



AIR RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP FOR YOUTH

*A resource for youth-program leaders,
decision-makers, parents and youth.*



This Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) document provides comprehensive, factual information for youth organization leaders, school administrators and parents to consider when making decisions about starting youth air rifle marksmanship programs in JROTC units, junior shooting clubs, club or varsity rifle teams, physical education courses and other youth programs. Youth who are interested in air rifle marksmanship, and their parents, may also use this document to learn more about this sport. To obtain additional information about target shooting, contact the CMP at 419-635-2141 or email at programs@thecmp.org.

WHAT IS AIR RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP? Air rifle marksmanship is part of the Olympic sport of shooting. There are two air rifle events, one for men and one for women, in the Summer Olympic Games. Air rifle target shooting participants fire 4.5 mm (.177 cal.) air rifles in three different shooting positions at targets 10 meters away. These air rifles are designed specifically for target shooting. All sports measure athlete performances by comparing times or scores. In air rifle, shots fired at targets are scored according to how close they are to the center of the target. Target shooting athletes develop fine motor control, coordination, self-control and mental discipline skills and must demonstrate strict obedience to safety rules. Air rifle shooting is practiced as a sport in more than 150 countries. In the U.S., air rifle is a popular high school and youth club sport as well as an NCAA Championship sport.



Li Siling from China raises her air rifle in triumph immediately after firing her last shot in the Women's Air Rifle final in the London Olympic Games and learning that she just won the first gold medal of the 2012 Games.

Air rifle marksmanship is one of the safest youth sports. Air rifle marksmanship may be the only youth sport that actually tries to achieve a "zero accidents" goal. The CMP currently enrolls over 2,000 high school rifle teams and over 1,000 junior rifle clubs. More than 250,000 youth participate in these programs. Every year more than 1,500 junior air rifle competitions are conducted in the USA. In the last 10 years, these organizations and competitions reported only six minor injuries resulting from the improper handling of air rifles. The injury rate for air rifle marksmanship is no greater than 0.0017 per a/e (athlete exposure) per year. This ranks far below the injury rates for all other youth sports where statistics are kept. Air rifle marksmanship is extraordinarily safe because rigorous safety rules and training are provided for all leaders and participants from the very first day they join a program. Air rifle marksmanship may well be the safest of all youth sports.



One of the reasons youth air rifle marksmanship is so safe is because trained Range Officers and Coaches provide close supervision.

Shooting is a sport for all. Rifle target shooting is a sport where sex, size, speed or "natural ability" do not determine success.

- Target shooting is a skill sport that offers participation benefits to an exceptionally wide variety of youth, including many who do not have the size, height, strength or speed to succeed in many other sports.

- Air rifle participants succeed because of motivation and practice; hard work and practice is always the biggest "difference-maker;" the most important "talent" in shooting is motivation and interest.

- Girls and boys compete equally in rifle; over 40% of recent college All-American teams were women; 70% of the top 20 athletes in four different 2014 CMP and National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship events were female.

- Target shooting is a lifetime sport where active participation can start as early as age 10 and continue until age 70 or 80 or even beyond.

Target rifle shooting teaches valuable life skills. The discipline and practice of target rifle shooting is extremely effective in teaching life skills that enhance student performances in schoolwork as well as in home, family, social and work-related activities. Life skills that are most effectively developed through marksmanship include:

- Self control, self discipline and emotional control
- Responsibility
- Concentration and attention skills
- Goal-setting and learning how to achieve goals
- Fair play, teamwork and leadership
- Rewards of hard work, practice and competition
- Self-image enhancement



The athletes who place in the top eight in 3-position air rifle events and qualify for final round competition are now equally divided between males and females.

Shooting is an Olympic sport. There are 38 different Summer and Winter Olympic sports. Four of these sports, Shooting, Archery, Biathlon and Modern Pentathlon, involve target shooting.

- Shooting is one of 28 Summer Olympic sports; Shooting has 15 different medal events for rifles, pistols and shotguns.
- Shooting was included in the first Modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 and has been included in every Olympics since then, except in 1904 and 1928.
- Nine Olympic Shooting events are for men; six are for women.
- There are five Olympic events for rifle, five for pistol and five for shotgun shooting.
- There are two air rifle and two air pistol events in Olympic shooting.
- Since 1988, the first gold medal of the Summer Olympic Games for all 28 sports has been awarded to the winner of the women's 10m Air Rifle event.
- Shooting is one of the most popular sports in the Olympics; 108 nations qualified athletes to compete in the 2012 Olympics. Only three sports had more participating nations.

