



# Project Appleseed in Minnesota

★ Liberty ★ Heritage ★ Marksmanship ★

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Find more information at [appleseedusa.org](http://appleseedusa.org).

## New Year's Resolution: Dry Fire! Dry Fire! Dry Fire!

*by Alexander R. Thompson, "AFTERMATH" on the forum, RWVA Senior Instructor, IBC/RBC*

You hear it all the time on the Appleseed forum, on the line, and in your head. But what does it mean? What are the benefits of dry firing? How do you do it? Will it hurt my rifle? It seems whenever I utter that phrase I am confronted with more questions than I have time to answer. Since it is now winter on the frozen tundra, and with that comes less time outside and on the firing line, I've found a little time to answer some questions on this mysterious technique. If you care about your shooting skills you will find time to implement this training resource. It will improve your handiness and ability with a rifle, or any other firearm for that matter.

Sometimes referred to as 'snapping in' dry firing is a simple tool that will make, or break, a Rifleman. What's really amazing is that dry firing, while an almost necessary form practice, is seldom actually used! Folks, if you want to shoot better, you've got to practice. If you can't make it to the range every day and/or can't afford to put thousands of rounds through your rifle every few months, you NEED to practice dry firing! In its most basic form, it's firing a shot without a bullet.

Dry firing will train both your mind and body to execute the shot properly. Your mind cannot tell the difference between actually firing the shot and squeezing the trigger on an empty chamber, except perhaps the noise/recoil, but that comes after the shot! Dry firing will prepare your mind by going through the same exact process you would use on the range with live ammunition.

Physically, dry firing will help to build muscle memory. Muscle memory is all about teaching

your muscles to do what you want them to do without the conscious effort of doing so. This frees your mind up for other tasks, such as keeping the front sight on the target! The good thing about muscle memory is when you execute a certain movement the same way, time after time, you'll find your muscles do exactly what they've been trained to do, exactly when you want them to. The bad news is that it can take up to 5,000 repetitions before long-term muscle memory is achieved. And even worse news, if you have bad habits, it can take up to 10,000 repetitions to break long-term muscle memory! So what's important here is when you practice—Do it right! Practice doesn't make perfect—Perfect practice makes perfect.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of dry firing is that it can be done indoors! That's right, no need to bundle up and head out into the back forty to lie on a bed of snow. As comfortable as that may be, it gets cold.

First things first—Safety! Remember the key word in dry firing is: DRY! Before you even pull your rifle out of the safe, clear your practice area/room of any and all ammunition! It has an odd way of creeping into an empty chamber. Next make sure your rifle is completely unloaded—both chamber and magazines. Double check it. Triple check it. Then have someone else confirm its empty status as well. People get shot with 'empty' guns all the time, so always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Then place the rifle on your firing line.

Dry firing is meant to emulate the actual shots you intend to fire. So you will outfit yourself with the same equipment you use in the 'real world' situation. If you intend to use a shooting jacket, put it on. If you shoot from a mat, put it down. If you're practicing for hunting, put on all your hunting gear.

## Dry Fire! Dry Fire! Dry Fire! *Continued*

While an outlet or a dot on a piece of paper will work for a makeshift target, you can also find scaled down targets of the type you intend to shoot. Post them at as great of distance as is possible in your situation, or at the distance for which the target is scaled. [A target scaled for 10 feet is available here:

<http://appleseedinfo.org/smf/index.php?topic=9833> under the title  
"AS\_D\_SQ\_DF\_10FT.pdf"]

Now that you've set up your range to your liking you may get into position. Make sure you have your sling set up and all your Steady Hold Factors are correct. Then find your Natural Point of Aim (NPOA) and get it on target. Now you're ready to start. You may now 'dry-load' your rifle.

A Rifleman fires every shot by the Six Steps – Dry firing is no exception. Go through the Steps, one by one, as you dry fire the shot.

1) **Sight alignment** – train your eyes and body to align themselves with the sights automatically.

2) **Sight picture** – you are teaching yourself to maintain the same exact sight picture, every time.

3) **Respiratory pause** – teach yourself to control your breath, pausing at the bottom/exhale of your natural breathing cycle for maximum results.

4) a] **Focus your eye on the front sight** – teach your eye to quickly acquire and focus on the front sight.

4) b] **Focus your mind on keeping the front sight on the target** – visualize it in your mind; watch the front site as you squeeze the trigger to ensure it doesn't move off the target.

5) **SQUEEZE the trigger** – you are teaching your finger to naturally squeeze the trigger without imparting movement to the rifle.

6) **Follow through/Call the shot** – after the hammer falls, hold that trigger back and take a mental snap-shot of that front sight and its orientation to the target.

