

4

Eleven Steps to Archery Success



Eleven Steps to Archery Success

Lesson Objectives

Student archers will learn eleven steps to perform and execute ideal shooting form, shot execution, and follow through.

Classroom Application

This lesson will be taught before students shoot their first arrows.

Discussion

There are many keys to enjoying success in archery. It is important the archer's equipment fits, and bows, arrows, and accessories are well tuned for effective arrow flight. The archer must also execute consistent shooting form from shot to shot. The archer's shooting form is most effective when it allows the shooter to be stable, relaxed, and comfortable, to maintain proper muscle activity and body alignment throughout each shot.



During this lesson the archer will learn eleven consecutive steps to follow to promote life-long archery success. These steps will guide the archer from initial form on the shooting line, through execution and reflection of each shot.

This lesson will rely heavily upon the String Bow® previously constructed. New archers should master these steps using the String Bow® before moving on to bows, arrows and targets. Even experienced archers will find it helpful to regularly review their performance of these eleven steps, even using the String Bow®, to improve or maintain the level of performance they desire.

Materials Needed

- *Each student needs a properly constructed and fitted String Bow®.*

Classroom Set-Up

No actual shooting will take place during this lesson. However, it is important there be a waiting and shooting line and a target direction for the students to simulate shooting. All students should be behind the waiting line as the class begins.

Conducting the Lesson

Sample Introduction

“The title of this lesson is the “Eleven Steps to Archery Success”. The purpose of the lesson is to learn proper archery form, shot execution, and follow-through. If an archer is able to master this process of shooting, they are much more likely to enjoy a lifetime of success in archery.”

Using the two-whistle command, bring the class to the shooting line. Because actual bows and arrows will be unused during this lesson, it is safe for the instructor to stand downrange, in front of the shooting line, where students can see. The instructor should first show and explain the Eleven Steps to Archery Success to the class. After the steps have been explained and students have followed the instructor through each step, have the students call out each step for the instructor to demonstrate again. Next have the students perform the steps. Then, have the class call them out as they perform the steps together. If a student has difficulty with a particular step, refer them to more practice with the String Bow®.

Form

1. Stance: Each student should straddle the shooting line with one foot on either side. If the archer is right-handed, the left foot should be over the shooting line toward the target line. To establish correct foot placement, first bring both feet together BEHIND the shooting line, toes and heels even and touching. Then slide the foot closest to the target (front foot) back a half step so the toes are even with the mid-point (instep) of the back foot.

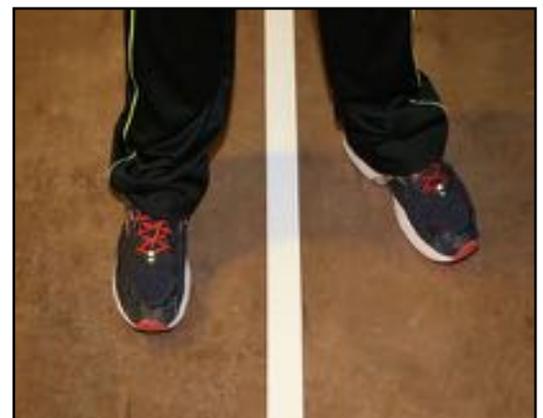


Fig. 4.1

Basic Archery Instructor

While maintaining this half-step placement, slide the front foot toward the target so the feet are shoulder-width apart. Then turn (open) the front foot toes toward the target. Imagine the shooter is facing a 12 o'clock position. The toes of the back foot should be pointed to 12 o'clock, parallel to the shooting line. The toes of the front foot should be pointing toward 10 o'clock for a right-handed shooter and 2 o'clock for a left-handed shooter. Stand vertical with your head up and knees firm with slight pressure on the inside of both knees and feet. **(Figure 4.1)**

- 2. Nock Arrow:** With your bow (String Bow[®] during this lesson) in your bow hand, use your draw hand to remove an arrow (in this case an imaginary arrow because the String Bow[®] is being used) from the floor quiver by grasping the arrow, thumb down, below the vanes. As the arrow is removed and carried from the quiver, the arrow should be kept pointed downrange towards the target at all times. Keep your



