

STOCK FITTING A LEFTY

Dear Technoid,

My son-in-law is right handed, but left-eye dominant. He is shooting left handed. If he were to buy an over-under, would you suggest a bending the stock or buying a split stock that is adjustable? He shoots sporting clays and hunts.

Richard

Dear Richard,

Ahh! From short questions like yours, do great long answers grow. Gun fit, gun fit, gun fit. Giving stock fitting advice over the Internet is like me telling you how to alter your new 42 Regular suit without ever seeing you in it. Gun fit absolutely, positively requires the "hands on" approach.

The fact that he is right handed, left eyed and is shooting lefty (definitely the best way to solve the alternate dominance problem if you can do it), merely means that he is now left handed and needs a "left handed" gun.

What is a "left handed" gun? Well, I just don't know. It is different things to different people, just as a "right handed" gun is. Let's limit our discussion to cast-on and cast-off here, not right and left handed actions. Every lefty I have ever met handles an O/U's rightward moving opening lever just fine. Some lefties do object to the right handed ejection of most semi-autos.

Definitions: viewing the shotgun from the rear (as you would hold it when shooting) "cast-off" is the bending of the stock out to the right (away from the face of a right handed shooter, into the face of the left handed shooter). "Cast-on" is the opposite, bending the stock into the face of the right handed shooter or away from the face of the left handed shooter. It is a bit confusing because the "cast" terms are British in origin and they are always taken from the point of view of a right handed shooter. Cast-off for a righty is obviously really "cast-on" for a lefty, but that is not how the phrase is used. "Cast-off" is always bent to the right, no matter who is shooting the gun. "Cast-on" is always to the left. Confused yet? Me too.

So what does your converted lefty son-in-law need? He will probably need a gun that is cast-on (bent away from his left cheek) or one with no cast. Most European guns come with cast-off, most American guns (especially the pumps and autos) come with no cast of any kind (neutral).

Some people prefer some cast on their guns, some do not. It depends as much on shooting style as on anything else. People who tend to "crawl" their stocks (push their heads forward) generally prefer straight stocks with no cast. People who shoot with upright heads usually prefer lower stocks and a bit of cast. Around here the English instructors seem to always set their students up with cast stocks, while the American instructors often do not. As I said, it really depends on shooting style. Personally, I set my guns up with zero cast. I crawl my stocks and find that the slightest amount of cast-off (I am a righty) gives me terrible face slap.

All of the above leads to this: Since I haven't seen your son-in-law shoot and do not know what brand and model of gun he prefers, I cannot possibly tell you whether or not he will have to move the stock one way or another. If his gun is not neutral and has cast-on, chances are 90% that it will not fit him quite right as a lefty and something will have to be done. It all depends where the gun shoots for him.

Adjustable combs vs. stock bending: I am not a big fan of adjustable comb guns for sporting and hunting because they look funny and often weigh a lot. That said, they are great if you cannot make up your mind as to what you want. For clay targets, I shoot autos and can simply shim my stock a tiny bit to make it fit. O/Us require professional help. If you feel that it will take your son-in-law a good deal of experimentation to get his stock right, and if he is shooting an O/U, then an adjustable comb might be the way to go. If he knows exactly what he needs for proper fit, then I would get it bent and have done with it.

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid