

National Park Service
Manual
For the
Handling and firing
Of the
**Spencer Repeating Rifle
and Carbine**
In
Interpretive Demonstrations



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Manual of Arms

Note: The United States Infantry Tactics as adopted by the Secretary of War appears to have been followed with the Spencer rifles and carbines. The only Manual of Arms issued for the Spencer was unofficial and written in 1864 by Captain G. M. Barber of the Ohio Volunteer Sharpshooters. This NPS manual is adapted from both the official U.S. Infantry Tactics and the unofficial Barber manual with just a few minor modern safety changes.

Shoulder—Arms

1. Place the recruit in the position of the soldier without arms, cause him to bend the right arm slightly, and place the piece in it in the following manner:
2. The piece in the right hand; the barrel nearly vertical and resting in the hollow of the shoulder; the guard lever to the front, the arm hanging nearly at its full length near the body; the thumb embracing the guard lever, the forefinger extended along the stock, the remaining fingers grasping the stock below the hammer which rests on the little finger.
3. The hand should rest lightly against the thigh, and care should be taken that the shoulder is not depressed, and that the elbows are kept near the body.



Shoulder Arms

Present—Arms

One time and two motions.

(First Motion) With the right hand, bring the piece erect before the center of the body, the guard lever to the front, seize the piece with the left hand below the lower band, the thumb extended along the barrel and against the stock, the forearm horizontal and resting against the body, the hand as high as the elbow.

(Second motion) At the same time, grasp the small of the stock with the right hand below and against the guard-lever.



Present Arms

Shoulder—Arms

One time and two motions

(First motion) Bring the piece to the right shoulder, at the same time change the position of the right hand to that of shoulder arms, press the piece against the shoulder with the left hand, the fingers extended and joined, the right arms nearly straight.

(Second motion) Drop the left hand quickly by the side.

Support—Arms

One time and three motions.

(First motion) Bring the piece with the right hand perpendicularly to the front and between the eyes, the barrel to the rear, seize the piece with the left hand at the lower band, raise this band as high as the chin and seize the piece at the same time four inches below the hammer.

(Second motion) Turn the piece with the right hand, the barrel to the front, carry the piece to the left shoulder and pass the forearm extended on the breast between the right hand and the hammer, support the hammer against the left forearm, the left hand resting on the right breast.

(Third motion) Drop the right hand quickly by the side.

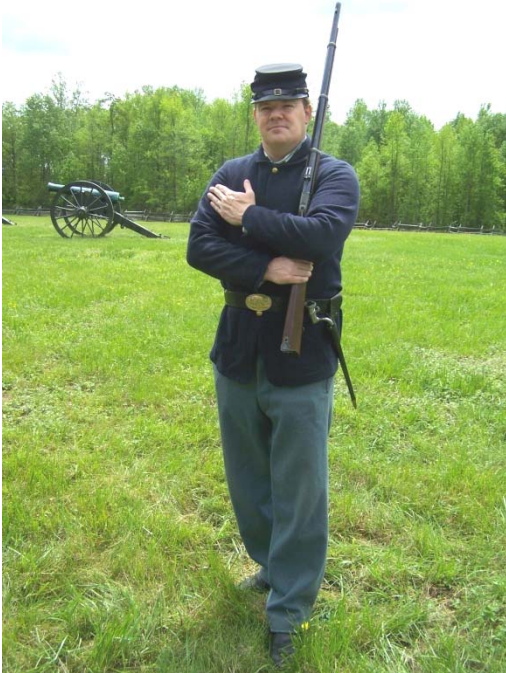


Support Arms

When the instructor may wish to give repose in this position, he will command:

Rest

At this command the recruits will bring up smartly the right hand and grasp the small of the stock when they will not be required to preserve silence, or steadiness of position.



Rest

When the instructor may wish the recruits to pass from this position to that of silence and steadiness, he will command:

1. Attention. 2. Squad.

At the second word the recruits will resume the position of the third motion of *support arms*.

Shoulder—Arms

One time and three motions

(First motion) Grasp the piece with the right hand under and against the left forearm; seize it with the left hand at the lower band, the thumb extended, detach the piece slightly from the shoulder, the left forearm against the stock.

(Second motion) Carry the piece vertically to the right shoulder with both hands, the stock to the front, change the position of the right hand to that of shoulder arms; press the piece against the shoulder with the left hand the fingers extended and joined, the right arm nearly straight.

