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**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
WEAPONS TRAINING BATTALION  
MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND  
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5040

**DETAILED INSTRUCTOR GUIDE**

LESSON TITLE

INTRODUCTION TO RIFLE SHOOTING POSITIONS AND SLINGS

COURSE TITLE

DIVISION MATCH COURSE



**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
Weapons Training Battalion  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5040

**DETAILED OUTLINE**

**INTRODUCTION TO RIFLE SHOOTING POSITIONS AND SLINGS**

INTRODUCTION

(3 MIN)

1. GAIN ATTENTION. On the battlefield, the rifleman must assume the steadiest possible position in which to engage the enemy. A steady position enables the rifle's sights to be stabilized and trigger control to be applied in one continuous movement to the rear. The application of the five factors common to all shooting positions is critical to this process.
2. OVERVIEW. This lesson will cover the procedures for adjusting the sling and applying the five factors and three elements common to all shooting positions.
3. INTRODUCE LEARNING OBJECTIVES. The Division Match instruction is structured to prepare the shooter to fire the Division Match Course and is not a component of a formal school program. Therefore, there are no learning objectives.
4. METHOD. This lesson will be taught in a classroom setting using lecture and demonstration.
5. EVALUATION. The Division Match instruction is structured to prepare the shooter to fire the Division Match Course and is not a component of a formal school program. Therefore, students are not evaluated on this material.

TRANSITION: The sling helps support and stabilize the rifle during firing, aiding the delivery of well-aimed shots on the target. When the rifle sling is adjusted properly, it will provide maximum stability for the weapon and help reduce the effects of the rifle's recoil. There are two basic types of rifle sling adjustments: the loop sling employed with a standard web sling and a three-point sling.

**INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:** The three-point sling is the only sling authorized for Division Match competition. It is not necessary to cover the instruction on the loop sling for the purposes of Division Match.



BODY

(30 MIN)

**1. (5 MIN) LOOP SLING**

a. Purpose of the Loop Sling. The loop sling, employed with a standard web sling, provides the greatest amount of stability during firing. This stability allows the shooter to perfect marksmanship fundamentals. The loop sling may be used while firing the Table 1 Course of Fire. Because it takes longer to don or remove a loop sling, it has limited combat application (e.g., in a defensive position). The loop sling provides maximum stability and is, therefore, best suited for developing proper application of the fundamentals in the prone, sitting, and kneeling positions.

1) In all three positions, the loop is high on the left arm above the biceps muscle in such a position that it does not transmit pulse beat to the rifle.

2) The buckle is positioned so the sling pulls from the center of the arm when the loop is tightened.

3) The only difference in the loop sling's application for the three shooting positions is the length at which it is adjusted. The sling is adjusted for each firing position to the proper length by loosening the sling keeper and pulling the feed end up or down (toward or away) from the loop. The sling keeper should be positioned near the feed end of the sling.

b. Donning the Loop Sling. To form the loop sling, perform the following steps:

1) Place the rifle butt on the right hip and cradle the rifle in the right arm.

2) Disconnect the J-hook from the lower sling swivel.

3) With the M-buckle near the hook, feed the sling through the top of the M-buckle to form a loop large enough to slip over the arm.

4) Give the loop a half turn outboard and insert the support arm through the loop, positioning the loop high above the biceps.

5) Position the M-buckle on the outside of the support arm.



6) Tighten the loop on the support arm, ensuring the M-buckle moves toward the center of the arm as the loop tightens. The sling must pull from the center of the arm to be properly positioned. In this way, as tension is applied to the sling in the firing position, the loop will tighten.

7) To adjust the sling for the proper length, loosen the sling keeper and pull the feed end down toward the loop. This adjustment varies with every individual and every firing position:

a) The loop should not be tightened excessively on the arm. If blood flow is restricted, excessive pulse beat is transmitted through the rifle sling to the rifle and causes a noticeable, rhythmic movement of the rifle sights. When this occurs, a stable hold at the desired aiming point is impossible to achieve.

b) Tension on the rifle sling is correct when it causes the rifle butt to be forced rearward into the pocket of the shoulder. This serves to keep the buttplate in the shoulder pocket during recoil. To increase the amount of tension on the rifle sling, the sling must be shortened. To lessen the tension, the sling must be lengthened.

8) Move the sling keeper toward the support arm and secure it. The sling keeper should be positioned near the feed end of the sling.

9) Place the support hand over the sling from the support side and under the rifle. The rifle handguard should rest in the "V" formed between the thumb and forefinger and across the palm of the hand.

10) Move the support hand as required to achieve a desired sight picture. Adjust the length of the sling for proper sling tension and support.

c. Purpose of a Consistent Sling Adjustment. Once a sling adjustment is found that provides maximum control of your weapon, the same sling adjustment must be used every time a particular firing position is assumed. Varying the sling tension will affect the strike of the bullet, making establishment of a battlesight zero (BZO) difficult. Using the same sling adjustment will maintain your BZO and ensure the accuracy of your rounds on target.

Confirm by questions.



TRANSITION: Rifle firing positions are designed as foundations for the rifle. A rifle firing position may be adjusted to conform to your body configuration as long as the position provides balance, control, and stability. There are three elements essential to every rifle firing position: bone support, muscular relaxation, and natural point of aim.

## 2. (10 MIN) THREE ELEMENTS OF A GOOD SHOOTING POSITION

a. Bone Support. The body's skeletal structure provides a stable foundation to support the rifle's weight. A weak shooting position will not withstand the repeated recoil of a rifle when firing at the sustained rate or buffeting from wind. To attain a correct shooting position, the bones of the body must support as much of the rifle's weight as possible. Proper use of the sling provides additional support.

1) The weight of the weapon should be supported by bone rather than muscle because muscles fatigue whereas bones do not.

2) Establish a strong foundation for the rifle by utilizing bone support. This will enable the shooter to relax as much as possible while minimizing the movement of the weapon due to muscle tension.

b. Muscular Relaxation. Once bone support is achieved, muscles are relaxed. Muscular relaxation helps to hold steady and increase the accuracy of your aim. Muscular relaxation also permits the use of maximum bone support to create a minimum arc of movement and consistency in resistance to recoil.

1) There is no way to achieve muscular relaxation without bone support. During the shooting process, the muscles of the body must be relaxed as much as possible. Muscles that are tense will cause excessive movement of the rifle, disturbing the aim. When proper bone support and muscular relaxation are achieved, the rifle will settle onto your aiming point, making it possible to apply trigger control and deliver a well-aimed shot.

2) Only through practice and achieving a natural point of aim will proper muscular relaxation be achieved.

c. Natural Point of Aim. The point at which the rifle sights settle when bone support and muscular relaxation are achieved is called the natural point of aim.

1) When in a shooting position with proper sight alignment, the position of the tip of the front sight post will indicate the natural point of aim. When



completely relaxed, the tip of the front sight post should rest on the desired aiming point.

2) One method of checking for natural point of aim is to aim in on your target, close your eyes, take a couple of breaths, and relax as much as possible. When you open your eyes, the tip of the front sight post should be positioned on the desired aiming point while maintaining sight alignment.

3) Since the rifle becomes an extension of your body, it may be necessary to adjust the position of your body until the rifle sights settle naturally on the desired aiming point on the target. For each shooting position, specific adjustments will cause your rifle sights to settle center mass, achieving a natural point of aim. These adjustments will be covered in each of the position lessons.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: Success in combat will rest largely upon the establishment of a stable and consistent firing position. A three-point sling is the standard sling employed in combat. It is important to understand how to adjust and employ the sling.

### **3. (10 MIN) THREE-POINT TACTICAL SLING**

a. Nomenclature. A standard three-point tactical sling approved by the Marine Corps is the I.B.D Products E-Z Sling (Sling System).

1) Flexible Swivels (w/triangular grommet). There are two types of front attachments. Both are attached to the sling by a triangular grommet.

a) One attachment is designed for use on the service rifle and is made of Nomex® in order to resist melting from the heat of the barrel.

b) A second attachment is made of nylon (nonresistant to heat) and is designed for use with various other weapon systems or used as the rear attachment to the M4 CQBW.

