

# So, You Want to Instruct...

An introduction to the NSCA Certified Instructor program



BY DON CURRIE, NSCA CHIEF INSTRUCTOR

**T**he trigger collapses under pressure from the index finger, the shot is delivered, and the target disintegrates. A burst of dopamine induces the familiar gratifying response: “Man, that was good. Let’s do it again!” This is what keeps us coming back for more — immediate feedback and instant gratification. It’s addictive.

As the instructor peers over the shoulder of the student, he experiences a similar euphoria.

The feeling is especially dramatic when a breakthrough occurs. The shooter missed a difficult target twice, and the instructor gave a correction. The student absorbs and then successfully executes the suggested technique, turning the next target into dust. Both the instructor and student celebrate, but the instructor’s elation is a mix of pride for the student’s performance and a validation of his own ability to advance his student forward.

## WHY BECOME A CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR?

Teaching is not for everyone. For many, however, the desire to teach, guide and share in the success of a student is gratifying beyond measure. While an instructor’s natural ability and passion play a significant role in his success, the essential elements that lead a shooter to expertise in instructing are education, training, repetition and experience.

Any proficient sporting

clays shot, lacking formal training as a coach or instructor, can still teach another shooter to shoot better. In fact, there are several shooters in our sport who, without any formal certification or training as a coach, provide valuable and effective lessons to shooters. However, even the most talented top shooter can benefit from building their instruction on a firm foundation of time-proven instruction principles. The instructor who has pursued

## PREREQUISITES TO ATTEND

\*OBSERVED SHOOTER PROFICIENCY DURING THE COURSE

	Level I*	Level II	Level III
Shooting Experience	2 years minimum	Substantial	Substantial
Instructional Hours (Minimum)	0	500 hours post Level I	1,500 hours post Level II (2,000 total)
Lessons taken from a senior instructor	2 hours minimum	8 hours minimum	8 hours minimum +
Shooting Proficiency	C class/3,000 registered targets OR equivalent ability*	A / 6,000 registered targets OR equivalent ability*	AA / 10,000 registered targets OR equivalent ability*
Shadowing other senior instructors	None required	Recommended	Highly Recommended

training as an instructor is likely to advance more rapidly and earlier in his instructing career and connect with a more diverse range of students. No shooter reaches his full potential without instruction. Why would a sporting clays instructor be any different?

If you don't see yourself instructing competitive or recreational shooters professionally, what about helping your local youth shooting team? There are hundreds of youth shooting teams that need trained and qualified coaches to help advance the next generation of shooters. The increase in enrollment and feedback from candidate surveys, emails and anecdotal comments from candidates and volunteer students alike are a regular reminder of the positive impact our instructor graduates are having on sporting clays shooters and wing shooters across the country. This, in turn, fuels the growth of our sport.

### THE INSTRUCTOR PROGRAM

The NSCA's Certified Instructor program and



our courses are, by virtually every comparative measure, the most effective, hands-on sporting clays instructor training program in North America. Having attended several other instructor courses, both in the U.S. and abroad, I have a lot of confidence in the truth of my claim. The vision and purpose of the NSCA's multi-level instructor program is to develop instructors to teach, train, educate and motivate the millions of recreational and competitive sporting clays and wingshooting enthu-

siasts at member clubs throughout North America. The program exists for three main purposes: 1) to provide instructors with the theoretical and practical education and knowledge needed to develop sporting clays shooters at every competency level, 2) to provide a network of instructors who will develop, encourage and mentor their fellow coaches, and 3) to certify, and thereby recognize, an instructor's demonstrated skill level at certain points along his or her path of development.

### THE LEVEL I COURSE

The Level I Instructor Certification Course is designed to educate, equip and train experienced shooters with a desire to instruct on how to effectively teach the fundamentals of shotgunning to beginning and novice sporting clays and wing shooters. The NSCA Level I course is the most requested and attended shotgun instructor course in the country. We also have many foreign instructors attend our courses, and we conduct several courses per year at international locations.



## THREE DISTINCT CERTIFICATION LEVELS

Course	Certification Criteria	Focus of the Course
Level I	Teaching aptitude, ability to advance a beginner/novice shooter, safety	Beginning / Novice shooters, introduction to diagnostics and shooting techniques.
Level II	Advanced diagnostics, problem-solving ability, communication, coaching up to an A-class competitor.	Equipping for complex, multi-causal diagnoses, mental game, sports vision, more advanced gunfitting, ability to coach shooters up to A class-level competitors.
Level III	Advanced diagnostics, problem solving ability of multi-causal challenges, communication, coaching and mentoring up to a M-class competitor.	Highly evaluative certification, advanced diagnoses, ability to overcome complex and multi-causal shooter problems, eye issues, gunfit issues, kinesiology, sports cognition.
Scholastic Instructor	Ability to advance a beginning/novice shooter safely.	Youth shooters, youth teams, SCTP.
Recreational Instructor	Ability to advance a beginning/novice shooter safely.	Recreational shooters in a resort environment.
Club Range Safety Officer (Club RSO)	Ability to referee, "jump start" a new shooter, render safe/reload traps, recognize/address unsafe conditions.	Any club customers, events, recreational and competitive shooters.

