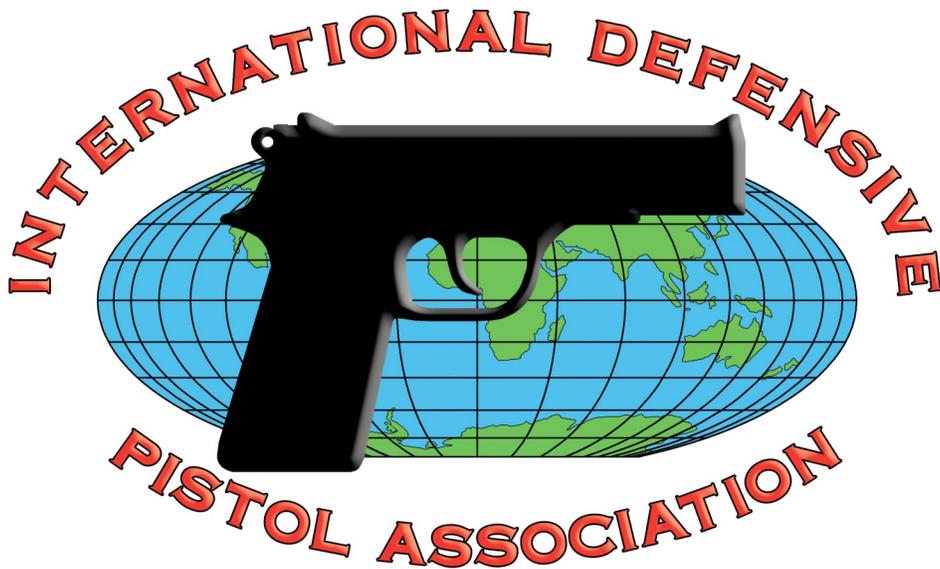


# **IDPA New Shooter Information Packet**



**April 2018**

# Welcome to IDPA Competition!

IDPA shooting is a fun and safe way to learn defensive pistol skills and sharpen your gun handling and shooting abilities. IDPA's safety rules are easy to learn and follow. Please read this material to familiarize yourself before your range safety orientation and test.

## Safety Rules

- 1) **Assume all guns are always loaded.**
- 2) **Never let your muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.**
- 3) **Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.**
- 4) **Know your target and what is behind it.**

If these simple rules are always followed, most firearms accidents will never happen. Pay considerable attention to rules 2 and 3. When shooting IDPA your finger should never be inside of the trigger guard until you are on target and ready to shoot. Always get your finger out of the trigger guard before moving. Always be aware of your muzzle's direction and keep it safely downrange. Muzzle Safe Points are the limits that a shooter's muzzle can travel without being unsafe. Be sure to know where these limits are and always keep within them. Certain IDPA courses of fire may test your skills of keeping the muzzle in a safe direction. Be mindful of your muzzle and trigger finger and you will always shoot safely.

**Note that IDPA competitions always take place on "cold" ranges, so your gun will never be loaded until you are told to load by a Safety Officer.** You may handle your ammunition and load your magazines at any time and any place **except in designated Safety Areas**, but the gun itself must always remain unloaded unless instructed otherwise.

## Concealment

A concealment garment is required for all stages unless otherwise stipulated in the stage description. This includes standards and limited stages. You may use any garment (jacket, vest, shirt, etc.) as long as it completely hides the firearm, holster, ammunition carriers and loading devices from view when your arms are stretched out to the side parallel to the ground.

## Range Commands

It is important to learn the IDPA range commands and the proper response.

**"Range is hot – eyes and ears."** This is the first command. It signifies the start of the Course of Fire. Everyone on the stage should ensure they are wearing their eye and ear protection.

**"Load and Make Ready" (or "Make Ready" for unloaded starts):** This is the command to load your gun and get ready to shoot. It is covered fully in the next section.

**“Are you Ready?”** The Safety Officer is asking if you are ready to execute the Course of Fire. If you are not ready just say “not ready.” If you are ready you can nod your head or respond verbally but you don’t need to say anything; you can just wait for the next command.

