New Shooters Information Brochure

Brought to you by the members of BADGER IDPA, southeast Wisconsin’s premier IDPA-affiliated shooting club.

http://www.badgeridpa.com
Welcome to IDPA!

IDPA (International Defensive Pistol Association) is a fun and safe way to learn some basic defensive pistol skills and to enhance your shooting abilities. IDPA's safety rules are straightforward and easy to follow. Please use this brochure as an introduction to the basics of IDPA, including safety rules, range commands, and competition rules. Note, though, that the official IDPA Rulebook takes precedence over anything you may read in this document.

Safety Rules

1.) Always treat firearms as if they are loaded.
2.) Never let your muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.
3.) Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.
4.) Know your target and what is behind (and in front of) it.

If these simple rules were always followed, most firearms accidents would never happen. Pay particular attention to rules 2 and 3. When shooting IDPA (or any type of shooting competition, for that matter), your finger should never be inside of the trigger guard until you are on target and ready to fire. Always keep your finger out of the trigger guard before moving, reloading, holstering, etc. Always be aware of your muzzle’s direction and keep it safely within the Muzzle Safe Points. Muzzle Safe Points are the limits that the direction the Shooter’s muzzle can travel within a shooting bay or Course of Fire while remaining safe. Be sure to know where these limits are and always keep your firearm’s muzzle pointed within them. Some IDPA Courses of Fire may make it challenging to keep your firearm’s muzzle in a safe direction, but it always your responsibility as a Shooter to ensure that your firearm’s muzzle is pointed in a safe direction. If you are unsure of what the Muzzle Safe Points are for any given Course of Fire, please ask the Safety Officer who is running that CoF.

Cold Range

Most matches are run with what is called a “cold range”. That means that every firearm is unloaded unless it is currently in use to shoot a stage. Also, every match will usually have a “safe area” or “safety table” set up. These are the only places, other than when you are engaged in shooting a stage, that you can handle your firearm. If you’re not shooting a stage or at a safety table, your firearm must remain in your holster or in your range bag. Ammunition and ammunition carriers (magazines, moonclips, speedloaders), on the other hand, can be handled anywhere except the safe area or safety table. Failure to abide by these rules will generally result in a match disqualification.

Most matches ask that all participants help with pasting and resetting targets. This is to help the match move along faster than it would otherwise if only the Safety Officers did this. It’s important to listen to your Safety Officers at all times- do not go down range to paste until the S.O. has indicated the range is safe, don’t slow the match down by picking up brass when another Shooter is ready to start the stage, etc.

Concealed Firearm Carriers

For those that have a concealed carry license and plan on arriving at a match while carrying, please contact the Match Director or some other club official before arriving so that you can be informed of any range or club regulations regarding concealed carry.

Range Commands

There are a number of range commands used in IDPA and it is important to learn them and what the proper responses to the commands are. The commands that you will hear at virtually every stage you shoot at an IDPA match are:
Range Is Hot, Eyes and Ears: This command signifies the beginning of a Course of Fire (CoF). The shooter should make sure that his or her eye and ear protection are in place. Anyone else in the bay should also check to ensure that their eye and ear protection are in place.

Load and Make Ready: This is the command to prepare to shoot a stage. The Shooter should prepare their firearm as called for in the Course of Fire. Typically, this includes loading the firearm to its division-legal capacity and then holstering the firearm. Some stages will call for the firearm to begin unloaded, or perhaps laying on a table or in a drawer. Be sure to understand what the particular stage calls for.

Are You Ready?: This is one last check by the Safety Officer to make sure that the Shooter is prepared to begin the Course of Fire. The Shooter should indicate to the Safety Officer that he or she is indeed ready to begin, but will be assumed to be ready after approximately three seconds of no response.

Stand by: This is an indication to the Shooter that the timer is about to begin. The Shooter should freeze until the buzzer sounds.

<BEEP>: This is the sound of the timer's buzzer. This sound indicates that the clock has started, and the Shooter should begin shooting the stage.

If Finished, Unload and Show Clear: This is the command to unload your firearm at the end of the stage. The Shooter should open their firearm and completely unload it. The Safety Officer will inspect the firearm to ensure that it is indeed empty.

If Clear, Slide Forward/Cylinder Closed: Since the firearm was open for inspection by the Safety Officer, this is the command that tells the Shooter to close the firearm in preparation for holstering.

Pull The Trigger (semi-auto’s only): This is one final check to ensure that the firearm is empty. The Shooter should press the trigger (while keeping the muzzle in a safe direction!) to in effect dry-fire the weapon. If the Shooter has a pistol that has a magazine disconnect safety, they should make sure to notify the Safety Office of this and have an empty magazine available to insert into the pistol (after getting the ok from the Safety Officer!) so that the trigger can be pressed. Please note that if a round is discharged, the Shooter will be Disqualified. It is, after all, ultimately the Shooter's responsibility to ensure that his or her firearm is unloaded.

