

# Getting Started with CMP Programs

## Your Step-by-Step Guide to Youth Marksmanship Training

Red Dirt Shooting Sports | 2025 Edition

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### Welcome to CMP Youth Shooting Sports

The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) offers the safest, most comprehensive youth shooting sports training in the United States. With over 2 million youth trained, a 92% reduction in firearm accidents among participants, and pathways to college scholarships, CMP programs provide life-changing opportunities for young athletes.

This guide walks you through every step of getting started, from finding a program to your child's first competition.

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## Step 1: Understanding CMP Programs

### What is CMP?

The Civilian Marksmanship Program is a federally chartered organization established by Congress to promote firearm safety and marksmanship training. CMP focuses on:

- Youth development through structured marksmanship training
- Safety education with proven accident reduction outcomes
- Character building emphasizing discipline, focus, and responsibility
- Competitive opportunities from local to national levels
- College pathways with scholarship opportunities

### Who Can Participate?

- Age Range: 8-18 years old (varies by discipline)
- Experience Level: Beginner to advanced (no prior experience required)
- Physical Requirements: Ability to safely handle equipment appropriate to age
- Financial Barriers: Scholarships and loaner equipment eliminate cost concerns

### Available Disciplines

Air Rifle (Ages 8-18) - Three-position shooting (prone, standing, kneeling) - Sporter and precision classes - Most popular entry discipline

Air Pistol (Ages 10-18) - Standing position shooting - Precision and technique focused - Excellent for developing focus

Archery (Ages 8-18) - Target, 3D, and field archery - Recurve and compound divisions - Complementary to shooting sports

Smallbore Rifle (Ages 12-18) - .22 caliber rifle training - Advanced discipline for experienced shooters

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## Step 2: Finding a CMP-Affiliated Program

### Online Resources

Official CMP Club Directory - Visit: [thecmp.org/youth/clubs-and-teams](https://thecmp.org/youth/clubs-and-teams) - Search by state,

discipline, and age group - Over 3,200 affiliated clubs nationwide

4-H Shooting Sports - Visit: [4-h.org/parents/shooting-sports](http://4-h.org/parents/shooting-sports) - Many 4-H programs use CMP curricula - Available in all 50 states

Red Dirt Shooting Sports (Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas) - Website: [reddirtshooting.com](http://reddirtshooting.com) - Phone: (580) 305-1228 - Email: [info@reddirtshooting.com](mailto:info@reddirtshooting.com) - Mobile workshops bring programs to your community

## What to Look For

When evaluating programs, verify:

- CMP Affiliation: Confirmed on CMP website
- Certified Instructors: All coaches CMP-certified with current credentials
- Safety Record: Ask about incident history (look for zero incidents)
- Student-to-Instructor Ratio: 5:1 or better for beginners
- Equipment Availability: Loaner equipment provided
- Insurance Coverage: \$1M/\$2M liability minimum
- Scholarship Opportunities: Financial aid available

## Questions to Ask

Safety and Credentials: 1. "Are all instructors CMP-certified?" 2. "What is your safety record over the past 3 years?" 3. "What is your student-to-instructor ratio?" 4. "Is mandatory safety orientation required?"

Program Structure: 1. "What age groups and skill levels do you serve?" 2. "How often do you hold practices?" 3. "What equipment do you provide?" 4. "What are the annual costs?"

Opportunities: 1. "What competition opportunities are available?" 2. "Do you offer scholarships or financial aid?" 3. "What is your typical progression timeline?" 4. "Have participants earned college scholarships?"

