

Single Action Shooting Society®

Cowboy Action Shooting™

Range Operations Course



Student Handbook

VERSION 28.3

MAY 2025

COPYRIGHT 2000-2025

SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY, INC.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Table of Contents

UNIT 1: Cowboy Action Shooting Range Operations Course	3
UNIT 2: Cowboy Action Shooting Basics	3
UNIT 3: CAS Shooting Categories	3
UNIT 4: CAS Ammunition	5
UNIT 5: Holsters, Cartridge Belts, and Bandoleers	6
UNIT 6: CAS Firearms	6
UNIT 7: CAS Range Operations	7
UNIT 8: CAS Penalty Assessments	9
QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD – EXAM	9
EXAM REVIEW	11

UNIT 1: Cowboy Action Shooting Range Operations Course

This course is not designed to be a reading or full presentation of the Shooters Handbook for Cowboy Action Shooting.

This course is not designed to be an introduction to Cowboy Action Shooting. Instead, the course highlights and presents key elements of CAS Range Operations. The SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course is a pre-requisite for this course.

The SASS Shooters Handbook is the greatest resource available to all SASS Shooters, members, & Range Officers.

Become familiar with the Handbook and reference it when enforcing the rules – it is your back up!

UNIT 2: Cowboy Action Shooting Basics

The SASS Shooting Sports

Undeniably, WBAS and CAS share similarities as sister sports of the Single Action Shooting Society.

There are distinct differences between the 2 disciplines, and it is important to understand although the 2 sports share SASS' long standing safety covenants, each discipline has specific safety rules and firearm requirements, as well as varying penalty assessments.

Cowboy Action Shooting (CAS)

- ✓ CAS is a multi-gun shooting sport in which contestants compete with firearms typical of those used in the taming of the Old West: Single Action Revolvers, pistol caliber lever actions, and side by side or pump style shotguns.
- ✓ CAS is a timed sport in which shooters compete on a course of different shooting stages and scenarios- using all four firearms in a designated order and sequence.
- ✓ CAS matches are staged in a unique, characterized “Old West” style, and there are dress/costume requirements for contestants.

UNIT 3: CAS Shooting Categories

This course is not designed to be a full presentation of all the available shooting categories from the Shooters Handbook.

Before choosing a category, ensure you have taken the time to learn the requirements for the category you are choosing.

SASS recognizes categories based on age, gender, costuming, equipment, shooting style, and/or propellant.

All CAS base categories are open gender categories. *There are no Men's categories! Base categories may be subdivided by gender to establish Ladies categories for women only. Lady categories are restricted to biological (at birth) females only.

Competitors may compete within any category for which they qualify.

Each category has a set of standard regulations the competitor must follow in order to “stay in category” during the match.

Open Age Categories

Open age categories have no age parameters and carry a set of guidelines.

- Cowboy – any age
- Cowgirl – any age (Female only)

Age Based Categories

Age based categories are offered to allow participants to compete amongst their peers and each carry a set of guidelines. *Parental consent and supervision is required for all competitors under 18 years of age.

CAS Age Based Shooting Categories

Buckaroo/Buckarett	13 and under
Junior Boy/Junior Girl	16 and under
Wrangler/Lady Wrangler	36 +
Forty-Niner/Lady Forty-Niner	49 +
Senior/Lady Senior	60 +
Silver Senior/Lady Silver Senior	65 +
Elder Statesman/Grand Dame	70 +
Cattle Baron/Cattle Baroness	75 +
El Patron/La Patrona	80 +
El Rey/La Reina	85 +

Shooting Style Categories

Shooting Style categories allow participants to compete with others *utilizing the same shooting style*.

- Duelist
- Gunfighter

Blackpowder Shooting Categories

- Frontier Cartridge

Costume Categories

Costume categories have specific sets of costuming and accessory requirements as well as firearm/caliber requirements.

- Classic Cowboy
- B-Western

Frontiersman

Frontiersman is a separate Blackpowder category and requires the use of percussion revolvers.

