

The Clay Target:

The first successful "clay" was actually invented here in the United States. The story goes that in 1880, George Ligowski of Cincinnati was watching boys skip clam shells across the water. Being a shooter, Ligowski saw potential in the soaring bivalves and immediately developed a disk made of shells bonded together. Discovering that the flying clam was practically impervious to lead pellets, Ligowski tried a mixture of river silt and tar. It was a smash, literally, and the first clay target was born. [Back to Top](#)

Trap

Trap's origins date to the English live pigeon shoots of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Although shooting pigeons released from "traps" (actually boxes or top hats) grew to be extremely popular with shooters on both sides of the Atlantic, the cost and controversy of using live targets prompted a search for an inanimate substitute.

Inventive shooters tried glass balls full of feathers, tin birds, even exploding targets, until George Ligowsky of Cincinnati made the first "clay pigeon."

As live bird shooting declined, trap shooting as we know it rose in popularity around the turn of the century. Today trap is thriving, as anyone who's attended the huge Grand American Handicap at the ATA's mile-long grounds in Vandalia, Ohio, can attest.

The Game

A round of trap consists of 25 shots, five each from five stations or posts in an arc beginning 16 yards behind the trap house. After five shots at one station, you move to the next station at the puller's command of "walk."

The gun is shouldered, and the target released immediately on the gunner's command of "pull." An oscillating trap throws targets at an unknown angle within an arc of 44 degrees. The target must travel a minimum of 48 yards, no more than 52, and it must rise between 6 and 12 feet 10 yards in front of the house.

Tournament shooters are handicapped according to their average and must compete at varying distances from 16 to 27 yards behind the house.

Trap Tips

New shooters need to know where to hold the gun as they call for their bird. Two-eyed shooters should start with a hold one or two feet above the house. They can look down "through" the barrel and see the target emerge from the trap. One-eyed shooters, on the other hand, will find such a hold blocks their view of the target, and often need to hold right down on the roof.

The standard advice on gun position for the five posts runs as follows: from station one, at the far left, hold above the left corner of the house and at five on the far right, hold over the right corner. At two and four split the difference between the center and the corner. At three, hold a few inches off the center, so you can still see the target emerge.

Another school suggests holding on the middle of the house and down near the roof from all five posts. This hold promotes a faster swing, since you start farther behind the bird. It also puts you in position to shoot the straightaway targets by simply raising the gun.

The advantage of a center hold is that it makes the deceptively difficult gentle angles easy to read and break. Many shooters who hold off the house to anticipate hard angles misread gentle quartering angles as straightaways and shoot behind them, or overswing as they react back towards the middle to cover a straightaway. You'll have to experiment with both methods until you find a hold position that suits you well.

Developing consistent timing is a key to good trap shooting. You need to be quick but deliberate to score well. Sporting shooters I've watched at their first try at trap tend to jump too quickly on their targets. Trap's cardinal sin is moving the muzzle before you've read the target angle. First, track the bird with your eyes, then swing quickly past the target and break it. Don't ride your birds; the farther away they get, the slower they spin and the harder they are to break.

Trap is truly a game of inches. I once saw a video in which All-American Kay Ohye stood at station five, swinging at hard right-angle targets. He'd suspended a ruler next to the gun muzzle and the barrel moved no more than a foot even on the widest angle on the field. Small errors in pointing cost you trap targets, especially on the straightaways.

The old saying "Trap shooters fear the angles and miss the straightaways" rings very true. The angles, which seem to sling sideways out of the trap, frighten and preoccupy trap shooters (although new shooters coming to the game from sporting clays break them confidently).

In reality, once you learn not to be afraid of angles, they're easier than straightaways-- they're closer, look bigger, and it's easy to judge their height. Straightaways, on the other hand, present just a slice of an edge-on look and are frustratingly easy to shoot over or under.

