

# *Improvised Shooting Rests For Hunting*



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## Chapter 1

If you are like me, you probably spend countless days afield every year pursuing big and small game. Many of us will travel the U.S. and many parts of the world because we love to hunt. We spend a lot of time and money on these adventures because we are devoted to satisfying the inner ancient hunter/gatherer that is deep within each of us. We also spend many days each year at our local gun club or public range putting round after round through our favorite hunting rifles. I know how it is. Tight groups from a sandbagged bench rest is our main goal. If you reload your own ammunition, you require pinpoint accuracy before you go afield. There is nothing wrong with this. It's a great thing to know that with a steady rest you can print a 1" or 1 1/2" group on paper. Problem is that most times when you are out in the field hunting, the lack of an adequate rest, and the time to find or make one, is lacking.

This is the reason that we decided to write this book. We have been a Professional Hunting Guide Service for over 30 years. The areas that we hunt offer poor rests, no rests, and no time to find one. And most times, no time to use bipods. Even using shooting sticks can be unhandy in some situations. Some times, if you are going to get the shot, you just have to shoot. If you follow the simple instructions in this book, you will be able to set up quickly, and shoot accurately at close to medium-long range.

Over the years rifles have changed. And for the purposes of fair chase hunting on rough ground, they haven't all changed for the better. The emphasis seems to be on heavy rifles that are best suited for the bench rest. Many hunters carry these rifles, and although they offer great accuracy, they are very heavy. They also require an artificial rest, and are very hard to shoot offhand. By offhand shooting, I mean without a rest, or use of bipods. Back about 20 or 30

years ago, lightweight carbines were in high demand. They were very light to carry and offered great accuracy. These "Mountain Rifles" were very easy to shoot offhand. Problem is that I rarely see anyone carrying one these days. Most have rifles with bipods in about the 12 pound range. To my mind, the ideal rifle is a carbine, and will weigh about 6 and a half pounds with a scope. Such a rifle is easy to carry, and easy to shoot. Especially in a tight, close shooting scenario. They also perform very well at long range. Many times we are hunting down in a deep coulee with steep arroyos that feed the coulee from the sides. Deer and even antelope will bed in these areas. When we jump them up, the shots are usually from 50 to 100 yards. And yes, you can get a good standing shot if you can set up quick. By setting up, I don't mean getting your bipod extended and finding a place to rest where you can use the bipod. I mean that you must quickly improvise a supported, offhand rest using your sling and your body. If you can do this quickly and make a good shot by also using good breathing and trigger technique, you can make a good clean kill. Its easy, and anyone can learn these techniques. You may already know and use some of the techniques in this book. If so, thats great. Then this will be a good refresher course.

First, we will teach you the proper sling wrap that is used in all of these improvised rests. Then we will show you proper standing, sitting, kneeling, and prone rests to use. Also covered in this book are proper breathing and trigger technique.

### **Sling Wrap**

In order to learn the Improvised rest technique, it's important to first learn to use the basic sling wrap. This will help steady your weapon so you will be able to shoot accurately in all of the supported positions. This rifle is my M44 Russian. Its in great shape, and its a light, short carbine

**that makes a great Mountain Rifle, or saddle gun. I chose it for the demonstrations in this book because it has no scope, and it will be easy for you to see how the sling wrap is done. Incidentally, using the techniques in this book, I can shoot this rifle accurately out to 300 yards! (With open Sights!)**



### **1st Step**

**For the 1st step, you must adjust your sling so that when you take your sling wrap, it will be tight. This will make your rest solid. This is kind of a trial and error thing, and you must actually learn the wrap before you can adjust the sling so you get a good tight fit. So we are actually getting the cart before the horse, so to speak. But this is a very important component to getting a good sling wrap. So adjust your sling while you are learning the sling wrap.**



## **2nd Step**

**On the 2nd step, you will want to place your arm between the sling and the rifle, all the way to your arm pit. I've kind of exaggerated the steps just so you can see what I am doing. You will actually be able to do the complete sling wrap very quickly. ( I mean in about 2 seconds!)**



### 3rd Step

**For the 3rd step, you will simply raise your arm up so that you can get around the sling in the next step.**



## 4th Step

**For the 4th step, you wrap your wrist around the sling, and bring your hand between the sling and forend of the stock. (It's gonna start to tighten up on you now, and thats just what you want!)**



## 5th Step

**The 5th step involves sliding your hand back towards you to tighten the sling up. This concludes the Basic Sling Wrap. You should be able to get into this wrap while you are getting into the best supported rest position for the shot, in just a matter of seconds. Now for the supported positions. (Practice, Practice, Practice!)**



## **1<sup>st</sup> Supported Position Standing**

**Your still hunting a coulee and all of the sudden, a nice buck gets up at 40 yards.....one jump and he's going to be long gone into the cover. There is no rock to get down on, and no time to find one, or get to a rest you can shoot from, and no time to use your bipod or shooting stick. You have only one option...and that is to shoot. (AND FAST)**

**But you want to be accurate. For the sake of the animal, you want to make a good kill shot. You won't get a second chance, and if your not ready, your not even going to get this one.**

**This is where you need the knowledge and confidence to be ready to make the shot. If you take the time to learn the Standing Improvised Supported Position, you will be able to make this shot. In fact, if you become proficient at the standing position, you will be able to shoot out to 100 yards. I used to shoot competition on a rifle team in high school. Later, I was a weapons instructor in an MP Company in the Army Reserve, and a competitor on the units rifle team. In competition, we had a 100 meter freestyle with no bench allowed. These techniques are very similar to some of the same techniques that we used in competition. I like to think that I have fine tuned them over the years to fit my needs.**

**The Improvised Standing Supported Position is mostly done the same way, with a few minor tweaks that you can use to “fine tune” it for yourself. But the basic setup is the same. This is how the basic set up is; You are in the sling wrap....OK, lets use the clock to show this example.... your target, hence the end of the barrel, is at 12. Your feet are spread apart a foot or foot and a half, and are pointed at about 3 and 4 respectively. Yes your getting it, your twisting**

**your body....and you need to do this. It helps you lock up tight to hold steady. The first picture shows what the basic stance looks like on the upper body. The tweak for this, and we used to use it all the time, is to take the twist one step further with the feet at about 4 and 5 respectively. Check out the 2<sup>nd</sup> picture in this series. This will really solid you up, especially when you slide your hand back towards you on the stock.**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Example**



**Your right arm is at a 90 degree angle, and you can slide**

**your sling wrap hand back towards you to tighten up.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Example**



**This is a very good example of what you can do with this position. I've really tightened it up by going about 5 and 6 with my feet for that little extra twist that, with proper breathing control and good trigger pull will let me shoot**

**accurately out to 100 yards. So you see that you can tweak this position until it suits you. Experiment with it and see what works the best for you. OK...now I will show you another example. For some real close and fast shots, If you have practiced your form good enough, you don't even need a sling wrap. Of course, this will come after you have totally mastered the form on this position. I would only use this on real close shots. I mean, 30-50 yards.**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Example**



**This can be used for fast shooting, but you have to solid it up by getting the twist right. If you practice and get it right, it**

**will almost feel as solid as the sling wrap. I recommend that you use the sling wrap unless you are very close and must shoot fast.**

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Supported Position Kneeling**

**This position is probably the next fastest. Think about it. It really doesn't take long to drop to one knee while your getting in the sling wrap. This is truly an actual supported position in that you are going elbow to knee for the key part of your improvised rest. You can shoot accurately out to 200 yards fairly easily with this one, maybe even out to 300 if you get real proficient with it. Here are a couple of examples;**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Example**



**Once again, muzzles at 12, right foot at about 9 to get the twist in. You can experiment around with this one to find your correct balance for your personal best accuracy. If you**

**get this one right, it's real solid. Here is another variation on this one.**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Example**



**This time, I'm putting more of a twist in it, legs spread apart farther, and I'm leaning into it more. Note that my sling wrap hand is slid clear back to the bolt. I'm tightened up on**

**this one, and I can hold a decent group at 300 yards with this fine weapon! Practice this one as it's a real keeper.**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Supported Position Sitting**

**This is a very accurate position in that it has full support with both elbows to knees. Its still a fairly quick position to get into. On our hunts, we use the sitting and kneeling positions quite frequently for spot and stalk hunting. Usually we are down in the tall sage when we use these improvised rest positions. They both lend themselves well to this type of shooting. Again, I have included two examples. The basic setup is the muzzle at 12, and the feet at 1 to 3 depending on the twist. One tip...you don't want too much twist on this one. It's easy to solid up with your feet at about 1. Once again, experiment with it as everyone is a little different.**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Example**



**In this example, I have my heels together to lock up. In this**

**next example, I crossed my legs to lock up. Both work very well, and I have used both methods with great success.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Example**



**Once again, this is a real good position. With practice, accuracy out to 300 yards is very doable. Note that I have my**

**sling wrap hand slid way back to solid up.  
4<sup>th</sup> Supported Position  
Prone**

**Unfortunately, this is probably the least used supported position in the areas that we hunt. The reason for this has to do with the tall sage. This is truly unfortunate in that it is one of the more solid supported positions.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Example**



**You can experiment with this one quite a bit and still retain a solid rest. What makes this rest so solid is that both elbows are on the ground. With the muzzle at 12, your feet can be anywhere from 6 to 9. The 9 o'clock position ( or as much that direction as you can get) will give you the twist that you need for a more solid rest. This is a great one to learn and**

**use if you get a chance. And once again, that is the problem as there is usually too much obstruction with sage brush to use it much.**

**Now you have learned the supported positions for the Improvised Rest system of shooting. Practice makes perfect. Still a couple of real important techniques that must be learned to use with these positions while shooting.**

### **Breathing**

**While you are shooting, you probably already practice some sort of breathing control while pulling the trigger. Whether you take a couple of deep breaths and let out half a breath and hold it, it doesn't really matter. What I want to stress to you is that whatever method or ritual you use, you need to use this as mind control also. So what you want to do is, as you are getting setup to shoot using breath control, you must think steady, or calm. This is very important. You may be out of breath from the stalk, or maybe jacked up from the size of the animal you are looking at. It does not matter. You have too much to think about getting set up to worry about that. You owe it to the animal to make your best shot, so use your breathing to slow down your heart rate and relax. You can do this, and the way to do it is to use your breathing for mind control. Also, if you have trained enough on these positions, your training will take over, and that will help to calm you down. You need to concentrate on shot placement. Hold right where you need to hit, and NEVER SHOOT AT THE WHOLE ANIMAL. I like to concentrate right on the heart lung area from the moment I first see my target animal. This entire event will take place in a matter of seconds so you must have a killer instinct to do the job. Once again, we owe this to the animals that we hunt. We don't want to wound them. We want a good, quick, clean kill. So use your breathing to settle yourself down enough to get your shot, and do it right. This will all work together in that you are breathing while you take your sling wrap and are**

**getting into the best shooting position for the shot. And it follows through with a very controlled and gentle trigger pull.**

### **Trigger Pull**

**Trigger pull is not so much a pull as it is a touch. Most modern weapons have very good triggers. Getting a steady round off is not too much trouble. The thing to avoid at this point is being in too much of a hurry. Folks have a tendency to rush the shot at this point. This is the one moment in the whole system where you actually take your time. Get it right. Barely squeeze the trigger. Right when you expel your breath and hold it. When you practice, slow down right at this point and calmly get it right. You can train yourself to do it right every time. If you practice enough, your training will take over every time!**

