

All About Slings

Introduction

A sling is usually a small piece of leather or braid to stop the bow from falling on the ground. It is a simple, yet indispensable part of an archer's equipment. This article addresses the types and uses of slings.

Why use a sling?

A sling is used to be able to shoot with a relaxed bow hand thus increasing accuracy. When shooting without a sling, you must hold onto the bow during and after the shot. In this way, the bow may be held slightly different each time. Since consistency is the name of the game in archery, we must find an easy way to duplicate every shot. A sling eliminates the gripping challenge. Also, grabbing the bow causes torque, which will cause the arrow to miss. A very simple solution to this problem is not to grip the bow, use a sling instead. In this way the bow moves freely after every shot while the hand and wrist can relax.

Types

There are three types of slings: The finger sling, the wrist sling and the bow sling. The wrist sling is a piece of rope that attaches to the wrist and wraps around the bow. A hook is used to secure the line. It is very easy to adjust. The finger sling is attached by loops to thumb and index or middle finger. This sling is harder to adjust. If it is too long, the only way to shorten it is by cutting it or tying a knot in it. The bow sling is attached to the bow. You slip your hand through a strap when taking hold of the bow. After release the strap will press on the top of the hand and the bow will be supported by the strap. This sling is easy to adjust.

Which type of sling is best?

All types of slings work well. Under normal circumstances and with a properly adjusted sling a bow will never end up on the floor. Every type of sling has certain aspects that, perhaps unconsciously, influence the execution of the shot.

One bad habit that many beginning archers have is catching the bow at the moment of the shot. You don't want to do that. You should let the bow jump forward out of your hand. You're less likely to torque the bow this way, especially if you anticipate when the shot is going off. A sling will allow you to shoot with a relaxed, open hand and let the sling catch the bow. Many tournament shooters use finger slings because they really allow you to let the bow jump out of your hand. Unfortunately, finger slings are not practical for bowhunting. Most bowhunters use a bow sling.

Bow Sling

The bow sling is attached to the bow handle on a point below the grip. This setup causes the bow to jump straight ahead after the shot. The natural reaction to this is grabbing the bow, although this is really not necessary. Grabbing the bow will alter the shot. Beginning archers must learn to trust the sling to do its job, and resist the temptation to grab the bow after the shot. It is recommended to keep about 3/4" slack between the strap and the wrist. Bow slings are used primarily for hunting, as they are the easiest and fastest to deploy.

Wrist sling

The wrist sling is a sound sling, although it is not used much in the U.S. The archer gets the feeling that the bow is firmly attached to his or her hand because the piece of rope is around both the wrist and bow. Sometimes the sling can feel a little bit tight and seems to interfere with the shot. This is usually just a matter of adjusting it a little. Some archers find the hook a bit flimsy and awkward, but it just takes a little time to get used to.

Finger sling

Finger slings are used primarily for target shooting. The finger sling gives you the feeling that it does not interfere with the shot because of its small dimensions. The bow moves 'freely' in your hand. Finger slings are made of rope, cord, leather or plastic. With these slings it is important that the loops give a tight yet comfortable fit around the fingers.

There is a fear that the loops will slip from the fingers. There is no need for this when the sling fits well. Leave about 3/4" slack. This is enough to allow the bow to jump freely but not fall. If you're afraid the loops will come loose, the reaction is to spread the thumb and index finger and raise the thumb a bit. This leads to hand tension and increased pressure on the grip, disturbing arrow flight. If you practice with a finger sling enough, it's use and feel will become natural.