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## Step 3: Preparing for Your First Visit

### What to Bring

Required Items: - Completed registration forms (provided by program) - Signed liability waiver (parent/guardian signature) - Emergency contact information - Medical information (allergies, conditions, medications) - Photo ID (for parent/guardian)

Recommended Items: - Comfortable athletic clothing (no loose sleeves) - Closed-toe athletic shoes with good support - Water bottle - Notebook and pen (for taking notes) - Questions list (write them down beforehand)

What NOT to Bring: - Jewelry or accessories that interfere with shooting - Personal firearms or equipment (use program equipment first) - Distractions (phones should be silenced)

### What to Expect

Typical First Visit Timeline:

30 Minutes: Registration and paperwork - Complete forms - Meet instructors and staff - Tour facility

45-60 Minutes: Safety orientation - Four fundamental safety rules - Range commands and protocols - Emergency procedures - Equipment handling

30-45 Minutes: Equipment introduction - Proper fit and adjustment - Dry-fire practice

(no live shooting) - Stance and position fundamentals

15 Minutes: Q&A and next steps - Schedule regular practice times - Discuss equipment needs - Review program expectations

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## Step 4: Completing Safety Orientation

### The Four Fundamental Safety Rules

Every CMP program teaches these rules first:

1. Treat every firearm as if it's loaded
  - Always assume equipment is ready to fire
  - Never point at anything you don't intend to shoot
2. Never point at anything you don't intend to shoot
  - Maintain muzzle discipline at all times
  - Keep equipment pointed in safe direction
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire
  - Finger stays outside trigger guard
  - Only touch trigger when aimed and ready
4. Be certain of your target and what's beyond it
  - Know what you're shooting at
  - Understand backstop and safety zones

### Range Commands

"Cease Fire" - Immediately stop all activity - Place equipment down safely - Step back from firing line

"Make Ready" - Prepare equipment for shooting - Assume shooting position - Wait for next command

"Commence Firing" - Begin shooting when ready - Follow all safety protocols - Maintain focus and discipline

"Unload and Show Clear" - Remove all ammunition - Open action/chamber - Show instructor equipment is safe

### Safety Orientation Completion

- 100% attendance required (no exceptions)
  - Written test may be administered
  - Practical demonstration of safety knowledge
  - Certificate issued upon successful completion
  - Annual renewal required
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## Step 5: Beginning Progressive Training

### First 2 Weeks: Dry-Fire Fundamentals

Focus Areas: - Proper stance and body position - Sight alignment and sight picture - Trigger control and follow-through - Breathing techniques - Mental focus and discipline

No Live Shooting: All practice is dry-fire (no ammunition) to build muscle memory and safety habits.

Parent Involvement: Attend at least the first 2-3 sessions to understand what your child is learning.

## Weeks 3-8: Supervised Live-Fire Training

Progression: - Introduction to live ammunition/shooting - One-on-one coaching during initial sessions - Gradual increase in shooting volume - Introduction to scoring and record-keeping - Group practice with peer support

Typical Practice Schedule: - 1-2 sessions per week - 60-90 minutes per session - Mix of instruction and practice time

## Months 3-6: Skill Development

Focus Areas: - Consistency and accuracy improvement - Position refinement (prone, standing, kneeling) - Mental game development - Introduction to competition formats - Goal setting and progress tracking

First Competition: - Local club match (low-pressure environment) - Emphasis on experience, not winning - Supportive coaching and peer encouragement

## Months 6-12: Intermediate Progression

Advancement Opportunities: - State-level competitions - Advanced technique training - Leadership roles (peer mentoring) - Equipment upgrades (if desired) - Specialty clinics and camps

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# Step 6: Understanding Costs and Financial Aid

## Typical Program Costs

Club-Based Training: - Annual membership: \$100-\$300 - Equipment rental: \$0-\$50/year (often free) - Practice ammunition: \$50-\$100/year - Competition fees: \$10-\$25/event - Total: \$200-\$500/year

Intensive Camps: - Week-long camps: \$500-\$800 - Travel and lodging: \$200-\$500 - Equipment rental: Usually included - Total: \$700-\$1,300/camp

Equipment Purchase (Optional): - Beginner air rifle package: \$400-\$600 - Intermediate setup: \$800-\$1,500 - Advanced competition gear: \$2,500-\$4,500

