

# COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™

## Range Operations Basic Safety Course (Level I)



Compiled and Edited for SASS

By

The Range Operations Committee

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COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™  
SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course

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# COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™

## SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course

### INTRODUCTION

The design and production of this course has evolved from many years of running matches and a need for match to match consistency. Shooters at all SASS matches will benefit greatly by the consistency this course provides. This course material is designed to help clarify and interpret the SASS Handbook. This document may be copied by any SASS Affiliated Club for use in the SASS Range Operations training program.

SASS encourages the broadest dissemination of this material to its members as possible. Those SASS members who receive this Range Operations Basic Safety Course training, taught by a certified SASS Range Officer Instructor will be awarded a yellow SASS pin as evidence of satisfactory course completion.

Consistency is important—undefined rules and gray areas cause hard feelings, misunderstandings, and arguments.

The purpose of this course is to ensure safety and consistency at every SASS club match, no matter what size the match. Each SASS competitor who sets foot on a range is a Safety Officer, responsible for his own safety and the safety of those nearby. It is our intent every SASS competitor has the knowledge to function as a Range Officer, given appropriate coaching on the range by experienced personnel.

The Posse Leader's role is to keep the posse running efficiently, safely, and consistently. It is the responsibility of club officials to determine the qualifications, experience, maturity, and judgment of its match officials and appoint appropriately trained individuals as Range Officers for their matches.

The rules and disciplines described in this course will not impose any undue hardship or additional financial burden on any club. It will, however, train our members to be safe and consistently penalize unsafe gun handling. Shooters who travel to SASS matches or clubs will feel comfortable knowing the safety rules and procedural penalties are consistent with their home club. They will also feel comfortable knowing the scoring, guns, and equipment are consistent with the SASS Shooters Handbook.

All SASS Range Officers must know and understand the most current version of the SASS Shooters Handbook, be informed, and understand any recent changes. It is recommended all posse leaders be trained in this Basic Range Operations Course. As of December 7, 2003, successful completion of this course, as well as the Range Officer Training Course, became required in order for a person to hold the position of Territorial Governor for a SASS-affiliated club. We must keep in mind what firearms are designed to do, and remember they can be very dangerous and deadly unless great care is taken while handling and shooting them. We must always treat every firearm as loaded and ready to fire!

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#### **SPIRIT OF THE GAME**

Good sportsmanship best defines “the Spirit of the Game.” When designing and running a match, every match Director and Range Officer must keep in mind the event is solely for the safe enjoyment of the shooters. Range Officers must be professional, polite, and friendly. The SASS Shooters Handbook is to be followed in designing a match, and SASS rules enforced equally and consistently. These rules have been developed over time and provide our sport with a high level of safety and consistency. This course was designed to give you a better understanding of the rules and how to apply them.

Completion of this basic safety course shows your commitment to SASS and demonstrates your willingness to jump in and help out where needed on your posse.

Because our goal is to provide a safe and fun shooting experience, any competitor or Range Official who uses foul language or becomes belligerent or threatening in any manner will be disqualified from the event, and, at the Match Director’s discretion, may be required to leave the range.

#### **FAILURE TO ENGAGE**

A “failure to engage” occurs when a competitor willfully or intentionally disregards the stage instructions in order to obtain a competitive advantage and is not assessed simply because a competitor “makes a mistake.” A Failure to Engage applies only to non-shooting situations such as refusing to rope a steer, throw a stick of dynamite or otherwise make an attempt to complete any other non-shooting procedure written within the stage instructions. In such a case, in addition to any penalties for misses, a 30-second failure to engage/Spirit of the Game penalty is assessed.

#### **SAFETY RULES (FIRST, LAST, AND ALWAYS)**

##### **All competitors are Safety Officers.**

Our sport, by its very nature, has the potential to be dangerous, and a serious accident can occur. However, the history of SASS–affiliated matches is free of any serious accident.

Every participant in a SASS match is expected to be a Safety Officer. Each shooter’s first responsibility is for his or her own safe conduct, and all shooters are expected to remain alert for unsafe actions by others.

Range Officers and shooters are expected to confront any participant observed in an unsafe situation, and it is expected the matter will quickly be corrected and not repeated. Any argument concerning the correction of a safety related matter can be expected to result in the offending shooter’s ejection from the range.

While every participant is a safety officer, the assigned Posse Officials and Match Officials, as described in this document, are the **ONLY** persons who may judge a shooter whether on or away from the firing line.

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## RANGE OFFICERS

The purpose of trained club Range Officers is to provide the sport of Cowboy Action Shooting™ with competent, firm, and fair officials in all levels of competition and allow Range Officers to perform any duty on the posse.

The main objective of the Chief Range Officer is to assist the competitor safely through a course of fire and be an authority in all areas of gun safety, any time, any place.

**Range Officer's Motto: THE PURPOSE OF THE RANGE OFFICER IS TO SAFELY ASSIST THE SHOOTER THROUGH THE COURSE OF FIRE.**

The two words in this statement paramount to why a Range Officer is even necessary on the firing line are assist and safely. Let's look at these two words separately and how they affect one's actions and attitudes.

### ASSIST

As a Range Officer, you are there to assist the shooter. You will notice the word "penalize" doesn't appear anywhere, but the word "assist" does. This is not to say you won't be called upon to assess penalties when they are appropriate, but it is NOT your first priority. You are there to prevent safety violations before they occur.

Assisting the shooter may take many forms. Some of the more important ways in which you can achieve this are:

**Information.** The best way to assist the shooter is to give consistent, complete information about the stage, such as starting position, starting location, round count for each gun, where to stage each gun, and the intent of the stage. Most of the basic information will appear on the stage description, however, many of the smaller details will not. For example, the shooter may know to sit in the chair at the start, but may not know he can re-position the chair to fit his or her size.

**BE CONSISTENT in what you say and how you say it. Make sure only one Range Officer answers any questions for that stage. This way the same question is answered the same way every time. Every posse must hear the same information the same way. Always read the stage description word for word as it appears on the sheet, whether you have it memorized or not.**

**Shooter Inventory.** Another good way to assist the shooter is to visually inventory each shooter at the line just before starting your range commands. This means you should inspect the shooter to see if they have all the equipment to complete the course of fire. For example, if you know the shooter is supposed to have shotgun shells on their person, but you don't see them, simply ask where they are. Also, look for the appropriate safety equipment. We all know how disconcerting it is to fire your first shot only to realize your earplugs aren't in!

**Assessment.** Assess the shooter's condition. We have all seen a shooter who is suffering from a bad case of match nerves. Even though this person may have plenty of experience, adrenaline is a strong drug and has many adverse effects. A person suffering from the effects of match nerves may be a hazard to himself or others, so it is important to pay special

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attention to a shooter who may be shaking violently, has trouble talking, or seems a little lost about the stage requirements. It may be wise to suggest the shooter sit down and wait a while longer before he shoots.

**Anticipate.** With time and experience, you will be able to anticipate the shooter's next move. If you can anticipate the shooter's next move, you may prevent him or her from acquiring penalties or committing an unsafe act. This is the mark of a truly good Range Officer.

**Attitude.** The best Range Officers have the best attitude. If you can do your job well and have fun too, then you will find the posse generally also has a good time. You will additionally find you are less likely to have any serious confrontations, and the posse as a whole will work more efficiently. Remember, it's your attitude that sets the mood for the entire match.

**Coaching.** This is the most direct way to assist the shooter after the course of fire begins. The Chief Range Officer should coach only when someone looks momentarily confused or lost, if they attempt to put down a long-gun with the action closed, or address the wrong target. However, it's not your job to "shoot the stage" for the competitor, coaching him in every action and some shooters don't like to be coached at all. It is prudent to determine if there is anyone on the posse who doesn't want to be coached. Proper coaching is not considered RO interference and, therefore, will never be grounds for a reshoot. Improper coaching that either impedes the shooters progress or results in a procedural penalty may be grounds for a reshoot.

### SAFELY

Safely, as it applies here, has nothing to do with the rules per se. When we talk about assisting the shooter through a course of fire *safely*, we mean "without incident." An accident or incident, which has the potential for injury, is of grave concern to all who are exposed to the danger, which naturally includes the Range Staff. Therefore, it is critical to do what is necessary to avoid or prevent such incidents from occurring. How is this accomplished?

1. **Course Design.** Some course designs are unsafe and should be avoided or changed. Example: a shooter leaves one shooting position and runs *up-range* (towards the spectators) to pull a revolver from his holster. This would mean the shooter, if he draws the revolver too early, could sweep the crowd with the muzzle of the gun. Solution: either stage the revolver so the competitor can't get to it until he or she is pointed in a safe direction, or change the stage so the competitor has to run down-range.  
**Don't be afraid to refuse to allow your posse to shoot an unsafe stage. Insist the stage be made safe before proceeding.**
2. **Anticipate.** Again, if you can anticipate what the shooter may do next, you may be able to stop an unsafe act from occurring. This is not to suggest you are expected to put yourself in danger in order to stop the unsafe act, but you *might* be able to prevent it from happening through verbal direction or physical action.
3. **Watch the Gun.** Many shooters acting as the Timer Operator rarely know what or where to actually look. Often, you will see them counting misses or looking around at the spotters. If you want to *really* know how to make more exact calls and anticipate the shooter's next

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move, *watch the gun!* By actually looking at the gun, you can identify where the gun is pointing and usually what target the shooter is engaging. This is critical if you have to make a call pertaining to correct target engagement. By watching the gun, you can also identify squib loads, warn the shooter if he or she is getting close to the 170° safety limit, or stop the shooter if there is a problem with the gun itself.

