



Range commands

The term 'Range Commands' dates back to the times when shooting ranges were either military or derived from military practice. It refers to the terminology used by range conducting officers on active ranges. **All shooters should be familiar with these terms.** Our club is not a military organisation; however, shooters should be under no illusion; when range officers instruct us to do something it is not for our consideration. It is a command. Failure to instantly follow a range officer's command could put people in danger, and may be regarded as illegally negligent if damage or injury results.



That being said, we also need to recognise that not all commands or questions in a club context are given in the formalized way set out below. For example the request "Is everybody ready to start?" may be replaced in a club setting with the less formal "Everybody ready"? This is particularly the case if the 'range officer' is part of the shooting detail and not acting as an observer as is sometimes the case in our club.

We are much more likely to hear the strictly formal version of range commands on a visiting shoot to another organisation's range or possibly on our outdoor range where hearing could be more difficult. We do need to understand these commands and questions. For example the question "Is everybody happy with the course of fire?" is not one that you will often hear whilst practicing air pistol in our club. However, if you were shooting in a formal competition, be it on our ranges or elsewhere you may well hear it. It is also the case that disciplines that potentially carry higher risk, such as using semi-automatic rifles with magazines in LSR, are more likely to use the formalized version below in a club setting. **Whatever the situation, we all need to understand range commands in whichever situation we find ourselves shooting.**

If you are in any doubt about what a range officer is telling or asking you, put your firearm down safely, raise your hand and seek clarification. You may be embarrassed, but this is better than making a mistake.

Many thanks to Shaun who prepared the material on which this article is based.



RANGE CONTROL

A guide to typical commands / procedures during rifle / pistol shooting

	RCO's command / procedure	Points to note
1	Is everybody Familiar with the range commands?	<i>Purpose of the question: To ensure that everyone understands what each range command / order means</i>
2	Is everybody happy with the course of fire?	<i>Purpose of the question: To make sure everyone knows how long a detail will last, how many shots will be fired, and in what order at what targets. This provides for a clean running detail or competition.</i>
3.a	Is everybody ready to start?	<i>Purpose of the question: to ensure that there is no disturbance to the detail from latecomers.</i>
3.b	Charge magazine	<i>Charge magazine means to "load rounds into the magazine". If this command is issued, it doesn't mean to load the magazine into the gun. A reminder to wear ear protection and eye protection can be helpful during this stage.</i>
3.c	Load	<i>If you were not asked to "Charge magazine", this step includes 3.b. This means to take the magazine and place it in the gun, or for a pistol take a pellet and place it into the barrel.</i>
3.d	Are you ready?	<i>This is an opportunity for the shooter to announce "Not Ready" if final preparation to commence firing is incomplete. The shooter will be afforded 15 seconds to complete their preparation, before calling "Are you ready?" again. Shooters may close bolts and make the guns "live" and "ready to fire" after the first command is given. Expect the range to be live.</i>

- 3.e Commence *Variations such as “Start”, “Fire” are acceptable. On rapid targets (turning targets) give instruction that the detail starts as the boards face you for the first time.*
- 3.f Is everybody finished? *Purpose of the question: To ascertain that no shooter is merely resting or pausing to adjust equipment. This is not used always, and should not be used to unduly place pressure on a shooter to complete the detail and not have a rest between details.*
- 3.g Cease fire *“Stop”, “Stop Stop Stop” are acceptable variations of this. The RCO’s Whistle should be blown to signal the end of the detail. This is because some shooters may have trouble hearing the commands with ear protection on.*
- 4 Make safe *This is the command given to inform shooters that the firearms should be made safe (unloaded, unable to fire)*

BEFORE issuing the next command. The RCO should visually check all guns to ensure that they are clear and that breech flags are inserted. If an RCO is unsure the firearm is safe, the owner must demonstrate the rifle is safe.

- 5 **Change targets** *This signals the end of the detail and is the RCO’s permission for shooters to move forward of the firing line.*
- 6 **Going forward** *This is used by the first person to move forward of the firing point, this is the final warning to all shooters that a person is moving forward of the firing line. No firearms should be touched during this stage.*

Andrew (Training Officer)

Shaun (An excellent RCO!)