Guidelines for running air rifle shooting as an activity

This is a guide for Section Leaders who are looking to run shooting as a group activity.

**FAQ**

Who can shoot: Anyone of any age who is not subject to a restriction under section 21 the 1968 Firearms Act which is why we need the form filled in. More on that later.

Who should shoot: This is probably at the discretion of the group GSL, issues to consider are maturity, fear and progression through Scouting. Arguably Beavers should not shoot air rifles, not least because rifles are not small or light enough. Cubs normally need one to one tuition, a small rifle and a helper to break the barrel of a springer rifle (the ones we most commonly use).

What do we shoot with: The most common shooting activity is done with a .177 break barrel air rifle, they are low cost, easy to maintain and come in lots of sizes and weights (.177 is the width of the pellet or the “calibre”). Unless we have a specialist range we cannot shoot air pistols and full bore rifles need a Home Office approved range. These activities can be organised if required, but not at a normal Scout venue.

Why shoot: Shooting develops skill, concentration and has huge competitive potential at relatively low cost (local, county and national competitions). There are three shooting styles to develop, standing, kneeling and prone (lying on your front) these are all Olympic sports.

How can I lead an air rifle shooting activity: The range officer (person who manages the activity) **must** have a current NRSA YPS certificate. There is no Scout Association permit for air rifle shooting and so the qualification does not appear on Compass. (Full bore rifle shooting needs an equivalent certified range officer).

What permissions do I need to run an air rifle activity: You need to request permission from the District Commissioner to run the activity. You also need the permission from the owner of the premises or land you plan to shoot on. A simple email is acceptable but failing to get permission from premises or land owner and then running a shooting activity is a criminal offense.

What is section 21 the 1968 Firearms Act: It states that anybody who has been imprisoned for more than three months but less than three years is not allowed to use a firearm for a period of five years. Anyone who has been imprisoned for more than three years will not be allowed to use a firearm for the rest of their life. In practice this is very rare and most of us would know if a young person or member had been subject to this restriction **however we must have a signed declaration to allow anyone to shoot (adults and children) at a Scout organised activity.** For those that shoot regularly, we recommend recording the date the declaration was signed and request a new declaration every 12 months (unless of course they fall foul of the legislation).

**Equipment**

Rifles: The district owns a set of 4 medium sized and 4 junior break barrel air rifles, many groups have their own. Matt Henson at 2nd Mitcheldean Scouts has a set of six air rifles of varying sizes.

Backdrop and target holders: The backdrop needs to be able to stop a pellet passing through it or bouncing off it. Carpet draped over an 8’x4’ sheet of plywood is ideal for a single range (so a four-person range would need 4 sheets). 2nd Mitcheldean and 1st Royal Scouts have a portable range.

Pellet Traps or target holders: These hold the targets and catch the pellets so they can be disposed of afterwards, remember they are made of lead, so children need to wash hands after shooting.

Tables and Chairs: Tables help define the range so that people do not walk in front of the shooting line. Chairs encourage those that are not shooting to sit down and stay in one place.

Pellets and Targets: These should be provided by the person running the activity, the typical cost of pellets and targets for a two-hour session for 20 young people is about £10-£15 depending on the quality of the targets.

Warning signs: It is important to warn others you are running a shooting activity

Space: This is covered later in this guide; a single target range needs an area of 3.5 metres by 9 metres (10’ x 20’). A four-target range needs an area of 8 metres by 9 metres (17’ x 20’). Also, avoid having any doors that open in to the area between the shooting line and the targets or at least lock them. There needs 6 metres between the target and shooting line to meet competition guidelines and minimise the risk from pellet ricochet.

People: A range officer cannot run a shooting activity by themselves, they will need help. The recommendations cover the requirements depending on the age group.

**Recommendations**

Scouts:

* Before the activity (2-3 days minimum), let the range officer (person running the activity) know the skills of the group (have they shot air rifles before for example) and are there any Scouts with special needs such as physical issues (i.e. can they hold a gun or do they need a support) or developmental issues that may require special attention.
* The range officer will need help setting up and taking down the range
* The range office will need access to tables, chairs and the required space. Please don’t ask them to clear a space to set up the range, guidance on space follows.
* Scouts tend to be capable of shooting up to four at a time in groups of 12 where they rotate. If the group is larger than 12, it might make sense to run two activities and swap at a suitable time.
* The range officer needs another person to help them at the shooting line, ideally someone with shooting experience although not necessary. This is simply to help break the barrels of the rifles for weaker Scouts, provide an extra set of eyes to ensure rifles stay pointing down the range at all times and all rifles are left safe when shooting stops. There also needs to be one other person to manage the Scouts that are not shooting.
* If a Scout is disruptive there should to be enough adults to remove that individual from the range whilst maintaining safeguarding guidelines and ratios.

Cubs:

* Firstly, ask the question, should Cubs shoot air rifles? It is worth checking with your GSL
* Before the activity (2-3 days minimum), let the range officer (person running the activity) know the skills of the group (have they shot air rifles before for example) and are there any Cubs with special needs such as physical issues (i.e. can they hold a gun or do they need a support) or developmental issues that may require special attention.
* The range officer will need help setting up and taking down the range
* The range office will need access to tables, chairs and the required space. Please don’t ask them to clear a space to set up the range, guidance on space follows.
* Cubs need one to one tuition with an air rifle and ideally from a bench rest on a table until they demonstrate they understand what they are trying to achieve and can shoot standing.
* The shooting group should be no more than four cubs with one shooting and the remainder sitting. Another adult is required to manage the Cubs who are sitting. Again, for larger groups, it makes sense to run more than one activity and bring the Cubs on to the range in small groups.
* It is highly recommended that if more than one Cub is shooting at one time, there is one YPS certificate holder or adult with shooting tuition experience for each Cub that is shooting
* If a Cub is disruptive there should to be enough adults to remove that individual from the range whilst maintaining safeguarding guidelines and ratios.

**Space Requirements**



