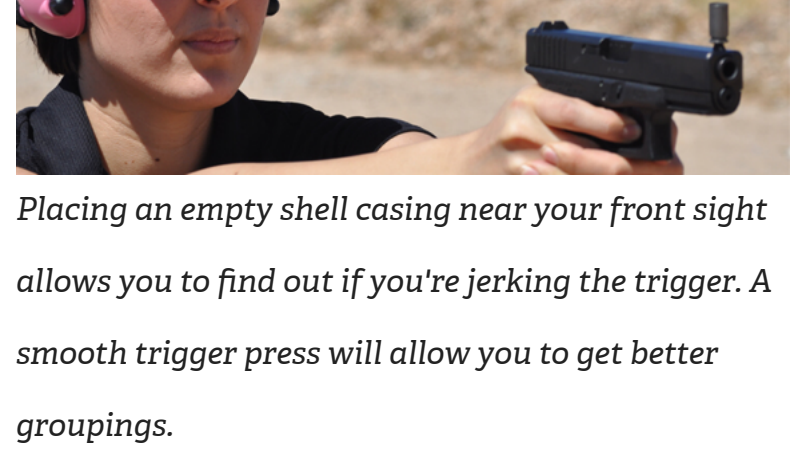
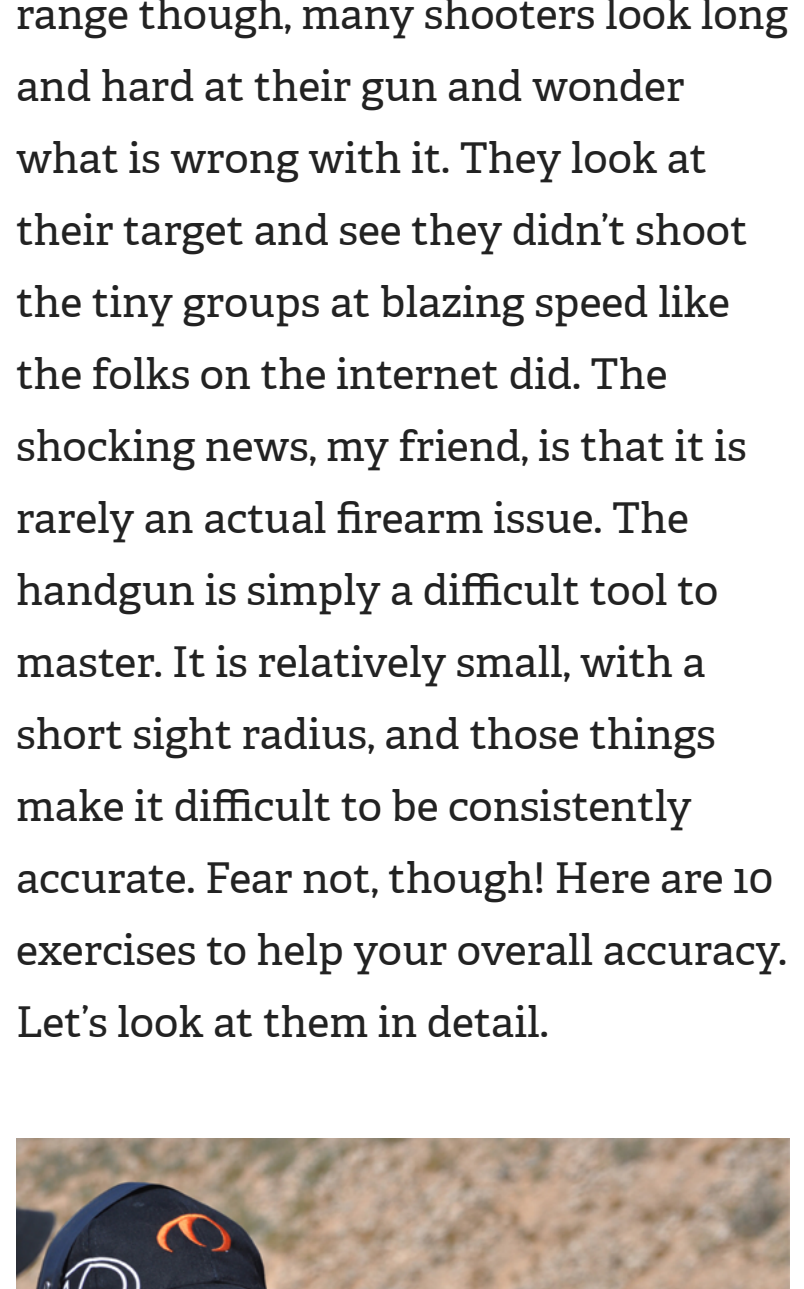