The Level I Course is essentially the course that transforms a shooter into an instructor, enabling the candidate to elevate their students to a higher level of ability. While a helpful squadmate might be able to tell you where you missed (in front, behind, over, etc.), telling a shooter where they missed will frequently encourage a shooter to

aim the shotgun, which is most often the recipe for another miss. In addition to safety, eye dominance and gunfit, we teach budding instructors the importance of diagnosing the reason for a miss, which is fundamental to correcting the error. If the instructor can address the "why" (the root of the problem), the "where" (lead) will often



## HOW TO HOST A COURSE

If your club is interested in hosting an Instructor Course, contact Don Currie, the Chief Instructor, or one of the NSCA's other certifying instructors listed below.

Certifying Instructor	State of Residence	Mobile Phone
Clayton Rue	AK	907-440-8005
Cindi Hubbard	CA	714-749-2440
Luther Cutts	Canada (AB)	403-700-2844
Don Currie	FL (Orlando)	407-697-6236
David Dobson	FL (Jacksonville)	904-571-8700
Brian Featheringham	FL (Naples)	207-420-6225
Dale Bouchillon	GA	912-313-1270
Phil Puckorius	IL	312-925-5842
Gary Walstrom	KS	816-896-2252
Dave Miller	MO	816-519-2683
Kevin Sterk	NJ	201-966-7057
Bill Elliott	OH	440-724-1735
Mike Bates	SC	864-590-7874
Craig Porter	TX	210-573-8139
Ron Ingles	TX (Houston)	951-317-7207
John Alexander	VA	540-270-2424

resolve itself. As part of the instructor's diagnostic toolbox, we also teach candidates how to understand what the shooter's eyes are doing by reading the subtle movement of the muzzle in relation to the target.

### PREREQUISITES

The Level I instructor candidate must have at least two years of experience shooting sporting clays and must have taken at least two hours of shooting instruction from a certified Level II or Level III Instructor prior to the course. Level I instructor candidates do not necessarily have to shoot competitively

but must be able to shoot at least as well as a C-class shooter who has shot a minimum of 3,000 registered targets. Regardless of a shooter's shooting ability "on paper," we also confirm every shooter's ability during the course. In order to prepare for the course, each Level I instructor candidate is required to read and study the Level I Instructor Certification Manual prior to attending the course.

For candidates who do not meet the shooting proficiency or experience requirements for Level I Certification, the NSCA offers two alternative certifications:



Scholastic Instructor and Recreational Instructor. These alternative certifications do not require the level of shooting experience as that of Level I Certification, yet provide youth shooting teams around the country with much-needed certified coaches. The Recreational Instructor Certification Course is designed for those teaching at resorts where shotgun sports are offered as an amenity.

### HOW IT WORKS

The Level I Course is conducted at an NSCA member club over a three-day period, usually on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On day 1 of the course, there is a four-hour block of instruction in the morning, followed by lunch and four

hours of demonstration and practical application in the afternoon. On the morning of day 2, candidates continue to teach each other and apply concepts and techniques for advancing shooters to a higher level of proficiency. On the afternoon of day 2, continuing to the morning and afternoon of day 3, the candidates instruct anywhere from three to eight volunteer students over three two-hour instructional sessions. They must demonstrate competency in nine specific areas as well as pass a written exam with a minimum score of 80%. Successful candidates finish the course on Sunday afternoon (day 3) and are presented with their certificate and patch as newly minted NSCA Lev-

## 9 AREAS OF COMPETENCY

At every level of certification, the demands for a higher level of performance is required in each of these nine areas of competency.

- ☒ Safety and Positive Control
- ☒ Assessing Eye Dominance
- ☒ Assessing Gunfit
- ☒ Teaching the fundamentals
- ☒ Teaching lead, lead types and a variety of techniques
- ☒ Problem Solving
- ☒ Observation, Communication and Motivation
- ☒ Shooting Proficiency
- ☒ Written Exam

el I Instructors.

Over the last 10 years, we have continuously modified, improved and updated the curriculum, content and course handouts to reflect the ongoing evolution and advancement of our sport. As enrollment has grown, we have also seen a noticeable increase in the quality, quantity and experience of the candidates attending instructor courses. Their level of preparedness has also markedly risen. As a result, the pass rate of the Level I, II and III courses has increased, despite the fact that the standards for certification have remained high. This paints a very positive picture of the quality of instructors currently teaching at clubs across the nation. Much of the credit for the quality of instructors produced by the program goes to the Certifying Instructors conducting Level I Courses in the field. From our stable of Level III Instructors, a select group are designated as

Certifying Instructors and entrusted to lead courses in the field and mentor other instructors in the sport.

If your shooting ability falls anywhere between competent and exceptional, and you have a desire to teach others, I encourage you to attend one of our Level I Instructor Certification Courses. The \$600 tuition will be a small price to pay for the gratification you receive from your students. You owe it to yourself, and to your students, to gain the necessary education and training to be the most effective instructor you can be. When I enrolled in my Level I Course, I didn't expect to teach a single hour. I was a moderately competitive Master-class shooter with a desire to learn something that would help my scores in competition. It is not an exaggeration to say that the three days I invested in this certification course changed the trajectory of my professional career. *CTW*