(Third motion) Drop the left hand quickly by the side.

Secure—Arms

One time and three motions

(First motion) The same as the first motion of support arms, except with the right hand seize the piece at the small of the stock.

(Second motion) Turn the piece with both hands, the barrel to the front; bring it opposite the left shoulder, the butt against the hip, the left hand at the lower band, the thumb as high as the chin and extended on the spring of the lower band; the piece erect and detached from the shoulder, the left forearm against the piece.

(Third motion) Reverse the piece, pass it under the left arm, the left hand remaining at the lower band, the little finger resting against the hip, the right hand falling at the same time by the side.



Secure Arms

Shoulder—Arms.

One time and three motions.

(First motion) Raise the piece with the left hand and seize it with the right hand at the small of the stock. The piece erect and detached from the shoulder, the butt against the hip, the left forearm along the piece.

(Second motion) The same as the second motion of shoulder arms from a support.

(Third motion) The same as the third motion of shoulder arms from a support.

Order—Arms

One time and two motions.

(First motion) Seize the piece with the left hand below the upper band; loosen the grasp of the right hand, lower the piece with the left, reseize the piece with the right hand below the middle band the butt about six inches from the ground, the right hand supported against the hip.

(Second motion) Lower the piece with the right hand turning it slightly to the left, and place the butt firmly upon the boot of the right foot, at the same time drop the left hand by the side.

NOTE—Position of order arms.

The butt on the boot—as high on the instep as it will rest without slipping—inclined slightly to the left, resting nearly square across the boot to protect the tube from gravel and dirt.

The hand as low as it can be without depressing the shoulder, the barrel between the thumb and forefinger extended along the stock, the other fingers extended and joined, the thumb resting against the thigh, the muzzle about three inches from the right breast, the barrel perpendicular.



Order Arms

Shoulder—Arms

One time and two motions.

(First Motion) Raise the piece vertically with the right hand to the height of the right breast, and opposite the shoulder, the elbow close to the body; seize the piece with the left hand below the right, and drop quickly the right hand to grasp the piece at the small of the stock, the thumb embracing the guard-lever the forefinger extended along the stock; press the piece against the shoulder with the left hand, the right arm nearly straight.

(Second Motion) Drop the hand quickly by the side.

Trail—Arms

One time and two motions.

(First Motion) The same as the first motion of order arms.

(Second Motion) Incline the muzzle slightly to the front, the butt to the rear and about four inches from the ground. The right hand supported at the hip will so hold the piece that the rear rank men may not touch, with their bayonets, the men in the front rank.



Trail Arms

Fix—Bayonet

One time and three motions

(First motion) Grasp the piece with the left hand at the height of the shoulder and detach it slightly from the shoulder with the right hand.

(Second motion) Quit the piece with the right hand, lower it with the left, and place the butt on the toe of the left boot, the barrel to the right nearly perpendicular; the muzzle three inches from the body; carry the right hand to the bayonet scabbard so as to seize the bayonet by the socket and shank.

(Third motion) Draw the bayonet from the scabbard, carry it to and fix it on the muzzle, turn the clasp from the body with the right thumb and seize the piece with the right hand at the middle band.



Fix Bayonet

Unfix—Bayonet

One time and three motions

(First motion) The same as the first motion of fix bayonet.

(Second motion) Carry the right hand to the bayonet, with the thumb and forefinger turn the clasp toward the body to the stop and seize the bayonet at the socket and shank.

(Third motion) Wrest (Twist) off the bayonet, place it in the scabbard and seize the piece with the right hand at the middle band.



Unfix Bayonet

Shoulder—Arms

Raise the piece with both hands, carry it to the right shoulder and resume the position of shoulder arms.

Parade—Rest
Rifle only

From ordered arms. Seize the piece with the left hand above the upper band, at the same time carry the right foot six inches to the rear; the left knee slightly bent; slip the right hand up against the left, and carry the muzzle opposite to and four inches from the middle of the body, and hold the piece firmly in that position. Note: There are other variations of Parade Rest that may be used as well.



Parade Rest

ATTENTION

Slip the right hand down the barrel to the middle band, at the same time bring up the right foot against the left, with the right hand, carry the barrel to the position of order arms, and drop the left hand quickly by the side.

