

How To Be A Better Range Officer

While this list is not comprehensive, hopefully it will give you a few pointers:

01. Always have an unambiguous, written stage briefing (approved by the RM), and read it out verbatim to each and every squad, even though you might be able to recite it from memory. Also ensure that a copy is posted at the stage entrance, so competitors can read it for themselves. It's also informative for spectators.

02. Never, ever give a stage briefing or issue range commands while holding a cigarette.

03. If a competitor wants to ask you a question about the stage, ask the competitor to wait while you assemble the entire squad and your fellow ROs before you reply. This way, everybody hears the same question and the same answer. If you think the question and answer might influence the conduct, procedure, scoring and/or application of penalties for the stage, summon the Range Master and seek his advice before replying.

04. Be cool. Be very cool. If a competitor has had a bad hair day, he might be aggravated and not as friendly as you would like him to be. However, since you're a shooter too, you've been there and you know the feeling.

05. When a rule issue arises, don't quote rules from memory. Always have a copy of the rulebook with you and look up the answer, then show the competitor the applicable rule. And don't try to wing it - not ever. If you're in doubt, summon the Range Master and seek his advice before replying.

06. If you must DQ a competitor, apologise. Yes, apologise, even though the competitor's actions caused the DQ. You really hate to DQ a competitor and you're just doing your job, but it still makes you miserable to send a guy to the showers.

07. If the competitor is upset about a DQ, stay cool. Calmly give him your reasons and nicely offer to summon a more senior official to assist. The competitor doesn't hate you - he's hates the DQ, and he has every right to make an appeal according to the rules. It's not personal.

08. Be sensitive to your competitor's demeanour. Some people need a bit longer to get into "Zen" mode when they come to the line, while others might be as nervous as hell. Read the signs and react accordingly.

09. Enjoying friendly banter with the squad helps to relax everybody but, when the competitor comes to the line, it's down to business. Recite the range commands verbatim and focus 100% on the competitor on the line.

10. During scoring, if a competitor challenges your call, don't just dismiss him - the difference between an Alpha and a Charlie can mean the difference between 1st and 2nd place. Grab your scoring overlay and take the time to carefully check the challenged hole(s) in the target, but only score what you can actually see. Never give away hits on a "benefit of doubt" basis, as you have more than one competitor to consider.

11. After scoring a competitor, stay downrange and be the last person to return to the start position. This way, you can ensure that the stage is clear before you start the next competitor.

12. Before each match, read the Range Officer's Creed.

Range Officer's Creed

As an IPSC Range Officer, I shall conduct all competitions with the safety of the competitors, spectators and fellow Range Officials first and foremost in my thoughts and actions. I shall always be courteous, while maintaining firm control over my range and areas of responsibility. I will always strive to be totally fair and impartial in my judgments.

1. Safety shall always be my primary goal, with efficiency and speed of the competition as secondary factors.
2. It is a privilege and an honor to serve as a Range Officer and I shall act accordingly.
3. It is my duty to assist all competitors in their attempts to accomplish their goals and not to hinder them by undue harassment and authoritarian behavior.
4. I shall put aside personal prejudices and act as an impartial judge at all times.
5. I shall keep my opinions to myself and shall not be critical of any individual beyond the field of contest.
6. I will thoroughly familiarize myself with all current regulations, match rules and attendant subjects.
7. I will be firm and fair in all judgmental calls made during the course of a stage, and be prepared to state in a clear and concise manner my reasons for such calls to the particular competitor or any Range Official.
8. During the course of a stage, my attention shall be clearly focused on the particular competitor I am assigned to observe, and I shall not permit my attention to be misdirected or lax.
9. Prior to and during a stage, I shall never consume any alcoholic beverage or narcotic. I understand that if I violate this rule, I may be suspended or barred from serving as a Range Official in the future.
10. I shall confer only with my fellow Range Officers and Match Officials concerning the behavior of any competitor and any decisions to be rendered.
11. I shall exercise due consideration for the personal emotions of any competitor, and shall act in a manner so as not to embarrass or disturb the competitor any more than is absolutely necessary.
12. I shall strive to never give even the appearance of wrongdoing.

Debugging A Stage And Being Prepared

I thought it might be useful to post a checklist of the Top 5 subjects an RO should consider when debugging a stage before anyone makes an attempt at shooting it:

1. Safety:

- a. Check every possible angle of fire to ensure that the stage will be safe for each competitor, official and spectator while it's being shot.
- b. Check the range surface for potentially dangerous dips, bumps, rocks, ricochets and other irregularities.
- c. Check all props a competitor might use for support (including doors & ports) are strong and durable enough for the intended purpose and for the duration of the match.
- d. Check that targets are not placed too high whereby shots passing through them will leave the shooting bay.
- e. Ensure there is sufficient room for the RO to monitor safe competitor action without interfering with the competitor.

2. Scoring:

- a. Check every possible angle of fire to ensure there are no shoot-throughs, remembering to consider short and tall competitors.
- b. If there are partial targets on the stage, make sufficient and identical spares in advance to ensure consistency and more efficient replacement.

3. Consistency:

- a. Secure each target stand (and popper) to the range surface.
- b. Mark paper target stands with the precise angle, location and layout of targets (take digital photos if possible).
- c. Make a written note of the sequence and presentation of all Scoring and Penalty Targets (especially overlapping and adjacent ones).
- d. Record the height of "non-standard length" sticks used to hold paper targets, in case they get shot and need to be replaced, and have spares ready.
- e. If there are moving targets, use a stopwatch to record their approximate speed when activated, and check them again prior to each walkthrough demonstration.

4. DQ Traps:

- a. Ensure targets don't encourage a competitor to inadvertently run past them while shooting and therefore break the 90 degree barrier.
- b. With a table start, use a non-slip surface to prevent the gun moving when the competitor reaches for it, and ensure the table itself is securely anchored.
- c. Always use a sturdy chair without arms or other impediments, so that competitors don't get entangled when rising.
- d. It's better to use a rear starting line (i.e. heels against rear) rather than a starting box, to minimise the chance of competitors tripping forwards on the start signal.
- e. For other areas in the COF, use strongly braced barricades rather than charge or fault lines, to further minimise the chance of tripping.

5. Gamer loopholes:

a. Check if there are ways which a gamer might circumvent the intent of the COF, and ensure the written stage briefing is unambiguous, but don't force everyone to shoot the COF in exactly the same way (e.g. allow options).

6. Supplies:

- a. Have spare cable lengths for activators of moving targets, in case they get shot and broken.
- b. If the weather looks doubtful, have plastic covers ready.
- c. Have at least one spare battery for your timer and, if possible, a spare timer.
- d. Have an ample supply of tan, white & black patches for paper targets, plus white & black paint for poppers. Using the wrong colour can be distracting for competitors.

Watch What Needs To Be Watched

I often see the comment "the RO must **always** watch the gun", but it's taken way too far by some who give me the impression they have tunnel-vision. Yes, the RO must watch the gun, but not during every second of the competitor's attempt at the COF.

For example, what do you expect to see looking at the gun when the competitor is standing perfectly still shooting at an array of targets? All I ever see are cases being ejected and smoke. You must change your focus, as required.

1. During loading, reloading, unloading and movement, watch the gun.
2. When the competitor is standing still shooting, look over or around his shoulder and watch the targets.
3. Never watch his feet. If there are charge or fault lines, your assistant RO should be watching (better still, don't use charge or fault lines - use barricades).
4. Never look at the timer until after you issue the "Range Is Clear" command. If you're holding the timer properly, it will pick up the shots but, as you approach the final array, move it closer to the competitor, because the only time that really counts is the one from the last shot.