

Tony Bracci guides you through the fundamentals of the clay shooting discipline of trap

All the trappings

This article is not meant to be a masterclass on trap shooting, more rather an explanation to encourage you to give it a go if you haven't tried it.

Trap shooting is one of the formal clay shooting disciplines and at its highest level an Olympic sport. Most people start on DTL (Down the Line) before moving onto ABT (Automatic Ball Trap), Double rise and OT (Olympic Trap).

Clay target shooting started from live pigeon shooting. The machines that throw the clay pigeons are called traps after the traps that held the live birds prior to release. We call "Pull!" to release the clay as they used to pull the cord to open the trap holding the pigeons. The term 'kill and lost' comes from this era but it is now more common to

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Trap in hand

- Long barrels, usually at 32in, to help with a smooth and consistent swing
- **High comb height helps with shot placement and keeps good visual contact with the target**
 - The extra mid-bead is there to get barrel alignment perfect as you start pre-mounted
- **A bigger fore-end for good grip and consistent movement**
- High rib for higher shot placement to deal with a rapidly rising and going away target
- **Tighter chokes, usually full and full or full and three-quarters, to cope with the distance and to give good tight patterns for edge on targets**



A high comb helps with shot placement



Sporting clays



hear 'hit and loss'. The format and shooting positions are founded on live pigeon days.

A trap gun can look different to a Sporting one but this does not mean you can't shoot trap with a Sporter. You can at least try it to see if it suits. All the differences are there to help you shoot the discipline better.

Most of the trap disciplines are shot in squads of five as there are five stations, but sometimes in squads of six with the spare waiting behind and moving in as the



Long barrels help achieve a smooth swing

“Concentration is vital as the targets are shot with the gun pre-mounted”

squad rotates. Stand 1 shoots first, then in sequence from 2,3,4 and 5. This carries on until all stations have shot five targets. Everyone then moves up one place to the right and stand 5 moves to 1. Station 2 then starts the second round and this continues until everyone has shot five targets on the five stations, a total of 25 targets.

Once you have been given the command from the referee to start, you are expected to call for your 'bird' within 10 seconds. There is then a gap of 10 seconds for the next call on station 2. You have to be aware that it is your turn but not load until the shooter before you has finished his or her shot. Once everyone has shot five targets on their station, the referee will give the command to change stations.

With DTL you can use 28g loads, but as you get into the Olympic disciplines you have to use 24g loads. In DTL, you score 3 points for a first barrel hit, 2 points for a second barrel hit and nothing for a miss. Competitions are »

Trap shooting is derived from live pigeon shooting



The stock with adjustable comb

usually 100 targets, giving you a maximum score of 300. Other variants include double rise, single barrel and handicap by distance.

Concentration is vital as the targets are shot with the gun pre-mounted and with specific hold points, depending on the discipline and station you are shooting from. It is not uncommon to see shooting glasses with blinkers on the side to block any glare from the sun or other distractions. You are expected to stay still

and quiet when you are not shooting. A towel is used to keep your hands dry to help you maintain a good grip. As the targets are often blaze (orange), glasses with red or orange tints can make the targets stand out more. It is important to note that when shooting trap disciplines, although the targets will be the same direction, speed, angle and elevation, different backgrounds can have an effect on perception of the target.

Technique is key. Your feet must be within the marked area and should not restrict your body movement when shooting the target. Your gun should be pre-mounted with your head down on the stock, starting your gun on your pick-up point for that station. The movement to the target is done with core muscles in a smooth and progressive swing.

The current world champion in Olympic Trap is Matt Coward-Holley, 24, the first British shooter to win a world title in this discipline. Perhaps you could follow him? ■

For more information

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Many thanks to E. J. Churchill for its help with this article. For more information visit: www.ejchurchill.com or call 01494 883227



Tighter chokes, such as full and full, are common