



# IDPA Stage Design Course

How To Design Great IDPA Stages

03/2021

# What Is An IDPA Stage?

- A stage is an exercise that tests a member's efficient use of shooting fundamentals using time to completion and marksmanship for scoring.
- The shooting exercises are predicated on defensive scenarios and skillsets using a member's ability to solve problems under pressure.
- A stage blends together a series of skills which are action shooting oriented in a way that no two stages are alike and simulate situations that are realistic for the participants, e.g. something that could actually happen.
- A stage tests shooters of every level and ability to execute an appropriate plan under strict safety guidelines which allows everyone a chance to compete on a level playing field against similarly skilled and equipped competitors.



# What Is An IDPA Stage?

- Simply put, the point of IDPA is to entertain shooters.
- To delight shooters.
- To challenge shooters.
- To make the stages memorable a year from now.
- To do all of the above for all classifications of shooters NV - DM.
- To accommodate all divisions, ESP, SSP, CCP, CDP, REV, BUG, CO and PCC.
- To easily accommodate physically challenged shooters.



# An IDPA Stage should be designed ...

- Not to trick or trap shooters.
- Not to penalize shooters.
- Not to test a shooter's non-shooting skills.
- Not to penalize shooters.
- Not to teach tactics.
- Not to require memorization.
- Not to penalize shooters.
- Not to penalize one division over another.
- Not to reward one division or another.
- Not to penalize shooters.

# Why Does This Class Exist?

- Frankly, IDPA has too many mediocre to poor, overly complex and sometimes illegal stage designs in almost all Tiers of matches.
- To improve the quality of IDPA matches.
- To emphasize entertainment in IDPA.
- To increase shooting confidence through IDPA.
- To focus IDPA on shooting challenges.
- To eliminate arguments about stages.
- To prevent penalizing shooters excessively.
- To make stage approval for T2-T5 matches easier and quicker.
- To prevent having to remove a stage during a match.

## 8 Fundamentals of IDPA

- Shooting Positions

- Offhand (Freestyle/SHO/WHO/Retention)
- Crouching
- Kneeling (Quick/Supported)
- Sitting
- Prone (Supine)

- Acts

- Barricade (Strong/Support/Over)
- Moving (Lateral/Retreating/Advancing)

- Unusual Conditions

- Off Body Start (Reloads)



# How To Get Started

- Start with a scenario from the news or history.
- Start wanting to test a specific skill or combination of skills.
- Start with a specific “new” layout of walls and props.
- Start with shooting from or around a vehicle.
- Start with a golf cart that the shooter can drive and shoot from.
- Start with a “new” type target, like a mover or out-n-back, etc.
- Start with a new prop, like a door, mailbox or “horse,” etc.
- Start with a stage found on the internet.
- Start with a theme for the match like “NRA Armed Citizen.”

# Dos and Don'ts

- Check every stage against the IDPA rulebook and Match Administration Rules.
- Check every stage against the IDPA MD-CSO Handbook which has a great list of Do's and Don'ts of stage design.
- Don't put non-threats behind poppers. This does not delight or entertain shooters. The shooters know the MD is just trying to punish them.
- Very sparingly paint hard cover on targets, if at all, and only when needed to represent something found in the scenario. (No one makes tuxedo bullet proof vests.)
- Stages must gracefully support all divisions, including BUG and PCC if included in the match.
- Stages must be the same for all divisions, no extra difficulty for PCC.
- Every stage must be 100% legal, staying away from any gray areas.



# Dos and Don'ts

- Provide the shooter options, different ways to legally and safely shoot the stage. Shooters like options, it is that simple.
  - Provide tight shots verses movement.
  - Provide tight body shots verses head shots.
  - Provide static targets near “appearing” or “moving” targets.
  - Provide multiple physical paths through the stage.
  - Consider logical reload points for each of the divisions.

