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Can you use iron sights with a scope

Posted: 1/13/2013 9:25:34 PM EDT Wow, a lot of info here, but seems that most folks are into red dot, etc. for close action. I have a RRA entry tactical w/A2 removable carry handle. I'm looking to keep iron sights plus add a scope...with iron sights viewable with scope in place. Rifle has fixed FSP, looking for advice on choice of replacing carry handle with rear sight and see-through scope mount riser that will clear the rear sight and allow for decent scope mount height. So many overwhelming options out there for someone of my knowledge; hoping the folks here will be willing to point to a choice of a rear sight and riser that will work together to allow use of both irons and scope. Thanks in advance. Something went wrong. Wait a moment and try again. Scope or iron sights: Pros and cons By John McAdams Share this article: Scope or iron sights? That question has existed for as long as hunters have had the choice available to them. Unfortunately, I won't settle that question during the course of this article. However, I do hope to discuss the pros and cons of both and hopefully provide some good advice for prospective hunters. INDUSTRY PULSE Which type of sight do you prefer? A high-quality scope is a great option for most hunters. It provides great light-gathering, and the increased magnification will aid in identifying game. A first-rate scope with a large objective lens will gather much more light than iron sights will. This is especially important while hunting, since some of the most productive times are during the first and last hour of light each day. The extra few minutes of shooting light a high-quality scope provides can be the difference between a filled tag and a missed opportunity. In addition, a scope allows the hunter to identify game in less-than-ideal circumstances, such as through thick foliage. This can help the hunter to determine the specifics of an animal, such as if it is a "legal" buck to shoot. This is especially true for people with poor eyesight who can certainly appreciate the clarity and magnification provided by a good scope. Even though scopes provide several large advantages, using them does have a down side. While scopes today are generally more durable than they were even 20 years ago, they are generally not nearly as robust as iron sights, and more care in handling is necessary when transporting a scoped rifle. One careless baggage handler can knock a scope out of zero or damage it beyond repair. This could be disastrous for a hunting trip and ruin a hunt before it even starts. Scopes are also generally heavier and more bulky than iron sights. For a hunter sitting in a deer stand this is less of a concern than for a hunter walking 5-10 miles a day hunting in Africa. If you will be doing a lot of walking on a hunt, you must assess what your needs are and balance them with the type of sighting system you plan on carrying. Carrying an unnecessary extra pound or two can quickly sap your energy and make the shot much more difficult at the end of a long stalk. In addition, especially on scopes with higher magnification, it generally takes more time to acquire the target with a scope than with iron sights. When hunting in heavy cover, or when the target is likely to be moving rapidly, a scope can be more of a hindrance than a help. Iron sights are generally cheaper, lighter, more durable and faster to acquire a target with than a scope. One can purchase a high-quality aperture (or "peep") sight for \$100-200, which is certainly cheaper than good scopes, which typically start at \$250 and go up from there. Especially for a hunter on a budget, this is something to consider. An iron sight will weigh a couple of ounces at most, making it an attractive sight for a hunter who will be carrying a rifle for a long distance. Also, while they are not indestructible, they are considerably tougher and more difficult to damage than a scope. Finally, a peep sight provides the fastest target acquisition of almost all rifle sights since the human eye will automatically center the front sight when looking through the rear aperture; thus enabling the shooter to focus on the front sight and align it with the target before firing. The disadvantages of iron sights become most apparent when hunting in low-light conditions and at long ranges, since an aperture sight does not gather as much light as a scope does and provides no magnification. This means the hunter has less shooting light available when hunting at dawn or dusk and in thick cover. Also, since iron sights provide no magnification, there is a definite, much closer, maximum effective range for utilizing them when compared to a scope. While target shooters are certainly capable of making accurate shots out to 1,000 yards with iron sights, that does not mean that they are practical to hunt at that distance with. In reality, the maximum hunting range for hunting with iron sights is about 300 yards, and often much closer. I personally would be very cautious about taking a shot longer than 150 yards with iron sights. Which type of sighting system you use on your hunt should be dictated by the conditions on the hunt. Obviously, if you are hunting on an open plain with the potential for long-range shots, a good scope is in order. If you are hunting in moderately thick woods and want to maximize your hunting time during periods of low light, you should also probably be using a scope. At the same time, if you are hunting in the relatively close confines of a thick forest with the maximum range for a shot around 50 yards or less, a peep sight is probably your best bet. The same holds true if you are expecting a fast, close-range encounter with your quarry. Indeed, since most of their shots are at relatively close, but rapidly-moving targets, many professional hunters guiding dangerous game hunts use a ghost-ring aperture sight for this exact reason. John McAdams was born and raised in