While trap targets are often described as steeply rising, don't jump to the conclusion that you're missing targets underneath. You'll often shoot over the top when you're learning the game. Beginners shoot slowly, and many times don't take their targets until they've topped out or even begun to fall.

Equipment

Can you shoot trap with a sporting gun? Not well enough to win the Grand, maybe, but well enough to enjoy the game. Trap guns are long-barreled-- 30 or 32 inches--just like

most sporting guns these days. A trap gun will probably be heavier in the muzzle than you're used to, but I've seen shooters turn in good scores with 30-inch barreled sporting guns with modified, IM or full tubes screwed in.

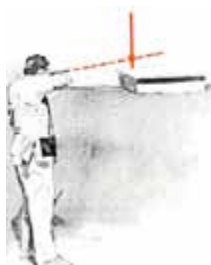
Most trap guns shoot high and many good shooters "float" their birds over the rib. With a lower-shooting gun like most sporting models, you have to blot your targets to break them. You may shoot better if you modify your sporting gun to shoot a little higher. Add some moleskin or a leather lace-on pad to the comb and you'll get the same sight picture a trapshooter sees over a Monte Carlo.

Trapshooters feel recoil more than do skeet or sporting clays shooters, perhaps because the gun is premounted and moved very little, or because shots follow one another in such quick succession. You can cut the kick of your gun significantly by shooting one-ounce loads of 7-1/2s, 8s, or 8-1/2s, which still have plenty of pellets to crush 16-yard targets.

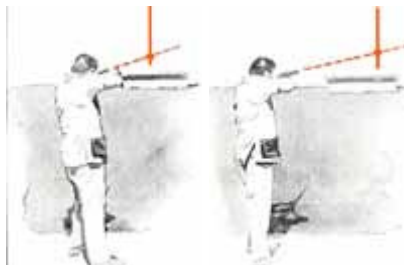
Does trap help your sporting clays? Not so much as skeet, frankly, but it's a good place to work on your long-range, outgoing targets, especially if you try it from your regular low-gun position. Even with a premounted gun, however, trap makes good practice for upland shooters who take their birds going away. [Back to Top](#)



Source: Remington Country



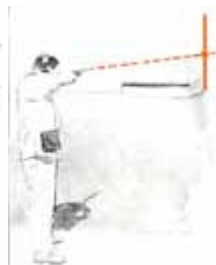
#1
Halfway from middle of trap house and left front corner; 1-1½' high.



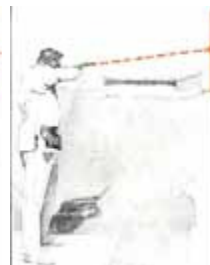
#2
Middle of trap house; 1-1½' high.



#3
Halfway from middle of trap house and right-front corner; 2-2½' high.



#4
Right-front corner of trap house and 2-2½' high.



#5
1-1½' off right-front corner house, and 2-2½' high.

Gunpoints

The gunpoint on each position is a necessary compromise which prepares you for whatever target angle is presented to you. On each position you favor the left angle target with foot and body position; and take a gunpoint that favors the right angle target. This is because a right handed shooter finds it easier to swing to the left from the gunpoint, without any muscle restrictions. Suggested gunpoints for each position are indicated for the five positions in the graphics above.

Foot Position

On each station, your toes should be placed on an imaginary line which would parallel the line of flight of the extreme left angle target from position #5.



Proper gun fit is an *absolute must* for trap. You have about one second, after calling for your target, to identify its angle and break it - which makes trap shooting like rifle shooting with a shotgun. At the distances trap targets are broken, being off a quarter inch in your gunpoint can mean a lost target. So your gun must be pointing exactly where you are looking. To see if your gun fits, close your eyes, raise your gun to your face and shoulder, then open your eyes. If you see the two beads directly in line on your ventilated rib, the gun fits. But if

they are off and you can see some of the rib in between, the gun doesn't fit and you should have a good gunsmith adjust the stock accordingly.

