

# COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING PROGRAM GUIDE



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®



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# INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended to provide councils and districts with an overview of the requirements for running the cowboy action shooting program. This is not a unit-level activity, and it should not be conducted as one. In this publication you will find youth requirements, training requirements for adults who are providing the program, and sample budgets for camp and weekend program venues. Plans for building the program area facilities are included in the appendix.

The program offers a fun and safe introduction to cowboy action shooting with pistols, rifles, and shotguns. While attending camp, Boy Scouts and Venturers 14 years of age or older can take part in a special shooting experience with opportunities to shoot single-action .22-caliber pistols, lever-action .22-caliber rifles, and 12-gauge or 20-gauge shotguns. In various old-time western scenarios, Scouts play “good guys” who prove their accuracy by shooting at things like spinning metal targets where they hit the spinner to “ring the bell.” All shooters choose their own cowboy action names before starting so the NRA instructors—dressed in cowboy attire—can call them by those names.



## YOUTH REQUIREMENTS

Boy Scouts and Venturers who are over the age of 14, or are 13 and have completed the eighth grade, may participate in this activity.

All youth participants are required to have written permission from their parent or guardian before they can take part in the program. A sample permission form is included in Appendix 1 of this guide. The council may also include this as part of the overall permissions for the camp or activity; however, it must clearly state that a child has the parent or guardian's permission to handle and fire a handgun, rifle, and shotgun.

## ADULT SUPERVISION AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

BSA Youth Protection policies for two-deep leadership must be maintained at all times.

The cowboy action shooting program can be conducted only by NRA-certified instructors with pistol, rifle, and/or shotgun certifications (must have all three if using all three

types of firearms). Each cowboy action shooting participant will be accompanied by a certified pistol, rifle, or shotgun instructor (depending on the firearm being used) who is actively involved in every shot and all of the gun handling. All Range Safety Officers and instructors for this program must possess current credentials for the discipline they will be instructing.

- Range Safety Officers (RSOs) must have current certification from the NRA.
- Instructors must have a current rating of pistol, rifle, or shotgun instructor from the NRA.



# PROGRAM GUIDELINES

## APPLICABLE LAWS

BSA safety policies generally run parallel to or go beyond legal mandates. However, it is the camp or activity supervisor's responsibility to confirm and ensure compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations or statutes related to youth handling and using a firearm.

## BSA GUIDELINES

This is an "open shooting experience," or level 2 according to the five levels of BSA shooting activities. All guidelines in the *Boy Scouts of America National Shooting Sports Manual*, No. 430-938, must be followed ([http://www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/pdf/30931\\_WB.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/Outdoor%20Program/pdf/30931_WB.pdf)).

Lever-action rifles have been approved for use in this program only and should not be used in other Scouting programs.

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Before beginning this program, a program hazard analysis should be conducted for the range and this program as outlined in National Camp Accreditation Program standard PD-111 ([www.scouting.org/ncap](http://www.scouting.org/ncap)). The enterprise risk management committee for the council should

review the analysis as per standard PD-112. The program hazard analysis instructions and template can be found at [www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Forms](http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/Forms).

The standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the range should also be reviewed and updated to reflect the requirements for delivering this program. A range SOP sample can be found in Appendix 3 of the *BSA National Shooting Sports Manual*.

## RANGE DESIGN

This program is intended to give youth an Old West "cowboy" shooting experience. The range should be specifically designed to provide the Old West look and feel. Range designs can be found in Appendix 2 of this guide.

# RUNNING THE PROGRAM

## BEFORE YOUTH ARRIVE

The program provides a fun immersion in old-time shooting scenarios where youth take on the persona of the "good guy," shooting at targets to prove their shooting accuracy. Sample scenarios are in Appendix 3 of this guide. You can adapt these samples for your camp or come up with your own scenarios that relate to the history of your area.

If metal targets are used, ensure that the targets are properly angled and

at a proper distance so that all metal splatter hits the ground away from participants and instructors.

All firearms, ammunition, and targets are set up during non-program hours by maintenance personnel in sufficient quantity to run the program for all shooters without interruption. Only council-maintained firearms and ammunition should be used for this program.

