

Offhand is the position that separates good shooters from REALLY good shooters. In Across the course a match is won on your feet and lost at 600. There really successful shooters who are national champions have techniques that work for them. The first book I read was by David Tubb. He has a position the undoutably works for him. However it didn't feel comfortable for me. So just because you read or watch something take it as advice but the ultimate predictor on what to do is what works for you. Remember you want to be comfortable in your position. If you are straining to maintain it the position is going to break down during a 10 or 20 shot string. There are certain basic fundamentals to offhand that are true for everyone but depending on body build there are other things that may work for some shooters but not for others. The overall main thing in offhand is to let your skelletion do the work and carry the weight, not your muscles. Unlike sitting and prone you do not use a sling for support in offhand. Below are two examples. Shooter on the left is muscling the rifle holding it like a shotgun and doing nothing correct. Shooter on the right is letting his skelletion do most of the work.



First lets talk about the support arm, (i.e. the arm that holds the rifle). The goal with this arm is you want it to make contact with the body somewhere. You don't hold the rifle with it as in the picture above where the shooter is holding it like a shotgun. Some people will say you want your elbow to rest on the illiac crest of your hip. From a skelleton standpoint this makes sense, but I know I can't do this. My wife who shoots and has long limbs can't do this either but can come close



If she tries to do this she will naturally point the rifle at the ground (left) or have to kick her hips out and make other position mistakes in order to make this work (right).



Since the majority of people can't do this the important thing is to get the elbow in as close as you can to the rib cage with the forarme bent up. Here you see my wife is able to do this and as talked about in the prone article there is a triangle formed. This bone on bone provides a hard solid base for position.





However somepeople can't get their elbow to their ribs. I can't because of being a former power lifter my triceps and laticiums dorci do not allow this to happen.



So in my position I have support but it isn't bone on bone. This isn't ideal but as I'm still able to have a support triangle. What does help with the support is the rubber on the coat.



The next part of the position that is crucial is your feet placement, you want a good sturdy base to provide support. Before you worry about how you stand you need to make sure you are standing on level ground. Take some point and find an area in your firing point that has good ground. Ideally this would be in the middle, but it may not be. Some people will say your feet have to point in certain directions while in theory this may be true it isn't true for all people, because of physical characteristics. However there are some general basics you want and from there you need to modify it through practice of what works best for you. First you want your feet in your normal stance this may be shoulder width but may be more narrow. Second, your front foot (i.e. foot closest to the target you want pointed towards or in a direction towards the target. You want your foot closest to the target that when you come down on the target your NPA is aligned correctly. If this foot is pointed to far left your NPA will be to the left. If your foot is pointed to far right your NPA will be right. Much like prone closing your eyes and opening them will tell you where your NPA is. Your back foot (foot away) from the target you generally want pointed down the firing line. Some say they need to point in a 90 degree angle but this isn't crucial, you need to find what works for you.

If your rifle has an adjustable LOP it is also best to shorten it up as much as possible. A shorter LOP brings everything in tighter including your support arm. On the left you will see a short LOP, on the right is a longer LOP. The shooter on the right will tire much quicker.





Now lets talk about mounting the rifle. You want to keep the rifle as high as possible. Both can be done equally with match rifle (left) and service rifle (right).



The next key to a good position is balance. Your balance is better the more upright your head is. Shooter on the left has a low head position shooter on the right has a high head position. The shooter on the right will have better balance and less wobble.



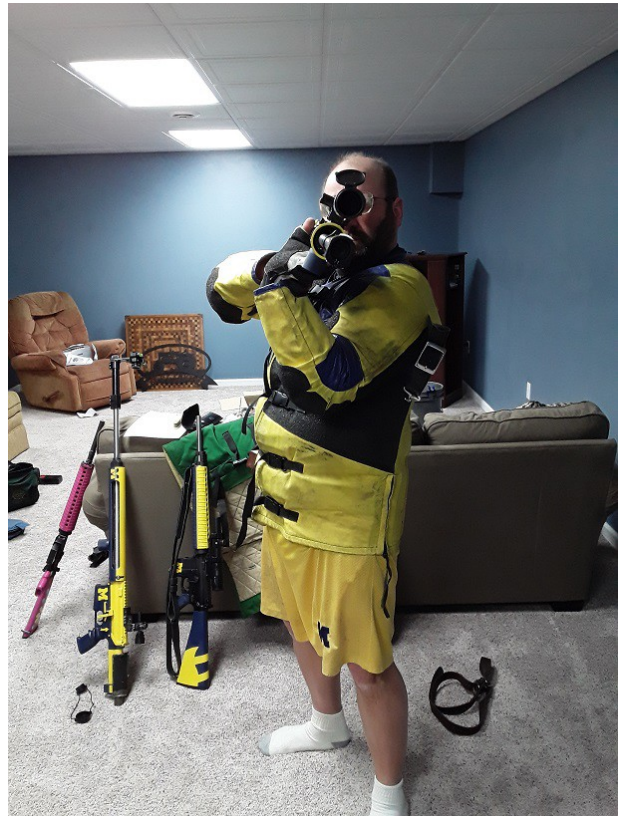
Along with mounting the rifle high you also want to keep your sights as high as possible. If you are shooting iron sights on a match rifle this can be done very easily. If you can find the picture of Karl Bernosky when he set the offhand record that was on the Creedmore catalog you will notice his sights on his rifle are ran up very high. Below you will notice the difference. Rifle is in the same position but the sight elevation is different.



