

Texas 4-H Shooting Sports Project Shotgun Rules (2014)

This is a synopsis of rules for the shotgun sports. With exceptions, the Texas 4-H Shooting Sports Program uses current ATA, NSSA, NSCA, USAS, and TPWD rules to meet the objectives of the program. Those exceptions may be designed to increase success rates of young people participating in the program or to aid in program management. Those interested in the source rules may obtain them from the primary governing bodies, but in Texas 4-H events, 4-H rules and regulations supersede all other rules where differences exist. All coaches are encouraged to obtain the appropriate rule books and become familiar with their content, particularly if their youth are planning to shoot in other events. This document is not intended to address all of the individual disciplines, but to provide the resources necessary to shooters and coaches, so that they may become familiar with the rules of the formal shotgun sports. Events sponsored by other organizations may invoke other rules and requirements.

1. EQUIPMENT AND GENERAL SAFETY

- 1.1. **Eye Protection** – All shooters and other persons on or in the immediate vicinity of each shooting field, including coaches, range officials, and any spectators must wear adequate eye protection (glasses or goggles). The equipment must protect both eyes. Normal corrective lenses constructed of impact resistant materials may be used.
- 1.2. **Ear Protection** – Adequate ear protection must be worn by all competitors, coaches, range officials, and spectators on the shooting fields during live firing. Both ear plugs and ear muffs are acceptable.
- 1.3. **Guns** – All current 4-H shotgun events permit the use of any shotgun 12 gauge or smaller. There are no limitations on action types. Slide action or semi-automatic shotguns need not have the magazines plugged, but in no case are more than two (2) shells permitted to be loaded in any 4-H competitive shotgun event.
 - 1.3.1. **Release Triggers** – Shotguns equipped with release triggers may not be used in 4-H events.
 - 1.3.2. **Choke Tubes and Variable Choke Devices** – The use of shotguns with interchangeable choke tubes or variable choke devices is permitted.
- 1.4. **Personal Attire** – Participants and spectators are required to dress appropriately. Team uniforms or shirts are encouraged, but not required. Both young people and adults should wear attire appropriate for the weather while remaining modest and socially acceptable. Shooters must wear shirts with sleeves. Where eye and/or ear protection is required, fully enclosed shoes must be worn for safety reasons for both shooters and spectators. This includes in front of the firing line when checking targets and/or score sheets. Clothing deemed immodest or distracting to other shooters will not be permitted. For all walking Archery and Hunting events, long pants must be worn by the shooter, for safety reasons in the brush. All shooters and coaches should remember that they may be having photographs taken or be asked to interview for the media. Remember you represent all of 4-H Shooting Sports. Make it a positive image!
 - 1.4.1. **Inappropriate Dress** – Inappropriate dress will be grounds for a warning, requirement to change, or disqualification.

- 1.5. **Compensated and Ported Barrels** – Shotguns with compensators, ported barrels, or similar devices are permitted in 4-H shotgun matches.
- 1.6. **Ammunition** – Unfired ammunition may not exceed the standard 2-3/4 inch length. Ammunition is subject to inspection by the referee or shoot management. Hand loaded ammunition is permitted, but it must be inspected, and meet all requirements for its use. Those requirements include use of standard procedures by or under the immediate supervision of someone who has completed the NRA/NRMA/4-H reloading course. All reloaded ammunition must be boxed, labeled with proper load descriptions, and accompanied by a photo copy of the source of the reloading data. Like all other ammunition, hand loaded ammunition is subject to random destructive testing at the prerogative of the shoot management to determine that the loads comply with the standards.
- 1.7. **Physically Handicapped Shooters** – Physically handicapped shooters may petition to have either temporary or permanent adjustments in the rules to permit them to compete. Medical evidence is required and each situation is considered individually. Our objective is to permit anyone to participate whenever possible.
- 1.8. **Electronic Devices** – Electronic devices, other than those specifically designed for hearing protection only, are forbidden on the shooting field forward of the safe line except by shoot personnel. This includes, but is not limited to radios, CD players, mp3's, walkie-talkies, and cell phones.
- 1.9. **Muzzle Control** – Each shooter is responsible for proper muzzle control on the range at all times. No firearm may be pointed toward any person, live animal, or portion of the shooter's own person while on or in the vicinity of the ranges. All actions must be open and firearms empty until on the shooting station and in immediate preparation for the shot.
 - 1.9.1. **Resting Muzzle on Foot** – Resting the muzzle on the foot or any other portion of the anatomy is strictly forbidden, as is resting any part of the body on the muzzle of the firearm.
 - 1.9.2. **Penalties** –
 - 1.9.2.1. **Warning** – Any shooter violating this rule for the first time in any round shall be warned by the field referee.
 - 1.9.2.2. **Disqualification** – Flagrant violation of this rule or repeated violations after a warning has been issued may result in disqualification from the current round of targets and forfeiture of any targets remaining. Repeated multiple violations in later rounds will be grounds for forfeiture of all remaining targets in the event, competition, or match and referral to the match jury for additional sanctions.
- 1.10. **General** – Any device, equipment, or apparel which is not specifically mentioned and may be of questionable status must be submitted to the shoot management for approval prior to its being used in the match.

