

## **Mississippi River Rangers**

### **Stage Writer's Guide**

#### ***A SMALL BOOK OF HELPFUL HINTS FOR WRITING COWBOY ACTION STAGES***

“IF YOU HAVE TO SHOOT, THEN SHOOT, DON'T TALK.” -TUCO

Actually that's good advice if you're in a gunfight. It's not necessarily thru when it comes to writing stages.

As a Stage writer you are in the entertainment business. It's your job to write stages that are not only safe, but also fun to shoot. If the shooters like your stages they will come back to shoot again and again. If they become too similar month after month, your shooters may begin to lose interest.

Don't panic! There are plenty of experienced writers and shooters who can give you advice. Don't be afraid to ask questions. And don't be afraid to give it a try. It's a great feeling to know that your fellow shooters had a good time running through the stages that you wrote.

### ***SAFETY***

Safety, of course is the most important thing to keep in mind when writing stages.

Never hesitate to try new things out in your stages. If you have a concern about whether something is safe or not, talk to an experienced shooter about your idea. They may be able to help you find a way to do what you want without it being considered unsafe.

It's good to try out new things in your stages. That's what keeps the game fun and interesting. So feel free to take chances with your stages. Write in the things you want to try and that you think others will enjoy trying too. Just keep in mind that it has to be done safely.

### ***FORMAT***

Formatting the pages of your stages is important. It should be easy to read and follow. To this end, I would suggest the following format.

#### **STAGE LOCATION OR TITLE**

**FIREARMS** – Include Type, Number of Rounds, and Staging Info.

**SCENARIO** – The story behind the stage

**ACTION** – Description of how to shoot the stage.

**PENALTIES/BONUS** – If you don't shoot it right...

It's important that your stages be easy to read and understand. Be **PRECISE** in your instructions. Describe each action that you want the shooter to take in a sentence or two, then space down a line before describing your next action. This makes it easier to read and follow. Each Action is separate so it is clear what you want the shoot to do.

## **SCENARIOS**

Scenarios can be as simple as a single sentence or as long as long as a paragraph. They can be strung together to form a complete story. They set the tone for the stage. They can make the shooter feel like their favorite western hero or just bring back memories of playing cowboys and Indians from their younger days. Keep in mind that your stages must be appropriate for a wide range of age groups and backgrounds. What some people might find acceptable others might not. If you are going to use your fellow shooters in your scenarios, don't be degrading or disrespectful of them. Remember, they may be writing stages about you in the future.

## **ACTION**

Once again, remember to keep it safe. Don't require your shooters to do anything that could lead to DQ's. Don't set traps. It's no fun being DQ'd. Everyone gets a DQ eventually. But you don't want it to be a common occurrence due to a poorly written stage. Have a specific way in which the shooter is to begin. For example, *Hands on Door Frame* or *With Hat in Both Hands*. This means that everyone starts from the same position and no one has an advantage. Next, have the shooter say a line. This lets the RO know when the shooter is ready to begin. Next, is the shooting order. The order is up to you, but you don't want it to be too complicated. The more complicated it is, the more likely it is to trip up your shooters and earn them one of those DQ's you don't want them to get. Separate each of the actions with a space to keep each clear and distinct. By doing this, you make the stage easier to read and easier to follow the shooting order.

Remember to be **PRECISE**. The more specific you are in your stage directions, the easier it is for the shooter to follow along and shoot the stage properly. This helps them to avoid those pesky 10 second Procedurals. This also means you have solid grounds for assessing a penalty when your directions are not followed. But it's hard to give someone a penalty when your directions are not clear. Do not leave room for interpretation. Again, **BE PRECISE**. Say exactly what you want them to do and how they are to do it.

Another thing to remember is shooting styles. Some shooters like things **BIG, CLOSE** and **FAST**. Some shooters like their rifle targets farther away. Some like to move a lot, some to use props, and some prefer to stand in one spot. The point is to mix it up to keep it from getting repetitious. I try to get writers with different styles and mix them up so we don't have similar styles back to back.

In the end, though, the best advice I can give you is to write stages that you would want to shoot.

So now, Are you ready to give it a shot?

We can't wait to see what you come up with, Pardner.

## **SAMPLE STAGE**

OPEN AREA-SHOOTOUT @ IRON SPRINGS

## FIREARMS

2 Pistols 5 rds ea, Holstered  
1 Rifle 10 rds, Staged In Rack  
1 Shotgun 2 rds on Pers, In Rack

Wyatt Earp and his posse have tracked several of the cowboys responsible for wounding his brother Virgil and murdering his brother Morgan to Iron Springs. But the trail has gone cold and Wyatt dismounts to give his horse a breather and let the posse catch up. Suddenly, Curly Bill appears from out of nowhere..

## ACTION

Start standing in front of the horse, facing the firing line, with the reins in both hands.

Say the line **“Curly Bill!”**

ATB - drop the reins and retrieve the shotgun from rack and engage two knockdown targets. Re-Stage - action open.

Draw first pistol and engage two targets, alternating. Re-holster pistol.

Draw second pistol and engage same targets, alternating. Re-holster pistol.

Retrieve rifle from rack and engage three rifle targets in a double tap Nevada Sweep.

Talk all guns to the unloading table.

## PENALTIES

5 sec per miss

**JUST STATE WHAT YOU WANT THE SHOOTER TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT AND THEN MOVE ON TO THE NEXT STEP UNTIL YOU HAVE PUT TOGETHER A STAGE.**

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2006