

ARROW CRESTING

PART 1

It's been said that the art of crestring dates back to the times of English longbowman who crested their arrows as a means of identification. In recent times crestring has become more of an art form used to enhance the appearance of arrows. Who wants to shoot a custom longbow or recurve made with exotic woods and not shoot arrows made with the same kind of attention to detail.

Cresting arrows is one of those things that just takes a little practice to make perfect. The first arrows that I crested were just horrible. However, with a little practice and some advice on proper equipment and techniques it won't take long to turn out some really nice arrows. The first bit of advice that I can offer is to take your time and don't get in a hurry. Every time that I have messed up while finishing an arrow, it is due to getting in a hurry.

The Photo above shows a number of different crests. As you can see they range from some fairly intricate crests to very simple crests. The problem with the real intricate crests is that it is difficult to make a dozen exactly the same. These days, I have been making simple crests, but work real hard at making the arrows very uniform and making the crestring lines very straight. Actually I think that an understated design is much better looking than a highly embellished crest (just personal preference here).

You do need some equipment and supplies to properly crest arrows. The most significant piece of equipment is a crestring machine. You can either buy a commercially made crestring machine such as the Bohning crester shown in this photo:



or make your own. If you build your own you will need an electric motor that will turn at somewhere around 300 rpm. I have seen some real nice homemade cresters made using old sewing machine motors which were variable speed and could be operated using a foot pedal. I have also heard that a motor from an electric can opener is a good choice, although I have not personally tried one. Two important parts of a homemade cresting machine can be purchased for a reasonable sum. A cresting chuck, which is the part that holds the arrow in place can be bought for about \$6. The chuck has a small rubber gasket that holds the arrow in place while it is being turned. Also, a felt v-block can be purchased for about \$4. The felt is real nice because it will not scratch the finish on your arrow as it is being turned.

The only other materials that you will need are paint brushes, paint and thinner. I believe that it is really important to use good brushes when cresting. Wide bands can be made with wider brushes while the thin lines need to be made with a very small, pointed brush. I generally purchase my brushes from an art supply store. A good brush will cost \$7 - \$10 but will last a long time if you take care of it. There are a number of different kinds of paints (and other materials such as marking pens) that can be used successfully for cresting. The important thing is to make sure that the paints that you use are compatible with the clear finish that you are using.

Some of the more popular crestring paints are Bohning, Testors, and various brands of automotive touch-up lacquer.

In the next section, I will discuss crestring techniques and more details about paints and markers.

CRESTRING - PART II

Now that you have all of the equipment that you need, you're ready to start to crest your arrows. My first bit of advice is try not to get into a big hurry. It seems that every time I get in a hurry I mess something up.

1) Prepare the shafts: Make sure that your shafts are fairly straight. For a reference on how to straighten wood shafts go to that section and refresh your memory. The shafts don't have to be perfect, but they do need to be reasonably straight. It is difficult to get uniform crestring lines on crooked shafts. I crest after I have applied 2 coats of whatever finish that I am using. After each coat of clear finish has thoroughly dried, rub until smooth with #0000 steel wool.

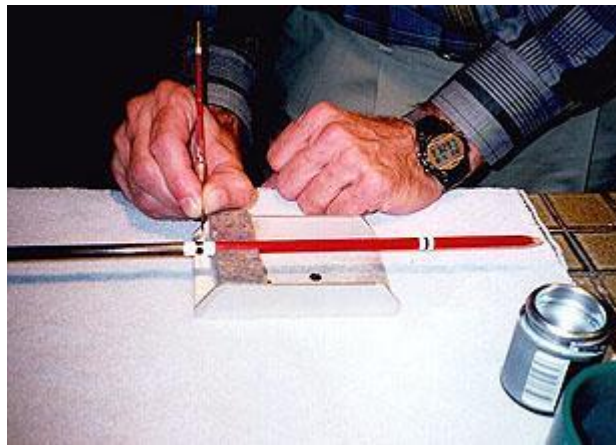
2) Lay out the pattern: It is a good idea to draw on an index card the crestring pattern that you want to use. Use this pattern to make your first shaft. After that you can either transfer that pattern to each individual shaft, or fix the pattern to your crestring machine to use as an indicator for each successive shaft.

3) Start with the base color: If you are going to be using bright or metallic colors, it is usually best to lay down a base of white first and then apply the colors over the white. You get a lot better coverage this way without having to use a lot of coats of paint. Put this base color on each of your shafts and let it dry thoroughly. In all of your crestring use several thin coats rather than trying to put on one thick coat. Also, clean your paint

brush often. I will clean my brush between each arrow for every color that I am using. Paint consistency is important. If the paint is too thin you will have trouble getting any sort of opaque coverage. If the paint is too thick, then you will have trouble getting a smooth finish. Experiment a little on an old shaft before you start. Another important thing is how much paint is loaded on your brush. You want enough to get good coverage, but not so much that it is difficult to control how much you're putting on. Also, don't leave the brush on the shaft very long, particularly with fast-drying paints. If you do then the paint will start to dry and you will get a very rough finish.

4) Add other colors: After you have the base coat, start with the wider bands of whatever colors you have chosen. I like to work from the thick bands down to the narrow bands. Again, do one color at a time, take your time and let each arrow dry thoroughly before you put on a different color. (See photo 1 showing each successive phase)

5) Add thin line to separate colors. I like to put a thin line of silver between other color bands. This really adds a striking look to your cresting. For this, you will need a very small brush with a very fine point. This is something that just takes practice, but once you get the hang of it, it really goes pretty fast. (See photo 2).



6) Let the shafts dry thoroughly. If you want to apply a clear dip over the entire shaft, then let them dry for a day or two before you do dip to prevent the cresting paint from smearing.

7) Using markers instead of paint and brushes - Some of the paint markers on the market work very well. The only difficulty that I have found is that they tend to run if you try to dip a clear coat over the entire crest. One way to avoid this running is to apply a clear coat spray over the crest rather than dipping. The markers that I have used most are the Opaque Paint Markers made by Deco Color. You can buy them at a hobby supply or art supply store. Buy the markers with the "extra fine" tip. The advantage of the markers is that there is no brush, no brush cleaning and you get a very uniform line. There is no clean-up as you just put the cap back on the marker. You can also use them to add other little details like drawing a set of deer tracks on your arrow, putting on your name or initials, or any other thing that your creative mind can think of.