4. ***Stay Within Arm's Length.*** In order to stop an unsafe act, the Chief Range Officer must be within arm's length of the shooter. In fact, the appropriate position for the Chief Range Officer is behind and off to the *strong side* of the shooter. In other words, if the shooter is right handed, the Chief Range Officer should be within arm's length of the shooter, to the rear and right of centerline. In this way, you can see the shooter operate the gun with his or her strong hand. NEVER let the competitor get away from you.

After you have run five or six competitors over a stage, you may get tired or lazy about staying up with the shooter, but remember, if that person commits an unsafe act, such as breaking the 170° safety rule, you will not be in a position to prevent it. If you are more than three feet away, you may not be able to see the gun. If you are getting tired, pass the timer to another Range Officer.

These are just some of the ways the Range Officer can apply safety in a practical manner.

### **RANGE OFFICER ATTITUDE**

1. Be courteous and considerate of your fellow competitor Never be over zealous in your duties.
2. Always be firm, but fair.
3. When penalizing a contestant, do not allow yourself to be intimidated by the competitor. Stand your ground, but do so in a professional manner.
4. Don't be a "hard-ass."
5. Be helpful to the competitor—learn to identify the seasoned shooters from the newer shooter—you can usually tell by their manner and confidence. If seasoned shooters need to know something, they'll ask; if newer shooters need help or coaching, give them all they need. Pay closer attention to newer shooters—from loading to unloading.
6. Always refer to the SASS Shooters Handbook when stating the rules. Don't quote them from memory; you may be wrong. Enforce the rules as written, not what you think they mean. The Range Operations Basic Safety Course and The Range Officer Training Course offer interpretations and clarifications of the rules and procedures referenced within the SASS Shooters Handbook that will be helpful in making the correct call.
7. Make the call, and call them the way you see them!!! There are checks and balances in place. In cases of rule and policy interpretation, you may be overruled. If you are overruled, don't take it personally. Be glad for the competitor if it goes in his/her favor.
8. Never allow a competitor to badger, abuse, or argue with you or any other match official. Be firm and fair, but if they persist, don't argue with them. This is a gun sport, not a tennis match! Heated words between folks wearing firearms are not acceptable. Bring this type of behavior immediately to the attention of the Range Master or Match Director.
9. Always read the rulebook from the contestant's viewpoint.
10. Always give the contestant the benefit of doubt.



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## MATCH PROCEDURES AND TERMS

All match positions described below are Range Officers. The Timer Operator is the Chief Range Officer during shooting stage operations.

1. **Match Director** is in charge of the overall match and is required to ensure qualified officials are in place in all tournament areas.
2. **Range Master** is in charge of and oversees all stages and ensures qualified officials are in place on all stages. He reviews all stages and ensures they are designed and constructed to operate in a safe manner for both competitors and officials.
3. **Posse Marshal**

Posse Marshals cannot perform all of the Range Officer functions themselves, but must ensure Range Officer assignments are made and the rules and regulations are being followed. It is recommended all posse leaders be trained in this Basic Range Operations Course.

- A) Is in charge of a posse and is required to ensure all positions are manned to safely and efficiently run the posse through each course of fire.
  - B) Will understand all stages, conduct a walk-through, and answer all questions before beginning each stage.
  - C) Will appoint at least one deputy if one is not assigned.
4. **Deputy**
    - A) Acts on behalf of the Posse Marshal when the Marshal is shooting or otherwise unavailable.
    - B) The Marshal and Deputy should be separated in the shooting order.
  5. **Timer Operator**
    - A) Is the Chief Range Officer for the stage and is in charge of the firing line, as long as he/she is running the timer.
    - B) Is responsible for assigning and identifying three Spotters. It is a good idea to have bandanas or batons for the spotters to hold. This helps identify the spotters and keeps them on the line until they hand off the baton or bandana to the next spotter.
    - C) The Timer Operator does not have the authority to overrule the spotters in regard to misses, but can question spotters as to location of misses. The Timer Operator is often in the best position to see the direction the muzzle is pointed, which is helpful in determining edge hits.
    - D) The Timer Operator should be aware of the skill level of the competitors and very attentive to newer shooters, helping and coaching them through the course of fire, as needed, and always ready to control the newer shooter.
    - E) Give seasoned shooters a little more room since they tend to move very fast. Don't let them run over you because you're crowding them.
    - F) The Timer Operator never starts a competitor in a faulted position or location. It is not considered a faulted position or location for allowing a shooter to start without appropriately loaded guns or available ammunition on their person.



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- G) The Timer Operator should not count misses, but watches the shooter for unsafe acts, correct target engagement, and stage procedures in addition to counting shots fired, **if possible**. However, the Timer Operator is often times in the best position to evaluate hits or misses if in question.
  - H) The Timer Operator holds the timer in a manner ensuring the last shots fired in a stage are recorded. This is especially true if the last gun being used in a stage is a rifle, **which is always considered poor course design**, since rifle reports are often not loud enough to reliably record on a timer.
  - I) Don't feel you have to record every shot on the timer through the course of fire. Make sure the last one is recorded. It's the one that really counts, but it is always best to record as many shots as possible in the event of a gun malfunction.
  - J) Once the stage begins, the Timer Operator stays within arm's length of the competitor until the stage is finished. **The Timer Operator then immediately announces the stage time to the shooter**. Any firearms with unfired rounds remaining should be cleared while still on the stage, if possible. Only after revolvers are holstered and long guns are retrieved by the shooter with actions opened, muzzles pointed in a safe direction, and the shooter is heading towards the unloading table does the Timer Operator, declare "Range is clear" and conveys the time to the Score Keeper in a loud, clear voice.
  - K) The Timer Operator polls the three Spotters to determine the number of misses and solicits their input regarding any penalties, and then calls those numbers to the Score Keeper and the competitor in a loud, clear voice.
  - L) It is up to the Timer Operator to verify at least two of the three Spotters agree on misses. The Timer Operator should consider input from the Spotters regarding procedurals and/or safety violations as well as personal observations during the stage. Final determination regarding assessment of penalties is made by the Timer Operator.
  - M) Only the Timer Operator or Expediter calls the next shooter to the line.
6. **Expediter or XP Officer**
- A) The Expediter or XP Officer is in charge of making sure the posse stays on time and on task during their assigned time on each stage.
  - B) The XP Officer's primary concern is the next shooter to be called to the line—otherwise known as the "On-deck" shooter. The XP Officer makes sure the "On-deck" shooter is ready, understands the course of fire, and proceeds promptly to the line to stage firearms and ammunition as quickly as possible.
  - C) The following is a guideline for the duties of the XP Officer:
    1. At the first shot of the shooter on the line, the XP Officer calls the next shooter from the loading table to the "On-deck" position.
    2. When the shooter arrives at the "On-deck" position," the XP Officer asks the following questions and assists the shooter with appropriate answers:
      - Do you understand the course of fire?
      - Do you have any questions about the stage?
    3. The XP Officer should not engage in any unnecessary conversation with the "On-deck" shooter, allowing them time to mentally prepare for the stage.

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4. Once the XP Officer feels the “On-deck” shooter is ready, s/he should focus attention on the **stage**. Once the line is clear, targets are set, and brass removed (if allowed), the XP Officer instructs the “On-deck” shooter to move to the line and stage firearms and ammunition as required by the stage description, then proceed immediately to the starting position.
  5. At this point, the Timer Operator or Chief Range office will take charge of the shooter on the line.
    - D) The XP Officer can be a Posse Member, but the best results can be accomplished by having a Berm Marshal or Stage Driver serve in this capacity, if possible.
    - E) The “On-deck” position should have a low table in addition to the loading table in order to accommodate the long guns of the “On-deck” shooter. It is also a good idea to have a copy of the scenario at the “On-deck” position.
    - F) The XP Officer does not count misses, reset targets, score, run the timer, or pick up brass.
    - G) The XP Officer helps assign target re-setters and brass pickers (if allowed).
    - H) Not all matches will benefit from an XP Officer, but the majority of time lost in a match is getting the next shooter to the line and staging their firearms. If used correctly, the XP Officer can shave off up to 30 seconds per shooter, thereby leaving more time for socializing after the shooting is finished!
- 7. Score Keeper**
- A) Score Keepers must never record scores for a family member.
  - B) Calls out shooting order and records times and penalties as received from the Timer Operator. If scoring instructions dictate, the Score Keeper will also total the times and penalties to calculate the shooter’s score. It is good practice for the Score Keeper to repeat in a loud, clear voice the scoring time announced by the Timer Operator.
  - C) The Score Keeper can be one of the Spotters.
  - D) The penalties are recorded in a manner not confusing to the person entering computer data. If there are five misses, for instance, don’t simply write “5,” since that can be confused as just a five second penalty. If there is one miss, don’t write “5” thinking someone will assume it just means five seconds. They may read that as five misses and add on twenty-five seconds. It’s best to write 1/5, 2/10, or 3/15 for misses and 1/10 for a procedural.
  - E) The competitor should always be aware of any misses or penalties as they are leaving the line. The competitor has the right to know, since once they leave the line and unload, miss penalties should not be questioned.
- 8. Spotters**
- A) Must never spot for a family member.
  - B) Have the responsibility to count shots and misses and to verify the targets were engaged in the correct order for the required number of shots. Spotters will assist the Timer Operator by watching for violations when the competitor retrieves staged firearms and draws revolvers since it is impossible for the Timer Operator to have an unobstructed view of both sides of the competitor’s body. Spotters are obligated to

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- stop a shooter from attempting an unsafe action if the Timer Operator is not in position to see it or react quickly enough.
- C) Should always be in position to see all the targets in the course of fire. At least one spotter should be positioned on either side of the competitor.
  - D) Determine misses by both visual and audible means, if possible.
  - E) Always give the shooter the benefit of any doubt. Spotters should also consider the Timer Operator's observations and input regarding hits and misses due to the TO's position near the shooter.
  - F) There should always be three Spotters—the majority (two out of three) breaks the tie in regard to misses. As mentioned before, bandanas or batons are a good idea.
  - G) Remember, the Timer Operator is not relied upon to count shots and misses. His main function is to safely assist the competitor through the course of fire, and his memory can easily be altered if something out of the ordinary happens or if he becomes occupied coaching a newer shooter through a stage.
  - H) It is up to the Timer Operator to verify at least two of the three Spotters agree on misses.

