

No Magic Method

To become a successful shotgunner, you'd better get a handle on more than one single shooting method.

By Peter F. Blakeley

A lady called me from San Angelo last week needing advice on which instructional shooting video she should buy. Before giving her an answer, I asked her if she had ever tried to lose weight. The surprised lady admitted that some years ago, she did indeed try to lose some weight after the birth of one of her children.

How did she do it? Just as I suspected, she bought one of those exercise videos that, after a rigorous exercise or diet program, is guaranteed to melt away the excess pounds. And, of course, if you follow the instructions, they work—sometimes.

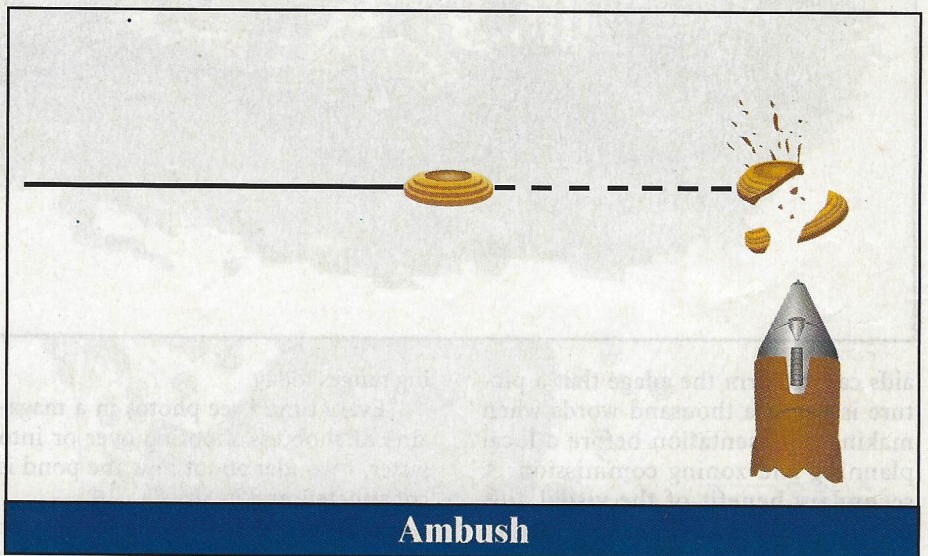
Okay, so just about now, you will be thinking that I've completely lost my marbles. What do weight-loss videos have to do with shooting? Perhaps more than you think.

Some time ago, Sunrise Productions released George Digweed's instructional shooting video describing a swing-through technique. Months later, Dan Carlisle launched his video, also produced by Sunrise Productions (800-862-6399; www.sunrisevideo.com), outlining his pull-away technique. Before this, there was former World Champion John Bidwell's *Move, Mount, Shoot* using a maintained-lead variation, and Roger Silcox with the CPSA method, which is basically pull-away. And *long* before all of them, in the early 1900s, the legendary London gun maker Robert Churchill taught his Edwardian students his "theory of allowance by eye" method.

There are many others offering everyone out there who is thirsty for knowledge and prepared to part with their hard-

earned dollar a sure-fire way of smoking targets by claiming that theirs is *the* method that *really* works. Over the years, the battle of the merits of swing-through vs. pull-away or maintained-lead has been raging. With the baffling array of how-to shooting videos on the market, who is right, and which is the best method to use for sporting clays?

There is no doubt in my mind that the thinking shooter needs all of the shooting methods. Since a sound knowledge of how each method works is crucial to shooting success, let's take a close look at the window of opportunity for each.