**“Standby:”** This command is given after the shooter is ready and will be followed by the start signal in one to four seconds. The shooter may not move or change positions between the “standby” and the start signal unless required by the course of fire. The start signal is usually a “beep” from the electronic shot timer.

**“Finger:”** You will hear this if your finger is in the trigger guard when it shouldn’t be. Fingers must be obviously and visibly outside the trigger guard during loading, unloading, drawing, holstering, while moving (unless engaging targets) and during malfunction clearance. A first offense will result in a 3 second procedural penalty. A second offense will earn a match disqualification.

**“Muzzle:”** If you hear this, immediately check yourself as your muzzle is getting near a muzzle safe point, but continue with the course of fire. Do not take muzzle safe points lightly.

**“Stop:”** This command is given if something unsafe has happened or is about to happen. Upon hearing this, the shooter is to immediately stop shooting and/or moving, point the muzzle in a safe direction, keep the finger outside the trigger guard and await further range commands.

**“If Finished, Unload and Show Clear:”** This is the command to unload your gun at the end of the stage. This will be explained in great detail in a later section. Note that this occurs “off the clock,” so a new shooter is encouraged to go slowly and carefully during this process.

**“If Clear, Slide Forward (or Close Cylinder)”** Once the SO has inspected the chamber (or cylinder) and found it to be clear this command will be issued and the shooter will comply.

**“Pull the Trigger:”** The shooter will point the firearm down range at a safe berm and pull the trigger. This procedure is followed for all firearms except revolvers. De-cockers must not be used. If the firearm has a magazine disconnect an empty or dummy magazine must be used before the trigger can be pulled. It must be removed immediately after pulling the trigger.

**“Holster:”** The shooter will safely holster the firearm.

**“Range is Clear:”** This is the command that ends the Course of Fire and begins the scoring and resetting of the stage.

The three most important commands to know and be able to recognize are **Muzzle, Finger, Stop**. You must be able to respond to these commands as soon as they are heard.

## **Penalties**

For the most part, a new shooter who shoots carefully and deliberately will avoid most penalties. Penalties are given out for various rule infractions, but in IDPA penalties are used only when truly necessary. Safety Officers are here to help you have a fun and safe time, not to nit-pick.

***Procedural Error (PE)***: Procedural penalties add three seconds to a competitor's score.

Examples are:

- Not engaging targets in proper sequence
- Not using Cover properly
- Not shooting while moving as required
- Not responding immediately to the initial Finger command
- Not reloading as required
- Not following other course of fire rules as described

***Hits on Non-Threats (HNT)***: A 5-second penalty for hitting a non-threat (“hostage”) target. A penalty will be issued for each hit on a non-threat target. Rounds that pass through a non-threat and hit a threat target (and vice-versa) are counted on both targets. All shoot-throughs count.

***Flagrant Penalty (FP)***: A flagrant penalty adds 10 seconds and is assessed instead of a PE penalty in cases where the infraction results in a competitive advantage. All FPs must be approved by the Match Director.

***Failure to Do Right (FTDR)***: This is a seldom-issued penalty given to shooters who do not follow the spirit or rationale of a stage. It can also be issued for using illegal equipment. If you shoot the course of fire as outlined and do not try to use inappropriate techniques or equipment to gain an advantage, this will never be a problem. Adds 20 seconds to the competitor's score. All FTDRs must be approved by the Match Director.

If you wind up earning a Procedural or Non-Threat penalty, do not get upset. This sport is all about learning and the only one who will remember at the next match is you. Learn from your mistakes and have fun!

## **Loading and Unloading**

***“Load and make ready!”***

For new shooters, the first time they make ready for a stage can be stressful. It should not be. When the Safety Officer gives the command to “*load and make ready*,” slowly draw your unloaded pistol (finger off the trigger), insert a loaded magazine, and rack the slide to chamber a round. “Racking” the slide is to pull the slide back and then release it. Do not grasp the slide as it moves forward as it can create jamming problems. Set the safety if your pistol has that feature or safely lower the hammer on a double-action pistol. Taking a “sight picture,” as is often done in USPSA/IPSC matches, is not permitted in IDPA.

