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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

PISTOL STANCE, GRIP, AND PRESENTATION

COURSE TITLE

DIVISION MATCH COURSE



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

DETAILED OUTLINE

PISTOL STANCE, GRIP, AND PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

(3 MIN)

1. GAIN ATTENTION. In combat, a Marine must choose a firing position based on the combat situation, observation of the enemy, the need for mobility, and individual body configuration. The standing position may be adapted to either a Weaver or an Isosceles variation, each of which has a specific grip. In combat, the key to success may rest on the Marine's ability to quickly present the weapon to a threat. Presentation of the pistol should be practiced until it becomes a natural movement performed under a variety of combat conditions, but never exceeding the Marine's capabilities.
2. OVERVIEW. This lesson will cover purpose of a firing grip; the Weaver and Isosceles variations of the standing position; selection of a pistol firing position; and presentation from the carries and the holster.
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. In addition, a practical application will be conducted during DIV-27A, Pistol Stance, Grip, and Presentation Practical Application.
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: To shoot accurately, the Marine must assume a stable firing position to steady the weapon sights and provide a platform for managing recoil. Key to a pistol firing position is the firing grip. The firing position chosen must provide stability and balance, while the grip must provide control during firing.



BODY

(55 MIN)

NOTE

The procedures in this lesson are written for right-handed Marines; left-handed Marines should reverse directions as needed.

1. (5 MIN) PURPOSE OF A PISTOL FIRING GRIP

A proper grip is one which provides maximum control of the pistol before, during, and after firing:

(ON SLIDE #1)

a. A Proper Grip Must Stabilize the Weapon Sights Before Firing. To fire an accurate shot, the pistol sights must be stabilized prior to and as the bullet exits the muzzle of the weapon.

1) A proper grip controls the alignment of the weapon sights and stabilizes the sights so an accurate shot may be fired.

2) To have a proper grip, there must be muscular tension in the wrist and forearms. Consistent muscular tension in the wrist, forearms, and grip helps maintain sight alignment by reducing the movement in the grip which can cause movement in the weapon sights. The grip is correct when it allows the pistol sights to be naturally aligned to the aiming eye.

3) When establishing a two-handed grip, equal pressure must be applied with both hands. Consistent, equal pressure from both hands will stabilize the weapon sights and allow them to be aligned and level with respect to the aiming eye.



b. A Proper Grip Must Allow Trigger Control to be Applied During Firing. The grip should provide a foundation for the movement of the trigger finger. The trigger finger must apply positive pressure on the trigger as an independent action, completely free of the other muscles of the gripping hand. There should not be excessive pressure on the web of the hand on the backstrap of the pistol because it will interfere with the manipulation of the trigger by the trigger finger.

c. A Proper Grip Must Manage Recoil After Firing. Once a shot is fired, the pistol recoils, disturbing alignment of the sights. A proper grip must facilitate a quick recovery from recoil so the sights quickly return to the same area on the target.

1) The amount the muzzle climbs during recoil depends on the amount of controlled muscular tension in the grip and wrists applied to stabilize the weapon and create consistency in resistance to recoil. Controlled muscular tension allows the weapon sights to recover consistently back on target within a minimum amount of time.

2) Equal pressure must be applied to the grip with both hands because recoil will travel where there is least resistance and the sights will not return to the same area on the target. Firm pressure ensures the pistol does not slip during recoil.

3) An improper grip or lack of controlled muscular tension will cause the pistol to move in the Marine's hand after the shot is fired, disrupting sight alignment and requiring the Marine to reestablish his grip.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: The firing grip is key to establishing a good firing position. A firing position is key to quick and accurate engagement. The standing position is easily assumed and provides excellent observation of the enemy, however, it is the least stable of the firing positions. There are two variations of the pistol standing position. We will begin by covering the Weaver variation.



2. (12 MIN) WEAVER STANDING POSITION AND GRIP

a. Assuming the Weaver Standing Position and Grip. Key to the Weaver variation is the body's angle to the target and the "push-pull" pressure applied to the grip. To assume the Weaver standing position:

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: *Demonstrate the position as it is explained. For the purposes of the demonstration, withdraw the weapon from the holster.*

- 1) Face the target and make a half turn right, keeping the weapon oriented to the target. This orients the body at approximately a 40-60 degree angle oblique to the target. The shoulders are angled to the target, the left shoulder forward of the right. The feet are about shoulder width apart, the left foot forward of the right.
- 2) Firmly grip the pistol with the right hand on the pistol grip. Place the right thumb on the safety in a position to operate it.
- 3) Keeping the shoulders at a 40-60 degree angle to the target, raise the right arm and extend it across the body toward the target. Ensure the right shoulder does not roll forward or turn toward the target.
- 4) Extend the left arm to the target, bending the left elbow to join the left and right hands. The left elbow should be inverted and tucked in toward the body so the left arm supports the weapon.

