

Lesson 1 - Narrative

Introduction to the 4-H Western Heritage Project

Purpose and Goals

The 4-H Western Heritage Project is a combination of 4-H Shooting Sports and a comprehensive study of the American frontier. The purpose of this project is to provide an avenue for 4-H members and adult leaders to experience the lifestyles and cultures of the Old West from the period of 1860 - 1900 through a participatory living history approach to learning.

The shooting portion of this project is arguably the fastest paced, most exciting, and spectator friendly project in 4-H shooting sports. Shooters dressed in Old West garb compete against the clock by firing at steel or cardboard targets at various distances with period firearms such as single action revolvers, lever action rifles, and double barreled shotguns. Scoring is based on accuracy and the time that elapses between the initial buzzer and the last shot. Each missed target is penalized by the addition of five seconds to a competitor's time. During a shoot, 4-H participants travel through a series of stages in a posse (group of shooters) along with an adult range officer. Stages consist of a series of targets set up at distances appropriate for revolvers, rifles, and shotguns. The props of the stage may be as elaborate as a façade of a building, like the front door of the sheriff's office, the window of the church, or just outside the door of the jailhouse, or as simple as engaging targets over a table near a campfire and bedroll.

The historical portion of this project addresses the lack of knowledge many young people have of their own country. Many formal classrooms still rely on the traditional teaching methodologies of history education: lecture and reading the textbook. An abundance of students describe history as boring, irrelevant, and lifeless and increasingly avoid history courses as they advance through school. As a result, few young people learn or enjoy learning American history and, in some measured standards, a full 88% perform below the proficiency level. This is an alarming statistic in a democratic country so dependent on an educated and engaged citizenry.

The participatory living history (PLH) approach to history education contained in the 4-H Western Heritage Project has been shown to increase youth interest in American history while making history fun and relevant. Wearing period correct clothing, firing historic firearms, developing an Old West persona, learning the how things were made in an earlier time, and even the building façades used in a shooting stage all lend to an experience not found in the formal classroom. As some 4-H members have commented, "I feel like I'm there, I'm a part of it". Participatory living history is shown to also increase youth interest in personal family history, create opportunities to visit with family elders, encourage more reading, and open members' eyes to the diversity of the American frontier and the roles of women and minorities. American history is fascinating and true accounts of personal trials, challenges, and triumphs are more thrilling than fiction.

The overall goals of the 4-H Western Heritage Project are as follows:

1. Learning and applying the fundamentals of the safe firearm handling.
2. Place 4-H life-skill development over competition.
3. Provide an enjoyable and action oriented shooting sports activity that will attract and retain 4-H members throughout their teen years.

4-H WESTERN HERITAGE PROJECT INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

4. Create a safe and inclusive environment of learning for all 4-H participants regardless of race, gender, culture, or socio-economic background.
5. Promote a positive image of the 4-H Western Heritage Project, and 4-H in general, to the public at large.
6. Teach in a participatory living history style through the use of historically accurate firearms, clothing, and accessories while participating in the 4-H Western Heritage Project.
7. Preserve and gain an appreciation for the heritage of the American frontier within the time period of 1860-1900.
8. Instill in 4-H members an investigative interest in frontier history leading to personal research and increased knowledge of the Old West, their family heritage, and American history in general.
9. Recognize the accomplishments and importance of both men and women from a diversity of cultures and races that contributed to American frontier history.
10. Promote the 4-H Western Heritage Project and historical study to 4-H programs across the state and country.

Project Requirements

In order to participate in the 4-H Western Heritage Project, 4-H members must meet the following criteria:

1. Nine (9) years of age by October 1st of the current 4-H year - Small bore rifle only (.22 Rimfire). (Turning age 10 between October 1 and September 30 of the current 4-H year).
2. Eleven (11) years of age by October 1st of the current 4-H year - Long Gun and Sidearm (.22 Rimfire rifle, .22 Rimfire pistol, .410 shotgun recommended). (Turning 12 between October 1 and September 30 of the current 4-H year).
3. Have taken Hunters Education or had at least one (1) year of 4-H shooting sports range experience or have taken an equivalent firearms educational course and/or pass the safe firearm assessment test administered by a trained 4-H Western Heritage Project instructor. (see appendix)
4. Demonstrate the ability to safely handle firearms throughout the course of the project in the judgment of the 4-H instructor and fellow 4-H members and parents.
5. Have written permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate in this project in compliance with the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Youth Handgun Safety Act of 1994. (see appendix)

Divisions

Class divisions for the 4-H Western Heritage Project are as follows:

- Junior - 9-11 Years Old - .22 Rimfire Rifle Only (No Pistols)*
- Intermediate – 11-13 Years Old - .22 Rimfire Rifle, .22 Rimfire Pistols, and Shotgun (.410 bore recommended)*
- Senior Rimfire – 14-19 Years Old – .22 Rimfire Rifle, .22 Rimfire Pistols, any period correct Shotgun
- Senior Central Fire – 14-19 Years Old – Central Fire Rifle, Central Fire Pistols, any period correct Shotgun

*Note: 11 year olds must indicate during registration if shooting Intermediate or Junior. **The choice must comply with your state policy.**

Individual programs may wish to divide members into black powder cartridge shooters, smokeless powder shooters, percussion (cap and ball) shooters under the guidance of a certified black powder instructor, or other divisions of their choice as long as the general 4-H rules are followed in each case. However, shooters cannot mix central fire and Rimfire firearms in competition.

Spirit of the Game

The 4-H Western Heritage Project is guided by a philosophy referred to as “The Spirit of the Game.” Much like all 4-H events, “The Spirit of the Game” requires that members fully participate in what the project asks. This includes clothing, equipment, and ethical standards identified or implied in the rules. Participants should not look for ways to create an advantage out of what is or is not stated as a rule or shooting procedure. In 4-H, we would call “The Spirit of the Game” nothing more than good sportsmanship. Regardless of the title, a desire to immerse oneself in the project enhances the enjoyment of all. As stated in the Code of the West, members who adhere to high principles don’t need lengthy rulebooks. Reputations last longer than the memory of competitive scores.