2) 1-inch Webbing Strap with Tri-glide. The webbing strap allows the sling to be attached to the flexible swivels.

3) Transition Release Buckle (TRB). The TRB is used to



transition from strong side to weak side without removing the sling.

4) Emergency Release Buckle (ERB). The ERB allows for quick release of the sling from the body.

5) Rear Stock Strap. The rear stock strap is used to connect the sling to the buttstock of the weapon.

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Demonstrate how to attach the three-point sling to an M16A2/4 and M4 Carbine. The following steps pertain to right-handed shooters; left-handed shooters should reverse the instructions as needed.

b. Attaching the Sling System

1) Feed the permanently attached front keeper with 1" webbing through the forward sling swivel from rear to front; feed the webbing back down through the forward end buckle. The buckle should be on the outside of the weapon.

2) Remove the rear stock strap from the sling system. Disassemble the strap by sliding the short end of the strap off the long end. The strap should resemble an L-shape.

3) Remove the rear keeper from the tri-glide. Set the rear keeper with 1" webbing to the side; it is not needed with the three-point sling configuration for the M16A2/A4.

4) Place the weapon with the ejection port cover facing down and the pistol grip closest to you.

5) Flip the sling over and lay it flat across the weapon with the quick release buckles facing down. Slide the middle tri-glide over the buttstock to a position approximately 1 ½" from the edge of the buttstock. The side of the tri-glide with 1 bar should be facing you.



- 6) Place the rear stock strap on the buttstock with the long side up and the short side to the right. Feed the short end of the strap through the middle tri-glide. Pull the strap to the right until the stitching prevents it from going any further.

**NOTE**

Left-handed shooters will maintain the same orientation of the rear stock strap. The only difference will be that the sling will be pulled tight on the left side of the buttstock where the short strap attaches to the long rear stock strap.

- 7) Flip the sling over with the quick release buckles are facing up. Wrap the short end around the back of the butt stock. Feed the long end of the stock strap through the slot in the short end.
- 8) Feed the coarse end of the Velcro through the slot closest to the material of the stock strap, then through the other slot on the buckle. Fasten it down tightly ensuring the triangular grommet is facing down.
- 9) Pull the sling hard to ensure it is secure.

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Demonstrate how to wear/employ the three-point sling. The following steps pertain to right-handed shooters; left-handed shooters should reverse instructions as necessary. Substitutions of the language in this lesson plan for 'right' and 'left' hand may be made with 'strong' and 'support', respectively, or 'firing' and 'non-firing' as desired.

c. Wearing of the Three-point Sling

- 1) While grasping the pistol grip in your right hand, place the buttstock in your shoulder.
- 2) Using the left hand, separate the sling with your thumb to create a triangle.
- 3) Insert your head and left hand and arm into the triangle while maintaining control of the weapon.
- 4) Adjust the tri-glide so you can easily bring the weapon into action while keeping the sling tight.





d. Three Elements of a Good Shooting Position with a Three-point Sling. Of the three elements, only bone support is relevant with the three-point sling. Unlike a loop sling, the three-point sling provides minimal support of the weapon, so the position must be adjusted to support the weapon.

1) Bone Support. The three-point sling was designed to transport or carry the weapon. The sling, as designed, provides little support to aid in stability of hold, management of recoil, etc. Therefore, the bones of the body must support as much of the rifle's weight as possible. This is called bone support.

a) Bone support is mostly achieved by placing as much of the left elbow as possible directly under the weapon for each firing position.

b) The weight of the weapon should be supported by bone rather than muscle because muscles fatigue whereas bones do not. Bone support will enable the shooter to minimize the muscular tension required to hold the weapon.

2) Muscular Relaxation. Muscular tension, rather than muscular relaxation, is required to hold the weapon up and steady the sights with the three-point sling donned; the shooter must apply an amount of controlled muscular tension in the left arm to stabilize the weapon sights.

