



State of California – Military Department
California Cadet Corps

CURRICULUM ON MILITARY SUBJECTS

Strand M13: Marksmanship

Level 11

This Strand is composed of the following components:

- A. **Firearms Safety**
- B. Rifle Marksmanship Fundamentals
- C. Competitive Marksmanship



“On Target!”

M13/A: Firearms Safety

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A. Firearms Safety

Standard #1: Students gain identity and belonging as a cadet while developing self-control, respect, discipline, and confidence.

OBJECTIVES

DESIRED OUTCOME (Self-Mastery)

Cadets are able to identify the safety rules used in rifle marksmanship and conduct themselves safely while handling weapons and on a range. Cadets pass the Firearms Safety Exam with 100%.

Plan of Action:

1. Explain why Safety is important when using firearms.
2. Explain the safety rules associated with the parts of the rifle: Muzzle, Action, Trigger (MAT).
3. Identify the Range Rules and how they relate to how a range operates.
4. Identify the meaning of the commands used on a rifle range in the CMP, NRA, and military styles.

A1. Introduction to Firearms Safety

Guns are a controversial topic in America today, but that's not the focus of this lesson or strand. Marksmanship - the ability to shoot accurately at a target (Askdefine.com, 2019) - teaches some great skills, not the least of which is a healthy respect for guns and the destruction they can unleash. The California Cadet Corps was founded partially with the intent to teach cadets marksmanship so they would have better skills when they entered the US Army. These days, we're not sending most of our cadets off to a career in the Army, but we do still like to teach marksmanship to those who choose to want to practice it.

If you learn nothing else from your marksmanship training in the California Cadet Corps, we want you to know how to be safe when handling firearms. There are basic rules about handling weapons that apply to all types of firearms, and as a cadet you should know them.

Firearm: A personal weapon that uses explosive powder to propel a projectile.

There are lots of situations where you may legitimately carry a firearm: on a range, in a class on marksmanship, while marching, going hunting, as a member of the military or police. In all these situations, you need to know the rules, and employ the safety rules that are in place in that situation. The rules may vary; for example, on a range you never walk around with bullets loaded in the chamber, but as a police officer your gun is always loaded.

The important thing is that you know basic firearms safety, know how to implement it, and know how to assess a situation, adjust to it, and remain safe.

Weapons safety can address many types of weapons - guns, knives, spears, swords, bows & arrows. We'll focus here on firearms safety, and specifically on rifle safety, since that's the type of firearm we might use in the Cadet Corps.

Why do we start our marksmanship training with lessons on firearms safety? Because guns are designed to inflict a lot of damage to a target, and we want to make sure that target is made of paper and hung at the far end of the range - not a person or animal that wasn't intended to be shot. Guns can and often do kill people. There is no margin for error in weapon safety. We demand 100% of your attention and compliance with the rules in this module. **Any** unsafe act will immediately get you removed from the range or course.

Though safety procedures on all ranges are similar, they do vary depending on the type of range, weapons, and personnel operating it. Cadet Corps ranges most often use the style and rules adopted by the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) for air rifles, or using National Rifle Association (NRA) procedures according to their rule book. You may occasionally also be on a range that uses military commands. It is critical that you understand the rules of the range you're on, and follow them.

To proceed in Cadet Corps marksmanship to familiarizing with a rifle, cadets must achieve 100% on the Cadet Corps Firearms Safety Exam. The material covered in the exam is in this curriculum strand - M13A - Firearms Safety, and includes common sense rules governing handling of firearms.