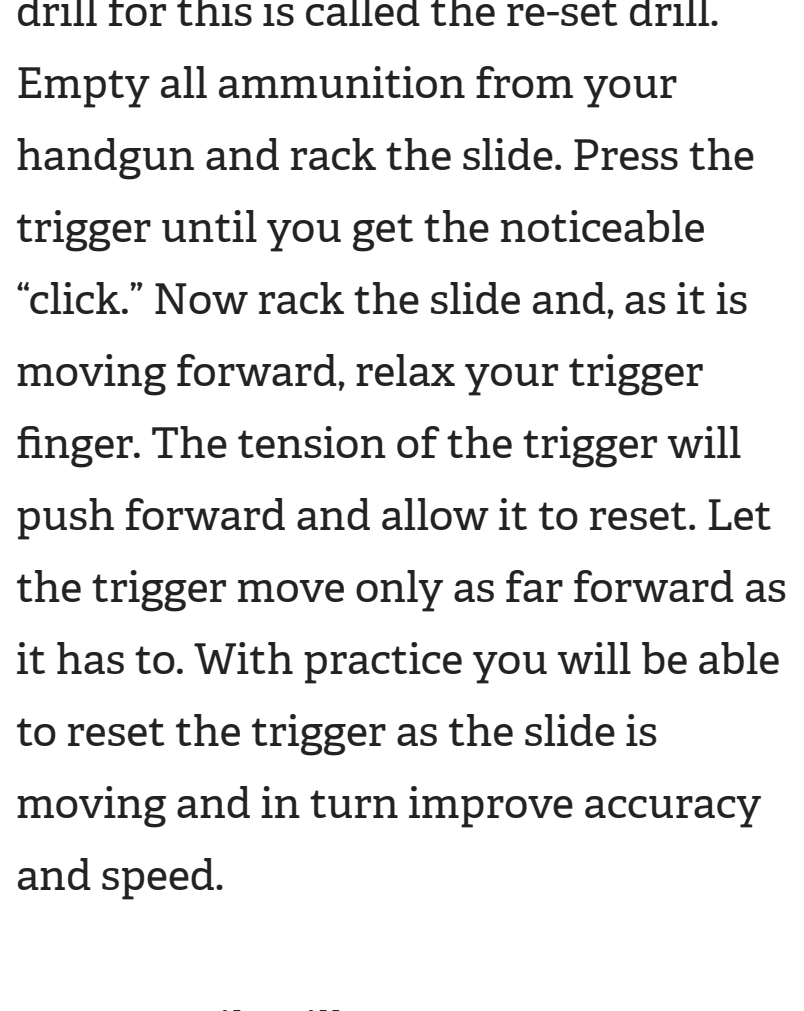


