



he says, "You can move the gun or the student if he's not braced properly. So I recommend standing with the heel of your support hand against the student's shoulder blade. But you should ask permission to do that because some people are touchy about physical contact." It's especially applicable today, with concerns about sexual harassment.

### Skip Loading

Those old enough to remember when most lawmen carried revolvers will recall "Swiss loading" with both live ammo and dummy rounds loaded in the cylinder. (The name presumably referred to Swiss cheese with its characteristic holes.) The same concept applies to semiautos with "skip loading" aka ball-and-dummy loading. The object is identical: to test the student's consistency for a smooth trigger release. Since it's nearly impossible to tell whether the muzzle remains level at the instant of firing, skip loading tells the instructor whether the student is controlling the trigger on a dummy round.

It's important that somebody else load the shooter's magazine, as there are always gamesmen in every endeavor. Larry recommends starting with one live round in a magazine of seven to 14 dummies, depending on capacity. When the hammer or striker hits a dummy, the student immediately calls it a good or bad press. If the instructor agrees it was good, he covers the student's eyes to prevent glimpsing the next cartridge as the student performs a malfunction drill to reload. If it was a bad press, the instructor mandates three good ones to reset the shooter's mental computer before proceeding.

The ratio of live to dummy cartridges increases as the student progresses, finishing with one dummy in a full magazine. Cycling the slide after each dummy round can reinforce a tactical immediate-action drill. "Remember," Larry says, "we don't teach qualification: we teach marksmanship and gun handling."

### The Different Zero Concept

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Larry insists that the large majority of humans can shoot the same zero. He began questioning the CW when zeroing pistols issued for each recruit class. He believes that at gunfighting distances – and quite a way beyond – the variance is irrelevant. "The main difference is not

in vision," he says, "but in different mistakes that people make." He convinced himself when he and seven other instructors each shot three Berettas at 25 yards, all zeroed to Larry's eyes. Every group printed within less than two inches error. "That was 24 tests with three excellent shooters. What are the odds that was a coincidence? I don't know, but they don't make numbers that big."

Arnie Stallman, a landmark on the Arizona instructor scene, arranged Larry's visit. In what he laughingly calls "retirement" Arnie travels the nation on behalf of NRA, using the trigger drills as diagnostic tools across The Fruited Plain.

Doctrine: "Shoot as fast as you can hit, and don't teach against doctrine." Yet Larry and Arnie both see an inherent contradiction, especially regarding qualification courses. (While we're at it, let's not confuse qualification with training; they're different but they should be similar.) Many states require officers to fire every round required in the qual course, with penalties beyond merely dropped rounds off the score. In some venues, unfired rounds are cause for disqualification.

"That's counterproductive," Arnie says. "Why do we force people to shoot faster than they can hit?"

The usual answer: "We've always done it that way." Yet Larry shows mathematically that by withholding two to four rounds per struggling shooter, scores actually improve when those individuals use the extra time to make their other rounds count.

When Larry arrived at LAPD, 42 of 100 recruits shot well enough for a marksman, sharpshooter, or expert badge. When he was given a free rein as chief instructor, his first two classes produced 97 and 99 medals; the third class went 100 percent and subsequent classes maintained that standard. However, since Larry retired in 2004 the figures have tanked. "Now about 10 percent of recruits qualify for medals," he glooms. Nobody seems to know why the effective methods are gone, especially since the NIH Syndrome need not apply.

However any department conducts firearms training, the agency and its officers can benefit from using the Mudgett trigger drills. And the Trigger Master himself is as close as the telephone.

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