



SAPRF
NEW SHOOTERS GUIDE
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1. INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this, chances are you are captivated by the idea of field-style precision rifle shooting. That, and you either already own a rifle or are looking to purchase a rifle in the near future. This aims to help you navigate the very first steps of your journey to competitive precision rifle shooting.

Let's start by defining precision rifle shooting. The name 'Precision' originated in the US from outdoor, practical style (i.e., as you'd experience in any number of real-world shooting situations from hunting to law enforcement), precision rifle shooting. Precision Rifle uses numerous props and natural landscape features to create challenging firing positions with steel gongs used as targets at ranges of anywhere between 90 and 1500 metres.

From its inception Precision Rifle proved incredibly popular and rapid growth ensued ... and in all likelihood, this popularity and fresh exciting concept is why you are interested in getting in on the action.

2. MAKE CONTACT & GET GOOD INFORMATION

The most common mistake new shooters make is that they rush into the market with limited experience and purchase some equipment. Unless you're very lucky and stumble on a knowledgeable salesperson – there's a very real risk you'll end up with gear that's less than ideal. Precision Rifle Shooting is an expensive sport – there's no two ways about that – but buying good quality equipment and understanding why you need what you need is the only way of making good purchasing decisions.

DON'T RUSH OUT AND BUY GEAR!!!

With this in mind reach out to your nearest Precision Rifle match organiser and attend a match either as a spectator or if you already have some equipment (even a top-loading hunting rifle is fine for the first time) and just see how you go. Remember this is a journey and taking the first few baby steps will save you a lot of time and money in the long run.

3. PICK YOUR FIRST MATCH

In South Africa there are Three levels of matches: Club, Provincial and National. These differ in the duration, minimum number of rounds required, minimum number of stages and the minimum number of shooters, that need t/o shoot in order to be a sanctioned match.

Match level	Match Duration	Min Rounds	Min Stages	Min Shooters
Club	Usually half a day	20	3	5
Provincial	Full day	60	6	10
National	Two days	120	13	20

4. DIVISIONS

There are a number of divisions in which you can enter, which are based on rifle configurations aimed at different types of rifles and calibres that would not normally be competitive if they competed within

the same competition. Open Division is further broken down into Ladies, Junior, Seniors and active Military and Law Enforcement Officer divisions.



- Classic Division - Suited for classic hunting rifles
- Factory Division - Designed for stock factory rifles
- Limited Division - 308 rifles only
- Open Division - Anything goes

Read through the descriptions of the Divisions and choose which one you best fit into. If you're not sure which division to enter into, contact your local provincial Precision Rifle committee and they will be able to assist you.

5. NEW SHOOTER BENEFITS

One of the benefits of being a new shooter is that you get on the clock assistance from others, while you are shooting your stage, until you get the hang of the sport and you're well on your way to becoming a Pro.

6. GEAR

So, you've reached out, got some dates for the next shoot near you and have booked a spot.

Most importantly make contact with the shoot organiser and explain this is your first shoot and that you'd like any and all assistance that they can offer, and in all likelihood the organiser will squad you with someone who's good at introducing new shooters and that person will show you the ropes. As a rule, most precision rifle shooters are a friendly bunch and as soon as they realise that this is your first shoot, they will muck in to help you out – be that with assistance with ballistics, lending you some gear, or offering advice to help you navigate the stages and so on.

What the guys on the day can't help you with is ammo and so no matter what it is you're shooting you'll need to buy or load up enough for the course of fire.

6.1 RIFLES

Precision rifle rules dictate that any rifle between .224 and .308 calibre with a muzzle velocity less than 3200 fps may be used to compete in precision rifle matches (with the obvious exception of PR22 matches where it is limited to the 22LR calibre). Most shooters in South Africa shoot bolt-action rifles (bolt guns) as they are inherently more accurate than semi-auto rifles (gas guns), however these are popular internationally.

Budget: Budget is key and failing all else get as accurate a rifle as you can afford. How much should you spend? Should you buy a factory rifle? Should you have a custom rifle built? Over time you will discuss these ideas with other shooters constantly and will find the right path for you.

Barrel: A varmit or bull barrel is critical as lighter contour barrels tend to lose accuracy as they heat up with the rapid firing that competition requires. Ideally you will need one or two detachable 10-12 round magazines for your rifle (although there is a classic division that caters for hunting rifles and is restricted to a maximum of 5 rounds in a single magazine – to mimic a traditional hunting rifle).

Accuracy: You will need less than 1 MOA accuracy to give yourself a chance, Half MOA is even better.

Trigger: An adjustable trigger is highly recommended as this allows you to tailor your trigger pull to the weight you prefer – lighter is usually recommended for competition precision rifles.

6.2 Scopes

There are a number of things to consider when making your purchase. Firstly, scopes will outlive your rifles and barrels – so spending relatively more on your optics upfront will be a long-term investment if you get a quality scope. Remember: 'If you can't see it, you can't shoot it!'.