#### 9. Loading/Unloading Table Officers

- A) Loading Table Officers are responsible to visually check to ensure all firearms are loaded with only the correct number of rounds required in a course of fire. They count, along with the shooter, rounds being loaded into rifles and revolvers.
- B) They check to make sure no round is ever under the firing pin of any firearm and that all loaded firearm hammers are fully down on empty chambers. While at the Loading Table, shooters must be allowed to make corrections as necessary to be sure no round is under the firing pin and hammers are fully down on empty chambers without the assessment of a penalty. Discharging a round at the loading table is a Match Disqualification. Leaving the Loading Table with a hammer not fully down on an empty chamber or with a round under the firing pin of any firearm is a Stage Disqualification.
- C) The Loading Table is also a good place for the Loading Officer to observe the shooter's equipment, especially his firearms, inspecting for illegal modifications. A comment from the Loading Officer may save the shooter an embarrassing disqualification at the shooting line. Any illegal external modifications encountered at the loading table should be brought to the shooter's attention and corrected prior to shooting, if at all possible.
- D) It is good practice for the Loading Officer to ask the shooter if he understands the stage. Explanations at the Loading Table avoid these questions being addressed at the line by the Timer Operator and prevent unnecessary delays.
- E) These officers ensure safe muzzle direction is strictly observed and enforced when a competitor is at a Loading or Unloading Table, as well as during movement to and from the Loading or Unloading Table.
- F) At the Unloading Table, competitors shall unload each of their firearms, and the Unloading Officer must visually inspect all chambers to make sure they are empty. Rifles and shotguns are cycled to verify their magazines are empty. All revolvers

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taken to the firing line must be checked, whether or not they were used, and only two main match revolvers may be taken to the line.

- G) Never allow a competitor to leave the loading table with a loaded firearm unless they are proceeding directly to the stage or expeditor position.

**Remember:** The primary responsibility always rests with the competitor. Shooters should always know the condition of their firearms and should never depend upon the Loading and Unloading Officers to ensure their firearms are correctly loaded and unloaded. The Loading and Unloading Officers are simply an added measure of safety. A competitor *may never* blame the Loading Officer for an incorrectly loaded firearm, and at no time will this claim be considered grounds for dismissal of penalties.

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### 10. Stage Driver / Stage Marshal / Berm Marshal

The primary responsibility of a stage marshal is to ensure consistency between posses and to keep posses running on time. To do this the following procedures should be followed:

For the first posse of each day's shooting rotations, a bit more time may be in order to get the posse organized. Take a few moments to help them get things underway by going over the posse duties as outlined in the SASS RO course materials. Make sure each posse acknowledges their Posse Marshals and each Posse Marshal understands each of the posse duties to be filled. If a duties list is provided by the match officials, be sure to pass that list on to the Posse Marshal for their personal reference during the match. Ask for questions about any of the posse duties. Only if necessary, assist the posse workers by explaining the role of each worker within the posse in order for the posse to run on time and efficiently.

Before the posse begins shooting the stage, do the following:

- Check the posse schedule to see if the stage is running on time. If the posse is running behind schedule, contact one of the Range Masters and do whatever is necessary to get them back on schedule.
- When a posse arrives, verify they are in the right place at the right time
- Record the time each posse starts the stage on the score sheet for that posse on that stage.
- Read the scenario and stage description, do not paraphrase.
- After the stage walk-through, the posse should assign duties to its members
- Once the assignments have been made, give the appropriate materials (spotting sticks, timer, props and so forth) to the Posse Marshal
- Before handing any score sheets to the scorer, verify they are the correct sheets for the correct posse
- At this point, sit back, relax, and watch the shooters as they shoot the stage.

After the posse has completed shooting the stage, do the following:

- Record the time on the posse score sheet in the score book at that stage.
- Get ready for the next posse by making sure the timer is still working, the pens still write, and the stage is completely set.

The Stage Marshal does not have the duty to watch every move of the shooter, but does have the duty to make sure each shooter completes the stage according to the directions and they all complete it in the same way. The Stage Marshal is there to promote consistency, prevent controversies, resolve discrepancies, and do everything possible to keep each posse on schedule. If the match is a "lost brass" match, remind each posse the schedule does not allow time for brass pickup (except brass shotgun shells).

It is recommended each Stage Marshal be a graduate of the SASS RO courses, and as such should be familiar with the rules and guidelines. Watch for illegal equipment, ammunition or any category specific requirements and **enforce** the current SASS rules **exactly** as they are written. Do not attempt to interpret, either liberally or conservatively, **any** of the rules. If a

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problem is encountered, be sure to follow the proper chain of command by bringing it to the attention of the RO and posse leader for quick resolution. If the problem is not quickly and appropriately resolved, notify the Range Master.

Do not hesitate to contact the Range Masters if there are ANY questions. Each Range Master should have a current SASS Handbook and all of the RO reference materials closely at hand just in case a resolution may require some research.

### RANGE COMMANDS

Standard Range Commands are used in almost every established shooting sport. It is the most efficient way to run a shooting line. Also, it allows shooters from all over the world to understand range procedures, even if they don't speak English fluently. We're not saying you have to say the range commands exactly word for word, but the closer the better. For instance, instead of "Is the Shooter Ready" the term "Is the Cowboy Ready" is certainly acceptable. After all, the western flavor and spirit of our game allows for colorful individuality. There is no reason Safety, Efficiency, and Having Fun can't all co-exist! Remember, SPEAK UP! Many of our competitors are a bit hard of hearing, and all are wearing hearing protection.

1. **"Do You Understand the Course of Fire?"** is the customary initial query at the **Loading Table**. A negative response requires additional explanation. Answer any shooter's questions in a clear and consistent manner. Remember, never make a shooter feel as though he/she is being rushed.
2. **"Is the Shooter Ready?"** is normally the Timer Operator's initial command and should always be said just before the **"Stand By"** command. If the competitor is not ready or doesn't understand the stage, he will ask you questions. If they are ready, they'll just nod their head, and they're ready to hear the "Stand By" command. If they ask a question, answer it to their satisfaction. While the primary goal is to assist the shooter, questions regarding the negotiation of the stage should be kept to a minimum at the line. After it is apparent they understand the stage, say again, "Is the Shooter Ready?" Don't just say "Stand By." It's better when shooters are comfortable and given the courtesy of a starting rhythm. We are not trying to surprise them with the start signal. Don't rush the shooter, but sometimes it is up to the Timer Operator to keep things moving efficiently.
3. **"Stand By"** should always be the last words spoken with a one- to three-second pause before the start signal unless the stage calls for the shooter to say a line or use a prop before the time starts. **"Indicate Ready by Saying the Line"** can optionally be used to cue the competitor to self-start the stage. The "Stand By" command should still be used after the competitor says their line.
4. **"Muzzle up. Please move to the Unloading Table"** should be stated at the end of a shooting sequence. Often the competitor stops thinking—after all, his shooting problem is finished! He simply needs a gentle reminder of what to do next.
5. **"Range Clear."** This command is given only after the shooter has completed their run, the revolvers are holstered, the long guns are picked up and pointed in a safe direction with the actions open, and the shooter is on the way to the unloading table. It is now safe to gather brass and prepare for the next shooter.



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6. **“Down Range”** is announced prior to proceeding down range to reset/repair targets.
7. **“Unload and Show Clear.”** The command used by the Unloading Officer when a competitor comes to the unloading table (applies to all guns taken to the line).
8. **“Gun Clear”** is the appropriate Unloading Officer response as each firearm is successfully inspected empty at the unloading table. **“Thank You”** is appropriate after all guns have been inspected.