**Don't try to override IDPA rules with the stage procedure.**

# Non-Shooting Actions

- Match Administration Rule 9.1.1 basically says that a shooter does not have to perform a non-shooting action and can not be penalized if not done. Examples of non-shooting actions:
  - Carrying anything. Manipulating props. Saying anything.
- Shooting actions are things like using cover, strong hand, weak hand, seated, kneeling, inside car, etc.
- If a non-shooting action is important to a stage, provide the shooters a reason to do the action that improves their score.
- Provide the shooters a scoring opportunity or an easier shot for properly completing a non-shooting action.
  - Ex: If moving a brief case across a stage is important, have the briefcase when properly moved, activate a scoring opportunity:
    - Briefcase activates a stomp box situated at the bottom of a blue barrel.
    - Briefcase pulls a rope tied to the briefcase activating a target.

# Match Physics

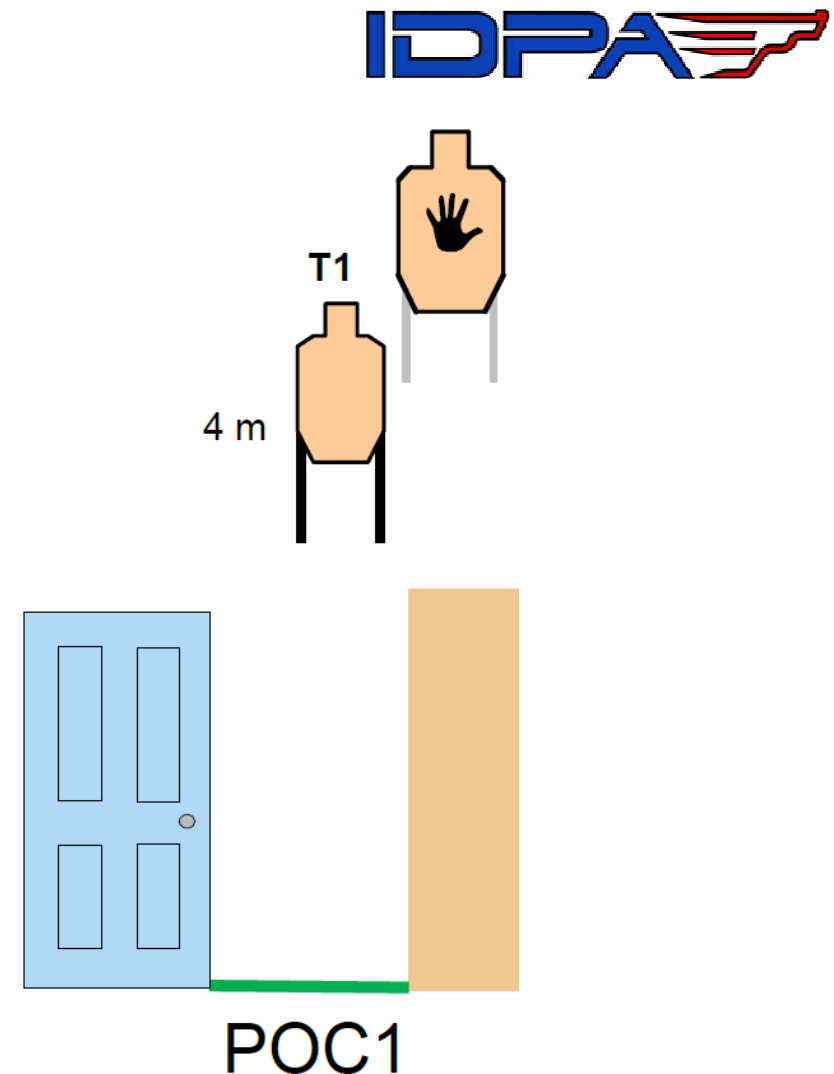
- No matter what stage is presented, shooters will push their limits and make it hard for themselves.
  - Ex: Look at the points down, trigger freeze, extra rounds fired, complete misses, etc. on the 5x5 classifier.
- Shooters will push themselves into a "difficult" area.
- Keep individual stages relatively simple.
- Vary the challenges over multiple stages.
- We don't need highly contrived, complicated mazes of stages with multiple movers or circus gimmicks.
- Don't put all your "cool" props or targets into a single stage.
- Direct shooters actions via props instead of words. That is, make it time costly to do an unwanted action.

