

The 170° rule – Common Sense Approach

Posted 05 July 2011 - by PaleWolf Brunelle
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The 170° rule, by definition, DOES NOT always apply to/from/at the loading/unloading tables. This is due to the wide variations in range/stage setups...it does on some ranges, if they are on a common firing line with the stage itself (e.g. LT / STAGE1 / ULT...LT / STAGE2 / ULT...).

The 170° Rule

The 170° rule means the muzzle of a firearm must always be straight **down range** (+/- 85° in any direction). Muzzle direction and muzzle control is important between, before, during, and after shooting a stage. The 170° rule is the backbone of all safe firearm handling and is always in effect.

- A muzzle must not be allowed to “sweep” the other participants at any time.
- Long guns shall have their actions open with chambers and magazines empty and **muzzles pointed in a safe direction when transported at a match.**
- 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 is grounds for a **Stage Disqualification** penalty assessment, and for repeat offenses, a Match Disqualification penalty.

NOTE: An obvious exception to this rule exists, where the shooter is given the ability to draw and holster revolvers from approved, legal holsters without penalty. Further exception is given when retrieving and returning vertically staged double barrel shotguns without penalty

SHB p.17

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

SHB "Glossary of Terms" p.42

“Muzzle up, please move to the Unloading Table” Should be stated at the end of a shooting sequence/stage to guide the shooter. Often the competitor stops thinking. (Adrenaline!)

“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 area. It is now safe to gather brass and prepare for the next shooter in line.

RO1 p.41

The muzzles of all long guns must be maintained in a safe direction at all times (generally “up” and, if on a common firing line, slightly downrange).

SHB p.16

The "*problem*" seems to be the parenthetical "*generally "up" and slightly down range*" as a definition of suggested "safe direction"... It should be obvious that the reference to "*slightly down range*" applies primarily DURING the stage engagement...if the muzzle of a firearm is pointed straight UP during the 'course of fire' (i.e. @ 180°), the shooter is in violation of the 170° rule. Once the stage has ended & the shooter is headed to the ULT, there are often personnel DOWN range (e.g. setting targets/picking brass)...at that point, "*slightly downrange*" might not necessarily be a "best practice" (depending on range/stage layout).

COMMON SENSE should be used to determine the safest direction to point muzzles when moving from the LT to the stage & from the stage to the ULT. UP has already been determined to be considered acceptable. The PRIMARY consideration is to avoid SWEEPING anyone with the muzzle of ANY firearm at ANY time.