NOTE

The angle of the body will determine how much the elbow bends.

5) Establish a two-handed firing grip in the Weaver variation:

(ON SLIDE #2)

a) Place the palm of the left hand over the front of the right hand so the palm covers the curled fingers of the right hand. The trigger guard should rest in the "V" formed by the left thumb and forefinger. The knuckles of the left hand should be just outboard of the trigger guard. A portion of the pistol grip should be exposed.



b) Rest the trigger finger naturally, straight and outside of the trigger guard, so the finger can be moved quickly and easily to the trigger.

c) The left thumb rests against the receiver so both thumbs are on the left side of the pistol. Once the safety is disengaged with the right thumb, the left thumb should be placed over the right thumb and positive pressure should be applied to hold the right thumb in place.

d) Apply rearward pressure with the left hand and forward pressure with the right hand to achieve a "push-pull" grip. Isometric tension (push - pull) stabilizes the weapon during firing.

(ON SLIDE #3)

6) Lean slightly forward and apply muscular tension throughout the body to stabilize the position and better manage recoil. The muscular tension in the upper body will not be symmetrical due to the "push-pull" tension applied on the grip.

7) Keep the head erect so the aiming eye can look through the sights.

b. Selecting a Weaver Position. To shoot accurately, the Marine must assume a stable firing position to steady the weapon sights and provide a platform for managing recoil. The Marine will select and assume either a Weaver or an Isosceles position to meet the demands of the combat situation.

1) Factors Affecting the Selection of Weaver. The size of the target, distance to the target, time, and type of engagement needed (i.e., two shots, single precision shot) are important factors to consider when deciding whether to fire in a Weaver firing position.

(ON SLIDE #4)



2) Advantages of the Weaver Variation

a) Stability of Hold. The Weaver position has a distinct advantage in stabilizing the pistol sights. This advantage applies whether the Marine is firing in the standing, kneeling, or prone position. The Weaver variation provides additional balance, control, and stability of hold during firing due to the placement of the arms; the left arm is bent and the pistol is in closer to the body. Therefore, it is generally easier to maintain sight picture using the Weaver variation because it is easier to hold the weapon steady.

b) Long-Range Engagement/Partially Exposed Targets. The Weaver variation is effective at any distance, however, some aspects of the position make it more effective for long range or precision shots on small or partially exposed targets. At longer ranges, the target is smaller and a more precise shot is required to eliminate the target. Even at closer ranges, a precision shot may be required to engage a partially exposed target. Because sight alignment and sight picture are more critical to accuracy, stability of hold is a bigger factor in precision and long-range engagements. One small movement will move the sights off the target so the weapon must be steadied.

3) Disadvantages of the Weaver Variation. Recoil has a larger effect on the Weaver variation due to the hand placement on the pistol; some of the pistol grip is exposed and pressure is applied in two different directions around the pistol. Recoil will travel to the path of least resistance. Therefore, recovery of the sights back on target may take longer in the Weaver variation.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: The Weaver variation of the standing position provides balance, control, and stability of hold, which can be effective especially during long-range engagements. However, there are times when the immediate situation, available cover, or individual body configuration may drive you to the Isosceles variation of the standing position. The Isosceles variation also incorporates a specific firing grip.



3. (12 MIN) ISOSCELES STANDING POSITION AND GRIP

a. Assuming the Isosceles Standing Position and Grip. Key to the Isosceles variation is the body squared to the target and equal pressure applied on the pistol from the grip. To assume the Isosceles standing position:

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: *Demonstrate the position as it is explained. For the purposes of the demonstration, withdraw the weapon from the holster.*

1) Face the target with the feet approximately shoulder width apart. The left foot may be slightly forward of the right foot (approximately half a boot length) to balance the position. The shoulders are squared to the target.

2) Establish a two-handed firing grip in the Isosceles variation:

(ON SLIDE #5)

a) Firmly grip the pistol with the right hand on the pistol grip. Place the right thumb on the safety in a position to operate it.

b) Place the heel of the left hand on the exposed portion of the pistol grip in the pocket formed by the fingertips and heel of the right hand. There should be maximum contact between the pistol grip and the hands. Wrap the fingers of the left hand over the fingers of the right hand. Ensure both thumbs rest on the left side of the pistol and point toward the target.

c) Apply equal pressure on both sides of the pistol to allow for the best management of recoil.

NOTE

Ensure the left thumb does not apply excessive pressure to the slide stop or the slide.

d) Rest the trigger finger naturally, straight and outside of the trigger guard, so the finger can be moved quickly and easily to the trigger.



NOTE

The index finger of the left hand may or may not rest on the front of the trigger guard.

(ON SLIDE #6)

- 3) Elevate and extend the arms toward the target.
- 4) Roll the shoulders forward and shift the body weight slightly forward to stabilize the position and better manage recoil. The left foot may be slightly forward of the right foot to balance the position. There should be an equal amount of muscular tension on both sides of the body to best manage recoil.
- 5) Tuck the head between the shoulders; the head is extended forward but kept erect so the aiming eye can see through the sights.

b. Selecting an Isosceles Position

1) Factors Affecting the Selection of Isosceles. The size of the target, distance to the target, time, and type of engagement needed (i.e., two shots, single precision shot) are important factors to consider when deciding whether to fire in an Isosceles firing position.

(ON SLIDE #7)

2) Advantages of the Isosceles Variation

a) Management of Recoil. The Isosceles variation has a distinct advantage in managing recoil. The advantage applies whether in a standing, kneeling, or prone position. In the Isosceles variation, muscular tension and grip pressure are evenly distributed around the pistol, causing the effects of recoil to be less than in the Weaver variation and allowing quicker recovery of the sights on target. This makes the Isosceles variation effective for firing multiple shots.

b) Short-Range Engagement. The Isosceles variation is effective at any distance, however, some aspects of the position make it more effective for close range engagements.



(1) When confronted with a target, the natural physical reaction is to face the target and push out with the arms. This makes the Isosceles variation advantageous for quick engagements at close range.

(2) When a target is at short range, it must be engaged quickly before it engages you. The management of recoil is a bigger factor than stability of hold in short-range engagements because it is more likely that multiple shots will be fired to eliminate the target and the sights have to recover quickly back on target. In addition, at close ranges the target is larger so stability of hold is not as important because it is easier to hold the sights on target and sight picture is not as critical.

3) Disadvantages of the Isosceles Variation. Stability of hold is degraded in the Isosceles variation due to the weapon being further from the body without support. This makes acquiring sight picture more difficult because it is harder to steady the weapon.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: The Isosceles variation has a distinct advantage in managing recoil. To shoot accurately, you must assume a stable firing position to steady the weapon sights and provide a platform for managing recoil. Regardless of the variation used (i.e., Weaver or Isosceles), the standing position must be assumed so there is natural body alignment to the target.

4. (3 MIN) NATURAL BODY ALIGNMENT

The body must be properly aligned to the target so when the pistol is presented, the sights fall naturally on the target. It takes a combination of body alignment and consistent muscular tension to ensure the sights fall naturally to the same area on the target every time the weapon is presented. The Marine can check his natural body alignment to ensure his sights are centered on his aiming area.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: *Demonstrate the following procedures as they are explained.*



- a. Orient your body to a target and establish a variation of the standing position and a two-handed firing grip on the pistol. Aim in on the target.
- b. Close the eyes and take a deep breath.
- c. Open the eyes and see where the pistol sights are in relation to the target. If the pistol sights are right or left of the target:
 - 1) Move the feet to adjust the position right or left.
 - 2) Do not force the weapon sights onto the target area by moving the arms; this will increase the muscular tension on one side of the body, disturbing balance and making recoil harder to manage.
- d. If the pistol sights are significantly out of alignment when the weapon is at eye level, it may be an indication of a poor grip. When the grip is correct, to include the muscular tension in the grip, wrist, and forearms, the pistol sights should be aligned to the point that only minor adjustments are needed to align the sights to the aiming eye.
- e. Repeat these steps. Body alignment and muscular tension are correct when the sights are placed naturally in the same area on the target every time the Marine aims in on the target.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: Natural body alignment can be achieved through practice in dry fire so that, when the weapon is presented, a stable position is assumed. A firing position is selected based on the combat situation and individual body configuration. It is important to understand how to select a firing position in combat.

5. (8 MIN) SELECTION OF AN M9 SERVICE PISTOL FIRING POSITION

- a. Pistol Firing Positions. The M9 service pistol is fired from the standing, kneeling, and prone positions.
- b. Selection of a Position. The selection of a firing position in combat is based on considerations of mobility, observation of the enemy, and stability.