Instructors will assist the NRA Range Safety Officer in putting up targets, placing firearms on the firing line, staging ammunition on the preparation table, and setting up shooting positions and cowboy action scenery.

General staging areas for shooters and those waiting their turn are clearly marked and include a red “ready” line behind each shooting position. As shooters enter, they stand behind the line and await the command to move to the shooting position.

## **WHILE YOUTH ARE IN THE ACTIVITY AREA**

- Each shooter in the cowboy action shooting program will have a certified pistol, rifle, or shotgun instructor, depending on the shooting position. The instructor will be actively involved in every shot and all of the gun handling at that station. Qualified instructors should be stationed at each position prior to youth beginning the shooting experience.
- The pistol, rifle, or shotgun will be loaded by the instructor prior

to the shooter arriving at the shooting position.

- Instructors are responsible for adhering at ALL TIMES to safety rules and the commands provided by the NRA Range Safety Officer. Each instructor will oversee their shooter’s unloading, shooting, and sighting on the range, as well as exceptional situations such as cease-fires.
- Before moving to their shooting positions, all youth must participate in a cowboy action shooting safety briefing as outlined in Appendix 4. The course of fire—option 1 or 2 below—should be determined before the briefing by the person in charge of shooting sports for the camp or activity. The course of fire must be clearly explained during the briefing so that participants understand what they are to do at each station, and when and where they are to move.
- After the briefing, each shooter will choose his or her own cowboy action name so the NRA instructors, dressed in cowboy attire, may call them by these names.
- Cowboy scenery for four different shooting positions will be located on the walkway of the western-style structure.

## **COURSE OF FIRE OPTION 1**

- The shooter starts at the left shooting station (shooting position 1), placing his or her hands on the shelf until commanded by the RSO to commence firing.
- Once the RSO has given the firing command, the shooter picks up the lever-action rifle, fires six rounds at spinning rifle targets, opens the action, and then sets down the rifle.
- The shooter then moves to the first window (shooting position 2), picks up

the first pistol, and fires six rounds at a flatiron pistol target. When finished, the shooter opens the cylinder loading gate and sets down the pistol.

- Then the shooter moves to the second window (shooting position 3), picks up the second pistol, fires six rounds at another flatiron target, and repeats the procedure of opening the cylinder loading gate and setting down the pistol.
- The shooter now moves to the right end of the structure (shooting position 4), picks up the shotgun, and fires two shots at a ground target. When finished, the shooter ejects the shells and sets down the shotgun.
- Finally, the shooter walks back to the ready line. When the RSO has given the “all clear” command, the next shooter can move to the ready position.

- The shooter then walks back to the ready line. When the RSO has given the “all clear” command, the next shooter can move to the ready position.



3D VIEW - FRONT  
NO SCALE



3D VIEW - REAR  
NO SCALE

## COURSE OF FIRE OPTION 2

- The shooter starts at the left shooting station (shooting position 1), placing his or her hands on the shelf until commanded by the RSO to commence firing.
- Once the RSO has given the firing command, the shooter picks up the lever-action rifle, fires six rounds at spinning rifle targets, opens the action, and then sets down the rifle.
- Then the shooter, remaining at the left end of the structure, picks up the pistol and fires six rounds at a pistol target. When finished, the shooter opens the cylinder loading gate and sets down the pistol.
- The shooter now moves to the right end of the structure (shooting position 4), picks up the shotgun, and fires two shots at a ground target. When finished, the shooter ejects the shells and sets down the shotgun.

## Cowboy action shooting pavilion

# SAMPLE BUDGET

*Below is a sample startup/one-year budget for the cowboy action shooting program. (Costs may vary by council.)*

