

How to Start a Youth Trap Team

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This Handbook is intended to be a guide for first time coaches. It takes a great deal of organization to run a youth trapshooting team safely and smoothly. This handbook will give you a basic plan for setting up, running, and competing with your team. It is not a comprehensive guide, but it will get you started and give you ideas.

Why start a youth trapshooting program?

The growth of sport shooting depends on new shooters being introduced to this fun sport. Shooting sports help students learn safety, self-confidence, hand-eye coordination, team work and leadership skills. At its highest level, trapshooting is an Olympic sport. College scholarship money and industry sponsorships are available for competitive shooters.

Scholastic Clay Target Program www.sssfonline.org

The Scholastic Clay Target Program was developed and is administered by The Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF). The SCTP is a Youth Development Program focused on providing young people with positive experience in the clay target shooting sports: trap, skeet, sporting clays including the international games of Olympic Trap and I.S.S.F. Skeet.

The SCTP works with official sanctioning bodies of the respective shooting sports to administer the program rules and encourage participants to develop their skills under the guidance of coaches and mentors.

Your team members will have to pay membership to SCTP. As a coach you will have to take their on-line coaching course. Much information is available on this website.

Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA) www.shootata.com

The rules of the ATA are the governing rules for trap under SCTP. All participants must be ATA members. The ATA offers a Junior Membership for all shooters under the age of 18.

Their website provides listings of clubs and shoots throughout the country. You will find information about the history of trapshooting through the Hall of Fame website. Coaching certification is also available.

Academic, Integrity, and Marksmanship (AIM) www.shootata.com

Currently the ATA offers a competing youth program called AIM. It is still in its infancy and the Ohio coaches have decided to continue supporting SCTP. However, the young shooters can participate in both programs.

Ohio State Trapshooting Association (OSTA) www.ohiotrap.com

OSTA is the state governing body for all shooters who shoot ATA sanctioned events in Ohio. Support for the OSTA is derived from modest target fees every ATA shooter pays to participate. You do not need a separate membership in the OSTA, as you automatically become a member with your ATA membership and payment of target fees at an event.

The OSTA sponsors the Ohio State Championship shoot annually in June. The SCTP Championship is on Monday just prior to the start of the state shoot. This shoot is held at the Cardinal Center facility, Marengo, Ohio...about 25 miles north of Columbus along I-71.

The OSTA also sponsors a “Zone Shoot” that is held in May. Specific information of dates and locations of these shoots will appear on the website.

OSTA is very supportive of the SCTP State Championships and other shoots during the year. Coaches meet annually in early winter to discuss the previous year and plan for the next year. Much can be learned from these meetings. The minutes are always posted on the website. Watch the website or contact the SCTP State Director for dates of this meeting. New coaches should contact the State Director to get their information posted on the state website.

The Ohio State Trapshooting Foundation annually provides funds for several college scholarships for Ohio high school seniors. The Foundation also supports the SCTP program.

Sponsoring Club

SCTP requires each team to have a sponsoring club. Most clubs realize the importance of introducing young people to the shooting sports. A club should be interested in subsidizing the cost of a youth trapshooting program. This can be done in several ways. The club can set aside a certain dollar amount and provide targets at cost for your practices. A count of targets used would be supplied to the club weekly and the cost subtracted from the amount that was set aside. When the amount is used, if not replenished through a fundraiser, the shooters would pay for their practices. Some clubs provide a place to practice, but the shooters pay for all of their targets. The important thing is to have a place to shoot and an established time to hold practices that do not interfere with the club’s day to day operation.

Fundraising

Raising funds to offset the cost of your team’s operation is very important. It also plays an important role in teaching your shooters to take ownership and some responsibility in running their team. There are numerous companies who offer ready-made fundraising projects for school teams. Here are some additional ideas:

ATA Raffle

The ATA in the past has held a raffle to help fund youth shooting. The tickets were \$5.00 and the team was allowed to keep \$3.00 from each sold ticket. Prizes in the past have been a truck, Cabela's gift packages, life memberships, etc. Watch the ATA website for information.

Dinners

Chicken barbeques, steak fry, spaghetti dinners or pancake breakfasts are all good ways to raise funds for the team. These also get the parents involved which is very important. These can be done in conjunction with a club trophy shoot. It makes for a great day of fun for the club members and the team. It is a good idea to have the team shoot a 50 bird program of their own to show the club members what they are supporting.

Sponsorships

Local sponsors can be solicited. Gun stores, gunsmiths, other organizations may want to sponsor a shooter or the team. Offer to advertise for them at the club, the club newsletter and in any handout you may provide your shooters. A tiered program can be developed with different levels of sponsorship.

Raffles

Ohio has regulations concerning gambling which includes raffles, 50/50s etc. Please make sure you are in compliance before you have any activity that could be considered gambling.

