

2015 FORCE SCIENCE ARTICLE BY DR. BILL LEWINSKI ON: THE USE OF SIGHTS IN A GUNFIGHT? SHOULD YOU IF YOU CAN?

The following article by Dr. Bill Lewinski, executive director of the Force Science Institute, was in Force Science News #276.

The article was titled: Can you really use your sights in a gunfight? Should you if you can? And it was written as a response to an inquiry from Capt. Jorge Tierno Rey, Dir., Dept. of Security & Protection, Spanish Marine Corps School, Cartagena, Murcia State, Spain.

Here is Capt. Rey's inquiry:

It is said that stress hampers eye focus, making it impossible to use your sights in a life-threatening encounter. Yet some people who have been involved in real firearms engagements state they used their sights. Can you aim and use sights under stress if you have the proper training?

Dr. Bill Lewinski, executive director of the Force Science Institute, responds:

In a panic situation, where an officer is caught in a threat by surprise and perhaps overwhelmed by emotion, he or she may not be able to respond with sufficient control to attain a sight picture in the fraction of time available. There are changes to the eye under stress that can make sighting more difficult, but with the right training these can be overcome. Our research with equipment that tracks eye movement shows that sighted fire can be accomplished even under intense stress.

The key is a combination of two critical elements: 1) your innate ability to acquire and implement the technical skills of effective weapon management, and 2) the type and quality of instruction that constitute the "right" training for gunfight mastery.

In the US, many departments train their officers only to the level of minimum state standards, which are inadequate for achieving high-level proficiency. The bulk of their training often is presented in concentrated blocks, after which learned psychomotor skills rapidly deteriorate, rather than through continual reinforcement at intervals, which tends to build and maintain skills over time. And, deplorably, many officers are never exposed to firearms training of any kind that allows them to practice perception, decision-making, and responses at the speed of an actual gunfight.

All this leaves them dangerously deficient in many aspects of quality performance in a crisis, sight-acquisition among them.

It's important to understand that using your sights in a gunfight is not always necessary or even desirable for effectively placing rounds. If you don't get a sight picture at 20 ft. and beyond, your ability to shoot accurately is likely to be seriously impaired. That's actually not very far, in real world settings--down a hallway or across some rooms.

Closer than that, at distances where most gunfights occur, trying to use your sights may take too long; by the time you're sighted in, your target may have moved. At less than 20 ft., you're probably best to fix your gaze on your target and quickly drive your gun up to align with that line of view, firing unsighted.

Obviously, to do this successfully requires a great deal of consistent practice, responding to force-on-force scenarios at various distances that develop realistically in terms of action, movement, and

speed. This will help you learn to identify the telltale patterns of an evolving threat so you can get ahead of the reactionary curve.

Over time, you will learn how threats unfold and be able to anticipate what, where, when, and how the "play" will progress. This, in turn, will build in you the ability to react automatically--without conscious thought--either with or without the use of your sights, depending on the dynamic circumstances you face. You will, in effect, be better equipped to stay ahead of the reactionary curve.

To achieve that level of skill, be prepared to go, on your own, beyond the training offered by your agency. It is the rare department indeed that has the budget and the time to take officers as far as their native ability allows and elevate them to truly elite status.

Even at no cost, you can still strengthen your fundamental skills, including sight acquisition, through dry-fire drills. With modern weapons, you can dry fire literally thousands of times without damage to your equipment.

When your life is on the line, your personal commitment to be the best you can be will seem a small price to have paid.

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Here is a slightly edited response I sent to Force Science.

Thank you for the article on sight use in a gunfight in Force Science News #276. I have added it to my web site on Point Shooting and added a comment about the dilemma posed but not answered in the article.

The dilemma is the need for, but lack of extensive traditional training to achieve a level of effectiveness in shooting that is higher than the abysmal and long standing hit rate achieved by Police.

One can also make the case that civilians who do not have the level of training provided to Police, and who don't carry regularly, will have even poorer results in real world situations.

Your article also has appeared in a gun forum in Florida, and received many comments. I added one. (see below)

My thought was that one or more of the known Point Shooting methods could be a "win win" solution to the dilemma, in that they are effective shooting methods which can be learned and maintained with minimal practice.

And if championed by a well recognized and scientifically grounded body such as FS, the result would be a real life and cost saver for both Police and civilians.

If you have comments in regard to Point Shooting training, or your investigation of it and its use, I will be happy to add it/them to the article.

Here is the link to the Florida gun forum and discussion of Force Science News # 276:
<http://www.floridaconcealedcarry.com/Forum/showthread.php?51926-Force-Science-News-276>

Thank you for your continued investigations and sharing the results for the information and use by

Police and those who have a gun for self defense use.

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Here is part of the comment I added to the gun forum thread:

Robin Brown's Quick Kill pistol shooting method is an excellent answer to the dilemma posed but not answered in the Force Science article.

QK can be learned with little or no practice and maintained with minimal practice.

To become proficient in it does not require tons of practice as stated in the article.

Of course the more one practices, the better should be the result.

There are other "Point Shooting" methods that one can employ such as Applegate's, and those which are similar to that method, plus others such as P&S which I am a fan of.

P&S is the simplest of shooting methods in that all you need to do is grab your gun, point your finger, and pull the trigger with your middle finger. And it can be learned with little or no training, maintained with minimal practice, and it also provides the user with automatic and correct sight alignment and an automatic and correct sight picture.

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Now, not hearing back from the Force Science folks, and finding that Hocking College offers a course on the "Applegate" method of Point Shooting, and states in the course information that "the techniques have been scientifically validated by an independent research organization and employed by numerous law enforcement organizations and the United States Military," I sent an e-mail to Hocking College asking for data that supports their course offering, and one to Force Science asking for data that supports Dr. Lewinski's supposition about Point Shooting.

No responses have been received to date.

End.