

# Taking Pistol is Better Together (*even if it's not planned!*)

Student Story Featuring Natalie and Monica Shifflet | Written by Sarah K. Johnson

<https://studentlife.mit.edu/news/taking-pistol-better-together-even-if-it%E2%80%99s-not-planned>

Part of the Pirate Certificate, the pistol course is one of the most popular courses offered by the MIT Physical Education Program. In fact, after registration opens, a waitlist is usually filled within a matter of *seconds!* Pistol is offered as either a beginner or intermediate course covering firearms safety, the "anatomy" of the pistol, how it functions, and the fundamental shooting positions. The class also highlights the application of safe and effective marksmanship techniques used in the pursuit of sport pistol shooting proficiency.

Somehow, during Quarter 1 2016, twin sisters, Monica and Natalie Shifflet were able to get into the same pistol course... *by complete chance!*

Monica, a Nuclear Science and Engineering '17, decided to pursue pistol because she never had formal training in the sport and wanted to learn the basics. Natalie, a Materials Science and Engineering '17, also decided to take pistol to gain more experience and formal instruction. Both sisters had exposure to different firearms through Career Orientation and Training Midshipmen (CORTRAMID), a summer experience by Naval Reserve Officers Training Corp (NROTC). The sisters spent a week at a Marine Corps base at Camp Pendleton in California where they were introduced to shooting weapons they had on base. They also participate together in the MIT Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC).

Both Monica and Natalie expressed that the relaxation and breathing techniques taught in the MIT pistol course can not only be applied to pistol and ROTC, but life in general. Natalie admitted that, before taking pistol, she was unaware of the mindful and meditative aspects of the shooting sports.

Similarly, Monica expressed that "the skills and lessons taught in pistol relate in that you have to be in control of yourself before you are able to do anything effectively. Being able to focus and be in control of your reaction and how you handle a situation is essential in being able to lead effectively and get the job done."

So... *what's it like taking pistol with your twin sister?*

As Natalie and Monica have different majors, they have rarely been in the same class together. Natalie shared that one of her favorite memories from the MIT Physical Education Program was competing with Monica throughout the pistol course, even when it was not a competition. After shooting, the sisters would reel in their targets to compare who did best.

Natalie and Monica were happy that they had the opportunity to experience this course together.

"The day before [registration] we discussed some of the PE courses we were considering taking and didn't even mention pistol. Then day of, I texted Monica that I had signed up for pistol, she replied 'me too,' she told me which section, and I replied 'me too!' So, we did not plan it, or try to be in the same section, but it worked out that way." –Natalie