Parade---Rest
Carbine only

From shoulder arms (also called carry arms). Carry the right foot three inches directly to the rear, the left knee slightly bent; clasp the hands in front of the center of the body, the left hand uppermost, the piece resting in the hollow of the right arm, the left thumb clasped by the thumb and forefinger of the right hand.



Parade Rest for Carbine

Attention

To return to shoulder arms. Bring both arms to the side of the body, at the same time bring up the right foot against the left.

Inspection—Arms

At this command, in the original manual, the soldier would fix bayonet and resume the position of order arms. However, in the NPS version, the demonstrator will not fix bayonet and will simply stay at the order arms.

The instructor will then inspect in succession the piece of each recruit in passing along the front of the rank. Each as the instructor reaches him, will smartly raise his piece with the right hand, and seize it with the left below the guide sight, the lock to the front, the left hand at the height of the chin, the piece opposite the left eye; the instructor will take it with the right hand on the handle, and after inspecting it, will return it to the recruit who will receive it with the right hand and replace it in the position of order arms.

The inspector should throw back the lever and partly withdraw the tube from the magazine, to see that there is no load in the barrel, and that the tube and lock are in perfect order.

The lever and tube should be returned to their place before the gun is returned to the recruit.



Inspection Arms

Right-shoulder Shift—Arms

One time and two motions

(First motion) Detach the piece perpendicularly from the shoulder with the right hand and seize it with the left below the guide sight, raise the piece, the left had at the height of the shoulder and four inches from it; place at the same time the right hand on the butt, the beak between the first two fingers, the other two fingers under the butt plate.

(Second motion) Quit the piece with the left hand, raise and place the piece on the right shoulder with the right hand, the lock plate upwards; let fall at the same time the left hand by the side.



Right Shoulder Shift Arms

Shoulder—Arms

One time and two motions

(First motion) Raise the piece perpendicularly by extending the right arm to its full length the guard-lever to the front, at the same time seize the piece with the left hand below the guide sight.

(Second motion) Quit the butt with the right hand, which will immediately embrace the guard, lower the piece to the position of shoulder arms, slide up the left hand to the height of the shoulder, the fingers extended and closed. Drop the left hand quickly by the side.

Ground—Arms

One time and two motions

(From order arms)

(First motion) Turn the piece with the right hand the barrel to the left, at the same time seize the cartridge box with the left hand, bend the body, advance the left foot, the heel opposite the lower band; lay the piece on the ground with the right hand, the toe of the butt on a line with the right toe, the knees slightly bent, the heel raised.

(Second motion) Rise up, bring the left foot by the side of the right, quit (turn loose) the cartridge box with the left hand and drop the hands by the side.



Ground Arms

Raise—Arms

One time and two motions

(First motion) Seize the cartridge box with the left hand, bend the body, advance the left foot the heel opposite the lower band, and seize the piece at the middle band with the right hand.

(Second motion) Raise the piece bringing the left foot by the side of the right, turn the piece with the right hand and place it on the toe of the right boot in the position of order arms, at the same time quit the cartridge box with the left hand and drop this hand by the side.

Arms—Port

One time and one motion

(From shoulder arms)

Throw the piece diagonally across the body, the lock to the front, seizing it at once with both hands, the right at the small of the stock, the left at the lower band, the two thumbs pointing toward the muzzle, the barrel sloping upward, and crossing opposite to the point of the left shoulder, the butt proportionally lowered, the palm of the right hand above, and that of the left under the piece, the nails of both hands next to the body, to which the elbows will be closed.



Arms Port

Loading and Firing

Note: The loading and firing procedure for the Spencer Rifle and Spencer Carbine are the same, except where noted in the drill. When demonstrating a carbine, the drill may be done with or without a sling.

Charge—Magazine

One time and three motions.

(First motion) Raise the piece slightly with the right hand, make a half face to the right on the left heel, carry the right foot six inches to the rear, and place it at right angles with the left, the hollow opposite to the left heel. Seize the piece with the left hand at the second band and detach it slightly from the shoulder.

(Second motion) Invert the piece in front of the body, the butt passing under the right arm, and place the muzzle on the toe of the left boot.

(Second motion for carbine) Invert the piece in front of the body, the butt passing under the right arm.

(Third motion) Seize the piece with the left hand at the heel of the butt, press the toe of the butt against the body, the thumb resting on the handle of the tube, and carry the right hand to the side.