There, you've done it! Wasn't really all that hard now, was it? Did that front sight move off the target? If so, take corrective action and try again. If your sight stayed on the target – great! You're probably doing it right! Keep on going! Practice NPOA shifts and magazine changes. Once you're satisfied with one position, continue to the next. Practice your transitions. Time yourself and dry fire an entire course of fire. Dry fire an entire AQT! There are no limits to this practice. [An MP3 recording of the timed AQT line commands is available here: [http://www.4shared.com/folder/559qijqr/My\\_4shared\\_Sync.html](http://www.4shared.com/folder/559qijqr/My_4shared_Sync.html) These were created by "wooldl." We have permission to share them with the caveat that they are not to be used for live fire or played at the range – dry fire only!]

If you're doing everything right – no bad habits – you can't do it too often. Remember you've got to fire that shot 5,000 times or more. With the current price of .30 caliber ball ammunition, that's a savings of about \$2,500. So not only will it save you money, it will also save you the time it takes for you to fire live ammunition that isn't going to hit the target anyway. A Rifleman DOESN'T waste ammo – A Rifleman DOES dry fire!

I know what's been on your mind while you read this. In fact, it's likely you might not have paid much attention to what has been said for one key reason: Someone told you dry firing will ruin your rifle. While this is true for some rifles, with modern advancements in design and metallurgy, many firearms can be dry fired with no issues at all. Almost every centerfire can be dry fired safely without repercussions. Many of the newer rim fires can as well. The Ruger 10/22, specifically, can be dry fired without hurting the mechanism.

### Dry Fire! Dry Fire! Dry Fire! *Continued*

A Rifleman knows his rifle. Read your manual, look it up online or contact the manufacturer. See if it's safe to dry fire your rifle. Another option is to acquire snap caps, or dummy rounds, and use them in place of the live rounds. These are also good for "ball and dummy," inducing malfunctions, and other practice drills.

Easy on the body and easy on the wallet, dry firing is something every Rifleman must do to build and maintain those hard-earned skills. It will keep you in shape, making it easier to get into and out of the positions. It gives you the muscle memory to quickly and unconsciously find your NPOA, get it on target, and fire the shot perfectly. Shooting is a perishable skill and it fades quickly – keep sharp during the winter. Add it to your regular exercise regimen a half hour a day, a few days a week, or whenever you can. It can be as simple or difficult as you want it to be. While you're at it, find some time to get to the range and get your cold weather zero/come-ups, and see how you've improved already!

Become a Rifleman!

### Heroes of Early America: Joseph Plumb Martin

At Valley Forge National Historic Park there is an 8.7 mile long trail named after him, but he was not a general or a famous hero during the War for Independence. In 1776, at age 15, he left his grandfather's farm in Connecticut to fight in the revolution as a private. He took a break after his initial six month enlistment ended, but then reenlisted in 1777 and continued on, ending his service in 1783. He advanced to the rank of corporal and then to sergeant by the end of the war.



Revolutionary War Soldiers: In Camp at Valley Forge  
Image source: Barnes, A.S. A Brief History of the United States.  
New York: American Book Company, 1885 [public domain image]

236 years after his enlistment he is famous, and is quoted in most documentaries and scholarly works about the American Revolution, simply because he wrote down his experiences. In 1830, at age 70, he published his memoirs based on the journals he kept during the war, giving us the crown jewel of primary sources to show us what the American Revolution was really like for the common man who fought for liberty.

He served in the Battle of Brooklyn, Battle of White Plains, the Siege of Fort Mifflin, the Battle of Monmouth and at Yorktown in the final major battle of the American Revolution. He endured terrible hardships for eight years, and yet his memoir reports them rather than complains about them.

Joseph Plumb Martin is known for being even-handed in his written account and not making himself out to be a hero. His memoir opens a window to the daily experiences of our forefathers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as they strove to win liberty for us, their posterity. We can honor the sacrifices they made by learning more about them.

Dover Value Editions offers an unabridged version of his 1830 original: "Memoir of a Revolutionary Soldier: The Narrative of Joseph Plumb Martin," ISBN: 0486451461. This and other editions of his memoir are available by interlibrary loan in Minnesota.

**Come to Appleseed and hear more about the day marksmanship met history and the heritage began!**

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## The Bill of Rights

In the shooting sports community we are pretty much aware of our 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment rights to keep and bear arms. However, we may not be aware of the entire Bill of Rights. The rights guaranteed to us by this important part of our Constitution are facing challenges regularly. For instance, <http://www.aclu.org> has information about the "Indefinite Detention" provision signed into law on December 31, 2011.

*The Bill of Rights Institute*, a non-profit group providing educational resources about America's founding documents and principles, offers some educational materials and videos to help explain what the Bill of Rights and the Constitution are all about, and why the Rule of Law is important. They are available at: <http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org>.

To get us all started in learning more about our rights, here are the 10 amendments to the United States Constitution that make up the Bill of Rights:

### **Amendment I**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

### **Amendment II**

A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

### **Amendment III**

No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

### **Amendment IV**

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation,

and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

### **Amendment V**

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

### **Amendment VI**

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

### **Amendment VII**

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

### **Amendment VIII**

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

### **Amendment IX**

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

### **Amendment X**

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

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