Category Breakouts

Base categories may be subdivided by propellant, gender, and age.

Example(s):

Gunfighter -> Frontier Cartridge Gunfighter -> Lady Frontier Cartridge Gunfighter -> Senior Lady Frontier Cartridge Gunfighter

B-Western -> Lady B-Western -> Senior Lady B-Western

UNIT 4: CAS Ammunition

Revolver & Rifle Ammunition

- ✓ Must be all lead.
- ✓ Moly-Disulfide, polymer coated bullets, or equivalents are acceptable.
- ✓ Minimum power factor of 60.
- ✓ Minimum velocity of 400 fps.
- ✓ MAXIMUM velocity for Revolvers: 1000 fps
- ✓ MAXIMUM velocity for Rifles: 1400 fps

*Ammunition that exceeds these velocities is considered illegal.

Pocket pistol, derringers, and long-range firearms are exempt from the power factor and velocity requirements. (Non-Main match firearms)

Shotgun Ammunition

- ✓ Must be number 4 lead birdshot or smaller
- ✓ No steel or plated shot is allowed
- ✓ No magnum or high velocity shotgun shells allowed
- ✓ Shells may not be sized down (necked) by the use of any die not made for the specific gauge
- ✓ Shells may not be scored (ringed) as to cause the case, wad, and shot column to be shot as one projectile

Blackpowder Ammunition

Blackpowder means: Blackpowder or a Blackpowder substitute such as Pyrodex, 777, APP, or comparable propellants intended for muzzle loading firearms.

- ✓ Propellants containing nitrocellulose are prohibited as BP substitutes
- ✓ Any combination of smokeless and Blackpowder (so called duplex loads) is specifically prohibited in ANY category
- ✓ Baseline standards for the amount of smoke and testing guidelines should be referenced in the Shooter's Handbook.

ILLEGAL Ammunition – Revolver/Rifle:

- ✓ Jacketed or semi-jacketed
- ✓ Hollow point
- ✓ Plated
- ✓ Gas checked
- ✓ Multiple projectile bullets
- ✓ Ammunition with bullets recessed below the case mouth
- ✓ Electrically fired ammunition

Power Factor

Power factors are simply calculated by multiplying the bullet weight times the velocity – and then the resulting number is divided by 1000.

Examples:

- 200 gr bullet traveling at 750 fps has a power factor of 150 $(200 \times 750) / 1000 = 150$
- 250 gr bullet traveling at 800 fps has a power factor of 200 $(250 \times 800) / 1000 = 200$

UNIT 5: Holsters, Cartridge Belts, and Bandoleers

The CAS Shooters handbook contains a full listing of rules and parameters surrounding holsters, belts, bandoleers, loops, and pouches.

If there is any question regarding the legality of any item, or if clarification is needed, reach out to SASS Headquarters for more information.

Holsters

- All handguns must be carried in a safe holster capable of retaining the firearm throughout a normal range of motion.
- Two Revolvers may not be worn on the same side of the body.
- Main match holsters must be located one on each side of the belly button and separated by at least the width of 2 fists at the belt.
- Holsters may not depart from the vertical by more than 30° when worn

Cross Draw & Shoulder Holsters

Cross draw holsters and shoulder holsters require extra care on the part of the competitor to ensure:

- No holster may depart from the 30° when worn
- When drawing a revolver, the user must twist their body (if necessary) to ensure the muzzle never breaks the 170° rule

Cartridge Belts, Bandoleers, Pouches, Ammo belts, Loops

The CAS Shooters handbook contains a detailed listing of the rules, requirements, and outlawed items for:

- Belts
- Bandoleers
- Ammunition belts
- Ammunition loops
- Belt slides
- And more

UNIT 6: CAS Firearms

The firearms used in Cowboy Action Shooting are all required to be original or replicas of the Old American West/Frontier era (approx.. 1860-1899):

- 2 single action revolvers
- Lever action rifle (pistol caliber, center fire not larger than .45 caliber)
- Side by side, pump style, or lever style shotgun
Any side by side or single shot typical, center fire of at least 20 gauge and no larger than 10 gauge.

