

The Prone Position

[11-time national champion tells how]

David Tubb

I am adamant about attaining a natural, upright head position in prone. Unfortunately, many people will not be able

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The prone position is probably the most important position to master. That is not an overwhelming obstacle. In my opinion, prone is a relatively easy position to learn because it is, by nature, a stable platform. Small changes can literally be seen and felt as improvements or mistakes.



The essential elements of the prone position, as I apply them, are keeping the body, rifle, and target in line, or as close as anatomy allows. Especially crucial is having the neck and shoulders facing forward in as natural an orientation as possible. A more perpendicular shoulder-rifle relationship allows me to set the rifle in nearer my neck, which naturally structures a more upright head position. I also want recoil traveling squarely into the body against its full mass. Angular dispersion in the torso, rifle, and legs means recoil will be directed at an angle. If recoil works against the shooter in this way, he can get pushed out of position and lose natural point of aim. The “straight” body-rifle orientation also brings the shoulders more nearly square to the target, furnishing a better base

to maximize the potential they have to develop a superior prone position because they don't have the adjustment capability in their rifle. The prone position is built around the rifle, but that mostly mean that the rifle should be built around the prone position. A fully adjustable stock and some latitude in setting the height of the sighting system are critical elements in attaining the best prone position. Ideally, the neck will be relaxed and the shooter's eye will be looking directly through the rear sight. Meeting those simple goals requires much experimentation, but the payoff is worth it.

for the buttpad since a natural shoulder pocket is formed when the shoulders are square.

The buttpad goes solidly into the shoulder pocket, close to the neck but not on the collarbone. The right side of the torso should be free from pressures from the ground to provide breathing room. Only my lowermost first couple of ribs touch the ground; it's clear from that point up.

I integrate a slight roll over in my hips and legs that elevates the right side of my body; my trunk is twisted so that my left hip is swiveled slightly forward and the right hip back. This places a noticeable twist in my lower back. The toes on both feet point toward my right. My left leg is extended, but I prefer to shoot with my right leg drawn up about halfway. That moves the upper body forward and solidly holding against the direction of sling tension.

The left arm is very close to being directly under the rifle line. Positioning the arm to either side of rifle centerline shifts the balance of pressure, which is the direction of lateral force, either toward the shooter's right (outside) or to his left (inside).

When I'm working on the prone position with new shooters, their tendency is almost always to want to prop up on the elbows (the right elbow follows the left elbow's lead — left elbow high, right high; left lower, right lower) and place the tip (point) or back of the left elbow in contact with the ground. This technique prevents the elbow from being positioned sufficiently underneath the rifle and forces employment of the biceps to assist in supporting the weight of the rifle. This position error is often accompanied by laying the rifle down on the mat between shots to relieve the burden on the biceps. Many shooters complain about not being able to get a comfortable low prone position, and this is one of the main reasons.

I do not bear the weight of the rifle on the tip of my left elbow; my elbow is sufficiently under the rifle that the support is spread across a range of an inch or two in front of and behind my elbow joint. This is

In prone I want the feeling that I am “behind” the rifle, not off to the side of it. I’m also aware of looking straight ahead with my neck in its natural, aligned orientation with my spine, not cocked off to one side. Correct rifle adjustments, and the adjustment capacity of the rifle, are keys in attaining a fundamentally sound position. Without adjustments, it’s a compromise.



accomplished by using the left or outer portion of the elbow joint. If you’ll bend your arm as if flexing your bicep and then look down at the elbow, you’ll see the pronounced point or tip of the elbow. When in shooting position this point bears almost no weight -- the point of my elbow is on the inner edge of the support area. This allows a wider area of support. If you reach around your left arm with your right hand and feel your elbow joint, you will feel your elbow (pointed portion) and then feel the bone on either side of the elbow joint. I use the left or outer portion of the joint in conjunction with the center area of the elbow for support.

Right elbow positioning is determined by where it naturally sits respecting orientation of the shooting grip and levelness or height desired in the right shoulder.

I think that many people would be surprised to know just how tightly I hold the pistol grip on slow fire shots. Many people seem to think of this as a “low stress” position wherein the underlying idea is letting the

gun rest quietly, almost as if it were riding atop benchrest bags. I grip the rifle more firmly with my right hand in slow fire than I do for rapid fire. The difference is that the time element in rapid fire demands being able to get my hand on and off the grip easily. I’m not pulling the rifle back into my shoulder in slow fire, but I am increasing pressure around the pistol grip. The forend on the T2K is shaped so that my left hand naturally wraps around it, but, unlike in past years, I no longer grip the forend with my fingers. The exception might be in a very strong wind, and this would be more necessary in sitting.

For more information about David Tubb and his Superior Shooting Systems Inc., click [HERE](#).