#### ADDITIONAL COMMANDS

1. **“Action Open.”** This advice is given by the Timer Operator when a competitor puts a long-gun down with the action closed. If the shooter puts down a gun with the action closed, but returns and clears the action before firing the next firearm, there is no penalty unless there is a live round in the chamber, then it is a Stage DQ.
2. **“Muzzle!”** This command warns the shooter their muzzle is getting close to the 170° limit and should be pointed back down range.  
**“Cease Fire!”** or **“Stop!”** If at any time an unsafe condition develops, the Timer Operator will immediately shout “Cease Fire!” or “Stop!”. **The shooter is to stop firing and moving immediately. Willful failure to comply with a "cease fire" or "Stop" command given by, and while under the positive control of, the CRO/TO will result in a Match Disqualification.**
3. **“Yellow Flag.”** On ranges where multiple stages are run in parallel using a common firing line with no separating berms, it is sometimes necessary to go down range to repair broken or malfunctioning targets. Once the “Yellow Flag” command has been given, each stage affected will allow any shooter already engaged in that stage to complete the course of fire. As shooting finishes on each stage, all in-use guns are laid down at the loading and/or unloading tables and the competitors will “stand back.” Once the firearms are secure, each stage will signal compliance by showing its own “Yellow Flag.” Once all affected stages are displaying their “Yellow Flag,” the initiating Range Officer may advance down range. When the offending targets have been fixed and the Range Officer is behind the firing line, an **“All Clear”** command will be given, the Yellow Flags withdrawn, and normal range operations can resume.
4. **“Red Flag” means “Cease Fire!”** As in “Yellow Flag” above, flags are often used and generally accompanied by a horn, whistle, or shout (“Cease Fire!”). All shooting must immediately stop, and firearms must be laid down or otherwise made safe. Once the ceasefire condition is resolved, an **“All Clear”** command is given, the Red Flags withdrawn, and normal range operations resumed. Any shooter stopped while shooting a stage is given a reshoot.



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## STAGE CONVENTIONS

Stage Conventions or standard range behaviors are a list of practices every shooter is expected to know and follow on every stage. These stage defaults should be followed in all SASS Matches unless otherwise directed in stage descriptions.

1. All knockdown shotgun targets may be reengaged until down.
2. All knockdown targets (shotgun, rifle, or revolver) must go down to count. Any knockdown target still standing once the shooter has engaged the next sequence of the stage will be counted as a miss.
3. All staged guns shall have their barrels pointed safely down range. All long guns initially staged on a horizontal flat surface shall be staged lying flat where at least the rear of the trigger guard is on the staging area. All handguns initially staged on a horizontal flat surface must be staged with the entire handgun lying flat on the staging surface.
4. Staged shotguns will be open and empty.
5. Shooters may not start a stage with ammunition in hand.
6. Long guns will be cleared and discarded with their barrels pointed safely down range. If the action of a long gun closes after being cleared, the shooter will, at the conclusion of the stage, show it to be clear to the TO. No person other than the competitor may handle the long gun prior to opening the action and showing the long gun to be clear. Appropriate penalties will be applied if the long gun is not clear.
7. Revolvers are returned to leather after the shooting string.
8. Revolvers are drawn and used in accordance with the shooter's category.
9. If no starting position is given the shooter shall stand upright with revolvers holstered, hands at the side not touching any firearm.
10. Cowboy port-arms is defined as standing upright with the butt of the long gun at or below the waist of the shooter, the muzzle at or above the shoulder, and the long gun held with both hands.

## APPENDIX A - RANGE SAFETY RULES

All participants are Safety Officers; however, it is the ultimate responsibility of the Range Officers to assure the safety rules are consistently followed. The following outlines specific safety violations and their penalties.

**Illegal equipment penalties are not awarded backwards. If a shooter is found to have illegal equipment, no penalty will be assessed for the stage(s) already completed.**

**If a Range Officer elects not to penalize a shooter that has not complied with a rule, the effect is penalizing all other match participants that did comply.**

1. Every firearm must be treated with respect! Covering or sweeping an individual or group with the muzzle of an empty gun will result in a Stage Disqualification. Covering or sweeping an individual or group with the muzzle of a loaded gun will result in a Match Disqualification. Handling guns away from the firing line should be avoided but if necessary should be limited to safe areas.
2. Safe gun handling is the shooter's responsibility. The 170-degree safety rule is in effect. Long guns will have their actions open with chambers and magazines empty and muzzles pointed in a safe direction when being carried to and from the designated loading and unloading areas for each stage. Chambers and magazines must be empty and actions open for all firearms transported at a match. Muzzle direction is important between, before, and after shooting a stage. A muzzle must not be allowed to "sweep" the other participants between stages, or when moving the firearms from the gun cart to the loading tables. The muzzles of all long guns must be maintained in a safe direction (generally "up" and slightly down range), even when returning to the unloading table. A holstered revolver (loaded or empty) with the hammer fully down on an empty chamber or expended case is considered safe and may not be interpreted as sweeping another shooter while safely secured in the holster. Failure to manage safe muzzle direction, even though no individual is swept, is grounds for Stage Disqualification, and for repeated offenses, Match Disqualification.
3. All firearms will remain unloaded except while under direct observation of a designated person on the firing line or in the designated loading and unloading areas. NOTE: Percussion revolver shooters must ensure they maintain safe muzzle direction during loading and have fired or cleared all capped chambers prior to leaving the unloading area. It is not permissible to seat percussion caps on a revolver's nipple using the gun's hammer. Some Range Officers will require the percussion revolvers be cleared before leaving the firing line. **Failure to adhere to loading and unloading procedures will result in a Stage Disqualification. Leaving the unloading table without clearing all firearms is failure to adhere to unloading procedures and will result in the penalty being assessed on the stage where the infraction was committed.**
4. Six-guns are ALWAYS loaded with only five rounds and the hammer lowered and resting on the empty chamber. Five-shooters may load five rounds, but the hammer must rest on a dummy chamber or safety slot or pin in the cylinder so the hammer does not rest on a live round/cap. All

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guns are loaded based upon stage requirements. If a particular stage requires a one shot reload, the sixth chamber of percussion revolvers may be charged at the bench and then capped “on the clock”, either before the first round is fired or after the last round is fired. A complete reload for percussion revolver shooters is handled by staging a loaded, uncapped revolver down range or switching uncapped cylinders and capping on the clock. Loading a revolver to maximum capacity and lowering the hammer on a live round and/or holstering or staging the fully loaded revolver will result in a Stage Disqualification.

5. No cocked revolver may ever leave a shooter’s hand (Stage Disqualification). This also means from one hand to the other. This does NOT apply when loading or reloading on the firing line.
6. Revolvers are returned to leather (re-holstered) with hammer down on a spent case or empty chamber at the conclusion of the shooting string, unless the stage description specifically directs otherwise; e.g., “move to next position and set gun on table or prop.” A shooting string is defined as shots from one type of firearm prior to the next type of firearm engaged. (Gunfighters may choose to shoot five rounds, safely stage their loaded revolvers, hammer down on a spent cartridge, shoot another firearm, retrieve the revolvers, and finish the “shooting string” before re-holstering.)
7. De-cocking may not be done to avoid a penalty if cocked at the wrong time, position or location once a round has gone down range. NO gun may be de-cocked on the line except by pointing it down range and pulling the trigger or while under the direct supervision of the Timer Operator. . (This requires a positive indication/ acknowledgement from the TO to the shooter). The penalty for de-cocking is a Stage Disqualification.
8. Once a revolver is cocked, the round under the hammer must be expended in order for it to be returned to a safe condition. Once a rifle is cocked, either the round under the hammer must be expended or the action opened in order for the rifle to be returned to a safe condition. Shotgun shells may be removed without penalty to return the firearm to a safe condition.
9. If a firearm is shot out of sequence or from the wrong position or location, the shooter will be awarded a single procedural penalty. In this situation, if the shooter elects or is forced to miss an appropriate target due to unsafe angles or target availability, a round may be reloaded to avoid a miss penalty (the dreaded “Double Jeopardy” of a procedure and miss). This does not mean a shooter may reload a rifle or revolver at any other time to make up a miss. Unfired ejected rifle rounds may be replaced.
10. Inadvertently leaving unfired rounds in a revolver is a miss unless the round is under the hammer, then it is a Stage Disqualification.

#### 11. Safe conditions of firearms during a course of fire are as follows:

##### **Revolver(s)**

Safe for movement in hand, while holstering, and safe to leave the shooter’s hand.

Hammer fully down on an empty chamber,

Hammer fully down on an expended round (may not be originally staged in this condition but may be restaged in this condition).

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While the above restrictions apply, there are additional considerations for the Gunfighter. When shooting “Gunfighter Style,” **a gunfighter may not holster revolvers with the intent to engage another revolver sequence.** Once cocked, all rounds are to be expended prior to holstering unless the revolvers were drawn at the wrong time or a revolver/ammunition malfunction has occurred. Physical stage design may allow a competitor shooting “Gunfighter Style” to stage or restage revolvers between firearm sequences.

#### Rifle

Safe to leave the shooters hands.

Empty

Hammer fully down on an empty chamber or spent round, action closed (restaged for further use)

Safe for movement rifle in hand only

Hammer fully down on an empty chamber or expended round, action closed

Action open, round on carrier or in chamber

#### Shotgun

Safe to leave the shooters hands.

Empty

Safe for movement shotgun in hand only

Action open, round in chamber or on carrier

Hammer(s) fully down on empty chamber(s) or expended round(s), action closed.

12. The shooter with firearm in hand shall never be allowed to move with a live round under a cocked hammer. Movement is defined the same as “traveling” in basketball. Once the firearm is cocked, one foot must remain in place on the ground until the firearm is made safe.

