

Advanced Beginner Questions & Answers

Jim Henderson

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Jim Henderson is one of the very best shooters to come along in the past 20 years. Setting records at the National Matches and the Interservice Matches, he is a two-time National Pistol Champion (2006 and 2009) and will surely win more times in the future. I have had the pleasure of shooting next to Jim on several occasions at small matches and have enjoyed his sense of humor and generosity with sharing his experience.

Here are some of the questions I've fielded over the years from aspiring shooters:

- *Slow fire: visualize the perfect shot EACH time, before firing each shot?*
Yes, I think a good visualization program is key. But remember, perfection is a hard thing to see. So keep your thoughts obtainable, but ever striving forward.
- *Engage in conversation between targets or stay intently focused?*
That to me is a match to match thing. Sometimes I can talk and cut up, sometimes I need to step back and keep my train of thought. This is something you will have to experiment with.
- *Scope a shot you called "out" (bad) just to confirm?*
Nope. Why let that negative thought in to your game plan? If it didn't feel right why look. Concentrate on the next shot. You can call them anything but back. When it's gone it's gone.
- *Scope at all on the short line?*
I use to, just for the first string. To reaffirm my zero. After I knew it was good I put the scope away. Now since I don't have a scope mount on my pelican box I hardly use my scope at all.
- *Intently think about breaking the shot or relegate to subconscious? (thinking about trigger pull)*
This I think is an experience thing also. If you are just starting out your subconscious doesn't know what to do. If you are farther down the road, a little less attention to the finer things may be OK. Your focus is just on the big picture or the outcome of the action. Kind of like being in upper middle management. I generally just concentrate on relaxing now. Just because I have complete faith in my plan and my ability to stick to it.
- *Is it really worth visualizing your entire match beforehand, or is mental training like other training: getting "pieces" mastered to make up the whole?*
Well, I don't know about you but I have a hard time remembering where I left my car keys, never mind 270 individual items at one time. Try this; one slow fire shot, fired to the best of your ability. You have to be comfortable with yourself before you can make yourself comfortable. Then strive for the next level. One point at a time, one shot at a time. It's like learning as a child all over again. Crawl, walk, run. Then run like the wind.
- *Why is it such a battle to beat my average?*
If you find that when you don't stick to your plan that you shoot right where you always do, I have a thought for you. Self-sabotage. Let's look at it for a minute before you start calling me names. Look at it this way. "Oh man I'm shooting great, I'm right on track to shoot my best score ever. Hey wait a minute, am I capable of this?"

(scratch 9) Can I shoot as good as I'm doing? (solid 8) I've never shot this good before, (slider 7) can I shoot as good as those Big Guns? (slammed in on paper miss)." And you know the funniest thing about all these doubts running through your mind. They flash by in the blink of an eye. They happen even before you know your defeating yourself. And I'll tell you something else. Sometimes you won't even know you did it until you're talking to someone after the match. Listen to yourself and you will hear your own best critic.

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