NOTE: "Raise the gun to your face and shoulder." Don't place the gun to your shoulder and then go down on the stock with your face. This causes tension in the neck muscles. Don't "muscle" the gun. Instead, hold it lightly with the fore-end just resting across the palm of your hand. This will enable you to point it smoothly and easily.

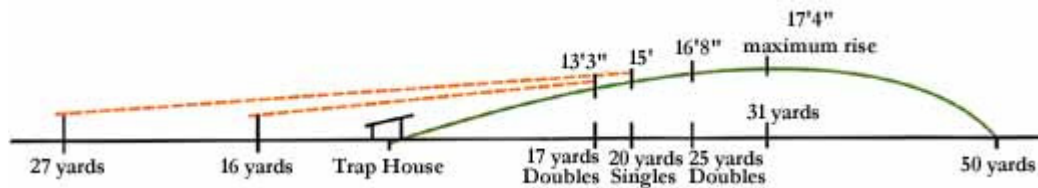


The primary concern of every shooter...even over shooting excellence...must be safe gun handling.

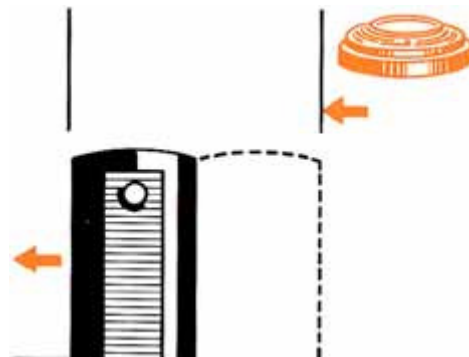
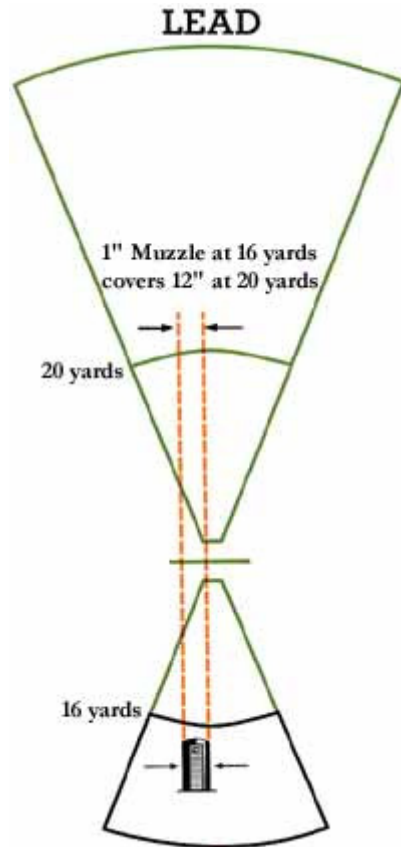
Always keep the action open and the muzzle pointed toward the ground. Never load until you are on your position and ready to call for your target.

Arc Of Target Flight

A profile view of a normal target path shows the distances at which targets are shot in singles, doubles, and handicap. In singles, targets are usually broken about 20 yards from the house, or 36 yards from the shooter. The first doubles target is broken at shorter range, the second about 25 yards out. At handicap, you're a long way from your work.



A 12 gauge gun muzzle is approximately one inch in diameter, and when your gun is mounted, is about 36 inches from your eye. When you are standing on the 16 yard line, and therefore 35 or 36 yards from the average target breaking point, the gun muzzle covers a space of about 12 inches at that distance.