**"Shuffling" the feet to maintain balance or adjust shooting stance is allowed as long as the shooter does not actually change location.**

This means, on revolvers, you may move, restage, or re-holster when the hammer is down on an empty chamber or expended case. You may move with a rifle or shotgun when the action is open, hammer(s) down on empty chamber(s) or expended case(s). Shooting on the move is expressly disallowed. Penalty = Stage Disqualification. If restaging the rifle, the action must be closed and hammer down either on an empty chamber or expended case.

13. Any discharge that hits the ground or stage prop from five to ten feet from the shooter, while on the stage, will result in a Stage Disqualification. Any discharge that hits the ground or stage prop less than five feet from the shooter while on the stage, any discharge at the loading or unloading areas, any discharge off the firing line, or any discharge that is deemed unsafe will result in a Match Disqualification.

Note: Match directors have the latitude to place props so shooters must negotiate them. In doing so, Match Directors may declare props expendable or shootable without penalty.

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14. When drawing a revolver from its holster, the revolver shall not be cocked until it is at a 45° angle down range. (Minor Safety Violation)
15. A round over the berm is always a bad idea but is worse on some ranges than others. Local match regulations establish the appropriate penalty, up to and including a Match Disqualification.
16. Rifles may be “staged” with the magazine loaded, action closed, hammer fully down on the empty chamber (not on the “safety” notch), as long as the muzzle is pointed in a safe direction—adheres to the 170° safety rule, and the muzzle is never on the ground.  
  
Note: When the muzzle is “on the ground,” the barrel will normally be “up-range” from the receiver, violating the 170° safety rule.
17. Shotguns are always “staged” open with magazine and chambers empty, never with the muzzle on the ground, and are loaded on the clock unless the stage description states otherwise. Shotguns may be opened and rounds removed or replaced without penalty. It is permissible for mule-eared shotguns to be “cocked” at the beginning of a scenario, whether staged or in the shooter’s hands. Scoring is very difficult when both barrels of a double barreled shotgun are fired simultaneously, so stages should not be designed incorporating a shotgun double tap.
18. Long guns will be cleared and discarded with their barrels pointed safely downrange. A 10-second minor safety penalty will be assessed if the firearm is not cleared. This condition may be corrected prior to the next round being fired. If the long gun is the last firearm used, it must be cleared prior to it leaving the shooter’s hand(s) at the unloading table. This does not apply to firearms shot out of sequence, made “safe,” and then restaged.

Examples:

- A. Shooter returns to the long gun and clears it before firing the next firearm and there is no UNFIRED round in the chamber — NO CALL.
- B. Shooter returns to the long gun and opens it at the end of the stage and an empty case/hull is ejected or found in the action or chamber — Minor Safety Violation.
- C. Shooter returns to the long gun and opens it, and a live/unfired round is ejected or in the chamber — Stage Disqualification for a long gun having left the shooter’s hand with the action closed, hammer cocked, with a live round in the chamber. In this case there is no opportunity to return to open it if called back before being committed to the next firearm -- **the penalty applies the moment it left the shooter’s hand.**

**Should someone other than the competitor open the action of the firearm; any penalties that would have been incurred are still applied.**

A live round left in the chamber constitutes a Stage Disqualification. A live round left in the magazine or on the carrier, as well as an empty round left in the chamber, magazine, or on the carrier of the firearm in which it was loaded, constitutes a 10-second Minor Safety violation. Malfunctioning firearms still containing rounds will not warrant penalties so long as the malfunction is declared and the firearm made safe (placed on a prop with the muzzle in safe

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direction or handed off to a Range Officer). At this point, the firearm is still loaded, everyone knows it, and the firearm can be handled in an appropriate manner.

All shooters must demonstrate rudimentary familiarity and proficiency with the firearms being used. While monthly club matches are certainly an excellent training ground, SASS matches are not the forums in which to learn basic firearms handling. Basic firearms safety and rudimentary proficiency training are more appropriately learned under non-match conditions. SASS matches can then be used to mature the learned skills.

19. SASS affiliated matches are not fast draw competitions. Any unsafe firearm handling in the course of a draw from the holster or any “fanning” will result in a Stage Disqualification. A second offense will result in Match Disqualification. NOTE: “Slip-hammering” is not the same as “fanning” and is legal.

Although cross-draw and shoulder holsters are legal, they represent a significant safety concern. No holster may depart from the vertical by more than 30° when worn. Extreme care must be exercised when drawing a firearm from a cross-draw or shoulder holster or returning the firearm to leather. The user must “twist” their body, if necessary, to ensure the muzzle never breaks the 170° safety rule during the process. (NOTE: The 170° safety rule means the muzzle of the firearm must always be straight down range +/- 85° in any direction. If a competitor “comes close” to breaking the 180° safety plane, the 170° safety rule has been violated and the competitor is at fault). **The restrictions against breaking the downrange 180° angle apply to ALL HOLSTERS and METHODS of DRAW/REHOLSTER. This allowance applies to ALL types/styles of holsters, from canted double strong side to cross draw, to shoulder/Huckleberry rigs. The muzzle of a revolver may be oriented into the straight down 180° as it clears leather; but MUST then go immediately into the DOWNRANGE 170° (and vice versa on the return)**

It is also necessary to note that during the course of fire, the shooter must be given the ability to draw and holster revolvers from **approved/legal** holsters and the ability to retrieve and return vertically staged double-barreled shotguns without penalty. Any firearm that breaks the 170° safety rule will result in a Stage Disqualification.

20. Movement is not allowed with a loaded, cocked firearm. Movement is defined by the basketball “traveling” rule. Whenever a shooter has a loaded, cocked firearm in hand, at least one foot must remain in place on the ground. 1st violation will result in Stage Disqualification; 2nd violation will result in Match Disqualification. This includes leaving the loading table with a cocked loaded firearm. Shooting on the move is expressly disallowed. Penalty = SDQ.

**"Shuffling" the feet to maintain balance or adjust shooting stance is allowed as long as the shooter does not actually change location.**

21. Any unloaded firearm dropped during a stage will result in Stage Disqualification. Dropped unloaded firearms away from the line will be a no call. A shooter is forbidden from picking up a dropped firearm. The Range Officer will recover the firearm, examine it, clear it (if necessary), return it to the shooter, and assess the penalty. A dropped loaded firearm is a Match Dis-



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qualification. **This does NOT apply to holstered revolvers that remain “in leather” in event of an equipment failure (e.g. broken belt buckle) causing the gun/ammo belt to fall. Shooter may safely recover a fallen gun/ammo belt and continue finishing the stage without penalty; or may wait until finishing the stage for retrieval.**

An open, empty long firearm that slips and falls after being set down and does not break the 170° safety rule or sweep anyone will result in either a “Prop Failure” call or a 10-second Minor Safety Violation, depending upon the circumstance.

As long as the shooter has contact with the firearm, it is considered as still in their control. No call should be made until the firearm comes to rest – wherever that may be. Then determine the condition of the firearm at rest and whether or not the 170° safety rule was ever broken on its way to its final resting point in order to assess the proper penalty (if any at all).

22. Ammunition dropped by a shooter in the course of reloading any firearm during a stage or “ejected” from any firearm **may be retrieved and replaced, or, alternatively,** must be replaced from the shooter’s person or other area as **allowed** by stage description. If the round is not fired it is counted **the same** as a missed shot. **Dropped rounds or rounds safely “placed” onto a prop from their original loading area may be recovered and used as long as recovering these rounds does not create loss of muzzle control.**
23. The Unloading Officer **MUST** inspect all firearms before they leave the stage. Rifles must have their action cycled for the Unloading Officer and chambers inspected. All revolvers, whether used or not in the stage, must be inspected, including cap and ball revolvers. Shotguns must have actions open or cycled and chambers inspected. It is acceptable to leave one or more chambers charged in a percussion revolver so long as the caps are removed from the nipples.
24. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the range area for all persons, shooters, guests, range officers, and others until all shooting is over for the day and firearms have been stored. You must also take into consideration the rules of the specific range in this matter and respect those rules. A violation of this rule will result in Match Disqualification.
25. No shooter may ingest any substance that may affect his or her ability to participate with a maximum state of awareness and in a completely safe manner. Both prescription and non-prescription pharmaceuticals that may cause drowsiness or any other physical or mental impairment must be avoided. A violation of this rule will result in a Match Disqualification and ejection from the range.
26. Hearing protection is highly recommended and eye protection is mandatory in and around the shooting areas. While small, period glasses look great, full protection, high impact glasses are strongly recommended. Eye protection is mandatory for all shooters and spectators within direct line of sight of steel targets.
27. All loading and unloading shall be conducted only in the designated areas.

NOTE: Percussion revolver shooters must exercise care to ensure they maintain safe muzzle direction during loading and have fired or cleared all caps prior to leaving the unloading area. It



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is not permissible to seat percussion caps on a revolver's nipple using the revolver's hammer. Percussion revolvers may only be capped at the loading area or on the firing line.

28. Dry firing at the loading table is not allowed and will result in a Stage Disqualification. Dry firing is allowed only at designated safe areas. Dry firing is defined as the act of bringing a firearm into a shooting position, cocking the hammer, and pulling the trigger as if to cause the firearm to fire normally.
29. Only registered competitors may wear firearms.
30. If a competitor has a firearm malfunction that cannot be cleared on the line, the firearm may not be removed from the firing line/unloading area until the firearm has been cleared. A Match Disqualification will be awarded to the shooter if they leave the firing line with the malfunctioning firearm unless under the direct supervision of a Match Official.
31. Failure to stage **firearms** or ammunition at the designated position(s) or location(s) is the fault of the competitor and scored as a **procedural** unless the competitor is able to correct the situation, unassisted, while in the process of completing the stage under time.

**Failure to bring enough ammo to the line to complete the stage is NOT a procedural. (scored the same as misses for any un-fired rounds). The **procedural** in this case would only apply to ammo (as with firearms) when not correctly staged on the line (e.g. on/in a prop), and not corrected by the shooter unassisted, on the clock.**

**Once a shooter is committed to the stage (first round goes down range) the shooter must remain on the stage until it is completed and the shooter has moved to the unloading table to clear all firearms. Penalty for violation is a **Stage Disqualification**.**

The penalty for using "illegally acquired" ammunition (i.e. NOT carried to the line/staged by the shooter in an approved manner) will be a PROCEDURAL. Any targets hit using that ammo will be scored **the same** as MISSES. NO adjustments will be made to the stage raw time.

32. Competitors shall unload each of their firearms at the designated unloading area and have them visually inspected to make sure all chambers empty. Rifles and shotguns must be cycled to verify their magazines are empty. All revolvers taken to the firing line must be checked, whether or not they were used, and only two main match revolvers may be taken to the line.
33. Competitors arriving at the designated loading area with uncleared firearms after completing a stage within the same day will be assessed a Stage Disqualification penalty on the previously completed stage.
34. Competitors shall not leave the designated loading area with a loaded firearm unless they are proceeding to the stage as the next competitor to begin the stage.
35. Interpersonal conflicts WILL NOT be tolerated.

## RANGE OPERATIONS SUMMARY

1. It is expected the Range Officers will have the primary responsibility for observing and resolving all safety-related matters occurring in the loading, unloading, and firing line areas. The Chief Range Officers will make the final determination of penalties and scores. Due care and diligence by the shooter will be taken into consideration when determining whether or not a penalty is valid, based upon factors such as a range equipment or prop malfunction.
2. In the event a competitor doesn't agree with a Range Officer's final penalty or assessment, the competitor has the right to "politely" request a Supervising Match Official (Range Master or Match Director) to review the call. The Range Officer's call can be overruled only in the case of a rule or policy interpretation.

At annual matches and above, the Match Director should recruit a number of Territorial Governors to hear the shooter's complaint and make a judgment. Three Territorial Governors (three break a tie) are suggested, and none should be from the shooter's home state. The Match Director administers the hearing and refrains from voting.

Fees may be charged to file a protest, preventing frivolous protests. The fees are sometimes returned if the protest is upheld.

**Minor safety infractions** occurring during a course of fire that do not directly endanger persons will result in a **10-second penalty** being added to the shooter's time for that stage. "Minor" safety infractions are occurrences such as **leaving empty or live rounds in magazine or carrier of the long gun in which it was loaded or cocking a revolver before it reaches 45 degrees downrange.**

3. **Major safety infractions** will result in the shooter's Disqualification from the Stage or Match. "Major" infractions include: a dropped firearm, a discharge that is unsafe or a discharge that impacts less than ten feet from the shooter, violation of the 170° safety rule, "sweeping" any person with the muzzle of a firearm, and similar acts that have high potential for personal injury. ***Committing two (or more) Stage DQ infractions will result in a Match DQ (even on the same stage). This does NOT apply to a single action that carries multiple penalties (e.g. breaking the 170° with an unloaded firearm AND simultaneously sweeping someone).*** There are circumstances where a single Major Safety violation will result in a **Match Disqualification**. (See Addendum for listing of penalties.)
4. A safe and sturdy place should be provided at each stage to position the shooter's firearms and is mandatory to use. Whether or not they are available, it is the **shooter's responsibility** to take reasonable care in putting down the firearm. If the firearm falls, the Range Officer shall make the determination of fault: either **Prop Failure or Safety Violation as appropriate**.

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### **RESHOOTS/RESTARTS**

SASS matches above the club level are “no alibi” matches. Once the first round goes down range, the competitor is committed to the stage and must finish the stage to the best of his or her ability. Reshoots/restarts are not awarded for ammunition or firearm malfunctions. However, if there is a range failure (failure of props, timer, or the range officers) beyond the competitor’s control, a restart may be granted. On a reshoot/restart, the competitor starts over clean, carrying only accrued safety penalties forward. At all SASS annual club, state, Regional, National, and World Championship matches, no reshoots/restarts will be given after the first shot goes down range as determined by the Chief Range Officer and the Match Director, except for:

- Prop or match equipment failure
- A Range Officer impeding the progress of the shooter
- Timer failure or unrecorded time

For example, if the Range Officer stops a shooter from completing a shooting sequence because of a suspected squib load, and the firearm turns out to be “clear,” the Range Officer has impeded the progress of the shooter, and a restart is in order. In this case, the shooter starts over with no misses or penalties (except safeties).

Proper coaching or no coaching at all is not considered RO Interference and therefore will never be grounds for a reshoot/restart.

Restarts shall be allowed for a competitor to achieve a “clean” start, up to the point at which the first round goes down range. Multiple restarts by the same shooter, that in the judgment of the Timer Operator, are seen to be taking advantage will not be entertained as they are not in the *spirit of the game*.

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## APPENDIX B

### THE 10 “COMMANDMENTS”

- Safety
- Keep it fun
- Use common sense
- The benefit of the doubt goes to the shooter
- Treat everyone as you would like to be treated
- Treat everyone equally (Sam Colt made us that way)
- Keep the stage moving (if a problem arises, take it away from the firing line)
- Make sure all the assignments are covered
- Coach when needed
- Keep it simple

### SCORING

It is recommended SASS matches be scored by an overall ranking system. This scoring system equalizes the difference in stages and rewards the most consistent shooter. Using this system, the recommended stage disqualification score is 999.00 seconds and the recommended match disqualification score is 999.99 seconds on all stages. The recommended score for not finishing a stage is a Stage Disqualification. Any competitor that fails to complete two or more stages in a match, for any reason, is not eligible for any main match awards.

Other scoring systems may be used at state and local levels, such as overall time. If overall time is used, a maximum allowed time for each stage should be calculated prior to the match to be used as the disqualification score and maximum stage score. It is recommended the maximum time allowed for a stage be a total of all the available targets/miss penalties plus 30 seconds.

SASS Sanctioned Championships at the State level or higher may not sell or incorporate in any other manner any score enhancing items such as “Free Misses” or “Do-Overs.”

### PENALTY OVERVIEW

#### 5-SECOND PENALTIES

Rifle, revolver, and shotgun targets must be engaged with the appropriate type of firearm. A “miss” is defined as the failure to hit the appropriate target type using the appropriate type firearm. Target placement should always allow a shooter the opportunity for a clean miss to be scored without argument. Overlapping targets of the same type should be avoided if at all possible and should not cause a Procedural “trap” by making it difficult to determine the shooter’s intent when engaging the targets.

- Each missed target.
- Each unfired round.
- Inadvertently leaving unfired rounds in a revolver are misses unless there is an unfired round under the hammer, then it is a stage disqualification.

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- Each target hit with an incorrect firearm, either intentionally or by mistake.
- Each target hit with “illegally acquired” ammunition.

To help understand this concept, a “MISS FLOW CHART” is found in Appendix C. It is also good to understand “**A MISS CANNOT CAUSE A PROCEDURAL.**”

#### 10- SECOND PENALTIES

##### Procedural Penalties

Any unintentional procedural errors caused by “brain fade,” confusion, ignorance, or mistakes (not to exceed one for any given stage).

- Failure to attempt to fire a firearm.
- Failure to attempt a prop or stage maneuver.
- Shooting targets in an order other than as required by stage description.
- Engaging the stage (firearms, targets, or maneuvers) in an order other than as required by the stage description.
- **First offence, in the same match, for failure to adhere to the guidelines of the category in which the shooter is competing.**
- Firing any firearm from a position or location other than as required by the stage description.
- Use of “illegally acquired” ammunition (i.e. NOT carried to the line/staged by the shooter in an approved manner) \* Reference “Shooters Handbook” page 11.
- **Not returning revolvers to leather unless otherwise specified**

Each of these penalties **is** stand alone and not to be added one on top of the other.

Accommodations are always allowed for those unable to comply with specific stage procedures due to physical limitations with no procedural penalties assessed.

##### Minor Safety Penalties

- Leaving empty or live rounds in magazine or carrier of the long gun in which it was loaded.
- Open, empty long guns that slip and fall but do not break 170° safety rule or sweep anyone.
- Cocking a revolver before it reaches 45 degrees downrange.

#### STAGE DISQUALIFICATION

- Shooting on the move (e.g., shooting multiple shots during continuous movement).
- Any dropped unloaded firearm on the firing line (from the loading table to the unloading table).
- Long guns that slip and fall and break the 170° safety rule.
- A discharge striking anything five to ten feet from the shooter. *Note: Exception under item 13 Appendix A.*
- Violation of the 170° safety rule/ Failure to manage appropriate muzzle control.
- Returning a revolver to leather with hammer not fully down on spent round or empty chamber.

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- A cocked revolver leaving the shooter's hand **(as soon as it leaves the shooter's hand).**
- A live round left in the chamber of a long gun (as soon as it leaves the shooter's hands).
- Second offence, in the same match, for failure to adhere to the guidelines of the category in which the shooter is competing.
- Changing location with a live round under a cocked hammer or a firearm with the hammer down on a live round. Changing location with a long gun with action closed and hammer cocked.
- Unsafe firearm handling, such as fanning.
- Loading at other than the designated loading position or firing line.
- Use of an illegal or illegally modified firearm.
- Use **or presence** of illegal items.
- Holstering or staging a revolver with the hammer down on a live round.
- Sweeping anyone with an unloaded firearm.
- Failure to adhere to loading and unloading procedures.  
*The point at which the "failure to adhere to loading/unloading procedure" Stage Disqualification for bypassing the Unloading Table applies is as follows: Once control of the firearm(s) is relinquished, be it in a rack on the stage or at the shooter's gun cart. (i.e. leaves the shooter's hand(s)).*
- Leaving the line once the stage has begun to retrieve ammo or firearms before all firearms brought to the line are verified as clear.
- Dry firing at the loading table.
- De-cocking a revolver, rifle or hammered shotgun **without positive indication/ acknowledgement from the Timer Operator.**
- Arriving at the designated loading area with uncleared firearms after completing a stage within the same day (assessed on the previously completed stage).

#### **MATCH DISQUALIFICATION**

- Two accumulated Stage Disqualification Penalties or Two Spirit of the Game assessments.
- Belligerent attitude / Unsportsman-like conduct.
- **Willful failure to comply with a "cease fire" or "Stop" command given by, and while under the positive control of, the CRO/TO.**
- Shooting under the influence of alcohol, prescription, or other medication that may impair the shooter's physical or mental abilities.
- Shooting illegal ammunition. This includes ammunition that exceeds the maximum velocity and shotgun shells that have been bottle-neck resized or ringed. This does not include ammunition that does not meet the power factor. Please refer to the SASS Shooters Handbook for a definition of legal ammunition. (they need to know, it's in the test)
- Dropping a loaded firearm.

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- Any discharge that hits the ground or stage prop less than five feet from the shooter, any discharge at the loading or unloading areas, or discharge that is deemed unsafe . *Note: Exception* for declared expendable props.
- Sweeping anyone with a loaded firearm.
- Third offence, in the same match, for failure to adhere to the guidelines of the category in which the shooter is competing.
- Interpersonal conflicts.

**A Match Disqualification means the shooter puts his/her firearms away and is done shooting for the duration of the match.**

#### **FAILURE TO ENGAGE/SPIRIT OF THE GAME**

##### **30-Second Penalty**

- Willfully shooting a stage other than the way it was intended in order to gain a competitive advantage.
- Shooting ammunition that does not meet the power factor, minimum velocity. The penalty is applied for each stage a competitor is checked and their ammunition is found not to meet the power factor or minimum velocity.
- Willfully refusing to rope a steer, throw a stick of dynamite or otherwise make an attempt to complete any other non-shooting procedure written within the stage instructions.
- Note: Two Spirit of the Game or Failure to Engage penalties will result in a Match Disqualification.

#### **ILLEGAL ITEMS**

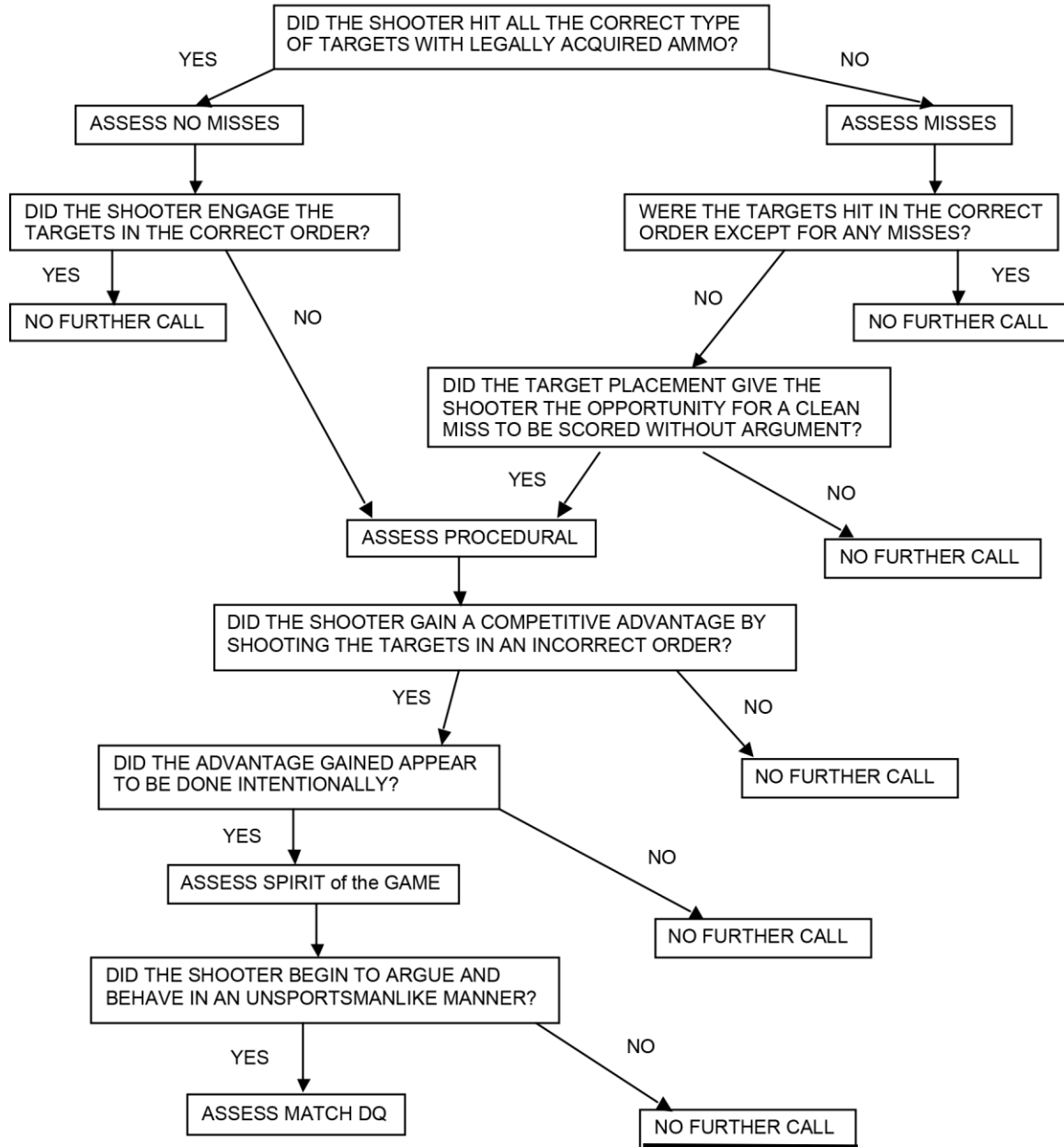
The following are examples of SASS “illegal” items. The current version of the SASS Handbook should always be used as an additional reference for illegal items. The use or presence of any outlawed item is a Stage Disqualification.

- Holsters departing from the vertical by more than 30 degrees when worn
- Two main match revolvers worn on the same side of the body
- Modern shooting gloves
- Short sleeve shirts (Male competitors only)
- Short sleeved tee shirts, long sleeved tee shirts, and tank tops for all competitors. (Long sleeved Henley type shirts with buttons are allowed.)
- Modern feathered cowboy hats
- Designer jeans
- Ball caps
- Tennis, running, jogging, aerobic or other modern athletic shoes, combat boots
- Apparel displaying manufacturer’s, sponsor’s or team logos. Manufacturer’s labels on such apparel or equipment are acceptable.
- Nylon, plastic, or Velcro accouterments.



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**APPENDIX C – MISS FLOW CHART**




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**APPENDIX D - POCKET RO CARD**

 <b>Pocket RO Card (Current as of January 2016)</b> “MSV”= Minor Safety Violation “SDQ”= Stage Disqualification “MDQ” = Match Disqualification	M	S	M
	S	D	D
	V	Q	Q
Empty or live round in magazine or carrier of the long gun in which it was loaded after the next firearm is fired, or if last firearm, put down on the unloading table.	■		
Empty long guns that slip and fall but don't break 170 or sweep anyone	■		
Cocking a revolver before it reaches 45 degrees downrange	■		
Leaving the line once the stage has begun to retrieve ammo or firearms before all firearms brought to the line are verified as clear		■	
Leaving the stage anytime between when the first and last shots have been fired on the stage		■	
Leaving the firing line after stage has begun before all firearms have been verified as clear		■	
Loading at other than designated location		■	
Discarding a long gun containing a live round in the chamber (once it leaves the shooter's hands)		■	
Holstering or staging revolver with hammer cocked (not fully down) or down (on a live round)		■	
Dropped firearm (unloaded/empty)		■	
Discharge impacting 5-10 feet from shooter, while on the line		■	
Cocked revolver leaving shooter's hand		■	
Changing location or leaving the designated loading area with a cocked gun/gun w/hammer down on live round		■	
Unsafe gun handling (fanning, etc.)		■	
Use of illegal or illegally-modified firearm		■	
Dry firing at the loading table		■	
Arriving at the designated loading area with uncleared firearms after completing a stage within the same day (assessed on the previously completed stage)		■	
Violation of 170 rule (without sweeping anyone)		■	
Sweeping anyone with unloaded firearm		■	

