

# Range Patter Tip Sheet

Every command should be:

- Short.
- Crisp.
- Loud.
- Repeated.

**Command voice** comes from deep in the belly, not from the throat. It's a bellow, not a scream.

**Add a brief pause** between each command to give students time to understand and comply – and to give yourself time to take a breath before your next short, crisp command.

**Use a verbal attention signal** (“on the line!” or “this will be...”) to draw attention and alert shooters that a command is coming.

**Basic patter pattern:** attention signal, <brief pause>, command, <brief pause>, repeat brief command, <pause and look>, whistle.

## Example:

On the line!  
<brief pause>  
ONE shot, on the whistle!  
<brief pause>  
ONE shot!  
<pause and look>  
<whistle>

**A brief pause** should last no longer than one deep breath. It's just enough time for people to mentally process the last noise you made. Pause and look takes as much time as it takes to look and really see what's going on with all your shooters.

**Always pause and look** before giving the signal to fire. Use that pause to quickly glance from one end of the line to the other, to be sure all shooters are ready to go. Watch for confused shoulders and students looking to others for more information; for hand or arm movement that may signal a gun malfunction; and for assistants trying to catch your attention. Give the fire signal only after you have actually looked at (and actually seen) that all your shooters and assistants are ready to go.

**In larger classes, repeat every essential command twice or even three times.** Look straight ahead on the first iteration, to the right on the second iteration, and to the left on the third iteration.

**When the essential elements are repeated three times**, the pattern looks like this:

(Instructor facing center): On the line! <brief pause>

(Instructor facing center): ONE shot, on the whistle! <brief pause>

(Instructor looking right): ONE shot! <brief pause>

(Instructor looking left): ONE shot! <pause and look>

(Instructor facing center): <whistle>

**Instead of repeating the commands yourself**, you can ask your assistants to echo your commands from their places near the ends of the line. They should echo only during your pauses, and repeat only the short form of commands. Be sure they know not to get ahead of you or add any extra info. That's because if they try to talk rather than simply echo, it may drown out the main commands and that would not be helpful. The pattern would look the same as above, just with other people giving the (right) and (left) commands instead of you doing it yourself.

**Commands should be predictable.** Make them boring by using the same words, in the same sequence, *every* time.

**Avoid easily-confused terms where possible.** For example, when you want students to put more ammunition into their magazines or speedloaders during the next break, tell them to “fill” their magazines rather than “load” the magazines. This avoids students misunderstanding and handling their firearms unexpectedly. Listen for similar words and notice common points of confusion in your own programs.

**Can't trust a short command? Use rhythm** to clarify and carry the meaning: “UNload, UNNNload! Magazines out, actions open, check by sight and feel...” The unusual cadence of the word “unload” with extra emphasis on the first syllable, and the additional info in the longer sentence that follows it, help students hear the “UNNNN” at the beginning of the word so they don't confuse it with the command to load. Notice that the primary command is still just one word, repeated at least twice. Extra words, even in well-considered short sentences, can be hard to hear so we don't trust them to carry the main message alone, but their presence can help students understand which command has just been given.

**Change your pace and inflection.** Who are you talking to? One student? Or the whole group? If you want the whole group, increase your volume and change your pace to get their attention.

**If you have a weak voice**, recruit help. Ask the nearest loud person to gather the class at the end of breaks. Let others help you avoid unnecessary wear on your vocal cords so you can save your remaining volume for instruction and safety issues. Use assistants to echo commands. (Hint: if your voice is very weak, you can simply speak the commands to a willing assistant, and let the assistant do all the bellowing.)

**Practice.** In the car or when you are by yourself and expect not to be interrupted, practice using your command voice to shout range commands. Make sure the windows are rolled up first! Experiment with making your voice bigger, deeper and louder. Bring the sound from deep in your belly, forcing it past your

vocal cords with a strong, explosive sound. Do this until it no longer feels silly or unnatural to use a strong command voice.

### **Be aware of special needs**

- Place hard of hearing students in center of line, and keep an especially close eye on them during transitional activity (gearing up, unloading to holster cold, going live for the first time, etc) to be sure they are still with the class.
- Except in special cases, recommend that these students do NOT double-protect ears unless on a very noisy indoor range.
- Encourage students to stand close during lecture times, especially if the environment is noisy.
- Consider packing an extra set of electronic muffs to share with hearing-challenged students.

**Ask students to TELL YOU** when they cannot or did not hear the commands, rather than “faking it” and hoping they are doing it right. They paid for your teaching, and deserve to receive it – and it is much, much less dangerous when they ask rather than guess at what they should be doing.

