

**NSCA Level I Instructor Certification  
Instructor Manual**

**A GUIDE TO THE  
NSCA LEVEL I INSTRUCTORS  
CERTIFICATION**

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## **Mission Statement**

The instructor committee is dedicated to all levels of shooting, stressing safety first, as well as an environment with an entertaining and noncomplex agenda. The Instructor Certification Committee will stress quality and experience in Level II & III instructors, not quantity. The committee will also promote continuing education for all instructors.

## **Level I Entry Guidelines and Criteria**

Applicants must be members in good standing of NSCA.

Applicants should be minimally eighteen (18) years of age and have had at least two (2) years of shooting experience.

Candidates are expected to be comfortable working with shooting students in a one-on-one situation and have a desire to function effectively in the role of teacher. Candidates must have the ability to empathize with their student's situation. Previous teaching experience (e.g. Boy Scout or 4H Leader, sports coaching, or something similar) is helpful but not required.

Candidates must demonstrate a complete knowledge of and comply with shooting range safety protocols. Only a 100% safe shooting environment will be acceptable. Candidates are solely responsible for their personal safety, the safety of their students, and the safety of range personnel. The ability to pay attention to every detail is mandatory.

## **COST**

\$500 plus target and instructor expenses. Instructor expenses will vary with target and travel costs.

## **THE NSCA PHILOSOPHY OF INSTRUCTION**

The NSCA instruction model is built on and supported by educational research. Virtually every individual learns at an improved rate and retains more of what they have been exposed to through experiential (hands-on) and interactive learning strategies. "Telling" simply is not an efficient, effective teaching method. This model is used both as a working entity for the purpose of "Training the Trainer", (the instructor candidate) and also as a guide for teaching strategies for that candidate.

A large majority of individuals learn best by repetitive activity. This is known as *tactile-kinesthetic learning* and is particularly common in the educational genre of psychomotor objectives i.e., skills need to be learned through personal trial and error. Another group of learners are best stimulated by visually observing (visual learners). Still a third, but relatively small group, learns by listening (auditory). A fourth and certainly very small group, learns by reading or visual cognitive modality. A highly effective instructor must be competent in utilizing all four areas.

You, the instructor candidate, will have ample time to practice the NSCA teaching model. As will be seen, much of the art and science of teaching is learning to ask questions of your students in order to find the correct teaching tool. Simply telling a student what you see will not result in effective teaching. Learning to shoot a shotgun well is best accomplished by a student and instructor learning to communicate and cooperate to solve each problem.

Effective communication often requires creativity. As an example, and to assist you in fostering creativity in teaching, you may be asked to instruct a student without talking at all. Silent communication of an instructional concept as complex as hitting a target may not be as difficult as one might think and certainly demonstrates that all method teaching need not be "how to shoot."

Successful completion of this course will entitle you to advertise yourself as a Certified Level I NSCA Instructor and seek clients for your instructional services. Level I instructors are only certified to teach beginning and novice shooters. Level I instructors who wish to receive training to coach intermediate level shooters are encouraged to attend and complete the NSCA's Level II Instructor Certification course upon completion or attainment of that certification's prerequisites.

## **Objectives of the Level I Instructor Certification Course**

### **Objective: Level I Instructor Certification**

Candidate will demonstrate **exact** knowledge of safety procedures. (Cognitive domain)

- A. Hearing and eye protection
- B. Proper range safety and etiquette
- C. Firearm operations
- D. Firearm and ammunition malfunctions
- E. Recognize potential safety hazards

Candidate will demonstrate ability to control student's firearm in teaching situation. (Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor Domains)

- A. Right hand/left hand
- B. In cage/out of cage
- C. Young adult
- D. Ammunition

Candidate will, on target, correctly identify cause and placement of students miss. (Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor Domains)

- A. Observation of shot string or pattern
- B. "Reading the barrel" method

This will also entail identifying the reason for the miss such as:

- A. Failure to look at target.
  - 1. Primary focus shifted from target.
- B. Head off gun
- C. Poor mount
- D. Wrong lead picture
- E. Pain
- F. Bad stance
- G. Gun fit

Candidate will demonstrate ability to identify and teach the three primary (as well as modifications there of) lead types used by and taught to students. (Cognitive, Psychomotor Domains)

- A. Pull Away
- B. Pass through
- C. Sustained

Candidate will demonstrate (objectively and subjectively) proficiency at Level I ability in outcome based solution/resolution to students ability to hit targets. (i.e. demonstrate the ability to solve problems, thinking on their feet, thinking outside the box)

- A. Problem solving skills
  - 1. Skills for youth
    - a. Watch intimidation
    - b. Not too technical
  - 2. Skills for adults
    - a. Watch intimidation
    - b. Use information they know
- B. Interpersonal communication skills
  - 1. Skills for youth
    - a. Do not talk condescendingly
    - b. Do not try and talk their language
    - c. Do not give them a "brain dump" of information.
  - 2. Skills for adults
    - a. Watch and interpret body language
    - b. Engage in conversation they can understand.
    - c. Do not overload the "fix".

