



# Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow

Hunting Awareness & Conservation Education

## CLFT Basic Firearms Program

**Introduction:** CLFT uses a multifaceted approach to introduce firearms and safe handling in a hunting and shooting environment to participants who have little to no experience handling or shooting a firearm.

**Goal:** To introduce various types of firearms to participants through a safe and enjoyable experience so they have a better understanding, both professionally and personally, of safe firearms handling, the proper way to mount and safely deliver the barrels (muzzle) to the target on the range and on the hunt, and the basic skill and knowledge required of shooters and hunters.

### Safety

Knowing and remembering that incidents do happen, the prevention of any type of incident depends on knowing and understanding:

- Safe gun handling practices
- The firearm and its unique functions (different firearms and actions)
- How to handle a firearm safely and skillfully

Safety is not only our 1<sup>st</sup> priority, but 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ..... Safety is paramount to the continued success of the program. **Safety depends on Everyone!** Always use the firearm's safety, but never trust it! It is a mechanical device that can fail or break!

**Modules:** The CLFT Basic Firearms Training Program is accomplished in six basic modules:

1. Introduction and Overview
2. Eye Dominance and Shotgun Fitting
3. Firearms Demonstration/Animation
4. Firearms Handling/Field Exercises (including clay target shooting)
5. Hunting Methods and Equipment
6. Application/Mentored Hunt

### Basic Model

The program will follow a basic model in which all presentations and exercises fall into one or more of the following categories: Safety, Training, or Awareness.

- The CLFT Basic Firearms Training Program starts on either the evening of Day 1 or the morning of Day 2 with an overview presented by the workshop coordinator that includes basic CLFT safety rules, explains the use of firearms and ammunition in the program, and the process of gun fitting.

- The Program continues with an instructor-led exercise to determine each participant's eye dominance. Once determined and explained as a starting point, instructors individually "fit" each participant to one of three sized firearms: Adult (300), Sub-Adult (200) or Youth (100).
- The CLfT Basic Firearms Training Program continues with the **Firearms Demonstration** classroom presentation which utilizes HE Tools software and the use of inert firearms of various actions and corresponding dummy ammunition.
- Following this session, participants are divided into groups and rotate through five stations in the **Firearms and Equipment Handling** exercise. Each participant is provided the opportunity to handle and work different firearm actions, see the parts and pieces of ammunition, muzzleloaders, and archery equipment, and introduced to proper mounting and pointing of a shotgun.
- Later in the workshop, the **Hunting Methods and Equipment** presentation provides the participants information on the various applications of rifles, shotguns, muzzleloaders, and mention of handguns, archery equipment, and lesser known and developing hunting technologies. This presentation also discusses why a hunter might select a certain firearm over another.
- The CLfT Basic Firearms Training Model continues on Day 3 with hands-on field exercises that include: **Zones of Fire, Target Acquisition, Clay Target Shooting, and Rifle Shot Placement**. Instructors should recognize that each exercise provides the participant with an important part of safe and successful firearm shooting and an understanding of what hunters must know to be safe and successful in harvesting game.

### CLfT Firearm Terms and Definitions

- **Gun Fitting** - A process to determine the **best** size shotgun available for a participant's use.
- **Inert (Dummy) Ammo** - Non-functioning ammunition that looks like real ammunition but does not contain gunpowder or a primer (aka "action proving" ammunition).
- **Inert (Dummy) Firearm/Gun** – A firearm that has been mechanically rendered incapable of discharging live ammunition.
- **Loaded Firearm/Gun** - A firearm that has live ammunition in the barrel **or** magazine.
- **Muzzle Control** – Maintaining pointing the muzzle in the safest direction possible.
- **Safe Firearm/Gun** - A firearm that is completely unloaded (including the magazine, if applicable), the action is open.
- **Two-Hand Ready Grip** – The carry of a long gun with both hands, in front and across the upper body, with the muzzle pointed up and away in the safest direction.
- **Wooden Firearm/Gun** - A wooden item that has been cut, carved, or fashioned to look like or simulate a real firearm.

### CLfT Basic Firearms Rules

Prior to beginning the CLfT Basic Firearms Training Program participants are advised of the following rules that **anyone** handling firearms at the workshop must adhere:

- Treat the firearm as if it is loaded.

- Keep the muzzle pointed in **the safest direction possible**.
- Keep your finger off the trigger and out of the trigger guard until ready to shoot.
- Know and identify your target, what is in front of it and behind it, to determine if taking aim is safe.
- Absolutely no live ammunition is allowed in the classroom.
- Participants are also instructed on the safe and proper way to pass a firearm, while maintaining muzzle control:
  - 1) Check to see if the firearm is unloaded; if it is loaded, unload it.
  - 2) Keep the action open.
  - 3) Pass the firearm to the recipient while maintaining a two-hand ready grip.
  - 4) The person receiving the firearm grips the firearm with both hands and says, “Thank You”, while the person passing the firearm says “You’re Welcome” or some kind of recognition and releases their grip. (This method prevents a loaded firearm from being passed or dropping the firearm.)

### **CLFT Firearms Instruction**

The most effective means to learn a new skill is repetition.

The workshop coordinator and instructors are responsible to **lead by example** and create a safe shooting environment while at the range and on the hunt. This includes:

- Attention to detail
- Following the rules of gun safety
- Following proper range safety and etiquette
- Proper wearing of hearing and eye protection
- Responding appropriately to firearm and ammunition malfunctions.
- Using professional and respectful communication and action necessary to immediately address any unsafe situations.
- Emphasizing the positive!

### **Instructor Challenges and Teaching Tips**

The CLFT Firearms Program should be looked at as one continuous program. Each presentation, demonstration, and exercise builds to the next. With that in mind, instructors should remember:

- A participant’s handling and mounting may vary throughout the day depending on the participant’s physical and mental fatigue.
- The most important rule regarding eye dominance is, there are no rules. Although we use dominance as a starting point for inexperienced shooters, recognize that eye dominance may change over time and when the shooter is fatigued.
- A beginning shooter’s failure to apply primary and intense visual focus to targets, and therefore miss, is very common.
- The way in which each participant responds to a target will vary because of individual differences in visuomotor integration, which includes the eyes, brain, and body coordination. (*Visuomotor*

*integration is the coordination of neuronal activity between visual-related and motor-related parts of the brain influencing behavior and perception).*

- When a shooter consistently misses targets, it is common for participants or well-intentioned instructors to add something to block the eye opposite the shooting eye to accentuate the use of the dominant eye and thus hitting targets. In fact, the reason for missing could be something else entirely.
- During this “beginner phase” of a shooter’s development, it is quite possible for an instructor to misdiagnose that the shooter is **not** applying sufficient intensity of focus to the targets or is looking at the barrel. Is the shooter “overthinking” it?
- It is also possible for an instructor to falsely diagnose a shooter to have an eye dominance problem when the real issue is improper gun fit, for example not getting the stock consistently up to the head, the cheek down on the stock properly, and the eye over the rib.

**Additional Resources:**

Luciano, Jerry 2015 *Guns The Right Way*

Deck, Tom 2006 *The Orvis Guide to Gunfitting*

Mulak, Steven 2008 *Good Shot, A Guide to Using Clay Target Skills in the Field*

Outdoor Life; Shooting and Hunting Manual, 1953.

Forehand, Michael Ray 2000 *Advanced Competition Shotgunning*

National Sporting Clays Association 2016 *NSCA Level 1 Certification Manual*

Schindler, Dan L. 1994 *Take Your Best Shot*

Schindler, Dan L. 1999 *To the Target*