

# Pistol and Rifle Range Commands

William F. Stevens, John Kavsnicka and Ronald A. Howard, Jr.\*

Basic range control procedures are familiar to most rifle or pistol shooters. After shooters become familiar with range operations, behavior and etiquette use the conventional range commands. When new shooters are learning, however, modifications can enhance safety and provide better control. The following procedure is effective, and we recommend it to you. Range commands are in bold type. Coach, shooter or range assistant actions and comments are listed in normal type. Options or temporary parts of the command are indicated by brackets [ ] Parentheses ( ) enclose alternative or additional commands that can be used with beginning shooters. Refer to Fact Sheet 13 for additional information.

**Shooters (Relay {state number}) to the line.**

Shooter-coach pairs move to the firing line with their rifles or pistols empty, actions open and exposed to view, muzzles pointed in a safe direction and fingers off the trigger. Range staff will also check each rifle or pistol on its way to the range.

**Is the line ready? Respond by firing point number, please.**

Each shooter or coach will reply with “ready” or “not ready” and state his or her

firing point number. Any firing point not responding will be queried directly to determine their situation and whether they need assistance. Once the line is ready, the range officer will declare its status.

**The line is ready. [The range (line) is clear, you may handle your firearms (pistols, rifles).] OR**

**Pick up your firearm (pistol, rifle). Keep the muzzle down range, the action open, the safety on and the finger off the trigger.**

Shooters pick up rifles or pistols, verify the condition, make any preparations with the empty rifle necessary for the shooting taking place and await further instructions. “Coaches” and range assistants observe muzzle control and maintain control over all ammunition. *See the Fact Sheet 17: Pistol and Rifle Shooting Procedures* for further information.

**Load your firearm (rifle, pistol). Safeties off.**

**Assume a comfortable (proper) firing position.**

Align your sights. (Focus on the front sight and obtain proper sight alignment.)

**[Raise your pistol (rifle) to firing position. (Keep the front**

**sight in focus and maintain your sight alignment.)]**

**Obtain a proper sight picture. (Maintain your focus on the front sight and proper sight alignment.)**

**Fire when ready.**

Squeeze (Press) the trigger. (Maintain your front sight focus, sight alignment and sight picture until the projectile {bullet, ball or pellet} hits the backstop.)

**Cease fire.**

The cease fire command must be obeyed immediately, even if a shot is nearly ready. It is complex and will need step-by-step reinforcement until it is nearly reflexive.

**Make your firearm (rifle, pistol) safe. [Keep the muzzle pointed down range.]**

**Open the action and make sure all ammunition is removed from the firearm. Place the safety in the “on” or “safe” position.**

Ground your firearm (rifle, pistol), leaving the action open and score targets.

Firearms may not be handled until the range has been declared clear once more.

Conventional Range Commands

**Relay [X] (shooters, relay [X] match [Y] to the line.**

Director, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association; and 4-H and Youth Development Specialist, Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

\* Conservation Affairs Manager for Federal Cartridge Company, Anoka, MN; Executive

**The preparation period begins now...The preparations period has ended**

This command declares that the range is clear and unloaded firearms may be handled, adjusted or otherwise made ready. They may NOT be loaded.

**Is the line ready?**

Any shooter not ready must indicate he or she is not prepared to begin their relay. If any shooter is not ready, the range officer will announce that **the line is not ready** and repeat the process after a brief pause.

**The line is ready.**

This command indicates that all shooters have completed their preparations and are ready to begin the relay.

**Ready on the right. Ready on the left. Ready on the firing line.**

This command announces that the firing line is active. In some events, the shooter may insert a magazine or load after the “ready on the right” command.

**Commence firing. (Fire when ready, fire at will, the range is hot.)**

Live firing may commence. The first two terms are more commonly used. Their use is encouraged to promote consistency.

**Cease firing. [Unload, open the action, ground your firearm.]**

The initial command carries the implication of all the others, but they are used explicitly in some shooting events.

**Change (score or score and paste) targets. (The range is clear, you may change targets.)**

Shooters may proceed down range to replace, retrieve or score targets. Firearms may not be handled until the range has been declared clear once more.

Several additional commands may be used.

**The firing line is clear. You may handle your guns.**

This is equivalent to the “make ready” command.

**Police firing points.**

This command is used when shooters need to pick up their fired brass and other materials around the firing points, often at the end of one or more relays.

**As you were.**

This command rescinds the one immediately preceding it. It returns control to the previous level, for example, if the range officer has announced “the line is ready,” “as you were” would indicate that it is not ready.

**Carry on.**

This command allows shooters to proceed with the actions taking place before some interruption occurred.

**Make your firearms (pistols, rifles) safe.**

The range officer may include or expand this command. The firearm should be unloaded, magazines removed, and actions or cylinders opened and plainly exposed to view. Muzzles must continue to point down range.

**Ground your firearms (rifles, pistols).**

The safe firearm must be placed on the shooting mat, bench or other safe surface. It may not be picked up or handled without specific instruction from the range officer.

Each action is the same as for beginning shooters above. Do not rush to move to the “standard” range commands. The beginning shooter will benefit from the verbal reinforcement of the positive actions they should be taking. Move to the conventional commands after you are completely satisfied that the fundamentals of firing a shot and range safety are instilled in the shooters.