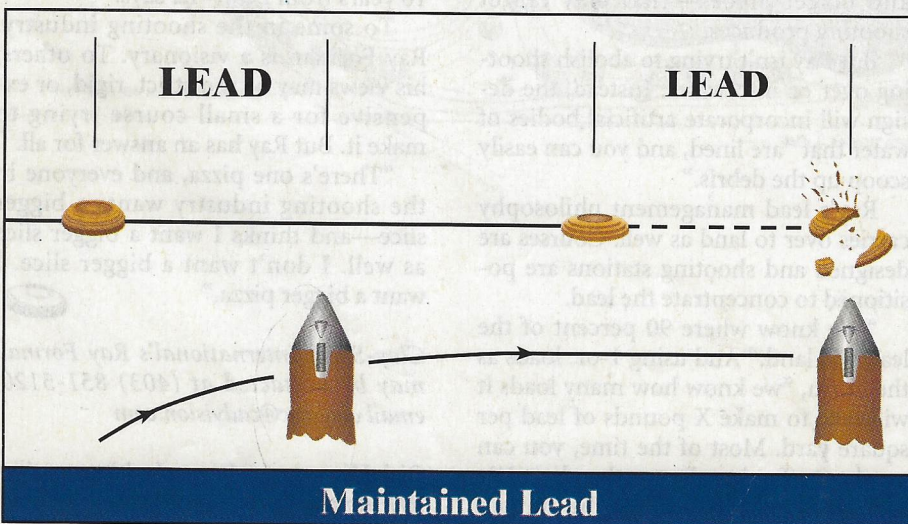


Ambush

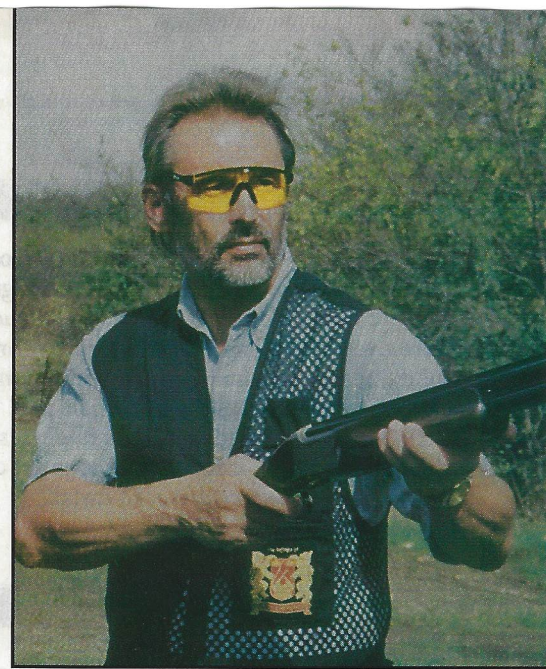
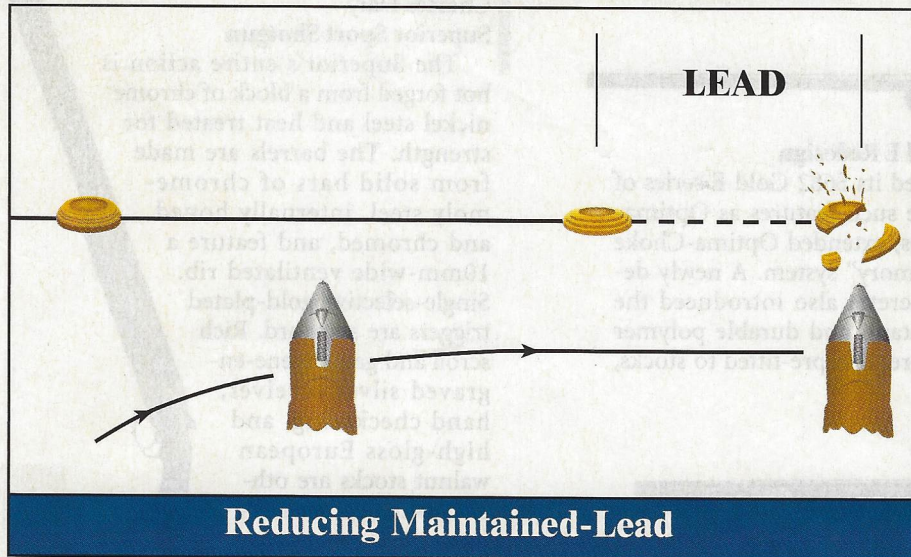
There are six ways that we can attempt to place a cloud of pellets into the anticipated flight path of a moving target, but usually only four of these are mentioned. I will start with the one needing the least gun movement and finish with the method requiring the most.

1. Ambush or Spot-Shooting: This is where the gun is stationary and the trigger is pulled when the target appears to be the correct distance behind the muzzles to give successful interception. Sometimes a clever course designer will present a type of target where there would be no time for any other shooting method. An example of this would be a narrow "window" shot, such as a rabbit target that appears briefly from behind a straw bale and vanishes behind another one, or a bird that appears through a small gap in the trees. For some reason, these target presentations are more popular in the UK than in the US.