Holster: At this command, the Shooter should holster the handgun. This is not optional! The Shooter must holster their firearm before bending over to pick up empty magazines, ejected rounds, etc.

Range Is Clear: The Safety Officer will call this out when he has determined that the range is safe. No one is allowed down range until this command has been called out.

Some additional commands, that you may hear at a stage are:

Finger: You will hear this if your finger is in the trigger guard while not engaging targets. Having your finger within the trigger guard when not actively engaging a target will within the trigger guard will result in a Procedural Penalty. Repeated offenses will earn a match disqualification.

Muzzle: If you hear this, immediately check yourself as your firearm’s muzzle is getting near a Muzzle Safe Point. Make sure that your firearm’s muzzle does not stray beyond a Muzzle Safe Point. Any violations of muzzle safe points will result in a disqualification from the match.
Stop: This should be self-explanatory. Immediately stop moving and shooting, remove your finger from your firearm’s trigger guard, and wait for further instructions from your Safety Officer. A “Stop” command could be issued because of a gross safety violation, in which case the Shooter is very likely to be disqualified from the match, or a range issue, such as a target falling over, an animal running across the stage area, etc. The key point with this command is to stop and await further instruction.

Cover: This is a warning that the Shooter is not using cover appropriately. Proper use of cover requires that all of the Shooter’s legs and feet and 50% of the Shooter’s torso be behind cover. This is a courtesy warning- depending on how quickly you shoot a stage, you may not receive the warning as the Safety Officer may not have time to issue the warning before you engaged a target. In this case, you will have earned a Procedural Penalty for improper use of cover. If you hear the warning before firing a shot, and correct your use of cover, you will avoid earning a penalty.

Penalties

IDPA has four different penalties, as described below. Please keep in mind that the Safety Officers do not hand out penalties lightly- penalties are earned by the Shooter. The penalties are:

Procedural (3 seconds): The Procedural Penalty is likely the most common penalty earned by Shooters. Procedurals can be handed out for quite a number of reasons. For example, not using cover properly will earn a Procedural. Engaging targets in an improper order, not following instructions laid out in the stage’s Course of Fire, performing reloads that are not IDPA-legal, etc. will all earn a Procedural Penalty. The good news is that, in most cases, once a Shooter earns a procedural for a given infraction, they cannot earn another procedural for that same infraction on the same string of fire. As an example, if the Shooter ignores cover and just stands out in the open and engages three threats from one position, only one Procedural is earned. However, if the Shooter ignores cover at multiple positions over the course of a stage, the Shooter will earn multiple cover violation procedurals.

Failure to Neutralize (5 seconds): A Failure To Neutralize penalty is earned when there is not at least one hit in either the -0 or -1 scoring areas on a target. Please note that this penalty does not apply to fully disappearing targets (such as a Drop-Turner) or to any targets on a string that is scored using Limited Vickers (more on that later in this document).

Hits on Non-Threat (5 seconds): The Hit on Non-Threat penalty is earned for every non-threat target that is hit. It does not matter if any given Non-Threat is hit once, or a dozen times- the penalty is earned for every Non-Threat that is hit, not every hit on a Non-Threat.

Failure to Do Right (20 seconds): This penalty is rarely given out, as only a failure to abide by the tenets of IDPA- cheating, unsportsmanlike conduct, etc. If you don’t cheat or try to “game” the stage, and are not unusually rude or unsportsmanlike to your fellow Shooters and the match staff, you’ll never earn this penalty. 20 seconds added to a stage may not sound like much, but it is a tremendous amount of time in an IDPA match.

If you end up earning a penalty or two at a match, don’t become upset. Nearly every Shooter has earned plenty of Procedurals, Failures To Neutralize, and Hits on Non-Threats over their IDPA shooting careers. Just treat them as opportunities to improve your skills and learn from your mistakes.

Competition Rules

IDPA has a variety of rules, and while this document is not a replacement for the official rulebook, it will touch on a number of the basics.
Scoring Methods: IDPA has two scoring methods, Vickers Count and Limited Vickers. In Vickers Count, which is the typical method used, the Shooter may fire as many rounds as they feel are necessary to get good hits on any given target. The only limit is the amount of ammunition that the Shooter has handy. Regardless of the number of hits on a target, normally only the best two count for score. Make sure to pay attention to the Course of Fire during the stage walk-through, though, as some stages do call for more than two hits per target.