Fig. 4.2



Fig. 4.3



Fig. 4.4

bow as vertical as possible and carry the arrow up and over the top of the bow. With the different colored "index fletch or vane" pointed toward you, snap (audible click) the arrow's nock under or between the nock locator(s). The arrow shaft should be placed on the arrow rest. **(Figure 4.2 - 4.4)**

- 3. Draw Hand Set:** With your bow at arm's length and pointed down with the cam resting on the leg, grasp the string with three fingers immediately under the nock at least to the first joint of the 1st and 3rd finger and slightly inside the joint of the middle finger forming a hook. Keep the back of the hand flat and the thumb folded in the palm and relaxed. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow[®] and the real bow. **(Figure 4.5 and Teaching Suggestions 4.1, 4.2, & 4.3)**



Fig. 4.5

- 4. Bow Hand Set:** Place your hand in the bow grip with the meaty part of your thumb inside the grip to the lifeline of your palm. The lifeline should be aligned over the center of the bow's grip. When set properly the knuckles of your bow hand should form a 30-45 degree angle. Form an "L" shape at the wrist and the fingertips of your hand should lightly touch the front of the riser. At the same time your bow hand is set, rotate your elbow down to the left (for right-handed archer). This hand and elbow position allows for improved string clearance of the bow arm. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow[®] and the real bow. **(Figures 4.7 – 4.8 & Teaching Suggestion 4.4)**



**Teaching Suggestion 4.1
Why 3 Fingers?**

Some experienced archers will question placing three fingers under the arrow nock rather than one finger above and two below. Explain that three fingers under prevents twisting of the bowstring and reduces the likelihood that the arrow will fall off the arrow rest.



**Teaching Suggestion 4.2
Why in the Finger Joints?**

Many archers were taught that the bowstring should be held with just the tips of the fingers to reduce "finger drag" when the string is released. However, when the string is held by just the finger tips, instead of correctly placed in the finger joints, the back of the fingers and hand bend and are stressed rather than remaining flat and relaxed.



**Teaching Suggestion 4.3
Practice a Flat & Relaxed String hand**

The String Bow[®] can be used to help an archer learn how to relax the string hand so the back of the hand is flat after hooking the bowstring. With the String Bow[®] hooked in the archer's groove, have the archer stand on the sling portion of the String Bow[®]. The string hand will be down at the archer's side and can be easily flattened. The archer can practice relaxing the back of the drawing hand to let the string slip from the relaxed hand. **(Fig. 4.6)**



**Teaching Suggestion 4.4
The 30 Degree Bow Hand**

To help establish a 30-45 degree knuckle angle of the bow-hand, curl the 4th and 5th fingers into your hand and along the side of the grip.



Fig. 4.6



Fig. 4.7



Fig. 4.8

SHOT EXECUTION

- 5. Pre-Draw:** Starting with your bow arm hanging relaxed at your side, and your bow undrawn, lift your arm allowing it to hinge at your shoulder so your shoulders will remain level. Your drawing hand will remain hooked around the bowstring with the bow undrawn. The drawing arm will be simultaneously raised slightly higher than the bow arm. The drawing hand, arm and elbow should be parallel to the floor or ground. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow® and the real bow. **(Figure 4.10 & Teaching Suggestion 4.5)**
- 6. Draw:** Smoothly pull or draw the string toward the right side of your face (right-handed archer) by rotating your hips and your shoulder around until your elbow is slightly in front of the arrow line. You want the feeling of getting in behind the bow. You should feel your upper back mus-



Teaching Suggestion 4.5 Practicing Turning Elbow to Protect Arm

For students who have a difficult time keeping the bowstring from hitting the bow arm and who can't turn the elbow down and to the left (or right for left-handed shooter), have them put their bow hand palm against a wall or door jam and practice turning the elbow under and away from the bow string. It is certainly acceptable for the student to wear an arm guard while shooting. **(Figure 4.9)**