Creating Your Alias (Old West Name)

The 4-H Western Heritage Project does not require every member to take on an alias (assumed name), but it does add a unique element to the project. If you choose to create a name to represent a character from the Old West, it must be appropriate to 4-H and repeatable to a wide audience. You can use historic names like Wild Bill or the Sundance Kid or you can use your imagination. Be careful with names that could be considered racially or ethnically offensive. Your 4-H leader, County 4-H Shooting Sports Committee, or County Extension Agent has the final say on the approval or refusal of your alias.

Developing a historical persona is required when a 4-H member is comfortable doing so. Persona creation is detailed in the Youth Activity Guide and is part of the judged interview process when competing in a state or national contest. A 4-H member’s persona should complement their chosen attire and the firearms they would or would not carry. It is important to note that while holsters may be worn to an interview, carrying firearms, holstered or in a case, is not allowed. Posters or photographs of period correct firearms for the persona are acceptable and encouraged. Some states title the interviews as “clothing interviews”, but the judges actually consider both clothing knowledge and persona development in their final scores.

Firearm, Clothing, and Equipment Guidelines

In an attempt to promote participation among all youth and adult volunteer leaders by eliminating financial barriers, the rules relating to acceptable firearms, clothing, and other equipment are not nearly as restrictive as other Western Action Shooting organizations. The use of historically accurate firearms and attire is strongly encouraged, but not at the cost of buying a complete set of period clothing or an antique or reproduction revolver, rifle, and shotgun. For financial and safety reasons, it is best if 4-H clubs provide the firearms for the project using historical guidelines in this manual. As 4-H members progress in this project, their goal should be to accumulate these items a little at a time while learning more about the Old West era through participation and personal research.

Clothing and Equipment

Young men's clothing may consist of jeans, or other cotton, wool, canvas, or buckskin pants of western styling, and a button down long sleeved shirt. Pullover "long john" type shirts with long sleeves are acceptable. Jackets, coats, or dusters of canvas, leather, or denim are permitted as are vests. Ladies clothing can include long pants as above, a skirt, or a dress. Low front tops and bare shoulders are not recommended for ladies for safety reasons. Shorts, T-shirts, tank tops, or ski or sports clothing are not allowed.

Western style boots, either laced or slip-on, are encouraged although hunting or work style boots are acceptable. Tennis shoes and sandals are prohibited. A western style hat including cowboy hats, bowlers, civil war style caps, and sombreros are encouraged. These hats can be made of straw, palm leave, felt, or wool. Otherwise, shooters can participate hatless. The use of baseball caps is not allowed.

Holsters may be worn, but no firearm or any facsimile of a firearm may be carried in the holster on or off the shooting range. Holsters and cartridge belts must be made of leather. Nylon or plastic belts and holsters are not allowed nor is the use of Velcro. Every attempt should be made to use ammo boxes, carry bags, and other equipment that would be typical of the era of 1860-1900, although plastic or nylon equipment is allowed.

Lesson 2 - Narrative

First Shot Fundamentals - Rifle

Firearms, Calibers, and Ammunition

It is recommended that .22s be used for the first few workshops while training 4-H members in safety and technique. Due to cost effectiveness, **please note that counties may choose to use .22 Rimfire rifles and sidearms throughout this project.** For safety, any firearm to be used in the 4-H Western Heritage Project or any shooting sports activity should be checked by a qualified gunsmith before shooting. It is recommended that county 4-H programs purchase all of their guns in the same caliber (i.e. two .45 revolvers and a .45 rifle). This eliminates the chance of placing the wrong caliber cartridge in a gun and helps ensure that the firearms used are in good working order.

Rifles – Any lever action, pump action, or single shot rifle chambered in a handgun cartridge is allowed. Some common cartridges are listed below. Bolt action and semiautomatic rifles are not allowed. While it is permitted to use firearms that have had “action jobs” for smoother operation, “short stroke” modifications on lever action rifles are prohibited. This rule also applies to rifles with short stoke actions installed in the factory which are prohibited. Rifles are required to operate identically to those manufactured between 1860 and 1900. Acceptable rifle sights are aperture (peep) or open sighted. No scopes are allowed.

For historical purposes, reproductions of the 1860 Henry Rifle, Winchester models 1866, 1873, and 1892, Spencer Rifles, Marlin Models 1894 and 1895, and Colt Lighting Models (pump action) are recommended. Originals in safe operating condition are certainly acceptable. Reproductions of these models are available and easily located through several distributors in the U.S. and from many local gun shops.

Calibers and Ammunition – Most handgun calibers, from .22 Rimfire to .45 Colt, capable of firing a lead or lead alloy bullet at velocities under 1000 feet per second for revolvers and 1300 feet per second for rifles are permitted. These velocities replicate the black powder rounds used from 1860-1900. **The 4-H shooting sports program does not allow the use of reloaded ammunition at any national event and does not recommend reloaded ammunition at any level. It is highly recommended that only factory loaded ammunition be used.** Factory loaded ammunition marketed as “cowboy ammunition” is available in either smokeless or black powder and will meet the velocity requirements stated above. Factory reloaded (used brass) ammunition is considered a factory load. This service is offered by some ammunition manufacturers and can be about half the cost of new factory loads.

Typical cartridges of the cowboy era include .22 Rimfire, .32-20 WCF, .32 S&W Short, .32 S&W Long, .38 Short Colt, .38 Long Colt, .38-40 WCF, .44-40 WCF, .44 S&W American, .44 S&W Russian, .45 Colt, and the .45 S&W. Modern calibers such as the .357 magnum, .38 Special, and .44 magnum may be used if factory loaded to acceptable velocities and lead bullets. The use of .22 Rimfire ammunition throughout the project is by far the most economical option when compared to centerfire cartridges.

All bullets must be made of lead or soft cast lead alloy. Because of a high chance of ricochet and the damage inflicted on steel targets, no bullets made of copper, copper jacketed, or similar makeup are allowed.