2. Maintained-Lead: Here, the gun is mounted in front of the target and moved



Maintained Lead

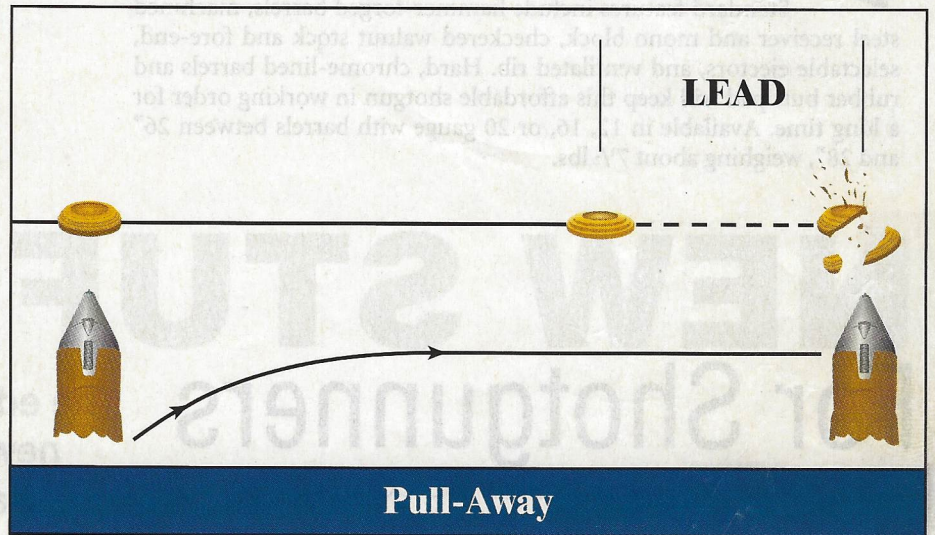


with it until the correct sight picture is seen. This is maintained *briefly* until the shot is taken. With this method, there can be a problem of slowing or stopping the gun, especially on long crossing shots requiring a lot of lead. It is useful for fast quartering shots, chandelles, and battues.

3. Reducing Maintained-Lead: This method is a *slight* variation on maintained-lead, where the gun is inserted *on* the correct lead and the trigger is pulled as the mount is completed. The gun hold point should be about halfway between where the target is seen *clearly* (not as a blur) and where we intend to break it.

To use this method correctly, there will be too much lead in the initial stages of the mount because the target will be traveling much faster than the gun. As the speed of the target and gun synchronize, however, and the correct sight picture is seen; the trigger should be pulled immediately, usually as the gun hits the shoulder.

This method is basically the same as former World Champion John Bidwell's move, mount, shoot method. It is probably the most favored method for FITASC, where a low-gun is mandatory. Once again, there is a chance that on long crossers, the gun can be slowed down or stopped as the

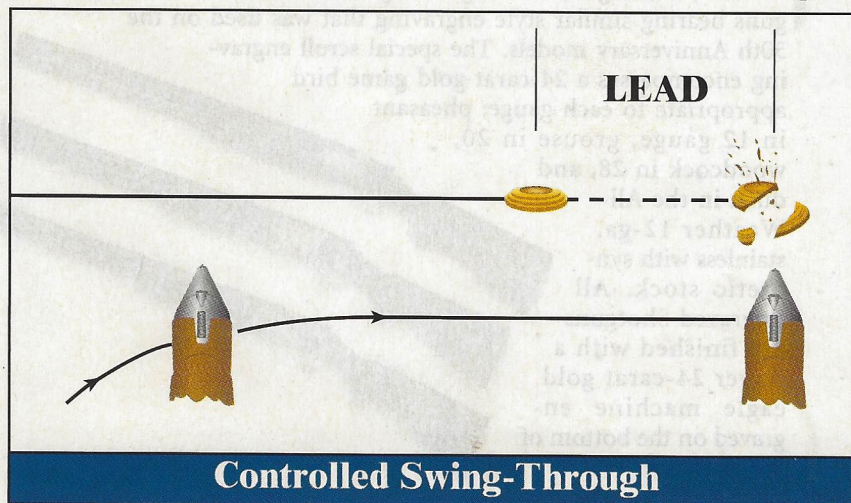


gun hits the shoulder to complete the mount. It is useful for simultaneous pairs when it is necessary to "buy" extra time on the second target.