 <b>Pocket RO Card (Current as of January 2016)</b> “MSV”= Minor Safety Violation “SDQ”= Stage Disqualification “MDQ” = Match Disqualification	M	S	M
	S	D	D
	V	Q	Q
De-cocking to avoid a penalty if cocked at the wrong time, position or location		■	
Not adhering to loading or unloading procedures		■	
Shooting on the move (shooting multiple shots during continuous movement)		■	
Use or presence of outlawed/illegal items.		■	
Dropped gun (loaded)			■
Discharge impacting within 5 feet from shooter, while on the line or any discharge away from the firing line. Any discharge in the loading or unloading areas.			■
Sweeping anyone with loaded firearm			■
Willful failure to comply with a "cease fire" or "Stop" command given by, and while under the positive control of, the CRO/TO			■
Any two (2) stage DQ penalties or 2 F.T.E./S.O.G.'s during the course of a match			■
Belligerent attitude/unsportsmanlike conduct			■
Shooting under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or impairing medications			■
Leaving the firing line with a malfunctioning firearm unless under direct supervision of a match official			■
Shooting out of category. e.g., Not wearing the correct items in Classic Cowboy or not making enough smoke in B/P Categories 1 <sup>st</sup> violation is a procedure, 2 <sup>nd</sup> violation is SDQ, 3 <sup>rd</sup> violation is MDQ.	P	2	3

Procedural: Unintentional errors caused by confusion or mistakes. 10 seconds; no more than one procedural penalty may be assessed per stage  
 Failure to Engage/Spirit of the Game: Willfully shooting a stage other than the way it was intended in order to gain a competitive advantage, not meeting the Ammunition Power Factor or willfully disregarding a non-shooting procedure. 30 seconds  
 Reshoots are granted for failure of props/match equipment; Range Officer impeding shooter progress; or timer failure.  
 Failure of shooter equipment or firearms may be granted at the discretion of the Match Director (except at annual or state/regional championships and above). Only safety penalties carry over. Restarts shall be allowed for a competitor to achieve a “clean” start, up to the point at which the first round goes down range. Multiple restarts by the same shooter, that in the judgment of the R.O. are seen to be taking advantage, will not be entertained as they are not in the spirit of the game.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**170° Safety Rule** -means the muzzle of the firearm must always be pointed down range +/- 85 degrees in any direction.

**Action Closed (lever & pump action long guns)** – BOLT in “full battery” e.g. unable to further close by manipulation of the lever or pump mechanism.

**Action Closed - (SxS & single-shot firearms)** functional firearm that requires manipulation of the opening mechanism (e.g. top/side lever/button)

**Action Open (lever & pump action long guns)** – BOLT not closed completely.

**Action Open– (SxS & single-shot firearms)** – functional firearm that opens without manipulation of the release mechanism (e.g. top/side lever/button)

**Apparel** – Articles of clothing including: shirts, pants, dresses, vests, jackets, coats, dusters, chaps/chinks, leggings, boots and hats. Not to include: Gun leather, ammo belts, garters/arm bands, wrist cuffs, or bandanas.

**Adjustable sight style revolver** – a revolver with dovetailed or adjustable rear sights and/or dovetailed front sights. Ramp style front sights are allowed if original to the firearm.

**Basketball Traveling Rule** – aka **movement with a firearm**. Once the firearm is cocked, one foot must remain in place on the ground until the firearm is made safe. This means, on revolvers, you may move, restage, or re-holster when the hammer is down on an empty chamber or expended case. You may move with a rifle or shotgun when the action is open or hammer(s) down on an empty chamber(s) or an expended case(s). **Shooting on the move is expressly disallowed. Penalty = Stage Disqualification.** The Basketball Traveling rule was not intended to relate to multiple movements between shots (e.g., shooting multiple shots during continuous movement).

**Chambered round – A round any part of which is IN the chamber of a firearm.**

**Cleared** – no live or empty cases in or on the chamber, magazine or carrier.

**Cocked** – hammer not fully down (full, half-cock or safety notch).

**Committed** – the point at which a firearm would have to be made safe to leave the shooter’s hand, and the point when the shooter is required to continue with the course of fire.

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**Commonly available** – obtainable by anyone given ordinary circumstances with ordinary means.

**Course of fire** – from the beep of the timer once the shooter has signified “ready” to last the shot fired.

**Designer Jeans -- modern jeans that have slogans or logos embroidered, silk screened and such, saying things like "PINK" or "BABY". (Jeans with fancy or flashy adornments are acceptable)**

**Double Duelist shooting style** - a revolver cocked and fired one handed and unsupported, with each hand, that is, **one revolver** with the left hand and **the other revolver** with the right hand. The revolver, hand or shooting arm may not be touched by the offhand except when resolving a malfunctioning revolver problem or when transferring the revolver from one hand to the other.

**Down range** – 180 degrees from the shooter toward the targets of a stage.

**Dropped firearm** – a firearm that has left the shooter’s control and come to rest at a location or position other than where it was intended.

**Dry firing** – defined as the act of bringing of an unloaded firearm into a shooting position, cocking the hammer and pulling the trigger as if to cause the gun to fire normally.

**Duelist shooting style** – a revolver cocked and fired one handed, unsupported. The revolver, hand, or shooting arm may not be touched by the off hand except when resolving a malfunctioning revolver problem or when transferring the revolver from one hand to the other.

**Engaged** – attempting to fire a round at the target.

**Equipment** – any non apparel item that you take to the firing line.

**Failure to engage** – willfully or intentionally disregarding the stage instructions in order to obtain a competitive advantage and is not simply because a competitor “makes a mistake.” Applies only to non-shooting situations such as refusing to rope a steer, throw a stick of dynamite or otherwise make an attempt to complete any other non-shooting procedure written within the stage instructions.

**Firing line** – From first firearm placed on the loading table until all firearms are confirmed as cleared at the unloading table.

**Fixed Sight style revolver** - barrel mounted, fixed metallic foresights of a simple blade, bead, or post configuration combined with a simple open notched rear sight cut into the frame, hammer, or latch mechanism. (note exceptions for conversion revolvers).

**Free Style** – shooter has the option of shooting Two-handed style or Duelist style.

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**Gunfighter shooting style – shooting with a revolver in each hand.** Revolvers must be cocked and fired one handed, unsupported, one right handed and the other left handed. There is no set pattern as to how the revolvers are to be fired

**Hammer down** – hammer fully down at its final resting position.

**Illegally acquired ammunition** – ammo NOT carried to the line or staged by the shooter in an approved manner.

**Loaded Firearm** – Any firearm **with any part of an** unfired round in the action/chamber/magazine.

**Location** – a physical point on a stage e.g. “behind the door....”

**Logo – Distinctive graphic design, stylized name, unique symbol, or other device for identifying an organization.** This includes those of SASS, individual clubs/ranges, match commemorative & those of any subgroups within the CAS community. **Exceptions:** Badges, pins, belt buckles, scarf slides, military unit/rank insignia of a standard size, **ranch brands on chaps/chinks.**

**Major Safety Violation** – a safety infraction that has a high potential for personal injury.

**Minor Safety Violation** – handling or firing a gun in a manner that is unsafe but does not directly endanger persons.

**Miss** – a failure to hit the appropriate target type using the appropriate firearm type. For further explanation of how to assess a miss, see “**Miss Flow Chart**” in the appendix to ROI Manual. (see also “**5-second Penalties**” section of the RO1 “*PENALTY OVERVIEW*”)

**Position** – the posture and stance of the shooter. e.g. “*the shooter starts with hands touching hat ...*”

**Power Factor** - Bullet weight (in grains) times the velocity (in feet per second); divided by 1000. The minimum standard in all SASS matches for smokeless categories is not less than 60 and no velocity less than 400 fps. Maximum velocity for revolvers is 1000 fps. Maximum velocity for rifles is 1400 fps.

**Procedural** – an unintentional action where the competitor does not follow the stage instructions; can include actions/omissions other than firing a round. e.g. failure to adhere to category requirements.

**Progressive Penalty** - Procedural for the first infraction, Stage Disqualification for the second infraction, Match Disqualification for the third infraction. Example: failure to adhere to category requirements.

**Reshoot** – score recorded, the competitor starts over clean, carrying accrued safety penalties forward. Both scores turned in.

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**Restart** – no recorded score, shooter is given a clean restart, carrying accrued safety penalties forward.

**Revolver in hand** – when the muzzle of the revolver clears the mouth of the holster, or breaks contact with a prop upon which it was staged.

**Shooting on the move** – shooting multiple shots during continuous movement. (Stage Disqualification)

**Shooting string** – shots from one type of firearm prior to use of the next type of firearm engaged.

**Short Sleeve Shirt** – A shirt with the sleeves sewn/manufactured or otherwise fastened above the elbow. Does NOT apply to rolled up sleeves that are not secured in place.

**Stage aka “the line”** – synonymous with “Course of Fire” from the beep of the timer once the shooter has signified “ready” to the last shot fired.

**Also refers to those location(s) from which the shooter actively engages targets.**

**Traditional** – A style or configuration of clothing and/or equipment that was commonly seen or used in the Old West from 1849 to 1900; or in the B-Western movies. Pictures, movies, and surviving equipment and clothing could be used in resolving issues.

**Two handed shooting style** – aka “Traditional-style” - shooter holds a single revolver with two hands.

**Up range** – 180 degrees from the shooter away from the targets of a stage.