

## LESSON 7: THE PRONE POSITION

### PURPOSE

This lesson introduces you to the correct technique for firing in the prone position.



prone  
sling

### INTRODUCTION

The **prone** position has the lowest center of gravity and is the steadiest of the three target positions. Prone has extra stability because the shooter is allowed to use a **sling** in this position. A highly trained rifle shooter is capable of holding a rifle almost as steady in the prone position as a test cradle or machine rest can hold a rifle.

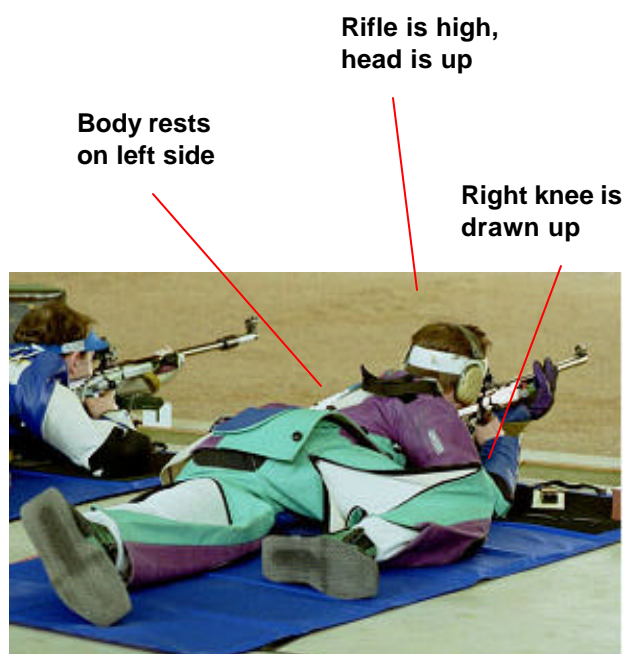
The 50 meter prone position world record is a perfect 600 out of 600 possible points. Firing at 50 meters is done with .22 caliber rimfire smallbore rifles on a target with a ten ring that is only 10.4 mm in diameter (A dime is 17.8 mm in diameter). Shooting a perfect world record score in the prone position means hitting a target that is over one-half of a football field away and less than 6/10ths the size of a dime 60 consecutive times. Even more astonishing is that six different shooters have fired perfect 600s eight different times in world record competitions.

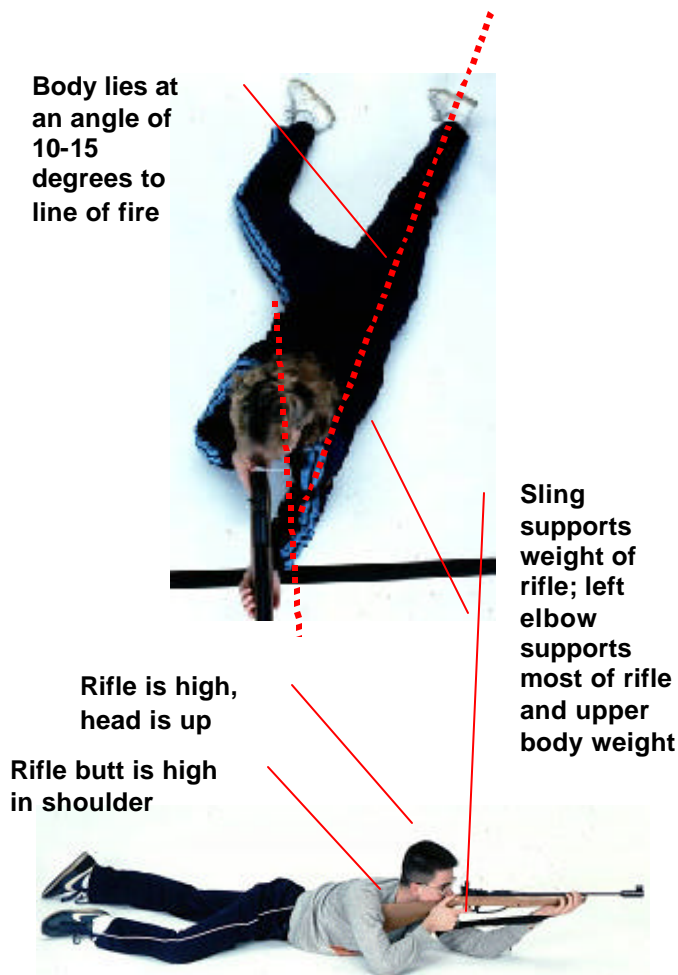


*Sergey Martinov from Belarus is one of six shooters who have fired perfect 600x600 world record scores. Martinov has fired three 600s in world record competition.*

### FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL PRONE POSITIONS

The first step in learning any shooting position is to study the positions of successful shooters. The prone position photo below is the position used by world record holder Sergey Martinov. School-age shooters with sporter air rifles and clothing demonstrate their prone positions in the other photos.





