



## Shotguns for Trapshooting

There's a new game in town: trapshooting at the Fernie Rod & Gun Club's Coal Creek range.

Trapshooting is all about hitting fast flying targets, which are small dark baked-clay Frisbees painted orange on top. When you hit a target, it turns into a black dust cloud or shatters into chunks that fly off in all directions. FRGC now has an electric thrower that automatically loads itself and throws a target each time you call out: "PULL". You can really get into a good rhythm with Trap.

A fun way to start is to come on out and give it a whirl. The trap range will be open one weekday evening and once mid-day on weekends. The range's Trap hours are on the web site at [www.ferniergc.com](http://www.ferniergc.com).

Bring whatever shotgun you happen to own: if it's a duck or pheasant gun, bring that. If yours is a stocked camp shotgun, bring it. Or borrow a friend's gun. You're good-to-go with a few boxes of cheap upland/field shot shells, (maximum shot size 1 1/8 ounce, 7.5 shot and a 3 dram load for safety, #8, and #7.5 shot in 2-3/4" shells are best).

Up to five persons can make up a squad and shoot the same 25-round match in rotation. It's a great way to have fun with friends or meet new shooters.

**Wednesday night Trap league** is the best time to go. Some of the regulars will let you try whatever they are shooting. You will see all kinds of shotguns: old & new, shiny or scratched, synthetic and wood-stocked, semis, pumps, doubles and single-shots. Most will be 12 gauge guns, some 20 gauge.

You will soon notice that ***you are getting more hits with a trap-specific gun***, compared to a hunting (or 'field') shotgun. This is because trap guns are designed and fitted for one purpose: hitting fast-flying targets. ***Think of your favourite hunting rifle: the reason it shoulders and lines you up so quickly on game is that the stock fits you.***

### BASIC STUFF ABOUT TRAPSHOOTING

This explains why a Trap gun helps you hit more targets:

#### 1. Targets are shot on the rise:

Trapshooting is different than other shotgun sports like bird hunting, Skeet, Sporting Clays, 5-Stand, or busting coyotes. The target may move up and directly away from you, or it may traverse to either side – our powerful automatic thrower releases the targets randomly.

In Trapshooting, ***the target is shot while it is quickly rising in the sky*** away from the shooter. A trap gun's barrel rib is very tall at the back, to point the barrel up slightly. This delivers the pellets high relative to a 6-o'clock hold on the rising target. If you keep the muzzle just below the target your shot pattern will rise to blast it to smithereens. Of course, on traversing targets the shot is released ahead of the traversing and still-rising target.

A Trap gun is tightly choked and will put at least 70% of the pellet pattern above the line of sight. In other words most of the pellet load is heading for where the target will be rather than where it is when you break the shot.

## 2. Trap Gun = more hits on rising targets:

Trap guns are fitted with a tall rib and the stock has a tall cheek piece. These features place your eye high enough to see the target above the barrel. A hunting or field gun –with its low rib and low stock– will blot out a rising target, plus its stock may lightly hit your cheekbone at every shot.

## 3. Seven features of a fully-fitted Trap gun:

1. *a raised ventilated barrel rib*, to aid pointing & help cool the barrel;
2. stock with a *high (or adjustable) cheek piece* (i.e. comb) to raise your eye to the high rib (a lace-on gets this done cheaply);
3. *long barrel* (30", 32", 34", 36") for a smooth swing;
4. *two beads* on the rib: one mid-way, the other at the muzzle (helps pointing);
5. *heavy* – weight helps absorb the recoil of a 100 round match;
6. a *recoil pad*, to optimize length-of-pull (LOP);
7. *adjustable butt-plate*, to allow adjustment of stock's cast & LOP.

Good entry-level trap guns need not have all seven features, nor are all features needed to hit targets and have fun. The first two -high rib and high stock- are the most desirable ones.

However, you may well be one of those guys with natural talent who does well with a \$150 used hunting shotgun. There will be guys with duck guns. So come to the range on Trap night, try out some guns and find out what this new game is about.