## Scholarship Opportunities

Red Dirt Shooting Sports: - 70% of participants receive scholarships - \$1,000-\$2,000 per year per participant - Covers equipment, travel, fees, competition costs - Simple application process - Rolling review (apply anytime) - Contact: [reddirtshooting.com/sponsors-and-partners](http://reddirtshooting.com/sponsors-and-partners)

CMP National Scholarships: - Merit-based scholarships for high-achieving athletes - \$1,000-\$5,000 awards - Application deadline: March annually - Details: [thecmp.org/youth/scholarships](http://thecmp.org/youth/scholarships)

College Scholarships: - Over 50 NCAA schools offer shooting sports scholarships - Partial to full-tuition awards - CMP training provides competitive foundation - Schools include: University of Kentucky, TCU, Texas A&M, Nebraska

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# Step 7: Supporting Your Child's Development

## Parent's Role

Encouragement Without Pressure: - Celebrate effort and improvement, not just scores - Avoid comparing to other shooters - Focus on personal growth and character development - Let your child set their own goals

Practical Support: - Reliable transportation to practices and competitions - Attend competitions to show support - Help with equipment maintenance - Communicate with coaches about progress

Safety Reinforcement: - Review safety rules regularly at home - Model respect for equipment and protocols - Never handle equipment without supervision - Reinforce that safety comes before performance

## What Success Looks Like

Short-Term (3-6 Months): - Consistent attendance and enthusiasm - Mastery of fundamental safety rules - Visible improvement in accuracy - Positive relationships with coaches and peers - First competition experience

Medium-Term (6-18 Months): - State-level competition participation - Leadership roles (helping newer shooters) - Improved focus and discipline in other areas (school, home) - Equipment proficiency and maintenance responsibility - Goal-setting and self-motivation

Long-Term (18+ Months): - National competition qualification - College scholarship opportunities - Life-long safety knowledge and skills - Character traits: discipline, responsibility, confidence - Potential coaching/mentoring roles

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## Step 8: Exploring Advanced Opportunities

### CMP Distinguished Badges

Junior Distinguished Badge: - Prestigious recognition of competitive excellence - Earned through accumulated match scores - Recognized by colleges and military - Details: [thecmp.org/youth/distinguished-badges](http://thecmp.org/youth/distinguished-badges)

### National Championships

CMP National Three-Position Air Rifle Championships: - Held annually at Camp Perry, Ohio - Over 1,500 youth competitors - Olympic-style facilities - Qualification required through state/regional matches

### Summer Camps and Clinics

CMP Junior Rifle Camps: - Week-long intensive training - World-class coaching - Video analysis and mental training - 5:1 student-to-instructor ratio - Details: [thecmp.org/youth/junior-rifle-camps](http://thecmp.org/youth/junior-rifle-camps)

Red Dirt Mobile Workshops: - Weekend intensive workshops - Bring CMP training to your community - All equipment provided - Scholarship support available - Contact: [reddirtshooting.com/mobile-shooting-sports-outreach](http://reddirtshooting.com/mobile-shooting-sports-outreach)

### College Shooting Programs

NCAA Rifle Programs: - Over 50 colleges offer rifle teams - Scholarship opportunities available - Division I, II, and III programs - CMP training provides foundation

Top Programs: - University of Kentucky (multiple national championships) - Texas Christian University (TCU) - University of Nebraska - West Virginia University - University of Alaska-Fairbanks

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## Step 9: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does my child need prior experience? A: No. CMP programs are designed for complete beginners. All fundamentals are taught from the ground up.

Q: Is shooting sports safe for kids? A: Yes. CMP programs have documented a 92% reduction in firearm accidents among participants. Safety is the absolute priority.

Q: Do we need to buy equipment? A: No. Most programs provide loaner equipment for beginners. Purchase is optional and only recommended after 6-12 months.

