

Rolling Rounds

Welcome to the world of Civil War reenacting. If you are portraying a private or corporal, you will most likely be shooting and, unless you wish to be an early casualty, will need to ensure that you have enough blank cartridges. There are numerous ways to roll cartridges and this is not the only way. Each person has to decide how much time and effort they want to expend on something the public may or may not ever see. That said, here goes.

One of the first questions a new re-enactor asks is "how many rounds should I roll for an event?" That number varies from event to event. During a battle or tactical, you may fire considerably more than during a living history demonstration. Generally, 20-40 rounds per battle or tactical should ensure that you are not asking your pards for rounds during the thick of things. For a living history demo, you may only need 10-30 rounds for the entire weekend (Note: Make certain you have permission as not all events allow firing). Everyone is unique in the rate of firing or when they want to take a hit, so these numbers are merely a starting point and you may be pleasantly surprised to find a few rounds left over. If so, you can adjust your numbers accordingly.

You will need the following as shown:



- Paper- blank newsprint cut as shown (dimensions are as follows from the shortest edge clockwise) 2 3/4 inches, 5 3/4 inches, 6 inches, 7 inches. In a pinch (especially if the public is not going to see them), you could use newspaper cut to size.

- Wooden Dowel- 6 inches long, tapered at one end with a concave at the other end and a mark 5 inches from the concave end. Use a 1/2 inch diameter dowel as the round pours easier into the rifle. Some prefer a 5/8 inch dowel.

- Powder Flask- necessary for a consistent and proper powder amount in the cartridge. Measure ranges can be from 50 to 70 grain. From personal experience, 60 grain appears to be optimum. Oftentimes your rifle may fail

to discharge with a lighter measure and heavier measure, although it makes a louder boom, uses up more powder. Feel free to experiment within this range.

- Gunpowder
- Toilet paper (or cotton balls) - The cheaper the better.



Step 1

Align paper so that point is in the right hand corner as shown. Take the wooden dowel, align the mark to the short edge of the paper, and tightly roll the paper to the dowel.



Step 2

Raise and pinch off paper at the concave end tightly while rotating the paper and dowel.



Step 3

Turn dowel so the concave end is down and press tightly against a hard surface in order to pack the pinched off paper into the concave end of the dowel. Remove dowel from the paper tube.



The bottom of the paper tube should be flat when done



Step 4. The "bullet"

The bullet is important in that it maintains the proper size of a round and can help prevent powder from exiting the bottom of the cartridge. It is not vital but makes for a better-looking cartridge. Toilet paper varies in thickness. Follow the instructions below keeping in mind that you may have to experiment with the number of sheets and folds in order to get the proper size. Using cotton balls is more expensive but quicker alternative. Just break off a piece to size.



Step 5

Fold the sheets over until sides are approx 3/4 inch high for a 1/2 inch diameter tube or 1 inch high for a 5/8 inch tube.



Step 6

Roll Toilet paper into small cylinder.



Step 7

Using the tapered end of the wooden dowel, stuff the "bullet" into the rolled tube. If the "bullet" is too large or small, adjust the amount of toilet paper. It should be able to slide down the tube snugly but relatively easy.



Step 8

Fill the cartridge with gunpowder.





Step 9
Pinch both sides of the round starting at the top working your way down.



Step 10
While compressing the powder down, fold the tab to one side. Fold one edge of the tab over and then the other.



Step 11
Fold the tab over to the opposite side of the cartridge, then fold tab down along the side of the cartridge. The overall length of the cartridge should be about 2 3/4 inches long so that it will fit in the cartridge tin.



Step 12 (optional)
If you are not going to make arsenal packs for your cartridges, it can be helpful to slide the tab into the spiral edge of paper on tube as shown. This prevents the tab from opening up allowing the powder to spill out. Finally, there you have it - a fully formed cartridge. It seems like a lot of work, but it will go faster the more

often you make them. After a season or two, you will be able to make them in your sleep.

