

Heffley Creek Gun Club

Black Powder Range Officer Training Course

Instructor – introduce yourself (name, what you do and your experience with black powder).

Students introduce themselves (name, what they do, experience with bp).

A range officer must accompany every group on the trail.

The Range Officer is the person in charge and safety is the first concern.

If some people who are taking the course are not familiar with black powder shooting some explanations are needed. Normally it is quite relaxed with very little pressure. Regimentation of military type shooting has no place in black powder shooting, nor is the pressure for speed normally found in black powder shooting.

You will find that older shooters do quite a bit of visiting and joking while they are reloading. This should not lead to carelessness, however, if people are not paying attention to what they are doing you may have to remind them to be more careful. Horseplay is not allowed.

Possibly the first thing to observe is how people in your group handle their firearms. Even if they say it is unloaded, make sure that no one allows the muzzle of their firearm point at themselves or anyone else.

Half cock is the safety on black powder firearms. Everyone should have the hammer on half cock.

Smoking or doing anything else that has anything to do with flame or fire is not allowed near powder horns or any type of powder holding container.

If you see anyone doing something that looks unsafe, bring it to that person's attention. Try to do this in a tactful way, being confrontational or yelling will usually get the person's back up and they will argue with you – try and avoid this. That said, remember you are the person in charge – do not let anyone continue to do something that is unsafe.

If they can explain what they are doing is in face safe to your satisfaction then you may let them continue to do it that way (I have been shooting a lot longer than you have and this is the way I have always done it is to an acceptable explanation.).

Some information on powder: smokeless powder is under normal conditions not an explosive while black powder is. Smokeless powder will explode under high pressure. Black powder will explode under low pressure. That said, the pressure produced by a

charge of smokeless powder in a barrel designed for black powder will burst the barrel with probable disastrous consequences.

It is quite possible that everyone in the group knows how to load; however, we will go over it anyways. For those people who are not familiar with black powder, loading is done behind the firing line. If not already done, run dry patch down barrel. If nothing else the ram rod should be dropped down barrel to make sure there is nothing in the barrel. Check flint, clean and dry pan.

When loading a percussion gun, it is a good idea to snap a cap before you begin to load. This is done on the firing line with the barrel pointing down range at the ground. If the end of the barrel is near a tuft of grass and the grass moves when the cap is fired then the channel is clear. Make sure to remove the spent cap from the nipple and set the hammer at half cock. If using flintlock, make sure the pan is empty. It is also a good practice to clear the touch hole on a flint lock with a vent pick. If the touch hole is cleaned before loading anything pushed out of the vent will probably fall away from the hole. Using the vent pick the firearm is loaded this will push any debris into powder charge and may tend to insulate the powder from the flame from the pan. Powder must be poured from the flask or horn into a measure and then into the barrel is must never be poured directly into the barrel from the horn or flask.

1. Pour measured charge of powder from measure down barrel.
2. Start lubed patch and ball down barrel with short starter.
3. Seat ball on powder with ramrod. Ramrod safety should be viewed here. If using a wooded ramrod always grip the ramrod with the hand a short distance from the end of the barrel using short strokes and not at the end of the rod – this way there is less chance of breaking the rod and shoving the broken part through the hand. Never put the hand on top of the ramrod and seat the ball with one continuous fast stroke as this could produce enough heat to set off the powder charge by diesel effect. This would drive the ramrod up through the person's hand. This is not just theory – it has happened.
4. Make sure the ramrod is not left in the barrel.
5. Capping and priming are done on the firing line with the muzzle pointing down range. The ramrod should have a mark so that it can be used if necessary to see if the gun is loaded.

Pistols are loaded in the same way as long guns – care must be taken to ensure it does not point at someone.

Revolvers need some coverage here.

It is safest to just load one chamber; however, a lot of shooters say they have 6 chambers why not load them all. Our rules say only 5 may be loaded at one time never 6.

When a shooter shoots at the target they may move to the next station with the hammer either down or at half cock on that empty chamber – if they pull it to full cock they must either fire it or turn the cylinder until the hammer rests on an empty chamber before moving to the next station.

Blowing down the barrel is allowed on the Heffley range only if the blow tube is used and the barrel does not point at someone's head. We have a rule that you are not allowed to point a firearm at yourself.

