

# GALLERY RIFLE: THE BASICS! PART 5

I don't know anyone who has never had a light strike, misfeed, stovepipe or Ruger/Marlin moment at some time or other whilst shooting in a competition, yet I still regularly see of shooters of all standards stepping up to the line carrying no spare ammunition with them whatsoever! Imagine being in this position and getting a stovepipe with your 10/22 or a light strike with your Marlin during the final 6 rounds of a 1500 competition at Bisley, with your spare ammunition 25m behind you. It wouldn't be the best situation to find your self in that's for sure! Simply carrying a spare magazine or a couple of extra centrefire rounds in your belt will at least give you a chance to clear a malfunction and quickly reload again rather than just throw away some of your hard



Carry it on your chest.....

earned points just for being lazy. I always carry at least 2 spare mags and a minimum of six extra .44 rounds at every distance I shoot at, as you never know what may happen on the day. I can remember one occasion a few years ago when I was having a lot of jamming problems with my old 10/22 when I needed to use 7 magazines in one stage, which only required 18 rounds to be fired in total. Luckily I always count my rounds as I fire them from each position, and although it proved to be very entertaining for the R.O behind me, at least I eventually managed to get all of the shots off within the time limit! With this in mind I always carry out the initial load with a spare magazine or loose rounds from either my shooting box or pocket, so that my ammo belt is always full to capacity.



or on a belt? Do what works best for you!

Having plenty of ammunition with you is one thing, but carrying magazines/ammunition in your pockets or bumbags etc is not ideal as you will waste valuable time turning them the right way around if you don't grab them correctly first time. They can also be a pain (literally) when adopting or shooting from a kneeling or sitting position! Carrying loose centrefire rounds in this manner can also cause

you to load either too few or too many rounds if you loose count half way through the loading sequence, which will cost you dearly on your scorecard! It is well worth spending a little time and effort when deciding on the type of holders you will use, and especially where to locate them to ensure that the magazines/rounds can be accessed easily from every position that you will have to shoot from, and not just the standing position! Reloading in the sitting position for example is very awkward if your ammunition is located on the front of your belt as you won't be able to see it easily, or even reach it in some cases!



**Place your ammo to use in different positions!**

Most shooters carry their spare ammunition attached to a waist belt, although there are a few who prefer to carry their centrefire ammunition either in a bandolier across their chest, or use an elasticated wrist or armband type holder. Wherever you decide to place your ammunition it is important that the holders are either held or angled slightly away from your body. This should ensure that no rounds/magazines are knocked out onto the floor by bulky clothing or other “overhanging” parts of the body when changing positions and it will also make it much quicker and easier to access your ammunition. If you find that your current holders hold your ammunition too close to your body a simple fix is to zip tie or tape some 2” diameter insulating foam to the inside of your belt to pack it out a bit. Some more resourceful shooters have taken this idea one step further and have actually fixed the round foam to the outside of their belts, drilled the correct sized holes where needed, and then use the whole thing as one large holder. They're very simple, cheap, and they certainly work well too!



**These home made holders keep the ammunition away from the body and also allow the shooter to quickly change between calibres when required!**

Making your own holders is pretty easy to do (and a lot cheaper also) and they can be made out of anything such as wood, plastic, rubber, leather or elasticated material. I've made my own holders out of aluminium and nylon which allow me to quickly swap between rimfire and centrefire ammunition and they hold the rounds at least 3 inches away from my body which makes it easy to reload whatever top I'm wearing at the time.

The centrefire rounds contact a wiper blade inside the nylon block which holds them in place with just enough tension so that the rounds remain retained when moving around but are easily released when required. They also allow about half the length of a .44 round to protrude out so that I can always get a good grip on each one, whilst the rimfire ones simply use a spring clip to retain them so that they too are very quick and easy to get hold of. If you are going to use a leather or elasticated type holder, you should always make sure that you don't push your centrefire ammo in too deep as this will make it much harder and slower to retrieve them. It's also a good idea if possible to arrange them into groups of 6 rounds (or 5's when needed) and simply leaving an empty loop inbetween each group of rounds, or pushing the 7th round all the way down when using a high capacity holder will make it much easier to see or feel when you have loaded the correct number of rounds needed.



**A good technique, used by a good shooter!**

Reloading an Underlever type rifle is pretty straight forwards but there are a few shooters out there who struggle with it because of the way in which they are trying to hold their rifles. Holding it out in front of you and trying to rest the butt against your stomach, hip or thigh will cause two major problems! The first is instability as the rifle will swing like a pendulum as it's creating a pivot point, and the second is that the hand will move far more than is necessary each time it has to transfer a round between the ammunition holder and the loading gate. Both of these problems will not allow you to achieve a smooth and fast reload so stability and economy of motion is what you should be aiming for, and this can only be achieved by keeping the rifle close to your body.