4. Pull-Away: This is also known as the CPSA method popularized by Roger Silcox. The technique involves mounting on or slightly ahead of the target and accelerating the gun away from it until the correct sight picture is seen. Because pull-away is a two-part gun movement, it is less useful

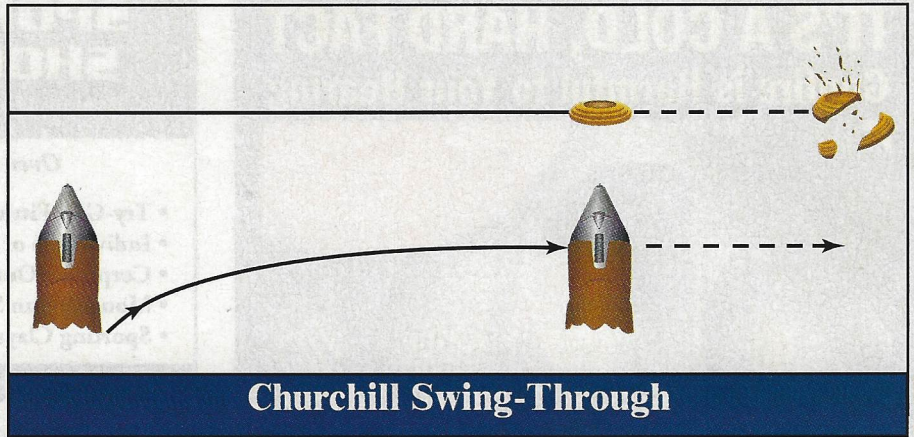
for close targets requiring small amounts of lead, but it is excellent for long, fast crossers or targets that are not noticeably slowing down, such as a long crosser off a high tower that is dropping under power. The main advantage is that on long and fast crossers, a *controlled* acceleration is produced, which eliminates the tendency to stop the gun.

5. Controlled Swing-Through: This is where the gun comes from behind the target and is accelerated through it on the same line but in a smooth and methodical manner. The trigger is pulled *as the correct sight picture is seen*. It is useful for driven targets, springing teal, or any bird that has a predictable trajectory. The inevitable muzzle momentum produced with a swing-through method means that the gun may be



difficult to control; more gun movement equals less control. Also, on a long, fast crosser, it is difficult to repeat the gun speed if using a swing-through technique. Many people who shoot swing-through confuse it with the Churchill method. But with this method, the lead is *consciously* applied, unlike pure Churchill, where it isn't.

6. Churchill Swing-Through: This technique is sometimes called the "English" or "instinctive" shooting method. Robert Churchill was a fa-



Exclusive patented lens technology
Scatters glare and reflective light
Improves your ability to focus
Eliminates visual distractions
Pupil size remains constant
See targets more quickly
Reduces eyestrain

Optical precision • Interchangeable easy-snapout lenses
 UV protected • Lens colors available for every shooting condition
 Durable, comfortable frames • Prescription lenses available

The **FOGGLES** shooting system includes
 3 sets of lenses and a deluxe case and come with our
100% Satisfaction 30-Day Money-Back Guarantee

Contact your local eyewear retailer
 and show them this ad

1-800-521-3001 **www.foggles.com**

mous London gun maker and firearms expert who inherited his uncle's gun making business in 1911. He suggested that swinging through a bird and deliberately seeing lead was a waste of time and that with proper gun mounting technique (or "drills," as he called them), the proper forward allowance could be made subconsciously. His "theory of allowance by eye" can be used with *some* success at both slow-to medium-paced, reasonably close clay targets and also game birds. On fast, crossing targets or at extended ranges, it will favor the shooter with slow reactions.

The Churchill method works because initially, the gun's muzzle is held behind the target until the speed is evaluated, then accelerated through it on the same line. The amount of acceleration needed on extended ranges is often excessive, which gives poor muzzle control. Pure Churchill is extremely inconsistent unless the gun speed is the same each time, and it is perhaps more useful for game bird shooting because of this. A point worth mentioning is that the enterprising gun maker often recommended the success of the method depended on the purchase of one of his very fast-handling, 25" barreled guns. Clever guy.

One thing is certain. To hit *any* moving target, we must shoot in front of it. Somehow. If we apply basic physics to this, the velocity of a standard 12-ga. shotgun shell is somewhere around 1,200 fps, which is 800 mph. If we imagine that the target we are shooting at is traveling at 40 mph, this is a ratio of 20:1. In other words, for every yard the target flies at 40 mph, the shot load travels 20 yards in the same time interval. Of course, neither the speed of the shot nor the speed of the target is constant. This means that the shot charge will take approximately 1/20th of a second

to travel 20 yards, but approximately twice as long to travel 30 yards, and more than three times as long to travel 40 yards due to the deceleration of the shot. A target that is traveling at 40 mph will travel three feet, six feet, and nine feet in the same intervals.