Most IDPA courses of fire require the gun be fully loaded to “division capacity” (a “full” magazine plus one round in the chamber). To do this, it is best to load as stated above, then replace the magazine currently in the gun with a “completely full” magazine from your mag pouch. Then holster the gun. You may then refill the partially loaded magazine and replace it in your mag pouch. This is the safest way to load your semi-automatic handgun.

Revolver shooters need to draw the handgun, load the chambers, close the cylinder and holster.

***“If Finished, Unload and show clear”***

After a course of fire has been completed, the Safety Officer will ask you to “unload and show clear.” For self-loading pistols you should remove the magazine first, pull the slide fully back (letting the cartridge fall to the ground) and allow the Safety Officer to visually check the chamber to see it is empty. Revolver shooters show the Safety Officer the empty cylinder.

***“If Clear, Slide Forward, Pull the Trigger”***

Issued after the Safety Officer has checked your chamber. Let the slide go forward, point the gun at the backstop (not the ground at your feet), and pull the trigger, dropping the hammer. Shooters with guns that have magazine disconnect safeties must insert an empty magazine into the gun and pull the trigger (allow Safety Officer to verify an empty mag before inserting into pistol). You may then holster the unloaded pistol after you have removed the empty magazine.

Revolver shooters do not pull the trigger. They simply close the cylinder and holster. The Safety Officer should have modified this command by simply saying “Cylinder Closed.”

***“Holster”***

Holster the weapon, being careful not to sweep the muzzle past any body part (i.e. hand, legs, etc.).

***“Range is Clear”***

Do not move forward to tape or reset targets until this command is given. Everyone except the “on-deck” shooter and the one who just shot should then be helping tape, reset and pick up brass.

**Movement**

Movement with a drawn pistol is easy if you follow the basics. First, always move only when your finger is outside the trigger guard. Second, be mindful of your muzzle at all times. You must keep the muzzle in a safe direction (which will mostly be downrange) at all times. Third, take your time. You will see experienced shooters moving very quickly, but they started out moving slowly as should you. Take your time, move and shoot carefully.

Be sure to listen to the Safety Officer for any special instructions related to a particular course of fire. Mentoring of new shooters is encouraged.

Shooting while moving is a bit more advanced. Again, do not put your finger into the trigger guard until your sights are on the target. Move slowly and smoothly by keeping your knees bent and placing one foot in front of the other “heel to toe” (or “toe to heel” if retreating). Remember to get a smooth trigger pull on every shot. Your sights will move about, but unless you jerk the trigger, you can still get decent hits.

## **Engaging Targets**

Typically, when the Course of Fire (COF) mandates a number of rounds per target, the shooter engages the target that many times. Targets must be engaged in tactical priority. This can mean in the order of threat posed, that is near-to-far (targets less than two yards apart are considered equal threat). It can also mean as they become visible around cover. This is known as “slicing the pie,” a term you will become intimately familiar with in IDPA.

The COF will stipulate “Limited” or “Unlimited” scoring. Limited means the number of shots you can fire in a string is limited to exactly the number specified in the stage description. Unlimited means you can fire as many as deemed necessary as long as this does not violate other IDPA rules.

## **Reloading**

In IDPA there are two kinds of reloads; the emergency (or “slide-lock”) reload, and the tactical reload/reload with retention. There are no provisions for the USPSA-type speed reload.

In most IDPA stages, the shooter will have the option to either reload when the slide locks back, or to tactical reload/reload with retention. Both of these reloads are to be done behind cover unless the shooter runs the firearm empty in the open. The general principle is that no magazine with rounds still in it should be left behind. The speed load (ejecting and leaving a magazine while a round remains in the pistol’s chamber) is not permitted, even if the magazine is empty.

Reloads must be initiated and performed while using cover appropriately. Remember the act of initiating a reload includes: removing a fresh magazine from its holder, removing a partial magazine, dropping an empty magazine, opening a cylinder, or removing a fresh speedloader/moonclip from its holder. A competitor may not leave cover until their reload is fully complete, which means a fresh mag fully inserted and slide forward (or cylinder closed for revolvers). Any partially empty mags or unfired rounds must be stowed.