*The acceptance of these teaching types is based mostly in the Affective Domain in that the students, both the Instructor candidate and the shooting learner, must want to accept the basic information presented. This is known as "Acceptance of Value."*

- A. Socratic
- B. Communicative
- C. Visual
- D. Verbal
- E. Cognitive

- F. Psycho-motor
- G. Repetitive
- H. Demonstration

*It should be understood that this section, though never complete, will apply to all objectives in this course.*

Candidate will, via provision of information to the certifiers, demonstrate recognition of proper fit of shotgun to shooter.

- A. Length of pull
- B. Cast
- C. Drop
- D. Pitch
- E. The female shooter

*At Level I we should be interested in **BASIC** fit. Correcting a minor fit flaw is fine; however we should leave the true fitting to those who know how to do it well.*

*This operation, though mechanical in domain is very oriented to upper level cognitive thought.*

Candidate will demonstrate one or more methods of determining shooters dominant eye as well as corrective measures.

- A. Candidate will check several students for eye dominance using a choice of methods.  
Correction:
  - 1. Tape
  - 2. Gel
  - 3. Lip balm
  - 4. Change shoulders
  - 5. What to do with the co-eye dominant shooter

*We all know there will be eye dominance problems. Our ability to creatively adapt the student means the difference between success and failure.*

*Caution must be used here so as not to make the student feel like they are different in a negative manner.*

Candidate will recognize and instruct proper shooting stance for various basic target presentations relevant to high gun and low gun start.

- A. Feet
- B. Gun hold
  - 1. Start point
  - 2. Insert point
  - 3. Break point
  - 4. Follow through
- C. Mount
  - 1. Pre mount for beginner
  - 2. Transition stage
  - 3. Low gun/Out of shoulder

*It is best to start a beginner at high gun in order to remove some possible mistake or faults. It is felt that there is a transition stage between the pre-mounted gun and low gun. This is an area which has been dealt with very little. The mount itself should be based on student ability.*

*This is a **demonstration** area that deals with psychomotor ability. It should be tactile-kinesthetic. i.e. Repeat, repeat, repeat. It is eye, muscle memory based.*

Candidate will demonstrate selection and presentation of targets for beginner and novice shooter. (Affective, psychomotor domains)

- A. High, floating incomer
- B. Slow crossing rabbit
- C. Medium power straight away
- D. Ability on all of these to modify shooters position

Candidate will demonstrate mid-level operational knowledge of gauges, chokes and loads as they pertain to clay shooting.

- A. Choke dimensions based on bore
- B. Types of chokes
- C. Ammunition types, manufacturers
- D. Gauges

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I; SAFETY**

There are no simple steps or quick fixes regarding safety. One lax moment and disaster is waiting to strike. This becomes even truer during an instruction session.

As an instructor candidate, think about the scenario you are playing a part in:

You and a student are on the range for a lesson. Just that fact plays a role. The student is dividing their concentration between listening to you and attempting to take targets. That division of concentration, even with an experienced shooter, can be the basis for a safety problem.

The primary rules of gun, range and instructor safety:

- A. Always keep firearm pointed in a safe direction**
- B. Treat every gun as if it were loaded**
- C. Never mix shot shell ammo gauges**
  - 1. Instructors will control ammo while teaching beginners.**
- D. Visually inspect chamber and barrel for obstructions**
- E. Keep finger off trigger until target is called for**
- F. Whenever possible, students should shoot from inside a stand or cage.**
- G. All shotgun actions are to be kept open when firearm is in hand and student is not in cage. Actions may be closed on Over/Under shotguns when they are in a gun rack. Auto and pump actions should be kept open.**
- H. Instructor must stay within arms reach of the student. This proximity is particularly important if the instructor is working without a cage.**

**I. Eye and ear protection are mandatory.**

- 1. Instructors should understand that there is a difference in lens type between safety lenses and plain eyewear.**
- 2. Hearing protection should be maximized but not so cumbersome as to reduce the students ability to function.**

Every instructor should have a safety plan. This amounts to a mental notebook regarding what to do in each shooting situation. Instructors should be well versed in the methods of controlling student's gun movement. Always inspect a new student's firearm prior to beginning the shooting part of the lesson. Some students will come to a lesson with either a borrowed gun or perhaps one that has been in storage for some time. A quick look can save the day. "*Ole Betsy could have a charge in her.*"

**Talk with the student regarding the primary rules of gun safety. Then, talk with the student about the primary rules of gun safety.....**

**Ad infinatum** Always control the ammunition when instructing beginning students. This means you, the instructor, need to carry the ammunition and issue it shot by shot. Should you be in the position of instructing two students shooting different gauges (try and prevent this if you can) have two very distinct shooting bags to keep the ammo separated.

An area of safety that is sometimes downplayed regards what to do in the case of a misfire. First, you, as an instructor, should understand that reloaded ammunition is a risk which should be avoided. The risks of a misfire and or barrel obstruction are increased many fold in such cases. Always have your students use "factory" ammo. In the case of a misfire, and yes, even factory ammo can misfire; the firearm must be maintained in a muzzle safe direction. Wait at least thirty (30) seconds before opening the action. This should cover you in case of a "fizzle/hang fire."

