

I've notice over the past seven years of instructing that new shooters have difficulty getting into a "straight behind the rifle position". Getting straight behind the rifle offers a couple of huge benefits. By placing more of your body behind the rifle, recoil management is more readily accomplished. Also, getting straight behind the rifle will help you to eliminate angles between your shoulder and the rifle – helping to eliminate lateral movement (or, bipod hop) of the rifle while firing and allowing you to see your own impacts. Additionally, whether hunting two legged varmit, or on a big game hunt, you'll have reduced your signature.

Getting comfortable behind the rifle begins with a proper rifle set up. Know that precision rifles are by design intended to be fit to the shooter. Setting length of pull, comb height, eye relief, ocular lens, bipod height and other factors should be done first thing when setting up a new rifle.

Once the rifle is set up to the shooter, it's time to discuss getting in



Figure 2: Line rifle up with inside of firing side leg

straight behind the rifle. Start by pointing your rifle in the direction of your target (see (Figure 1). Now take a couple steps back and stand directly above your feet such that one foot is not in front of the other. Move left or right until

the rifle lines up with the inside of your right leg for a right handed shooter (see Figure 2). Now go to your knees, ensuring you do not twist



Figure 1: Pointing rifle at target, look over the scope to the target



Figure 3: Entry to prone



Figure 4: Lay forward, rifle is parallel to spine

and end up with one knee forward of the other (see Fig 3). Lay forward, laying down on your upper legs, hips, stomach and chest (see Fig 4). At this point the rifle should be parallel with your spine and lined up with your right shoulder pocket.

Lift your chest slightly off the ground and address the rifle by lifting the rear of the rifle up and pulling the butt into your shoulder pocket with your firing hand. Secure your sand bag with the left hand and place under the stock (see Figure 5). While keeping the butt securely in your shoulder pocket, relax your body down to the



Figure 5



Figure 6

ground, think of a pancake flattening out. Your elbows will slide slightly to the sides and as you flatten out, your body's mass will naturally "pinch" the rifle between your shoulder and the bipod feet, taking any flex or pliability in the bipod out (see Figure 6). Now look left and right checking to see one elbow has not slid forward more than another. For right handed shooters I typically see the left elbow creep forward. We want to avoid this as it likely introduces an angle between the shoulder and the rifle. Envision the shape of a T, this is the relationship you want between your shoulder line and the rifle (see Fig 7). Now, place your chin on the stock and allow your



Figure 7

head to slide off the left side of the stock until your cheek bone is contacting the comb. If rifle set up was accomplished correctly your eye will be in line with the axis of the scope when your head comes at rest on the comb, you will not need any neck muscles to maintain this position.

At this point, you have mounted the rifle straight and in line with it – your spine is parallel to the bore and your shoulders are square to the bore. From here you'll perform a series of steps which are outside the scope of this

brief article. This includes achieving muscular relaxation, checking natural point of aim, removing parallax and checking the rifle is level.

I want to point out that for the longest time getting as low to the ground as possible has translated to employing bipod legs in their shortest position. You need to set up the bipod legs to your body size, this is just as important as setting other features such as comb height and eye relief, for example. A large bodied individual, carrying extra weight at their stomach will want those bipod legs longer to achieve comfort and facilitate muscular relaxation.

**This brief article is not intended to be comprehensive or replace instruction from a qualified instructor**, but should help get you on the right path to setting up a “straight behind the rifle” prone position. In turn you’ll have better recoil management, enabling you to see your own hits and misses, and sometimes even watch your own trace. Which is pretty cool! If you are planning to attend a course with us, I recommend you get in and out of this position, do as many repetitions as you can comfortably do until it becomes natural and repeatable. It never hurts to set up a video camera so you can self-assess.

At The Marksmanship Training Center, we introduce the fundamentals of marksmanship in our LR1 class. In LR2 every student goes through rifle set up and we deep dive every element of the fundamentals of marksmanship, repeatedly applying them to target analysis. Learn. Practice. Master.

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