Rifle loading will be done in the following sequence:

With the rifle lying on the table with the action open and empty, the shooter will close the lever of the rifle and carefully lay the hammer down on the empty chamber. At this point the rifle can be loaded through the loading gate with the appropriate number of rounds. For .22 Rimfire rifles, lay the firearm on the table with the action open and empty and the muzzle in a safe direction. Close the lever of the rifle and carefully lay the hammer down on the empty chamber. Unscrew the magazine tube rod and remove it from the magazine. Ten rounds can then be fed through the cartridge shaped opening. Once all rounds are in the magazine, replace the tube rod and secure the screw end. The use of a ten round loading block is helpful to ensure that the correct number of rounds are loaded. The rifle is then staged with the chamber remaining empty.

Lesson 3 - Narrative

First Shot Fundamentals - Pistols

Firearms, Calibers, and Ammunition

Sidearms – Any revolver in safe operating condition, including double action revolvers capable of performing as single actions, in a traditional handgun chambering is allowed (see caliber and ammunition section in rifle). Semiautomatic pistols are not allowed. Open sights are required on all revolvers. No telescopic scopes, laser or other types of electronic sight is allowed. Historic reproductions of the Colt Conversion Models (cap and ball firearms modified to fire metallic cartridges), Colt 1872 Open Top Models, 1873 Colt Single Action Army styles, Colt Bisley, 1875 Remington, Smith and Wesson American, and the Smith and Wesson Russian are recommended. Again, originals are welcome if safe and reproductions of these models are available and readily located through several distributors in the U.S. and from many local gun shops.

Important Notice to 4-H Leaders: In compliance with the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Youth Handgun Safety Act of 1994, all 4-H members under the age of 18 must provide a signed permission form from their parent or legal guardian in order to handle and fire a sidearm. An example of this form is provided in the appendix of this document. Remember that only 4-H trained instructors can serve as supervisors in 4-H shooting sports.

Typical cartridges of the cowboy era include .22 Rimfire, .32-20 WCF, .32 S&W Short, .32 S&W Long, .38 Short Colt, .38 Long Colt, .38-40 WCF, .44-40 WCF, .44 S&W American, .44 S&W Russian, .45 Colt, and the .45 S&W. Modern calibers such as the .357 magnum, .38 Special, and .44 magnum may be used if factory loaded to acceptable velocities and lead bullets. The use of .22 Rimfire ammunition throughout the project is by far the most economical option when compared to centerfire cartridges.

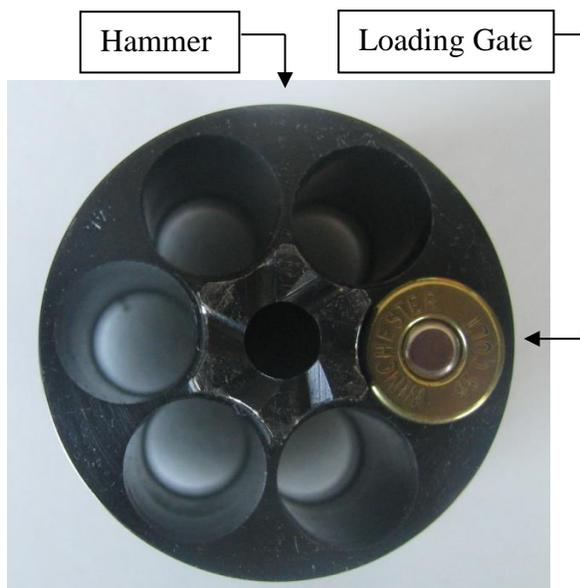
Black Powder Firearms - Black powder “cap and ball” percussion revolvers are acceptable, but only under the supervision of an instructor trained in the 4-H Muzzle Loading discipline as well as the 4-H Western Heritage Project discipline.

Cap and ball percussion revolver shooters may use round balls or conical bullets of a make similar to those of the cowboy era. No jacketed sabots are allowed.

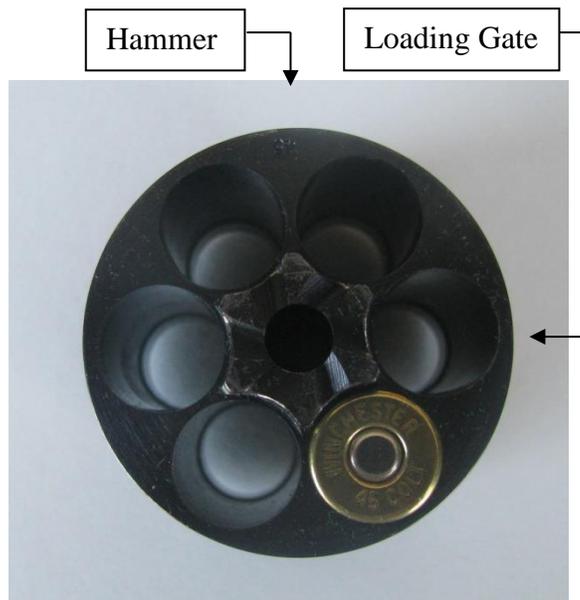
Revolvers are always loaded with the hammer down on an empty chamber. To accomplish this, the shooter will follow the following loading sequence:

With revolver lying on the loading table, the shooter will open the loading gate of the revolver and then place the hammer at the half cock position. The shooter will then load one round in the nearest chamber, then rotate the cylinder past the next chamber leaving it empty, and then load a round in the next 4 chambers. Once the last round is loaded, the shooter will not move the cylinder. Next the shooter will pull the hammer all the way back, hold it with their thumb, pull the trigger to release the hammer, and then, with their thumb, place the hammer all the way down. This procedure will ensure that the hammer is resting on the empty chamber that was skipped during the loading process. It also provides any empty chamber for the hammer to fall on if it slips off the thumb of the shooter. The loading table supervisor will make certain this procedure is done correctly before the shooter is allowed to begin the stage.

