

Changing Magnification Range

As we have already discussed, a scope in the 3-9 magnification range for a whitetail deer gun is pretty standard. In Western states for mule deer or antelope, a 4-12 or 4.4-14 is not too much, especially when your average shot is many times as long as it would be in the eastern whitetail woods. On the plains or in open country you can even leave your scope at a higher power. You can often see all around you, with little chance of an animal surprising you, which they seem to do occasionally, anyway. In some cases you might have to shoot from hilltop to hilltop, or mountain to mountain. Scopes in this magnification range are excellent for target shooting as well.

For prairie dogs or long range target shooting, a 6-20X or 8-25X variable scope does not have too much power. Keep in mind though, on hot days, mirage and heat waves can make a high power scope almost unusable.

Some people prefer fixed power scopes for their simplicity and fewer moving parts. On some rifles, people like nothing more than a fixed 4X. Squirrel rifles and many .22s for plinking are well equipped with this magnification. Some target shooters use fixed power scopes with high magnification such as 24, 36, or 40 power.

A 2X scope is the most common for a handgun in a magnified scope. The more magnification you have, the harder it is to find your sight picture and target, and the more critical and closer your eye relief becomes. Shooting a handgun with a scope requires lots of practice, especially with anything over 2X. Higher powered variable scopes are really for the experienced shooter and are used almost exclusively from a rested position.

Shotgun scopes and muzzle loaders often have lower power scopes for short range deer hunting with slugs, and for turkey. Again, a fixed 2X is fairly standard, but the trend is for variable power 2-7 or even 3-9 scopes. Sabot slugs for shotguns and muzzleloaders fly much faster and flatter than the Foster type slugs and Maxi Balls they replaced not too long ago. These new projectile types make shots that were way out of range just two decades ago now very possible. Parallax is often factory set at 50, 60, or 75 yards. Shotgun and muzzleloader scopes generally have maximum available eye relief to prevent "scope eye."