Coach's Training

Under SCTP, a coach does not need to be a certified shotgun instructor, but it is a very strong asset if you are one. SCTP does require that you complete the on-line Double Goal coaching course and have a background check completed. Certification should be strongly considered as your program grows. Classes can be found on the OSTA, ATA, and NRA websites.

Coach's Commitment

At the bare minimum, a coach's job is to provide an opportunity for young shooters to shoot safely on a regular basis. Fielding a team will require a coach to complete all pre-season planning and budget work, arrange for the purchase of materials, advertise, recruit, conduct a safety course, run regular practices, supervise competitions and troubleshoot any related issues that come up during the season. The level of commitment is really up to the coach and his club.

Cost Analysis

It is important that each shooter and family have an idea of the cost of participating on the youth team. There are several items to consider when determining the cost of your program. After finding a club, the next big decision is to decide what equipment you and/or the club is going to provide to a new shooter. Are you going to provide shotguns, ammunition, shell bags, vest, etc.? Are you only going to provide equipment to those who have no equipment? Are you going to have discounted target costs? The size of your team is going to determine the path you choose. Most coaches believe that the shooters must have some financial responsibility to make the commitment needed to come to practices and shoot in competitions.

Some programs charge a “participation” fee. This fee might cover the cost of the SCTP state shoot, a T-shirt, and maybe another competition that you as a coach want them to shoot. Any extra can be used for end of the year awards.

There are membership fees that must be either collected by the coach or a system must be set up to make sure they are paid. These fees are: club membership (most have youth memberships), ATA, SCTP and the NRA. The latter is optional, but many clubs require NRA memberships to be eligible for club memberships.

Late Arrivals

A decision will have to be made about allowing youth into your program after it has started. The SCTP requires participation in at least 6 team practices to be eligible to shoot the state shoot. Additional safety meetings will need to be held. If a participation fee is charged, do you pro-rate the fee? Some teams set a deadline for accepting new shooters.

Provide a Schedule/Calendar

Each shooter should know when practices are scheduled. A set time should be established and strictly followed. If a practice has to be canceled it should only be for extreme weather. A coach should have assistants who can hold practice if the coach cannot attend.

The schedule should include the state shoot and any other shoot you want them to attend. For example, there are currently 3 youth shoots sponsored by teams and their clubs that you may want to attend. These allow the shooters to meet other youth shooters from around the state. With today’s technology, they can stay in touch with them throughout the year.

The schedule should include any fundraisers if they can be scheduled this far in advance. For example, you may be able to coordinate with your club to have a fundraiser when the club has a trophy shoot or an honor shoot.

Recruiting

There are many ways to find youth that want to learn to shoot. Your sponsoring club can be a huge resource. Members have daughters, sons, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. An announcement in the club newsletter will get the word to them. Also put up a poster at the club. This will give notice to shooters who use the facility but are not members. Other sources are the American Legion, VFW, Pheasants Forever, and Duck's Unlimited to name a few. Just beware, the more places you place posters the more shooters you will have. This will effect your decision on equipment and cost analysis in general.

Orientation Meeting

An orientation meeting is a very important first step in keeping your team organized. Be prepared. Have a clear and concise presentation. Try not to ramble. The costs of the program should be discussed. If the shooters will be encouraged to shoot in other events that may not yet be scheduled these additional costs should be discussed. Provide all handouts including membership forms. Encourage and answer all questions. If you don't know the answer, write it down, and get back to the person as soon as possible. Make sure your membership forms request an e-mail address. This is the easiest way to communicate to all members on a regular basis.

The more you explain during orientation the better. This meeting is also when you explain all of the rules you expect the young shooter and the parents/grandparents/guardians to follow. Parents must make sure their young shooter(s) follow all safety rules at all times. Parents should act as positive role models, respect the goals of the SCTP, and reinforce the character values of good sportsmanship, teamwork and self-discipline. Parents should stay off the shooting field during training sessions. If a parent is a coach, if at all possible they should not coach their own child(ren). If a parent has something to discuss, they should discuss it with a coach in a positive manner. Any parent who criticizes other shooters, coaches, uses abusive language, consumes alcohol or drugs, or acts in an unsportsmanlike manner should not be allowed on your club premises. Parents should understand their actions will result in their child(ren) being removed from your program.

Organizing Multiple Forms

Shooters and parents will be required to fill out many forms at the start of the season. Membership forms for your club, ATA, and SCTP are just a few you will have to organize. It is helpful to keep a portable hanging file with a folder for each shooter. Keep copies of all forms and checks that are received. A check-off list can also be used as applications and forms are turned in. If you decide to have the shooters apply directly to the ATA for membership, you will need to obtain their membership numbers for use at the state shoot. Some coaches keep the cards. If your shooters become active ATA shooters this is not a good idea. A shooter can request a duplicate card.