3) Natural point of Aim. There is no natural point of aim when using the three-point sling because muscular relaxation cannot be achieved. Therefore, a consistent amount of controlled muscular tension must be applied to allow the rifle sights to settle.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: Marines must know how to properly wear the three-point tactical sling so that the Marine can employ the weapon system properly and effectively.

#### **4. (5 MIN) FIVE FACTORS COMMON TO ALL SHOOTING POSITIONS**

There are five factors common to all shooting positions. The five factors affect your ability to hold the rifle steady, maintain sight alignment, and control the trigger. The way these factors are applied differs slightly for each position, but the principles of each factor remain the same.



**NOTE**

The following procedures are written for right-handed shooters; left-handed shooters should reverse directions as needed.

- a. Forward Hand. In all positions it is desirable that the handguard of the rifle rest in the "V" formed by the thumb and index finger of the left hand. The left wrist is straight with the rifle resting across the heel of the hand. The left elbow should be positioned directly under the weapon to create bone support and a consistent resistance to recoil. The fingers can curl against the handguard, but should apply only the minimum amount of pressure to prevent the hand from slipping on the handguard.
- b. Rifle Butt in the Pocket of the Shoulder. Place the rifle butt firmly into the pocket formed in the right shoulder. This reduces the effect of recoil, helps steady the rifle, and prevents the rifle butt from slipping in the shoulder during firing. Consistent placement of the rifle butt in the shoulder pocket is essential to firing tight shot groups and maintaining a battlesight zero (BZO).
- c. Grip of the Right Hand. Grasp the pistol grip with the right hand and place the forefinger on the trigger, with the thumb and remaining fingers wrapped around the pistol grip. Firm rearward pressure should be exerted to help keep the rifle butt firmly in the shoulder, reducing the effects of recoil. The trigger finger should be placed naturally on the trigger and care should be taken to ensure that the trigger finger can move independently without dragging on the side of the receiver. Proper placement of the right hand on the pistol grip allows the trigger to be moved straight to the rear without disturbing sight alignment.
- d. Right Elbow. The right elbow should be positioned naturally to provide balance to the position and create a pocket in the shoulder for the rifle butt. If the elbow is correctly positioned, it helps to form the pocket in the right shoulder where the rifle butt rests. The exact placement of the elbow varies with each shooting position but should remain consistent from shot to shot, ensuring the resistance to recoil remains constant.
- e. Stock Weld. The placement of the shooter's cheek against the stock should remain firm and consistent from shot to shot. Consistency of stock weld is achieved through proper placement of the rifle butt in the pocket of the shoulder. A firm contact between the cheek and the stock enables the head and rifle to recoil as a single unit. This



provides quick recovery between rapid fire shots, keeps the aiming eye centered in the rear sight aperture, and prevents the head from bouncing off the stock during recoil.

Confirm by questions.

OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS:

(1 MIN)

1. Respond to questions from class.
2. Prompt students with questions to the class.
  - a. QUESTION: What are the five factors common to all shooting positions?

ANSWER: Forward hand; rifle butt in the pocket of the shoulder; grip; right elbow; stock weld.

- b. QUESTION: Why is the rifle sling important to the shooter?

ANSWER: It provides added stability and maximum control of the rifle when firing.

- c. QUESTION: What are the three elements of a good shooting position when firing with a loop sling?

ANSWER: Bone support, muscular relaxation, and natural point of aim.

- d. QUESTION: What does bone support provide the shooter?

ANSWER: Bone support helps reduce the effect of recoil, prevents muscle fatigue, and allows muscular relaxation.

***INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE:*** Ask Marines as many questions as necessary to ensure they fully understand the material presented in this lesson.

SUMMARY:

(1 MIN)

The sling is an important tool in firing consistently and accurately because it provides stability and control of the rifle during firing. Understanding the elements of a good shooting position and the factors common to all shooting positions will help obtain the best results when employing the loop sling with any rifle firing position. The ability to understand and apply these basic firing techniques is essential to ensuring consistent and accurate target engagement.