

LESSON 8: THE KNEELING POSITION

PURPOSE

This lesson introduces you to correct technique for firing from the kneeling position



*kneeling
kneeling roll*

INTRODUCTION

In the **kneeling** position, the shooter kneels to sit on the right foot that is supported by a **kneeling roll**. The rifle is supported by the sling and left arm that rests on the left leg. The kneeling position is similar to prone in that the sling is also used in this position. It is similar to standing because the body's center of gravity is higher and precise balance is essential to achieving a stable kneeling position.

In the kneeling position, one additional item of equipment is used, a kneeling roll. It is possible to shoot kneeling by sitting on the side of the right foot, but only a few shooters have ever been able to use that position successfully. All of the top kneeling shooters in the world today use a kneeling roll. Its use is highly recommended.

If your unit does not have kneeling rolls available, it is easy to make suitable kneeling rolls. Pieces of heavy fabric can be sewn to form a cylinder that is eight inches long and six inches in diameter. Fill the cylinder about 80% full with birdseed, wood chips or other similar material. A kneeling roll can also be made by cutting a eight inch wide strip of carpet and rolling it into a kneeling roll, that is about four or five inches in diameter.



Sling

Kneeling roll

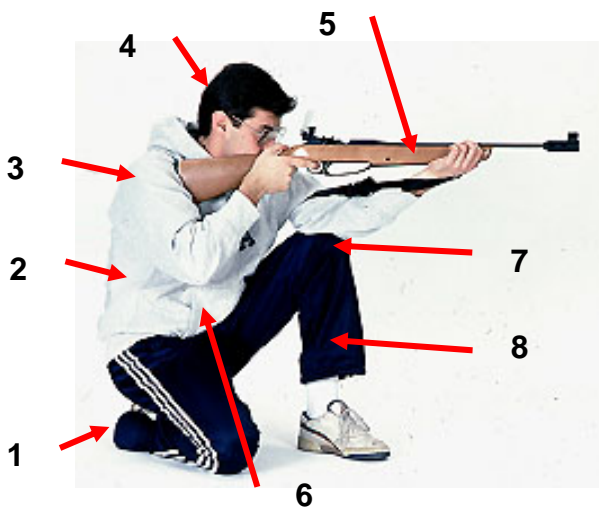
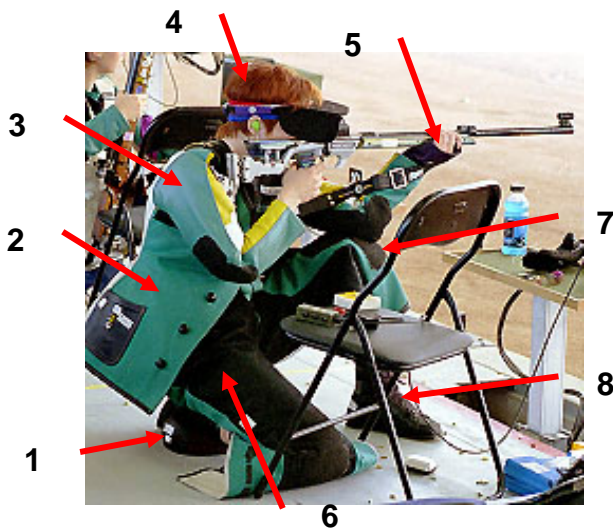
A competitor in the 2000 Olympic Games firing in the kneeling position.



A suitable kneeling roll may be made by rolling a strip of carpet to form a roll. Tape the roll to keep it rolled tightly.

FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL KNEELING POSITIONS

Like the standing and prone positions, mastering the kneeling position also must begin by studying the positions of experienced, successful shooters. The first kneeling position photo below, shows Tatiana Goldobina of Russia firing during the 2000 Olympic Games. She won a silver medal in the women's 50-meter three-position rifle event. The second photo below, shows a school-age shooter with a sporter air rifle. The arrows on both photos point out the key features to study and copy when you begin to shoot in the kneeling position.