by Fred Mastison - Sunday, May 13, 2018



You've made the decision to enter the world of firearms and purchased your **first handgun**. After the first trip to the range though, many shooters look long and hard at their gun and wonder what is wrong with it. They look at their target and see they didn't shoot the tiny groups at blazing speed like the folks on the internet did. The shocking news, my friend, is that it is rarely an actual firearm issue. The handgun is simply a difficult tool to master. It is relatively small, with a short sight radius, and those things make it difficult to be consistently accurate. Fear not, though! Here are 10 exercises to help your overall accuracy. Let's look at them in detail.



Placing an empty shell casing near your front sight allows you to find out if you're jerking the trigger. A smooth trigger press will allow you to get better groupings.

1. Brass on the Front Sight Drill
This drill focuses on trigger control and I honestly consider it to be one of the best drills of all time. In order to get accurate shots, we must have a very smooth trigger press. First, we unload our handgun and remove the magazine. Rack the slide or cock the hammer. Now balance an **empty cartridge casing** on top of the front sight. Once it is in place, point the gun at a safe backstop and smoothly press the trigger. If done correctly, the front sight will not dip or move and the brass will stay in place. If the brass falls off, you are jerking the trigger and causing movement in the gun. That translates into missed shots. The key to keeping the brass balanced on top of your gun is a smooth continuous trigger press with a clean "break" at the end.

2. Reset Drill
Smooth manipulation of the trigger is one of the biggest challenges to accurate shooting. The more we move the trigger, the higher the chance we will cause unwanted motion in the gun. Once you press the trigger and the gun fires, the trigger will reset as you let off pressure. After the initial press, we only want the trigger to move as far as it has to in order to reset. Do not let it go all the way back out and start all over again. A great drill for this is called the re-set drill. Empty all ammunition from your handgun and rack the slide. Press the trigger until you get the noticeable "click." Now rack the slide and, as it is moving forward, relax your trigger finger. The tension of the trigger will push forward and allow it to reset. Let the trigger move only as far forward as it has to. With practice you will be able to reset the trigger as the slide is moving and in turn improve accuracy and speed.

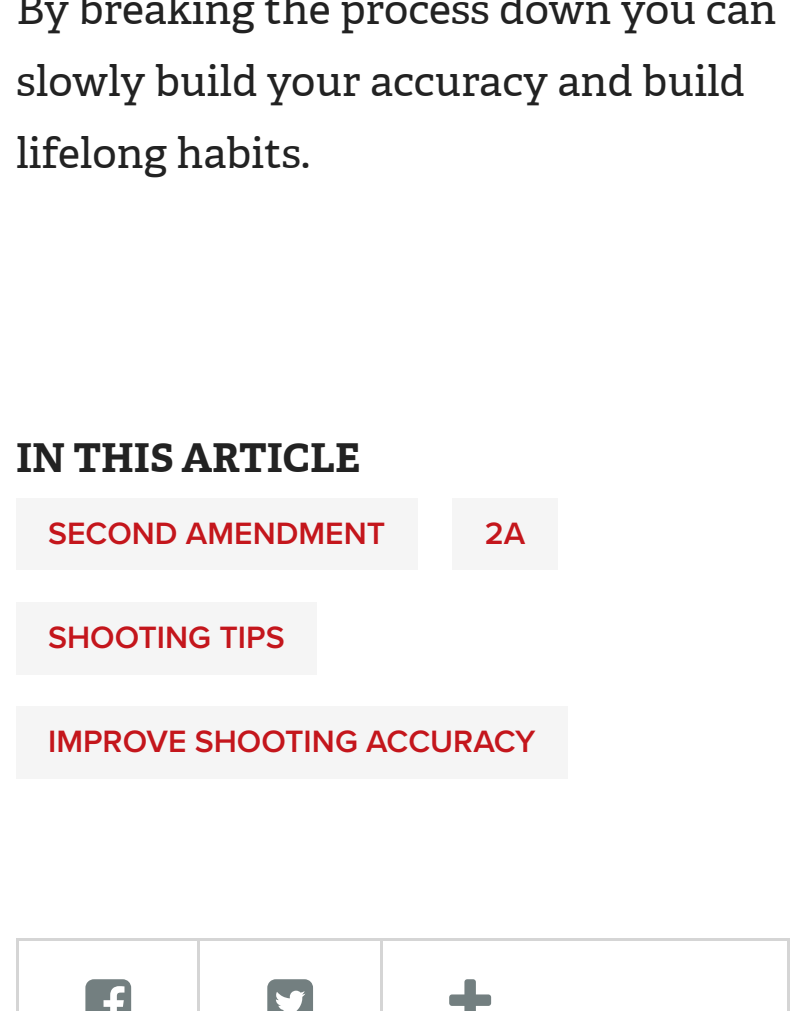
3. Pencil Drill
Another challenge shooters face is pressing the trigger directly to the rear. In many cases I see people pushing their trigger finger out while they simultaneously try to press to the rear. This gives us shots hitting toward the shooter's support side. We need the trigger pressed directly back to get accurate shots. A solid drill for this is to place a pencil on the web of your thumb with the eraser on your trigger finger. Slowly and smoothly press the pencil toward you with the intention of keeping it on the web of the thumb. This drill will not only help you visualize a good press, but it can create strong habits.