But there are other things that we must consider. The main one is gun speed. Some shotgunners believe that it is possible to influence the length of the shot string by the speed of the swing, the sort of "jet of water from a hose" effect. This is an erroneous mental picture, as is easily explained.

The shot column may be only an inch long as it leaves the gun. The difference in the time interval between the front of the shot column exiting the barrel and the back exiting may only be less than .00005 of a second, during which time the gun barrels would have hardly moved. After the shot leaves the barrels, it starts to spread longitudinally and laterally, and this is known as shot string. Shot string does give a *slight* advantage in that the shooter may be too far in front of the target yet still hit the front edge with the back end of the shot string. If he's one millionth of an inch *behind*, though, he's missed.

The second factor to consider is shooter reaction time. Human reflexes vary enormously from person to person, day to day, hour to hour, and even shot to shot. The guy who starts the day with lightning reflexes and strong physical capabilities may be feeling the strain on his mental and physical reserves after tramping around a testing sporting clays course for three hours.

The last thing we must consider is "time up the barrel." This is a complex equation involving lock time of the gun (the fraction of time it takes for the trigger pull to disengage the sear and allow the hammer to fall), the time it takes for the primer to ignite the propellant, and the ignition time of the propellant to build up enough pressure to push the shot charge out of the barrel.

The combined shooter reaction time and up the barrel time is probably only about 1/20th of a second. That doesn't sound like much, does it? But in that time, a 50-mph target will travel three to four feet. Stop the gun as you pull the trigger, and all the lead will evaporate, with a miss behind the inevitable result.

This combination of neurological, physical, mechanical, and ballistic

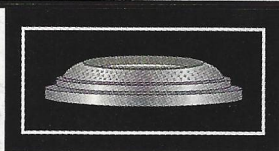
events influences our shooting consistency. So which methods of shooting are least affected by them?

Two of the six methods listed above produce much more consistent results than the other four, and the effects of gun speed, shooter reaction time, and time up the barrel are reduced. These are maintained-lead and reducing maintained-lead. In both of these methods, the target is used as a moving reference point, and the lead requirement is more precise as a result.

But wait a minute, isn't this the way

that it used to be done? As far back as 1660, King Charles II and his noblemen used shotguns for hunting flying birds. In the days of the flintlock, ignition times were variable due to the doubtful recipe of the powder, primitive lock mechanisms, dampness, etc. These early sportsmen had absolutely no choice but to keep the gun pointing the correct distance ahead of the target until the shot charge had left the barrel, and no doubt they shot some birds sometimes with some success.

The method they used was a version



PARAGON SCHOOL OF SPORTING

PREMIER SPORTING CLAYS AND WING SHOOTING SCHOOL

established by: DANIEL L. SCHINDLER

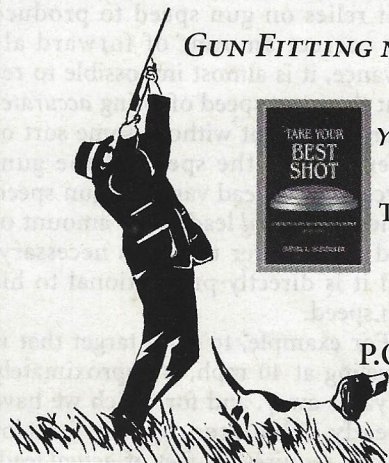
- NSCA Level III Instructor
- Guild of Shooting Instructors, England
- Author of *To the Target, Take Your Best Shot* and dozens of *Sporting Clays* articles

SPORTING CLAYS AND WING SHOOTING • INDIVIDUAL/GROUP LESSONS
CLINICS • CORPORATE OUTINGS

LOCATION	CLINIC	PRIVATE INSTRUCTION
Northbrook Sports Club Hanesville, IL	June 14,15,16,17	June 12,13
River Bend Sportsman's Resort Fingerville, SC	Instruction by appointment Additional dates TBA	
TM Ranch Shotgun Sports Orlando, FL	August 16,17,18 September 28,29,30 October 11,12,13 November 2,3,4 December 1,2,3	TBA TBA TBA TBA TBA
Water & Wings (formerly Twin S) East Greenville, PA	April 7,8	April 4,5,6
Wild Marsh Sporting Clays Clear Lakes, MN		April 24,25,26,30 May 1,2,3

Additional dates are available year round!