(Third motion for carbine) Seize the piece with the left hand at the heel of the butt, press the toe of the butt against the left breast, the thumb resting on the handle of the tube, and carry the right hand to the side.



Charge Magazine



Charge Magazine for Carbine

Draw—Tube

One time and one motion.

With the thumb of the left hand turn the handle of the tube at right angles with the piece, seize it with the thumb and fore-finger of the right hand, withdraw it from the magazine and place it in the hollow of the left hand, the thumb clasping it against the butt of the piece, and carry the right hand to the cartridge box.



Draw Tube

Charge—Cartridge

One time and two motions

(First Motion) Take one cartridge at a time from the cartridge box and place it in the magazine, or if using a Blakeslee box, remove one tube from the box and pour rounds into magazine. NOTE: You may load up to seven cartridges, however, only load those needed for that demonstration, NEVER load more than the number you are going to fire.

(Second Motion) With the right hand seize the handle of the tube.



Charge Cartridge

(Return—Tube)

One time and two motions.

(First motion) Replace the tube in the magazine, the handle at right angles with the piece, with the ball of the right hand press it home and turn the handle to its place.

(Second motion) Drop the right hand by the side.



Return Tube

Load.

One time and three motions.

(First motion) Seize the piece at the lock with the right hand, the thumb behind the hammer, the third and forefinger grasping the guard-lever. Carry the butt against the right arm under the right shoulder and at the same time seize the piece with the left hand at the lower band, the thumb extended along the barrel.

(Second motion) Bring up the piece with both hands, the barrel upwards, the left thumb extending along the stock, the butt below the right forearm, the small of the stock against the body and two inches below the right breast, the muzzle as high as the eye—the left elbow against the side, at the same time take the guard-lever between the thumb and forefinger.

(Third motion) Throw forward the guard-lever as far as it will go briskly and as briskly return it against the stock and seize the piece with the right hand at the small of the stock, without deranging the position of the butt.



Load

Ready

One time and two motions.

(First motion) Place the right thumb on the head of the hammer, the fingers under and against the guard-lever.

(Second motion) Cock and seize the piece at the small of the stock without deranging the position of the butt.



Ready

Aim

One time and two motions

(First motion) Raise the piece with both hands and support the butt against the right shoulder; the left elbow down, the right as high as the shoulder; incline the head upon the butt so that the right eye may perceive quickly the notch of the hausse, the front sight and the object aimed at; the left eye closed, the right thumb extended along the stock.

(Second motion) Place the forefinger on the trigger.

When the men are formed in two ranks to execute the firings, the front rank men will raise a little less the right elbow, and the rear rank men will carry the right foot about eight inches to the right and toward the left heel of the man next on the right, inclining the upper part of the body forward.



Aim

Fire

One time and one motion

Press the forefinger against the trigger, fire without lowering or turning the head, and remain in this position.

Recover—Arms

One time and one motion

At the first part of the command, withdraw the finger from the trigger; at the word arms, retake the position of the third motion of ready.

Open—Chamber

One time and one motion

Throw forward the guard – lever as far as it will go briskly and as briskly return it to the stock. (Make sure all cartridges are ejected and the magazine is empty after the demonstration, this may involve opening and closing the guard more than one time) Seize the piece with the right hand at the small of the stock, without deranging the position of the butt.



Open Chamber

Shoulder—Arms

One time and one motion

At the command shoulder, place the thumb upon the hammer and seize the small of the stock with the right hand. At the command arms, bring up the piece briskly to the right shoulder and retake the position of shoulder arms.

Misfire Procedures

1. Continue to aim the piece down range for five seconds following the misfire.
2. Bring the piece to "Ready." (Keep weapon pointed down range at all times)
3. Bring the hammer to "Full Cock" as in the Manual of Firing.
4. Take aim and press the trigger
5. If the cartridge fails a second try, it will not likely go off with further attempts, bring the weapon to recover or ready position.
6. Bring the hammer to half-cock.
7. Work the action and eject the failed cartridge.



Remember, you must always wear earplugs when presenting a firing demonstration.