Texas where he started hunting at an early age with his father and grandfather. John has hunted big game all over the United States as well as in Namibia and Zimbabwe, and he runs his own website, The Big Game Hunting Blog. He is currently serving in the United States Army and has served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. After attending an Applesseed shoot in 2014, I was all hopped up on learning and preaching iron sights. I treated them like some kind of magic voodoo that I had learned, and that magic made me a real rifleman. I didn't think I was acting that way, of course. But I was. It was dumb.What follows is a quick breakdown of the considerations you make when comparing iron sights and optics for your rifle. When I say optics, I'm referring to anything that isn't an iron sight. Of course red dot sights have different quirks than fixed power magnification or low power variable scopes. We can talk about those separately.But for now, I need to get something off my chest.Iron Sights are Not FundamentalsLet's say you're browsing the marksmanship board of your favorite gun-related forum. While looking for discussions about teaching new shooters, you find someone telling everyone else that you need to start new shooters off on iron sights. "Start them with the fundamentals, and then work them up to red dots and other optics," - Said by someone who is wrongHave you come across that? Maybe you've even said it. I probably did at some point. Iron sights are merely a sighting device used to estimate the point of impact based on point of aim. That is their sole purpose in life, the same as any other sighting device. So why have they obtained magical status?The Fundamentals of MarksmanshipThe fundamentals of marksmanship are simple.Steady PositionAimingControlled BreathingTrigger ControlNotice that you didn't see iron sights listed there. You can further break down aiming into two elements: sight alignment and sight picture. Sight Alignment is a correct image seen through your sighting device. For your iron sights, that means properly aligning the rear aperture and the front sight post. But it's equally true for optics, where you need to center the reticle and get to the correct head position for minimizing parallax and scope shadow.Sight Picture means putting the reticle, or front sight post, on the correct point of aim on the target. This also means accounting for windage and elevation. Again, this remains true for either iron sights or optics.Neither of these elements requires you to master the iron sights of your rifle first. In fact, it makes the learning process more difficult.Using Optics to Learn the FundamentalsThe simple truth is that using optics makes learning marksmanship much easier. Optics removes a difficult variable from the sight picture problem: focus.With irons, you have to correctly align the rear aperture and front sight post. The small peep sight actually does an okay job of suppressing parallax, due to its small aperture, but the problem is the front sight. After you go through the effort of aligning the iron sights, you need to pick your focus point.When using iron sights, you need to focus on the front sight. Unlike what you see in video games, focusing on the front sight will make your target blurry. The shorter the sight radius, the worse this effect becomes. In other words, rifle length iron sights are better about this than carbine sights, but neither is as quick or intuitive as an optic.With optics, that problem is taken off the table. You only need to look through the sight, get a correct sight picture, align the sight to the target, and squeeze. Even better, red dots and fixed magnification optics like ACOGs work better when you focus on the target.Iron Sights vs OpticsDon't take any of this as me saying that iron sights are terrible and you shouldn't bother learning them. In fact, I think they have a lot of uses.Compared to optics, iron sights Are cheaperDo not require batteriesAre usually lighterDo not fog up in inclement weatherAre less likely to get bumped off their settingsDo not care about water intrusionAre easier to cleanOffer a decent point shooting referenceWhen you look at that list, irons seem like a pretty good option for austere environments. In fact, they work pretty well in jungle environments. I've read several reports from military units starting to train in jungle environments as we pivot towards the Pacific theater again. A lot of the lessons learned include the difficulties with magnified or battery powered optics.Irons worked very well for that.But, they still have all the same downsides. Compared to iron sights, optics areFaster to acquire Red dot sights are more forgiving of parallax errorOffer better range and wind estimationMagnified optics provide dramatically improved capability to locate targets, which is a hugeProvide better target identification since you focus on the target and not the sight itselfWhich Do You ChooseIf you've read my article on selecting your first AR-15, then you might recall my suggestion on sighting devices.If you have the funds to buy a quality optic right now, either red dot sight or magnified scope, then go that route. However, if you don't have the funds available, then I say stick to a decent set of iron sights until you can save up for the optic.A quality set of irons aren't very expensive, and they will serve you well for a long time. I hate the idea of people buying something cheap now and then something nicer later. Inevitably, they end up buying two or three of the cheap optics as they break. Had they stuck with the irons for a while, they would still gain the skill and experience and not wasted their money.Iron sights are not magic voodoo. They are useful, but more difficult to master. The people who preach that everyone should learn irons first as "fundamentals" are stuck in the last century. I say focus on the actual fundamentals first, regardless of your sighting system.

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