The CAS Shooters Handbook should be referenced for firearm specifics.

There are restrictions and guidelines on:

- ✓ Category specific firearm requirements
- ✓ Sights
- ✓ Grips
- ✓ Stocks
- ✓ Lever wraps

UNIT 7: CAS Range Operations

Enforcing all SASS Safety Rules is not negotiable.

All SASS Basic Range Safety Conventions apply:

- ✓ Shooter Responsibility
- ✓ The 170° Rule
- ✓ Firearm Staging & Handling
- ✓ Stage Conventions
- ✓ Loading & Unloading Practices
- ✓ Ammunition

Stage Conventions

- ✓ All knockdown shotgun targets may be re-engaged until down.
- ✓ All knockdown targets (shotgun, rifle, or revolver) must go down to count.
*EXCEPTION: Buckaroo/Buckarett shooters must hit knockdown targets, but they do not have to go down to count.
- ✓ In the event a target fails or is downed, the shooter should “shoot where it was”.

Starting Position(s):

If no starting position is given, the shooter shall stand upright with revolvers holstered, hands at the sides and not touching any firearm. (SASS default)

Common starting positions:

Cowboy Port Arms
At the Ready
High Surrender
Low Surrender
Texas Surrender
Hands on Hat
Gun(s) in Hand

Range Operations – Rifle

Loading & Unloading table

- Rifles are loaded with the number of rounds required for the initial target sequence-up to a maximum of 10 rounds
- Rifle must be checked clear at the unloading table

Staging

- Rifles may be staged with the magazine loaded, action closed, hammer fully down on an empty chamber (NOT the safety notch), with the muzzle pointing in a safe direction (adheres to the 170°)
- The muzzle is never initially staged on the ground.
- Vertical staging is not restricted if the stage scenario and provided prop calls for safe, vertical staging of the long gun(s).

Rifle Conventions

- Rifles will be cycled and discarded, pointed safely downrange.
- If the action of a long gun closes after being cycled, the shooter will, at the conclusion of the stage, show it to be clear to the TO.
- No person other than the competitor may handle the long gun prior to opening the action and showing it to be clear.
- Once a rifle is cocked, either the round under the hammer must be expended (shot) or the action opened for the rifle to be returned to a safe condition.
- Unfired, ejected rifle rounds may be replaced (reloaded) on the clock.

A rifle is considered SAFE to leave the shooters hands in the following condition(s) only (some conditions may be corrected before firing the next firearm):

- Empty
- Hammer fully down on an empty chamber or spent round, action closed (restaged for further use)

A rifle is considered SAFE for movement (in hand, while moving through a stage) in the following condition only:

- Hammer fully down on an empty chamber or expended round, action closed.
- Action open, round on carrier or in chamber.

Range Operations – Shotgun

Loading & Unloading Shotguns

- Shotguns are always staged open and empty and are loaded on the clock unless the stage description dictates otherwise.
- Shotguns are to be shown clear at the unloading table, per SASS Unloading conventions.

Shotgun Conventions

- Pump and Lever action shotguns are not allowed to load more than two live rounds at a time unless specified in the stage description.
- Mule eared shotguns can be cocked at the beginning of a scenario, whether staged or in the shooter's hands.
- Shotgun shells may be removed without penalty to return the firearm to a safe condition.
- Shotguns will be cleared and discarded with their barrels pointing in a safe direction.
- If the action closes after being cleared, the shooter will, at the conclusion of the stage, show it to be clear to the TO.
- No person other than the competitor may handle the gun prior to opening the action and showing it to be clear.

A shotgun is considered SAFE to leave the shooter's hands in the following condition only (some conditions may be corrected before firing the next firearm):

- Empty.

A shotgun is considered SAFE for movement (in hand, while moving through a stage) in the following conditions only:

- Action Open, round in chamber or on carrier.
- Hammer(s) fully down on an empty chamber(s) or expended round(s), action closed.