2. RANGE OPERATION, DEFINITIONS, AND REGULATION

- 2.1. **Handling Guns** – All shotguns, even when empty, must be handled with the greatest of care. All shotguns must be pointed in a safe direction, empty, and with the actions open except while on the shooting stations. Shooters must keep the muzzles pointed in a safe direction at all times – down range, up or at the ground. In no event should a shotgun be pointed toward the gallery or any other individual.
- 2.2. **Loading** – Shotguns may be loaded only when the competitor is on or in the shooting station facing the shooting area with the shotgun pointed downrange.
- 2.3. **Cease Fire** – Any command to cease firing requires that all firing cease immediately and that all chambers and magazines be emptied of all ammunition until firing is permitted to resume.

- 2.4. Changing Guns** – Shotguns may be changed between stations on the same round only if they are malfunctioning or disabled. In that case the referee may permit replacement of the malfunctioning parts or the entire gun. (For more information refer to malfunction rules for each discipline)
- 2.5. Regular Target** – A regular target is one that complies with the rules of the event and is released according to those rules on the call of the competitor.
- 2.6. Irregular Target** – A target that deviates from the specifications of a regular target for the event as determined by the referee. The referee only has the right to determine whether a target is irregular.
- 2.7. Broken Target** – A broken target is any target that is not whole. Results of shots at broken targets shall not be scored, and the shot will be repeated.
- 2.8. Shooting Order** – In all Trap, Skeet, and 5-Stand events the shooting order is determined by the order listed on the official score card. In sporting clays, either the shoot management or the shooters may determine a different order for each field, making sure that the referee is notified of any changes.
- 2.9. Ammunition Malfunctions** – Any failure to fire when the primer has been fairly struck by the firing pin. Shooter error may not be deemed an ammunition malfunction. Ammunition malfunctions are handled differently in each discipline. Please consult discipline rules for more specifics.
- 2.10. Procedures for a Misfire** – The shooter experiencing a misfire shall keep their finger on the trigger with the muzzle pointed downrange until the referee has determined whether a shooter error, firearm malfunction, or ammo malfunction has occurred. Referee decisions on faulty ammunition are final.
- 2.11. Disabled Firearm** – Any firearm which cannot be fired safely, which doubles automatically, which fails to ignite the powder charge, or fails to eject the spent cartridge due to mechanical defect or damage shall be declared disabled and may be repaired or replaced.
- 2.12. Dead Target** – A target is scored as dead (hit or broken) when at least one visible piece is broken from the target within the shooting boundaries. Dust is not considered a visible piece.
- 2.13. Lost Target** – A target is scored as lost when:
- 2.13.1.** It is not hit during its flight or is hit outside the shooting boundaries.
 - 2.13.2.** A target is dusted, but no visible piece falls from it.
 - 2.13.3.** The shooter balks, failing to fire at a regular target for which he or she has called for.
 - 2.13.4.** The shooter was unable to fire due to shooter error (safety not released, action not closed properly, firearm improperly operated, failure to load).
 - 2.13.5.** If the shooter opens the firearm or touches the safety mechanism prior to inspection by the referee after a firearm or ammo malfunctions.
 - 2.13.6.** If an excessive malfunction occurs.
 - 2.13.7.** Targets are fired upon out of order.
 - 2.13.8.** The shooter's position or gun position is in violation of the rules after having been warned of the rule violation.
 - 2.13.9.** The shot is not fired for any reason attributable to the shooter.
- 2.14. No Bird or No Target** – Targets may be declared “no bird” or “no target” only by the referee. Handling of repeat targets is outlined in discipline specific rules. A target declared as a “no bird” or “no target” by the referee must be repeated regardless of the actions of the shooter or the results of any shot at the target.
- 2.15. Interference** – Interference is defined by the referee on the field and it entails any loud or disturbing noise, including conversation as well as distracting conditions related to field maintenance, persons, wildlife, wind-blown objects, or any other condition deemed distracting by the referee. No claim of interference can be made if

