



Skeet: Sustained Lead Basics

Most shotgunners know that there are several basic approaches to hitting a target on the skeet field. The most commonly used approach is “Sustained-Lead”. In Sustained Lead, the gun is pointed at a location in space in front of the target and fired so that the shot string and the target arrive in the same space at the same time. Simply put, the shooter “leads” the target the correct distance for a period of time before firing. If the “lead” is the correct one and the gun is pointed at the flight path, rather than above or below it, the target *will* be hit. As the squad moves around the skeet field, the apparent leads change, with the largest leads in the middle of the field and the smallest on the ends.

A number of books and other resources are available on the topic of sustained lead. If you consult these, they tend to give the following information on lead requirements:

Station	High House Lead	Low House Lead
1	6” under	12” in front
2	12” in front	24” in front
3	24” in front	36” in front
4	36” in front	36” in front
5	36” in front	24” in front
6	24” in front	12” in front
7	12” in front	0”
8	Cover it	Cover it

Practitioners of the technique rarely adjust the amount of lead that they use for a particular target, but may often adjust other parts of the method. Those things that get changed most often are:

- Pickup Point (that place where the eyes are focused while calling for the bird)
- Hold Point (the point in space where the gun is pointed while calling for the bird)
- Engagement Point (the point along the flight path where the gun is fired)

If the Pickup Point is too close to the house, the target will appear as a blur. Moving out from the house often helps when the target seems to get a “jump” on you. If Pickup Point is too far from the house, smooth gun movement may not be generated, and “spot-shooting” will occur, if the target is hit at all.

The Hold Point is *seldom* the same as the Pickup Point. A Hold Point that is too far from the house will cause jerky gun movement, as per above. When the Hold Point is too close to the house, it may not be possible to get the gun moving before the target passes in front of it. The location of Hold Point is often changed with gun weight. Lighter guns have less inertia and are easier to start moving. To be fair, remember that heavier guns have more inertia and are harder to *stop* moving. Check out any competition O/U tube set. Most are at or over 10 lbs.

The Engagement Point must not be too far along the target flight path. If it is, the target will also be falling as well as moving away, requiring two elements of lead rather than one. Additionally, it must not be so far out as to cause the shooter’s stance to become unstable. If the Engagement Point is too close to the house, it may promote “snap-shooting” or sudden and uncoordinated gun movement. Additionally, it will not allow the shooter to insure that the proper lead has been established.

A good way to observe this in action is to get one of the instructional tapes by Bender or Mayes, you know, the ones with the gun camera work on them. They show (in excellent super-slo-mo) exactly what the lead looks like to the shooter as the gun goes off.

Keep your head down and follow-through!