# Match Physics

- Most of the clock time used in a match is resetting the stages.
- For three minutes per shooter, roughly ten seconds is Load and Make Ready.
- Roughly ten -thirty seconds of that is shooting.
- The rest is resetting the stage, i.e. stage design.
- A simple reset is key to keeping matches on time.
- Time killers in a stage:
  - Complexity. Too many things to do during reset.
  - Hard to reset props.
  - Lots of walls and passages.
  - Props that are unreliable in the wind and trigger themselves.
  - Stages without scoring loops, e.g. those with closed in areas where the scorekeeper and pasters have to go in and come back out.
  - Poor target placement. E.g. partial target exposed behind barrels.

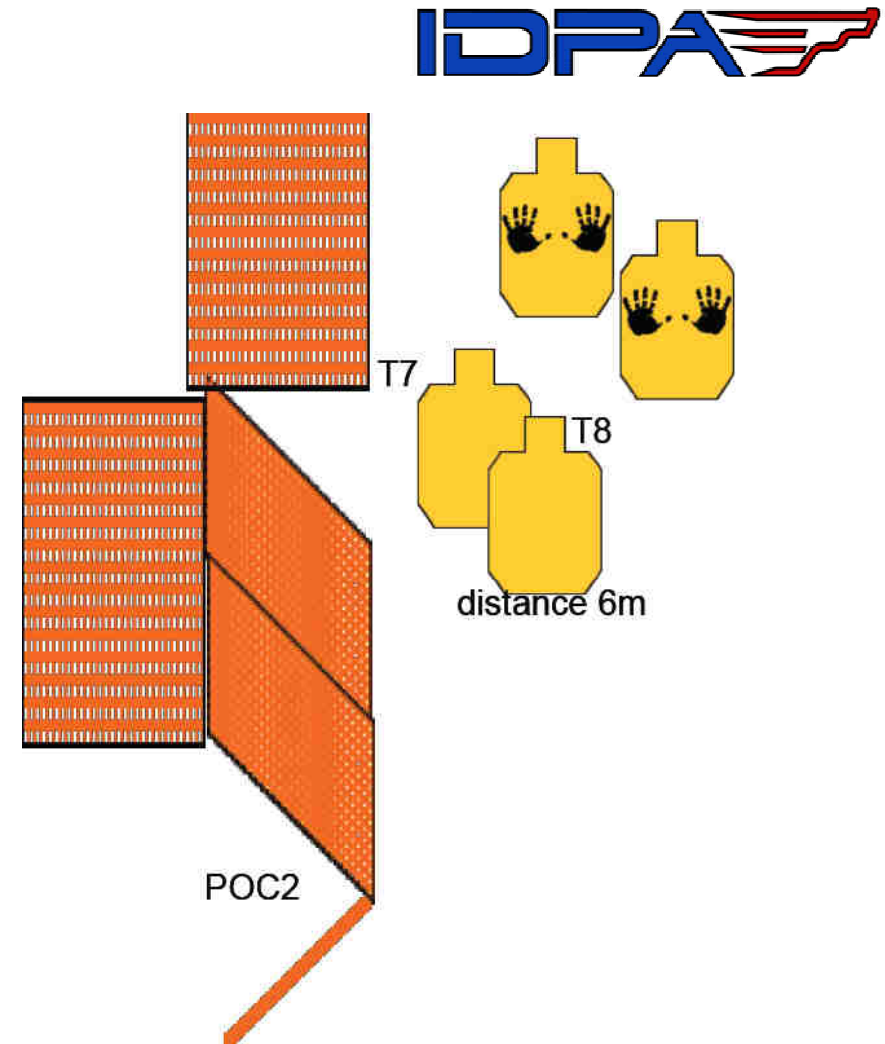
# Fault Lines

- Rule 1.2.3.A says in part, “Cover” refers to a position where a shooter can engage targets with a portion of their upper and lower body behind an object such as a wall.
- To meet this requirement do not set Fault Lines too loose.
- Example of too loose. This fault line shown in green provides the shooter no cover for the upper or lower body to shoot T1.
- Point the fault line at T1, and possibly use two fault lines, one on either side of the doorway.