Spend more on your Optics !

Important things to look out for are:

Glass quality – The quality of the glass has profound effect on the scopes acuity in hazy conditions and when the light is less than perfect. (ie. at most matches when it counts).

Magnification – Most precision rifle competitors shoot stages between 10x and 15x magnification on most stages, but most of them will also tell you that you need good magnification to ensure that you have a good zero.

Reticule location – A first focal plane (FFP) scope is essential. FFP means that when you adjust the magnification of your scope the size of your reticule changes so that the scale of the ticks along the axis remains in relation to the size of the target.

Reticule design – There are a number of different reticule styles but you're really looking for a graduated scale on both axis and preferably with some sort of Christmas-tree arrangement to facilitate hold overs.

Mil or MOA – Less important perhaps is the decision of whether to use Mil or MOA reticules and turrets in a metric country like South Africa Mil tends to be easier as its calculated in metres while MOA works best in inches and yards. That said – it's a matter of choice and depends on what you're familiar with. Most Precision Rifle shooters use Mil based scopes, and by getting a Mil based scope, it makes it easy to discuss wind holds with squad mates as you'll be speaking the same scope language.

Tactical turrets – Tactical turrets are also essential as you will constantly be adjusting your sights depending on range and wind, and it's important that they are calibrated in the same measurement system (Mil or MOA) as your reticule.

Zero stop – Less important perhaps is the decision of whether to use Mil or MOA reticules and turrets in a metric country like South Africa Mil tends to be easier as its calculated in metres while MOA works best in inches and yards. That said – it's a matter of choice and depends on what you're familiar with.

6.3 Bipod

A good quality bipod is almost ubiquitous across all precision rifles and is essential for all prone work. When buying a bipod give some serious thought to how the easily it deploys, and how tall it can stand as this will have a bearing on how useful it is when shooting from obstacles and/or at steep inclines both up and down.

6.4 Binoculars

Another near critical piece of field gear is a good pair of binoculars (and if your budget can stretch that far rangefinder binoculars). These help you interrogate the target layouts of the course of fire to help you find your targets when you are shooting the stage. They are also important to assist with scoring as spotting hits is everyone in the squad's job.

A note on finding targets: New precision rifle shooters struggle to find targets during the stage (this is normal, don't give up). Instead of looking for the actual targets, rather teach yourself to look for significant landscape markers near the targets (be they specific trees or odd shaped rocks, or patches of sand, or a particular bush ... you name it). Then by finding the bigger landscape marker, you'll see the target next to it.

Memorise the pattern of targets!

Before your turn to shoot the stage go through your course of fire by viewing it through binoculars from landscape marker to landscape marker as you intend to shoot it. Think of the layout of the targets as a mobile phone unlock pattern, and go from one to the next.

6.5 Ballistics – Trajectory Data or 'DOPE'

At the very core of precision rifle shooting is the concept of DOPE (Data On Previous Engagements). It is this knowledge of the ballistics and trajectory of the bullet that allows precision rifle shooters to hit targets at various ranges and in different wind conditions. You don't need a very good idea of your DOPE for your first match but in time you will become adept at working this out for your rifle and bullet (and by bullet I mean bullet, case, powder, primer etc) combination.

At your first match ask someone to help you zero your rifle and true your ballistics at range. If you don't have anyone to ask, approach the Match Director and ask him to get someone to help you (come to think of it, ask him to arrange for someone to help you when you enter the match) . Essentially what you're going to do is zero your rifle at 100m then calculate the ballistics for a target at a further

range – say 500 metres – to your DOPE. If it is – you're all good to go, if not you'll need to fine tune your MV and repeat the process.

6.6 Other Field Gear – (not essential)

Aside from a bipod and binoculars, everything else in what can be called 'field gear' is optional, and pretty much all the other shooters in your squad will let you try out their gear if you haven't got it. This is a great way to see what is readily available, get good advice and 'try before you buy'.

Tripod – Tripods create a stable shooting platform in certain situations, while a number of bags and 'pillows' assist in creating a good shooting position in others. Ammo pouches help keep your loaded rounds organised, while if you are reloading a small drawstring bag really helps you keep track of all that precious brass.

Knee and Elbow protection – Knee and elbow guards save you a tremendous amount of pain when deploying to shooting positions in the dirt. You can buy expensive tactical body armour – or cheap as chips tiling kneepads from your local hardware, they work just as well.

Clothing – Tactical pants and jackets save your legs and arms from sustaining scratches and cuts from the terrain and also prevent sunburn.

Backpack – A comfy backpack carries everything that's needed for the shoot.

7. Wrapping up

In summary precision rifle shooting is incredibly diverse, extremely challenging and a huge amount of fun.

So what are you waiting for?

Stop over thinking it, and reach out and join a shoot near you today.