

Hand Judge Training Brief

The Hand Judge is a vital part of the safe and fair operation of a CFDA match. The Hand Judge in most contests will be the next shooter on the lane they are called to hand judge. Sometimes the importance of hand judging is overlooked or considered to be menial task when in fact each Hand Judge is the first line of safety as well as insuring fair competition between shooters. It is OK for a new shooter to Hand Judge even at their first CFDA contest. However, the Range Master should make sure that new shooters know what the responsibilities of a Hand Judge are. Billy the Kid and Annie Oakley shooters should not be Hand Judges for the Men and Lady shooters. We don't want our young shooters to be intimidated if they have to make a call while hand judging an adult.

The Hand Judge has four main responsibilities:

1. Assist your shooter. This is a fun sport. We need to try to help each other.
2. See that after the set command has been given, your shooter does not commit any violations such as moving the gun in the holster, rocking the hammer or putting the finger in the trigger guard before the light comes on.
3. Makes sure that the muzzle of the gun is not clearly behind the front cut of the holster boot when the shot is fired. If the muzzle is not "clearly behind" the front cut, then it is a NO CALL!
4. Confirm hits and misses on your shooter's target **AND** their opponent's target.

At some local matches and at all CFDA titled matches the Hand Judge will hand ammo to their shooter. It is helpful to ask your shooter how they load and reload during the bout. Some shooters load all 5, some eject a round after each shot, some load just one and reload each shot. Since you are assisting the shooter be prepared to retrieve empties or have a reload ready. When using Shotgun Primer Loads it is acceptable to either hand each round to your shooter, or hold the ammo box so that your shooter can retrieve their own rounds from the box, especially since shotgun primers can fall out easily. Shooters may also need assistance with handling their gun or loading or unloading.

At the beginning of the round do not allow your Shooter to un-holster their gun for any reason until the "Load and Make Ready" command is given by the Range Master.

No more than 5 rounds may be loaded in the gun. The hammer must always be down on an empty or fired chamber. If your shooter is using a Colt or Colt clone and they want to put it on the safety notch, this must be done after the gun is loaded or reloaded but before it is holstered for the final time. Half-cock notches are not safety notches.

Eye protection is mandatory. Ear protection is recommended and required for anyone under 18.

When your shooter has loaded, holstered, and appears ready, please sit down on the provided stool. This will let the Range Master see that your shooter is ready. Your position to your shooter will be dictated by where their shooting arm is when they draw their gun. You will need to be in position to see a violation after the "SET" command has been given and before the Start Light comes on. You should position yourself so you can see your shooter's gun hand, thumb on the hammer, trigger finger, front of the holster pouch, and a light. The light doesn't have to be their light since all lights come on at the same time. Your position may be directly behind them or maybe slightly to the side of them so that you can see what is happening. You should also check the position of your shooter's holster on their leg, the position of the gun in their holster, and at titled matches check to see that their gun has a "gun check sticker" on the butt. The Hand Judge should not encroach on their shooter's area. In other words, you shouldn't be visible to your shooter while they are getting ready to shoot their shot.

As a Hand Judge in a CFDA Titled Championship you may not coach the shooters in the Men's & Ladies Divisions. If asked by the shooter, you may spot misses, but only if you see them. They may ask you to spot misses when they come to the line, but your primary job is still being a Hand Judge. Being helpful and encouraging is recommended and not considered coaching. Youth Division shooters can be coached.

If your shooter has an issue during the bout then you should stand up behind your shooter so that the Range Master knows that there is an issue. Always communicate directly with the Range Master and not the Announcer or Score Keeper.

Hand Judge Training Brief

If there is a question about a hit or miss on the targets in the bout you are hand judging, please stand immediately and raise your hand. The Range Master will respond and, if needed, will call a "Hands Off Guns - Down Range" command. The Range Master will ask both Hand Judges in that bout to go downrange to inspect the target in question. Hand Judges must keep their hands at least 12" from the target, only the Range Master can inspect closer, as not to unintentionally disturb the grease. According to the rules targets must be "clearly hit" on the front surface to count, so closer inspections looking for minute fragments should not be needed.

Additionally:

- No 45LC live ammunition is allowed in the area. Check your shooter's gun belt.
- Always see that your shooter remains facing down range whenever their gun is unholstered, loaded or not.
- See that your shooter stays behind the firing line.
- Remind your shooter of the 170 Degree Rule. If you see their barrel start to wander while loading, unloading or shooting, be prepared to control them if necessary.

When a bout is completed, **Stand Up Immediately**, and give your shooter the "**Unload and Show Clear**" Command. Stay close to the shooter through the unloading process, and visually inspect all chambers, upon confirmation that the chambers are empty give the "**Gun Clear, Hammer Down and Holster**" command.

Important! Stay with and keep your eyes on your shooter until the gun is unloaded, cleared, and holstered, before allowing them to turn around and leave the line. You may save them from receiving a penalty.

If other bouts are still in progress, and the next shot is ready to be fired and your shooter has finished their bout but have not finished clearing and holstering their gun, remind them to "**Freeze**" when other bouts are ready to continue. They may resume the line clearing procedure after the next shot is fired.

In the case of a Rule or Safety Violation tend to it immediately and bring it to the attention of the Range Master. While shooters are awaiting a Start Light, just raise your hand, don't shout out, you don't want to disturb the other shooters.

Always be aware of activity down range – be prepared to yell "**Holster Your Guns**", "**Hands Off Guns**", "**Freeze**", or "**Stop**", if there is any person down range or a safety issue develops and that command has not been given previously. **We are ALL Safety Officers...**

Remind shooters on the two outside lanes if they are responsible to go down range after all bouts on that range are completed. Once the line has been cleared and the Range Master has given the "**Down Range**" command followed by asking that the targets be tended or greased.

You as the Hand Judge may be asked to testify in the case of a meeting of the Arbitration Committee.

NO ROUND IS COMPLETE UNTIL GUNS ARE CLEARED, CHECKED & HOLSTERED!

CFDA recommends that our affiliated clubs run local matches at the same standards as CFDA Titled Championships in order to better prepare their members to participate with confidence in championship events. Club matches at your local range are a great opportunity to teach both Hand Judging and Range Officer classes. It is not necessary to be a CFDA Regulator, U.S. Marshal or CFDA Range Master to teach Hand Judging classes. All Qualified Range Masters appointed by a CFDA Affiliated Club can teach the CFDA RO Course. Periodic refresher classes are also a good way to maintain proficiency.

Complete Hand Judging Procedures can be found in the CFDA Rulebook - 11th Edition on Page 21. and the 10th Edition RO Course published at CowboyFastDraw.com.

Be Safe and Have Fun!!

Your CFDA Regulator Posse