

**NSCA Level II Instructor Certification  
Instructor Manual**

**A GUIDE TO THE  
NSCA LEVEL II INSTRUCTOR  
CERTIFICATION**

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## **Mission Statement**

The Instructor Committee is dedicated to all levels of shooting, stressing safety first, as well as an environment with an entertaining and noncomplex agenda. Our goal is to have a Level I instructor at each shooting facility across the country. The Instructor Certification Committee will stress quality and experience in Level II & III instructors not quantity. The committee will also promote continuing education for all instructors.

## **Introduction:**

Welcome to the Level II part of the National Sporting Clays Association Instructor Program. If you are taking this level, you have successfully completed the Level I Instructor's Course; have worked as a Level I Instructor for at least 2 years; and have a recommended 400 hours of actual sporting clays teaching experience. A high level of expertise is required for the Level II course, with an emphasis on accurate diagnostics and communication skills. The Level II Certification Course includes classroom presentations, shooting and hands-on teaching exercises during three days of intensive training. A sound knowledge of the fundamentals is vital, as well as the realization that there are no advanced shooting techniques, just advanced applications of the basics. Not everyone passes the Level II course. Please be sure to carefully weigh your experience and expertise before signing up for the course.

In addition to the \$750 registration fee, which must be submitted along with the application form to NSCA Headquarters, each applicant is responsible for bringing his/her own shotgun and approximately 150 shells. Students are also accountable for target fees of the host club and a percentage of the examiner/instructor expenses. (This will vary depending on the number of students in each course.)

You will find that all levels of the NSCA program build on the foundation of the Level I course. At the Level I you learned how the new instructor handles new or beginning level shooters; how to get started; how to teach the basic fundamentals of shotgun shooting; and, most importantly, safety.

These elements will be reinforced in the Level II course. You will find a similarity between these two levels because all shooting is built from the same basic fundamentals. In this level, the mental game will become very important. Learning to control anxiety is a major part of becoming a better and more consistent shooter.

Define coach -----From Rainer Martens' "Successful Coaching:"

A good coach should have "the teaching skills of an educator, the training expertise of a physiologist and the counseling wisdom of a psychologist." ---  
"Successful coaches help (students) master new skills, enjoy competing and develop self-esteem. Successful coaches not only are well versed in the technical and tactical skills of their sports, but they also know how to teach these skills and direct their (students) in the performance of these skills." Most coaches have learned the skills of coaching through years of trial and error. The NSCA Instructor Program will help you shorten that learning process -- reduce those painful errors -- by teaching you the principles of

coaching based on the sport, art, science and wisdom of many successful coaches.

As Rainer Martens also says in his book *Successful Coaching*: "A mediocre coach tells, a good coach explains, a superior coach demonstrates, but the great coach inspires." Successful instructors will be able to help their students master new skills while enjoying the competition and developing their self-esteem. You must be able to learn new skills, change techniques if necessary and accept constructive criticism while regularly employing self-evaluation.

To be a good instructor or shooting coach, you do not have to be a shooting champion, but you must understand and know how to break any shot that you will be teaching. Be sure to make time to shoot some yourself and experience as many target presentations as possible. You will find that experience is a wonderful teaching tool. Taking lessons from other coaches is another great way to increase your teaching knowledge and will help you develop different problem-solving techniques.

## **THE NSCA PHILOSOPHY OF INSTRUCTION**

The best way to describe the NSCA Instructor School's philosophy is – keep it safe, keep it simple and have fun. We want all aspects of the program to be simple to understand, simple to teach and simple to communicate. As an instructor, you are in the communication business – talking, listening, negotiating, encouraging and consoling. The biggest problem that we find with most new, intermediate instructors and coaches is that they give too much information and too lengthy solutions to a problem. It is much easier for the student to understand a short and direct solution than it is to listen to five minutes of verbal diarrhea from his coach. The student will usually remember that last thing that the coach says. Remember, when it comes to teaching, "Less is more."