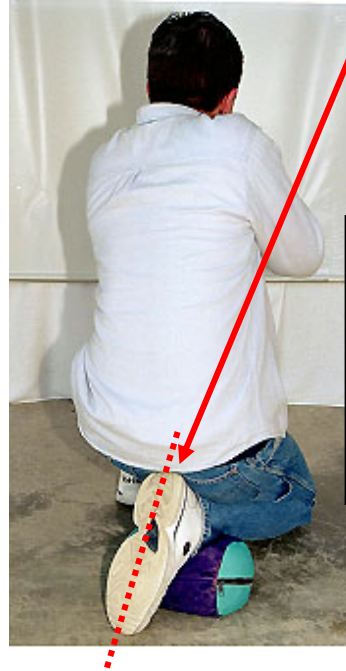
Kneeling position features that are marked with arrows are:

1. Foot is placed on a kneeling roll. The kneeling roll allows the shooter to comfortably sit on the foot for long periods.
2. Almost all of the weight of the shooter's body rests on the heel.
3. The torso is fairly erect, but the shoulders are rolled forward. The shoulders are not erect, but instead are rolled forward or slumped down.
4. The head is fairly erect. It is tipped toward the target, but not to the right.
5. The support hand (left hand) location is far enough back on the fore end to place the rifle fairly high in the shoulder and keep the head erect. The sling supports the weight of the rifle.
6. The body is turned 30-45 degrees away from the target.
7. The elbow of the support (left) arm is located on top of the knee. Other successful shooters place the left elbow just behind the knee. The elbow is normally not placed ahead of the knee.
8. The left lower leg that supports the rifle (left leg) is vertical. Some shooters move the left foot farther forward so that the foot is slightly in front of a point directly below the knee. The foot is never pulled back so that it is behind this point.

LEARNING THE KNEELING POSITION

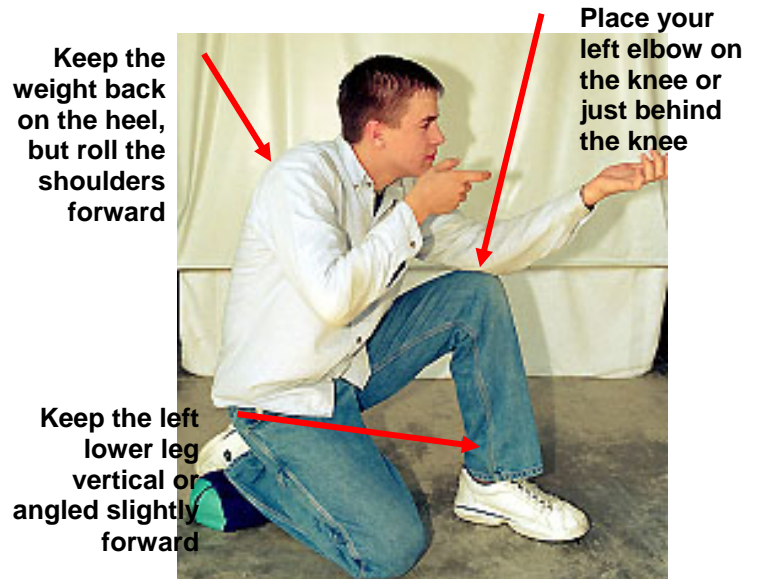
The step-by-step process for developing a kneeling position is almost identical with the steps that are followed in learning the prone position. Working out a position first without the rifle and then with the rifle, but without the sling, are especially important in kneeling. These steps help you establish the correct relationships between the different parts of your body. Do not skip these steps.

1. **Study the position.** Take the time to go through each of the eight points identified in the position illustrations. Visualize how you will place your body in a similar position.
2. **Kneeling position without rifle.** Begin by placing your kneeling roll on your firing point. Turn it so that it points between 30 and 45 degrees away from the target. After you practice the kneeling position for several days, you can adjust this angle so that it is most comfortable for you.
 - Next, kneel down and place the front part of your ankle over the kneeling roll. Then sit on your right heel.
 - Sit back on your heel so that as much of your body weight as possible rests on the heel.
 - Do not be discouraged if it is uncomfortable at first to sit on a kneeling roll with all of your body weight resting on your heel. If you have problems with this, try improvising a kneeling roll at home so you can practice sitting in this position for periods of ten to 15 minutes while you study or watch TV.