***Emergency Reload:*** When the slide locks back, the shooter will eject the spent magazine, insert a fresh magazine, and release the slide. If this occurs while shooting on the move (if allowed by the course of fire), the competitor may immediately begin the reload process, but must continue moving towards cover. In the event the slide fails to lock back you may still perform an Emergency Reload as long as the chamber is empty.

***Tactical Reload:*** The shooter removes a fresh magazine from its holder, and while holding the fresh magazine, the shooter uses the same hand to remove the magazine currently in the pistol. The fresh magazine is then inserted into the pistol and the spent magazine is stowed in the magazine holder or a pocket. The magazine must be stowed before resuming shooting. Shooting before stowing the magazine will earn a procedural penalty.

***Reload with Retention:*** The shooter removes the spent magazine and places it in a pocket or mag pouch. The shooter then inserts a fresh magazine in the pistol and resumes shooting. The Tactical Reload and Reload with Retention are interchangeable and the decision about which to use belongs to the shooter. In other words, if a course of fire stipulates a Tactical Reload, you may perform a Reload with Retention instead.

***Reloading Revolvers:*** Revolvers can be emergency reloaded or tactical reloaded.

***Revolver Emergency Load:*** Open cylinder, eject shells to ground, reload using speedloader, speed strip, or loose cartridges.

***Revolver Tactical Reload:*** Open cylinder, eject shells into hand, pocket both brass and fresh cartridges, reload using speedloader, speed strip, or loose cartridges.

## **Scoring**

Scoring in IDPA is relatively simple. After shooting a course of fire, the time is recorded. Hits on the target are scored as follows:

- All 4" head ring and 8" body ring hits are awarded 0 points down
- Hits in the next scoring area receive 1 point down each
- Hits in the last scoring area are 3 points down each
- Misses are scored at 5 points down each

These points down are totaled and then multiplied by one second. That amount of time, along with the time from any penalties the competitor received, is then added to the raw time to provide the score (given in seconds) for that stage. Fastest total time for the match wins. In the case of a tie, the shooter with fewer points down wins.

Bullet holes (including the grease ring surrounding the bullet hole) that touch the perforation between two scoring zones will receive the better score. In the case of hits "too close to call" the shooter gets the benefit of the doubt. USPSA scoring overlays are not to be used.

## **Tips**

This sport rewards speed, but punishes for lack of accuracy. Take the time to place your shots properly. Remember you will lose one second for each point down. This adds up more quickly than you would think.

Do not crowd the barricade or wall when using cover. Staying back from the cover will not only make you less of a target (in the real world) but will help you move from target to target easier.

Reloads with Retention are generally, faster and easier than Tactical Reloads. Practice both kinds of reloads though, as there are times when the tactical reload may be beneficial.

Remember to get a smooth trigger pull every time, even at the expense of the “perfect” sight picture. Slightly misaligned sights may cause you to be a couple of inches off your point of aim, but jerking the trigger can cause you to miss the target entirely.

## **Malfunctions**

If your firearm fails to fire do not panic. Malfunctions happen, and competition is an excellent place to learn how to perform recovery procedures quickly.

Keep the muzzle downrange and your finger out of the trigger guard. Most of the time the problem is due to a bad round or improperly seated magazine. In this case: Tap the bottom of the magazine upward into the gun to re-seat the magazine, rack the slide back to chamber a new round, and then aim and pull the trigger to verify that the gun will now fire. This is known as the *Tap-Rack-Bang* method.

If a Tap-Rack-Bang does not work and you are not sure how to proceed, it is best to stop and request help from the Safety Officer. If requesting help, keep your muzzle downrange, your finger off the trigger and follow the Safety Officer’s instructions.