In Limited Vickers, the Course of Fire will indicate how many rounds are to be fired at each target. This is an exact number- no extra shots may be fired. Failure to fire the correct number of rounds will earn the Shooter a Procedural penalty. In addition, if the Shooter fires extra rounds, the best hits are thrown out and only the worst hits (equal to the number of hits called for in the stage) are scored.

Reloads: IDPA has two legal reload methods, a Slide-Lock/Empty Cylinder Reload, and a Loaded Cylinder/Chamber Reload.

The Slide-Lock/Empty Cylinder Reload occurs when the handgun is completely empty of ammunition. Most semi-automatics lock the slide open when the firearm runs out of ammunition, which is where the name “slide-lock” comes from. With this reload, the empty magazine (or moonclip for certain revolvers) can be dropped.

The Loaded Cylinder/Chamber Reload is a reload where the handgun is not empty when the Shooter decides to reload. It could be that the handgun does not have enough rounds left to engage a disappearing target, or it could be that the stage calls for a Loaded Cylinder/Chamber Reload at a given point of the stage. With this reload, the partial magazine, moonclip, or remaining rounds from a revolver must be retained.

One of the key points to remember with regards to reloads is that IDPA does not allow the Shooter to leave ammunition behind during the course of a stage unless the Shooter is clearing a malfunction.

A few more notes on reloads- if there is cover available on a stage, it must be used for reloading. The only exception is for a Slide-Lock/Empty Cylinder Reload, which may be begun while moving to a position of cover. Note, though, that no targets can be engaged after a Slide-Lock/Empty Cylinder Reload until the Shooter has reached a position of cover. Also, a Shooter may not move from a fixed position of cover until their handgun is in a condition of readiness. In other words, once you’re behind cover and reloading, you may not advance, even if remaining behind cover, until your firearm is ready to shoot. You may advance, however, if you have not yet stowed any partial magazines or moon clips, but you must have them stowed before engaging any additional targets.

Target Engagement Order: IDPA has two methods for target engagement, Tactical Priority and Tactical Sequence. The two cannot be mixed on any given string of fire- the string is one or the other, never both.

Tactical Priority is the method used for target engagement most often. In Tactical Priority, you engage targets near-to-far, or as you see them if there is cover available on the stage. Targets that are within two yards of each other are considered equal threats. Please be aware that when the Shooter is using cover properly, the first target seen may not be the closest!

Tactical Sequence calls for every target to be engaged with one round before any target is engaged with a second. When using Tactical Sequence, targets may be engaged in any order the Shooter desires, as long as each target is engaged with one round before any target is engaged with a second round. A common moniker for Tactical Sequence is “boarding house rules- everyone gets firsts before anyone gets seconds”. A target is considered engaged when a round is fired at it- the round need not be a hit.

Scores: Scores in IDPA consist of three components. The first is the raw time taken by the Shooter to complete the stage, as recorded by the timer. Second is the points down for accuracy (or lack there of!).
Third are any penalties that the Shooter may have earned during the course of a stage. To calculate a final score for a stage, take the raw time from the timer, add in points down for accuracy multiplied by 0.5, and finally add in any penalty time. As an example, a Shooter who took 10.23 seconds to complete a stage, had targets scored as down 1, down 0, and down 8, one Failure To Neutralize penalty (on the target that was down 8: the Shooter had a miss and a down 3 hit), would have a final score for the stage of 19.73 (9). The “19.73” is the score, and the “(9)” is the number of points down over the stage. The score is tallied like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Time</td>
<td>10.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points Down</td>
<td>9 (1+0+8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points Down Converted to Seconds</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalties (1 FTN)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep in mind that a lower score is better—less time taken to complete the stage, more accurate hits, and fewer or no penalties all lead to lower (better) scores.

**Equipment Rules**

IDPA has five different equipment divisions for handguns. These divisions are divided with three for semi-automatic pistols, and two for revolvers. Obviously, any firearm used at a match must be in working order. Grip safeties may not be pinned, manual safeties may not be removed, etc. For semi-autos, you should have at least three magazines. For revolvers, you should have at least four moonclips (if shooting in ESR) or three speedloaders (if shooting in SSR).

The official rules are covered in the IDPA rulebook, but a very brief overview of the divisions follows.

**Stock Service Pistol:** This division is the most common, and includes semi-auto pistols such as Glocks, Springfield Armory XD’s and XDm’s, Beretta 92’s, Smith & Wesson M&P’s, most Sigs, and Ruger SR-series, among others. The key requirement for pistols in this division is that they are chambered in 9mm or larger calibers, and be Double Action, Double Action Only, or striker-fired. The ammunition limit is 10 rounds in each magazine (regardless of actual magazine capacity), plus beginning with 1 round in the chamber, for a total of 11 rounds ready for use at the beginning of a stage. SSP handguns must also weigh 43oz or less with an empty magazine inserted, and must fit in the IDPA box (8 3/4”x6”x1 5/8”).

