



4-H Shooting Sports

Learn by Doing

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Volume 1 Issue 1

10 Ways to Beat Your Nerves During a Shooting Competition

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1. Know the rules - If you are a first-time shooter, shooting at a new place or shooting a new sport, having some knowledge about the rules can really help you feel calm. If you are a new shooter, you don't have to be an expert on rules, but you should be familiar with safety rules to make sure that you and all the participants are safe. There are 3 sets of rules I would suggest looking at before your any match.

- **Basic Firm Safety** - Treat every firearm as if it is loaded. Never point a firearm at anything you are willing to destroy. Keep your finger off of the trigger until you are ready to fire. Know your target and what is behind it.
- **The Local Range's Rules** - (For district Saturday this should be simple as most of you have shot at south plains already!) If you are going somewhere new, it is always a good idea to check and see if there are any rules the range requires you to follow. With technology today, even the most basic ranges usually have a website with rules online. For instance, most

ranges are "cold ranges" that means all firearms must be unloaded unless you are under the direction of a range/safety officer.

- **The Competition's Rules** - If you are shooting a competition for the first time, even if it is just a different kind of competition than what you're used to, it's a good idea to read the rule book before you go. Some rulebooks are very long, so you may not want to read the whole thing, but a quick "once over" can give you an idea of what the sport is about and what to expect. Most rulebooks are available online.

2. Visit the Rang the Day Before- (Once again as this pertains to district Saturday most of y'all have been so covered here too!) Getting lost is never fun. When I get lost it makes me feel nervous and rushed and it's hard to shake that feeling. If you have the time, always try to go to the range the day before. If you can, mark the range on your GPS to help guide you the next day, and for any future trips.

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3. Take Cash - *(Not necessary for District Contest)* Taking cash will help you pay your range fee, entry fee and may even help you buy lunch. You won't be nervous or have to worry if you get to shoot, you will know that you can.

4. Pack the Basics - If you are a first-time shooter, or a seasoned expert, there are always a few things you will absolutely need. The list below is not complete, but can get you through just about anything.

- Eye Protection — Bring some type of glasses for everyone traveling with you to the range, including kids. Even if your friends and family are not shooting, most ranges require a minimum of sunglasses to watch.
- Ear Protection for everyone, especially children!
- A duffle/range/gym bag to hold your equipment, like firearm, magazines and ammo.
- Water & snacks.
- Chair!

5. Be Early - One of the easiest things you can do help calm your nerves is to make sure that you are not only on time, but also a few minutes early.

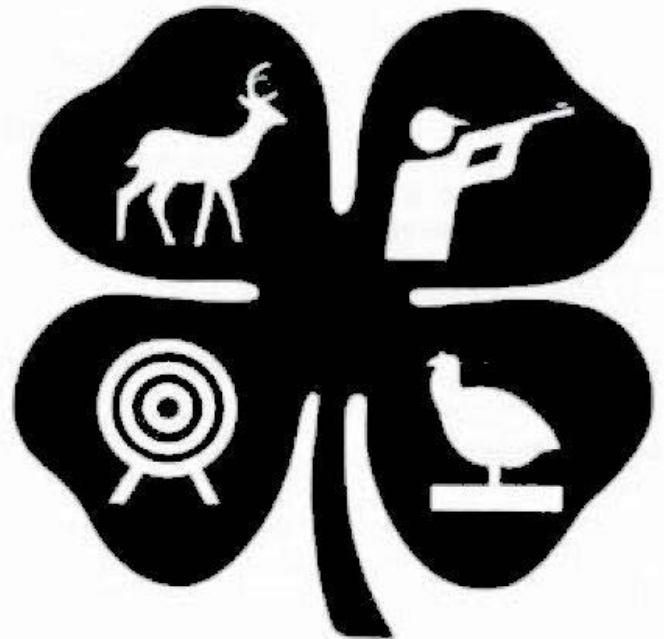
6. Attend the Safety Briefing - Every competition I have been to has conducted a safety briefing, so, while I have heard many, it is always something I try to attend. I usually learn something, even if it is just when to break for lunch.

7. Smile - There are medical studies that prove that smiling relieves stress and improves mood. I think this is doubly, even triply important when it comes to trying new things or going to new places. If you can smile while at a match, it will help relieve your tension, and may even make you some new friends.

8. Ask Questions - I think the hardest, scariest thing for me is the unknown. If you have a question, ask it! Asking questions can help you feel calmer, but it also can start conversations that will make you feel more like a member of the group.

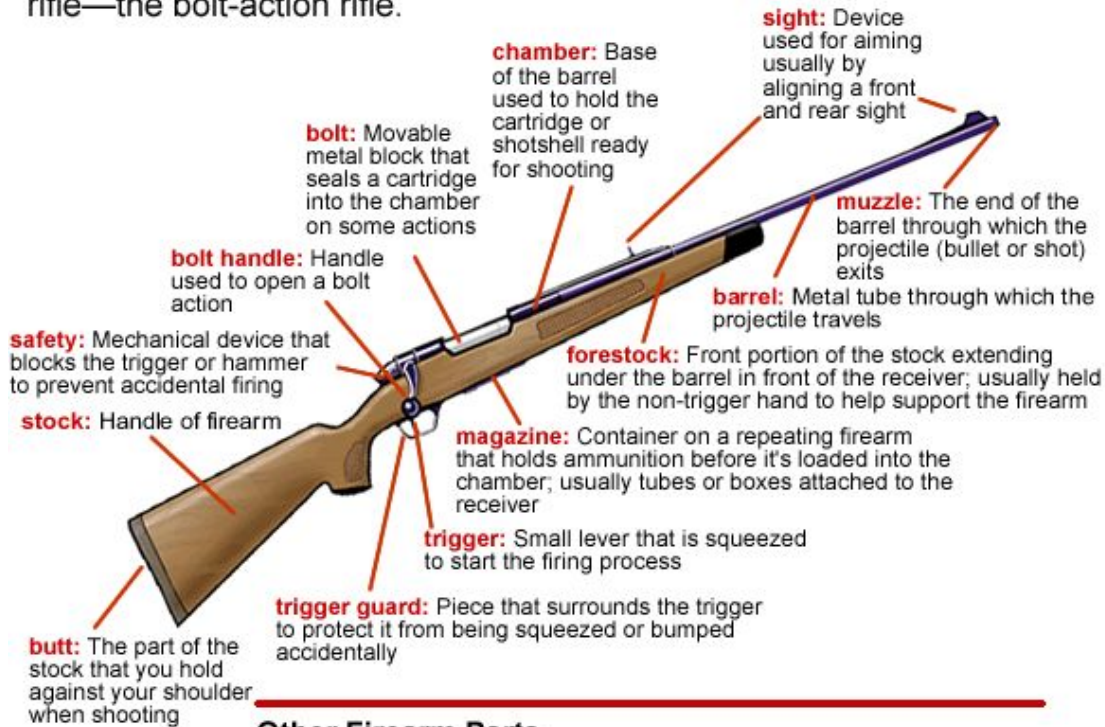
9. Mind your Manner - It is amazing how much "please" and "thank you" make you feel good, as well as make others feel good. Being friendly and polite can help you relax and will likely also make you some new friends.

10. Breath! - I saved this for last, but I should probably have put it first. I know that when I get nervous, my breathing tends to get shallow, which means my body has less oxygen, my heart beats faster and before I know it, I am breathing fast and getting even more nervous. Taking a few deep breaths, breathing in slowly, holding for a beat and breathing out slowly, usually does wonders to help me calm my nerves. Plus, it feels good!



Parts of a Bolt-Action Rifle

Rifles, shotguns, and handguns have many similar parts. Shown here are the parts of a commonly used rifle—the bolt-action rifle.



