

5 Tips To Improve Your Match Scores In Any Shooting Discipline

by Frank Melloni - Monday, April 19, 2021



Competition is about gauging your skill level, enjoying an organized shoot, spending time with range buddies and above all else—improvement. Sure, these events are tremendous fun, but if you don't see changes for the better, eventually the novelty of shooting a match wears off and you are stuck in stagnation. This is never a good place to be in any area of life and competition is no different. Early on, we must decide if we want to continue with a certain style of shooting, or abandon it and perhaps try something else.

Regardless of the discipline or league you shoot in, there are a few pointers that are helpful to move up the leaderboard.

1. Listen to the better shooters.

The competitor that smoked you on that last stage likely isn't a bad person—just a better shooter. Most top shooters have an open personality. Heck, half of the reason they got to where they are is at some point, they weren't shy when it came to spending time with better shooters. That same open nature usually works the other way too, and many are happy to talk about a given hurdle and how they've overcome it.

Often, I sit with my friends and share what I've picked up over the years with those looking for advice. Conversely, I have spent numerous nights around a campfire listening to a group of far better long-range shooters explain to me what I'm doing wrong. At the range, when the topic of forums comes up I always like to say "my squad is my forum." These are the folks who have not only survived their woes, but mastered them. Most are aching to tell you how they did it. All it takes is the courage to ask.

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2. Read as much as you can.

That dreaded four-letter word. You might not fall into this category, after all you did click on this article. While a top-level competitive shooter may not have time to talk, quite a few have published their stories—especially online. Whatever discipline you fancy, it's nearly certain that at least one world champion has a few volumes on what you seek to improve. If they haven't written a book, they have at least penned a few articles. Search bars are your friends, including the one at the top of this website. (Click the magnifying glass icon.)

Besides help from the pros, don't be afraid to give the rulebook a thorough review. You may find something completely legal that you haven't been taking advantage of. It might be a better start position, or even gear that is going to help speed you up or shoot tighter groups. Case in point, USPSA now allows flashlights in its Production division—that might as well be a compensator. Updates such as this can have a big impact on your score, but only if you know about them.

3. Research all available gear.

Read gun reviews, because newsworthy firearms could possibly give you—the competitive shooter—an edge. Is there a reticle for your PRS scope that you wish existed? How about a “lefty” version of a popular AR-15 that might make your reloads a tad faster? Search bars are great for this, but don't forget the wonder of walking around a gun show or convention to get a little touch and feel in as well. This is another terrific topic to bring up when you are grilling the pro shooters at your club. Plus, you may find a great deal on something used while you're at it.

4. Practice what you hate.

Over time, we can find ourselves in a vicious cycle with things that we aren't good at. Some will shy away from the one thing that gives them trouble during a match because it's frustrating. But, by skipping it in practice you will never get better at it. A shot of self-discipline is all it takes to break the redundant loop as you dive headfirst into whatever you're lacking. The preceding statement describes my overall relationship with pistol shooting.

About 10 years ago, I blew a ridiculously easy handgun shot on Season 4 of *TOP SHOT*. It cost me nearly all of my bravado, not to mention \$100,000. For the next two years, I didn't touch a shotgun or rifle when I hit the range. Instead, I learned and practiced the various forms of handgun shooting and competition. Today my pistol skills have increased, and it's made me a better instructor in the process. So be sure to spend plenty of time shooting off your weak side, or in that position that hurts a little. You'll see your biggest gains from these areas.

5. Shoot more matches.

The number one apprehension to competing that I hear is, “I'm not good enough to shoot a match.” To this, I lovingly reply, “That's not true, you're just not good enough to win. If you want to improve enough to win, you need to shoot a few first.” The vast majority of first-time competitors do not win their first match, so you might as well get it out of the way. In time, you'll have more failures and more opportunities to learn and improve.

The only way to experience the rigors of match competition is to *actually* compete. Sure, outside practice is a big piece of the puzzle too, but unless you spend time on the clock with someone else keeping score it's just not the same. If you want to improve your match performance, one of the easiest things you can do is just simply show up more.

Find local matches by visiting our Coming Events section.

Read more: Training With Ginny Thrasher: Using The SCATT MX-W2