Students will come to a lesson with a variety of firearms. NSCA does not want a novice student shooting an exposed hammer gun. The potential for a "drop fire" even given the interceptors commonly found on new made guns is great. This is not a responsibility you need to worry about, so avoid if possible.

The instructor should discuss with the student the safe operation of the type of firearm the student has brought to the lesson. Should the instructor be supplying the firearm, the same will hold true.

***Remember this: You are ultimately the person in control. Your student must obey your rules regarding safety or go home. No ifs, ands or buts!***

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I, CONTROL OF FIREARM**

Perhaps one of the most important areas of concern for the certified instructor when working with new and young shooters is the exuberance that can be displayed when a shot is successfully made.

We have all stressed that this “**lesson thing**” should be fun and that it should. However, there will be times when the emotional energy of a successful shot has to be released and it is at those times you as the instructor must be in a position to take control of the firearm. A student makes a shot and in his or her joy turns around with gun in hand.

**Whoops!**

***Is it empty or what? That was not supposed to happen!***

Well it did and it does. What do you do? Hopefully, you were in position and alert enough to prevent this from happening.

This is not to say that these are the only times when you might need to do this. One should, as a control, remove the firearm from the beginning student during discussion times. This can and should be done gracefully. This alone will greatly reduce the possibility of an incident.

OK. So here is how we do it. When working with a new shooter we have a number of options regarding how we set them up. Most clubs have shooting stands that we have all seen. Wood, metal, PVC and even decorative iron work. These “cages” provide a degree of restriction to the shooter and for the instructor. But a degree may not be enough. The instructor should place themselves in such a position as to be able to control the shooter’s movement at a moments notice.

When working (for example purposes) with a right handed shooter; ***the instructor should be standing behind the right shoulder and perhaps off to the right a bit.*** Obviously, this is opposite for a left handed person. The distance should be about an arms length or less. You will find that this distance can be modified as you grow more familiar and comfortable with the student and his or her style. It is not easy, in some instances, to have the student in the stand/cage and you "in there" with them. After all, these "fixtures" were designed for one shooter.

Young adults may have some problems with stands/cages due to the height of the front cross bar. These cases must be taken individually and it is the instructor's job to adapt the situation without sacrificing safety and student allowance.

So..... Do we work in the stand/cage or out of the stand/cage? This is an area of discussion that frequently comes up in a Level I course and even in Level II. Some instructors like to move the student around a good bit during a lesson, particularly if the student is being rapidly successful. Some students, during their first lessons, feel confined by a stand/cage and are distracted from the task at hand. You may need to be a bit creative here.

However, after all we have said, for the beginning of the first lesson at least, it makes sense to have the shooter in a stand/cage. This just helps the instructor.

Additionally we are all, or all should be, cognizant of the fact that there is a certain amount of energy put forth from both the student and certainly the instructor. This should guide you in setting both yourself and the student in shooting position. Again, we want their exuberance but not at the cost of safety.

Remember, when teaching *adult female* and *younger female* students that there should always be a *zone of comfort* between you and the student. A professional approach to this area of concern should be paramount. This is more significant when instructing females than males. They have a pronounced private space not usually found in a male shooter. Also in this regard; never put your hands on a female shooter without first asking permission and then never make physical contact with your fingers. Always use the palm or back of your hands. You will feel more comfortable with this as time goes on. However, do not ever get so comfortable that you do not follow these suggestions. This should also include helping the student "into" the mount. Be

particularly careful if you should have to help them adjust the position of the gun butt in their shoulder. A strong suggestion here might be to do a visual for that student by you openly placing the gun in your or another male students shoulder while the female student watches closely and you explain the positioning.

Please understand that these suggestions are presented in good faith in an effort to alleviate possible problems.

**OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I.  
IDENTIFYING CAUSES, PLACEMENT OF MISS ON  
TARGET.**

So, here is the fun part.

Each of us has a different way of "reading" a miss. The "ole club line" of "you shot low cause I saw your wad" is not going to work. Reading the wad is going to show you absolutely nothing save for perhaps the wind direction.

There are two (in this case) good ways to read a miss. The first is to train your eyes to see the shot cloud/string and the second is to read it off the gun barrel.

Some folks just cannot see shot. That's OK. But, if you can, this is a great way to get the job done. The only catch here is when your background changes and suddenly you cannot see shot. Then what?

The best approach is to use both techniques at the same time. As an instructor your focus will be directed in several directions at one time while you are in the teaching mode. Safety, your student's questions and your comments or instructions are all rolled together. That's a ton of stuff going on at the same time.

**OK. Let us try and see shot.**

We will start learning to do this at the range with your classmates.

First off set yourself up so that you can read the swing of the student's gun from their shoulder.

Now, do not intensely look at the target. Rather, you should look around the target. The shot cloud, if you see it, will be a grey "puff" near the target. Obviously, a broken target if the student connects.

The trick here is to keep your eyes relaxed rather than have a hard focus. This allows your eyes to pick up the shot. It may surprise you. Some folks just suddenly see it. Admittedly, some folks never do see shot and thus must rely on reading the barrel.