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II SAFETY**

The most important element in shooting is safety. It doesn't make any difference if you are a beginner or an All American - safety is paramount. In all levels of instruction, we will stress safety, safety, safety. See Level I Manual for review.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II COACHING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Without the ability to communicate your thoughts and ideas, you will never be a good coach. The most knowledgeable person in the world is worthless as a teacher if they cannot communicate their knowledge. Even a world class shooter can be a very poor teacher simply because he or she cannot explain how they make the shot and why their method works. An instructor must be able to send a clear, understandable message and also listen to understand what the student is attempting to communicate.

There are many ways to communicate. Body language is a great way to get your point. It is also a way for your students to communicate with you. Just a slight change in facial expression can send a message without the student or instructor saying one word.

Visual aids are among the best teaching tools for an instructor. These aids will help paint the picture you want your student to see. An example of a common visual aid would be a target. This visual aid is readily accessible and is invaluable in helping a student see what lead and target line would look like when the trigger is pulled. Be creative. Empty shells, laser pointers, string and other items can all be part of your visual aid tool box.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II TEACHING STRATEGY**

A good sound teaching strategy is essential when instructing someone to shoot. A good instructor will develop his or her strategy from hours of teaching many students. Each student is an individual and may need to be taught using a different strategy. The type of job they have can dictate the strategy that you will use. For example, an engineer or chemist in a job that requires very technical information to perform their duties will respond to this type of information when learning to shoot. On the other hand, a salesman might require much less technical information and a less complicated delivery.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II LESSON PLAN**

Every coach should have a lesson plan. If you are teaching a student for the first time, you may want to use a generic lesson plan - a plan that will fit most people. As the lesson progresses, taking notes about the student and his or

her problems will help you the next time you work with them. Never become rigid in your delivery or ideas. Be very open minded and flexible. Problems can change from day to day.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II TEACHING MOMENTS – WHEN TO TEACH AND WHEN TO BE QUIET**

There will be times when a problem is better addressed than others. We will call this a teaching moment. For most coaches, teaching moments are the time in the lesson when addressing a problem with a solution will be easier for the student to understand. An example of a teaching moment would be when you are working on target line but the student is stopping his gun and missing the target. The student turns and looks at you and says "I can't seem to get to the target." Now would be a good time to change gears and talk about foot position or hold point simply because the student is asking questions that deal with these two things. Right now, line is not as important to him as getting to the target.

A good example of a non-teaching moment would be if a student is making a fundamental mistake but is breaking the target. This is the wrong time to offer any help or solutions. If you do, there are only two things that can happen. First, he hits the target. What have you accomplished? He was already hitting the target so in his mind, you didn't help him. What if he misses the target after you offer your suggestion? He was hitting the target and now after listening to you, he starts to miss -- the student's confidence in you as a coach has decreased.

Remember "if it isn't broke, don't fix it". This is one of the cardinal rules of teaching. Wait for a more appropriate time to discuss the problem that you have observed or set the student up so that problem will be magnified and he will miss. After a few misses, the student will turn and look at you and ask for help. He may not ask you in words but the look on his face will tell you that the time is right. Now he is ready for you to fix the problem.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II METHODS FOR ACHIEVING LEAD**

There are three NSCA approved methods for achieving lead. Most good shooters use all of these methods. See Level I Manual for refresher.

- A. Swing Through
- B. Pull-Away
- C. Maintained Lead

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II**

### **THE BASIC SET UP**

All good shooting requires a plan or basic setup. There are four basic technical steps for breaking a target. They are listed and explained below. As a coach, you will find that a majority of reasons that cause the student to miss the target will be caused by one of these four things. Major problems such as poor gun fit and eye dominance should be considered, but in most cases, look at these four steps first. They will save you lots of time looking for the problem and they will normally have a generic solution that can be applied to most shooters. When the shooter follows this basic setup, they should become more consistent. Follow the four basic steps below in the order they are listed.

