

# ON THE MARK Instructors' Notebook

The ON THE MARK Instructors' Notebook series is written and designed by Gary Anderson, DCM

## A Brief Guide for Parents

*On the Mark's Instructors' Notebook* is a teaching and coaching resource for junior shooting coaches and instructors. It seeks to present the most effective methods of teaching marksmanship to new shooters. This edition of **Instructors' Notebook** addresses one of the critical components of the success of most junior shooters, parents. The support and encouragement parents and other responsible adults provide for young shooters can make a huge difference in how they progress in the shooting sports. Since this **Instructors' Notebook** feature focuses on parents, coaches are encouraged to make it available to the parents of the junior shooters in their program.



### For Coaches and Instructors:

Positive parental support is a critical success factor that can further or hinder how much a young person progresses in the sport of shooting. There are several things coaches and instructors can do to foster the right kind of parental involvement in their youth shooting programs:

1. Allow and encourage parents and other interested adults to attend all appropriate club and team activities.
2. Conduct a parents' orientation program at the beginning of each basic marksmanship class or at the beginning of each program year.
3. Identify specific roles that parents and interested adults can play in your program (i. e. assistant range officer, assistant coach, fund raising, equipment acquisition and preparation, trip planning, etc.). Form a booster club that formalizes the support roles needed by your team or club.
4. Help parents learn more about the shooting sports; encourage them to attend coach training and travel to matches with the team; show them how they can facilitate home training by advanced juniors.



**A parents' orientation program will help to foster positive parental support for the juniors in your club or team.**

### Should Parents Coach Their Own Children?

The answer to this question can be yes or no. Some fathers and mothers coach their children and do an outstanding job. Other parents simply do not want to be their child's youth sports coach or they want the coach to be someone with expertise in that sport. Parents who want to coach their own son or daughter must ask whether both the parent and child will be comfortable in roles that involve teaching and learning technical skills, making and accepting critical evaluations, accepting and objectively analyzing good and bad results and giving both praise and encouragement that is not clouded by emotion. In some situations there is no one else available to be the shooting coach. If that is the case, parents should not avoid the responsibility of becoming their child's coach, but they also must accept the concurrent responsibility of learning as much as they can about how to teach shooting skills.

### Guidelines for Positive Parental Roles

Parents or guardians of youth who participate in organized target shooting programs are urged to give careful consideration to these guidelines:

1. Always remember that youth sports like shooting are not just about winning; help to keep your child's focus on learning both shooting skills and life skills, on having fun and on sportsmanship and fair play.
2. Insist that your children receive gun safety training even if they do not remain active in target shooting.
3. Enroll your son or daughter in a shooting program when they are ready, not before. It's OK to provide information about the sport, but let them tell you when they are ready. Some children have the right combination of interest, motor skill development and maturity at age 10 or 12; others are not ready until age 15 or 16. There is no ideal age to start shooting.
4. Respect your child's goals in shooting. It's OK to challenge him/her to set high goals, but make sure their goals are really their goals, not yours.
5. You cannot buy success for your children. It's OK to make sure they have good equipment, but be sure they understand that the finest rifle and equipment is never a substitute for practice and hard work.
6. Encourage your son or daughter to practice hard and strive to improve, but make sure they are having fun with their practices. Do all you can to make practice opportunities available, but do not force them to practice when they are not motivated to practice.
7. Encourage your son or daughter to respect their coaches. If you disagree with the coach, work that out with the coach, not with your child.
8. Take your son or daughter to competitions or do what you can to help the club or team get to competitions.
9. Encourage short-term goal setting. It's OK to ask "what do you plan to work on at practice tonight?"
10. Praise accomplishments. Find out how your child did in practice and matches; praise them when a goal for the day was reached or a good score achieved.
11. Respond positively to bad shots and bad scores. Bad scores happen to all shooters; your child did not shoot the bad score to make you angry. When a bad score happens, make sure your child knows you love them just as much as when they shoot great scores.
12. Insist that your child display self-discipline and self-control while shooting; the coach will not tolerate a lack of discipline or self control or displays of anger; you should not tolerate that either.
13. Encourage your child to rejoice in the successes of others on the team. Becoming a real team player encourages others on the team to do the same.
14. Communicate with the coach, especially when you have questions or concerns. Find out if there are lessons the coach is trying to teach your child that you can help to reinforce.