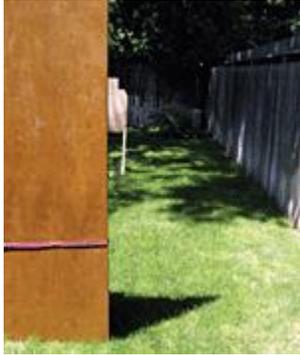


# The Art of Calling Cover

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One of the best parts of IDPA is that the shooters must use cover when engaging targets, when cover is available. Of course it is the SO and Scorekeeper's job to call cover. Thanks to video and photos on the Internet it is easy to see shooters in club matches and sanctioned matches that are properly or improperly using cover.



The IDPA rulebook says that the SO must call cover. We know that the Scorekeeper or the SO can make the call, whichever is in position to do so. From this point on I will just use the term SO, but mean both officials. I hope this article will provide a bit of help to SOs and Scorekeepers everywhere to call cover more consistently.

Just as a shooter will figure out where to stand to shoot around cover at different positions in a stage, the SO needs to figure out where the best line is to effectively call cover. The picture below shows an ideal line from which to call cover. The SO aligns the head of the target with the edge of cover. The SO should make this mental note for each shooting position and target when walking through the stage.

Below are two pictures of proper use of vertical cover from the target's perspective and from the SO's perspective.



The shooter is using the minimum possible cover to be in compliance with the cover rules. The shooter may shoot, reload or clear malfunctions from this position. The target cannot see any part of the shooter from the belt down, or the center of the shooter's torso. This is an important view since a shooter is using cover to address a single target at a time. Note the angle of the torso and shoulders which must tilt to allow the shooter to engage the target and maintain the waist down cover. The SO must be able to see the edge of cover from his/her pre-picked observation point. The shooter's foot, knee or upper leg must not block the SOs view of the edge of cover. If it does, then the shooter is not using cover properly. Each time the shooter acquires another target, the whole process begins again.

Contrast the above view to a shooting position that is often seen when shooting IDPA. The target can clearly see the shooter's waist, knee and foot. From the SO's perspective the shooter is standing out far enough from cover that he is upright with almost no torso tilt. The foot, knee and upper leg are clearly out further than the cover.



After twelve years of watching SOs as they work so we can have fun, I believe the issue of calling cover well and quickly is all about knowing where to look. The SOs that I see having difficulty calling cover, appear to be looking in the wrong place or not looking at all. Many SOs look at the torso to check cover, but I believe that is the wrong place to look. Note above that the shooter is pretty far out from cover, yet has 50% of the torso behind cover. This shooter should receive a cover call, but may not if the SO is looking only at the torso.

Of course the SO needs to be primarily watching the gun. However there is time for the SO or Scorekeeper to take a brief check of the shooter's foot, knee and upper leg at each shooting position. That is all it really takes to call cover well and quickly. The waist is hard to see from the back, because of the way a concealment garment hangs, but we can look at the leg just below the cover garment. Fortunately if the foot, knee, and upper leg are behind vertical cover, then the waist will not be exposed. Another benefit is that if the foot, knee and upper leg are behind vertical cover, then cover for the center of the chest will take care of itself. This simple anatomy and balance constraint can help the SO. By simply checking the foot, knee and upper leg in a single glance it allows the SO to know if the shooter is properly using cover without looking further.

When the SO cannot see the edge of cover he/she should yell "COVER" immediately so the shooter can correct the position. But if a shot is taken when the shooter is not properly using cover, then a procedural error has been earned, whether or not the SO had time to yell "COVER".

I've been using this method for a few years now and am very satisfied that the shooters are using cover properly or they are hearing "COVER" in their ear. I hope you will find it works well too.

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