#### **A. Break Point**

The break point is the first step in making any shot. All other parts of the shooting plan cannot be put into effect without the proper break point. You must find the point in the target's flight path that will let you not only break that target but also will leave you set up for the second target in a pair. If you have ever played a game of pool (billiards) you will understand the concept. In pool, the player is always thinking about the next shot and where he needs to leave the cue ball. In sporting clays, the muzzle is the cue ball and leaving it in the right place for the second shot will make the pair easier to shoot.

Always be faithful to or trust your break point. If you find that you were able to make a good move and broke both targets with little effort, don't change. On the other hand, if you find that your rhythm was bad and that making the second shot was not smooth, by all means, change the break point.

#### **B. Foot Position**

After picking your break point you will need to find the right foot position. Proper placement of the feet will enable the shooter to move freely to the target. You should always face the break point of the hardest target when shooting a pair. This means that if a right handed person has a pair where one target goes to the right and the other one goes to the left, he should face the target going to the right simply because a right handed person will have a harder time moving to a left to right target. The muscles in the body tighten up and slow the muzzle swing and the gun tends to

pull away from the face. This is why a left to right target will take more perceived lead than the same target moving right to left. For a left handed shooter, everything is just the opposite. Foot position is very important and is one of the most common reasons for missing a target.

**C. Hold Point**

When we refer to hold point, we are talking about where the shooter wants to start the muzzle of his gun. Hold point is generally different for each shooting method and a hold point for one shooter may not necessarily be the same for another shooter. Many times hold points change from one shooter to the other even though they are using the same shooting method because of the difference in the speed of the muzzle.

There are several ways to determine hold point. A very basic way to explain this point to a student is to have them pick a break point. If the shooter is using the Swing Through method, the hold point would be about two thirds back from the break point to the beginning of the focal window. This will let the bird pass the muzzle but will leave plenty of time for the muzzle to come from behind the target and pass in front to the proper lead. If the shooter is using the Maintained or Sustained Lead method, the muzzle will start about half way back from the break point to the beginning of focal window. This point will allow the shooter to keep his muzzle in front of the target at all times and achieve the proper lead. The Pull-Away method requires a hold point that is somewhere between half and two thirds of the way back from the break point.

Here is a good way to tell if you have the right hold point. If you have to chase the target or cannot catch it, your hold point is probably too far back. If you have to wait for the target and cannot develop enough gun speed, your hold point is too far out. After the first pair, adjusting the hold point may be required.

**D. Line**

Here we are talking about the target line or the path the target is flying on. Line is very important when it comes to being able to see the target. If the gun is started above the line, the receiver or muzzle may block out the view of the target. In most instances it is better to start the muzzle below the line of the target. To demonstrate, go outside and find a telephone pole. Start your trigger finger about 20 feet above the pole and as fast as you can, move down and stop at the top. You will probably find that you will pass the top of the pole and have to move back up. Next, start 20

feet down the pole and as fast as you can, move to the top. You will find that it a lot easier to come from the bottom because you will never loose sight of the target.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II MOUNTING TECHNIQUES**

A good, smooth mount will help a shooter break targets and is one of the most important things we do to be consistent. The mount should be a fluid, natural movement. A mount that is jerky will cause the line and the lead to be hard to achieve. Remember, the leading hand (left for a right handed person and right for a left handed person) starts the mount. This is the hand that controls the gun. The trigger hand is just along for the ride and to pull the trigger. When applying a proper mount, both hands will be slightly relaxed. The harder you grip the gun, the harder it will be to move. Try tensing up your shoulder and arm muscles and see how slow and stiff your movement becomes. Now relax and feel how fluid your movement is.

A good mount will put x's on the score card. Whether you start with the gun already mounted or you prefer a low gun mount, the butt of the stock must fit firmly into the pocket of the shoulder. Without the right stock placement, you will not achieve the proper head position on the stock thus creating problems with cast and drop at comb.