Reading the barrel takes a bit of practice as well. You have to have an idea of how much lead is needed. As you develop this method you may need to ask your student to extend or decrease their perceived lead. This will allow you to do a quick check for what you are seeing. Do not do this too much. You should be able to get a fairly good line on what should be seen before you leave this certification program.

Now; there are a number of form or mechanical mistakes that cause a shot to be missed. The three most common are:

- A. Primary focus shifted from the target
- B. Lifting head off gun
- C. Wrong Lead Picture

So, let's see what we can do about these problems.

Lifting the head off the gun:

This is another very common cause of a miss. The easiest way to fix it is with super glue and velcro. OK, really, this is a concentration problem. The shooter wants in the worst way to see the target break thus the lifting of the head. Explain that this is also part of the follow through and that the head should be kept in contact with the stock until the shot is completed. The use of the golf swing concept of "keeping your head down" generally works well although you should rest assured at some time or another with a certain student, you are still "gonna want some super glue."

Stopping the swing:

1. Primary focus shifted from the target.
2. Poor stance – ran out of swing.

Frequently when working with new students we want to let them find their "comfortable stance" when attempting a target. This stance can sometimes be "misplaced" to the point that they reduce their ability to move on to or with the target. Always check their stance..... Don't make a big deal out of it, just move them a bit.

Poor mount:

The instructor will insure that the beginning student has the firearm properly placed in the shoulder and further has explained to the student what a sight picture looks like. From this point, the instructor should be observant of the students mount. High gun or low gun the student must get the gun butt placed properly to be continuously successful with the shot.

Remember, **holding the gun in the mounted position for very long can tire a beginning student.** This will lead to problems. Should you need to have a quick discussion with the student or make a correction, at least step up and take the weight of the gun in your hand.

A poor mount can be an outcome of intimidation and certainly the anticipation of pain. Watch out for these.

Even at the "mounted" position there is a mount..... Make sense? Sure it does. The gun must be securely in the students shoulder at a point which allows the student the ability to see over the top center of the barrel and control the gun. Anything else is a poor mount.

Wrong lead picture:

This one is a bit more complicated. For first time shooters, if you have done your set up properly, and walked them around that first floppy incoming bird, they should have a good idea that **there is a need for lead.** Now we need to explain how the lead should look. Should the student wish to or show a performance preference for a different lead we need to go there. This will require us to use some visuals so that the student might get an idea of what the picture looks like. Do not be afraid to take a step "out of the box" here. Everything from a shell bottom to a pointer with a tiny target glued to it all work very well. A bit of thought and you should be able to come up with your own methods of demonstration.

Bad stance, bad focus, and incorrect set for break point may also play into reasons for a miss. Each will be covered in class. Each of these is

very particular to the individual student and should be addressed as such. There is no “cook book” approach for this. Correction is learned by working with and through the problems.

Pain:

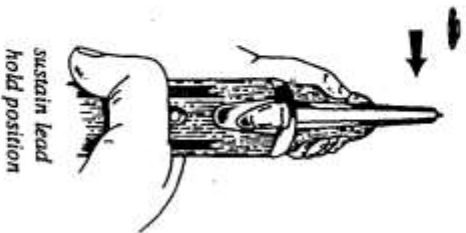
Pain is a cause for a miss and can in fact be the root of some of the other reasons for a miss. Talk with your student about how they feel. Do not ask directly if the shot produces pain as this could send them off in that direction.

**OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I  
LEADS AND LEAD TYPES**

# SUSTAINED LEAD—

Maintained—Constant Lead (are all one & the same.)  
 With sustained lead the bird is generally never allowed to pass the line of the muzzle of the gun, even when the gun is out of the shoulder. The gun is mounted ahead of the target. The shooters pre-planned lead picture is placed directly in front of the target as the target appears, always remember-

ing never to look at the gun. Choosing the target break point before calling for the bird helps to prevent the shooter from riding the bird. The trigger is pulled when the correct lead picture is seen and felt. This usually happens a second or so after the gun touches the face.



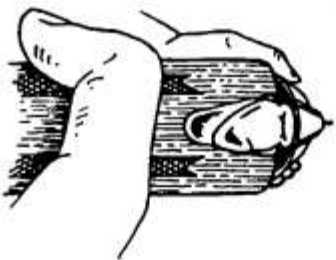
*sustain lead  
hold position*



*sustain lead  
half mount*



*sustain lead  
mount*



*sustain lead  
shot*



*sustain lead  
follow through*

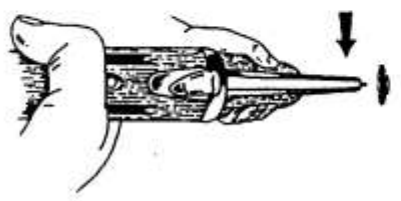




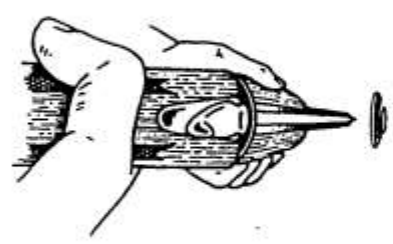
# PULL AWAY —

This is the official CPSA shooting method. With pull away, the gun is mounted directly at the target. This method uses our natural ability to point. Pull away enables a shooter to judge speed, distance and line of the target very effectively. Stance, timing and rhythm of the shot, as with all shooting techniques, are determined by the pre-planned break point.

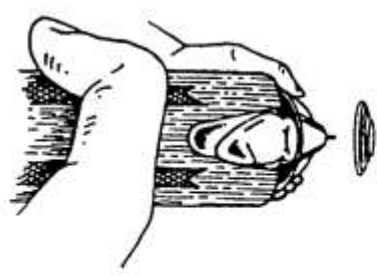
After the stock touches the face, the gun is smoothly moved ahead of the target until the correct lead picture is seen and felt. Pull away is excellent for long range shots and can improve shooter timing and consistency on many types of target presentations.



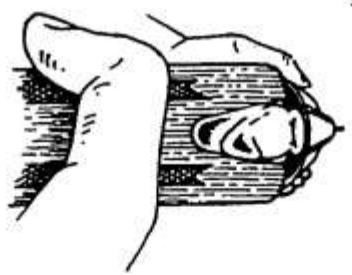
*pull away hold position*



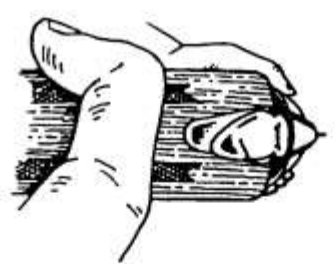
*pull away half mount*



*pull away mount*



*pull away shot*

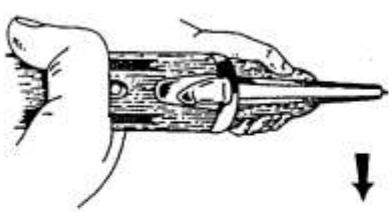


*pull away follow through*

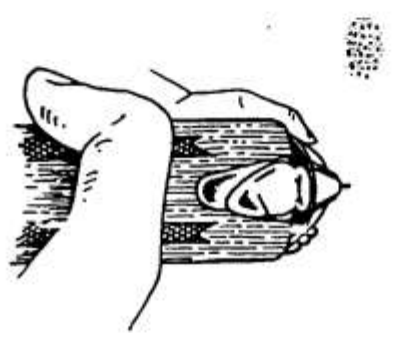


# PASS THROUGH—

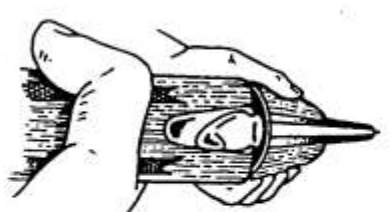
Pull Through—Swing Through (are all one & the same.) The line of the muzzle before any move is made. Control of pass through method of shooting is very popular with hunters and those who are self-taught and shoot instinctively. REMEMBER—successful, instinctive shooting comes as a RESULT of good technique. With pass through, the gun is always inserted behind the target. The bird is allowed to pass near the bird as the mounted gun swings past the target.



swing through  
hold position



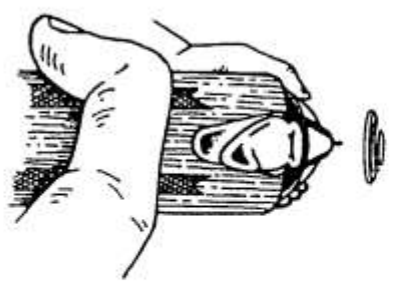
swing through  
shot



swing through  
half mount



swing through  
follow through



swing through  
mount

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I PROBLEM SOLVING OR "GET THE STUDENT TO HIT THE TARGET"**

Instructors must remember that there will be a division of students seeking their help. Instructors will see youth and adults both at Level I. This division will require each instructor to approach problem solving decisions from at least two different positions.

The first thing instructors must remember is to watch out not to be intimidating. Youth shooters can absolutely shut down when this happens. Try and keep your delivery light and motivating.... Not demanding. Take care not to talk in a condescending manner when either responding to a question or presenting information. Whatever you do, do not try and "youth speak" (talk in their jargon). This will get you put out so quickly you will not have time to take a breath. They do not want you to break into their private world.

Technical information, though interesting to some, is not needed with the youth shooter. Too much information may turn the shooter away and prevent them from concentrating on the matter at hand. No "brain dumps."

Adult shooters have some differences from youth shooters. You must still watch out for intimidation and condescending talk. However, with an adult shooter, the response can be more direct than with a youth shooter. Adults will also shut down but they are just as likely to tell you about it. Body language is something you should learn and understand. This silent language will tell you more than you know.

Keep your corrections to the KISS (keep it simple stu...) format. Do not put so much information out there that the shooter has trouble finding the answer among the verbiage. Do not overload the fix. Do only one thing at a time.

Your ability to solve shooting problems will be based in your abilities to communicate, think in a line which the student understands and keeping a good personality while doing all of this. The good instructor has a good outlook on his or her student's ability and is able to draw the student's response to a positive outcome of a teaching situation.