the shooter accepts the target(s) by firing at it (them). Sun angle does not constitute interference.

- 2.16. Shoot-Offs** – Shoot-off procedures for individual disciplines are unique to the discipline and in some cases there are various options to select from. Shoot management should publish shoot-off/tie breaker procedures prior to the shoot. Although there are procedures published, shoot management shall be allowed to modify these procedures for logistical purposes in order to conclude the event in a timely manner.

3. DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC RULES AND RESOURCES

- 3.1. Order of Application** – As noted earlier in this document, the Texas 4-H Shooting Sports Program uses current rules from each of the National Governing Bodies, with certain exceptions. In all cases, where there are differences, 4-H rules and regulations supersede all other rules.

- 3.2. National Governing Bodies** – The National Governing Bodies (NGB) for the shotgun events in 4-H Shooting Sports are as follows:

- 3.2.1. International Skeet – USA Shooting (USAS)** <http://www.usashooting.org/>
- 3.2.2. Bunker or Modified Trap – USA Shooting (USAS)**
- 3.2.3. American Skeet – National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA)**
<http://www.mynssa.org/>
- 3.2.4. American Trap – Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA)**
<http://www.shootata.com/>
- 3.2.5. 5-Stand Sporting – National Sporting Clays Association (NSCA)**
<http://www.mynsca.com/>
- 3.2.6. Sporting Clays – National Sporting Clays Association (NSCA)**
- 3.2.7. TPWD Whiz Bang – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**
<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/outdoor-learning/hunter-education/shooting-sports-opportunities/sporting-clays-schedule>

3.3. Exceptions to National Governing Body Rules

3.3.1. International Skeet

- **Permanent Marker** – Having a permanent ready position marker line on the vest is not mandatory in 4-H events but is encouraged. However, at the State Games, a visible line on the shooters outer garment must be displayed. If you do not have a line on your outer garment, you must report to a check station at the range and a temporary line of tape, chalk, or some other material will be applied before you are allowed to shoot.

3.3.2. Bunker or Modified Trap

- **Moving Between Stations** – Although it is allowed in USAS events, all ammunition must be completely removed from the firearm.

3.3.3. American Skeet

- **No exceptions at this time.**

3.3.4. American Trap

- **No exceptions at this time.**

3.3.5. 5-Stand Sporting

- **TPWD Whiz Bang** – A club may, at their own discretion, elect to shoot the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's Whiz Bang format instead of NSCA 5-Stand. The primary differences being a single round of 25 pairs (50 targets) instead of two 25 target rounds, the shooter in the station #1 starts after each rotation, and that a low gun mount is required. The low gun mount in this event is defined as calling for the target with the heel of the butt stock below the armpit.

