

WHY OFFER SHOOTING ACTIVITY PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Today, nearly 70 million people own firearms, with over half of all U.S. households contain at least one firearm. Tens of thousands of competitors participate in matches from neighborhood level tournaments to the Olympic Games. (In fact, shooting is the third most popular sport when ranked by the number of participating nations. It is exceeded only by Olympic track and field events and boxing events.) More than 20 million hunting licenses are issued annually in the United States, generating vast sums for the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

WHAT IS SHOOTING?

Shooting is a skill sport. Learning to be a safe shooter teaches responsibility. Learning to hit a difficult target teaches self-discipline and self-control. Learning to hold a firearm steady and hit the target teaches concentration. Knowing that the shooter alone is ultimately responsible for his or her performance teaches self-reliance and enhances individual self-esteem.

Shooting is a participation sport. This active involvement is important because sports are more fun when young people can participate personally instead of just watching others. Persons with physical disabilities also can take part in shooting, often right alongside other shooters in regular matches.

Shooting is a safe sport. Injuries are so rare in target shooting that accident records are not even kept. Shooting is safe because it has a strict code of safety that all shooters follow.

Shooting is a lifetime sport. Persons of all ages participate successfully in shooting. Children as young as eight or nine can learn to shoot using the lightweight air rifles.

Shooting is an exciting sport. There's a special thrill in being able to hit a target. It is fun to see shooters' abilities improve. The challenge of preparing shooters in your Post to compete against other shooters throughout the nation makes every practice session an exciting event.

GETTING STARTED A 10 STEP CHECKLIST

1. Determine Your Goals
2. Identify Post Leadership
3. Affiliating with the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program
4. Check on Your Insurance Coverage
5. Selecting Your Facilities
6. Obtaining Equipment
7. Funding Your Program
8. Promoting Your Program
9. Recruiting Participants
10. Optional Suggestions

1. DETERMINE YOUR GOALS - Here are some suggestions:

a. To provide an opportunity for young people to learn firearm safety and basic marksmanship.

b. To introduce the shooting sports to community members and to educate them about shooting.

c. To provide participants in an existing youth organization an opportunity to achieve objectives related to the shooting sports, e.g., Boy Scout merit badges, 4-H awards, the Law Enforcement Explorer Qualification program.

d. To use the shooting sports as a vehicle to help young people develop leadership, discipline, self-esteem, concentration, sportsmanship and responsibility.

2. IDENTIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP - Your Post probably already has a structure set up to develop committees for special projects. The shooting club leader should be qualified to instruct the basics in gun safety and marksmanship. Volunteers from the Post should be encouraged to take part as assistant instructors in what is generally a once a week session. It is strongly recommended that at least one of your instructors complete an NRA certification course if he or she is not already certified.

Keep in mind that a shooting club is a great way to get Post members involved in a Post activity regardless of age or physical ability.

3. AFFILIATION WITH THE AMERICAN LEGION JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS PROGRAM - This is probably the easiest part. Simply write to The American Legion National Headquarters, ATTN: Shooting Sports, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN, 46206 or call at (317)630-1200 and ask for a Junior Shooting Sports Brochure. Fill in the questions on the form and send it back to the same address. *Make sure the Post Commander signs the form.* After receiving your form, you will automatically be sent (at no charge) the Junior Club Leader's Administrative Manual complete with the Basic Marksmanship Course. The manual will also include one (1) student guide and forms for ordering additional guides.

4. CHECK ON INSURANCE COVERAGE - It is critically important that you make certain that you have liability coverage. If you plan on locating your operation in some other facility, you'll need to check their insurance coverage. If your Post coverage is not adequate, you may wish to look into an additional rider to your own policy or investigate some specific shooter's coverage.

5. SELECTING YOUR FACILITIES - One of the great advantages of firing air guns is that a range can be set up just about anywhere. The meeting area in most Post homes can serve as an air gun range. Depending on the number of firing points you wish to have, there are some minimum requirements. The range itself will need to be at least 10 meters (33 feet) deep. You will, of course, need some additional room for the shooter's position and some space behind the targets for backstops and pellet traps. You should protect your wall with some type of covering (many Posts have used canvas tarp or furniture moving quilts). You should allow about 4 feet of width for each shooter. Other equipment you will need includes safety glasses for each shooter, pellets, target traps (which can usually be made cheaply) and rifles (described later). You may want to have mats for shooters to use for prone firing. Spotting scopes are a popular accessory.

6. OBTAINING EQUIPMENT - At the moment, 177 caliber rifles such as the Crossman are the recommended rifles for use in the Basic Marksmanship

Course. These are match grade training rifles.

Pellets can usually be purchased at any sporting goods store including most of the large discount chains.

7. FUNDING YOUR PROGRAM - You may already have funds set aside for the Post's youth activities. At least in the beginning, you may wish to have participants pay some of the cost in the form of a registration fee or club member fee. You may ask the shooters to purchase their own targets and pellets. Many times, local businesses or local shooting clubs may wish to make donations to the good of the club. Local community leaders can be very helpful in soliciting funds. Many Posts dedicate proceeds from specific Post functions to raise money for the club. Once you have your club established you might want to hold an "adult" match with entry fees going to the club fund.

8. PROMOTING YOUR PROGRAM - The first audience you will want to interest will be your participants. The second group will be the parents of these potential shooters. Still a third group will be made up of individuals who are in a position to provide assistance and support for the program, such as business people, community leaders, and school officials. A fourth audience is the general public in your community.

Posters on school bulletin boards or items in school newspapers are a good way to communicate your message to the young people. For raising money, a letter to local businesses or a presentation before local community groups would be appropriate. The general public can generally be reached through newspaper

articles and radio announcements.

9. RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS - Numerous groups have existing youth programs: school athletic department, police athletic leagues, Boy Scout Councils, 4-H Clubs, your own SAL Squadron or simply the children and grandchildren of your members.

One of your greatest resources for participants is the local high school. Most high schools have JROTC units that have competitive shooting as part of their JROTC program. *For a listing of public high schools that have JROTC units* contact:

The American Legion
Department of Florida
P O Box 547859
Orlando, FL 32854-7859
407.295.2631x235

Remember that you can be most successful in your recruiting efforts if you explain that gun safety is the foundation of your program, and that shooting activities complement many other youth activities.

10. OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS - Included in your Leader's Administrative Manual will be applications for affiliation as an CMP Junior Club. You may wish to take advantage of some of the opportunities offered in both gun safety and competition by the CPM as an affiliated club. The CPM also offers a quality program known as the CPM Junior Olympic Shooting Program (CPM JOSP). It offers opportunities for improvement for your club members and is explained in detail in the Leaders' Manual.

THE AMERICAN LEGION JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS PROGRAM



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Department Shooting Sports Program
P O Box 547859
Orlando, FL 32854-7859
800.393.3378x235
e-mail: Programs@floridalegion.org
web site: floridalegion.org

**THIS PROGRAM
IS ENDORSED
BY THE
UNITED STATES
SHOOTING TEAM**