### **Vehicle Hoods**

**Hey, don't laugh. In Wyoming, it is legal to shoot from a road called a two track. These roads are not really roads at all, just real nasty trails used to get around on with 4x4's. In situations like this, it is plum legal to use the hood of your vehicle to shoot over. On any major road like a county road or even a forest service road, this would be illegal.**

**Last fall, I got myself into just the type of situation where we could shoot over the hood. Problem was, I wasn't watching what was going on close enough, and we were in the wrong truck to be shooting over the hood. We usually use Land Cruisers on these real rough roads. You can shoot over these hoods easily as they are a small vehicle with a flat hood. That day, I had my big Dodge on one of the rough two track roads. We were driving on one of these rough roads down a long ridge and sure enough, we spotted a herd of**

**Antelope. I had two hunters with me, both with Antelope tags. We got set up to shoot, I had one hunter over the hood shooting off of a backpack, and the other one was behind the truck in the prone position. I figured there would be no problems with the hunter shooting over the hood because he was high enough with the backpack. You see, I am not a stranger to what can happen when you shoot over a hood, so I was taking precautions.**

**So we were all setup and we watched and waited. And wouldn't you know it, the herd started to move closer. And as they did, I should have been watching closer because they were coming *down hill* into the valley below the truck. So as my hunter was watching through his scope, he was naturally dropping the barrel of his rifle. He could see the Antelope clearly through the scope, but *THE BARREL OF THE RIFLE WAS NOT CLEAR*. I should have been watching closer, and my hunter should have been watching closer too. I was near the back of the truck glassing over the bed. There was two different Antelope in the herd we were after, so we made up to shoot together. When they shot, I could not hear the first shot that hit the hood. They shot again, and when they did I heard the second round deflect off of the hood. So naturally I stopped my hunter from shooting again. I should have been watching closer, but I thought with the backpack it was OK. The real kicker to this story, and one that will get a laugh out of you, is that my hood shooting hunter is also a Hunter Safety Instructor!**



**This is my Dodge. You can see from the next picture that the**

**hood actually rises in the center.**



**This is one of our Land Cruisers that we use when we hunt the back country on the little “Two Tracks”. They are a narrow vehicle with a flat hood. Way different than the big Dodge! To sum up, be real careful if you are going to shoot over the hood of any vehicle. Safety first, always.**

## Conclusion

I hope that this little guide will help you in your hunting and shooting sports. It is real fun to hunt and shoot and it's even more fun to hit what your shooting at. In these photos, I am demonstrating right handed shooting. But the fact is that I am left handed! I have instructed using right hand technique before. These techniques are so good that I can actually shoot proficiently while shooting right handed!

It has been my good fortune to own and operate an Outfitting/Guide Service for the last 30 plus years. We have operated in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Oregon. Currently, I own Wyoming Hunting Outfitter's, [www.wyominghuntingoutfitter.com](http://www.wyominghuntingoutfitter.com) in Wyoming, and also Colorado Outfitted Hunts, [www.coloradooutfittedhunts.com](http://www.coloradooutfittedhunts.com) in Colorado. It has been my privilege to Guide hunters in some of the best areas that the West has to offer.

Our service has had numerous articles written about it in Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, Field & Stream, Guns and Hunting, Sportsmans Hunting Yearbook, Deer Yearbook, Game Journal, etc., plus 2 outdoor books.

I have written “Fly Fishing Secrets To Live By And For Catching Large Trout” and am currently working on “Packstring Memories, Two Decades of Hunting the High Country”.

I hope that you have enjoyed this book, and I know that if you use it and learn it, it will help improve your shooting. Let me know what you think. Email me at [wyominghuntingoutfitters@gmail.com](mailto:wyominghuntingoutfitters@gmail.com). I look forward to hearing from you.

Good Hunting and Shooting,

Bill and Fayle