

Learning Basic Archery Skills to Improve Performance

Coaching tips for beginners and improvers. This article will also be useful for those involved in coaching activities in both the senior and junior sections of the Club.

Most archers adopt a T draw position which aligns the arrow just above the aiming point, with a low front shoulder, relatively fully extended front arm and little bow reaction on release.

The shooting stance is the foundation of the shot and archers should develop a consistent position on the shooting line that is comfortable and can be repeated for each shot.

Once you have assumed your stance, ensure your head is upright, flat is back, chest lowered, core muscles taut, shoulders low and relaxed, and soft knees.

The weight of the bow in an outstretched arm typically causes archers to lean back or push their hips towards the target. Be very conscious of this and correct and reinforce it immediately as it can lead to very bad habits.

When you raise, draw and release the arrow, make sure that not only your body stays in this position, but your head stays central and upright. An erratic head position can lead to inconsistent shooting.

The most popular bow hand grip is a low wrist position where the hand is placed so that the pressure is along the inner side of the thumb, knuckles are at a 45 degree angle.

The bow is gripped by aligning the bow handle through the centreline of the vee between thumb and index finger.

When you turn the wrist inwards the knuckles of the bow hand will adopt a position of 45 degrees to the bow.

The thumb and finger must be relaxed. A finger sling should be worn to accomplish this. When the arrow is released the bow will jump forward and be restrained by the finger sling, this will stop the bow falling out of the hand on release.

A consistent bow hand position is important to maintain accuracy.

Nock the arrow

Make sure you do not obstruct other archers on the shooting line when nocking the arrow.

Hold the bow in an upright position, bow hand is in place on the riser handle. Draw the arrow from the quiver with the thumb and forefinger below the fletchings. Position the arrow over the bow string and place on the arrow rest. Rotate arrow to until cock fletching is facing your body. Attach the arrow to the string by pushing the nock firmly onto the finger serving between the nocking points. It is important to ensure that the arrow is neither too tight nor too loose.

Pre Draw

The pre-draw is the opportunity to get the fundamentals right, establish a good grip on both the bow and the string and relax prior to the shot execution.

Facing down the line check the stance and body placement, check arrow is nocked securely. Establish comfortable deep grip on the string.

The index finger is placed above the arrow nock and the second and third fingers are placed below the arrow nock. Place the fingers around the bowstring so that string is resting on or behind the first joint of all three fingers.

Modern theory indicates that a deeper hook is more relaxing, helps keep the back of the hand flat and therefore makes for a cleaner release. Keep a space clear between the index and second fingers and the arrow nock, the bottom finger should not touch the nock. This will reduce the possibility of lifting the arrow from the arrow rest. A tab with a finger separator can be used for this purpose.

Keep the back of the hand as flat as possible (relaxed.) The thumb is often tucked into the palm so it can be placed against the neck at full draw.

The bow hand is placed in the handle of the bow with the centreline of the v-shape between thumb and index finger in line with the centre of the bow. The base of the thumb should rest on the centreline of the grip. A finger sling will stop the bow falling out of the hand on release. Rotate the wrist to set the knuckles of the bow hand to 45 degrees and check that the grip is comfortable and in the right place.

A consistent hand position on the bow grip will ensure accurate shooting.

With the body and hands relaxed. place a slight pull on the bowstring to set the fingers in position ready for the draw.

Draw

Turn your head to face the target, keeping the head upright and address the target. Make sure the bow is vertical, you should be able to see the string as a blur and lined up with the bow handle. It is important that the string is aligned to the same point for every shot. The front shoulder is now relaxed and forearm rotated. Raise the bow and the drawing arm together keeping the shoulders low and relaxed. The bow arm is extended and the bow is pushed towards the target.

Pull the string back to the anchor point by rotating the back shoulder, this will ensure the back muscles are engaged. The string should be lightly touching the nose and corner of mouth. The tab hand should be lined up under the jaw line with the fleshy part of the thumb firmly against the neck. At this stage the draw elbow will be in line with front shoulder.

The dominant eye should be looking through the shooting window. Right side of the string for a right-handed archer, Left side of the string for a left-handed archer. Be consistent at all times to maintain accuracy.

When you have assumed the bow hand position place a little tension on the string, rotate the wrist, relax the shoulder lift the bow and push the riser towards the target.

Draw the string, keeping the bow in an upright position, to your anchor point. Align the string on the bow, you should see the string as a blur, sight the gold, hold steady and relax the draw hand fingers.

The Hold

You should be pushing the bow towards the target with front shoulder relaxed, wrist rotated and bow aligned and upright.

The weight of the draw should now be on the back muscles, the drawing arm shoulder blade squeezed towards the bow hand shoulder blade.

The gold should now be in the sight.

If you have to adjust your aim lean from the waist to prevent reducing the draw length.

Hold steady and relax the draw hand fingers.

Release and Follow Through

Commit to the shot. Focus on the gold, until the arrow is in the target.

You have now completed the shot and your back muscles are reacting to the release of the arrow. The bow has jumped towards the target and your draw hand has moved backwards behind the head. This is called the follow through.

As the bow moves forward you can hear the arrow hit the target.

Keep the head in the upright position throughout the shot.

Relaxation

It's now time to relax between shots and recall what felt good and get ready to repeat all those good points again. Check stance, hold the bow with a relaxed grip, slight tension on the string, shoulders relaxed, take some deep breaths, clear your mind, visualise the target, focus on gold, prepare to draw.