Range Operations – Revolvers

Loading & Unloading

- Six-shot revolvers are loaded at the loading table with a maximum of five rounds and the hammer lowered and resting on the empty chamber.
- Five-shot revolvers may load five rounds, but the hammer must rest on a dummy chamber or safety slot/pin in the cylinder to avoid the hammer resting on a live round/cap.
- Revolvers must be emptied and shown clear at the unloading table.
- SASS Loading and Unloading conventions apply.

Percussion Revolvers

- Must only be capped at the loading table or while on the course of fire.
- The cap over a nipple must never be seated using the percussion revolver's own hammer.
- The TO shall require any misfires to be cleared on the firing line- by either recapping and firing that chamber, or by uncapping the misfired chamber.

*See the Shooters Handbook for more information on Percussion revolvers.

Revolver Conventions

- Revolvers are drawn and used in accordance with the shooter's category.
- When drawing a revolver from its holster, the revolver may not be cocked until it is pointed safely downrange (at a 45° angle downrange)
- Revolvers are return to leather (re-holstered in a safe condition) at the conclusion of the shooting string, unless the stage description specifically directs otherwise.
- A cocked revolver may never leave a shooter's hand, including from one hand to the other. (This does not apply when loading, unloading, or reloading on the firing line)
- ONLY Gunfighters and B-Western categories allow two loaded revolvers "in hand" at the same time.
 - o This may be corrected in regard to any other categories before cocking either one without penalty.

Revolvers are considered **SAFE for movement** (in hand, while holstering, or while moving through a stage) **and SAFE to leave the shooters hand** in the following conditions ONLY:

- Hammer fully down on an empty chamber.
- Hammer fully down on an expended round. A revolver may not originally be staged in this condition but can be restaged in this condition.

UNIT 8: CAS Penalty Assessments

SASS Penalties procedures apply.

There are no specific penalties for Cowboy Action Shooting apart from the SASS penalty procedures reviewed in the SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course.

5- second penalties (Misses)

10 second penalties (Procedurals & MSV's)

SDQ

MDQ

Spirit of the Game Violation

QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD – EXAM

Cowboy Action Shooting Range Operations Course

EXAM

Date: _____

Name/Alias: _____ **SASS #** _____

Instructor Alias(es): _____

Please circle your answer to each question.

1. What is your greatest resource when checking and enforcing the rules for Cowboy Action Shooting?
 - a. The most experienced person on the Posse
 - b. The SASS Shooter's Handbook
 - c. The Timer Operator
 - d. The Match Director

2. Revolvers should be returned to the holster:
 - a. Hammer down on a spent case or empty chamber
 - b. Hammer cocked with empty chamber or spent case in the cylinder
 - c. Hammer down on an empty chamber

3. During the course of fire, never cock a revolver until:
 - a. It is pointed on target
 - b. It is clear of the holster
 - c. It is pointed down range and at least 45 degrees from the ground

4. In CAS, main match pistol ammunition must have a minimum velocity of _____, and a maximum velocity of _____.
 - a. 400 fps; 1000 fps
 - b. 650 fps; 1000 fps
 - c. 350 fps; 1400 fps

5. Re-holstering a revolver with the hammer cocked or down on a live round will result in:
 - a. 10 second safety penalty
 - b. Stage DQ
 - c. Match DQ

6. A shotgun is considered SAFE to leave the shooter's hands in the following condition only:
- Closed
 - Empty
 - With the safety on
7. If the action of a long gun closes after being cycled, the shooter will, at the conclusion of the stage:
- Show it to be clear to the TO
 - Receive a procedural penalty
8. No holster may depart from the _____ when worn.
- 45°
 - 20°
 - 30°
9. Which categories allow two loaded revolvers "in hand" at the same time?
- Gunfighter
 - B-Western
 - Classic Cowboy
 - Both a and b
10. What is your greatest resource when checking and enforcing the rules for Cowboy Action Shooting?
- The Range Master
 - The SASS Shooter's Handbook
 - The SASS Wire Forum
 - Facebook

EXAM REVIEW

Congratulations, Course Complete!

Thank You for taking the SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course.