Ten Commandments of Shooting Safety

1. Always point a weapon muzzle in a safe direction
2. Treat every firearm or bow with the same respect you would show a loaded gun or knocked arrow
3. Be sure of your target and what is in front of and beyond your target
4. Unload firearms and unstring bows when not in use
5. Handle firearms, arrows and ammunition carefully
6. Know your safe zone of fire and stick to it
7. Control your emotions when it comes to safety
8. Wear hearing and eye protection
9. Don't drink alcoholic beverages or take drugs before or while handling firearms or bow and arrows
10. Be aware of additional circumstances which require added caution or safety awareness

A2. Firearms Safety Rules

The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) suggests three easy-to-remember safety rules (CMP, 2019). These rules relate to three parts of a rifle:

- Muzzle
- Action
- Trigger

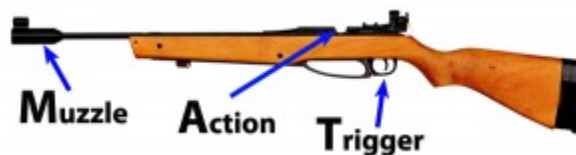
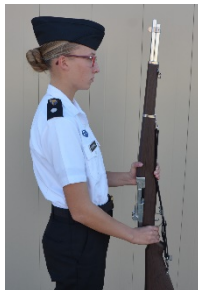


Photo from CMP website: www.thecmp.org/Safety

We remember these rules using the acronym **MAT**. These are the **most important rules**. These are rules you must **NEVER** violate when handling working firearms. No second chances - know these rules and always follow them.



Muzzle (the forward end of the barrel where the bullet comes out). **Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.** What's a safe direction? That depends. In most cases, it's up, or up and downrange - pointed toward where the targets are. If you're walking with your gun, it's best to carry it pointed straight up. Carry it with both hands, and don't carry other things in your hands at the same time. There may be times where local policy is different - on some ranges, you keep the gun pointed down at the ground. But whatever local policy is, follow it! If you're making policy, consider your surroundings, and determine what the safest direction is. **When you put a rifle into your hands, the first thing you do is make sure it's pointed in a safe**

direction. Then, go on to the next important rule:



Action (the working mechanism of the gun - where you put the bullets in). **Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.** In a marksmanship training situation, don't load the gun until you're ready to shoot. If there's no ammunition in the gun, a shooting accident can't happen. Unless ready to shoot, there should be no magazine inserted into the gun, or if it's a bolt action, the bolt should be open and to the rear. Once you do load ammunition into the gun, be extra careful of where you're pointing the muzzle, and that your finger stays off the trigger until actually shooting. **Unless actually shooting, always ensure the action is open and a CBI is inserted** (unless the gun is in storage).

Photo: 2007.07.21 Gydnia, Open bolt of rifle.jpg - Wikimedia Commons

Always handle a gun as if it is loaded. When you receive a gun from someone, the first action you take is to clear it - check to see that it is unloaded and on Safe. If there's a bolt, keep the bolt to the rear. If you have one, use a chamber plug or clear barrel indicator (CBI).



Photo: www.odcmp.org

Trigger. Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

That's pretty simple - finger off the trigger. This is especially true once the gun is loaded, but even when it's not, practice this simple safety measure.



Some other rules that are important (Association, 2019):

- Know your target and what is beyond
- Know how to use the gun safely
- Be sure the gun is safe to operate
- Use only the correct ammunition for your gun
- Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate
- Never use alcohol, over-the-counter drugs or prescription drugs before or while shooting
- Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons
- Be aware that certain types of guns and many shooting activities require additional safety precautions
- Keep your gun cleaned and oiled

Know your target and what is beyond: Situational Awareness is always important when you are around firearms. You must pay attention to what's going on around you. You can't let yourself focus on your

task so much that you don't notice what's happening, what other people are doing, where your weapon is pointed, or even where you're walking. You need to be hyper-aware, especially when moving with a firearm, and follow the 3 NRA Rules outlined above.

Even if you're on a range, don't assume everything is safe. Be aware if someone moves toward the targets, or if someone is walking by, even far away, within the range of your weapon. Never go "down range" if someone is still situated at their rifle. At most ranges, shooters must not even touch their firearm if someone goes down range.

At most ranges, you take direction from the Tower. There's a range officer whose sole job is to run the firing line and give directions to shooters. That person will tell you where to go, when to go, what to do with your weapon and ammunition, and when to fire. It may seem overwhelming your first time on a range, but it's important that you learn how to handle your weapon and how the range works. Once you understand that, just follow directions, remember what you've been taught about how to correctly fire the weapon, and do your best!