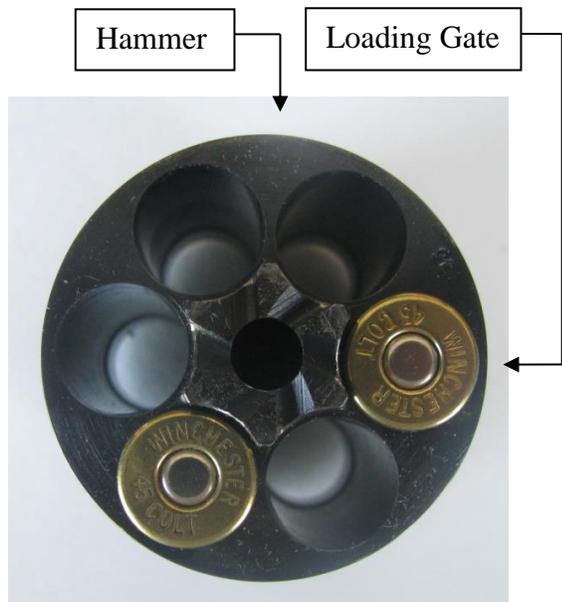
See Diagrams Below



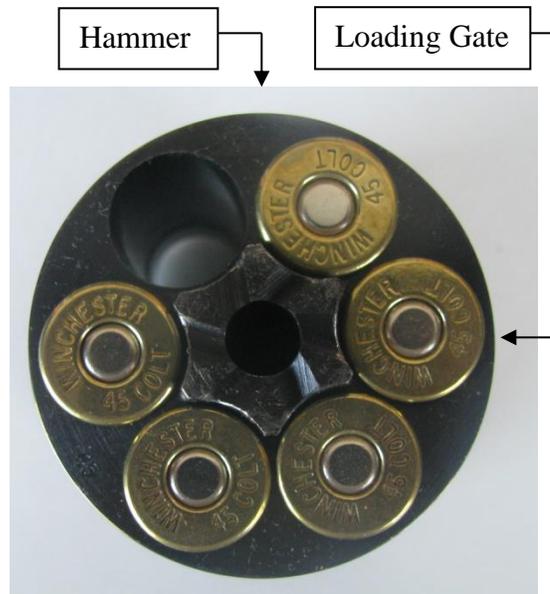
Load One



Skip One

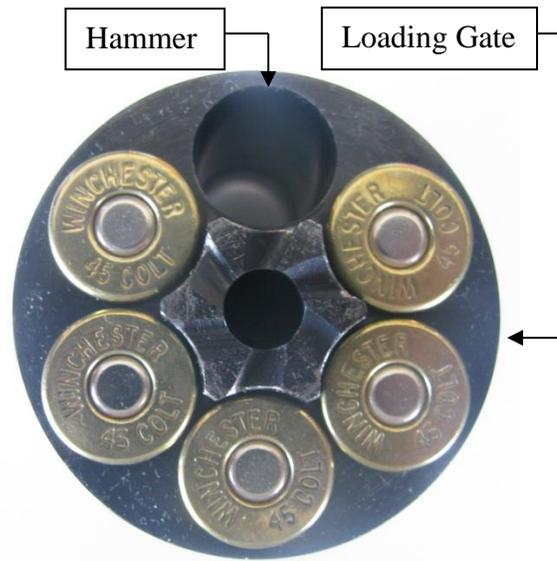


Continue Loading with
Four More Rounds



Don't Move Cylinder
After 5th Round is Loaded

Loading Sequence Continued Next Page



Cock Hammer and Let Down Easy on Empty Chamber

Confirmation that the hammer of a revolver is laying on an empty chamber is easily accomplished by visually inspecting the back of the cylinder from the side of the gun. A quick glance will reveal whether or not a cartridge case is under the hammer. Remember that the muzzle must remain pointed down range at all times.

When using a .22 revolver with a recessed chamber it is often difficult for the loading table supervisor to see the position of the empty chamber. Designating the first chamber loaded by painting a white (or orange) line on the cylinder, or marking it in some way, is **required** and greatly assists the loading table supervisor in ensuring a properly loaded .22 revolver. Take particular care with .22 revolvers that have more than six chambers.

Lesson 4 - Narrative

First Shot Fundamentals - Shotguns

Firearms, Gauges, and Ammunition

Shotguns – Any shotgun used in the 4-H Western Heritage Project must be in safe operating condition. Break open (single barrel or double barrel) shotguns without the use of automatic ejectors are allowed. Period correct lever action and pump actions shotguns may also be used, but cannot be loaded with any more than two shells at a time. Bolt action or semiautomatic shotguns are not allowed. Due to chamber irregularities and the high pressure generated by smokeless powder, it is not recommended to use modern ammunition in antique shotguns. Reproductions of the Colt 1878 Exposed Hammer Side by Side/Double Barrel Shotgun, the Colt 1883 Internal Hammer Side by Side/Double Barrel Shotgun, the Winchester 1887 Lever Action Shotgun, and the Winchester 1897 Pump Action Shotgun are recommended. With the popularity of Western Action Shooting, there are several sources on the market for these firearms.