## 4. How to test for fit:

- ✓ Does the gun shoulder easily and naturally?
- ✓ Make sure the stock doesn't snag under your arm as you shoulder.
- ✓ Can you comfortably reach the trigger? An easy LOP, without your hand touching your cheek, will prevent fatigue.
- ✓ Does the barrel(s) swing and point freely?
- ✓ Is your eye looking right down the middle of the barrel rib with the bead(s) centered, without having to tilt your head or move your cheek from the stock?
- ✓ When you mount the gun with eyes closed and then open them, does the mid-bead and front bead form a flat figure 8? Better yet, a quick test on a pattern board will confirm the fit.
- ✓ If there is no mid-bead or rib, the front bead must be centered down the middle of the muzzle.

Like a good rifle, a well fitted shotgun feels balanced. It points and swings easily. You don't need to creep up on the stock to reach the trigger.

Whatever you do, don't buy the first shotgun that you fall in love with.

## 5. The Autoloader or Semi-automatic:

The autoloader (or semi) shotgun is arguably the best all-around trap gun for the first-time shooter. The reasons being: the stock is easily adjustable to set point of impact (a critical consideration); the gun can shoot all the games: singles, handicap, double-trap, sporting clays – you name it. Recoil is lowest and that makes it ideal for everyone, especially for women and youths.

The drawbacks of a semi-auto are that they require extra detailing in the cleaning. Worst of all they can jam which is a pain and may cost you points. Another thing is that most eject the empty hull toward the person standing at the next shooting station, an annoyance that is prevented with a shell-catcher attachment.

Another negative is that the semi-auto is somewhat less safe relative to the pump or Over/Under because it is harder to see if the gun is in fact unloaded when carried. The O/U breaks wide open so its status is immediately apparent.

Overall, the autoloader is a good first and last choice, and with different barrels and chokes you can shoot all the clay target games.

## 6. Trap specific guns:

Most trap guns are **12 gauge, with 2-3/4" chambers**. Longer chambers are ok but of no practical benefit. Full choke is a great overall choke for older guns. If your shotgun has choke tubes, **Improved Modified and Full tubes work very well**. You do not need a steel-shot compatible barrel as the pellets are lead.

Buying a shotgun for trap is like buying a big game rifle: you try out a bunch and see what fits you best.

The following Trap guns are fitted such that most people find them pleasant to shoot well:

### Semi-auto:

- Remington 1100 'Trap' model, gas semi. Affordable and found on the used market. Negative is that it throws the empties toward other shooters without a shell catcher and there is no single-shot selector.
- Beretta AL391 Urika

### Over/Under:

- There are many Over/Under break-action double guns on the used market.
- Browning 'Trap' Citori O/U, great gun, somewhat affordable on the used market.
- Winchester M101 'Trap' O/U. A fine gun, affordable on the used market.
- SKB combo O/U.

### Pump action:

- Winchester M12 'Trap'. A fine old pump gun.
- Remington 870 'Trap'. A great pump, affordable.
- Mossberg M500
- Browning BPS 'Trap' available regular sized or micro. A great affordable gun. Ejects from the bottom, so great for lefties and doesn't disrupt others. Features a single-shot selector for safety.

## 6. Picking a gauge:

- Ten (10ga) gauge is a very bad choice, with huge cost and huge recoil, for no real benefit. Not allowed in formal competition.
- ✓ **Twelve (12ga) gauge is most popular** as it puts out a dense pellet pattern. Cheap factory ammo is readily available everywhere (\$32/100shells), and high-end trap ammo is available. Twelve gauge has more recoil than the smaller gauges, yet many women and older youths do very well with it in semi-autos. Worth reloading but only for affordable custom shotshells.

- Sixteen (16ga) is not a good choice. Ammo is scarce in stores and few 16ga guns are on the market.
- ✓ **Twenty (20ga)** is popular for trap for ladies and juniors. The ammo is *more expensive* and not quite as readily found in stores as 12 ga. Advantage is that it puts out enough pattern density to do the job, and has less recoil than its 12ga big brother. If you reload your own 20ga shells, you can save quite a bit of money.
- Twenty-eight (28ga) ammo is *very expensive* and hard to find in stores. This is a specialty lightweight boutique gauge with a small pattern, and is for experts or people who are particularly recoil sensitive due to injuries. Reloading these is very worthwhile.
- Four-ten (.410ga) is the smallest gauge and a poor choice for beginners. The ammo is readily available but expensive and the pattern is tiny. This is a challenging gauge for experts and *not typically used for trap* but ok for skeet.

Researched by the Fernie Rod & Gun Club  
Trap Committee, Spring 2012.