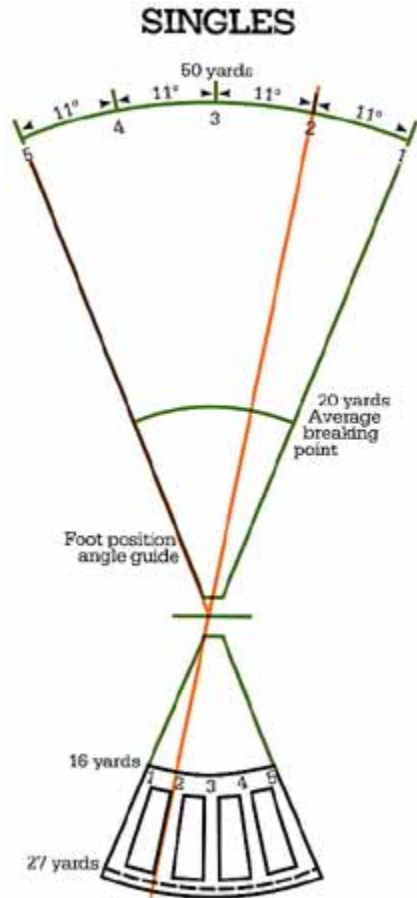
Sight Picture

When a 24 inch lead is called for, your sight picture would be two gun muzzles ahead of the target.

Follow Through

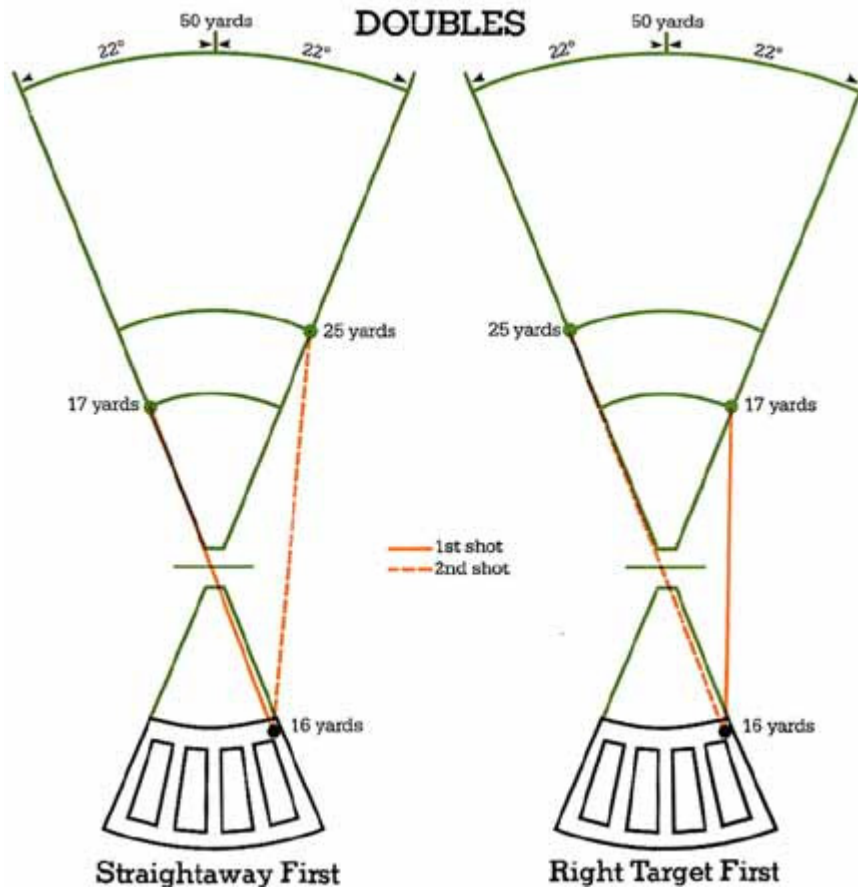
A stopped gun is probably lost target. Keep your swing smooth and follow through after the trigger is pulled on every target.

Shooting Positions and Angles of Flight



The five shooting positions are indicated at the 16 yard line. Handicap yardage extends back to the 27 yard line. Also indicated are the five angles of normal target flight, spaced an equal distance of 11° apart. Flight paths indicate straightaway targets from each shooting position, and are numbered opposite the shooter according to that position. Average breaking point is approximately 20 yards from the trap house, or 36 yards from the shooter standing at the 16 yard line.