Dry-Firing is the action of cocking the trigger mechanism and squeezing the trigger, without loading a round. It is done to practice the firing process, particularly the processes of aiming, breath control, and trigger squeeze. Dry-Firing is a good way to review fundamentals and get your head in the game. Even though the rifle remains unloaded, still follow all the rules about pointing it at a safe place.

A3. Range Rules

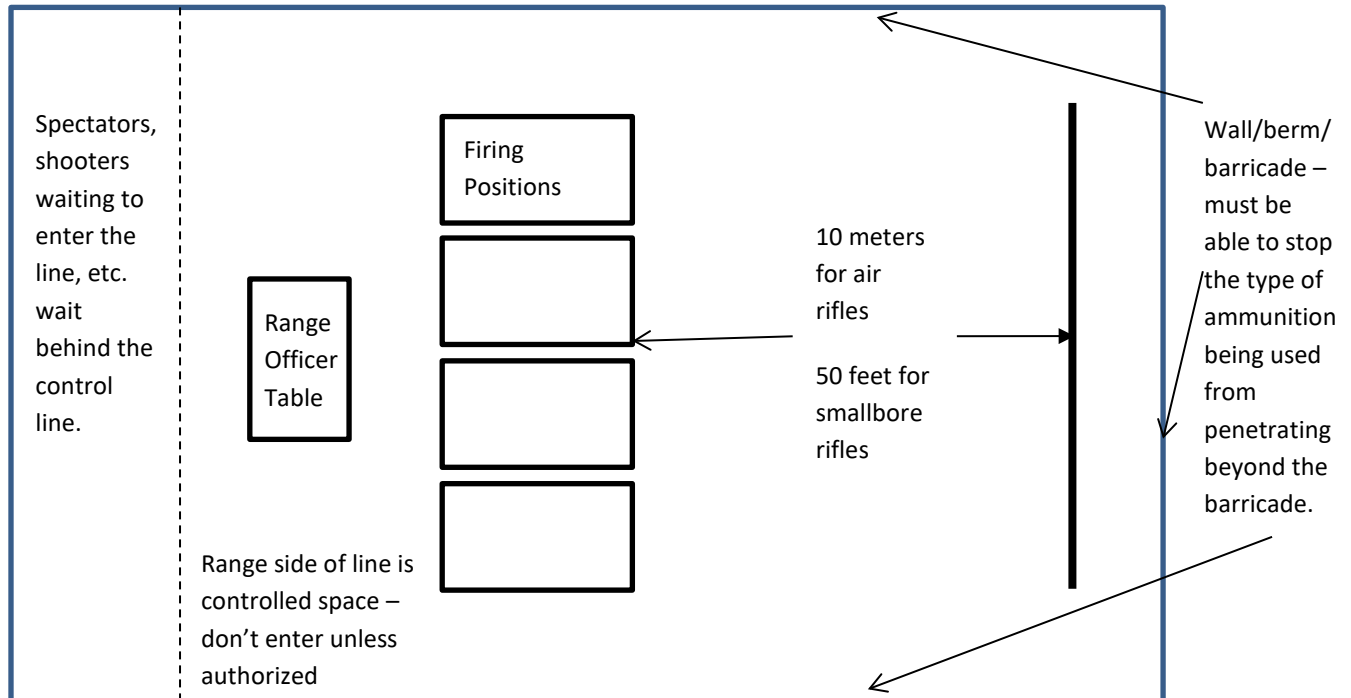
In addition to the fairly universal rules about what to do to safely handle a firearm, you need to understand how a rifle range is set up and the rules that apply to everyone on the range. Violating range rules will get you removed from the range immediately - you must always be aware of your actions when at a range!

For air rifles and .22 caliber rifles, which are the two types of rifles you might use in the Cadet Corps, ranges are similar.

Targets are posted at the far end of the range, with a wall or berm or Kevlar screen as a backdrop that prevents the bullets from going beyond the target.

The amount of space between the firing line and the targets at Cadet Corps ranges is generally 30-50 feet. The firing line is where the shooters position themselves to shoot at the targets. Each shooter has his/her own space to keep their rifle and ammunition, scope if used, other equipment, and enough space to properly position themselves to shoot without disturbing other shooters.