Riflery is a popular high school sport. High school rifle teams participate regularly in leagues, regional competitions and state championships every year in many parts of the country. The CMP affiliation system enrolls over 2,000 high school rifle teams from 45 different states, but the actual numbers are probably higher. The Georgia High School Association recognizes rifle as a varsity sport; 126 Georgia High Schools have varsity rifle teams that compete during the season in eight districts where they can qualify for a state championship tournament. The Hawaii High School Athletic Association recognizes Boys and Girls Riflery as one of its 16 state championship sports. State high school air rifle championships are organized in several other states. High school air rifle competitions are organized on a regional or league basis in most states.

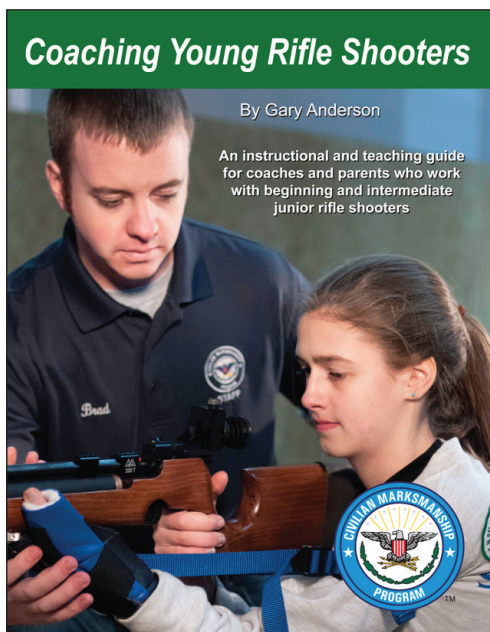


Shooting is one of the oldest and most popular Olympic sports. Jamie Beyerle Gray, USA (center), won the women's 3-position rifle gold medal in the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Rifle shooting is an NCAA collegiate championship sport. 'March madness' applies to rifle shooting too. The annual NCAA Rifle Championship takes place every March as the culmination of a winter sport season for 42 colleges and universities that have varsity rifle teams sponsored by the school's sports department. The NCAA program includes one air rifle standing position event and one smallbore rifle three-position event. Detailed information about college rifle teams and their competitions can be found at <http://www.ncaa.com/sports/rifle>. In addition, the NRA reports that there are more than 200 colleges and universities that have club rifle teams or other shooting sports programs.

Training materials and coach training are readily available. A wide variety of marksmanship training and instructional curriculum materials are now available for coaches to use to teach basic and advanced techniques to youth who participate in air rifle marksmanship. The CMP cooperated with the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force JROTC Command to produce the marksmanship training curriculum used by JROTC instructors. The CMP makes similar instructional material for basic marksmanship training available to other school and club programs. Coach and instructor training is available through cooperative programs provided by the NRA, USA Shooting (Olympic shooting NGB) and the CMP.

Air rifle ranges are easy to build and low in cost. Air rifles used for target shooting fire 8 grain pellets at velocities of 400-600 feet per second and that generate about five foot pounds of energy. This means a target backstop made of 1/8" sheet steel or even a box filled with several layers of cardboard or newspaper easily can capture a fired air rifle pellet. A room that is at least 40 feet long and 20 feet or more wide, that is covered with ordinary wallboard or wood, where there are no exposed windows, and that facilitates controlled access to the firing area, will serve as a range. The additional protective measures required for firearms ranges are not required for air rifle ranges.

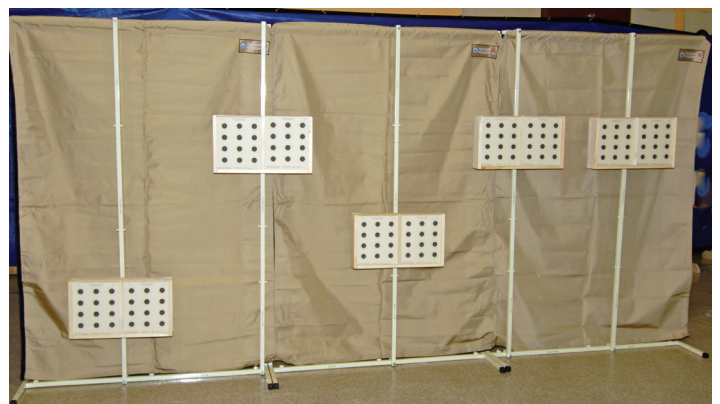


A big selection of training courses and published training material is available to prepare coaches and instructors.