Note that the line of flight of the left angle target from position #5 represents the imaginary parallel line on which your toes should be placed for proper alignment on all five positions.

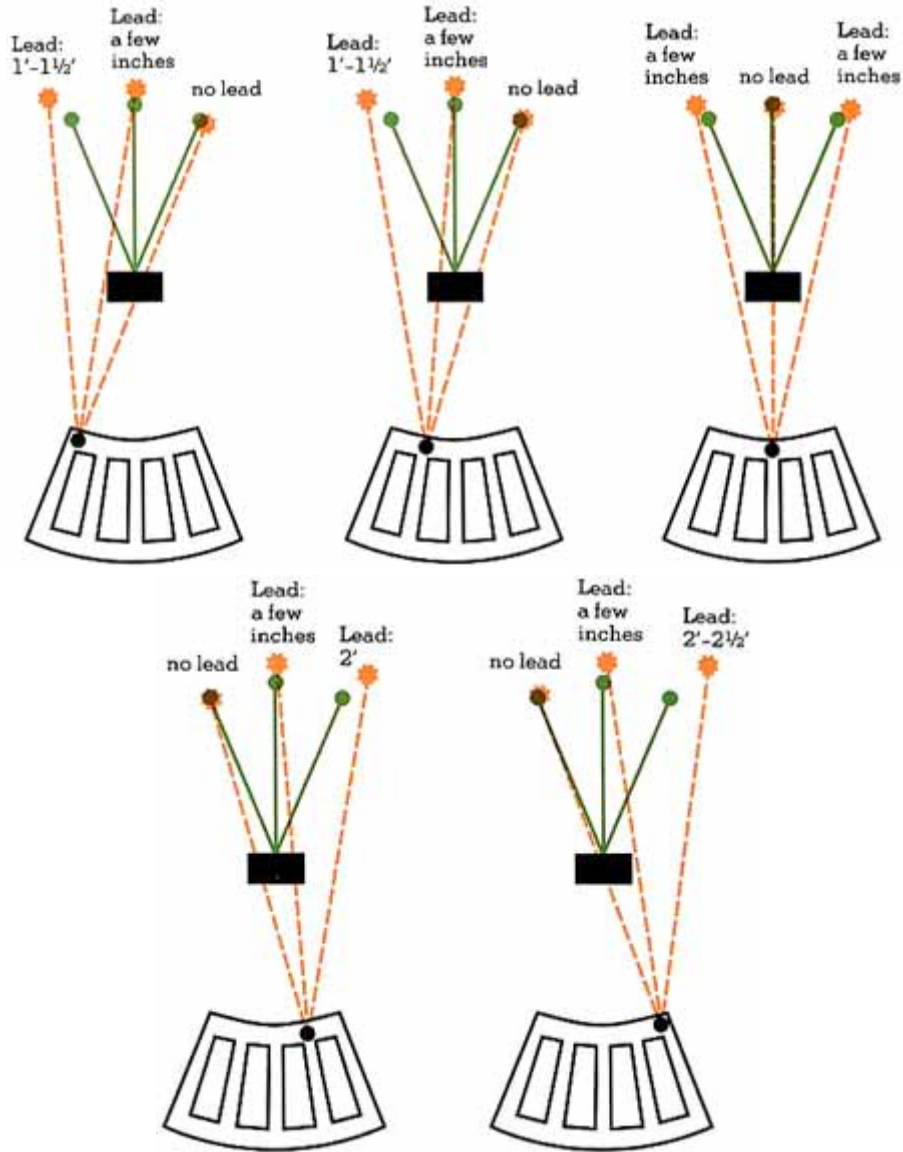


For doubles, the trap is locked to throw known angles, with a right angle straightaway from position #1, and a left angle straightaway from position #5. Each target is 22° right or left of corner.

Plan to take the first target several yards ahead of where you would normally break a single target, since the angle is known, and you can prepare for it. Then, swing to the second target while it is still within effective range. You should break your first target at about 17 yards; the second at 25 yards from the trap house.

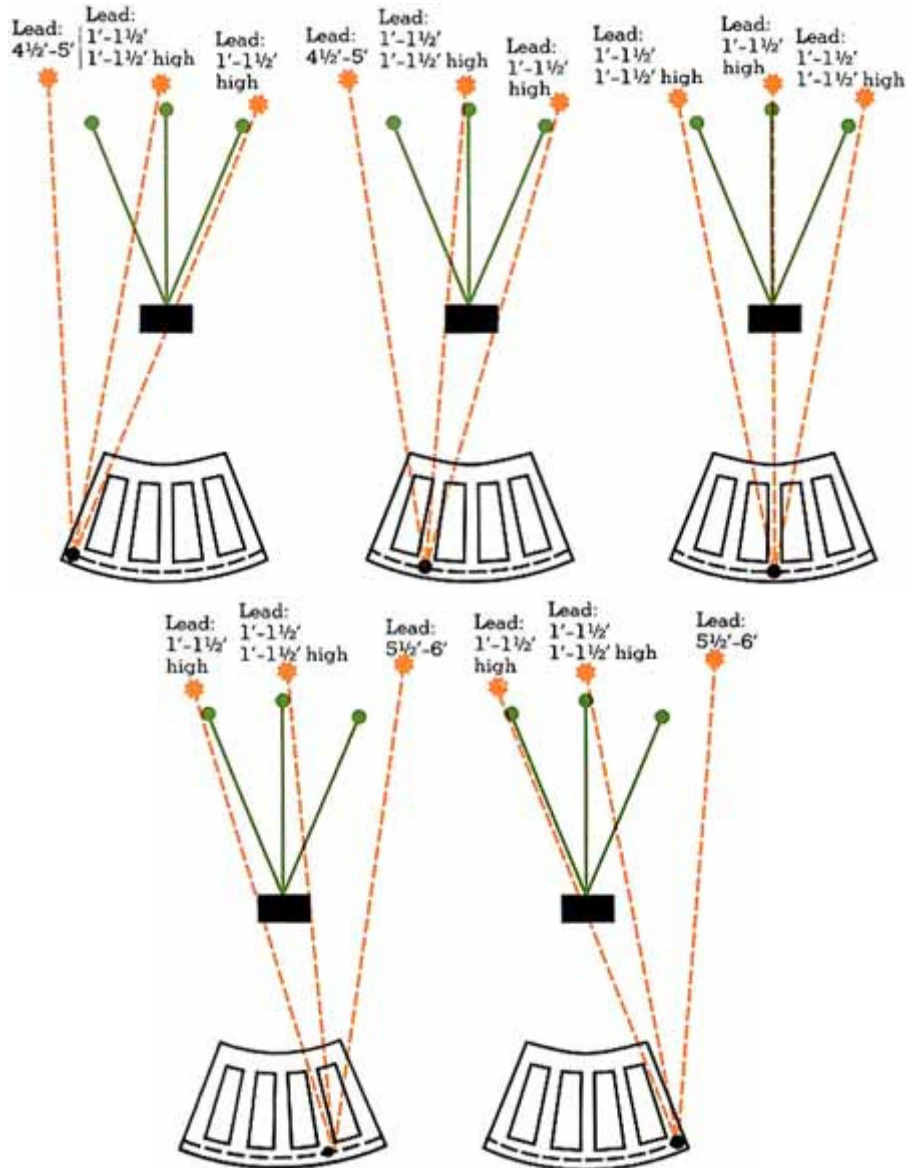
Most trapshooters prefer to shoot the straightaway target first on each position, because it's an easy target to get out of the way. But on positions #4 and #5, this makes for a difficult right-angle second shot. Some shooters continue to shoot all right-angle targets first. Shoot both methods to determine which is best for you.

16-Yard Singles - - - Line of Fire ● Where Gun Points at Instant of Fire
— Path of Target ● Target



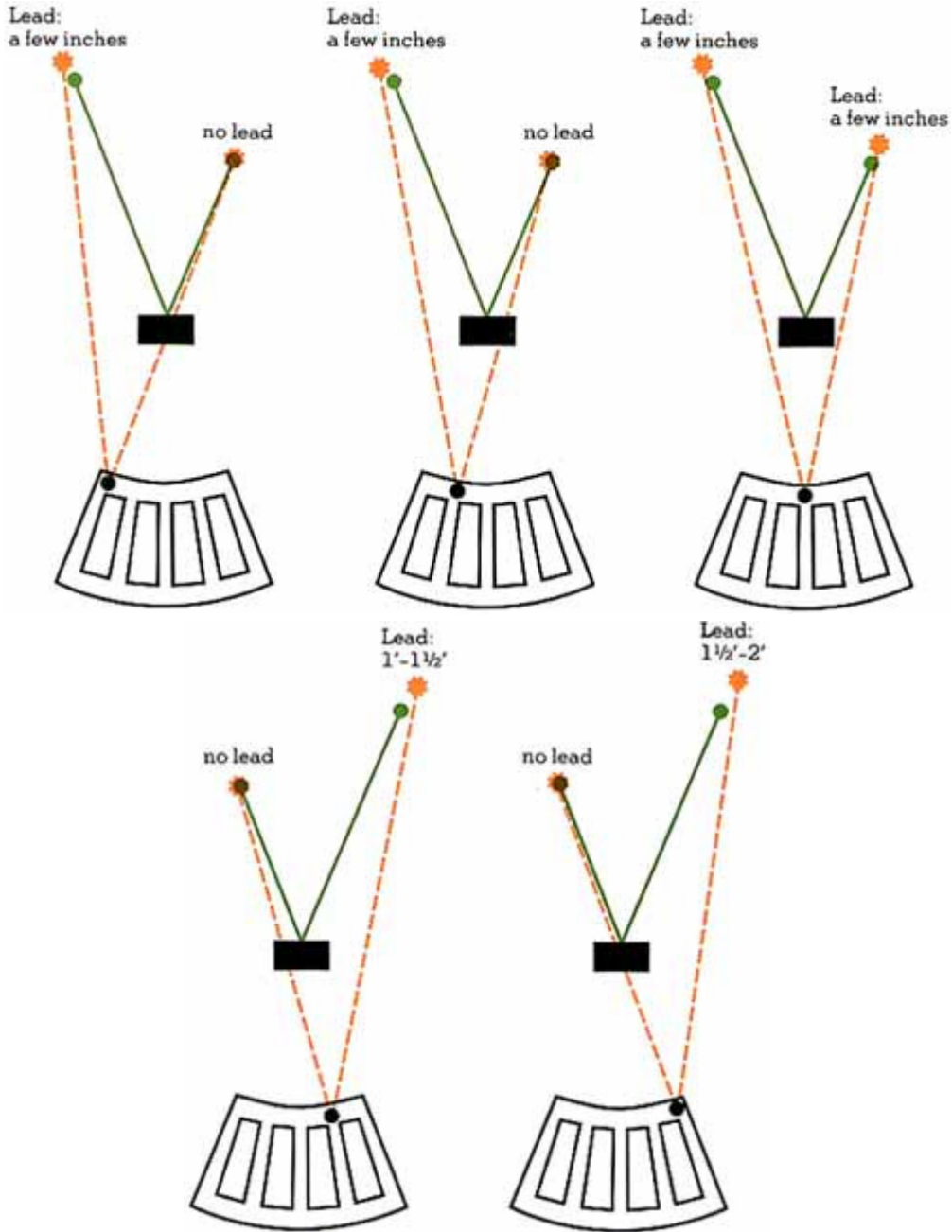
27-Yard Handicap

--- Line of Fire ● Where Gun Points at Instant of Fire
 — Path of Target ● Target