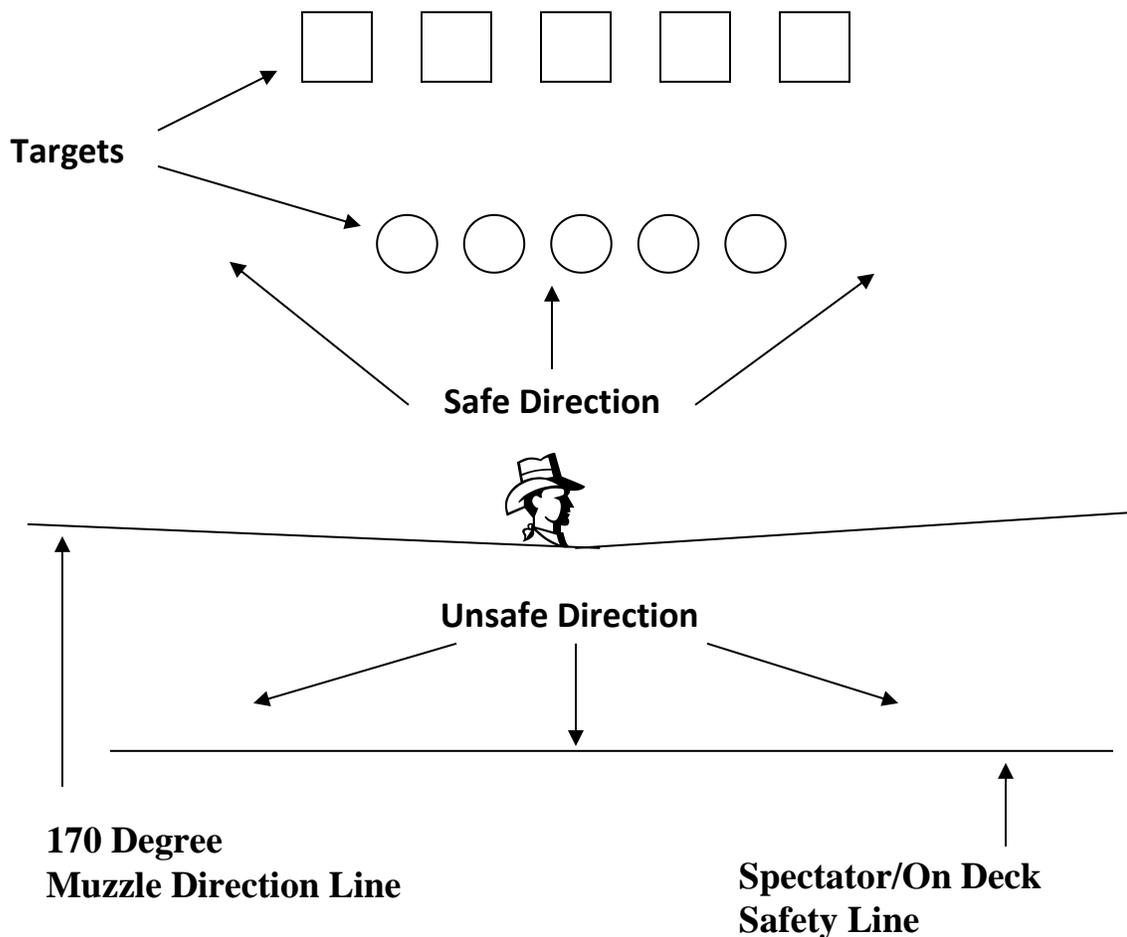
Acceptable shotgun gauges include 12, 16, 20, 28 and .410 bore with #7 ½ shot or smaller pellet size. Only 2 ½ inch .410 bore shotshells are allowed. Three inch .410 bore shotshells are prohibited. Shotgun rounds must be low velocity and loaded with lead shot only with pellet size no larger than #7 ½. Low velocity, light shotgun loads are more than sufficient to knock down shotgun targets. The recoil generated by heavy shotgun loads will needlessly punish the shoulder of young shooters, cause target damage, and increase the risk of ricochet.

Lesson 8 - Narrative Setting Up The Stage

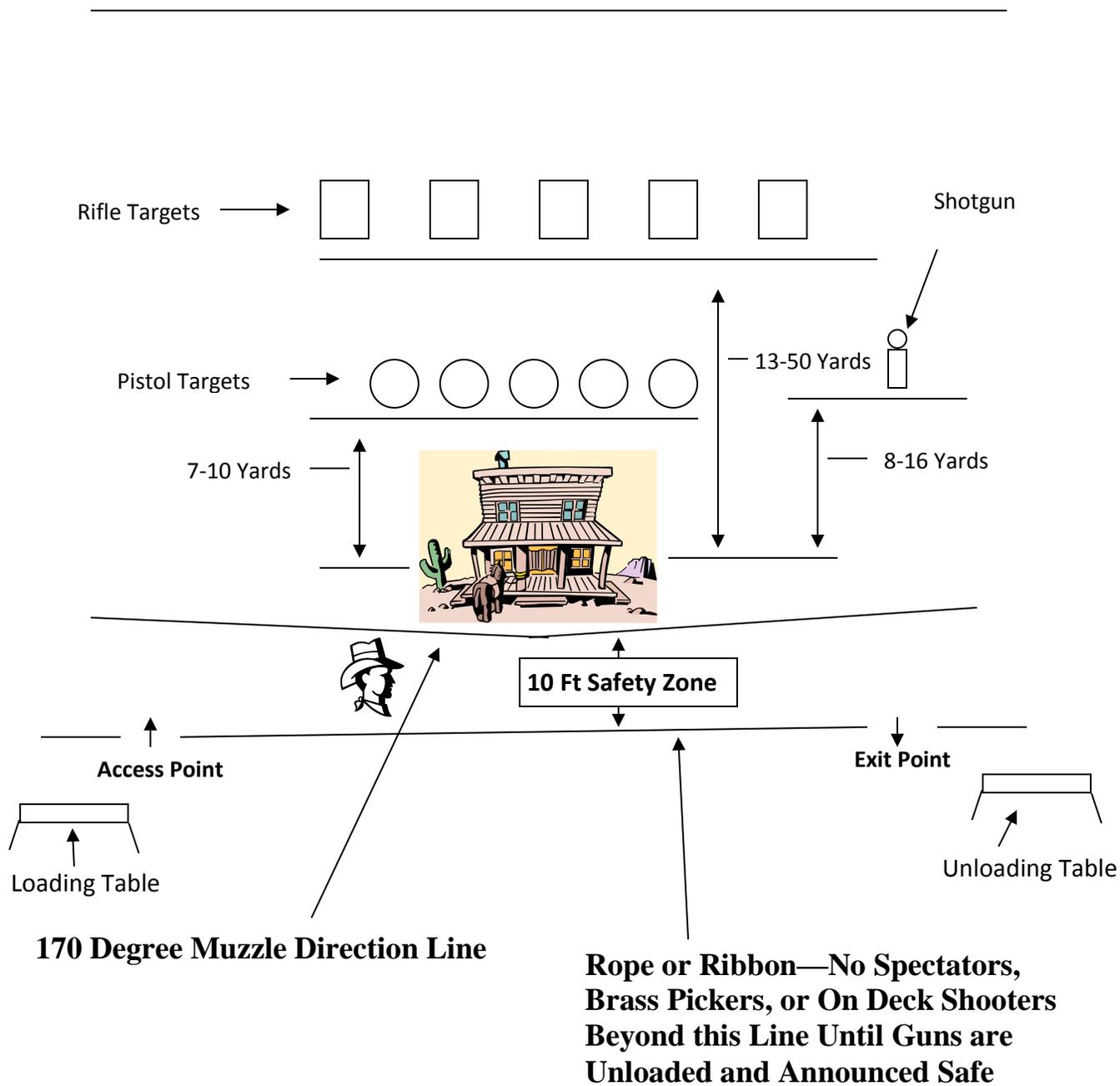
4-H Western Heritage Shooting is intended to be a safe and enjoyable learning experience. It is not a precision shooting competition. For this reason, large targets at reasonable distances are used to facilitate success. Small targets and long distances can frustrate and discourage newer shooters. Everyone wants to hit their targets. Shooters who accumulate too many misses begin to perceive the targets as too difficult to hit. Often times discouraged youth will drop out of the project due to a feeling of failure or embarrassment. Don't take the fun out of the 4-H Western Heritage Project. It only defeats the purpose.