With a higher more neutral head position the gun settles and doesn't move as much. Also over the course of a 20 round string you don't tire as quickly. Both of these are key to good offhand shooting. With scopes you are more fixed to how high you can adjust the sights, so when you get a mount or rings you want to find something that lets your head be relatively upright but yet still allows for a good prone head position.

The same goes as far as tilting your head out to the rifle. It is possible to bring the rifle completely in and keeping your head perfectly verticle. Shooter on the left is slightly bringing his head out, shooter on the right is bringing the rifle into his head.





Now the problem with bringing the rifle completely into your head is you have a cant on the gun and if this isn't constant then that causes aiming issues. For the beginning shooter it is best to bring the rifle in as close as possible but you still may need to bring your head out a little.



Next we have the trigger hand. With this hand you want to pull snugly the rifle back into your shoulder. Now snug is the key term. You don't want to have a death grip and pull like your in the tug of war world championships. On the other hand you don't want to lightly pull on it like your rifle is made of glass. You want a snug pull into your shoulder. Next as far as the elbow if your rifle has a pistol group you can keep your elbow down (left). However if it is a traditional stocked rifle you need to keep it out (right).



Final part of the support is what we talked about first is the hand on the support arm. Depending on your rifle depends on how you can grip it. Some people use a reverse palm and the rifle just says on their hand, this is probably the preferred method.





If your rifle has a mag well you may want to use a standard placement and kind of brace the barrel and mag well against your hand.



The other option is gripping the mag well vertically



Then there is the option that you would see back in the days of the M1A and still see some where people put their hand under the mag and use it as a palm rest.



I tried #4 and it has never worked for me and #3 doesn't really support the rifle that well. Usually I use #2, but sometimes #1 feels better.

Now after figuring this all out the next thing is you need to practice dry firing is a good thing even better if you have a SCATT trainer. Because while you may set out to do method A, you might find out method B works better and then Method B.1-c-02 is the best.

Now that we have our position figured out let's talk about how we use the position when we are live firing.

First you want a place to rest the butt of the rifle where you don't have to pick it up off the ground all the time. Also notice how close the spotting scope is. I can look through the scope with my rifle on my stool and not move my feet.





When you go to execute a shot make sure you point the muzzle in a safe direction and drop a round in the chamber and close your bolt. It is recommended that you have your safety on at this point. Then you mount the rifle. The best way is to raise it up slightly to get the rifle back into your shoulder.



Pull back on the grip and then lower it to the target



Once your gun is on target then take the safety off. As soon as your rifle comes down on target and if it is centered up take the shot, don't dress up the shot. The longer you wait the more it will wobble. The more you shoot the more consistent the wobble will be and the quicker you will be able to take the shot. If after 5 seconds, 10 at most the shot isn't there take the rifle out of your shoulder, eject the round, relax and repeat. DO NOT try to muscle the shot in, it won't work. If the rifle settles take the shot, call the shot, let the rifle come out of recoil and settle down before

you pick up your head and dismount the rifle. Now all the principles talked about calling your shot come into play here so make sure you do them. However if you notice your rifle just settles at the bottom of the 10 ring almost the 9 ring at 6 o'clock that is where your NPA is. Don't be afraid to adjust your sights so you aim there but have it hit in the X ring. Your position will have a place where the gun is settling down and that's where you want to break the shot. Preferably this is in the X ring but if it isn't with scopes you can adjust for it. Same with irons if you're shooting 10's and X's with a hold that isn't in the center that is ok, just keep breaking shots with that sight picture.

Finally part is where to sit stuff up. Generally for a right handed shooter your spotting scope will be to your left. You want it in a position so you don't have to move very much at all to look through it. If you look at the pictures above you will see how close the spotting scope is. You will have your cart to your right and use the seat to rest your rifle on. If you are shooting on electronic targets it is advisable to have the display as high as possible so you can see it with minimal head movement. On my cart there is a tray that attaches to it towards that top and this is where I place the display.



Hopefully this helps you understand some of the basics and allows you to either initially learn or gives you some advice that you can use to process and develop a position that works for you.

See you on the range.