



# INDOOR VS OUTDOOR SHOOTING RANGES

So, you want to go shoot? In some areas there may be limited options of available shooting ranges. Some places may have many ranges of different styles. Residents of many western states are even fortunate enough to head out to public land (usually BLM land) to go shoot.

Everybody has a preference on the type of shooting range go to. Sometimes, it is decided by your goal for that trip to the range: are you trying to zero a hunting rifle? Are your training for a competition? Will you be drawing from a holster? These requirements can often make up the decision for you, but sometimes it simply comes down to personal preference. Whether you are a veteran shooter or it's your first time at a shooting range, there are two main types of shooting ranges: indoor and outdoor. There is no right or wrong answer to choosing which one you prefer, but both types of ranges have their pros and cons. Some prefer the fresh open-air feel to an outdoor range, and others prefer the comfort of an indoor range where you can control a target distance with a push of a button. To better help you choose between the different range styles, here are some pros and cons:

## INDOOR RANGES

### Pros

You don't have to worry about the weather, due to the fixed climate. This alone can be a huge benefit to escape the scorching heat of summer or cold icy winters. You can test out your equipment without encountering wind or even sun glare. Since you do not have to worry about weather conditions, it is easier to judge your pistol accuracy.

Many indoor ranges stay open well after dark, while most outdoor facilities close before the sun goes down. This extends the time you can shoot, and can even reduce crowds a bit since everyone isn't vying for the same spot at the same time. This can be especially important in the winter when the days are short.

Electronic target swappers used by most indoor shooting ranges make it effortless to switch out your target or look at your grouping closer with the press of a button. This technology has really improved indoor ranges in the last decade.

Most indoor ranges have the perk of being attached to a gun store, making it easier to purchase boxes of ammunition if you run out of cartridges, or ear plugs for your buddy who “forgot” and asks to mooch yours. Indoor shooting ranges are usually easier to get to due to them being in a more urban and populated area. The convenience of finding an indoor shooting range is a major perk.

## Cons

The versatility allowed at an indoor shooting range to practice is very slim. Indoor ranges have a limit on the caliber and types of bullets that can be fired due to safety reasons. These restrictions are often related to fire hazards (incendiary rounds, tracers, etc.) and over-penetration concerns (steel tipped bullets, 50BMG, etc).

There is no fresh air; the ventilation system must be top-notch due to all the lead fired in the air from the shooting. Lead poisoning is a hidden danger caused by repeated exposure to lead, so you gun enthusiasts who like to go to indoor ranges frequently, better ask if the range is using quality air filters. Most ranges do (they are required to), but if you are especially sensitive, or worried about lead, better to head outside.

An indoor range is ultimately a gun being fired in a box; this can get loud. You should always wear quality ear protection when shooting, but when shooting indoors, you may have to step it up a notch. Many shooters will even combine wearing ear plugs and earmuffs to protect their hearing.

If you are looking at long range rifle shooting, you are not going to be able to do much more than test-fire your gear on most indoors ranges. There are a few hundred-yard ranges that can be good for zeroing a hunting rifle, but most frequently indoor ranges are 25 yards, and are the domain of pistol shooters.



## OUTDOOR RANGES

### Pros

A major pro to being an outdoor shooting range is the fact that it is located outside...it seems simple but fresh air while you are practicing shot placement is important. Along with this comes the natural lighting that being outside gives you; this can help if you want to test out a new scope to see whether the light settings are set to the natural environment or if you would need to reset it. Outdoor ranges are usually not located in urban areas, so some may view this as almost an escape from city life.

An outdoor range is often more lenient and supports a wider variety of shooting disciplines and firearm types. For instance, you may be able to find a single outdoor range that allows you to practice with rifles and shotguns, along with your handguns. The open space and longer target distances open things to more options. The range can provide a greater distance for you to practice shooting, creating more realistic shooting scenarios. Some outdoor shooting ranges offer terrain-based exercises, such as shooting from barricades, which allow for great tactical training freedom.

## Cons

Being outside is a pro for outdoor shooting range, but it can also be a big negative. The outside environment can be beautiful at times, but when the weather is rainy, cold, scorching hot, or even super windy, it can be a bit difficult to practice. If you look at this optimistically, as a way to benefit you in practicing in these types of conditions, then go for it! Otherwise, you will have to choose an indoor range to practice at on these bad weather days or choose another day to practice.

You may need more gear. Practicing out in the elements can be great, but you may now need to pack sunscreen, targets, target stands, and water bottles. Conditions will vary quite a bit, but ultimately an outdoor, uncontrolled range can mean having to pack more or different equipment.

You'll have to manually patch or replace your targets. This means a bit of walking and a bit more work, but it can also mean waiting around for the Range Safety Officer to call a "cold" range. You must understand your outdoor range etiquette so you can practice safely around others.

Outdoor ranges may require more maintenance, like making sure cartridges are picked up over time. Many public land and "hobby" ranges are notorious for being littered with old targets and spent shell casings (we're looking at you 12 ga. shooters!). Please do your part to reduce litter and keep these ranges nice. Trash and pollution is becoming a more common reason to shut down outdoor ranges. Remember, if you packed it in—pack it out. Try to leave the place nicer than you found it.

### **Unpredictable weather can affect your shooting range plans**



# RANGE TIPS

Whether you pick an indoor or outdoor range to practice at, you must have proper range etiquette. Below will be some of the most frequent terms you should know before going to the range so you can practice safely.

## Firing line

This line is visible on the ground and usually looks like a painted stripe across the floor and determines where a shooter may stand. You must be positioned at the line before shooting and loading your weapon. When cease fire is called, you must be behind the firing line as well.

## Downrange

This term is used when shooters are past the line of fire, and this usually occurs during a cease-fire, due to an individual crossing the line of fire and who could be walking in front of shooters.

## Hot and Cold

When a range is “hot” that means the shooters are active, and you can continue to fire. When the range is hot, then no one should step past the line of fire. When a range is “cold”, this means all shooters have unloaded their weapons and “showed clear” (usually locking back the slide, opening the bolt, etc.) This is when you may go downrange.

## “Eyes” and “Ears”

It may be obvious enough, but this term refers to eye protection and hearing protection. You don't want to damage your own vision or hearing and you don't want to be the guy who pops off a round when your neighbor has removed his hearing protection.

## Double Doors

This one is less obvious. Most indoor ranges have set of double doors creating an “airlock”. This is for the air filtration system, but also for sound reduction. Always let one set of doors close behind you before opening the next set. While you may be trying to be polite and hold the door for someone, you may be introducing loud sounds to people who have just removed their ear protection.

## Backstop

The backstop is almost a safety net that is either a wall or a barrier behind the targets. Therefore, it is important to shoot parallel to the ground so if there are any stray bullets or you miss the target, it will safely be blocked by the backstop.

# WHAT'S YOUR CHOICE?

In general, choosing your perfect shooting range depends on what you want to practice that day and can narrow your choice down to what is nearby. The important thing is that you are going to the range to keep up with your practice. Both shooting ranges can offer enjoyable experiences and offer what you need. Remember to keep in mind these helpful tips and get your practice in!

**Practice your shooting and head to the range today!**



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