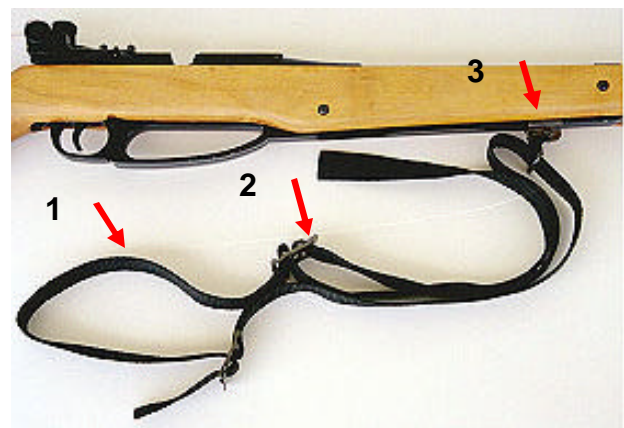
Again, check the similarities between the world record holder's position and the positions of the two school-age shooters. Carefully study the position features pointed out by the arrows and captions. Visualize how you will develop a prone position that is like these three excellent positions.

## PROPER USE OF THE SLING

Competition rules allow the use of a **sling** in prone and kneeling. Scores that can be fired with the sling are so much higher and more consistent than scores fired without a sling that all successful shooters use slings in those two positions (the use of a sling is not permitted in standing). It may be tempting to think that shooting in the prone position is easier without a sling, but trying to shoot

without a sling would be a mistake. To learn the correct position and get the highest possible scores, a sling must be used in the prone position.

To take full advantage of the support that the sling provides, you need to understand how the sling is designed and used. The illustrations here show you how to place the sling on your arm so you will be ready to use it when you get into the prone position.



*All target shooting slings have similar features. They include 1) an arm loop with a means of tightening the loop around the arm, 2) a buckle or other means of adjusting the sling length and 3) a sling attachment point that can be adjusted forward and backward.*

**Step 1.**  
Detach the sling from the rifle, form a loop for the arm



**Step 2. Place sling loop high on arm, tighten sling loop around arm**

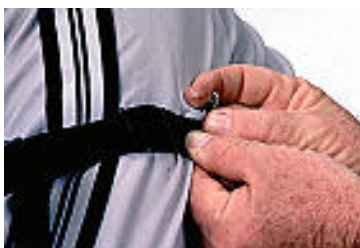


**Sling supports 100% of rifle weight**

*The remaining steps to attach and adjust the sling are described in the prone position instructions that follow. With a properly adjusted sling, the muscles of the arm can be completely relaxed.*



*Wearing a glove on the support hand makes using the sling more comfortable. If a shooting glove is not available, a normal leather work glove may be worn.*

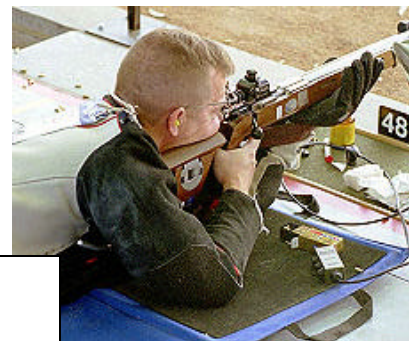


*A large safety pin or other fastener may be used to keep the sling from slipping down on the arm.*

## LEARNING THE PRONE POSITION

A step-by-step process should always be used when learning a new shooting position. After studying the position and becoming aware of the importance of using the sling, it is time to move to the firing line and begin to develop your own prone position. Here are the steps to follow:

1. **Study the Position.** Take another look at ideal prone position photos. Imagine placing your arms, body and legs in a similar position. Put the sling on your support (left) arm so that it will be ready when the time comes to attach it.



*Major Mike Anti, U. S. Army Marksmanship Unit, is shown firing in the prone position during the 2000 Olympic Games. The photo on the left shows how the arms and sling support the rifle while keeping the butt high in the shoulder and the head up. The photo above demonstrates the angle that the body should lie in relation to the rifle. His right knee is drawn up to roll the body onto the left side. Note how erect his head is in both position views.*





2. **Get into position without the rifle.**

Start by placing your air rifle on the floor next to the shooting mat. Then place your shooting mat at an angle of about 10 degrees to the line of fire.