# Fault Lines

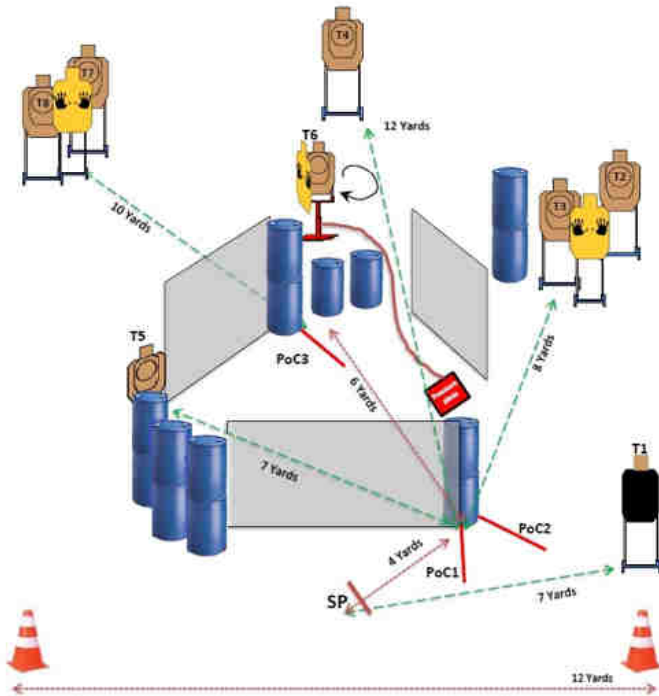
- Example of too tight. This fault line shown in orange may cause some shooters to lean over and fall over to shoot T7.
- Point the fault line at T7.
- It is good practice to point the fault line at the last target to be engaged around cover when slicing the pie.
- This may require breaking one point of cover into two, to provide cover for the shooter and eliminate leaning shots.



