

Sling Basics

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Many of today's gun owners are influenced by visual marketing. Companies in the USA spend billions of dollars on advertising. The goal of any business is to turn a profit; regardless of what the POTUS says. The goal of advertising is to sell products and make a profit. Sling manufacturers are no different. Some have really good products that do what is required. These companies do the research and field test their products. Other companies let the profit get in the way of selling the best gear. They cut back on research and testing. They outsource to the lowest bidder in a third world country.

The best sling may not be the one with the best marketing or all the latest fasteners or buckles. Trained shooters know from experience what a good sling is and how to use it properly. One thing I like about the Suarez group is the fact we use and test products year round. No one in this group will recommend gear unless we use it. I have a tub full of gear I don't use anymore because it did not work the way I thought it would.

A sling is used to aid the shooter in a shooting position. A carry strap is used to carry the carbine. Carry straps come in all types. 1 point 2 point and 3 point carry straps are all common. It is important to know the difference and how a good sling can help a shooter.

I have not seen a single point carry strap that provides much added support while shooting. My experience has been they get in the way, especially shooting from any position other than standing. Even while doing shoulder transfers while standing they can have issues. Most of the single point straps with one arm through wrap around the upper chest at a 45 degree angle. This ties the shooter to the rifle and creates other issues. These straps do carry the rifle fairly well and allow easy access to a secondary weapon. Watch out. If you drop a carbine the wrong way while on a single point strap it might just swing right between your legs and take you to your knees.

The 3 point straps carry the rifles well but the ones I worked with offered little support while shooting. To me the 3 point straps are complicated and cumbersome. Some run a strap down the side of the rifle interfering with the controls on the left side of the gun. They actually tie the gun to the shooter and in CQB this can be a hazard. The hazard comes when the attacker gets close and grabs the gun and you are strapped into it. Also most of the 3 point carry straps don't work when doing shoulder transfers.

That brings us to the 2 point sling. These fall into 3 categories, the standard sling (like the style sold at OST), the military style sling and the new cuff style sling. All can be used for support while shooting. The standard sling can be adjusted so all the excess is on the front end under the rifle fore end. Make the front loop large enough to place your support arm through. Then slide the loop up your arm until it is high on your bicep; the higher the better. Now wrap your forearm through the sling so that it lies against the back of your hand while holding the fore end of the rifle. The sling should form the top leg of a triangle. The other 2 legs are formed by your upper arm and your forearm. The sling should be mounted at 6 o/c on the fore end for the best results. Mounting on the side can cause the rifle to cant.

The picture on the right is an OST sling with a big front loop. Adjust the front loop to aid in the shooting positions. The rear loop is used to adjust the overall length of the sling. I recommend having enough slack to carry the rifle across the back in order to free both hands for other task.





This sling position will add support in all 4 standard positions. The trick is to use bone support not muscle support. The shooter can rest the support side elbow on their hipbone or on their web gear while standing. When kneeling the rest is the support side knee. Remember to use the flat spot on the back of the elbow not the pointed end of the elbow. Keep the lower leg directly under the gun for maximum support. Both elbows when sitting go inside the knee pocket for stability. There are other forms for sitting but this one leads to the most stable shooting platform. For prone shooting get your elbow as close under the gun as possible to reduce fatigue. When the elbows are wide the hands come back, recoil is increased and the shooter is raised off the ground. The sling should be tight. You should have to push the rifle forward to get it in your shoulder pocket. When positioned correctly the rifle will be held in the shoulder pocket without the use of the firing hand. Here's a tip. Wear a glove on the support hand. This dampens the pulse in your hand from the rifle weight and protects your hand against sling pinching.



Here I am using the OST sling sitting and prone. It is normal for the magazine to rest against the forearm in these positions. A shorter 20 round mag can be an advantage. Notice the eye relief in the sitting position is less than optimal. Be aware that impact with the eyebrow happens more in sitting than other positions.

The military and cuff slings work within the same principal, with minor adjustments. The key is to dry practice with the sling. Spend time, maybe while watching TV, in the shooting positions so you will be comfortable with them. Depending on the shooter's body type the sling may need to be adjusted between positions. If adjustments are needed mark your sling so you can return to the same place later. It is harder to make an accurate shot when the position is stressing you out.



Left is a cuff type attachment that wraps tightly around the upper bicep and uses a Fastex buckle to attach to the rifle sling. This makes getting into and out of position easier. Since the sling is still attached to the front and rear mount points a speedy transition to a carry mode is easy. Just release the buckle and you have a normal 2 point carry strap.



Here is an example of the old style military or Turner sling. It is leather and uses frogs and predrilled holes for adjustments. In front of the bicep is a leather band that tightens around the bicep as it slides down the sling. The sling is not attached to the rear of the gun. The tail section is hanging below the arm pit. These slings work well. Getting into & out of them isn't as fast it may be when using slings with Fastek buckles.

Do not overlook the sling attachment points. As previously mentioned the front sling mount is best if placed at the six o'clock position. The rear sling mount is not nearly as important. In fact the NRA high power shooters remove the sling from the rear of the gun when shooting. I would not do this in the guerrilla sniper roll since we may need to make a hasty exit from a shooting position.



Here is an example of a Military spec sling swivel and an economy brand. I have had the economy brand break during a tactical rifle match. It is well worth the extra \$7 for the mil-spec equipment.



The sling can apply pressure to the barrel if the sling is mounted to the front sight base or the barrel. This could affect accuracy when the shooter applies pressure to the sling. The picture on the left is the solution to this issue. This is an example of a free float tube on an AR, all the pressure is on the tube not the barrel.

In conclusion remember just because it looks cool in marketing does not mean it will enhance your shooting. A good sling is worth it's weight in gold because you can't carry a shooting bench into the field.

Be safe and shoot well. God willing we'll get to train together.

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