Behind the firers, you'll find the Range Officer's position. Usually this is a table where the range officer can observe all the firers and the whole range, can use a scope as necessary, and from which he/she will give the range commands.



- The Range Officer controls the range. All actions on a range are at the direction of the Range Officer. People don't enter the range without the permission of the Range Officer if the range is operational. On a military range, this function may be performed by a Tower NCO, whether there's a range tower or PA system. All orders come from the Tower.
- At the firing line, weapons must be safe until you're ready to fire - unloaded, pointing downrange, with CBI or barrel plug inserted, bolt to the rear, Safety switch engaged.
- When going to and from the firing line, keep weapons pointed up and downrange.
- When exiting the range after firing, the Range Officer will check and clear each weapon.
- Range commands using the CMP style are LOAD, START, and STOP.
- If anyone goes downrange for any reason (i.e. to put up or fix a target), all weapons must be grounded with CBI inserted. No handling of rifles if anyone is downrange.
- Ear and eye protection is recommended.
- Shoot only the target associated with your position. Don't shoot anything other than targets (at outdoor ranges, this includes animals, blowing garbage, etc.)
- No horseplay of any kind.
- If you see anything unsafe, anyone can command STOP or CEASE FIRE. Everyone present is responsible for both their own safe actions and the actions of those around them.

The commands used on a CMP style range are Load, Start, Stop, and Unload. (CMP Civilian Marksmanship Program, 2018)

LOAD. Do not load ammunition into any rifle until the range officer gives the command LOAD. At that point, shooters may charge air rifles as necessary, load ammunition, and get ready to fire.

START. This is the command that allows you to start shooting. If your weapon has a Safety switch, you may take the weapon off Safe when the command START has been given. You may continue to load and charge your weapon and fire at your own pace until the STOP command is given.

STOP. If all shooters are finished firing, the range officer commands STOP. If time has run out but shooters haven't completed their course of fire and are still firing, they immediately CEASE FIRE upon hearing the command STOP. Do not pull the trigger after you hear this command. The range officer or any other person on the range can command STOP if they become aware of a dangerous or unsafe condition. All firers must instantly obey this command. Once you have stopped firing, open the action of your rifle, and await further instructions.

UNLOAD. With air rifles, removing ammunition usually entails firing the rifle into a Pellet Discharge Container. Indicate you have pellets loaded by raising your hand or calling out "**Loaded Rifle,**" and wait for instructions. Once your rifle is unloaded, insert your CBI.

On an NRA range, the most common commands are related to competition shooting. Simple range commands are **Commence Firing, Cease Firing, Ready on the Left/Right?, Carry On, Go Forward and Change Targets,** or **Remove your Equipment from the Line for the Next Relay.** You may hear **Cease Firing - Bolts Open, Insert Your ECIs** (equivalent of CBI). Other commands are explained in the NRA publication *Smallbore Rifle Rules*. Because of the differences between air rifles and .22 cal Smallbore Rifles and how they operate, the actions for loading and unloading will be a bit different. As you learn the weapon system you're going to fire, understand these key processes.

Military ranges tend to be more controlled than civilian ranges. You'll get commands for each phase of firing. Some examples are:

Firers, assume a good prone supported firing position.
Lock and load a magazine of three rounds
Ready on the Left/Right? The Firing Line is Ready.
Take your weapon off Safe
Commence firing
Cease firing, lock and clear all weapons
Clear on the left/right? The Firing Line is Clear.

You'll notice that the commands aren't that different, and are fairly easy to interpret. Be prepared for all types of commands, and you'll feel confident, and you'll be more likely to shoot well!

If your rifle malfunctions while you're shooting it on a range, stay calm. Keep the muzzle pointed downrange, raise your hand so the Range Officer or your Coach can see there's a problem, and wait for instructions.

Never leave your rifle sitting anywhere loaded. If you have reason to walk away from your firing position, ensure the weapon is unloaded with CBI inserted.

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