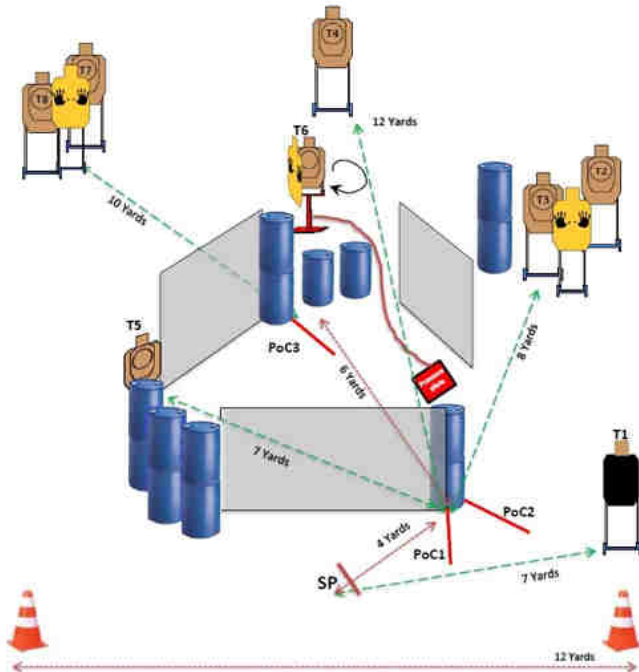
# A Well Written Stage Description

<b>SCENARIO:</b> You are shopping on Black Friday when a group of criminals has just robbed the cash till and shoot towards the people and your family. You decide to defend your family.	
<b>START POSITION:</b> Shooter at SP facing T1 with firearm loaded and holstered. Hands relaxed at sides.	<b>STRINGS:</b> 1 <b>SCORING:</b> 16 rounds min. Unlimited
<b>STAGE PROCEDURE:</b> At the signal engage T1-T8 using all available cover. The pressure plate activates drop-turner.	<b>TARGETS:</b> 8 Threat, 3 Non-threat <b>SCORED HITS:</b> Best 2 per target <b>START-STOP:</b> Audible - Last shot <b>CONCEALMENT GARMENT:</b> Required <b>MUZZLE SAFE POINTS:</b> 180 degree rule
<b>NOTE:</b> T1 can be engaged while moving as well. Turner T6 at rest show a NS target.	

- A brief good guy civilian self-defense scenario. No movie, book, cartoon, or tv characters, super villains, superheroes, LEO, Military, etc., or illegal activity.
- A brief start position telling the condition of the firearm and the position of the shooters body, facing direction, hands and feet when appropriate.
- A simple procedure section that does not script the stage but tells which targets are taken in the open and which are taken from cover.
- The number of strings, type of scoring and total number of required shots are shown.
- The number of cardboard threats, non-threats and reactive targets are shown.
- The number of rounds per target is shown as well as start and stop conditions.
- The concealment garment as well as muzzle safe points are also noted.
- The start position and points of cover are clearly marked and numbered.
- Places the shooter is not supposed to go are denied by the use of props, not words.



- Realistic fault line positions are shown that provide cover for the shooter, but do not require the last shots to be taken while falling over.
- Targets are numbered in a logical shooting order.
- Distances to targets from shooting positions are shown.
- Distances the shooter is expected to move are shown.
- Any objects used as Vision Barriers are clearly marked on the diagram.
- Muzzle safe cones or flags are shown if used.
- Notes to the approval team and setup crew help with clarity.
- The connection between the activator and the affected target/prop is shown.
- The distances and notes can easily be removed, and the same diagram can be used in the match booklet.

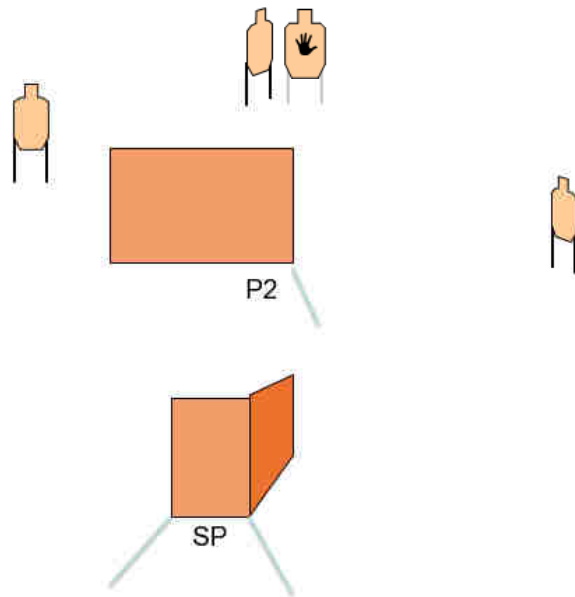




# Other trending hot buttons

## Nesting Fault Lines

- Having a position of cover downrange is NOT an excuse to advance on unengaged targets.



## Props for stowing reloads

- While we frequently require loading devices to be placed off body in different positions to start a stage, using that prop to hide a Speed Reload is still a penalty.



# Summary and Questions

- All stages 100% rulebook compliant, with no gray areas.
- Provide memorable shooting.
- Provide the shooter options.
- Keep reset simpler rather than complex.
- The non-shooting aspects of stages should provide scoring opportunities.
- Check every stage against the IDPA rulebook and Match Administration Rules.
- Check each stage against MD-CSO Do's and Don't list.
- Focus on entertainment instead of penalties.