

Archery – Level 3

The following are key points to help you improve on your archery performance.

Muscle strength is crucial. Weight lifting can often benefit accuracy more than repetitive shooting. Strengthen the legs, stomach, back, shoulders, and the arms. Strengthening these muscles will support the unique muscles used for drawing back and holding the bow.

The archer's stance should be approximately shoulder width apart. 60 to 70 percent of one's weight should be on the front foot. Move the feet together when shooting on hill sides and bend at the waist when aiming, rather than lowering or raising the bow arm. Raising or lowering the bow arm corrupts correct archery form and shortens the draw.

Suck in your gut. The stomach muscles are the anchor of the upper body. Therefore, tighten the abdomen and relax the hips along with every other part of the body. Prepare to draw your bow by raising your head and dropping your shoulders.

Extend your bow arm out and draw the bow without cheating. This means the bow arm is extended out at a horizontal plane and the draw arm pulls the string back on the same horizontal plane. Reduce the draw weight on the bow until this can be accomplished. Do not raise your shoulders or lower your head during the draw.

The bow hand should not grip the bow. Only the thumb side of the palm should be contacting the grip. The hand should be turned so that the knuckles are at a 45 degree angle from a vertical line. This means the wrist is not straight, but bent, so that the forearm is holding the weight of the draw, not the wrist. The bow hand should be relaxed. This is the strongest hand/arm position with the least amount of torque on the bow handle.

Anchor the bow. The *primary* anchor position is defined when the drawing arm shoulder, and the drawing arm shoulder blade (scapula), are set when full draw is reached. Slide your shoulder blade towards your spine, but not all the way. Leave a little room for executing "back tension release" in the next phase.

Once your back is set, establish some consistent point of contact on the face. Usually, this will include the string coming across the tip of the nose, but this depends on the size of a person's nose. Do not move the head to meet the string or bow hand. Facial point of contact is secondary in the anchoring process.

With the drawing arm scapula and the shoulder locked into place, the drawing arm elbow should be level or a little higher than the shoulders. The sight pin should float slightly above the target allowing gravity to bring it down into the kill zone. An archer may focus on the sight pin, or the target -- whatever works for the individual.

Execute "back tension" release, by sliding your shoulder blade the remainder of the way into your spine while tightening your release hand muscles. The release will come as a

surprise. If the drawing arm comes back wildly after the release, then too much bicep muscle is being used and not enough back muscle. Using this method, it is impossible to anticipate your release.

“Back tension” release can be difficult to accomplish with some types of release-aids. It should also be noted that “back tension” release is not practical in most hunting scenarios. Squeezing the release-aid trigger during hunting is recommended. However, by practicing with the former method, one can avoid acquiring “target panic” from anticipating the release. Regardless, an archer’s groups will tighten by using all of the techniques described, up to “back tension” release.

An archer’s goal is to be entirely focused on the aiming process, while his form and muscle movements become subconscious – he does them automatically without conscious concern. After the release, continue holding your bow out front and evaluate your shot for a brief moment, then erase the shot from your memory, relax, breathe and repeat.