

Bow Grip...A secret nobody talks about!

Article Courtesy Spot-Hogg Archery

We try many different things, in research and development. Often times, it's hard to tell what helps and what's a wasted effort. Sometimes we take things we have learned for granted, we assume everyone already knows about it. Then we're surprised to find out that it's secret knowledge. The few that actually have the knowledge tend to keep it a secret, and use it as an advantage.

Bow grip is one of the most critical factors in consistency. A more consistent grip equals better accuracy. We soon found out that different bows needed different grip variations to shoot well. We've spent years working with different grips and pressures to get our bows to perform better. Whenever we get a new bow, among the many things that we do is to try different hand placements on the bow grip. What we are looking for is that magic hand placement that will give us awesome accuracy (we're still looking). We settle for good arrow flight and try for a follow through where the bow doesn't twist in your hand during and after execution.

This seems to be something that just about everyone has done. We are all looking for that consistent grip. Some of us have spent hours shooting at a blank bale with our eyes closed, trying to get the feel of that perfect hand placement.

But, in search for that magic way to grip the bow, we found that the real magic wasn't in where the hand was placed on the bow. The real magic came from how easy it was to duplicate.

Custom bow grips, bumps added to the grip, shooting without the grip, using bow slings, shooting with an open hand, the list goes on and on. They all have been used to help make the way the bow is gripped easier to duplicate. All these "gimmicks" can work quite well. With practice, they can help you be more consistent.

So, we practiced with different hand variations. But, after spending a lot of time trying different hand placements, we found that there were quite a few variations that seemed to be workable. Each grip variation needed a different sight setting to compensate for where the arrow would impact. As long as the same grip was used, the sight was accurate. (Otherwise, we could never be sure where the arrow would impact.)

Soon we noticed that if we took care to align the cables the same way for each shot that a lot of left and right problems went away. That is, when we were at full draw looking through our peep we made sure that the cables were inline with some reference on the bow riser. Sometimes we would put a white mark with a crayon on the riser and make sure that when we set our hand position, at full draw the cables would be aligned with the mark. But soon we started abusing this knowledge.

We started fixing some of our left and right problems by adjusting the cable alignment on the riser. By torquing the bow slightly one-way or the other. This was so effective that sometimes our practice sessions would consist of finding the cable alignment that was working best that day (not the best path to being consistent).

Soon we decided the best cable alignment would be the natural one. If we didn't add any extra torque to the system and let the bow torque naturally. That way we could have consistent cable alignment simply by doing nothing. No extra work to align cables. We found out that doing nothing was actually doing something.

To find out where the natural or neutral alignment of the cables was, we started with an open grip covered with Vaseline (petroleum jelly). The grip being slick made it a lot harder to torque the bow. So we were able to determine where the cables were suppose to line up on the riser. (Each bow was different.)

However, trying to do nothing, so the cables would line up naturally required constant attention. Without the grip being slick, it was easy to torque the bow. In fact, the more friction in the grip the more attention had to be given to getting the cable alignment correct. This took attention away from other aspects of the shot (like aiming).

We found that if we wore a simple cloth glove on the bow hand, the cable alignment was more consistent with less effort. We tried several types of gloves and found the common brown jersey type glove to be very slick when used on a wood bow grip. We cut the fingers off the glove so we didn't have to worry about the bow slipping out of our hand when we didn't want it to. The only problem with that glove was that it tended to lose its shape after a bit, especially if it got wet. (But even wet, the glove works superbly.)

Using the cloth glove gives us more time to work on some of our other problems. With a glove on to insulate our hand from the cold bow grip, it is hard to understand why rubber grips have become so popular lately. Rubber grips make it so easy to torque the bow. The cloth glove makes it easier to do nothing.

Special note: We found that a knitted polyester glove (sometimes used as a ski insert), is just as slick and holds its shape for a very long time (even wet). We cut all the fingers and thumb off, leaving about 1" still attached to the palm portion. This works very well for target shooting and hunting. We have all tried gloves, and we all use them.