

Developing a Good Finger Release

One of the keys to successfully shooting with back tension and a finger release is to make sure that the back of the hand is completely relaxed, stretched out, and flat . . . not cupped. The three fingers (or two) should contact the string in the first joint or perhaps even a little deeper, but not on the fingertips as it is too hard to draw a hunting bow with the finger tips and too easy for the string to slip off the fingers prematurely. The fingers and the back of the hand to be relaxed, and as the hand travels rearward, fingers hinge out of the way of the string at the second joint. If you try to hook shallow on your fingertips, this will cause the back of the hand to "cup," which causes tension through out the rest of the hand and wrist, causing much more string oscillation during "let-go." It can also cause the arrow to come off the rest while drawing the bow. (Note: Some successful finger shooters draw to anchor with all three fingers, then "drop" or "drag" either the top or the bottom finger before starting back tension). The archer should pull the string in a straight line directly opposed to the target. Again, the back of the fingers, hand, wrist, and forearm must be relaxed, and stretched out on this imaginary line or direction of pull.

Getting the elbow back as far as possible behind your head will eliminate a lot of inconsistencies and excessive string oscillation such as "plucking the string." The last thing, and probably most important, is the anticipation and amount of acceleration that is used with this "motor system." The fingers are "ripped off the string" on the way back to conclusion (for example, touching the back of your neck or shoulder with the index or ring finger). Don't try to "let go" of the string! If you try this method, as your fingers start opening, the string actually moves 1/4" to 3/4" forward before the string comes off the fingers. This is actually called creeping and is a form flaw.

Instead, as you rip you hand back to your shoulder . . . "refuse to hold it!" . . . as famous Olympic coach Al Henderson put it. For example, before you start back tension, and you are anticipating touching your shoulder with your index finger, you "power up" with enough back tension to drive your elbow up and back through an imaginary wall. The elbow will drag the "whole unit" straight back . . . ripping your fingers loose from the string . . . keeping your index or ring finger in contact with your face, all the way back, until you touch your conclusion (neck or shoulder). Therefore, the tips of your fingers will actually come in, toward your face, as they are forced or pulled off the string . . . they shouldn't pop open or flip open away from your face, which is called plucking . . . another form flaw.

NOTE: Finger shooters, in particular, will find that if your elbow up is slightly higher than your nose (one or two inches above), it is easier to use back tension. Remember, if shooters ingrain a three or four second squeeze of the rhomboid back muscles (light the fuse), it will help facilitate a smooth, subconscious release.