3.3.6. Sporting Clays

- **No exceptions at this time.**

6. RANGE CONTROL

- 6.1. Code of Conduct** – The current 4-H code of conduct will be enforced both on and off the fields during all 4-H shooting events and activities. Voluntary compliance is expected, and coaches or parents are responsible for the behavior of their team members. Shooters, volunteers, family members, or observers may be expelled from the event, match, or the grounds for failure to comply.
- 6.2. Caps or Hats** – Caps or hats are encouraged both as safety devices and to shade the eyes. Since the bill of the cap or visor is designed to provide some level of protection from target chips coming from a higher level, they are considered safety equipment. Thus caps may be worn backwards only when specific reasons appropriate to the shooting situation prevail, e.g. where targets emerge from behind the shooter.
- 6.3. Clothing Appropriate to Conditions** – While 4-H shooting events allow for considerable individual choice in their selection of clothing, we do not wish to become fashion police. The official dress code is listed in Section 1.4 above. Shoot management has the right to ask shooters, volunteers, and parents to change or withdraw from the match if their apparel is deemed unsuitable.
- 6.4. Appropriateness of logos, imprints, or messages** – Any messages, images and advertisements on clothing must comply with the image of 4-H and the 4-H Shooting Sports Program. Clothing advertising or promoting the use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products, or presenting lewd, suggestive, or crude images or language is prohibited. Remember that the image you project covers the program! This rule applies both on and off the fields. Violators will be warned and asked to change to appropriate garb. Failure to do so may result in sanctions up to forfeiture of all remaining rounds and dismissal from the grounds.
- 6.5. Discipline** – The safety of all persons in the vicinity of the range requires continuous attention to the highest standards of safe firearms handling and strict self-control. Self-discipline is the key to proper range behavior and safety. Where self-discipline is inadequate, it is the responsibility of all range personnel, coaches, parents, or any other individual to enforce discipline on and off the fields. Deliberate and/or repetitious breakdowns in discipline will incur sanctions and referral for additional disciplinary actions.
- 6.5.1. Disorderly Conduct** – Disorderly conduct, including the use of controlled substances, is strictly prohibited on the range or in the gallery during matches. Anyone failing to comply with this rule may be expelled from the event, match, or grounds by the match director, referee, or Extension personnel. Such expulsion shall be referred in writing to the State Shooting Sports Coordinator for appropriate action.
- 6.5.2. Refusal to Obey** – No person shall refuse to obey the duly executed orders or instructions of any range official or match management personnel given in conduct of their official duties.
- 6.5.3. Vandalism** – Any form of vandalism, creation of nuisance situations, damage to facilities, or destruction of on site facilities or equipment will be met with severe sanctions. This includes creating messes in the bathrooms, littering, or similar actions that may be considered minor by some. They will not be treated as minor if they create extra work for the site staff or inconvenience for either site or shoot management. **REMEMBER – YOU are the program!**
- 6.6. Loud, foul, or abusive language** – The use of loud, foul, or abusive language on or near the shooting field is not permitted in 4-H events. The first instance of such behavior may result in a warning. Repeated or severe instances will be referred to the shoot management or shooting sports coordinator and may result in a forfeit of all entry fees and expulsion from the event or match.
- 6.7. Alcohol Use** – The consumption of alcohol beverages by participants, coaches or observers during any 4-H Shooting Sports event is strictly forbidden. Violators of this rule will be asked to leave the grounds. Failure to comply will result in expulsion from the

event with additional referral to the event management committee for additional sanctions of the individual or individuals involved.

- 6.8. Delaying a match-** No shooter may delay a match or event through willful tardiness or excessive delay in preparing to fire.
- 6.9. Firing and test firing-** Shots may be fired only when it is the shooter's turn to fire in an event, the range is safe, the shooter is on station and the targets have been thrown. Test firing may be done only at the beginning of a round (two shots maximum) ONLY if permitted by the referee. All test shots must be fired into the air and down range.
- 6.10. Sighting –** Sighting is permitted only in the shooting station or in a designated safe area. Sighting or shooting at another competitor's target or at any live animal is strictly forbidden. This rule is mentioned only in the context of safety, and is not meant to override discipline specific rules as to sighting procedures. Certain disciplines may have more restrictive rules as to sighting procedures. (Consult NGB Rules for specifics)
- 6.11. Open and empty requirement-** The shooter may not turn from or leave the shooting station until he or she has opened the action and removed all ammunition from the firearm. Actions will be opened and ammunition removed during any stoppage of fire. All firearms being carried to or from the fields will be open and empty.
- 6.12. Pointed in a safe direction-** All firearms will be pointed in a safe direction at all times, including loading, facing away from traps being cleared and turning between shots on skeet station 8.
- 6.13. Racked or cased firearms-** Firearms not in transport to the fields or in active use shall be racked, cased or otherwise safely stored.
- 6.14. Loading and closing trap guns-** Trap shooters may insert a cartridge into an open firearm after firing at a target. They may not close the shotgun until the shooter ahead of them in the rotation has fired at a regular target. The shotgun may NOT be loaded when changing stations.
- 6.15. Misfires or malfunctions-** Shooters must remain on the station with the shotgun pointed downrange after any misfire or malfunction. They must not touch the safety or manipulate the action until the firearm is inspected by the referee.
- 6.16. Interruption-** Shooters may not cause an interruption in shooting other than those permitted in the rules. In the international events, conversation shall be limited to that necessary for the conduct of the shooting. American event and sporting clays shooters may converse or encourage others as long as that conversation and encouragement does not interfere with the other shooters.