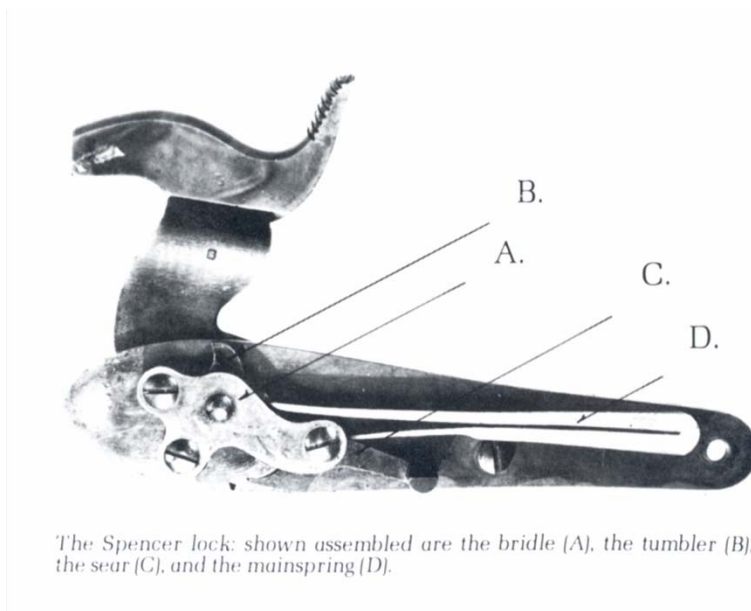
Dismounting and cleaning the Spencer

1. Bring the hammer to half-cock, and open the action, make certain the piece is unloaded.
2. Remove the magazine tube
3. Unscrew the lever screw hinge pin
4. Drop out the breech block carefully

To Clean

1. Black Powder weapons must be cleaned as soon as possible after firing.
2. Wet a patch with solvent or hot soapy water and run it through the bore, keep doing this replacing patches till they appear clean.
3. Run a bore brush through and back out to remove hardened residue.
4. Repeat step one till clean using as many patches as needed.
5. Make a tight fitting patch run it through the bore to remove any moisture.
6. Wipe all parts of the block with solvent till clean and then dry the block.
7. Wipe the magazine tube off.
8. Run a lightly oiled patch through the bore and back again.
9. Wipe off the magazine tube and block with the oiled patch
10. Wipe and lightly oil inside where the block slides, do not put on a heavy coat of oil as it will attract dirt and will cause a problem with working the repeating action.
11. Wipe all external surfaces with a lightly oiled patch, till clean
12. Reassemble the arm.
13. Wipe down the wood with a soft cloth and apply a small amount of linseed oil if necessary
14. Check all parts carefully and work the action to insure it is all operating correctly

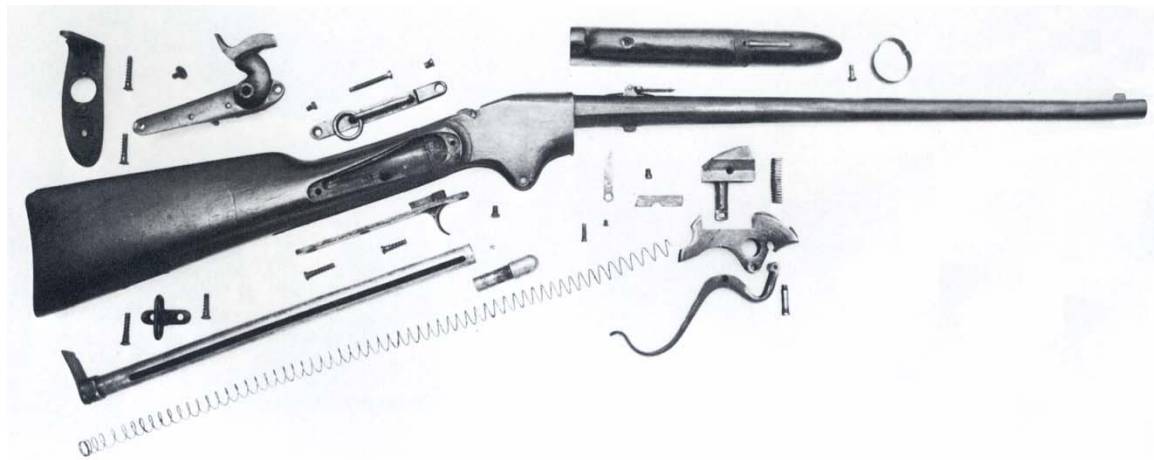
No black powder residue should get into the lock, only remove and inspect it at the first and end of the season.



Lock Illustration: (A) Bridge (B) Tumbler (C) Sear (D) Mainspring



Guard lever and breechblock assembly



Spencer Carbine Component Parts