

Teaching the Sitting Position for BB Gun Shooting

By Gary Anderson, DCM

Most junior rifle shooters learn the standing, prone and kneeling positions that are the standards for three-position shooting. Junior shooters in some youth marksmanship programs, however, also need to learn the sitting position. Sitting is one of four positions used in BB Gun shooting. In highpower rifle shooting, competitors may use either the “sitting or kneeling” position, but with a lower center of gravity and both elbows resting on the legs, sitting is inherently more stable

and preferred by virtually all shooters. Junior shooters in Rimfire Sporter competitions where competitors also can use either “sitting or kneeling,” will want to learn the sitting position for the same reasons that highpower rifle shooters choose sitting over kneeling.

Since sitting is an important position in BB Gun shooting and since learning how to get into the correct sitting position is essential for Rimfire Sporter and Highpower Service Rifle Shooters, this article explores how to

teach the sitting position to BB Gun shooters. The principles of teaching the sitting position, however, apply to shooters of any age in any shooting discipline.

Sitting is potentially a very stable position because of its low center of gravity and solid base of support where both arms are supported on the legs that are in turn well supported by the feet or ankles. Sitting is especially challenging for very young shooters because they are more flexible and because different parts of their bodies grow at different rates. A shooter with especially flexible hip joints will sometimes find it almost impossible to make a cross-ankled sitting position work. And fast-growing youngsters will find a properly structured sitting position one year become a difficult challenge the next.

There are two sitting positions that are commonly used in rifle target shooting, cross-legged sitting where the legs are crossed and pulled back close to the body and cross-ankled sitting where the legs are crossed and extended away from the body. Cross-legged sitting positions work best for shooters with proportionately shorter torsos in relation to their arm length. Cross-ankled sitting positions work best for shooters with torsos that are proportionately longer in relation to their arm length. When matched to the right shooters, either position is equally stable and capable of producing winning scores. There also is an older, open-legged sitting position that is less stable and should be taught only when neither the cross-legged or cross-ankled sitting positions work out.

When choosing between cross-legged and cross-ankled sitting, the right choice for each shooter depends upon how their bodies are configured,



Coaches face unique challenges in getting younger shooters into stable sitting positions. Success depends on following the correct steps for selecting the right position and then building it into a stable position. (Photo: CMP Stock Photo)

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For new shooters, try the cross-legged position, with the legs crossed and pulled back to the body, first. If the cross-legged position is right for a shooter, they should be able to keep the butt-plate up in the shoulder while still keeping the left hand on the forearm when the sights are raised to target height. (Photo: CMP Stock Photo)

not on which position works for someone else. For new shooters, have them try cross-legged, with the legs crossed and pulled back, first. Follow these steps to determine which position variation is right for each new shooter and to help them develop a good sitting position:

TRY THE CROSS-LEGGED POSITION FIRST:

Step 1—Body Turn. Sit on the shooting mat and turn the body approximately 45 degrees from the target.

Step 2—Put on Sling. Put the sling high on the arm. Extend the sling length adjustment so that the sling will be “long and loose” when shouldering the rifle.

Step 3—Cross Legs. Cross the left

leg over the right leg. The leg that supports the rifle always goes on top. Pull the feet up close to the body so that they support the legs.

Step 4—Shoulder the Gun and Locate Both Elbows. Place both elbows in the Vs formed by the bent legs.

Step 5—Position the Butt Plate and Head. The key to having a good head position is to keep the butt-plate up in the shoulder. This ensures a comfortable head position where the shooter can aim without straining to look up. When building a new sitting position, do not compromise head position by placing the butt-plate too low in the shoulder.

Step 6—Adjust Rifle Height. The correct way to adjust rifle height in a new position

is to first fix the butt-plate location to provide for a good head position, then move the left hand (right-handed shooter) forward and rearward on the forearm until the sights align at target level. A major caution here is to align the sights at target level without forcing the sights onto that shooter’s target.

DECISION POINT: It is at this point that you must decide whether the cross-legged position is best for this shooter. Look at the left hand. How far back

did the hand have to come to raise the sights to target level? IF THE HAND REMAINS SOMEWHERE ON THE FOREARM, CONTINUE BUILDING THE CROSS-LEGGED SITTING POSITION. If the hand comes back to the cocking lever and the shooter is still struggling with getting the sights up to target level, CHANGE TO THE CROSS ANKLED SITTING POSITION (see next page).

Step 7—Tighten Sling. If the left hand is located on the forearm, indicating that the cross-legged position is right for this shooter, tighten the sling until it takes over the work of supporting the rifle. With the left hand location established, it is a good idea to place a strip of tape or mark on the forearm so the shooter can start with that hand position the next time they shoot sitting.



In a properly structured cross-legged sitting position, the legs will be crossed so that the feet support the legs, the elbows rest in the Vs formed by the bent legs and the sling is tightened so it supports the weight of the rifle. (Photo: CMP Stock Photo)

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Step 8—Rotate Position to Target.

The final step is to orient the position so that it is aligned with that shooter's target. Rotate the entire position by pivoting on the buttocks. Use the feet to move the body left or right.

With the sights raised to target level, the sling supporting the rifle and the sights and position aligned on that shooter's target the position is ready to shoot.

IF THE CROSS-LEGGED POSITION DOES NOT WORK, TRY THE CROSS-ANKLED POSITION:

Step 1—Body Turn. In the cross-ankled position, start with the body turned approximately 30 degrees from the target.

Step 2—Put on Sling. Keep the sling high on the arm and fully extended so that it is "long and loose."

Step 3—Cross Legs. Once again, cross the left leg over the right leg, except this time extend the feet forward, away from the body. The legs should be crossed at the ankles.

Step 4—Shoulder the Gun and Locate Both Elbows. After shouldering the gun in this position, lean forward and place both elbows on or below the knees. Stress the importance of leaning forward in this position.

Step 5—Position the Butt Plate and Head. Next recheck the location of the butt-plate to be sure it is well up in the shoulder, ensuring a good head position where the shooter comfortably sees through the sights.

Step 6—Adjust Rifle Height. Next adjust the rifle height by moving the left hand forward and rearward on the forearm until the sights align at target level. Again, only try to bring the sights to target level; do not force them onto the correct target yet.



In a properly structured cross-legged sitting position, the legs are crossed so that the ankles and hip joints support the legs, the elbows rest on the inside of the knees or legs below the knees. Notice how the torso is inclined forward in this position so that the head and shoulder are lowered to a comfortable rifle height. (Photo: CMP Stock Photo)

DECISION POINT: In almost every case where the cross-ankled position is right for a particular shooter, his/her left hand will be somewhere on the forearm when the sights are at target height. If you study the photos of the two positions, it is easy to see why this works out. In the cross-legged position where the torso is more upright, a short-bodied person is able to keep the rifle and sights up at target level while a long-bodied person finds that impossible. Conversely, the cross-ankled position, with the legs extended, requires leaning forward so a longer body is able to stretch out and lower the head and shoulders to more easily keep the rifle at proper shoulder and head height.

Step 7—Tighten Sling. After the left hand is located on the forearm, tighten the sling until it takes over the work of supporting the rifle.

Step 8—Rotate Position to Target. Finally orient the position onto the correct target by using the feet to rotate the position over the buttocks until the sights align on the correct target.

Now, for shooters who are better suited for the cross-ankled position and with their sights raised to target level, the sling supporting the rifle and the sights and position aligned on their target, the position is ready to shoot.

Previous articles on teaching shooting positions can be found in the OTM archives online. Visit <http://www.odcmp.com/OTM.htm>.