(ON SLIDE #8)

1) Mobility. A firing position must provide mobility should the Marine need to move. For example, the standing position permits maximum mobility because it can be quickly assumed and easily maneuvered from and it permits lateral mobility to engage widely dispersed targets. The prone position provides limited mobility because it is the most time consuming position to get into and out of and it lacks lateral mobility to engage dispersed targets.

2) Observation of the Enemy. A firing position should allow observation of the enemy while minimizing the Marine's exposure. In combat, there can be many obstructions to a clear field of view. Terrain features such as vegetation, earth contours, and man-made structures can often dictate the firing position. For example, the prone position normally allows the least exposure, but it usually provides a limited field of view. Kneeling may provide a wider field of view, but generally provides less concealment.

3) Stability. A solid firing position establishes a stable foundation for target engagement. A firing position must provide maximum stability while firing. If the Marine's position is not stable, recoil will force him out of his firing position, requiring him to reestablish his position before he takes his next shot.

a) Purpose of Stability. A consistent, stable position is assumed for two distinct purposes:

(1) Minimize Movement of the Weapon Sights. A pistol firing position must be stabilized to minimize movement of the weapon sights so an accurate shot can be fired. A stable firing position enables the weapon's sights to be controlled to deliver accurate fire on a target.

(2) Minimize the Affects of Recoil. A pistol firing position must be stabilized to minimize the affects of recoil for recovery of the sights to the same area on the target. In combat, it may be necessary to engage the same target more than once to eliminate it. If the firing position is stable, the pistol sights should recover to the same area on the target, allowing rapid reengagement. Distributing the body's weight to balance the position will stabilize it and allow better management of recoil.



b) Controlled Muscular Tension. A pistol firing position is stabilized through controlled muscular tension. Because the pistol is fired without benefit of bone support, muscular tension is needed in the body to stabilize the position and the weapon sights.

(1) A consistent amount of muscular tension is needed to hold the weapon steady so the sights can be aligned with the aiming eye and the target.

(2) Controlled and consistent tension in the body allows the Marine to offer resistance to manage recoil and bring the sights back on target quicker.

(3) Too much tension, however, can cause strain or produce additional movement by trembling.

(4) Muscular tension is correct when the Marine can control the pistol before, during, and after firing the shot.

Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: To be proficient, the Marine must be able to select a stable firing position that provides a solid foundation for accurate shooting while meeting the demands of the combat situation. The mission may dictate that the Marine carry the weapon at the Alert or Ready. Therefore, the Marine must be able to effectively present the pistol from these carries when a threat presents itself.

6. (5 MIN) PRESENTATION OF THE M9 SERVICE PISTOL FROM THE CARRIES

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: Demonstrate the procedures for presentation as they are explained. Demonstrate using a Weaver variation of the standing position, followed by a demonstration using an Isosceles variation. For the purposes of the demonstration, withdraw the weapon from the holster.

a. Alert. To present the pistol from the Alert, perform the following steps in sequence. When a target appears:



1) Sweep the safety with the thumb of the right hand, place the trigger finger on the trigger, and bring the weapon to bear on the target:

a) If the arms are straight and at a 45-degree angle to the deck, raise the arms.

b) If the arms are bent, punch the arms out toward the target.

NOTE

If the Marine wishes to thumbcock the pistol for a single action shot, the pistol is thumbcocked with the left thumb after the safety is swept with the right thumb. The grip of the left hand may have to be broken to thumbcock the pistol; reestablish the grip after thumbcocking.

2) Acquire sight alignment and sight picture within the aiming area and apply trigger pressure until the shot is fired.

b. Ready. To present the pistol from the Ready, perform the following steps in sequence. When a target appears:

1) Sweep the safety with the thumb of the right hand, place the trigger finger on the trigger and raise the arms to bring the weapon to the target.

NOTE

If the Marine wishes to thumbcock the pistol for a single action shot, the pistol is thumbcocked with the left thumb after the safety is swept with the right thumb. The grip of the left hand may have to be broken to thumbcock the pistol; reestablish the grip after thumbcocking.

2) Acquire sight alignment and sight picture within the aiming area and apply trigger pressure until the shot is fired.

Confirm by questions.



TRANSITION: Presentation of the pistol from the carries must be practiced to be proficient. The pistol is carried in the holster. Therefore, most presentations will come from the holster. We will now cover the procedures for presenting the pistol from the holster.

