

Reloading Shotgun Shells

Fun, Simple and Cost Effective Loading

MegCha™

By Chad Buckendahl


Shooting skeet is one of my passions. Sheet shooting allows me the time to bond with friends, extend the sport of hunting outside of the field and shooting shotgun competitively keeps me young. I enjoy the challenge of shooting skeet. There's no other hand-eye coordination sport like it. Anyone that shoots skeet just one time can attest to how challenging it really is.



Shooting on Station #9 – My best station

The one drawback is that shooting skeet is that it can be expensive if you shoot as much as I do. You can reduce your cost and extend your hobby by reloading your own shotgun shells. Many shooters enjoy reloading as a hobby in itself; to others it is merely a necessary chore that they must finish before the next shoot. But anyone who does much shotgunning, and particularly if they get involved in one of the clay target sports such as trap, skeet, or sporting clays, is probably going to eventually become a Reloader.

This white paper is all about reloading shotgun shells. I use a MEC 9000 to reload so this shotgun shell reloading white paper is exclusively written from the perspective of the MEC 9000.

	<p>The MEC 9000 Reloading Press is high-speed, high-volume reloading press that is state-of-the-art. It retails at about \$450.</p> <p>The loader automatically moves the shells through each reloading stage by simply returning the handle to the top of its stroke. Accurately resized shells are achieved with each pull of the lever. Finished shotgun shells are automatically ejected from the shell carrier after final crimping.</p>
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An important bit of advice I have for you is that if the only reason you are going to reload shotshells is because you want to save money, don't waste your time. Yes, it's true. You will save money; however, if you are not looking to extend the sport of shooting or hunting, you'll be disappointed with reloading. The

savings for the normal shotgunner won't amount to much in a lifetime of loading. I don't believe that saving money is the biggest reason one should reload and if you go into reloading thinking you're going to save a ton, you'll be let down.

	No Reloads	Reloading	Savings
Year 1	\$178.50	\$678.50	(\$500.00)
Year 2	\$357.00	\$753.50	(\$396.50)
Year 3	\$535.50	\$828.50	(\$293.00)
Year 4	\$714.00	\$903.50	(\$189.50)
Year 5	\$892.50	\$978.50	(\$86.00)
Year 6	\$1,071.00	\$1,053.50	\$17.50
Year 7	\$1,249.50	\$1,128.50	\$121.00
Year 8	\$1,428.00	\$1,203.50	\$224.50
Year 9	\$1,606.50	\$1,278.50	\$328.00

Assuming that you shoot 30 boxes of shells each year; you spent \$500 for your startup equipment; a box of shells cost \$5.95 at the store and that it only costs \$2.50 for a box reloads, you will break-even on the 6th year of reloading.

I load primarily for shooting skeet and do use reloads to shoot smaller game birds such as Mourning Dove and Bobwhite Quail. I do not load for larger game birds such as pheasant and chucker because the recipe would be totally different and I personally, don't like switching up recipes. I do hunt with several individuals that reload their field loads as well and it is pretty cool to see someone create a load and take a game bird with the load they built.

Reloading shotgun shells is not as complicated as it sounds. You follow recipes like you would when you are cooking. Simply follow the recipe of wad, hull, shot and powder that gives you the load that you desire. I shoot a consistent 12-gauge shotgun load that consists of a recipe of Winchester (1 1/8) AA Hull, Green Dot Smokeless Shotshell Powder, Claybuster Red 8 (1 1/8) Wad, Number 9 Lead Shot, and Winchester W209 Primers.

First things first are that if you're going to reload shotgun shells, you are going to need the following materials.

1. Reloading Press
2. Hulls
3. Wads
4. Shot
5. Primers
6. Other Items I recommend but you don't have to have:
 - a. Extra Bushings
 - b. Shotgun Shell Boxes
 - c. Shotgun Shell Catch Tub
 - d. Two Oil Funnels
 - e. Work Bench w/ Light
 - f. Flashlight
 - g. Reloader Press Cover
 - h. Miscellaneous Reloading Specialty Tools



