



# Simple Tips to Sight in Your Rifle

For most hunters, getting a shot at a deer or other big-game animal is a difficult chore that requires a lot of time, expense and hard work. While you cannot control the movements of a wild game animal, you must make certain that your rifle shoots where it is aimed. Here are six simple rifle sight-in tips from Jim Ridings. Ridings owns a shooting range and custom ammo and rifle business near Dallas, Texas. He has literally sighted in thousands of rifles in every popular caliber.

1) Don't rely on bore-sighting for rifle accuracy. Many gunsmiths use a mechanical device called a collimator to approximately align the crosshairs with the rifle bore. This is usually done when a scope is mounted on the rifle. The key word is "approximately."

Bore-sighting can be very precise. More likely, it will be precise enough to place the bullet somewhere on the paper target at 25 yards. One memorable Saturday morning prior to the opening of deer season, Ridings had eight hunters fire new bore-sighted rifles on his range. The most accurate of the eight rifles placed the bullet within a foot of the bull's-eye at 25 yards. To be certain where your rifle shoots, you must fire at paper targets from a solid rest.

2) Fire your first shots at 25 yards. After sighting-in virtually every caliber and bullet weight commonly used in big-game hunting, Ridings has found that most modern calibers sighted-in to shoot 3/10 of an inch low at 25 yards are about 2.5 inches high at 100 yards.

Since most deer hunters sight-in a little high at 100 yards, the 25-yard rule of thumb is a good one to remember. Because of image size and ease of precision aiming at short distances, bullet placement is much easier at 25 yards than at 100 yards.

3) Ridings uses sandbags to hold the rifle absolutely steady when sighting-in. He then fires his first shot. He leaves the rifle sandbagged in position. To save ammunition, Ridings does not sight-in in typical fashion by adjusting the crosshairs to move the point of aim toward the bull's-eye. Instead, with the rifle still solidly on the sandbags, he adjusts the scope so the crosshairs are centered on the bullet hole he just punched in the

target. That means the scope is now lined up with the bore.

The second shot should be pretty near the bull's-eye. A third shot may be required to fine-tune where the bullet strikes at 25 yards. You should then fire the rifle at 100 yards. For that matter, you should also fire the rifle at the farthest distance you expect to shoot at game, just to see where it hits at longer ranges. From a practical standpoint, long-distance shooting at paper targets emphasizes human error in precision shooting. Those 1-inch, 100-yard groups you're so proud of open up considerably at 300 yards.

4) If your rifle gets out of whack while in the field, you can bore-sight it yourself. That's assuming you shoot a bolt-action rifle. Set up a target at 25 yards. Remove the rifle bolt and set the rifle up on sandbags in such a position that you can look through the bore and have it centered on the target. Then, without moving the rifle, adjust the crosshairs until they're likewise centered on the target. Again, fire the rifle to make certain of the alignment.

5) When you fire repeated shots at the same target, it's difficult to remember the sequence in which the shots were fired. Keep an identical target beside you on the shooting bench. As you fire each shot, locate the bullet strike on the downrange target. With a pen or pencil, locate and number each corresponding bullet strike on your shooting bench target. Logging each shot in sequence makes it easier to determine the effectiveness of scope adjustments. If you flinch and shoot a "flyer," it's easier to identify its downrange location if previous shots were logged in sequence.

6) Use the same ammunition for hunting that you use when sighting-in. Not only does the brand of ammo make a difference in rifle performance, bullet weights and bullet designs within the same brand make a difference. Ridings has found that premium factory ammunition outperforms standard ammo in most rifles. Premium ammo costs about three times as much as standard loads, but it approaches hand-loaded ammo in performance. Fine-tuning loads to suit your particular rifle is the best method of improving accuracy. If you lack the time or patience for reloading, gunsmiths such



Gavin Sanders, 11, shot this nice 9 point buck on November 7th at his grandparents place near the community of Star in eastern Mills County.



Slayde Herndon, 7, of Burlington, took this 7-point buck on Nov. 27 around on his father's lease in western Mills County. This was Slayde's first deer. He was using his H&R .243 rifle and the buck was taken at approximately 90 yards with one shot.



## Hesson Downs 11-Point Buck

Chris Hesson of Spring, Texas took this big 11-pointer with his Hoyt Spyder compound bow Wednesday evening on a 20-acre lease south of Mills County. Hesson said he and Gary Dodd had "been playing peek-a-boo" with the buck, and that the deer disappeared for several days before showing up again at one of their feeders. "Point-wise, this is the biggest buck I've ever shot," Hesson said. Hesson took his shot at 25 yards, and he said the buck ran about 50 yards before piling up in some dead cedars. Ginger Spies measured the buck at 145 1/8 points, making Hesson's deer a strong entry in Mills County General Store's "The Big One" Buck Contest.