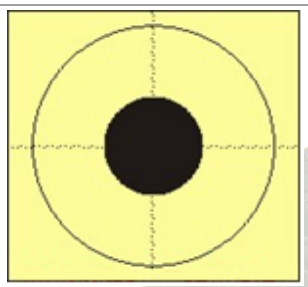
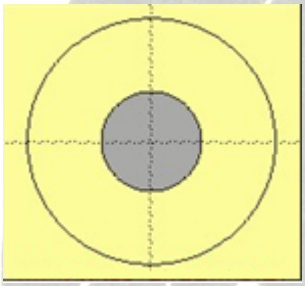
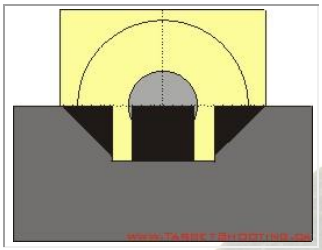
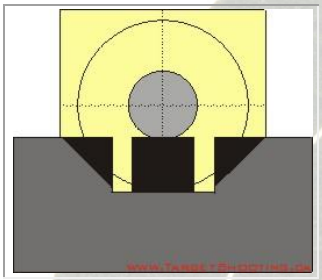
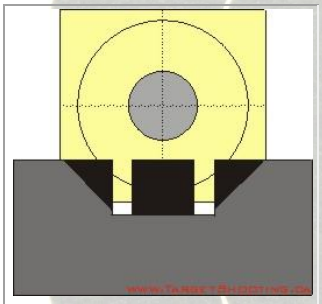
Sighting

Sighting is terribly important in shooting and you need to devote a lot of energy into coordinating your sights and the target. If you can't consistently aim your firearm at the target, you'll never be satisfied with your results. Here's a brief overview of sighting considerations.

Targets and how they should look	
	What's wrong with this target? Easy: its crisp and the bull is defined and black. To see the target this way, you must be looking at it, which you should NEVER do when you're actually shooting. When you're aligning your body on the target, looking over your pistol hand, you can look at the target. Make sure that you are pointing directly at your aiming point. Once you're on target, and you've tested that your pistol is settling in wherever you aim, then stop looking at the target!
	This is much better. The centre is greyed out and it's not as sharp, preferably being nothing more than a gray blob down range. Why should it look this way? The answer is that you're not supposed to be looking directly at the target. Your primary attention should be focussed on the front sight and its relative position to the target. If you believe that you can see both the target and the front sight in sharp focus simultaneously, then you're mistaken. The eye cannot physically perform the act of focussing on 2 objects, one being close to you (the sight) and one far away (a target 10-50 metres downrange.) When it appears that both are in focus, your eye is actually focussing on one object, breaking back to the other object and re-focussing very quickly, and then back again. In other words, half the time you are not looking at your front sight and your shots will be all over the place. Focus on one thing: your front sight.
	Let's look at sight alignment. This image is not the conventional view presented in manuals. Of course, the front blade is crisp and black. This is our primary point of focus. But, looking at your front sight doesn't guarantee a great shot. You also have to make sure that it is properly aligned in the rear sight; hence, the upper corners of the rear sight notch are black and sharp as well. (Unlike the target and the sights, your eyes are able to keep these two objects almost equally focussed because they are very close to each other.) Make sure that the top of the front sight is even with the top of the rear sight. Also, make sure that there are equal bars of light on either side of the front sight. If the light is too thin to accurately gauge its thickness, you may want to consider making your rear side notch wider, or decreasing the width of your front sight, if your pistol has these options available. BTW: the reason that the whole rear sight isn't black is that you are looking through the rear notch to the front sight and you pay attention only to the upper corners of the notch. From these reference points, you determine that the tops are flush and that the blade is centred.

Now we finally get to put our sights in front of a target, so we can discuss sight pictures. A sight picture encompasses the sight alignment from above and establishes a relationship with the target. Essentially, when you point at the target, what you see is your sight picture.

There are three generally recognized points of aim on a pistol target: centre-of-mass, 6 o'clock and sub-6. I haven't seen anything out there that definitively proves that one style is better than another, so try them out and see what works best for you. Make sure during your trial phase that you mark the results down in your shooting diary, so you can review and choose wisely.

Sight and Sight Pictures	
	Centre hold, or centre-of-mass, places the top of the front blade in the centre of the target. If you shoot different courses of fire on different size targets, and possibly at different range distances, then this style may be best for you. Visually, you'll always be shooting at roughly the same "image". Some people feel that they lose some clarity on the front sight because they are looking at a black front sight in a dark background.
	A 6 o'clock hold places the top of the front sight at the bottom of the black bulls eye of the target. The belief here is that this gives the shooter a very tight point of reference which they can lock on to visually and shoot at. Some argue against this saying that the top of the sight blends into the target and causes them to shoot high. Other shooters say they jerk the trigger when the front sight finally crosses the bottom of the bull, causing shots to drop low. (This is a trigger fault and not a fault of the sight picture.)
	A sub-6 hold places a bit of white space between the bottom of the bull and the top of the front sight. This allows the shooter to see the sight absolutely crisp and clear in higher contrast then in the centre of the target. One concern that was raised is about developing a consistent aiming point on the target: how do you consistently shoot on a blank area, off-centre on a piece of paper? One solution is to aim such that the bars of light on either side of your front sight are the same distance (visually) as the distance between the top of the sight and the bottom of the bull. As kids (or as parents), we probably saw the children's puppet show that had the game and song "One of these things are not like the other." This highlights that people are trained to notice differences and similarities. The goal of sub-6 sighting is to make all light bars (sides and top) look the same for consistency.

General Considerations

- Everyone has their preferences and nobody has the definitive choice in what the best sight picture is. Try them all out over several weeks and see what feels right for you. Measure your results and mark it all down in your shooting diary. Finally, when it comes down to making a decision, refer to your diary and make a choice.
- Try to shoot with both eyes open - place a blinder over your non-dominant eye.
- Lighting conditions vary from range to range and even between bays at the same range. This should be taken into consideration when choosing your sight picture and how you respond to variations at a match.

Always allow your sights to float in your area of aim, regardless of what sight picture you choose. If you don't float, you may not have the smooth, fluid trigger control that you desire.