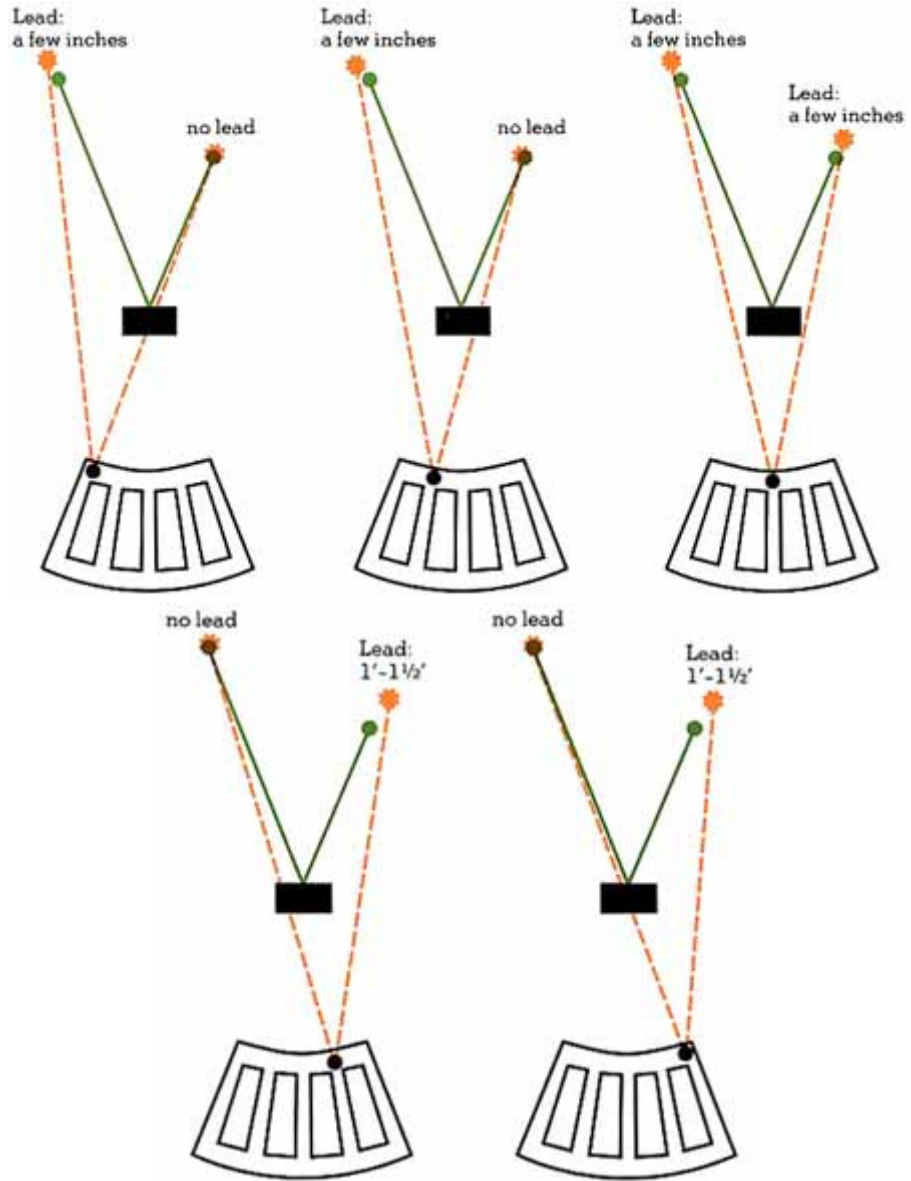


**Doubles:
Straightaway
First**

- Line of Fire
- Path of Target
- Where Gun Points at Instant of Fire
- Target



Doubles: Right — Line of Fire — Where Gun Points at Instant of Fire
Target First — Path of Target — Target



Source: Remington Country