In the Level I manual, we described the chicken wing method for mounting the shotgun. Another very good way to make sure that the gun fits into the pocket is to raise the arms just like a referee would do when signaling a touchdown in a football game. You will notice that when doing this you have created a perfect pocket for the butt stock. With your arms up, the gun must slide into the face thus acquiring good eye alignment with the barrel. Now with the butt stock in the pocket and the head on the comb, lower the muzzle. This should create a perfect mount and allow the gun to shoot where you look. We will refer to this method as the touchdown method.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II FOCUS**

Hard focus is one of the most important techniques a shooter can use when shooting clay targets. Hard focus is looking at an object so intensely that you can distinguish certain things about it. Some of baseball's greatest batters have said that they could see the lacing on the ball as it spins through the air on its way to home plate. While most of us do not have such vision, we can look only at the target and nothing else. We want to see the barrel in our peripheral vision - it will be a blurred image. This is called soft focus. When hard focus is applied to the target, the target will look as if it slows down and becomes very distinct. To prove this concept, look into the window of a skeet house when a target is thrown. Don't let your eyes leave the window and watch how fast the target seems to be flying. Next, look outside of the house or at the beginning of focal window. As the target appears, look at it as hard as you can while moving your eyes with it. You will find that the target does indeed appear to slow down and you can almost see the lines and dimples on it. The target will be easier to break because it will seem that you do not have to move your gun as fast. Instruct your students to look at the target with as much focus as they can. Their scores will go up.

Soft focus is just the opposite of Hard focus. Instead of seeing an object clearly and being able to distinguish marks, writing or any such things, the object will be more of just an image. It will be blurred somewhat. You will see Soft focus only with your peripheral vision. Some people call this fuzzy focus.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II BASIC GUN FIT**

As an NSCA Instructor, you will be asked questions about gun fit. We recommend that you be very careful when dealing with this subject. Of course, you do need to know basic gun fit and we do teach this in Level I but we do not teach you to be a gun fitter. You are being certified as an instructor with a basic knowledge of gun fit. Understanding length of pull (LOP), drop at comb, cast and pitch is important to an instructor when trying to figure out why a gun is jumping, the shooter is getting a mouse on his cheek or the gun is shooting high, low, left or right. The NSCA Instructor Program suggests that unless you have experience as a gun fitter, seek out or refer your students to someone professionally trained in proper gun fit techniques.

Class discussion.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II BASIC MENTAL PREPARATION**

In all sports, the mental game is important when it comes to performing well. Without a good mental game we are not able to be consistent. The top three mental errors committed on the shooting course are trying too hard, a lack of a mental game and focusing on the outcome rather than the process. There have been many great books written about the mental game and one of the best is "With Winning in Mind" by Bassham. As he says: "In no other sport is the need for a good instructor more obvious than in the shooting sports." A good instructor saves a shooter tons of time by increasing their knowledge; helping with applications in specific situations where the student has made an error and may not see it; working with the mental game; and helping make contacts with experts in all facets of the shooting world.

### **A. Visualization**

Bassham calls this rehearsal or simply practicing the event in your mind. The mind does not know the difference between visualization and actually doing it. An example of this would be having a nightmare. Most of us have awakened trembling, heart racing fast and sweat pouring off of us because we have had a bad dream. If this was just a dream, why did we react as though it was real? The answer is obvious. Our mind cannot distinguish between the two when our subconscious is involved. Bassham's CD, "Freedom Flight" will provide additional explanations about the subconscious and is a good tool for any instructor.

### **B. Handling Stress**

One of the biggest problems when it comes to winning or just shooting a good score is the stress factor. Stress is always with us, not only when shooting but in our everyday lives. How do we handle stress when we are shooting? Stress affects people in different ways but it nearly always results in tight muscles and confused thinking. To relieve stress, the shooter must relax. Not to the point of becoming sleepy or sluggish –just enough to let his body move smoothly and his mind to become clear.

### **C. Tuning Out Distractions**

Tuning out distractions is another part of the mental game. It is simply using the subconscious to override all of the things that distract us, such as people talking or noisy golf carts. When we remove these negative but normal things from our thought process, our scores will go up.