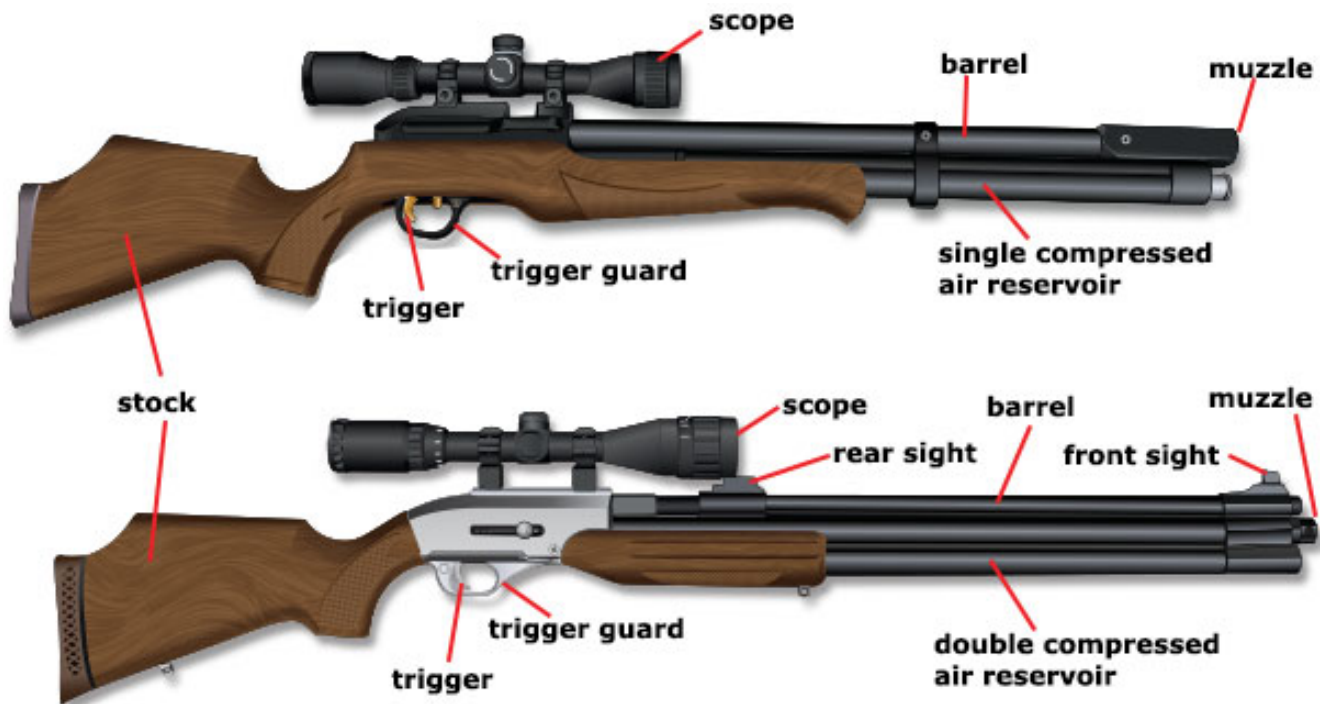
Other Firearm Parts

bore: Inside of the firearm barrel through which the projectile travels when fired

breech: Rear end of the barrel

firing pin: A pin that strikes the primer of the cartridge, causing ignition

receiver: Metal housing for the working parts of the action



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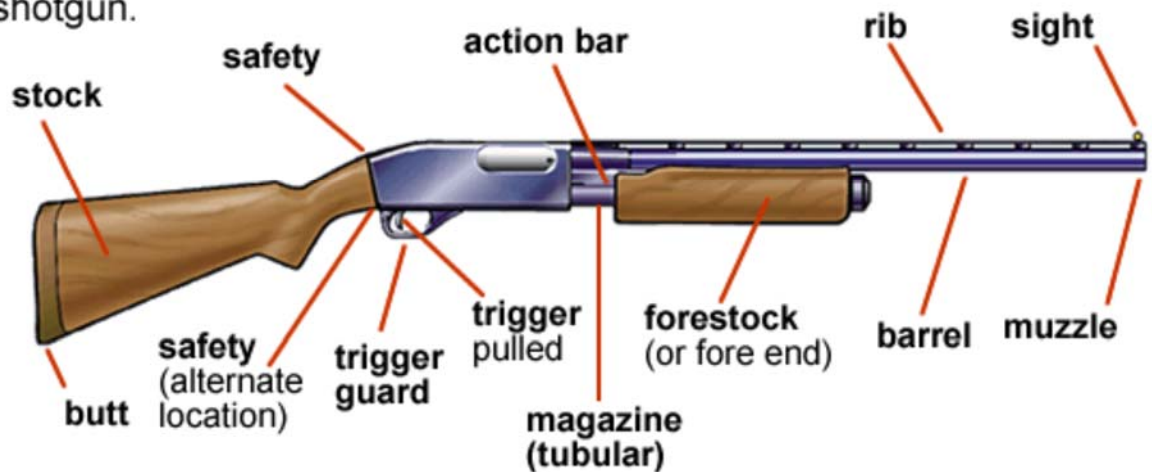
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Parts of a Pump-Action Shotgun

Shotguns are another long-barreled firearm used by hunters. Below are the parts of a commonly used shotgun—the pump-action shotgun.



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