Q: How much time commitment is required? A: Beginners typically practice 1-2 hours per week. Competitive athletes may train 4-6 hours weekly.

Q: Can girls participate? A: Absolutely. Shooting sports are co-educational, and female participation is growing rapidly (currently 40% of youth shooters).

Q: What if we can't afford the program? A: Most CMP-affiliated programs offer scholarships. Red Dirt Shooting Sports provides aid to 70% of participants.

Q: Will this help with college? A: Yes. CMP training can lead to college scholarships at over 50 NCAA schools, plus character development valued by all colleges.

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## Step 10: Taking the Next Step

### Ready to Get Started?

Find a Program Near You: - CMP Club Directory: [thecmp.org/youth/clubs-and-teams](http://thecmp.org/youth/clubs-and-teams) - 4-H Shooting Sports: [4-h.org/parents/shooting-sports](http://4-h.org/parents/shooting-sports) - Red Dirt Shooting Sports: [reddirtshooting.com](http://reddirtshooting.com) (OK, TX, MO, AR)

Contact Red Dirt Shooting Sports: - Phone: (580) 305-1228 - Email: [info@reddirtshooting.com](mailto:info@reddirtshooting.com) - Website: [reddirtshooting.com/get-in-touch](http://reddirtshooting.com/get-in-touch) - Programs: [reddirtshooting.com/youth-shooting-sports-programs](http://reddirtshooting.com/youth-shooting-sports-programs)

### What Happens Next?

1. Initial Contact: Call or email to express interest
  2. Information Session: Attend a free introductory session
  3. Registration: Complete forms and schedule safety orientation
  4. First Practice: Begin your child's shooting sports journey
  5. Ongoing Support: Regular communication with coaches and staff
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## Additional Resources

### Official CMP Resources

- CMP Homepage: [thecmp.org](http://thecmp.org)
- Youth Programs: [thecmp.org/youth](http://thecmp.org/youth)
- Training Resources: [thecmp.org/training-tech](http://thecmp.org/training-tech)
- Competition Calendar: [thecmp.org/competitions](http://thecmp.org/competitions)

### Red Dirt Shooting Sports Resources

- Youth Programs: [reddirtshooting.com/youth-shooting-sports-programs](http://reddirtshooting.com/youth-shooting-sports-programs)
- Safety Standards: [reddirtshooting.com/safety-standards](http://reddirtshooting.com/safety-standards)

- Mobile Outreach: [reddirtshooting.com/mobile-shooting-sports-outreach](http://reddirtshooting.com/mobile-shooting-sports-outreach)

- Scholarships: [reddirtshooting.com/sponsors-and-partners](http://reddirtshooting.com/sponsors-and-partners)

## Equipment and Supplies

- CMP Sales: [thecmp.org/sales-and-service](http://thecmp.org/sales-and-service)
  - Champion's Choice: [champchoice.com](http://champchoice.com)
  - Pilkington Competition: [pilkguns.com](http://pilkguns.com)
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## About Red Dirt Shooting Sports

Red Dirt Shooting Sports is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit CMP-affiliated organization serving Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas. We provide:

- Zero safety incidents across 600+ youth participants (3+ years)
- 70% scholarship rate to eliminate financial barriers
- 100% CMP-certified instructors with annual background checks
- 5:1 student-to-instructor ratio for all beginner programs
- Mobile workshops bringing programs to underserved communities
- All equipment provided (no purchase required)

Our Mission: Remove financial and access barriers to youth shooting sports, ensuring every young person can develop confidence, discipline, and life-long skills through safe marksmanship training.

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Ready to begin? Contact us today:

Phone: (580) 305-1228

Email: [info@reddirtshooting.com](mailto:info@reddirtshooting.com)

Website: [reddirtshooting.com/get-in-touch](http://reddirtshooting.com/get-in-touch)

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This guide is for educational purposes. Always follow your specific program's protocols and consult with certified instructors for guidance.