No target in the 4-H program will be in the human form or readily perceived as a human form. Metal, cardboard, or paper targets at least 16 inches by 16 inches should be used. Reactive targets such as falling plates can enhance shooter feedback and spectator appeal. There are no "official" rules, but the following distance guidelines may help you get started:

Revolver Targets – 7 to 10 yards
Shotgun Targets – 8 to 16 yards
Rifle Targets – 13 to 50 yards



Typical Target Placement



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Personnel

It is recommended that each stage be under the supervision of four (4) non-shooters which must include at least one 4-H trained adult. Their roles are Range Officer/Timer, Loading Area Supervisor, Unloading Area Supervisor, and Hit and Miss Recorder. For the sake of time, it is appropriate for the other members of the posse at the stage to pick up empty brass after the shooter has completed the stage, the firearms are made safe, and the Range Officer instructs them to do so.

Role of the Range Officer

The role of the Range Officer is to safely assist the shooter through the course of fire. Advising proper procedure and constraining the shooter from unsafe acts is expected when appropriate to minimize procedural and safety penalties whenever possible. It is also the responsibility of the Range Officer to count the rounds expended by the shooter. If the shooter does not empty their firearm (usually 5 shots in each revolver and 10 in the rifle) the range officer will order the shooter to fire their remaining rounds down range. This eliminates a gun with live rounds being carried to the unloading table. Often times, the Range Office takes on the responsibility of carrying the timer as he/she shadows the 4-H shooter. The Range Officer serving as the Timer is the most practical way to run a stage.

It is expected that the Range Officer will be the responsible party for observing and resolving all safety related matters occurring in the loading, unloading, and firing line areas. However, any shooter who observes a safety infraction not seen by the Range Officer(s) should call the infraction to the Range Officer's attention, at which time the matter will be resolved.

Role of the Loading Table Supervisor

The Loading Table Supervisor's role is to make certain that the revolvers are loaded with the appropriate number of rounds (usually 5) and that the hammer is resting on an empty chamber before the revolvers are staged and that the rifle magazine is also loaded appropriately with the hammer resting on an empty chamber. Junior rifles and Intermediate pistols are loaded by the Loading Table Supervisor. The Loading Table Supervisor also makes certain that the caliber correct ammunition is loaded into each firearm. Using a single caliber throughout the project great reduces this risk. It is the responsibility of the Loading Table Supervisor that all muzzles remain pointed in a safe direction throughout the loading process.

Role of the Unloading Table Supervisor

The Unloading Table Supervisor's role is to require the shooter to safely make safe each firearm while keeping the muzzles pointed in a safe direction. This includes observing the shooter work the action of a rifle and inspecting the chamber to be sure it is empty, asking the shooter to unload the revolvers and spin the cylinders to be certain the revolver is empty, and similarly inspecting the chamber or chambers of the shotgun. If a loaded round makes its way to the unloading table, the Unloading Table Supervisor is required to notify the Range Officer immediately. It is the shooter's and Range Officer's responsibility to make certain that all loaded rounds are expended during the stage. Once each firearm is declared safe by the Unloading Table Supervisor, the firearms may be safely carried back to the loading table or other designated area with the muzzles always pointed in a safe direction.

Loading/Unloading

All loading and unloading shall be conducted only in the designated areas such as the loading or unloading table and only when the designated area is manned by a 4-H leader. Follow the same procedures as detailed in First Shot Fundamentals.

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Senior shooters will load, stage, and unload his/her own firearms while under supervision, except for those physically challenged or inexperienced who may request assistance. Junior rifle and Intermediate pistols will be loaded by the loading table supervisor. Any misloaded firearm by the loading table supervisor will constitute a reshoot.

When shooters or adult leaders are carrying firearms to the loading or unloading table, rifle muzzles must be held in a vertical position with muzzles above the head. Revolvers must be carried by grasping around the cylinder and pointing the muzzle in a safe direction. Revolvers may not be carried by the grip or with a finger in the trigger guard.

Staging the Firearms

At no time while carrying firearms, including while staging, are fingers allowed in the trigger guard unless the shooter is on the firing line in the act of shooting. Shooters failing to observe this rule may be disqualified from competition.

All staged guns shall have their barrels pointed safely down range. All long guns staged horizontally shall be staged lying flat. If staged vertically, all long guns must be placed in a rack with a barrel notch to eliminate any chance of the gun falling over. To save time, the range officer may stage a firearm, but the shooter is allowed to reposition the firearm.

Rifles may be staged down range from the shooter with the magazine loaded, action closed, hammer down, and chamber empty.

Guns are never staged with their muzzles on the ground.

Revolvers must be staged on a flat, skid resistant surface at least 9 inches wide and 1 foot long such as a window sill or table. The skid resistant surface may be buckskin, a wool blanket, or other traditional style item. In the absence of this, carpet samples may be used.

Shotguns are always staged open with magazine and chambers empty and are loaded on the clock unless the stage begins with the shotgun in the shooter's hands. (Muzzle loading shotguns may be charged but not capped.) All empty shells must be ejected before grounding/restaging the firearm.

