

Nine Basic Steps of Shot Execution

For many beginning archers the big question is—where and when can you enjoy archery? The answer is . . . anywhere and anytime you want. Archery is the type of sport that can be enjoyed by people in all walks of life! You can shoot archery for fun or as a pastime, you can shoot archery competitively where you have set rules or you can shoot just for fun or you can shoot archery to hunt. Any way that you choose to shoot will become fun if you let it be. Archery usually becomes more fun when you join together with others who have the same love for the sport as you do.

Even if you are just shooting archery for fun, it might be a good idea to join an archery club or association. There are many different types of archery clubs, from clubs that only shoot targets to bow-hunting clubs. To find out what kind of clubs are in your area, check with the local office of your Fish and Game Department or check in telephone information for anything under archery or try the NAA or NFAA websites on the internet.

Find out if the clubs in your area are affiliated with a national organization. There are usually representatives of these organizations in each state or even area of the state. You have already done an important next step by subscribing to an archery magazine. There are many magazines out there that can give you advice on subjects ranging from equipment to styles of shooting and form.

The Basics

Now it is time to start shooting. One of the best ways to start learning archery is through the "nine basic steps." Even if you change the style that you shoot later on, or make changes in your form, these nine steps are the basics to get your arrow to the target. And these basic steps of the archery shot will also help you enjoy shooting archery even more than before. The nine steps are these—Stance, Nocking, Set-up, Predraw, Draw, Anchor, Aim, Release, and Followthrough.

Step One – Stance. The first step is your stance, the way you stand at the target line or, as it is said, how you "address the target." You must decide if you will shoot with an open stance or square stance (very few people use a closed stance). To adopt a square stance you stand with your feet shoulder width apart with your toes on a line pointing directly to the target. An open stance is achieved by placing yourself in a square stance then moving your right foot (for right handed archers) forward so that you are at an angle of about 30–45 degrees to a line pointing directly to the target (You will then have rotated your other foot slightly.). This open stance is a more commonly used stance, but it also takes a little more time to adjust to than the square stance. In either stance, keep your knees relaxed.

Step 2 – Nocking. The next step is nocking an arrow. You will need to have a nocking point set up on your string, where the arrow will be placed (right under the nocking point).

Step 3 – Setup. Next you have the set-up. To "set-up" you place your fingers on the string, either in a deep hook position or a tip hook position. Typically your top finger goes above the arrow and the other two go below. (Your littlest finger isn't long enough to get to the string so it is tucked away.)

The deep hook position is achieved by grasping the string just inside (toward your palm) the first joint in your draw hand fingers. The tip hook is where you will place the string on the tips of

your fingers, just outside of the first joints. Many archers have a preference for one or the other of these. It is up to you to try them and use the style that is most comfortable to you. Remember that each one might feel a little uncomfortable at first, but will get more consistent with time (and practice!).

Step 4 – Pre-Draw. The next step is the predraw. This step includes raising the bow, putting your sight pin on the target, and setting your bow shoulder. Staying relaxed is very important in this step.

Step 5 – Draw. The next thing to do is the draw. To draw the bow, you pull the string to a particular spot on your face with a smooth and continuous motion.

Step 6 – Anchor. Then you will anchor. You need to pick a spot on your face to draw to. It is best to pick the spot that is most comfortable for you, usually either a center anchor or a side anchor. The center anchor is where the bow string is touching the front of your chin, and your nose and your fingers are snugged under your chin. The side anchor is where the string is touching the side of your chin and the tip of your nose, with the tips of your fingers tucked into the corner of your mouth. The center anchor is easier for beginners to use as the side anchor takes more time to master.

Step 7 – Aim. The next step is to aim. This is something that must not be forced. In this I mean that it is best to stay relaxed. Let the sight pin float around in the gold ring of the target while you focus on the target, not the sight pin. Relaxation is the main key in this step.

Step 8 – Release. The next step is the release. When you release your fingers from the string you must be relaxed. Let the string slide from your fingers as you continue to pull your string arm back. (This pulling is done with the back muscles and is referred to as "back tension.") In the release you need to also relax your bow arm. Continue to hold your bow arm up while relaxing your arm and the fingers of your bow hand. When the arrow is released, let the bow fall (tip) forward into your bow sling. (Are you getting the point that it is best for as much of your body and mind to be relaxed as is possible?)

Step 9 – Follow-through. The final step is the followthrough. Throughout the entire shot you must create continuous motion. The release is not where the shot ends. When the arrow is loosed, the bow will jump forward, then tip. Your string hand, being pulled back continuously through the shot will react to the loss of tension by jumping backward. If your string wrist and hand are relaxed, your fingertips will end up touching your shoulder. This is the followthrough. Focus on the target throughout the entire followthrough.