

# Are you a shooting range jerk?

by Dean Rieck

[www.buckeyefirearms.org/are-you-shooting-range-jerk](http://www.buckeyefirearms.org/are-you-shooting-range-jerk)

In the gun world, we talk a lot about range safety. But we seldom talk about range etiquette.

That's unfortunate because, let's face it, some people act like jerks when they're at a public shooting range. Are you one of these people? Let's find out.

You're a shooting range jerk if you:

**Shoot at posts, supports, and target frames.** People do this all the time and I simply don't understand it. These are expensive to buy or time-consuming to build. They're provided as a convenience for you. Why destroy them?

Here's something to think about: We'd all like more target frames and holders at ranges. And maybe the folks at ranges would provide them more often if you'd just stop blasting them to smithereens. We all hit things on the range we're not aiming at now and then. But try to confine your shooting to actual targets.

**Shoot at other people's targets.** You'd think only bratty kids would do this, but I've seen adults do it too. It's one of the most disrespectful things you can do at a range. And it's a sure way to make an instant enemy of a perfect stranger.

Not only are you shooting targets someone else paid for, you could be interfering with someone sighting in their gun, working on creating tighter groups, or practicing for competition. Some people even like to keep their targets for reference and the holes you make are not welcome.

Even if someone has steel targets or other non-paper items, it's discourteous to shoot them without asking for permission. Most people won't mind if you just ask first.

**Destroy targets with too much gun.** If there's anything worse than shooting at other people's targets, it's using your rifle or high-caliber handgun to shoot at targets rated for .22 or other small calibers.



I attended an outdoor shoot sponsored by Buckeye Firearms Association earlier this year. Someone brought a small resetting target for plinking. It was fun ... until someone shot it to pieces with an AR. The target's owner was upset. But we couldn't do anything about it because the shooter left without saying anything or offering to pay for the damage. Wow. Talk about being a jerk.

Make it a habit to ask about the rating for any steel or resetting targets before you start blasting. And if it belongs to a fellow shooter, ask if it's okay to shoot at it.

**Litter the range with ammo boxes, target remains, and other debris.** This isn't something people do on purpose. It's really a matter of personal habits and tolerance for disorder. But just as most people prefer a tidy home, most people also prefer a tidy range.

This shouldn't be a big deal. Just throw your trash away and clean up a little before you leave. If the previous shooter left a mess, be the adult on the range and pick it up. If there aren't any trash cans nearby, ask the range master about it. This is something every range should provide.

**Pick up other people's brass.** This is a big no-no. Sure, some people don't reload. But some do. And they'll want to police their own brass and take it home with them. And never assume that just because brass from the next shooting position lands in your space that it's okay to pick it up for yourself or even to sweep it up and toss it into the range brass barrel.

This is another example of just asking before you act.

**Disrespect someone's personal space.** Have you ever parked far away from other cars only to have someone ignore a hundred open spots and park right beside you? It's irritating, right? Same thing at a shooting range.

Some people go to the range to socialize. Others just want to mind their own business and shoot their guns. Personally, I enjoy my "quiet" time at the range. It's relaxing and can be a form of focused meditation. It's sort of like how golfers want to be left alone at the driving range so they can get "in the zone."

Unless the range is busy and you have no choice, give other people their space. Allow at least one empty shooting position between you and your neighbor.



**Bring pets to the range.** Has it ever occurred to you that they can suffer from hearing damage just like you? Why would you do that to a loyal and loving pet? There are also things around the range they might eat that could make them sick. Maybe they'll get scared and panic, causing a safety issue. And while some shooters may love interacting with your pet, others could be annoyed or distracted.

Pets, especially dogs, can be great companions. Maybe yours goes everywhere with you. But shooting ranges are not the ideal place for them. Do everyone a favor and leave your pets at home.

**Ignore basic range safety rules.** Every range has its own set of rules. However, the important ones are universal: Keep your guns pointed in a safe direction. Keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot. Keep your guns unloaded until ready to use.

More specifically, when you're at a public shooting range: Keep your guns cased until you're on the line. Never clean, load, or otherwise fiddle with your guns behind the line. Keep your guns pointed downrange at all times, whether they're loaded or not. And keep your finger off the trigger until you're aiming at your targets.

If you think these range rules are too strict, then you're a BIG jerk. Being sloppy with rules at a shooting range can get people shot. And you will forever be "that guy" people point to and whisper, "That's the moron who was cleaning his gun behind the line and shot the little kid working on his Scout patch." Even assuming you don't go to jail or get sued for every cent you own, you'll never live it down.

So are you a shooting range jerk? Let's hope not. But if so, it's never too late to change.

*Dean Rieck is Executive Director of Buckeye Firearms Association, a former competitive shooter, NRA Patron Member, #1 NRA Recruiter for 2013, business owner and partner with Second Call Defense.*

#### **General Range Safety Rules**

- Always keep firearms pointed in a safe direction.
- Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- Always keep your gun unloaded until you are at the firing line and the range is declared "HOT."
- Cease Firing: Immediately stop shooting when anyone calls "Cease firing."