DESCRIPTION	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL COST
<b>ONE-TIME STARTUP COSTS</b>			
NRA PISTOL, RIFLE, AND SHOTGUN CERTIFICATION	\$100	6 (2 PER DISCIPLINE)	\$600
.22-CALIBER REVOLVERS	\$450	2	\$900
.22-CALIBER LEVER-ACTION RIFLES	\$500	2	\$1000
12-GAUGE OR 20-GAUGE PUMP- OR BREAK-ACTION SHOTGUNS	\$400	2	\$800
METAL TARGETS (IF USED)	\$150	4	\$600
EYE PROTECTION	\$6	12	\$72
STAGE CONSTRUCTION			\$1500
<b>TOTAL ONE-TIME COSTS</b>			<b>\$5,472</b>
<b>ONGOING YEARLY ESTIMATED COSTS (PER 100 SHOOTERS)</b>			
AMMUNITION			\$150
GUN CLEANING CONSUMABLES			\$150
EAR PROTECTION			\$100
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED YEARLY COSTS</b>			<b>\$400</b>

If you have questions or would like additional information about this program, contact Curt Palmer, Outdoor Program, at [Curt.Palmer@scouting.org](mailto:Curt.Palmer@scouting.org) or 972-580-7843.

# APPENDIXES

# APPENDIX 1

## CAMP \_\_\_\_\_ SCOUT COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT

Camp \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_ Council) will be conducting a Scout cowboy action shooting program. In this program, Scouts will shoot a rifle, pistol, and shotgun under the supervision of an NRA Range Safety Officer and NRA certified instructors. Scouts will be required to wear eye protection and hearing protection at all times while on the range. Scouts are expected to abide by all safety rules and the instructions of the Range Safety Officer(s) and rifle, pistol, and shotgun instructor(s).

I, the undersigned, give my child, \_\_\_\_\_, permission to participate in this program. I understand that participation in the activity involves a certain degree of risk. I have carefully considered the risk involved and have given consent for my child to participate in the activity. I understand that participation in the activity is entirely voluntary and requires participants to abide by the rules and standards of conduct. I release the Boy Scouts of America, the local council, the activity coordinators, and all employees, volunteers, related parties, or other organizations associated with the activity from any and all claims or liability arising out of this participation.

**For safety, my child and I agree that he/she will do the following or he/she will be removed from the program.** I understand that any additional cost associated with participation in this program will not be refunded if my child is removed for not following the rules below.

1. Complete a range safety briefing.
2. Wear all safety gear at all times while on the range.
3. Follow all the safety rules provided in the briefing.

4. Follow the instructions of the Range Safety Officer(s) and rifle, pistol, and shotgun instructor(s).

5. Do not handle the firearms until instructed to do so by the instructor(s).

6. Is 14 years of age, or 13 and has completed the eighth grade, as of the start of the class and will be in full compliance with all local, state, and federal guidelines, including age restrictions and original equipment manufacturer standards.

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

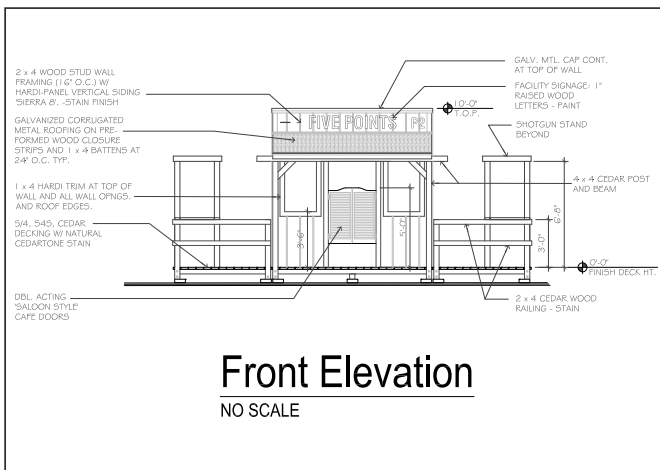
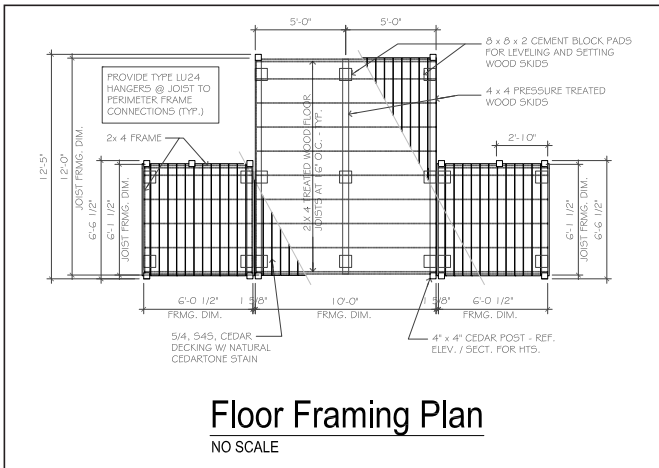
Parent/guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian printed name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_