- Stand at the rear of your shooting mats. Kneel and lie down on the mat, facing the target. Your body should lie at the same 10 degree angle to the line of fire as the mat.
- Extend your left arm to the front and place your left elbow on the mat.
- Bring your right knee up and roll your body weight onto the left side.
- Place your right elbow on the mat to also help support the upper body. Position both hands as if they are holding an imaginary rifle.



*2. Get into the prone position without the rifle. Support the upper body with the left elbow and brace the body in position with the right elbow. Imagine holding a rifle in this position.*

3. **Get into position with the rifle, but without the sling.** The next step is to pick up the rifle and hold it in

position.

- Place the butt plate high in your shoulder and close to the neck. The butt plate location is correct when your head is high enough that you can comfortably look straight forward to see your target.
- Hold the rifle with both hands. Make sure your elbows are positioned so they comfortably support the upper body and rifle. Most of your weight should be on the support elbow.
- While looking through the sights, move your support (left) hand forward and rearward on the fore end. This will determine where to locate the hand to raise the rifle to a point where the sights naturally point at the target.
- When the correct support hand position is determined, mark that point on the fore end where the V between the thumb and hand rests. The instructor or another cadet can also assist you by marking that point.



*3. Add the rifle to the position. Move the left hand forward and rearward on the fore end until the front sight is at the level of the target. Mark the location where the V between the thumb and hand is located.*

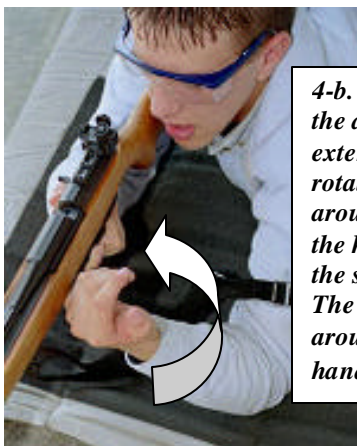
#### 4. Attach and adjust sling.

- a) Attach the sling. Extend the sling and be sure it is adjusted so that its length reaches the extended finger tips of the left hand. Rotate the sling swivel one-half turn to the right (clockwise as you look at the sling swivel). Attach the sling to the sling attachment point (Daisy M853/753 rifles) or attach the sling swivel to the rail.



*4-a. Extend the sling and rotate the sling swivel one-half turn to the right (clockwise direction).*

- b) Get back into the same prone position you just had with the rifle and without the sling. This time the sling should be attached. The sling swivel should be forward of your hand and the sling should be loose. Wrap your arm around the sling so that the sling passes over the back of the hand and around the inside of the arm.



*4-b. To properly place the arm in the sling, extend the arm and then rotate it clockwise around the sling so that the hand rests between the sling and fore end. The sling should pass around the back of the hand.*

- c) Place your left hand in the same location that you marked previously. Check your position to be sure the rifle points comfortably at the center of your target. If the front sight rests above or below the target, move the left hand forward or rearward to get the sights on the target. Move the sling swivel to the location where the V between your thumb and hand is located and tighten it. The best way to do this is to have the assistance of an instructor or other cadet who can adjust the sling swivel by moving it back to the left hand position and tighten it in place.



*4-c. With the left hand in position, move the sling attachment point or sling swivel back to the hand and tighten it in place.*

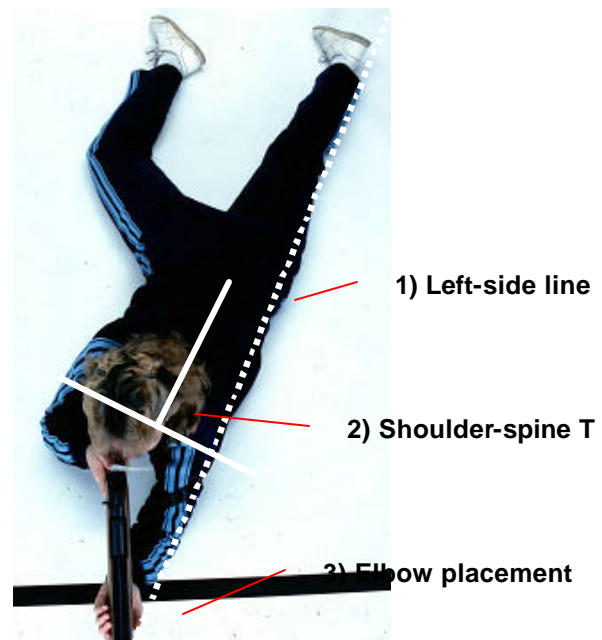
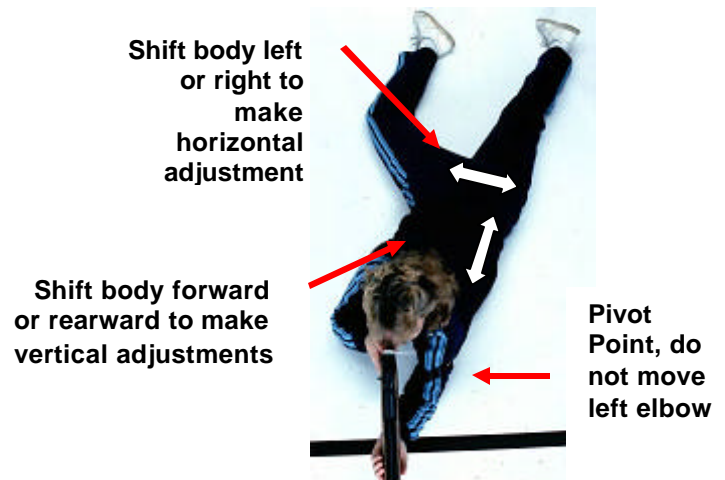
- d) Complete the position by tightening the sling until it takes over the work of holding up the rifle. The sling should be tight enough so that no muscle effort by the arms is necessary to help hold up the rifle.