**Enhanced Service Pistol:** This division includes semi-autos such as Browning Hi-Powers and single-action 1911’s, among others. Caliber must be 9mm or larger, and the ammunition limit is 10 rounds in each magazine (regardless of actual magazine capacity), plus beginning with 1 round in the chamber, for a total of 11 rounds ready for use at the beginning of a stage. ESP handguns must weigh 43oz or less with an empty magazine inserted, and must fit in the IDPA box (8 3/4”x6”x1 5/8”). Any legal SSP firearm may also be used in ESP.

**Custom Defensive Pistol:** This division includes semi-autos that are chambered in .45ACP only. The ammunition limit is 8 rounds in each magazine (regardless of actual magazine capacity), plus beginning with 1 round in the chamber, for a total of 9 rounds ready for use at the beginning of a stage. Any SSP-legal handgun chambered in .45ACP may also be used in CDP. CDP handguns must weigh 43oz or less with an empty magazine inserted, and must fit in the IDPA box (8 3/4”x6”x1 5/8”).

**Stock Service Revolver:** This division includes revolvers that are loaded via speedloaders, such as Ruger GP-100’s, Smith & Wesson 686’s, and others. Caliber must be .38 Special or larger. Ammunition limit is 6 rounds loaded in the handgun at any one time, regardless of the actual cylinder capacity. SSR
revolvers must weigh 43 oz or less, and have a barrel length of 4.2” or less.

**Enhanced Service Revolver:** This division allows for revolvers that are loaded via moon clips, such as Smith & Wesson 625’s and others. Caliber must be 9mm or larger, and the ammunition limit is 6 rounds loaded at any one time, regardless of actual cylinder capacity. SSR revolvers may also compete in ESR as long as their ammunition meets ESR’s power factor requirement. ESR revolvers must weight 50 oz or less, and have a barrel length of 4.2” or less.

Some of the divisions allow for more modifications and customizations than others. What’s common between all of them is the ability to change sights to any conventional “notch and post” style sight, have action work performed on the handgun to smoothen the trigger pull, have the grips replaced (no weighted grips are allowed, however), and to change the finish on the handgun. Lasers, lights, and ported barrels are not allowed in any of the divisions. Please see the official IDPA rulebook for a full list of what’s allowed and what’s not allowed in each division.

IDPA also regulates holsters, ammunition carriers, and ammunition.

**Holsters:** Holsters used must be of a strong side style, and should be suitable for everyday concealed carry. They should safely retain the handgun, not be offset from the Shooter’s body, and not be of a “competition only” design. A good test for retention is to put your handgun in your holster and do some jumping jacks. If the handgun doesn’t shift around, it’s likely that the holster will adequately retain the handgun. No shoulder, ankle, weak side, or small-of-the-back holsters are allowed.

**Ammunition Carriers:** Ammo carriers must retain the spare ammunition that the Shooter carries. Check the IDPA rule book for specific requirements. The “jumping jack” test also works to determine if the ammunition carrier will retain your magazines, moonclips, or speedloaders.

**Ammunition:** All Divisions have a minimum power floor for ammunition. The minimum power factors are 165 for CDP and ESR, 125 for SSP and ESP, and 105 for SSR. Power factor is calculated by multiplying the bullet weight in grains by muzzle velocity in feet per second, dividing by 1000, and ignoring any numbers to the right of the decimal point. The idea is to use ammunition that would be suitable for self defense purposes, so no “powder puff” loads are allowed. Both factory and handloads are allowed. While not guaranteed, the vast majority of factory ammunition will meet or exceed the power floor. Metal piercing, incendiary, and tracers loads are not allowed.

IDPA matches also require that everyone have eye and ear protection. This includes both participants and observers that are on the range. It’s generally a good idea to wear a brimmed hat of some sort as well- this will help prevent ejected brass from being able to fall behind your safety glasses.

Many IDPA stages require some sort of concealment garment that hides your handgun and ammunition from view. Vests, light jackets, and button-down shirts can all serve as a concealment garment. The standard test for this is to stand with your arms held out to the sides. If your firearm and ammunition are hidden from view from all directions, you should be good to go.

**Miscellaneous**

Make sure to check the weather conditions forecast for match day, and dress appropriately. Sunblock, bug spray, and water may all be useful items to bring with to a match. Make sure to bring enough ammunition to the match. The match announcement will generally list the *minimum* number of rounds required to complete the match. It’s a good idea to bring extra ammo, though, in case of needing extra shots to get good hits, having to reshoot a stage due to a stage malfunction, etc.

Finally, always feel free to ask questions of your Safety Officers and Match Directors. Stay safe and have fun!