# APPENDIX 3

## SAMPLE COWBOY ACTION RANGE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Inspected by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

√ = Yes

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled access/fencing/<br>gates closed | <input type="checkbox"/> NRA RSO control area centralized  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flags or signs displayed                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency communications working  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Left and right range limits displayed      | <input type="checkbox"/> First-aid kit filled/accessible   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backstop/impact area inspected             | <input type="checkbox"/> Range rules posted                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lumber boards painted and visible          | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin board hung               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Target frames/mounts in good repair        | <input type="checkbox"/> Gun racks available               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firing line marked                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Empty trash receptacles available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firing points numbered/clean               | <input type="checkbox"/> Brass/dud buckets labeled         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting benches/tables inspected          | <input type="checkbox"/> Trash area identified             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandbags/gun rests on hand                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lockable storage                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ready line/area marked                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spectator area designated                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scoring area established                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies available                         |  |

# APPENDIX 4

## SAMPLE COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING SCENARIOS

These scenarios are provided as suggestions. You should change the names and places to fit your camp or make up your own scenario to fit the history of your area.

### SCENARIO 1

Mayor V. Augustine has seen Bad Bob Gibbens and his Baldnobbers Gang crossing Bow Creek! The mayor ordered Marshal Larry Maly to get a posse and stop Bad Bob's band from holding up Uncle Kev Rittel's Trading Post. (Bad Bob has a terrible hankerin' for them slushies that Kev serves up there.) Marshal Maly has deputized you to keep the Baldnobbers out of the trading post.

### SCENARIO 2

Ranger Rex and Popcorn Patty were crossing the plains of Kirwin when they stopped their wagon outside of Greg's Trading Post. They were stocking up on fixin's for those famous covered-wagon turkey sandwiches. Next thing they knew, the Tom W. Turkey Gang had surrounded the store. These gobblers were tired of being hunted and were out to take prisoners. They

started to tie up and gag Ranger Rex so he couldn't make turkey sandwiches for the Scouts. But Popcorn Patty grabbed her Dutch oven to clobber those thieving gobblers, and screamed for help. Sheriff Slim Maly and Deputy Greenback Greg came a'running, rallying a posse to fend off the Tom W. Turkey Gang.



# APPENDIX 5

## COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING SAFETY BRIEFING

**Note:** This briefing is best done within viewing range of the cowboy action shooting range. When firearms are used during the briefing, the NRA RSO must follow the NRA gun safety rules.

Cowboy action shooting consists of shooting multiple shots from a loaded .22-caliber lever-action rifle, a .22-caliber single-action pistol, and a 12- or 20-gauge shotgun at non-human form action targets in an Old West setting.

Have participants read the NRA “Range Safety Rules” poster.

Review the NRA’s three “Fundamental Rules for Safe Gun Handling” (verbatim), and discuss general range rules (see below). Ask questions for reinforced learning.

### PURPOSE OF THE SHOOTING EVENT

- Tell participants that they will engage in cowboy action recreational shooting on the range.
- Explain that they will shoot a total of 14 rounds—six from the pistol, six from the rifle, and two from the shotgun. (Note: Those totals are for option 2; revise the numbers if using option 1.)

- A trained instructor will be at each shooting station to provide guidance and instruction. The role of each instructor and the NRA RSO is to provide a safe environment for the shoot.

### RANGE LAYOUT AND LIMITS

- Point out and describe the range layout, and explain what stations will be used and which guns will be shot at each station.
- Describe the ready line and firing line. Explain the purpose of the lines and when shooters are expected to be at each line.
- Inform everyone that the spectator line is located behind the ready line. This is where all non-shooters will remain until authorized to enter the range.