Shotguns with exposed hammers will be staged with hammers down, actions open and empty, and safeties on if so equipped. All other shotguns, including internal hammered double barreled, will be staged with actions open and empty with safeties on. Shooters will load shotguns when preparing to fire, close the breach, and then cock the hammers or disengage the safety.

All firearms will be staged with the trigger over a surface when staged horizontal. Triggers resting off the surface are prohibited. The 4-H shooter is not allowed to carry firearms from place to place during a stage or have pistol in their holster. This rule will prevent mishaps that may occur when a revolver is drawn from the holster or while re-holstering the revolver. No more than two rounds may be loaded into shotguns at any time. (Applies to pump or lever action shotguns)

Dry firing is never allowed and results in a stage disqualification. Dry firing is defined as the act of cocking the hammer or working the action and pulling the trigger as if to cause the gun to fire normally.

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No one other than the shooter and Range Officer are allowed in the 10 foot wide Safety Zone directly behind the firing line once the shooter is prepared to begin. If at a range with permanent loading tables in the safety zone, the Loading Table Supervisor is required to move behind the safety zone line as soon as their job is done and the guns are staged. The Unloading Table Inspector may enter the safety zone at the instruction of the Range Officer when the stage is completed. If the range is bermed on both sides of the stage and the loading and unloading tables can be positioned behind the safety zone and separated from the audience, loading and unloading may be done while a shooter is actively engaging a stage. This facilitates a faster flow of shooters through the stage, but is dictated by the layout of the shooting range.

Shooting the Stage

If no starting position is given the shooter shall stand fully erect with firearms staged, hands at the side not touching any firearm. If beginning the scenario with the shotgun, shooters may not start with ammunition in hand. The shotgun will be loaded from a bucket, a box of ammo, or a loading block placed at the shotgun's location in the scenario or ammunition may be positioned on a table or flat surface by the shooter. No ammunition is carried on the shooters person.

Changing location with a firearm during a stage, loaded or unloaded, is prohibited at all times. There is absolutely no running or walking with a loaded or unloaded firearm during the live shooting phase of the stage. Shooting position adjustment is permitted. All shooting with a particular firearm must be completed and the firearm re-staged before the competitor moves to the next part of the stage. Once the firearm is cocked, one foot must remain in place on the ground until the firearm is made safe. Participating 4-H members may not change location during a stage while in possession of any firearm.

Revolvers will be shot with a two-handed grip only with neither hand in front of the cylinder. This grip allows a shooter to cock the revolver with their weak hand wrapped around their strong hand which, in turn, is holding the gun. Unlike a one-handed grip style, the two-hand grip style does not require the hand to be opened, the thumb on the strong hand moved to cock the hammer, and the grip weakened from shot to shot. Using the two-handed grip greatly reduces the chance that the gun might slip and pivot the barrel in an unsafe direction. Obviously the two-handed grip rule does not allow 4-H shooters, under any circumstance, to fire two revolvers at the same time. A shooter shall not cock any pistol until the firearm is pointed safely down range and is actively engaged in shooting a stage. De-cocking a revolver, rifle, or external hammer shotgun may **not** be done with a live round under the hammer. De-cocking may not be done to avoid a penalty if cocked at the wrong time or position. The penalty for de-cocking is a Stage Disqualification.

Revolvers are to be re-staged with hammer down on a spent case or empty chamber at the conclusion of the shooting string. A shooting string is defined as shots from one type of firearm prior to the next type of firearm being engaged.

Long guns will be re-staged with the action open and empty with the barrel(s) pointed safely down range.

Once a pistol is cocked, the round under the hammer must be expended in order for it to be returned to a safe condition except in the case of a cease fire. Once a rifle is cocked, either the round under the hammer must be expended or the action opened in order for the rifle to be returned to a safe condition. No cocked or loaded firearm is allowed to leave the shooters hand except for a malfunction. This also means from one hand to the other. Shotgun shells may be removed, if necessary, without penalty in order to return the firearm to a safe condition.

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All knockdown shotgun targets must be reengaged until down.

All knockdown targets (shotgun, rifle, or revolver) must fall over to be considered a hit. Special consideration is allowed for 4-H members using .22 caliber ammunition at the discretion of the range officer/project leaders.

Ammunition dropped by a shooter in the course of reloading any firearm (most likely a shotgun) during a stage or “ejected” from any firearm is considered “dead” and may not be recovered until the shooter completes the course of fire. The round must be replaced from the source as required by stage description. If the round is never fired, such as ejected from a rifle, it is counted as a missed shot.

There is no breaking of the 170 degree safety plane with the muzzle direction of any firearm at any time during the stage.

A dropped loaded or unloaded firearm ends the stage for a shooter as a stage disqualification or a match disqualification at the discretion of the range officer and/or the project leaders. The responsibility of recovering a firearm that falls on the ground lies with the adult range officer/timer or an adult posse leader only. This individual will recover the gun, examine it, clear it, and take it to the unloading table.

If a competitor has a firearm malfunction that cannot be cleared on the line, the shooter may not leave the berm/stage until the firearm has been cleared at the unloading table or if instructed by the range officer.

Refusal to follow the range officer’s direction regarding safety or procedural rules will be grounds for expulsion from the 4-H Western Heritage Project.

Cease Fire Procedure

Upon hearing the command "cease fire," or being made aware of other danger signals, the shooter will immediately cease firing and keep their firearm pointed down range with the muzzle in a downward position. On open action or a hammer down on a spent case is considered safe allowing the range officer or another adult to assist.

If the hammer is in the cocked position when a cease fire is called, the lever of the rifle must be opened or the action of a shotgun must be opened. If a revolver is cocked when the “cease fire” is called the shooter will keep their finger out of the trigger guard, keep the muzzle in a safe direction, and allow the Range Officer to assist them by placing his or her thumb between the hammer and the frame and taking the pistol to the unloading table.

When Shooting is Completed

Each shooter is required to retrieve his or her firearms with the help of the adult 4-H leader and go directly to a manned unloading table after the stage is completed. The Unloading Officer or Range Officer MUST inspect all firearms before they can be declared safe.

The range officer may invite helpers in the Safety Zone if muzzle direction allows. If muzzle are directed downrange, brass pickers and target setters must wait until the range is safe.

