

IDEAL CHOKE SELECTION

Hi

I am new to this game and happy to have found these articles (very helpful). Currently been shooting trap and Skeet at least trying to. I recently purchased a used berretta DT10 trident sporting with optima barrels OU; the only chokes included was the full cylinder. The club I belong to has trap, skeet and sporting clays. I would eventually like to do all 3. What chokes tubes do you recommend I should get for each discipline

Regards

Lou

Dear Lou,

I could go into mind-numbing detail on the reason for my choices, but it would just bore you to tears. Besides, if you ask someone else, they would probably come up with different selections. But I don't care. You asked me, so here are mine.

Skeet: You want two skeet chokes. They should have about .005" constriction. These chokes will also work perfectly for International Skeet.

Trap: You will want a Modified choke (.020") for 16 yard and a Full choke (.035") for handicap. These chokes will also work fine for Olympic Bunker Trap.

Sporting clays: Obviously, sporting clays can include any conceivable target presentation from 5 to 60 yards, edge-on or full open. But in reality, you can break target presentations down to Near, Normal and Far, plus Edge-On and Open. You can reliably break a fully open 40 yard chandelle with a Skeet choke, but you'll need Full to get the most reliable breaks on a 40 yard edge-on crosser. Yes, you can break many with Modified, but ask any trap shooter what he uses from the 24 yard line and back. It's Full, and those trap birds are slightly open as they are still rising.

At sporting use your skeet choke for 20 yards and in, your Mod and Full for the long ones. All you need to add is a choke to cover the 20~30 yard area. This is where a high percentage of sporting targets are thrown. I'd get at least one Improved Cylinder (.010") or Light Modified (.015") for this distance. I'd probably get both and then you are covered for just about anything. If I could only get one, I'd get the Light Mod.

In the best of all worlds, you'd get two of every constriction. Of course, then you'd spend all your time screwing in chokes and not looking at the targets. The cause of a missed target is almost never the choke. We fuss with chokes because it is something concrete we can actually do, as opposed to the damnably difficult subtle muscle movements required to point the gun correctly. If I had to trim my choke budget down to a sporting clays minimum, I'd probably get 2 Skeet and 2 Modified. If it had to be even more basic, I'd just get a pair of Modifieds and never remove them. In NSCA sporting, you can use spreader loads if you want to, so those Mods would work

for closer birds. Of course, if you intend to shoot sporting mostly at your local club, and that club tends to have a close or intermediate or far course, buy chokes for that.

Bottom line: You know you need 2 Skeet chokes for skeet. You also know you need a Modified and a Full for 16 and handicap trap. That's four chokes. For sporting, try an Improved Cylinder and a Light Modified. That will give you six chokes total. Later on, if you find that you really need other constrictions, you can add them, but these six will be enough to get you going on all three games.

Remember too, every bit as important as the choke is the shell selection. When I tested a Remington STS with hard shot vs Remington Gun Club with softer low antimony shot, the patterns opened from 60% with the STS to 50% with the Gun Club. That's going from a Modified percentage to an Improved Cylinder percentage just by changing the shell, not the choke. Also going from a good 1-1/8 oz load to a good 1 oz load will reduce the number of pellets in the pattern by a bit over 10%, again a choke difference when you analyze by pellet count, not by percentage.

One last gasp: you will never know what you have unless you actually go out and pattern your gun. You can NEVER assume that just because a choke is marked "Modified" and measures .020" constriction (if indeed it does), that it will throw a 60% pattern at 40 yards. You would be amazed what happens when you actually test this stuff. And when you pattern, don't just do one pattern of each shell/choke combo. Three is the absolute minimum, five is better and ten is the best statistically. And that's for each choke and each different shell. Makes you wonder if it's all worth it. I'll guarantee you that your time and money will be better spent taking lessons from a good instructor than doing too much fussing with chokes, shells and patterning. If I had taken my own advice, I'd be a better shot.

Best regards,

Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid