

Want to try clay target shooting?

Think you might like to try clay target shooting but don't know where to start?

It can seem overwhelming at first with so many things to consider – Do I need a Firearms Licence? What gun? What cartridges? How do I hit the target? What shooting jacket? and so on.

The best way to start is to simply come along to a scheduled shoot, make yourself known to the Club officials and watch what happens. Talk to some of the members and ask plenty of questions.

The Club occasionally has “Try Shooting Days” where you can shoot at targets with a borrowed gun under the guidance and coaching of an experienced shooter. You don't even need a shooter's licence to take part.

If you already have a Firearms Licence and a shotgun there is no reason why you can't have a go. Let one of the Club officials know that you are a beginner and would like some coaching and guidance.

What types of Clay Target shooting are available?

Basically there are 3 types available at the Shoalhaven CTC – Trap or “Down-the-Line” (DTL), Skeet and Sporting.

Trap/DTL involves shooting from five lanes radiating out from a single trap house in front of the shooters. Targets are thrown forward at various angles. All targets are moving away from the shooter and rising (initially at least). Mostly you are allowed 2 shots at each target, but some events are “single barrel” (1 shot only). Events are usually broken into multiples of 25 targets. Targets are usually broken at 30 to 40 metres.

Skeet involves shooting from 8 different stations arranged in a semi-circle at targets thrown from 2 different traps – a high house and a low house. Depending on the station, targets can be going away from the shooter, coming towards the shooter or crossing at right angles. Only one shot is fired at each target. Four pairs (2 targets thrown simultaneously) are also shot at. 25 targets are shot each “round”. All targets are broken at less than 25 metres.

Sporting (or simulated field) is highly variable – no 2 events or grounds are the same. Generally there are 7 or 8 stations where 2 to 4 targets are shot – for a total of 25 for a “round”. Targets can be thrown in an infinite variety of ways - high-low, fast-slow, flat-loopy, in the air-on the ground, in singles-pairs. Targets are often thrown between and over trees. A range of different targets may be used – standards, midis, minis, rabbits and battues. Sporting is intended to simulate field shooting for ducks, rabbits, grouse etc. Shooters usually shoot in a squad of 5 or 6. Targets can be very close (less than 10 metres) or long range (more than 45 metres).

What Firearms Licence do I need?

To shoot competitively your licence will need to be endorsed for “Clay Target Shooting” and you will need to be a member of a recognised Clay Target Shooting organisation such as the ACTA (Australian Clay Target Association). In the interim, you can shoot at clay targets non-competitively with a Licence that is endorsed for Hunting/Vermin Control.

What sort of gun do I need?

Most clay target shooters use under and overs (U/O's) with single triggers but side by sides (SxS) and U/O's with double triggers can also be used. Guns for Trap/DTL usually have 30 or 32 inch barrels and half or full chokes. Guns best suited to skeet usually have shorter barrels (26 or 28 inch) and very open chokes (skeet, cylinder or improved cylinder). Guns for sporting often have 28 to 32 inch barrels and variable (screw in) chokes. This allows specific chokes to be chosen to best suit the types of targets being thrown. Most field guns can be easily used for sporting.

An “adequate” shotgun can be purchased for around \$1000 to \$1500. The price is largely unimportant – as long as it is in good condition and safe for use, the most important factor is how well it “fits” the user.

What sort of cartridges are used?

Most clay target shooting is done with cartridges with 28 grams (1 ounce) of shot in sizes 7, 7¹/₂, 8 or 9. Sometimes, lighter (24 grams) or heavier (30 or 32 grams) loads are used. Shot sizes 7 & 7¹/₂ are normal for Trap/DTL. Shot size 8 or 9 is normal for skeet. For sporting the full range of shot sizes can be used.

The beginner is advised to choose relatively light loads as this makes it easier to concentrate on hitting the target instead of worrying about the recoil. Light loads are less fatiguing. Cartridges usually cost \$7 to 8 per packet of 25 or \$150 for a case of 500.

What does it cost?

The cost is often determined by the value of the prizes. However, beginners can choose to shoot “birds only” in many events. This simply means that you shoot the targets the same as every one else, but you are not eligible to win any prizes. “Birds only” usually costs about \$8 per round of 25.

Paying your entry fee is called “nominating” or “paying your noms”.

What else is required?

Hearing protection is highly recommended. Ear muffs or plugs are both suitable. Cheap industrial foam earplugs work well.

Shooting glasses are also advisable – to protect the eyes from pieces of broken target. A hat is useful to shield the sun. A cartridge belt, shooting jacket or cartridge pouch to hold cartridges makes things easier.

And finally – enclosed footwear is mandatory – no things or sandals.

What safety protocols apply?

Safety is VERY important. Except when on the firing line ready to shoot, ALWAYS have the gun in an open position and unloaded. NEVER carry a gun around the Clubhouse or car park or on the shooting ranges with the breach closed. Keep the muzzles pointed downwards. Don't leave guns lying around – lock them in your car when they are not being used.