**All in all, the instructor should try and keep things FUN**

You have heard your certifier's use the term "tool kit" throughout their presentations now let's talk about that "kit".

You, as an instructor, bring with you to any certification or instructional session certain unique teaching techniques. These are the tools in your kit. Additionally, your method of instruction also becomes a tool as it is built on the tools you use.

From an educational standpoint there are a number of known approaches to teaching. Here are some of the ones you might try:

**The Socratic method** uses questions to perk the student's interest

**Discovery Learning** where the instructor arranges the learning environment so that the students find their own answers. This usually works well with the Socratic Method.

**The Communicative (verbal) method** uses conversation as a means of training.

**Affective objectives** are instructional objectives that stress attitudes, feelings and values.

**Psychomotor skills** are the basis of our training. These are physical skills driven by the mental process.

**Repetitive activity** entrenches learned processes.

**Cognitive domain teaching** teaches to mental activity stressing knowledge, and intellectual abilities and skills.

**Visual and demonstration methods** show a student what is to be done.

All of these methods work well but not all of these methods work for each student. You, as the instructor, must decide which technique fits each student.

There is a second drawer in your tool kit. This is the one where you keep your tricks. These tricks can be visual aids like a small clay glued to the end of a pointer, tape, lip balm, and mental notes on how to get

a student to conceptualize, utilize and demonstrate their ability to take a target.

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I GUN FIT**

Good or correct gun fit may be the most important facet of shotgun shooting. A shotgun that does not fit the shooter correctly will/may be uncomfortable and perhaps even painful to shoot. Such poor fit can result in inconsistencies when attempting targets and can certainly slow a student's development.

That having been said, we certainly do not want to send novice or beginning shooters off for a gun fitting. Why? Well, think about it. They have not developed their own consistency yet with the firearm. In truth, a good gun fit is established by a "fitter" observing the shooter and making adjustments to a try gun to bring the shooter's dominant eye dead over the gun and on a horizontal plain over the barrel. The new shooter has not developed enough consistency to have a gun "fit"

So, what can we as Level I instructors do for a student that comes for a lesson with an ill fitted gun?

First let's talk about the major points of gun fit:

1. Length of pull
2. Cast
3. Drop
4. Pitch

### **Length of Pull (LOP):**

LOP is the measurement from the face of the trigger to the back of the butt plate or recoil pad. This measurement can be taken at three points. (A) is at the top or heel of the butt, (B) is at the middle or valley of the butt and (C) is at the toe of the butt.

LOP is that "snuggle" fit when you put the gun in your shoulder. Too short and the shooter will most likely get a thumb in the nose. Too long and you will find the gun unruly and not be able to get the shooter's head in the right position on top of the comb.

**Cast:**

This is the horizontal "bend" or cast of the stock off of center. A gun which has cast off has the butt of the stock bent or "cast" away from a right handed shooters face. Cast is used to bring the dominant eye into position over the center of the sight plane of the shotgun.

**Drop or Drop at comb:**

This is a measurement from the top of the gun barrel to the top of the comb and again like LOP can be done at three locations along the line of the comb.

This measurement controls where the gun will shoot in the vertical plane. Most sporting clays shooters prefer one of two Point of Aim (POA) settings. The first is directly to point of aim and the second is what we call 60/40. This means 60% of the pattern of a load will print above a horizontal line placed in mid circle of a pattern. The 40% will be below that line. In other words, the gun shoots just a bit high.

**Pitch:**

Pitch is the angle of the gun butt compared to the line of sight or the top of the barrel/rib. Pitch determines how the butt stock will sit in the shoulder pocket of the shooter.

**OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I  
EYE DOMINANCE AND EYE DOMINANCE PROBLEMS**

There will be eye dominance problems. Our ability, as instructors, to creatively adapt the student may mean the difference between success and failure.

There are certainly as many ways to check for eye dominance as there are shot shell ammunition companies. One of the better ways to perform an eye dominance check is to have an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper with a 1/4 hole in the center. Have the student hold the paper in front of them with arms extended and look through the hole with both eyes open focusing on a spot on an adjacent wall. Have the student slowly draw the sheet towards their eyes, again keeping both eyes open. As the paper nears their face you will notice that it is directing itself more towards one eye than the other. When the paper finally comes to rest against the face it will be directly over the dominant eye. This can also be done with a heavy stock 3 x 5 card. You can tuck this in your range bag in case you want to do a second check while the student is on the range.

Assuming this goes well your student should have gone to the eye on the same side that the student shoots from. If this is not the case you have a few decisions to make and some work to do.

Let us make the assumption that your student has told you they are right handed and the eye test showed them as being left eye dominant. We now have a situation, **cross eye dominance**.

You have several options available to you. First you can talk with the shooter about changing to the left side. This usually means that the student will literally be a beginner no matter how much they have previously shot.

Your second option is to control the power use of the left eye. This can be done by using some tape, a dot or for a temporary fix, lip balm. This will limit the left eye while the gun is mounted and moving to the target.

There has always been a great deal of discussion among instructors regarding fixing the "**cross eye dominance**" problem. As stated above, if this is a brand new shooter it might well be prudent if you try your best to convince the shooter to move to the strong eye side. The ability of younger shooters to adapt to this situation is really amazing.

