

# Five Tips for Long Range Shooting



Long range shooting requires a combination of the right equipment and preparation.

By Bob Humphrey

It's hard to believe but fall is just around the corner. If your fall hunting plans include any type of long range shooting - whether it be a western hunt for elk, antelope or mule deer, or even an eastern hunt over large food plots - you'll want to be prepared. The following are a few tips to get you aimed in the right direction.

1) Choose a flat-shooting caliber - Flatter shooting calibers reduce the need for proper range estimation and the margin of error associated with mis-judging distance. While the venerable 30-06 and 30-30 have probably accounted for the deaths of more deer than all other calibers combined, they're not the best choice for longer shots. Better choices for larger game like bear and elk might be the .300 Win Mag or 7mm Remington Mag, or something with similar ballistics. For mid-sized game like whitetails any of the short mags, .300, .270, would be a good option. For smaller game like antelope or even southern thinner skinned you could even drop down to a .243. Larger varmints and predators call for something akin to the 22-250 or the 220 Swift, while 17 rimfires are ideal for smaller varmints.

2) Zero at 200 - Without getting too technical, there are some distinct advantages to sighting in your rifle so it is dead-on at 200 yards, rather than the conventional 100 yards. Inside 200, your point of impact will be a little high, but should still be less than two inches above your point of aim, which is barely noticeable in a hunting situation. The real payoff comes at the other end, where you may only be four to six inches low out to at least 300 yards, and in many cases a foot to 18 inches low all the way out to 400. Figures will vary with the particular calibers and loads you select.

3) Use good optics - This applies to both your target identification and target acquisition optics. You'll need binoculars and/or a spotting scope to locate, identify and possibly field judge your quarry. Never point your firearm at anything you cannot identify and do not intend to shoot at. Once you have properly identified your target, you can aim and fire. The biggest difference between cheap optics and good ones is the quality of glass used. Under average conditions you may not notice the difference. However, under challenging conditions such as heat haze and low light you will really appreciate it, especially at longer distances.

4) Use a solid rest - Any type of movement will be exaggerated at longer ranges. A solid rest will provide you with a more steady aim, and more accurate shot. Options include shooting sticks, and mono-, bi- and tripods. Which you choose will depend on several variables, including hunting conditions and personal preference. A shorter, detachable bipod may be fine for something like antelope hunting on open plains. In areas with taller vegetation, you

may want a taller shooting stick that will allow you to shoot from a standing position. Even in a shooting house you should use some type of padded rest to stabilize your gun.

5) Practice - This last tip should go without saying. Unfortunately, a lot of folks won't take the time and effort for proper practice. They'll pick the right caliber firearm, equip it with good optics and even zero it at 200 - usually by sighting it high at 100. Then they'll go to the range, or out in the back 40, and practice shooting at 100 yards. That's only going to help you so much. If you're going to be taking shots at 300 or 400 yards, you should practice at those same distances. Granted, 300-yard shooting ranges are hard to find. However, if you ask around you maybe able to gain access to a ranch, farm or other private land where you can practice. Load up your [ATV or Side-by-Side vehicle](#) with guns, ammo, targets, spotting scope and whatever else you might need and head for the wide open spaces.

When shooting, make sure you have a safe backdrop and always be aware of your target and what lies beyond. Last but not least, always wear proper eye and ear protection when target shooting.

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