Trigger Control and Follow Through

Why Trigger Control?

Control of the trigger allows you to shoot your rifle without disturbing your sight picture. Without trigger control all the work you put into establishing the perfect sight picture is all for nothing.

How do you DO trigger control?

* Start by keeping your finger out of the trigger guard until you establish the sight picture (keep it simple and only do one thing at a time).
* Remember that the sight picture is a dynamic thing. Your body is in constant movement and you can only hope to minimize that movement. Remember the 10 second ‘rule’ for getting a shot off…the first 3 seconds is to settle down with 7 seconds to shoot before your vision starts to fade out.
* Okay, now it’s time to start thinking about making the shot. Slowly move your finger into trigger guard and onto the trigger without messing up your sight picture.
* Place the trigger finger on the trigger without applying any pressure. The finger should be placed along the first joint of the index finger. This is the part of the finger with the least amount of meat on it (skin on bone). Other parts of the finger will work (like the finger pad) but because the finger is thicker, it is affected by temperature etc.
  + Pressing straight back will allow you to activate the trigger without pulling or pushing the trigger (and thereby the stock & sight picture) to the side.
  + The remainder of the trigger finger should not make contact with the stock.
  + You can index on this position using the edge of the trigger and finger joint.
  + If you cannot press the finger straight back using this position, adjust your finger position so you can press straight back. This is the important part.
* You can now start applying pressure to the trigger. If this is a 2 stage trigger there is a first stage of movement of the trigger called slack/takeup. The term used is called ‘taking up the slack’. The purpose of this type of trigger is to ‘add’ pressure in stages rather than all at once, making it easier to maintain sight picture.
  + If you don’t need to ‘take up slack’, this is a single stage trigger.
* You are now at the point where you are going to shoot your rifle.
  + Slowly apply increasing pressure straight back.
  + It should take 2+ seconds of increasing pressure till the trigger ‘breaks’. This should be a complete surprise. Okay, we know it’s going to happen but we just don’t know when.
  + Applying pressure quickly signals your body that the trigger is breaking and eliminates the surprise (the when).

The trigger ‘breaks’, now what? Time for follow through

* The shot doesn’t stop until the bullet hits the target.
* Continue holding your shooting position as if you are still waiting for the trigger to ‘break’.
* Continue increasing pressure on the trigger straight back as slowly as before the ‘break’
  + When the trigger breaks sometimes the trigger feels loose (no back pressure)
  + Pressure continues until trigger hits the trigger stop.
  + Pulling the trigger finger quickly away from trigger when it breaks is called ‘happy’ finger but you won’t be happy with the results. It destroys follow through and the corresponding sight picture.
  + Stopping the trigger press(ure), lets the body relax prematurely and can negatively affect the shot.
* Where was the sight picture when the shot broke…..that’s where your bullet strike should be. This should allow you to analyze your shooting procedure for what you did right and what needs work. Calling the shot is a tool, do not become obsessed with it. Follow through is the completion of the shot process. Now you get to start all over again on a brand new bullseye.
* Do not concern yourself with shot value or overall target score, just do your best on each individual shot process, trying to improve and the rest will take care of itself over time.

Additional Info:

What’s the difference between a 1 stage and 2 stage trigger?

Imagine a trigger which takes 2 pounds of pressure to cause the trigger to break.

* A 1 stage trigger requires 2 pounds of pressure immediately from the point when you start pressing it until it breaks.
* A 2 stage trigger happens in 2 parts. The first stage provides 1 pound of trigger pressure until this is taken up; then you feel a trigger get heavy again when you reach the second stage. You feel the second 1-pound stage but you only perceive it as 1 pound of pressure. It feels like a 1-pound trigger. 1 lb. + 1 lb. = 2 lb. total.

Holding a sight picture:

No matter what you do the sight picture is a dynamic thing. Even if you were skeletally and muscularly capable of holding perfectly still, the blood is flowing through your body, your heart is beating and the remaining air in your lungs is expanding. All we can do is to hold as steady as we can. When we get into position, by following the shooting process we give ourselves a window of about 10 seconds once we complete the exhale step. On top of that the first 2-3 seconds we’re trying to settle down after exhaling. Don’t rush 7-8 seconds is a l.o.n.g….time. Also you can always start over, you do not have to break a shot every time you start the shot process. Use your time to complete each shot; remember you need time to recover and relax after each shot.