4. Ball and Dummy
Another challenge we face is flinch, or anticipating the shot just before it fires. This manifests itself with our muzzle dipping. This drill takes a little pre-range preparation and requires some dummy rounds. Prior to range day, load your magazines and be sure to load dummy rounds in them at random intervals. Do this with multiple magazines. That way, you will have no idea when it will cycle into the gun. The goal is to not have any flinch or muzzle drop when you get the "click" as opposed to a shot. We want to always imagine that that piece of brass we practiced with earlier is on the front sight and we don't want it to fall off. This is a great diagnostic tool as well.

5. Single-Shot Drill
This drill expands a bit on the ball and dummy drill, but it allows us to get a good number of repetitions without much reset. Load one round and remove the magazine, if possible (some semi-automatic handguns have a magazine disconnect that is designed to not allow the gun to fire if a magazine is not in the magazine well). Smoothly press the trigger to get a good shot. With the magazine out, the gun will not go to slide lock and you can practice another trigger press. Settle in for the second shot and smoothly press the trigger. Watch for motion on the front sight and train yourself to keep it steady regardless.

6. Bench Shooting
Many people are not certain exactly what "hold" they need with their sights in order to be precise. Some sight systems are designed for you to place the sights under your intended target while others may require you to cover it. Shooting groups from a bench is a good way to find out where you need to hold. Sit at a bench with your arms resting on a shooting bag. Take your time and fire shots with the intent of managing perfect sight pictures throughout the process. This drill will help you see where your sights need to be aligned in order to hit precise targets.

7. Figure-Eight Drill
So you are pointing at a small target and you swear your sights are moving all over the place. While it is true that your sights are moving, they are not moving nearly as much as you think. The figure 8 drill is an excellent tool to practice two things. First is to understand that the movement we experience does not affect our shots much and that good trigger control can eliminate the down side of this movement. Load your gun and set up at 5 yards pointing in. Take the slack out of the trigger and intentionally move the front sight 6 to 8 inches in a figure eight over the bullseye. Now, as you come across the bullseye, break your shot and reset your trigger to shoot again. You will be stunned at how accurate you can be if you use good trigger control even if you are moving.



With practice and mastery of the basics, you can get to the point where this is the type of grouping you get when you fire one magazine.

8. Ragged-Hole Drill
The ragged-hole drill is another well-known classic drill. From 5 yards, fire five rounds into a single point on your target. Do your best to focus on a small portion of the target. Better yet, get a target that has 1- to 2-inch dots on it as focus points. Take your time and use the exact same point of aim each time. Do not chase your shots or try to make corrections. If you manage your trigger and sights well, you should end up with a single ragged hole. If your shots are spread out, it is a sign that you need to polish up on one or more of the basics.

9. Shrinking Targets
Once you master the ragged-hole drill, we can start to expand those skills a bit. Use a target that has three circles on it, each in diminishing size. Start on the smallest one at 3 yards. Fire five rounds with the goal of all of the shots touching each other. Then move back to 5 yards and repeat on the middle circle. Once complete we move back to 7 yards and shoot another ragged hole on the largest target. This will improve your accuracy skills quickly.

10. Single Shot from Draw
The last drill we do really brings everything together. From 3 yards draw your handgun and fire a single round into a bullseye or similar target. Do this three times with the goal of shooting yet another ragged hole. We then move back to 5 yards and repeat, then 7 yards and repeat. If you are able to shoot a ragged hole from the draw at 7 yards, simply push yourself back further. You can also increase the pace at which you shoot in order to add a little stress to the drill. This is a solid drill to start mixing the fundamentals.

Shooting a handgun can be a challenge. By practicing these drills you can improve individual portions and ultimately bring them all together. By breaking the process down you can slowly build your accuracy and build lifelong habits.

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