Good range management practices eliminate lead exposure risks. Lead exposures from air rifle participation are effectively eliminated or controlled by using properly constructed target backstops and following recommended hygiene practices. There is abundant scientific evidence to confirm that rifle shooters who practice on properly designed air gun ranges and who follow recommended hygiene practices will not be exposed to any medical or health risks.

- Numerous tests by environmental testing professionals in the U.S., Germany and other countries confirm that firing air rifle pellets does not generate airborne lead. This means special air circulation systems required for firearms ranges are not necessary for air rifle ranges.
- Properly designed target holders efficiently capture fired lead pellets and lead residues generated by their impacts.
- Shooters handle lead pellets while loading and firing, but requiring participants to thoroughly wash their hands after firing effectively prevents lead absorption.
- U.S. Olympic Training Center resident athlete shooters, who daily spend six to eight hours per day on USOTC ranges have periodic blood tests to monitor lead. These shooters have potential exposures much greater than any school or club participants. In 15 years of testing, no USOTC shooting resident athlete has ever registered blood lead levels requiring medical intervention. Most, in fact, consistently register blood lead levels that are below normal.

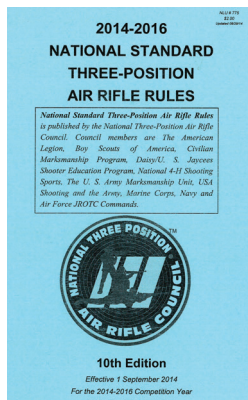
Target rifle training is a proven means of reducing firearm accidents. Youth who learn rifle safety in air rifle marksmanship programs where range firing opportunities give them real gun handling experiences are much less likely to ever be involved in a firearm accident than youth who have no gun safety training. The most effective gun safety training is to give youth supervised gun handling experiences. Air rifle marksmanship programs do this. This training significantly increases the probability that these youth can also prevent accidents when they are exposed to firearms in any other situation.



Safe air rifle ranges require simple, low cost installations that can be built in any room that has at least 40 feet of depth and where access can be controlled on three sides.

Youth air rifle shooting has a unified national governing body.

National shooting sports and youth-serving organizations that sponsor air rifle shooting for youth in the U. S. established the National Three-Position Air Rifle Council to provide national coordination, competition rules based on the Olympic model, participant recognition programs and the promotion of three-position air rifle training and competition. The Council provides a common national rulebook, the National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules, that govern almost all junior air rifle competitions in this country. More information about the Council and its programs can be found at <http://thecmp.org/air/national-three-position-air-rifle-council/>. Council members are:



- The American Legion
- Air Force Cadet Command (AFJROTC)
- Army Cadet Command (AJROTC)
- BSA-Venturing
- Civilian Marksmanship Program
- Daisy/U. S. Jaycees Shooter Education Program
- Marine Corps Training and Education Command (MCJROTC)
- National 4-H Shooting Sports
- National Guard Marksmanship Training Center
- Naval Education and Training Command (NJROTC)
- USA Shooting
(National Governing Body for Olympic shooting in U. S.)



Two classes of air rifles are used in youth target shooting. Sporter air rifles (above) are inexpensive and require minimal additional equipment. Precision air rifles (below) are the same air rifles that are used in national and Olympic class competitions. Precision air rifle competitors need special shooting jackets and some additional equipment.



Air rifle marksmanship is remarkably effective in developing concentration skills and qualities of self-control among its participants.

Air rifle marksmanship guides firearms interests in positive directions. Firearms are an integral part of American heritage, culture, sports and recreation. Most young people in the USA will be exposed to firearms and many will develop an active interest in guns and shooting. Marksmanship and target training programs assure that these interests are guided into positive, structured, disciplined, sports-oriented activities. These programs can counteract potential negative interests that might grow out of dangerous images of guns that are conveyed by popular culture and the media. Target shooting prevents such interests from becoming destructive or dangerous.

Target shooting is a sport of discipline, control and non-violence. Air rifle marksmanship creates an understanding of guns among youth that make them extremely unlikely to commit acts of violence of any kind. Air rifles used in target shooting are low-powered, single-shot pellet guns that have no purpose except for target shooting. In target shooting, participants' competitive energies are directed towards inanimate targets placed downrange and never directly against opponents. In this environment, the air rifle is a piece of sports equipment that is always treated with respect, it is never understood as an instrument of violence.

To obtain additional information about air rifle marksmanship, check these web sites:

- **Civilian Marksmanship Program** <http://thecmp.org/air/>
- **National Three-Position Air Rifle Council** <http://thecmp.org/air/national-three-position-air-rifle-council/>
- **USA Shooting** (U. S. Olympic governing body) <http://www.usashooting.org/membership/youth-programs>