All rifles and pump or lever action shotguns must have their action cycled for the inspecting official. Shotguns may remain open and empty at the staging location once inspected by the

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range officer, but only if the next shooter is using the same shotgun. Pistols unloaded through the loading gate and the cylinder turned at least twice while visually inspected by the unloading table supervisor. Once each chamber is confirmed empty, the loading gate remains open the the hammer at half-cock.

All firearms can be moved, under supervision, to the loading table if used by the next shooter or cased if not used by the next shooter.

Scoring and Timing

4-H Western Heritage Shooting is a timed event and is scored in seconds beginning at the sound of the first beep from the range officer's hand-held timer and ending at the sound of the last shot. A five (5) second penalty is added to the shooter's time for each missed shot during any given stage. A ten (10) second penalty is added for unintentional mistakes termed "procedurals" and minor safety violations. The recorded elapsed time, plus penalties, of each stage are added together for a final score. Final scores are used to rank competitors from the quickest time to the longest time.

Misses – a miss is defined as the failure of the shooter to strike the intended target with a bullet or pellet from the appropriate type of firearm or not knocking over a knockdown target. Examples of this would be simply missing a rifle target while engaging with a rifle or failing to hit a knockdown target with enough force to knock it down. (At times, .22s may not have enough force to knock down some knockdown targets. Special considerations are allowed). A missed shotgun knockdown target must be reengaged until down. There is no miss penalty if a shotgun target remains standing. The penalty is the time required to reload the shotgun and reengage the missed target. Each miss results in a five (5) second penalty.

Procedural Penalty – a procedural is a mistake that occurs when a competitor fails to complete the stage the way it was designed. Examples of procedurals would include firing at a pistol target with a rifle, not following the course pattern as the range officer described (firing a sweep in an improper sequence), or failure to complete any portion of the stage. Procedurals result in a ten (10) second penalty and only one (1) can be assessed per stage.

Failure to place guns or ammunition at the designated position(s) is the fault of the competitor and scored as a procedural unless the competitor is able to correct the situation, unassisted, before the timer starts. Once the timer starts, no guns can be re-staged. Remember, the 4-H program does not allow members to change locations with a firearm in hand.

Minor Safety Violation – A safety violation is considered minor when the incident does not put anyone in direct or immediate danger. Examples of minor safety violations include the failure to leave a rifle action open at the end of its use during a stage, the failure to restage a sidearm at the end of a shooting string, or a live round in a gun discovered at the unloading table. Minor Safety Violations result in a ten (10) second penalty per occurrence at each stage. A Range Officer may issue a warning in the place of a 10 second penalty at their discretion as long as this decision is consistent.

Major Safety Violation – A safety violation is considered major when the incident endangers any person at the event. Major Safety Violations include an accidental discharge that impacts anywhere other than downrange, breaking the 170 degree safety rule, allowing the muzzle of the firearm to sweep anyone in the audience or on the range, dropping a gun, or any other occurrence that has the potential for personal injury. The penalty for a Major Safety Violation is disqualification from the stage or match at the discretion of the 4-H range officer present at that

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stage. With proper training and practice, major safety violations will be rare or nonexistent in the 4-H Western Heritage Project. **It is the responsibility of the adult range officer to shadow the 4-H member during the course of fire in order to be in the physical position to prevent any safety violations.**

Intentional Procedural – An Intentional Procedural occurs when a competitor purposely or intentionally disregards the stage instructions in order to obtain a competitive advantage. This may occur when a competitor feels they could take a penalty and still shoot a faster time than if they followed the proper procedure. This is considered a violation of the Spirit of the Game and 30 seconds is added to a competitor's time in addition to other penalties.

Appeals – If the competitor believes a ruling is in error, the 4-H member alone may politely appeal the decision to the group of trained 4-H shooting sports leaders present. Appeals must be made before the posse leaves the stage. The group's decision will be based solely on the rules pertaining to the safety violation and is final regardless of the size of the group.

Reshoots - Reshoots may be awarded for ammunition or firearm malfunctions if the problem is out of the control of the shooter. This rule is in place because most 4-H programs share firearms and ammunition among many shooters. Therefore, equipment becomes extremely fouled and cartridges are often provided to the shooter. If there is a range failure (failure of props, timer, or a loading table supervisor or the range officer's mistake) beyond the competitor's control, a reshoot may also be granted. On a reshoot, the competitor starts over clean, carrying only accrued safety and procedural penalties forward.

Rules of the Range

Range Safety Rules and Regulations (Adapted from the National Congress of Old West Shootists and the Single Action Shooting Society)

General Safety Rules

All participants must attend a safety meeting before shooting in any event.

Treat and respect every firearm as if it were loaded.

Always keep the muzzle of any firearm pointed in a safe direction.

All firearms will be placed on the loading table under supervision of a 4-H leader. This includes both club guns and privately owned firearms. No 4-H member or spectator will be allowed to wear firearms.

No loaded firearms except at the firing line or loading table.

All long guns will have actions open at all times except on the firing line or when in a case.

No fanning or twirling a firearm at any time.

No fast draw competition. No quick-draw at any time.

Shooters are responsible for the safe condition of their firearms. County 4-H Western Heritage Project leaders who have a concern, or are alerted to a concern by others present, may request to inspect any firearm at any time. If the firearm is considered unsafe by the 4-H range officer

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and/or a committee of 4-H Western Heritage Project leaders, it may not be used in the project until repairs are made. This decision is final.

Eye and ear protection is required for all competitors and spectators. Safety glasses with side shields are recommended. Ear muff-style hearing protectors are allowed, as are modern-designed shooting glasses.

No alcohol is allowed. No illegal controlled substances at any time. No smoking at any time.

Interpersonal Conflicts WILL NOT be tolerated. Good sportsmanship is expected at all times.

Remember to think safety first and always! Shooters and spectators are encouraged to speak up if they witness anyone handling a firearm improperly, but they must also remain courteous. If someone points out that a shooter is handling a firearm carelessly, the shooter should be grateful, not upset. It's better to be corrected than have someone get hurt.

Remember the Spirit of the Game!