

Your First IDPA Match

The first question that match organizers usually get from potential competitors is, “What do I need to bring?” For your first match, you need really bring only yourself, your IDPA-legal gun and gear, enough ammunition, the match fee, eye and ear protection, and the desire to have fun.

The ARPC-IDPA website (arpc-idpa.com) has the entire rulebook available online, and within the book are sections covering guns and gear. To keep the playing field somewhat level, IDPA has divided competition into five Divisions. Do you want to shoot your Glock? How about a Beretta or SIG? They would all fit in the Stock Service Pistol Division (SSP). This is the Division for semiauto duty pistols. If you prefer a revolver, then Stock Service Revolver (SSR) and Enhanced Service Revolver (ESR) are for you. These divisions allow little in the way of modifications to your gun, but do allow for more comfortable grips, and minor action tuning. If you prefer a single action semiauto, such as the Browning Hi-Power or 1911 derivatives in the medium bores, then Enhanced Service Pistol (ESP) is your cup of tea. If that old warhorse, the Colt .45 is your weapon of choice, then you’ll be competing in Custom Defensive Pistol (CDP) Division. These latter two divisions allow much more in the way of modifying your gun to enhance performance. You can change the sights, grips, improve the trigger action, etc., as long as the gun is not made too much larger or heavier than stock.

Holsters are regulated, to ensure that they are both safe, and of a type suitable for concealed carry use, as opposed to holster optimized for range or competition use. The holster must cover the trigger guard, and must hold the gun high and close to the body.

Other gear that is worn on the belt includes magazines for semiautos, speed loaders or moonclips for revolvers, and the pouches to contain

them. It's OK to load from a pocket, but pouches will do a better job of ensuring your spare ammo is at hand. Courses of Fire (CoF's), or "stages", never exceed eighteen rounds, so reloads are limited to two spare magazines or three spare speed loaders/clips on the belt. You can get through most stages with one reload, but having at least two is recommended.

Since you are going to be taking ammo, your ear protection, etc., with you, it's nice to have something to put it in. Most people eventually buy a "range bag", but for a first match, you can use anything to keep your gear together – a shootin' buddy of mine hauls his stuff around in a plastic bucket. A toolbox works, too. Items to have handy are spare magazines, any ID or membership cards that the range may require, sunscreen, band-aids, a towel or rag, a snack ("feed your brain", as one competitor put it), and a bottle of water. Even if the weather is mild, moving around as much as the match requires can build a thirst – bring water to every match.

Knowing where and when matches are held can be as easy as going back to the IDPA website. They have a list of all affiliated clubs, and their contacts. Here at ARPC (Arnold Rifle and Pistol Club), we have our matches on the 2nd Sunday of every month. We also try to get together every Tuesday evening for practice as a group of shooters.

Matches consist of approximately five different CoF's, each scored separately. The matches start at 8:30AM, and you should get to the range before 8:00, so that you have plenty of time to get geared-up before the New Shooter Orientation. ARPC is a cold range, so don't bring a loaded gun to the match. You may handle your gun only in the designated Safe Areas, while ammo may be handled anywhere BUT the Safe Areas. There is a match registration/waiver form which must be signed, the \$5 match fee paid, and you're then issued a scoresheet.

The specifics of scoring are in the rulebook and on our "Shooter Meeting" page at www.ARPC-IDPA.com. New shooters are grouped

together, so that they can receive any extra attention or direction that they may need. Shooting continues until everyone has completed all of the stages, and the range is usually cleaned up by 2:00pm.

What puts the “Defensive” in IDPA? Most course designs involve utilization of available cover (doorway, trees, walls, cars, or simulations of same, that block the “view” of the threat target), movement either laterally or away from the threat (shooting while retreating is an oft-used skill in IDPA matches), and the inclusion of non-threat or “no-shoot” targets. Non-threat targets, while appearing similar to threats, simulate innocents that if hit, garner the competitor a heavy penalty. The scenarios thus require the shooter to continuously assess the situation while engaging the threats. While escaping the threat is part of most stages, the amount of movement is never great. IDPA guidelines allow for no more than 45 feet of total movement in any given stage – it’s a shooting contest, not a track meet! All the while, the shooter’s movements are scrutinized by a Safety Officer. The SO serves as a combination Referee and Lifeguard – Referee because he or she is operating an automatic timer, is watching your every move to ensure you are complying with the rules, will tally your score; and Lifeguard because the SO’s first job is to ensure the safety of the shooter and the other competitors. The SO will be watching to make sure that your muzzle is always pointed in a safe direction, and will be quick with a warning if it’s not. Harsh penalties can result from repeat infractions, but that is rarely necessary.

Usually, due to restrictions of range layout and cost, the scenarios are built using a minimum number of props to adequately convey the situation. So how does a typical scenario look? Imagine you’re at the cash machine, on a cold, dark night. As the machine starts to dispense your cash, you notice a person approaching from the shadows. In this scenario, the approaching stranger produces a knife, and rushes toward you. Your car is parked behind you, so as you retreat to the relative safety of your car, you draw your sidearm and engage the on-coming threat. As you reach your car, you see two armed accomplices across the parking lot, and using your car as cover, engage those threats as well. To

simulate this defensive situation, the course designer needs only a 55gal barrel to simulate the cash machine, an overturned table to simulate the fender of the car, and three targets. Simple, but very effective. Other scenarios might be more elaborate, with walls, hinged doors, targets that sway or turn, or even real cars arrayed on the range. Each scenario at a given match might be completely different, or there might be a theme.

IDPA is competition, because someone is keeping score and some of the shooters want to win, but it is also a way to spend a day on the range with like-minded individuals, developing your shooting skills. While “winners” are announced after the match, most shooters know how well they did by how many or few mistakes they made; and how determined they are to prevent those same mistakes the next time is what really makes a winner at an IDPA match.

If you are interested in joining the fun, visit our website www.APRC-IDPA.com or contact Mark Goede @ 314-225-7640 or email at markgoede@charter.net.