*4-d. Finish the sling adjustment by tightening the sling until the sling and not the left arm muscles, do the work of holding up the rifle.*

5. **Align the position.** After tightening the sling, one more step is necessary to be sure your prone position produces the smallest possible groups and highest scores. You must align your position with the target.

- Get into position and let the rifle point where it naturally wants to point, without trying to force the rifle to point at the target. A good way to do this is to close your eyes or look down while you relax your arms and upper body and let the sling support the rifle. Next, look through the sights to see where the rifle is pointing. If the sights are not aligned on the target, you need to align your position by moving your body.
- When aligning your body-sling-rifle system on the target, do not move the support (left) elbow. Use the support elbow as a fixed pivot point. If the rifle is too high or too low, use your feet to push the body forward slightly, to lower the rifle muzzle. Or use your feet to pull the body back slightly to raise the muzzle.
- If the rifle points to the left or right, use your feet to lift the body and gently shift it to the left or right to bring the rifle onto the target. Again, do not move the support elbow—always use it as the pivot point.
- Check position alignment again to be sure the sights now point naturally at the target. The prone and kneeling positions have a “natural point of aim” that must be aligned with the target.



*As you prepare to fire, here are three things to check to be sure your position is correct. 1) Left-side line: You should be able to draw a straight line from the left hand through the left foot. 2) Left elbow placement: The elbow should be located directly under the left-side line. It should not be forced under the rifle. 3) Shoulder-Spine T: Lines drawn through the shoulders and spine should form a T.*



## PRONE POSITION FIRING

You should now be ready for dry and live firing in your new prone position. Your instructor will likely begin by doing several dry firing repetitions to practice aiming, breathing, centering your sight picture and smoothly pressing the trigger to release the shot without disturbing your aim.

To fire a series of shots in the prone position, it is also necessary to develop a successful technique for loading the air rifle in the prone position. Loading the air rifle in prone is more difficult than in standing. The method of loading that is used in the prone position depends on the type of air rifle that is used.

- Sporter air rifle, Daisy M853/753. With the pneumatic air rifle, it is necessary to take the rifle off the shoulder and then to take the hand out of the sling so that both hands are available to cock the rifle. The illustrations show two methods of cocking the pneumatic air rifle in the prone position
- Compressed air and CO2 rifles. Loading these rifles is simply a matter of dropping the rifle from the shoulder, opening the bolt, loading and pellet, closing the pellet and placing the rifle back in the shoulder for the next shot.

After your instructor gives the command **START** to begin firing in the prone position, think about relaxing your arms so that the sling does the work of holding the rifle. Center the bull's-eye in your front sight ring as perfectly as you can. You will still have some hold movement, so be sure to relax and center the movement within the front sight ring. When you have a good sight picture, smoothly squeeze the trigger until each shot fires. When you finish firing, be

sure to open the bolt on your rifle and wait for the instructor to inspect it.



*Method 1: Left elbow remains in place. Left hand comes out of sling and grasps cocking lever. Right hand pulls rifle to rear and then pushes it back forward to cock the rifle. The left hand is then repositioned in the sling and loading is completed by the right hand.*



*Method 2: Rifle is turned over and left hand holds rifle while right hand operates the cocking lever. The left hand is then repositioned in the sling and loading is completed by the right hand.*

## CONCLUSION

This lesson gives step-by-step directions for achieving the correct prone position. It also tells you how to use a sling. Firing accuracy in the prone and kneeling positions is greatly increased by using a sling.