Reloading Press



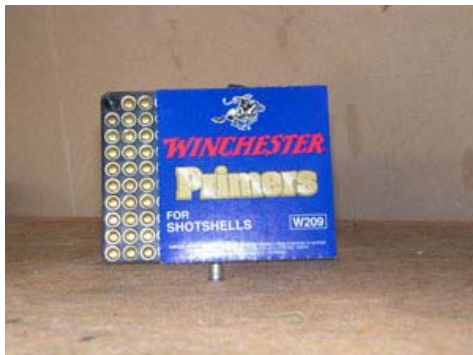
Hulls



Wads



Shot



Primers



Smokeless Shotshell Powder



Shotgun Shell Boxes



Shotgun Shell Catch Tub



Two Oil Funnels



Work Bench w/ Light



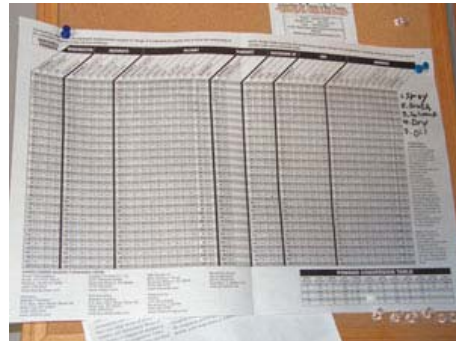
Storage Container



Reloader Press Cover



Miscellaneous Reloading Specialty Tools



Busing Chart



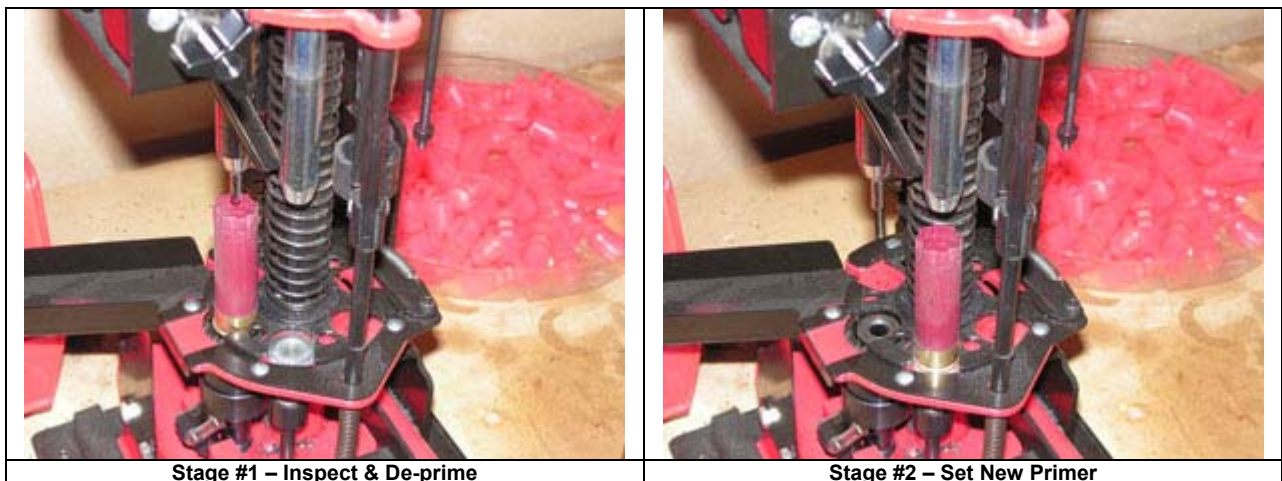
Extra Bushings

Once you have the entire necessary shotgun reloading materials and ingredients for the recipe of shotgun shell you desire, you're ready to begin loading. There are six stages to the MEC 9000 and they don't differ all that much for most loaders. The MEC 9000 is one of the more advanced progressive presses on

the market today and I highly recommend it. I have loaded thousands of shells on my MEC with few incidents.

The steps for reloading shotgun shells are as follows:

1. **Stage #1 – Inspect and De-prime**: After inspecting the empty hull to determine its quality, the first step will be to remove the spent primer and resize the brass. ‘Resizing’ will assure that the finished shotshell will match the original size and work well in your shotgun. On most MEC reloaders, one pull on the handle will resize the metal base as well as deprime the empty hull.
2. **Stage #2 – Set New Primer**: The empty hull is now ready to be rebuilt. The next step is the priming of the hull. After moving the empty shell from the depriming/resizing station to the priming station, a new primer is placed into the primer pocket when the handle is depressed.
3. **Stage #3 – Set Wad & Drop Powder**: Now the reprimed hull is ready to accept the pre-determined powder charge. With the proper powder bushing placed in the charge bar, the handle is lowered and the bar is moved to deposit a powder charge into the hull. It is recommended that a scale is used from time to time to assure that the charge bar is, in fact, throwing the correct charge. This amount of powder is determined by the recipe you have chosen from your reloading guide.
4. **Stage #4 – Drop Shot**: With the hull now charged with powder (powder type and amount determined by your chosen recipe), the next step is to prepare the hull to receive the shot. The modern one piece wad column is the most commonly used. You must, of course, use only the wad column of the proper height to match your other components. A wad is now inserted into the hull. With the wad placed on the ram the handle is lowered and the wad is seated against the powder. At this time the charge bar is moved to deposit the correct amount of shot into the cup.
5. **Stage #5 – Pre-crimp**: The shell is now ready to be crimped. First, a crimp starter is used to partially close the hull, following the original folds of the shell. Since shells are either of 6 or 8 point, it is necessary that the shell is pre-crimped with the same number of folds.
6. **Stage #6 – Crimp & Size**: The final step is to close the hull. With the shell placed in the final station, the handle is lowered and the cam activated crimping die tightly closes the shell. Upon final inspection, your shell is now ready to shoot.





Care and attention to detail are required to produce safe and reliable ammunition, but the chances that you will produce a bad load that could cause damage to your gun are not high. Be studious when you're loading. Don't stop and start a lot so you loose your place. The reloading process is repetitive and you can easily loose your place.

I hope you found this paper to be useful. I love reloading and know that if you are an avid shotgunner, you too will find enjoyment in reloading your own shotgun shells. Good luck and keep it simple.