A potentially dangerous malfunction is known as a squib. This is usually caused by a cartridge that has a primer but no powder in the case. When a squib round is fired, the bullet is pushed into the barrel where it stops. Firing a subsequent round may cause the barrel to rupture, resulting in extreme damage to the gun and possibly the shooter. A squib can be identified audibly by the “pop” or “pfft” noise and by the distinctly reduced (or lack of) recoil. If you even suspect that this has happened, stop immediately and request help from the Safety Officer. Remember to keep the muzzle downrange and follow the S.O.’s commands precisely.

If you experience any kind of malfunction or a jam and are in doubt as to how to fix the problem, stop and ask the Safety Officer for help. Better a bad score than having to replace a damaged gun (or damaged hands or face).

## Shooting Gear for the New IDPA shooter

To start out at most IDPA matches, all that is needed are the following:

- A safe handgun that is reasonable for self-defense (9mm or larger caliber)
- A sturdy belt** and holster that carries the gun inside or outside the waistband on your shooting-hand side (no shoulder, cross-draw, or tactical thigh-rig holsters)
- Three magazines, speedloaders or four moonclips
- Two magazine pouches (or a one double magazine pouch) or three speedloader/ moonclip pouches
- Quality eye and ear protection (safety glasses and a set of muffs or ear plugs)
- Jacket, shirt or vest that can cover your holster and ammo carriers

***It is important that you try the sport first, before going out and spending money on specialized equipment.*** Find out that you enjoy it, and what the experienced competitors use (and why they use it). Being in too much of a hurry to buy your equipment before you start competing may mean that you end having to buy a whole kit of different gear several months later.

Most matches will require to shoot anywhere from 50 to 150 rounds of ammo, so make sure you bring enough. If you are not sure, check with your local club to see what they recommend.

### **Holsters and Ammunition Carriers**

Holsters are generally made of leather, plastic, or nylon. The general requirements **are** that it is reasonable for use should you have the right to carry a concealed handgun, holds the weapon securely with a neutral (vertical) or muzzle-rear cant, and that it must carry the gun on your belt on the strong (“shooting hand”) side of your body. It must fully cover the trigger guard, and the entire front strap, to the trigger guard, must be above the top of the belt (women are allowed to carry the gun a little lower **and IWB holsters are exempt from this requirement**). **Holsters must be positioned such that the center of the trigger pad is behind the centerline of the body.**

Shoulder, cross-draw, ankle, or tactical thigh-rig holsters are *not* allowed because of either safety reasons or they are unrealistic for concealed carry.

Most strong-side Inside-the-Waistband (IWB) holsters are allowed. If you choose an Outside-the-Waistband (OWB) model, it must pull the gun tight enough into your body so that a person behind you cannot see daylight between you and your holster. For male shooters the holster must fit the shooter’s body such that a ¾” diameter dowel placed between the shooter and the firearm anywhere above the belt contacts both the shooter and the firearm simultaneously.

You may note that most competitors use plastic holsters (sometimes referred to as “Kydex”). This is because they provide a smoother surface allowing for faster draws and easier re-holstering. They can range in price from \$25 to \$75, while leather holsters can range from \$40 to \$250. Fobus makes an inexpensive but effective plastic holster, while companies such as Safariland, Blade-Tech and Comp-Tac make superb, but more-expensive, models. Quality leather holsters can be purchased from Bianchi, Safariland, and DeSantis. Nylon holsters are generally the least expensive but their soft texture provide the least structural rigidity. Uncle Mike’s Sidekick line can sometimes be found for many models under \$25.

Note that there are a few low-cost plastic/Kydex models that initially appear appropriate, but are actually illegal in the sport. This is because their belt slot area is so wide that it inappropriately sets the gun away from the body. Be sure to perform the tests mentioned above to make sure the holster is legal.

You will only need two magazine pouches if you shoot a semi-automatic pistol or three if you shoot a revolver. The pouches must hold your reloads securely and cover at least 2” of the body of the magazine measured down the back from the top of the cartridge rim. Pouches are usually available in the same materials as holsters, and from the same manufacturers. Speedloader and moon-clip carriers are a bit more complicated. See section 8.6.3 of the rules for specifics. Complete rules are available on line at <http://www.idpa.com/compete/rules>.