### HOW THE SHOOTING EVENT WORKS

Have one instructor demonstrate the course of fire option that has been selected, without using a loaded gun or live fire. Be sure to cover how shooters will move through the course and handle shooting at each station. (See course of fire descriptions on pages 6 and 7 of this guide.)

## SAFETY RULES

### Three fundamental NRA rules for safe gun handling:

Ask: What is the first rule of safe gun handling?

—Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.

Ask: What does a “safe direction” mean?

—The gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off, it would not cause injury.

Ask: What is the second rule of safe gun handling?

—Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

Ask: Unless shooting, where should the shooter’s finger(s) rest?

—The finger(s) should rest alongside the gun, i.e., on the frame, receiver, or trigger guard.

Ask: What is the third rule of safe gun handling?

—Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Emphasize that safeties can fail. Safe gun-handling rules should be followed all the time!

### Rules for safe use

*Know your target and what is beyond.*

Ask: What is meant by “know your target and what is beyond”?

—The shooter must be sure that projectiles will safely hit the backstop.

*Be sure the gun is safe to operate.*

*Know how to use the gun safely.*

Ask: What is meant by “know how to use the gun safely”?

—Shooters need to know how the firearm operates, its basic parts, how to safely open and close the action, and how to remove ammunition.

*Use only the correct ammunition for your gun.*

Ask: What is meant by “use only the correct ammunition”?

—Only ammunition designed for a particular gun can be safely fired in that gun.

—Shooters should ensure that the caliber marked on the barrel, ammo box, and cartridge case match. This is especially true for antique firearms.

*Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate.*

Ask: Why should course users wear eye and ear protection?

—Guns are loud and the noise can cause hearing damage. Guns can also emit debris, hot gas, and cartridge cases that could cause eye injuries.

*Never use alcohol or drugs before or while shooting.*

Ask: What type of substance is implied by “never use alcohol or drugs”?

—It refers to any substance that may impair normal mental or physical bodily functions.

## GENERAL RANGE SAFETY RULES

Have all range users read the rules as the NRA RSO points to range posters or refers to handouts.

- Know and obey all range commands.
- Know where others are at all times.
- Shoot only at authorized targets. Also, note that shooting at different targets at different distances or angles can result in hazardous conditions.
- Do not handle a firearm or stand at the firing line where firearms are present while others are downrange.
- Stop shooting immediately upon the command to “cease fire,” and await further instructions from the NRA RSO.

## NRA HYGIENE GUIDELINES

Explain that the following NRA hygiene guidelines can minimize one's exposure to airborne lead particles and cleaning product residues. Emphasize that these guidelines apply even to non-shooters exposed at the range or cleaning area because they, too, can be affected.

- Wash your hands and face with cold water after leaving the range or cleaning area, and before eating or drinking.
- Change and wash clothing after shooting or cleaning a gun to minimize exposure to airborne lead particles, cleaning product residues, or solvent.
- Leave dropped ammunition on the floor until the course of fire is completed and firearms are benched or grounded. This policy prevents shooters from unintentionally pointing the firearm at other users while picking up the ammunition, or moving in front of the firing line.
- Notify the NRA RSO when there is a firearm stoppage malfunction.
- Dry firing is permitted only at the firing line and only when authorized.
- All firearms must remain unloaded with actions open except when the guns are on the firing line and authorized to be loaded.
- When firearms are benched or grounded, keep the actions open and the ejection ports facing upward so the chambers are visible.
- Ammunition is not permitted in the cleaning area.

## FIRING LINE COMMANDS

Explain the standard range commands for cowboy action shooting:

"Is the line ready?" allows any shooter who is having problems to raise an arm and call, "Not ready on target (number)!"

"Commence firing!" signals shooters to begin shooting.

"Cease firing!" tells shooters to immediately stop firing and await further instructions. This command can also be given by shooters if they observe an unsafe condition.

"Range is clear" means all guns are benched.

"Police your firing point" means to pick up empty cartridges.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- Take charge of the situation. (Determine the seriousness of any injuries and assign duties.)
- Render aid. The first-aid kit should be centrally located.
- Call for help via radio.
- Direct help to wherever it is needed.



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