GUN FITTING NOW AVAILABLE BY RESERVATION



You may order our two instructional books by Daniel L. Schindler

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT Book I - 14.95

TO THE TARGET Book II - 29.95



PHONE: (828) 693-6600

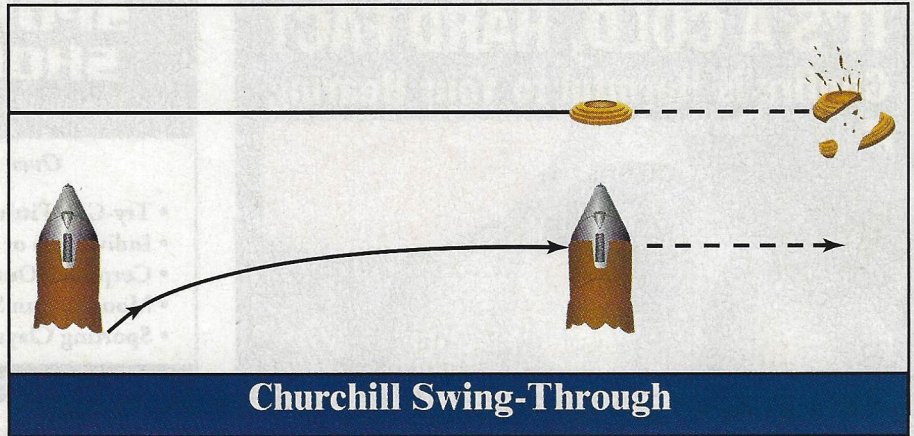
P.O. Box 1276 FLAT ROCK NC 28731-1276


E-MAIL: PARAGONSCHOOL@AOL.COM

WWW.PARAGONSCHOOL.COM

difficult to control; more gun movement equals less control. Also, on a long, fast crosser, it is difficult to repeat the gun speed if using a swing-through technique. Many people who shoot swing-through confuse it with the Churchill method. But with this method, the lead is *consciously* applied, unlike pure Churchill, where it isn't.

6. Churchill Swing-Through: This technique is sometimes called the "English" or "instinctive" shooting method. Robert Churchill was a fa-





Foggles®

Exclusive patented lens technology
Scatters glare and reflective light
Improves your ability to focus
Eliminates visual distractions
Pupil size remains constant
See targets more quickly
Reduces eyestrain

Optical precision • Interchangeable easy-snapout lenses
 UV protected • Lens colors available for every shooting condition
 Durable, comfortable frames • Prescription lenses available

The **FOGGLES** shooting system includes
 3 sets of lenses and a deluxe case and come with our
100% Satisfaction 30-Day Money-Back Guarantee

Contact your local eyewear retailer
 and show them this ad

1-800-521-3001 **www.foggles.com**

mous London gun maker and firearms expert who inherited his uncle's gun making business in 1911. He suggested that swinging through a bird and deliberately seeing lead was a waste of time and that with proper gun mounting technique (or "drills," as he called them), the proper forward allowance could be made subconsciously. His "theory of allowance by eye" can be used with *some* success at both slow-to medium-paced, reasonably close clay targets and also game birds. On fast, crossing targets or at extended ranges, it will favor the shooter with slow reactions.

The Churchill method works because initially, the gun's muzzle is held behind the target until the speed is evaluated, then accelerated through it on the same line. The amount of acceleration needed on extended ranges is often excessive, which gives poor muzzle control. Pure Churchill is extremely inconsistent unless the gun speed is the same each time, and it is perhaps more useful for game bird shooting because of this. A point worth mentioning is that the enterprising gun maker often recommended the success of the method depended on the purchase of one of his very fast-handling, 25" barreled guns. Clever guy.

One thing is certain. To hit **O** any moving target, we must shoot in front of it. Somehow. If we apply basic physics to this, the velocity of a standard 12-ga. shotgun shell is somewhere around 1,200 fps, which is 800 mph. If we imagine that the target we are shooting at is traveling at 40 mph, this is a ratio of 20:1. In other words, for every yard the target flies at 40 mph, the shot load travels 20 yards in the same time interval. Of course, neither the speed of the shot nor the speed of the target is constant. This means that the shot charge will take approximately 1/20th of a second