If someone feels that blowing down the barrel with one's mouth over the muzzle is the only way to put out a glowing ember that is lurking down the barrel waiting to ignite the next powder charge, then suggest a moist patch run down the barrel should put out anything smoldering down there. If this is not satisfactory to them and they still insist that they must blow down the barrel with the gun pointed at their head, then yes, they can do this as long as it is done somewhere off of the gun club property.

If you are shooting as well as doing the job of the RO for the group, depending on how large the group is and how experienced they are you may not be able to score as well. Scoring is not necessarily part of the RO's duties, have someone else do it if necessary.

Range commands:

Load and make ready or (you have 5 min to load and make ready) whatever was decided on for this match.

Ready on the right, ready on the left

Ready on the firing line

Stand by

Fire

Cease fire

As you were (this means disregard the last comment, wait for it to be given again or an explanation).

Heffley Creek Gun Club Muzzle Loading Range Officer Test

True/False – answer whether the following statements are either True or False

1. Drinking alcoholic beverages before and during shooting is ok.
 True False
2. HCGC black powder range is an informal range where a minimum of range commands are used.
 True False
3. The range command “Cease Fire” can only be given by the Range Officer.
 True False
4. The Range Officer should ensure that all shooters know the range rules and the rules of each match before the match starts.
 True False
5. Shooters can start shooting as soon as they are ready.
 True False
6. Shooters may snap percussion caps in the loading area.
 True False
7. Cap locks may be snapped and flint locks may be primed in the loading area.
 True False
8. The range officer will allow a shooter to leave the firing line with a loaded firearm.
 True False
9. A flintlock is safe to transport in a vehicle loaded but with the cock down and pan clean.
 True False
10. Pyrodex can safely be used in flintlock firearms.
 True False
11. Always blow down your barrel after each shot to clear out the spark before you reload.
 True False

Multiple Choice – Answer the following questions by choosing the best possible answer.

12. Who is in charge of the range and its safe operation.
 A. Shooters
 B. Club members
 C. Range Officer
13. Black powder should be kept tightly sealed in its original container with labels because:
 A. It is sensitive to heat and sparks
 B. It can be harmed by moisture
 C. It must be correctly identified
 D. All of the above

14. When pouring black powder into the barrel of a Muzzle Loader, it is important you use:

- A. A funnel
- B. A powder horn
- C. A preset measure

15. Black powder is classified as a(n):

- A. Explosive
- B. Oxidizing agent
- C. Propellant

16. The lock on a Muzzle Loading firearm:

- A. Is a safety device that locks the hammer
- B. Contains the firing mechanism that ignites the powder charge
- C. Is part of the sighting system
- D. Locks the trigger to prevent firing

17. Training to shoot a Muzzle Loading firearm:

- A. It uses black powder which requires special handling
- B. It requires special accessories to load
- C. It is loaded and fired differently than modern firearms
- D. All of the above

18. When granulation of black powder would be used to prime the flash pan on a Flintlock firearm?

- A. FG
- B. FFG
- C. FFFG
- D. FFFFFG

19. Which granulation of black powder would you use in a .58 cal Black Powder firearm?

- A. FG
- B. FFG
- C. FFFG
- D. FFFFFG

20. A safe substitute for black powder is:

- A. W231
- B. Pyrodex
- C. 2474
- D. None of the above

21. When a cap lock firearm misfires you should:

- A. Immediately replace the cap and try to fire again
- B. Remove the nipple
- C. Keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction for a minute or so
- D. Clean the flash channel

22. After you have determined your Muzzle Loader is unloaded, the next thing you should do before loading is:

- A. Blow down the barrel
- B. Snap two or three percussion caps
- C. Wipe and clean all grease and oil from bore and chambers
- D. Remove the nipple

23. The flint should, when in half cock position:

- A. Not touch the frizzen
- B. Push open the frizzen
- C. Be held in the Jaws
- D. Touch the frizzen firmly

24. Smoking is allowed on the black powder range

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. It makes no difference
- D. In a smoking area only

25. Your target falls down after your third shot in a 10 shot match. Do you:

- A. Walk down range and put it up
- B. Yell out loud and clear "CEASE FIRE!"
- C. Wait until everyone is finished then put your target up and finish shooting
- D. Raise your hand for the Range Officer

Name (first and last name required) _____

Telephone number _____

Date _____