

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCOPE CHOICES – Some Basics

CLOCKWISE OR COUNTERCLOCKWISE?

When choosing a Schmidt and Bender scope shooters have to make a decision about the adjustment direction of the turret. The S&B standard is Clockwise but many other scopes like Nightforce use the Counterclockwise adjustments more common in America. Here are the pros and cons of both systems:

Clockwise: PROS: more natural direction of adjustment for right-handed shooters, numbers in the turret increase left to right (like we normally read), CONS: a bit harder to get used to. However is still easy to learn if you think about elevation as number getting taller as they are bigger in the natural left to right order: 1 2 3 4 5 **6 7 8**

Counterclockwise: PROS: easy to remember, the point of impact follows “the head of the screw”: if you imagine that the turret is a screw, unscrewing (counterclockwise) moves you up (elevation) and left (windage) and screwing (clockwise) get you down or right. CONS: harder to turn up for right handed shooters, numbers increase right to left.

FIRST (FRONT) FOCAL PLANE OR SECOND FOCAL PLANE?

First Focal Plane (FFP) scopes reticles are in front of the magnification lenses and change in size in the scope but remain the same proportion in relationship to the target therefore they can be used at any power for range estimation and holdover. In the Second Focal Plane (SFP) scopes the reticles are behind the magnification lenses and remain of constant size in the scope at different magnifications but change in size relative to the magnified target. In the SFP scopes the reticle only works for range estimation and holdover at one power, usually the highest power or one marked with a line in the magnification knob.

One noticeable disadvantage of the FFP is that the reticle lines get thicker a higher magnification, obstructing more of the target than the constant SFP reticles. Other disadvantage is cost; generally a FFP costs more than a SFP.

Hunting applications where shooters either use the crosshairs to aim or, in a rare case of holdover, do it eyeballing a higher aiming point on the animal do not benefit of the additional cost of FFP. Also target shooters, with known distances and aiming at the crosshairs do better with the thinner reticle at full power of a SFP scope. Sniper and long-range hunters would enjoy and benefit of the easiest ranging and holdover capabilities of a FFP scope.

We will add a discussion of MOA vs. Millirads later. For now we suggest to you to read the excellent paper A Shooters Guide to MILS and MOA by U.S. Optics on this section.

We encourage customers to try different options and have different scopes the same way you collect different rifles. I understand the desire of some customers to be immediately familiar with the scope of any rifle they pick from the rack. But experimenting with optics is fun too, one more excuse to shoot and learn!