All mental coaches say the same thing when it comes to the conscious and subconscious minds. The conscious mind can only think of one thing at a time while the subconscious mind can think

of thousands of things at a time. If we give the conscious mind something positive to think about like making a smooth move to the target, our subconscious mind can make the shot with very little effort. Bassham points out that the conscious mind can get in the way of a good performance because "the conscious mind tends to be more careful and outcome orientated." To be a great shooter, you must rely on your subconscious mind to get you there.

**D. Having a Bad Day**

Have you ever had a bad day at the range – a day where everything that can go wrong goes wrong? No matter how hard you try to do better, it just gets worse. We all have those days. One cause of days like this is poor focus on the target. We think about everything but the task at hand. When we try harder what happens? We start using the conscious mind to perform with instead of letting the subconscious mind do the work. Having a bad day shooting is no different than having a bad day at work. We are going to have them throughout life and we must accept these days as part of living. Bad days just make the good days better.

**E. Becoming a Consistent Shooter**

Consistency in anything is achieved by approaching your goal in the same manner every time. A shooter who has a plan and follows that plan is a successful shooter. If you want to be consistent, develop a shooting routine and stick with it.

**F. Attitude**

A positive attitude is a shooter's most important tool. For many people, being negative is the norm. Just listen to some shooters as they approach a station that always gives them trouble. You will hear comments like "I never shoot well on this type of target" or "I would take a seven and not shoot this station." Some shooters have been heard to say "Lord, please don't let me miss." Without exception, all of these people will have a hard time and shoot below their ability. They have already set the stage for failure.

On the other hand, a shooter who keeps a positive attitude when approaching a difficult station will score far ahead of the person with a negative attitude. The power of positive suggestion is a very powerful tool. But the power of negative suggestion is far stronger. The best shooters in the world are those people with a good positive attitude. They think about what they want to happen and what they have done well, not what they have done wrong. They are the people who truly believe they are the best and can break any target.

## **G. Keeping a Shooting Journal**

Keeping a shooting journal requires daily discipline. It requires a conscious effort on your part to make daily entries with goal setting and evaluation. This will be difficult for most people — so why keep one? Most great shooters keep some sort of shooting journal. They know that goal setting is very, very important. Reaching that goal is the climax of all the hard work that you have put into this challenge.

As you keep this journal, write down your long-term goal everyday. When you go to the range, be sure to list your goal for that practice session. The practice routine will be the roadway to your goal. At the end of the day, evaluate your progress by listing ONLY the positive results of the day. For example, if you are shooting sporting clays on a 10 station course and you break nine 10's and one 4, list only the nine 10's and how it felt to break them. On the other hand, if you break one 10 and nine 4's, list only the one 10 and what you did right.

If you have a trouble target or station, make that your goal for the next practice session. Be sure to do this in a positive way. For example, "I am going to work on my teal today by starting my gun higher up towards the break point." Now you have an objective to reach. If you will notice, we did not say "I am having trouble with teal and I have to shoot more of them to get better." That is a negative.

## **OBJECTIVE; NSCA Level II PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING**

If you want to keep busy as an instructor, you will need to market yourself. There are many ways to do this but word of mouth is the most effective. Building a good client base is essential. Referrals from satisfied clients will bring more students to your door. As a Level I instructor with at least 400 hours of instruction, you should have a good start on your client base.

There are other ways to promote yourself. Signs in area sporting goods stores work well as do signs posted at clubs or on benches. Passing out business cards whenever the opportunity arises is a good idea. Ads in papers or magazines will work for many of the big name coaches but are very expensive and may not produce the return that will make the investment worthwhile.

One of the best ways to promote your services is to donate some lessons to local charities. Let them use the lessons for auction items, door prizes, etc. The amount of time that you donate will come back to you many times over. It is a way to promote goodwill and appreciation of the shooting sports. We should all be goodwill ambassadors of the shooting sports and enjoy our pastime by following Rule 13: "You got to love it."