A shooter with a bit more age and/or of certain personality types may be less receptive to this suggestion. If this is the case you will need to revert to mechanical modifications for the "fix".

Our second assumption is an interesting one. Your student, upon drawing the paper to their face, has drawn the paper back directly to the bridge of their nose. We now have a **co-eye shooter**. You might see a student that will pull the paper to their right eye but after you start shooting you notice they begin to roll their head over the comb of the gun. Did you miss something? No. Your student can switch.

This will be discussed in the classroom. This co-eyed inclination creates some interesting needs.

Good luck!

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I STANCE**

At Level I we should not “jump” on a new shooter for bad stance. If the shooter is breaking targets, let them shoot. Make only minor modifications. The shooter will eventually work themselves into a target that will provide “the teaching moment” to get them into a better stance.

The basic shooting stance for shotgun shooting is similar to any other fundamental athletic stance used in sports such as golf, tennis, football and martial arts. The shooter should stand comfortably with their feet about shoulder width apart. The right handed shooter should stand with their left foot slightly forward, pointing generally towards the break point for the target. The shooters weight should be placed (60/40 or 55/45) on the front foot, knees slightly bent. This stance allows the shooter comfort and the ability to move with the target.

**Stance**, after the general position is comfortable, equates to the positioning the body for the following:

**Start point** is where the muzzle is placed when the bird is called for. Proper placement is crucial at this point.

**Break point** is rather obvious but we must consider the fact that each student will approach this point differently. Students that are more controlled in their delivery may have a break point further along the targets flight line; while a more attuned shooter, will have a break point sooner in that flight line.

It should be understood that all these moves are related to focal zone or focal ability on the part of the shooter. Focal zone is dependent on the shooters visual acuity. The target will appear first with a “bit of a blur”. As the target travels through its flight, the shooter will be able to accomplish a more intense focus on the target eliminating the “blur”. It is at this point that the swing begins.

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I BEGINNER TARGETS AND SHOOTER ABILITY**

Remember, at Level I we are trying to make the shooter successful and happy. The targets at this level should be presented to allow the student this success.

There are three basic presentations which can/should be used for the beginner.

### **High, slow, floppy incomer:**

This should generally be your first target. It allows the student to be basically successful quickly. The instructor should set the student so that the target is coming directly at, but high above, the student. As the target hits its apex the student can shoot. Realistically, there is little or no lead picture here. The student literally moves the shotgun to the target. The catch here is that the gun is actually moving and the student will eventually realize this. If not, then the instructor can enforce this activity via explanation. This target presentation provides the ability for quick and early success. It thus boosts the student's confidence while removing fear of recoil and all those other "nastys" which the student may have brought with them.

Once the student has successfully broken several targets at this presentation the instructor should move the student slightly (10 ft.) to the left or right. This will mean the student now needs to see some space (lead) and still keep the gun moving to correctly take this target. This provides the opportunity for the instructor to begin talking about lead without totally changing targets on the student. The confidence level from the first targets can be carried over into these presentations.

This presentation can be done on a skeet field or set up with mobile machines.

### **Slow crosser:**

The second target presentation should be a slow crosser and quite frankly, a rabbit target works great. Set your student up 90 degrees to the central track of the target and explain to them that this target is going to require them to see some lead. The advantage to using a rabbit target is that the student can clearly see where the shot hits and may well be able to adjust their own lead. If not, at least it is a dramatic demonstration which the instructor can use to their

advantage. Do not be afraid to speed the bunny up as the student becomes more confident with their ability. The best deal going is if you have two rabbit machines and can throw one from the left and then from the right.

**Going away:**

The third basic target is a going away trap type target. Start the student close to the trap and throw the bird directly away from the shooter. After some breaks move the shooter back and then slightly to the side. Take your time.

**OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I  
CHOKES AND LOADS, OPEN CHOKES, LIGHT LOAD.**

At Level I we are teaching the student the mechanics of taking targets. We should not immediately overload them with choke and load information but we as instructors must set them up to be successful. A good load and choke combination in a 12 ga. gun for a beginner is skeet (.005) and 1 ounce of #9 shot. Should the student come with something else, like a 20 or 28 ga. gun, the same chokes and loads will work. There is a point to mention; 20 ga. guns develop more pressure than 12 ga. guns and are usually built lighter for field use. They will frequently have more felt recoil than some 12 ga. guns. Number 8 shot is certainly acceptable.

A good byword here is; as little choke and as much shot with as little recoil as possible. As an example the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, in their introductory wing shooting clinics use all 28 ga. auto loaders and #8 shot. Their success rate and return rate are excellent.

There are several ammo manufacturers out there that are producing a light or trainer load. These may well be the best thing to come down the road since sliced bread. They remove the recoil problem from the mix and quite frankly, break targets at some distance. The only drawback with some of them is that they will not cycle an auto loader. This is your decision as to what load your students will use.

On a note of caution; check your student's loads when they come for a lesson. Frequently, they will come with some horrendous load that you would not use on a tank or a Nilgai bull but that's what they either had or it's what their husband or parent sent them with. Fix this before it causes a problem.