7. SHOOTER AND COACH RESPONSIBILITY

- 7.1. In all circumstances, shooters, parents and coaches are responsible for their actions and for upholding the standards of the Texas 4-H Shooting Sports Program. All of us are expected to behave in a manner suitable for the promotion of a 4-H Youth Development Program, and the promotion of shooting sports in the United States. Cooperation, self-control, self discipline and high standards of sportsmanship are expected at all times.**

8. SCORING

- 8.1. Scoring on the field-** The official score is kept by the referee on the field. Flanker referees may be employed to score or to settle disputes over scoring that may arise. The decision made on the field is final and may not be appealed after the score sheet has been delivered to the statistical office by the squad leader. Score sheets by parents or coaches are unofficial and will not be used under any circumstances to verify scores kept on the field.
- 8.2. Signing the score sheet-** After each round of 25 targets is completed; each competitor should verify their score and sign or initial the score sheet. All score sheets will be **returned to the statistical office by the squad leader immediately** upon

completion of the course of fire and verification of the scores. Shoot management may elect to have officials handle this task in order to expedite data entry and other logistical reasons.

- 8.3. Correction of Errors-** Signing an erroneous score sheet does not validate the improper score. Scoring staff will verify and correct errors in scoring or addition. Those corrected scores are official.

9. PROTESTS

- 9.1. Field protests or appeal-** If a shooter disagrees with a call on any target they may appeal by raising an arm and saying "appeal." The referee will immediately suspend shooting temporarily and consult with flanker referees or other officials on the field. The referee may, at his option, poll the squad. He is not necessarily required to accept the results of this poll, however. After consultation, the referee will make the final decision. The decision of the referee on the field is final and questions of hit, missed or irregular targets may not be appealed further.

- 9.2. Formal protests-** A shooter may formally protest:

9.2.1. Any injustice he or she feels has been done to them (except as noted in 8.1 above)

9.2.2. The conditions under which another shooter was permitted to fire

9.2.3. The equipment that another shooter was permitted to use

- 9.3. Protest Committee-** In 4-H events, the shoot management shall have the authority to name a protest committee of knowledgeable persons. Suggested composition includes the state shooting sports coordinator (and/or the shoot manager), the chief referee for the event and two to three persons named by the shoot manager or shooting sports coordinator. This committee will review all sides of the protest and rule on it, either sustaining it or denying it. The decision of the committee is final and not subject to further appeal or protest.

- 9.4. Protest procedure-** The purpose of formal protests is to redress injustice, not to alter the results of the competition on the field. Protests should be initiated immediately, and no protest will be considered after the awards ceremony for that event has been initiated. A formal protest may be initiated by the shooter **only**. Parents or coaches may not initiate a protest or participate in writing a protest statement. The formal protest procedure follows:

- a. State the complaint orally to the field referee, if not satisfied by the decision then;
- b. State the complaint orally to the chief referee, if not satisfied by the decision then;
- c. File a written protest with the chief referee within one hour after completion of the recorded rounds in question.

1. **Protest fee-** A protest fee of \$25.00 must accompany any formal or written protest. If the protest is sustained, the fee will be returned. If it is denied, the fee will be retained by the shoot management and placed in the general fund of the 4-H Shooting Sports Program.

2. **Protest committee action-** The protest committee will act on the formal, written protest in an expeditious manner to reach resolution as quickly as possible. Failure of the protest initiator to appear when requested by the committee is justification for summary dismissal of the protest unless the content is clear without such appearance. Excessive, adversarial or abusive argument by any person involved may be treated similarly. Committee actions will be announced in private prior to the event awards ceremony.