

Loading Table Etiquette

This is the time for a refresher course for the loading table. Besides the written rules of not pointing your guns in the wrong direction and dry firing, there are some unwritten rules of which everyone should be aware. Let us start with when to walk up to the loading table. Some places allow you to shoot when you are ready. Not around these here parts. Nightmare for the scorekeeper and creates a crowd at the loading table. No one left to work the stage. Having said that, have no more than 3-4 at the loading table unless you have a big posse.

As stated previously, we always shoot or approach the loading table when your name comes up on the shooting list. We attempt to pay attention when the shooting order is called out and we match and place the face and name in our subconscious. Consciously, you should glance over at the loading table and when you see this person laying their guns on the table you should start for your cart to be prepared to approach the loading table. This practice will make for a smooth match and not cause the shooters on the loading table to become distracted if you come to the loading table late.

Do not occupy the table before your turn. Do not place your guns on the table in other shooters way if it is not your turn at the loading table. When you approach the table please have the exact number of rifle and pistol rounds necessary for you to shoot the stage. Not only does this assist the Loading Table Officer (LTO), it also helps to ensure that you will probably load the correct number of rounds. If you are unable to acquire a loading block of some sort, at least lay them out in such a fashion to count them accurately. If you do have a loading block the LTO can establish that you have at least brought the correct number of rifle rounds with you and can concentrate on checking your pistols.

Do not spread your guns out and occupy more table than you need to. Besides, an established routine at the loading table will assist you to focus on the stage and not reloading. I would hope it would not be necessary to tell you to show your loaded pistols to the LTO. In my opinion, no one is too good to not voluntarily accept that much of a means to checks and balances.

Carrying you guns to the loading table and the **presentation of pistols** at the loading table should be consistent with all rules. Barrels up and stand as if the table is the firing line. Cross draw holster people. This is the place where not paying attention can get you into trouble. Most of you comply, but there are a few which prompted a request from one of the contributors. At the loading table you must do the twist, dance, or whatever it takes to draw the pistol and place it on the table and not sweep anyone.

After you have loaded a pistol, present the pistol so as to present the best viewpoint from the LTOs position to determine the hammer is on an empty round. Some hold their hand on the opposite side of the cylinder to provide the LTO with a lighted background.

If the LTO requests to see your pistol again, please comply. Any reasonable request to examine your guns should be met with compliance. The LTO is being responsible for his job.

There are some places that do not require or maintain a loading officer. No comment here. I will comment that the unloading table should always have an Unloading Table Officer (UTO).

If there is a LTO, watch your weapons. A number of LTOs have remarked how many times they are swept with a barrel. I have some ideas on this problem but they can all be solved by **PAYING ATTENTION**. As the contributor of this piece says, "Watch what you do and really watch what you do".

Learn you guns. This is not redneck language instructing you to teach your guns. You should not come to a match and be dangerously unfamiliar with your weapons. Practice loading your weapons at home. Safely, I hope. The single action pistol is a relatively simple firearm and they are a few different methods of loading. How to hold your pistol and insert rounds at the same time, and then lower the hammer on an empty chamber will cause confusion amongst the rookies. As in shooting a match, I tell the new shooter to forget the ego, throw away the pride. Do not prove anything to us except that you can hit all the targets. Well, almost all. If you come to a match, let us help you.

Once you have loaded your guns, arrange them compactly. Move your guns down the table and allow room for those coming to the table behind you.

One of the problems on the loading table **is hogging the table**. This may be unintentional but it is annoying. After you have moved your guns close to the shooter's guns in front of you, step away from the table. Do not lean on the table or place your hand on the table. Do not take up space just behind your guns. Next time realize how much space you are consuming. On a small table this will cause the third loader to have to hurry to get loaded after you have left the table. On a small table someone will probably tell you to move. Realize why. We all have rocks and live in the proverbial glass house. Sometimes I forget to move. We probably all have. But those times are brain fade, not a bad habit.

Another problem is talking and/or **being a distraction**. There are those who do not realize that some of us would rather have that time to focus on the stage and attempt to get the sequence fixed in our subconscious. Especially if you are the one on deck. If you are about to say we take this game too serious, I disagree. We want to do our best. We have just as much fun as you do. If we shoot the stage really well, this is a plus to our fun factor.

I will make one last point. You may holster your pistols as soon as the LTO checks them. This practice is a personal preference and there is no rule; however, if you holster them and suddenly remember that you left something on your cart, you may help pick up brass for the remainder of the stage. Translated: walk away from the loading table with loaded guns and you will be stage DQd. At my age I leave them on the table until just before I am called to the line. This practice does take up room on the table. Sorry.

When it is time for you to stage your guns, keep an eye on the RO/Timer. He should be the only one that has the power to call you to the line. I will walk slowly towards the RO/Timer but generally I will never stage my guns unless she or he instructs me to. To keep from insulting the other person who is attempting to get you to the line, I will walk to the line but I still will not stage my guns. The R/O should examine the stage to ensure that all helpers have exited downrange and it is safe to call you to the firing line.

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