

PROPER STOCK LENGTH

Dear Technoid,

I think that the stock on my sporting clays gun may be a little too long for me, but how can I tell for sure before I start cutting? I tend to crawl my stock a bit.

Bob

Dear Bob,

Stock dimensions are a very personal thing. Trust me in one thing: the more you shoot the longer and higher your stock will become. The more you crawl your stock, the longer a stock you will need. The more erect you carry your head, the shorter stock will suffice.

For example: I am 6'1" and wear a 17/35 shirt. My neck is of average length, but my cheek bones are slightly higher than normal. I tend to crawl my stocks and tip my head slightly forward. I have always needed a trap height stock to see over the rib, but have noticed that my stocks have grown in length from the standard 14 1/4" to 15"- 15 1/4" over my last quarter century of shooting.

When I competed in International Skeet, I used a standard Remington 1100 trap stock towards the end of my career. Now that same stock seems slightly too short for me in sporting clays. Of course, sporting is a much slower game than IntSk, but I think that it has more to do with technique plus the fact that the IntSk gun mount starts so much lower and has to be mounted so much more quickly. In sporting you usually have plenty of time to mount slowly and carefully. Indeed, the slow mount is the preferred technique. A longer stock is of no mounting disadvantage if you have the time. Once it is up there, the long stock has a lot of advantages.

Here is another thing to think about- the longer the stock, the less the perceived recoil. Short stocks are not held as tightly to the shoulder, so the gun can build up some momentum on recoil and this increases recoil perception.

As we have not met and I have not seen you shoot, I could not advise you on exact stock length for your particular stature and shooting technique. The general rule is that for a pure sporting clays gun, I would leave about 2" between the lens of the shooting glasses and the nearest part of the right hand (behind the thumb) when the gun is mounted. This is usually best tested by mounting and swinging with the eyes closed. Also- when in doubt, go with a little longer stock. You can always take a spacer out or cut later.

Not everyone agrees. When I was once talking to Kay Ohye about American Trap, he said that he liked the shortest stock possible, with his glasses pressing right up against the back of his thumb. I have also noticed a number of excellent American-style skeet shooters using extremely short stocks. That said, however, I do not believe that these opinions reflect the stock fits of the majority of the top grade shooters who use a 1"-2" clearance between back of thumb and glasses.

As you lengthen your stock, you should also increase its height. Most stocks (unless they are Monte Carlo configuration) slope slightly from front to back. Making the stock longer will move your face back on the stock and thus place it very slightly lower. Slight increases to stock height have to be made when lengthening a stock just to keep your face height were it was on the shorter stock. Also, if you crawl your stock a bit, you are tipping your head forward slightly (a very common technique among American shooters). This also lowers your pupil to stock distance and leads to the need for a slightly higher stock.

Adjustable triggers have absolutely nothing to do with practical stock length. Yes, moving the trigger fore and aft will change the numerical stock length, but not the practical one. Where you put your hand on the pistol grip determines the real length of the stock. Unfortunately, this is very hard to measure, so people continue to use the old trigger to butt length.

The type of pistol grip will also have an influence on technical stock length. A very "tight" and close to the trigger Perazzi style trap grip will produce a very different practical stock length when compared to a gently slanting Browning round knob grip, because your hand will be located in a different place on the stock. The trigger to butt measurement on the Browning will have to be considerably longer than the same measurement on the Perazzi to feel comfortable because the grip on the Browning will locate your hand further to the rear.

Stock fit just isn't that simple to do by relying simply on pure measurement. It really all depends on how it feels. That "eyes shut, mount with 2" to the glasses" measurement is still a pretty good ball park figure. Different guns will require different measurements to feel the same. This is why you can almost never transfer measurements from one pistol gripped gun to another and have them feel the same. It is easier with an English gripped gun as trigger to butt gives a meaningful measurement there.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid