enter one division/subdivision pairing during each match. This is to prevent shooters from handling firearms while not on the firing line, which is a very important safety concern.

## 8 Revisions

### 8.1 Version 3

- Added range commands to section 5
- Revised rules on loaded mags/speedloaders at start of string of fire.
- Added rules concerning DQs for safety violations to section 4.
- Added rules concerning firearm and ammunition malfunctions to section 4.
- Changed maximum length of a Short Barrel pistol barrel from 4" to less than - **but not equal to** - 5" to allow 4-1/2" and 4-5/8" pistols to compete in this category.