Collecting Money

Collecting money from shooters and their parents can be a headache. Staying organized is a must. Being clear about what costs you are collecting is very important. For example, if you are collecting a “participation fee”, but the shooters may be encouraged to shoot in other events not included in that fee the parents need to understand this. These monies maybe paid at the time of the event directly to the club holding the shoot.

Keep a separate checking account. Do not commingle the funds with your personal monies. This will make your accounting for the team much easier. As a coach, you should be the only one to collect money. This process can spin out of control very quickly if care is not taken.

Safety, Safety, Safety

Safety of all shooters, parents, visitors and range workers is our number one priority. Trapshooting is one of the safest sports. There has never been a fatal shooting accident in the history of trapshooting. Reason—shooters respect the firearm and follow all safety rules.

A safety class must be held that covers the safe handling of any firearm. Trapshooting etiquette should be included. There are many safety DVDs available to help in this process. These are available from the NRA, USAS, and NSSF etc. SCTP also has “Rules of Conduct” which must be followed.

Parents should participate in your safety program. The more “eyes” you have watching the shooters the better. Plan how you will handle an accidental discharge on the line. You can yell and scream or use it as a training moment for all of the team.

Be prepared for the worst, take a first-aid course and make sure your club has a complete first-aid kit.

Practice

Practice schedule should be set at the beginning at the season. Try not to cancel practice. Only extreme conditions should cause cancellation. Set a beginning and ending time. Insist on timeliness.

Plan a practice program in advance so you are not deciding what to do at the start of each practice. A team meeting is a good way to start. Pick a topic to discuss or review the last practice results but always take time to get them together as a team. Your first practice of the season will require a lot of time with checking gun fit and assessing what equipment shooters will be using.

Another reason to plan your practices is you will have various levels of skill and experience. Beginners who have had no or little exposure to shooting will require more time and attention to every aspect of shooting. For those with some experience, practice can be a series of drills, shooting straight-aways, angles etc. Set a goal to give them direction.

Always keep score. These scores will be used to build your squads for competition.

On days that the weather is not cooperating, plan to watch DVDs from some of the top shooters. If you have new shooters who want to learn how to reload, you may want to plan a reloading class to avoid overloads and bloopers.

Give back to the club

All team members need to give something back to the club. Make sure you clean up the shooting fields after a practice. Empty trash cans. Clean up the club house. Additional time can be scheduled if the club needs other things done, such as edging of the fields. Extra cleaning chores may be needed prior to a fundraising event. Every club will have different needs. Ask the club president for suggestions.

Preparing for Competition

For the SCTP State Championship make sure you have all of your teams ATA membership numbers. Complete any additional forms required by the state organization for the competition. When all team/squad members have arrived, the process of signing up for the shoot can be completed. One check should be written for the total.

Prepare your team for a long day. They should watch the weather and dress appropriately. Bring water, snacks and some chairs for resting between events. The day ends with an award ceremony. Even if you don't have a team in the winners circle, your team should show support and congratulate the winners. Vendors are very supportive of the SCTP. They provide drawing prizes that are given away during the awards ceremony to shooters who shot the event and are attending the awards ceremony.

Competition Day

Be organized and be punctual. It's unfair to make your team stand around waiting for the coach. Just as soon as all shooters have been accounted for, get them signed up so they know in what squad number they will be shooting. If you are not familiar with the grounds, take the team for a tour to find their starting trap and view the background. Encourage them to shoot a practice. This will help take the edge off the jitters and fill in some of the time before they are to start shooting. But don't let them wear themselves out either shooting practice or running around. They should remember they are representatives of their club and team and should act like ladies and gentlemen.

End of the Year Awards

It is important for each shooter to have something to remember the season. A small trophy with a shooter on it is a great memento and will spark many conversations because it stands out from normal trophies.

End of the Year Survey

In order to improve you program, it is important to give your shooters and parents a chance to give anonymous feedback. The forms should be simple and given at the end of the year event. Some sample questions are: What did you like about the season? What did you not like about the season? Do you hope to shoot on the team next year?

Resources

There are many sources for coaching information. Other coaches can be a great source of information. The OSTA website lists the coaches of established teams. They will be glad to answer any questions.

Amateur Trapshooting Association	www.shootata.com
Ohio State Trapshooting Association	www.ohiotrap.com
Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation	www.sssfonline.org
National Shooting Sports Foundation	www.nssf.org
USA Shooting	www.usashooting.com
National Rifle Association	www.nrahg.org
Responsible Sports	www.responsiblesports.com
Positive Coaching Alliance	www.positivecoach.org
Character Counts	www.charactercounts.org