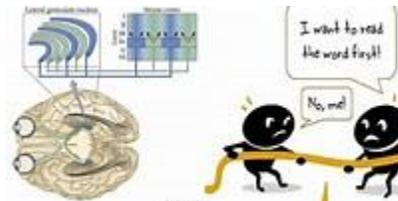


Eye Dominance

Shooting a firearm involves coordination between your eyes and hands. You shoot more proficiently by firing the gun with your dominant (master) hand and aiming with your dominant (master) eye. An important factor to note is your master hand side may not be the same as your master eye. This is referred to as cross eye dominance.



We are all aware that we have a dominant hand, the hand with which we perform most one-handed tasks, like writing. Our dominant hand and arm are usually stronger and demonstrate better coordination. Similarly the brain also has a preference for one eye over the other. This is eye dominance. Usually our dominant eye is on the same side as the dominant hand, although many people are cross dominant. Eye dominance is extremely important in shooting.



To determine eye dominance, with both eyes open, focus on a small object at a distance of 10 or more feet. Extend both hands forward at arm's length, bring the hands together to form a small hole between the webs of the thumbs, and focus on your object through this small hole. While keeping focus on your object, bring the hands to your face. When your hands are only a few inches from your face, the hole between your hands will be directly in front of your dominant/master eye.

All too often, firearm instructors are doctrine-based and insist on a one-size-fits-all method of training. This is either because the academy they work for requires they teach that way or the instructors simply don't know any better and teach that way because that's how it has always been taught.

A better way to get results from students is to be flexible and work toward objectives using the student's natural attributes as opposed to a specific methodology, which ignores the fact that each of us have differences in our visual and physical acuties.

Another failure in firearms training is to confuse precision shooting, marksmanship and shooting tight little groups with liberal time constraints, with defensive shooting where the objective is getting sufficient hits on a target of variable size and shape quickly enough to stop a threat. Time, distance, cover and other variables make the visual input needed to achieve success a different stream of information. We must distinguish our objectives between precision bulls-eye shooting accuracy with defensive accuracy. These are two totally different forms of shooting.

Just to put this into perspective from one viewpoint that makes sense to most people, precision shooting requires consistent sight alignment and sight picture combined with a shot release that has little to no effect on the sight alignment or the sight picture—shot after shot. It is unlikely too many people have the same visual clarity and level of eye dominance where they can all be put into a single category. For example, as we

age visual clarity, particularly in close proximity, degrades as physical changes take place. This factor greatly affects how well a shooter can place their visual attention on sight alignment and sight picture.

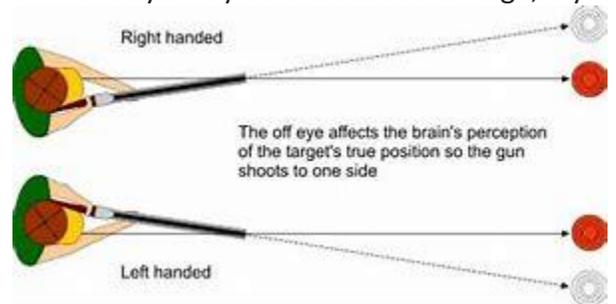
A person utilizing their dominant eye will usually find it easier to maintain visual attention on the sights with both eyes open. This helps to prevent conflict between the two eyes as to what visual information is primary in being processed by the brain. Keeping both eyes open also enhances peripheral vision. Depth perception is lost with one eye closed. Peripheral vision is key in realizing potential threats during a defensive encounter.

A quick example would be for a right-handed shooter using the right eye to see the sights while keeping both eyes fully open and intermittently or totally seeing the left side of the gun come into view and taking precedent over the focus on the sights and sight picture. Without strong right eye dominance, the left eye will overpower the right eye unless it is disadvantaged by squinting or closing the eye, which transfers the visual input back to the eye behind the sights.



Remaining as an additional concern is the cross-dominant shooter. This is generally recognized as a person shooting from one side of the body, but having their dominant eye on the opposite side. There are many ways of addressing this issue, but the remedy usually is best realized by using the techniques previously mentioned as a starting point. With handguns, cocking the head to the side and using the dominant off-side eye is not a bad option. With long guns and an off-side dominant eye, switching to shooting under the dominant eye may be the best advantage, if you are able to adapt to it with some practice.

This is why determining eye dominance is key and should be performed before teaching/learning the fundamentals of shooting (aiming, grip, stance, breath control, trigger control and follow-through). A shooter should shoot from the side of the dominant/master eye and grip their firearm accordingly. This eliminates the tendency to attempt to aim from your support side which will have you shots hitting towards one side.



Do what is necessary to achieve the desired hits on target because the objective of shooting is hitting what you are aiming at, whether you have one eye open or two.