Keep the foot vertical and sit with your weight on the heel

To start building the kneeling position, place the kneeling roll on the floor and turn it 30-45° from the target. Place your ankle on top of the kneeling roll and sit on your heel.



Keep the weight back on the heel, but roll the shoulders forward

Place your left elbow on the knee or just behind the knee

Keep the left lower leg vertical or angled slightly forward

- Next, position the support leg (left leg for right-handed shooter) so that the lower part of the leg is vertical or slightly forward of a point directly below the knee. Do not pull the foot back behind the knee.

- With the body weight on the heel, let the shoulders slump down or roll forward. You should keep your weight back on your heel, but do not try to sit up straight in kneeling.
- Lift the support (left) arm and hold it above the knee. Then simply drop the elbow onto the knee or leg. Depending upon how your body is built, your support elbow may fall on the knee or it may fall on the upper leg just above the knee.
- Complete the kneeling position without the rifle by lifting the right arm to hold an imaginary rifle. Think about how your body feels in this position. Try to relax your body and balance your body weight over your heel.

3. **Kneeling position with rifle, without sling.** The next step is to pick up the rifle and hold it in position. Pay close attention to finding the correct position for the butt plate in the shoulder and for the left hand on the fore end.

- Position the butt plate in the shoulder, close to the neck, and high enough that your head is fairly erect.
- Move the support (left) hand forward and rearward on the fore end to find the hand location where the sights are raised to the level of the target. When the correct hand location is identified, mark the point where the V between the thumb and hand lies on the fore end.

Place butt high enough in shoulder to keep head erect.

Shift left hand forward and rearward until sights are at target height. Move the sling swivel back to the hand and tighten it.



Move the sling swivel back to the left hand.

Then tighten the sling until it fully supports the weight of the rifle.

4. **Kneeling position with rifle and sling.** All that remains is to complete the position by adjusting the sling swivel and tightening the sling.

- To start this step, place the sling loop on the arm. Tighten the sling loop so that it does not slip down on your arm. Adjust the sling so that it is much too long and position the sling swivel far out on the fore end.

- Replace the rifle in position on the shoulder with the sling on. At this point, the sling should still be adjusted so that it is too loose or long.
- Return the left hand to the location marked on the fore end. Move the sling swivel back to the hand and tighten it.
- Complete the position by tightening the sling until it fully supports the weight of the rifle.
- Check the alignment of the position on the target. If your natural point of aim is left or right of the target, align the position by rotating the entire position (left foot and right knee) on the kneeling roll. If the rifle points above or below the target, it is necessary to move the left hand back to raise the rifle or forward to lower the rifle. The sling and sling swivel will have to be readjusted as part of this change.
- Center your hold movement (sight picture) and add more pressure to the trigger until the shot releases

When firing in the kneeling position, keep the weight of the body and rifle balanced over the heel. The balance line on this kneeling illustration shows how the weight of the body and rifle are to be balanced over the right heel. The shooter is Raimond Debevec, Slovenia, 2000 Olympic gold medal winner in men's 50 meter three position rifle.



To cock and load the M853/753 pneumatic air rifles in kneeling, take the rifle from the shoulder and the hand out of the sling. Work the cocking lever, replace the left hand in the sling, load the pellet and replace the butt in the shoulder.



KNEELING POSITION FIRING

You will probably begin your firing exercises in kneeling by dry firing. Use your dry fire repetitions to work out the shot technique that you will use in kneeling. Try to follow these steps as you dry fire each shot.

- Close the bolt, place the butt in your shoulder, and align the sights on the target.
- Breathe naturally, exhale, and stop breathing—let the left arm relax so that only the sling holds up the rifle.
- Take up the trigger slack and add some pressure to the trigger.

CONCLUSION

As you make dry and live fire shots in kneeling, think about your position to be sure 1) your body weight is resting on your heel, 2) your left lower leg is vertical, 3) your left elbow rests on your left knee or upper leg just above the knee and 4) your sling is tight enough to fully support the weight of the rifle.

If you do a good job of relaxing and balancing your body above the right heel, your kneeling position should produce scores that are almost as good as your prone scores.