

Steel Challenge Stage: Outer Limits

Steel Challenge is the drag race of the shooting sports focusing on the delicate balance between speed and accuracy. In order to place well, you have to shoot all eight stages well or your competition will. In order to be proficient on all stages I am starting a stage breakdown series focusing on some tips and helpful hints on how to maximize your performance in your next match.

Let's start by examining The Steel Challenge Stage; Outer Limits, which is the only stage in Steel Challenge where the competitor is moving from one shooting position to another while on the clock. So, what is the fastest order for this stage? As a right handed shooter, the most popular and accepted option as we are looking down range and is shot 1-2-4-3-Stop Plate. This pattern does not differ for most with the type of division being shot; when shooting any gun from the low ready or from the holster the order is the same. This is the only stage with more than one shooting box where the rules indicate which box you have to start in. If you are right handed you will start in the left shooting box. If you are left handed you will start in the right shooting box and reverse the order of the targets.

Here are some tips to be successful on this stage:

Tip #1: I prefer to have my index setup on the first plate – right in front of me. I test this by pointing my pistol straight out and it will show me where the gun is pointed. I will also hold a rifle like a pistol and do the same check. This allows my body to wind up on my first shot and when I transition the gun fast, the height of the gun does not change.

Tip#2: For those of us with shorter legs, I like to get as close to the side of the shooting box as possible and even will place the right foot on the edge of the box. Remember, be careful to not touch the ground outside of the shooting box or it's a penalty.

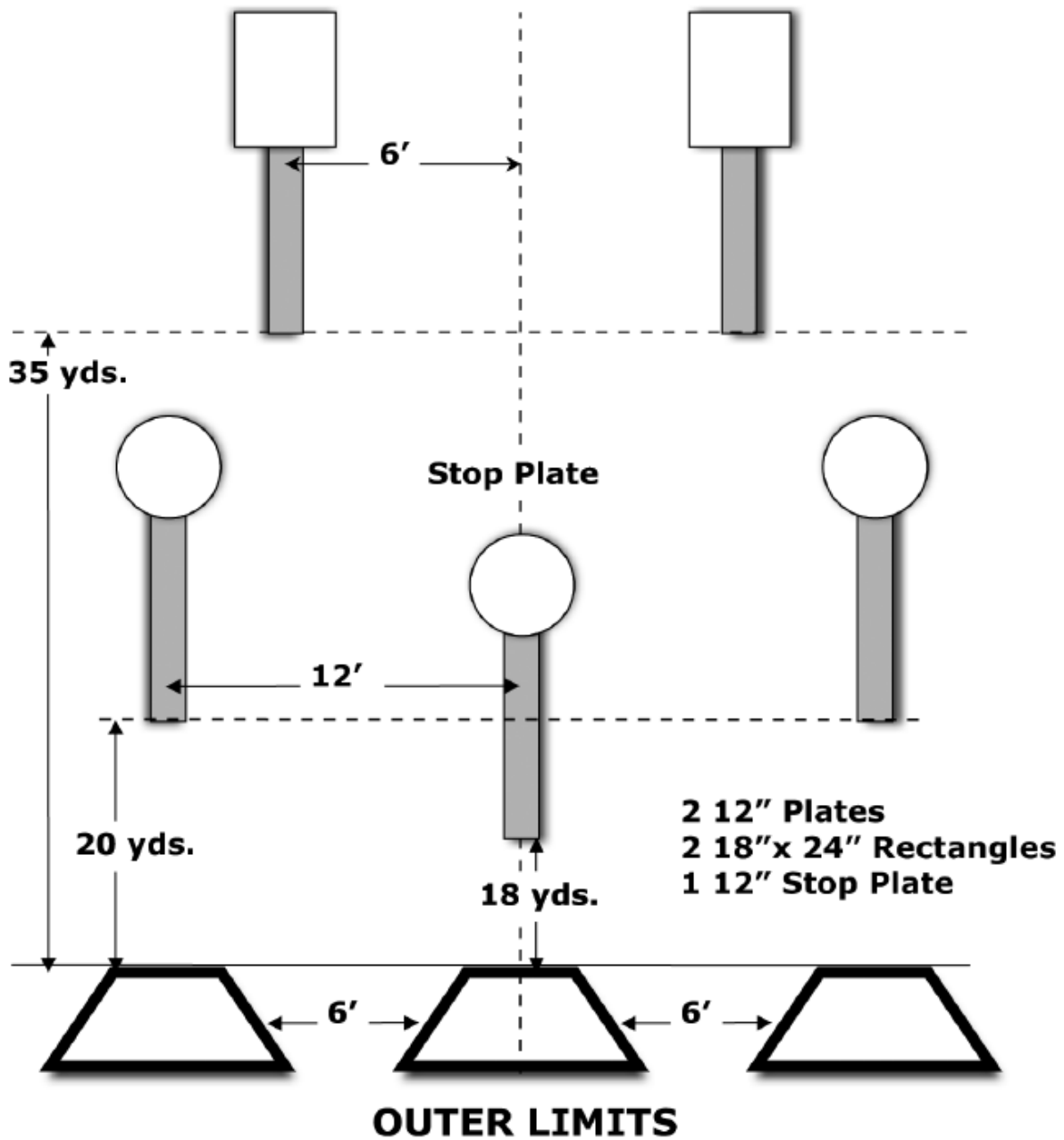
Tip#3: For those who are starting at the low ready, take a few 'sight picture' repetitions to the first plate to make sure when you move the gun up the dot or front sight is on the middle of the target. This allows you to get the gun up fast and get a solid first shot.

Tip#4: Keep your eye on the sight/dot when shooting Plate #2 as you break the shot. The most missed plate on this stage is Plate #2 if you are right handed and if you shoot the stage as outlined above. This happens because in your mind you want to get moving to the second box even before you break the shot. When your conscious mind thinks about moving, you take your focus off of completing the second shot.

Tip#5: Bring the handgun in when moving to the middle box. This allows you to focus on moving and getting a good 'draw' onto Plate #4.

Tip#6: If you are shooting a rifle, drop the gun down slightly when moving to the middle box. Your goal is to have the sight/dot just under Plate #4. You do not want to track the sight the whole way. For some reason, when we track the sight our mind has a tough time focusing on a moving object and it subconsciously tells our brain to slow our body down.

Tip #7: Follow through on the stop plate. The concept of follow through when shooting in steel challenge on a stop plate means as you drive the gun hard to the stop plate, stop the gun on the stop plate as you are pressing the trigger. I advise students to count "One Mississippi" with the gun on the plate. This helps reinforce the concept of "calling shots".



Keeps these tips in mind the next time you step into the box in practice or in a match and watch your times fall! Stay tuned for more analysis of the other Steel Challenge Stages.

See you out on the range soon!

Steve