

Holding an Area

What is the difference between a hold and a sight picture/ aiming area? The concepts are easily confused, but not the same. I am often asked “what is your hold?” Yet, I have come to interpret this as “where is your area that of hold on the target?” People are normally not interested in my ability to HOLD the gun, but rather *how* I hold the gun.

Hold means exactly what it implies—holding is maintaining a gun in a given area without instability. Shooters can work to decrease their hold through exercising and drills. Thus, the smaller the hold, the better sight picture a shooter can achieve. Regardless of whether you are on target or not, your hold should remain consistent.

Sight picture and aiming area are interchangeable terms, referring to where the sights are aligned with the target. The reason that some people mistakenly use the term aiming area is because the hold is the AREA in which the shooter executes a shot. In pistol it is best to shoot for a given area. If a shooter tries to pin-point the shot, he or she has a tendency to lose the sight picture. You will never be perfectly still, so learn to trust the area. In pistol, the ten-ring is an area—not a point. Thus, it makes sense to “area aim” rather than “aim.” So, now you know that hold is merely the action of holding a gun, whereas sight picture is what you see on the target.

In international pistol, there are three types of sight pictures. The first sight is center. A center aiming area is where a person places their sight alignment in the center of the bulls-eye. The concept is easy: aim where you want to hit. Most practical shooting is taught seeking the point of impact. Obviously, it is easy to teach newcomers to aim at the center of the target; therefore, people can be very successful with this hold. Center sight is helpful when shooting rapid fire or the rapid phase of sport pistol. In those instances, the target is all black. Thus, it is easy to aim in the center of the target as opposed to elsewhere. For precision events, a center sight picture is difficult because it is hard for the eye to gauge the center when looking at black on black. Subsequently, most shooters (looking for precision) use a six o'clock aiming area or sub-six o'clock aiming area.

A six o'clock sight picture looks like a flat tire or line of white (sub-six). Six o'clock refers to the location of the sights on the

target. For me, this is the most challenging aiming area because the target will look different from range to range due to lighting conditions, which often requires more sight adjustment. With a six o'clock sight picture, it is tempting to look towards the target to determine if your sights are covering the bulls-eye. Yet this poses a problem because it causes shooters to lose focus of the front sight and choose their shots. Look at Figure-1 for an illustration of the three sight pictures.

Currently, I am using a sub-six sight picture for international air pistol and precision phase of sport pistol. In the past, I used a center sight picture for all events and phases, but National Pistol Coach Sergey Luzov advised me to change from center aiming area to sub-six o'clock aiming area. At first, my inclination was to rebel because center was my second-nature and it made sense. Center aiming area was also my universal—I used it in Conventional Pistol, Service Pistol, and Highpower Rifle. I switched to sub-six when Coach Luzov told me that a majority of international shooters use sub-six and I needed it to be competitive and successful.

It took time to adjust because old habits are hard to alter. For awhile, I would sneak shots out the top of the bulls-eye because it was automatic to shoot into the black. After a few months, I settled into using a sub-six sight picture. My aiming area for sub-six is in the middle of the white, located between the bulls-eye and the bottom of the target. So in other words, I cut the white in half—it is about the three-ring for me.

The benefits for the switching were two-fold. I wear corrective lenses, so it was difficult for me to differentiate black sights on a black target. When I moved to a sub-six aiming area, it was easier to see the alignment of my sight and the target. Thus, I was able to focus on the front sight instead of moving my focus between the target and the sights. Sub-six requires more trust, but emphasizes the idea of shooting in an area of hold instead of picking shots. No matter where you hold on the target (center, six-o'clock or sub-six), you must stay consistent. If you are thinking of switching from one aiming area to another, give it time. Again, remember that aligning your front sight with your rear sight in focus is more important than placing the shot. Trust your Area. ■ *Teresa Meyer*

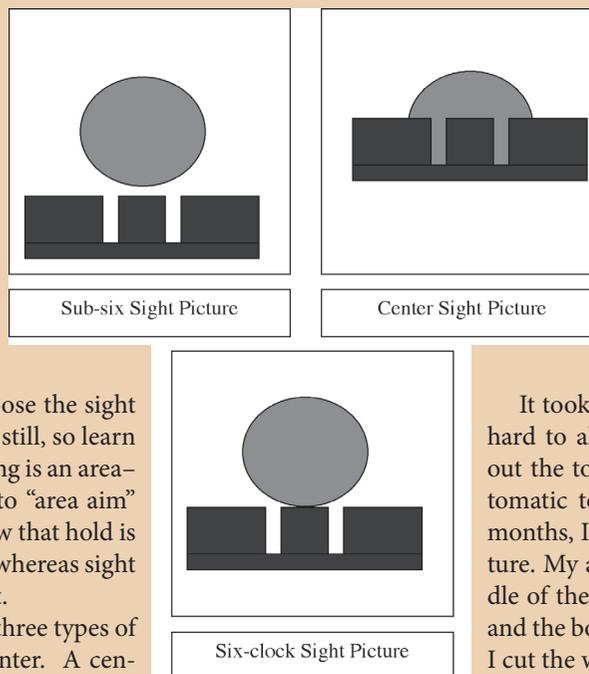


Figure-1