7. (10 MIN) PRESENTATION OF THE M9 SERVICE PISTOL FROM THE HOLSTER

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: Conduct a demonstration for the proper wearing of gear, emphasizing the importance of placement of the holster to facilitate presentation.

a. Proper Wearing of the Holster. The holster must be positioned on the cartridge belt to facilitate presentation of the pistol from the holster. To check for the proper wearing of gear:

- 1) While standing with the arms hanging naturally, close the eyes, and bring the right hand straight up to the cartridge belt.
- 2) Reposition the holster to a place on the cartridge belt where the hand would come in contact with the pistol grip as it is brought naturally straight up.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: Demonstrate the procedures to present the pistol from the holster using both the Weaver and Isosceles variations.
Demonstrate the complete procedure using the Weaver variation, then follow with a demonstration using the Isosceles variation. Procedures should be demonstrated and taught emphasizing that presentation is performed in a continuous, fluid motion.

NOTE

To ensure no one competitor has an advantage, all competitors will start from the same position during the Pistol Division Match. Marines will assume a 'Stand By' position prior to presentation drills from the holster.

To assume the 'Stand By' position, clasp the hands together and place them so the thumbs rest on the center of the chest.



b. Presentation of the Pistol. The weapon should be presented from the holster in one continuous, fluid motion. To present the pistol from the holster, perform the following steps in sequence:

- 1) When a target appears, place the heel of the left hand at the center of the torso with the fingers extended toward the target. At the same time, unfasten and release the D-ring with the right hand.
- 2) With the right hand, place the thumb on the forward edge of the lower portion of the holster and the fingers around the back edge of the holster, keeping the trigger finger straight.
- 3) Slide the hand up the holster until the fingers come in contact with the pistol grip. At the same time, keep the thumb above the pistol to guide the holster flap up.
- 4) Grasp the pistol grip with the fingers and draw the pistol straight up. Continue withdrawing the weapon while moving the thumb to a position on the safety.
- 5) Once the muzzle clears the holster, rotate the muzzle forward while sweeping the safety.
- 6) Establish a two-handed grip on the pistol by joining the hands in front of the torso. At the same time, start to punch the weapon out toward the target.
- 7) Continue punching the weapon out and, at the same time, place the trigger finger on the trigger, acquire sight alignment and sight picture within the aiming area, and apply trigger pressure until the shot is fired.

NOTE

When time permits to thumbcock the pistol for a single action shot (e.g., long-range engagements), thumbcock with the left thumb after both hands are on the weapon. The two-handed grip is established after the pistol is thumbcocked.



Confirm by questions.

TRANSITION: Presentation from the holster must be continuously practiced to ensure you can perform this skill rapidly and without exceeding your capabilities.

OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS:

(1 MIN)

1. Respond to questions from the class.
2. Prompt Marines with questions to the class.
 - a. QUESTION: What three things does a good grip on the M9 service pistol provide the Marine before, during, and after firing?

ANSWER: The ability to stabilize the weapon sights before firing; the ability to apply trigger control during firing; and the ability to manage recoil once the shot is fired.

- b. QUESTION: How are the shoulders positioned in the Isosceles variation of the standing position?

ANSWER: The shoulders are squared to the target.

- c. QUESTION: Why is natural body alignment important?

ANSWER: Natural body alignment helps ensure that the body is properly aligned to the target so when the pistol is presented, the sights fall naturally on the target.

- d. QUESTION: What three things should be considered when selecting a firing position in combat?

ANSWER: Mobility, observation of the enemy, and stability.

- e. QUESTION: Which variation of the pistol standing position is more effective for promoting stability of hold?

ANSWER: Weaver.



f. QUESTION: When presenting the pistol from the holster, is the safety swept before or after establishing a two-handed firing grip?

ANSWER: The safety is swept with the right thumb before establishing a two-handed grip.

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

SUMMARY:

(1 MIN)

Because the pistol is fired without benefit of bone support, it is critical to establish a stable and consistent grip and firing position to shoot accurately. While a proper firing position provides stability and balance for shooting, a firing grip provides maximum control of the pistol to ensure firing accuracy and consistency. When assumed properly, both the Isosceles and Weaver variations of the standing position provide a stable base for accurate firing by allowing the pistol to be steadied and the trigger to be controlled while keeping the sights aligned. To be truly effective, the Marine must be able to quickly and smoothly present the weapon to the target from the standing position. This includes presentation from the Alert and Ready carries and the holster.



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