The easiest way for a right handed shooter to reload an underlever rifle is to slide your left hand backwards along the fore end as you start to bring the rifle down from the aiming position, until it's close to the action. Then rotate the rifle slightly so that you can clearly see the loading gate and pull the rifle inwards until your left arm and the rear of the stock lock up against your lower body. Controlling the rifle with the left hand and working/reloading the action with your strong hand will always provide you with a very safe and stable platform to reload from, and will (providing you have placed your ammunition holders in a good location) provide you with the shortest round to loading gate transfer possible.

To reload quickly and smoothly you must limit every action to its minimum and standing back and thinking things through sometimes can pay dividends. Take for example part of match 4 in a 1500 match which requires 12 shots to be fired within 35 seconds (6, reload, 6). Many novice shooters will rack out the 6th empty case, then close the action again as they bring the rifle down. They then feed 6 new rounds into the loading gate causing them to have to rack the lever again to chamber the first round. One way to save your self a few valuable seconds is to simply leave the action closed when bringing the rifle off aim and leave the empty case in the chamber. Then load the next 6 rounds into the loading gate and rack the first new round into the chamber either on the way back up to, or once the rifle is mounted back into the shoulder again. Another way I save some time is to rack out the empty case on the way down and leave the action open. Once the rifle is locked up against my body, I pick up 2 rounds out of my holder and drop the lower one directly into the open action then quickly close the lever with my third and fourth digit. This action then aligns my hand with the loading gate and I simply proceed to load the second round directly into the loading gate. I use both methods depending on the type of match that I am shooting and find there is little difference time wise, so just do which ever method you find to be the easiest.

A lot of left handed shooters have big problems loading an underlever quickly because they try to hold the rifle in their left hand, and use their right (weak) hand to load the rounds with! This generally causes the rifle to swing away from the shooter as they try to push the rounds into the loading gate making it a slow process, and above all, a very frustrating one! The fastest and easiest way for a left handed shooter to reload an underlever is to rotate the rifle as it is being brought down out of the shoulder until it is completely upside down. The right hand should then slide back to grip underneath the scope or action (or both if possible) and then pull inwards to anchor the rifle against the body. The left hand can then be used to load the rounds giving the shooter much more control and a much smoother round transfer into the loading gate!



**This guy has no problems reloading his Marlin left handed!**

When reloading with a 10/22 in the majority of the Gallery Rifle disciplines, right handed shooters will also generally pull the rifle into the side of the body and support it in the same way as they would with an underlever so that the rifle is “controlled” with the left hand and the action is “worked” (drop the magazine & lock open the action if needed)

with the right! Adding a speed release lever of some description to your trigger unit will help produce a more efficient reload and there are two types of lever readily available.



**Magazine release speed levers do just that.....**



**and this blade type will allow you to lock open the bolt quickly also!**

The first type sweeps backwards underneath the whole length of the trigger unit and the magazine is released by simply extending one digit forward. This type however does not allow you to lock open the bolt as well meaning that you will waste a bit of time hunting around trying to find the bolt release lever. The straight blade type ones drop the magazine when pushed forward and allows you to lock back the bolt by pulling both it and the lever rearwards in one sweeping action making it a very fast and easy motion saving you some valuable seconds in time. It does mean that you have to take your hand off the grip though to drop the magazine out so some people have modified them so that the lever extends under the trigger guard giving them the advantages of both designs, and are well worth fitting to your rifle!

Left handers however may find that when shooting a 10/22 from the strong shoulder, as the bolt handle is on the right hand side of the action it is much easier to keep the rifle held in the left hand whilst sandwiching the butt against the left hip. This way, “working” the action and reloading with the right hand can produce a very slick reload! I always make sure that my magazines are placed in my holders in such a way that the bullet is always at the end of the magazine nearest to where my index finger will be when I take them out of the holder. I use the recess on the bottom front edge of my Ruger mags as a reference point for my index finger so that I achieve a consistent grip on them every time, and canting the rifle slightly ensures that only a small rotation of the wrist is needed to transfer the magazine from the holder to the mag well.

Carrying an adequate supply of ammunition at all times during a competition and holding it in the correct place for each type of reload that is needed will help you perform to your potential and improve your all round marksmanship skills. Make sure that you take the time to practice your reloading drills with empty magazines or dummy (no powder/primer) centrefire rounds in every shooting position and this will help you to be both smoother and more proficient on the range. This in turn will give you more time to actually fire each shot as well as helping you to keep calm and focussed if you ever have a malfunction or are under tight time restraints during a stage. Next month I'll cover

some of the pre match preparations you should be thinking about, along with some tips on how to shoot some of the “Shorts” matches!