

Practice Tips From the Pros

There is a difference between shooting and training: Tiger Woods did not get where he is today by simply waking up and shooting nine holes, after nine holes, after nine holes and so on day in and day out. At any given time he can be found spending hours at a time on the driving range, then on the putting greens, then in the sand trap. When each of the individual aspects of his chosen passion are strung together he has a game. Archery is no different than golf in that respect. One has to spend time honing each particular aspect of the game.

Learn to approach your shot sequence by breaking it down into bare minimums and practicing them separately. Practice drawing to the same anchor, practice aiming, and practice waiting for the release to fire, and then figure out which aspect gives you the most trouble (you know, the part that you fear and hate the most) and force yourself to make it your first priority at practice.

Here's a practice tip. If an arrow was not a good shot then put down your bow and walk to the target and retrieve the arrow and re-shoot it. Do this until you are repeating your shot time and time again. You may get up to two arrows in a row or ten arrows in a row, and then some days you will do more walking than shooting. The whole idea is to force yourself to shoot your best possible shot so you won't have to do so much walking! Hopefully you will teach yourself to stay in your zone time and time again.

Here's another tip from archery legend George Ryals. "Concentrate on the feel of the shot and the rhythm of the shot. Each time your bow goes off, pretend there is a gallery watching you shoot, but (they) cannot see the target. Make your form and follow through look so clean and so perfect that the gallery would say, "He must have drilled it!"

George also advocates a practice routine that he calls "ten yard practice." This involves shooting at a full sized 20 yard target (he recommends a NFAA indoor 5 spot target), but doing it at 10 yards: "Set up a target at ten yards. Get a score card and a pencil. Shoot a full game at ten yards (60 arrows for 300 points). Do it exactly as you would at a tournament. Keep score. Save the target. Do everything that you would do at a tournament when you shoot a perfect score or a personal record. This acclimates your brain to shooting a smooth shot while your sight is dead center on the target. It gives you a positive and perfect image of what it feels like and what it looks like when you are the best archer in the world. Stay at ten yards for a couple of weeks. Bouncing back and forth from 10 and 20 will do you no good. It is not an instant fix. Resist the temptation to shoot at twenty to see how you are doing. You need to burn this image into your brain. After a couple of weeks, move to fifteen and do the same thing. As you work back, slowly you introduce a little more sight movement into the routine and you will learn to shoot with it, and without worrying about missing."