Here is some pocket info on chokes and loads. Use it as you see fit:

<u>Choke</u>	<u>Constriction</u>
<i>Cylinder</i>	<i>.000</i>
<i>Skeet</i>	<i>.005</i>
<i>Improved Cylinder</i>	<i>.010</i>
<i>Light Modified</i>	<i>.015</i>
<i>Modified</i>	<i>.020</i>
<i>Improved Modified</i>	<i>.025</i>
<i>Full</i>	<i>.030 and above</i>

***Remember, these figures are based on a 12 ga. bore size!!***

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Shot Pellets in various weight loads:

<u>Shot size</u>	<u>Shot diameter</u>	<u>7/8 oz.</u>	<u>1 oz.</u>	<u>1 1/8 oz.</u>
<b>9</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>658</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>462</b>
<b>7.5</b>	<b>.095</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>393</b>

***There is still some ammo showing up here in the U.S. marked #7. That is basically English # 7.5***

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## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I; OBSERVATION, MOTIVATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

This area of your certification is so important that it could well comprise this entire manual. A good instructor must be capable of communicating information in numerous ways to every student. Some students will need visual explanation of a target situation while others will merely need you to talk them through it. Remember; **Less is More** and the **KISS** Theory (keep it simple stu....) play very strongly here.

Each instructor candidate comes to the certification with the potential for a different style of teaching. These styles are outgrowths of their personalities and their own preferences for a teaching method whether the candidate knows it or not. This is good! It's variety. How boring would it be if we all taught in the same manner?

The instructor must be able to observe the student and via observation make evaluations as to the student's problems, needs and offer positive actions. At level I we are teaching the very basics of shotgun shooting. These basics can also be called "functional mechanics" of the cognitive and psychomotor kind. We are instructing a person desirous of "learning" to shoot. (beginner or novice)

We must consider, when working with a student's problem, (behavior/skill) what behavior/operation we want or need to modify. Thus:

1. Remain aware that behavior is the result of particular conditions.
2. When older students are dealing with a complex and meaningful situation, delayed feedback may be prudent.
3. Use several types of evaluators so that each retains its own effectiveness.
4. Be alert for generalization. When it occurs, use self reinforcement and explanations to bring about discrimination of the evaluation.
5. Thoughtfully plan terminal performance as you expect it. Gather from the student what they want to learn and provide self lined feedback so that the correct performance can be achieved.

The instructor's next move is to motivate the student to attempt new and different methods for taking a target or fixing a problem.

Motivation is one of those "things" that you must apply to your student in order to keep them in the learning curve. A good instructor will sometimes motivate a student just by having a conversation with them regarding the student's performance on a target. Some instructors "High Five" a student after a shot, while still others will present the student with additional challenges to keep them moving. All of these methods work but they do not all do well on every student.

Here are some ideas on motivating your student:

1. Make your point as active, investigative, adventurous, social and useful as possible.

2. Make sure that the students know exactly what they are to do and how to proceed.
3. Take into account individual differences in ability, background and attitude.
4. Do everything possible to satisfy the deficiency needs; physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem.
  - a. Allow for the physical condition of your student.
  - b. Make your teaching venue physically and psychologically safe.
  - c. Show your students that you take an interest in them and that they belong.
  - d. Arrange learning experiences for each student so that they may gain a degree of esteem.
6. Direct learning experiences toward feelings of success in an effort to encourage a realistic level of aspiration, and orientation toward achievement and a positive self-concept.
  - a. Make the objectives challenging but attainable.
  - b. Provide knowledge of results by emphasizing the positive.
  - c. Permit the student to partially direct their own training.
7. Try to send your students away from your instruction anxious to use what they have been taught and eager to learn more.
  - a. Promote the feeling that the student is doing well as they learn.
  - b. Provide information on how often and where to practice.

Communication skills must be at the highest level in order to perform any of our instructional techniques.

Try fixing a student's miss without talking..... Now we will see communication at its basic level.

## **OBJECTIVE: NSCA Level I LESSON PLAN**

A lesson plan is a vital part of your teaching. The plan itself need not be “engraved in stone” but rather should have built in flexibility.

Every student will be different and learn at a different speed or rate. The plan will allow you to maintain a focus on the direction of your instruction.

The lesson plan should have several entry points that allow you, as the instructor, to make note of the student’s initial performance and needs. From that point you will need to design in a sequence of teaching and “homework” or practice for the student based on where the student intends to go with their shooting.

Set achievable goals for both you and the student. This could mean establishing the target sequence that you will present in an effort to develop the student’s applied understanding of things like lead, sight picture, swing, etc. **Again, and we cannot stress this enough, do not overload the student.** Keep your progression smooth and be ready to modify your lesson plan if you need to.

Most instructors start out with very simple targets to get a feel for the student and to begin to develop a line of communication. This is a good thing! Remember, you are teaching beginning and novice students.

Good plans will give you an area to enter comments on how the student performed as well as comments from the student. Over time you will smooth out the rough spots as well as have a deep list of probable points to address with new shooters.