## **Magazines**

During a course of fire, a competitor may have no more than three magazines on them (one in **the gun** and two on their belt). It is beneficial to bring more with you to a match, since it will expedite preparation for a stage, or allow for quickly topping off you ammo during stages that have multiple strings of fire. But to compete in IDPA, you do not *need* more than three mags.

You are typically better off buying factory magazines, since they are usually superior to after-market models. Spend your money wisely and purchase quality magazines, even if you have to make do with fewer magazines in the short term. High-capacity magazines (10+ rounds) are legal for IDPA but you can **never start a COF with** more than 10 rounds in them (**fewer in some divisions**).

## **Speedloaders/Moonclips**

Revolver shooters may have no more than three speedloaders/moonclips on their belt during a course of fire. Having a fourth **speedloader** to load the gun after the “Load and Make Ready” command is beneficial, but not required since you can choose to load the rounds by hand.

There are a variety of devices available to reload your revolver. HKS and Safariland are popular makers of speedloaders. Good sources for moonclips are Brownells and T.K. Custom.

## **Ammunition**

Purchase basic ammunition for matches. The accuracy and/or power of Bullseye Match or Defensive-type ammunition is wasted on the type of shooting done at IDPA matches.

Most shooters will shoot jacketed or plated ammunition. Its advantages are reduced smoke and clean up, and it is often more reliable in common guns. Lead bullets can work well, and are usually more economical. Reloaded ammunition is allowed, but be sure that you are careful with your reloading procedures to avoid the creation of squib rounds (bullet and primer, but no powder). Also make sure that you are familiar with the velocity of your loads, since there are minimum power factors.

## **Sight and Hearing Protection**

Eye and ear protection are critical safety measures in all forms of shooting.

Your eyes can be damaged by burning powder residue thrown back during weapon discharge, or by bullet fragments (frags) that ricochet off of steel targets. Shock-resistant eye protection (ANSI Z87.1-certified) is critical because even the smallest damage to your eye can be permanent. You can find inexpensive glasses for as little as \$10 at Wal-Mart or Big5 Sporting Goods, or higher-quality, optically superior models are available from Rudy Project or Oakley.

Hearing protection is important because hearing loss results from the exposure to peak sound levels as well as the average sound level around you. A single competition's worth of gunfire can cause hearing loss, and frequent competitions will rapidly affect the rate of loss. Foam earplugs may be adequate, but are inconvenient to repeatedly insert and remove for conversations during the course of the day. External ear protectors are the most popular because of their effectiveness and convenience. Passive hearing protectors can be purchased for as little as \$15, while sophisticated electronic hearing protectors (which suppress loud noises while amplifying softer sounds like a person's voice) can be purchased for fifty to as much as several hundred dollars. A popular and reasonably-priced brand of electronic "ears" is the Howard Leight Impact Sport line which can sometimes be found on sale for around \$40. They also fold for storage.

Regardless of the conveniences you select in your hearing protection, it is critical to choose a solution that provides an adequate Noise Reduction Rating (NRR). Normal conversation takes place between 70 and 80 decibels, and a .45acp handgun can generate 165 decibels. Your goal should be to choose an item that provides an adequate NRR rating for your needs.

## **Miscellaneous**

Don't forget the sun screen, band-aids, bug spray, a bag to hold your gear, and a good hat. It is also advisable to bring water or a sports drink, as well as energy bars since matches can last up to six or more hours.

## **Web directory of manufacturers, retailers, and distributors:**

Blade Tech – <http://www.blade-tech.com>

Comp-Tac – <http://www.comp-tac.com>

Fobus – <http://www.fobusholster.com>

MidwayUSA – <http://www.midwayusa.com>

Brownells – <http://www.brownells.com>

Dawson Precision – <http://www.dawsonprecision.com>

Dillon Precision – <http://www.dillonprecision.com>

**Safariland – [www.safariland.com](http://www.safariland.com)**

Blackhawk – <http://www.blackhawkindustries.com>

5.11 Tactical – <http://www.511tactical.com>