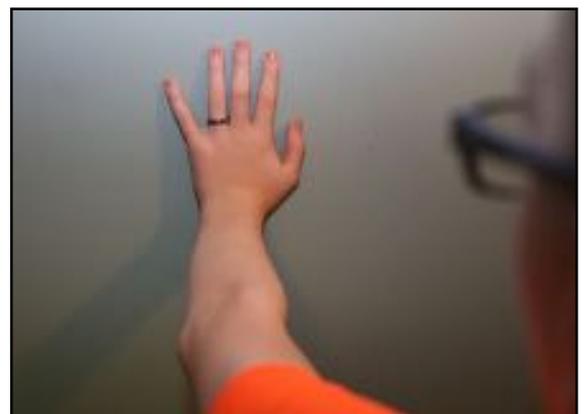


Fig. 4.9

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Fig. 4.10

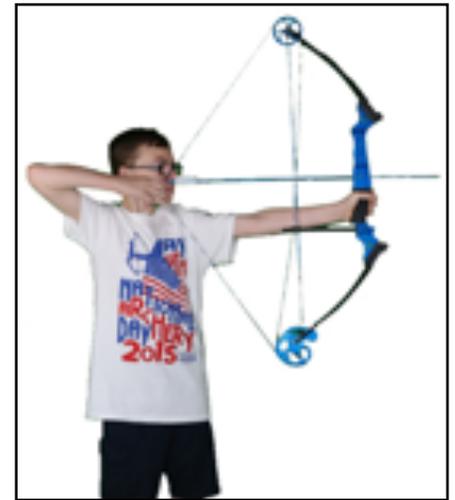


Fig. 4.11

cles being activated. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow[®] and the real bow.

(Figure 4.11)

7. Anchor: Anchor by placing your index finger touching the corner of your mouth. Keep muscles active while maintaining full draw. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow[®] and the real bow. **(Figure 4.12)**

8. Aiming: Your dominant eye is your rear sight and must be consistent in location as it relates to the anchor. Think of aiming as an alignment between your eye, the string and your front sight. In bare bow archery (without a bow sight) your front sight is your arrow's point. Allow your bow to move naturally – a perfectly still bow is unnatural. Be aware of the target and the sight. Keep your muscles active during the aiming process. **(Teaching Suggestion 4.6)**

9. Shot Set-Up: After you have reached your anchor and begun your aiming alignment, while keeping the bow-arm muscles active, slowly start moving your draw-side shoulder blade towards the active, but stationary, bow-side



Fig. 4.12



Teaching Suggestion 4.6 Accommodating Non-Dominant Eye

As covered in Chapter 3, eye dominance may be an issue with some shooters. If the archer is missing the target badly to the left (for a right-handed shooter) or if the archer is leaning over the string to get the other eye behind the string, the shooter is probably holding the string under the non-dominant eye. The student can shut the other eye to fix this problem without changing bow and drawing arms.

shoulder blade. Initiate release anytime during the drawing-side shoulder blade movement. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow® and the real bow. **(Teaching Suggestion 4.7)**

10. Release: The release is a combination of relaxing your fingers and the back of your hand in a single instant. All your arm and back muscles remain active during this process. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow® and the real bow. **(Teaching Suggestion 4.8)**

REFLECTION

11. Follow-Through/Reflect: Upon release, your drawing hand will move rearward, along (painting) your face, and under your ear with your fingers relaxed, and end up with your thumb touching (or near) your drawing shoulder. The shoulder should hinge so your elbow can move/relax down. The bow arm moves a bit forward then slightly both left (right for left-handed shooter) and down. After follow-through, reflect upon the position of your drawing and bow hand to see that they are in the proper ending positions as a result of having kept your muscles active throughout the shot sequence. This is done exactly the same for the String Bow® and the real bow. **(Figure 4.13 and Teaching Suggestion 4.9 & 4.10)**



Teaching Suggestion 4.7 Shot Set-Up

During the shot set-up the shoulder blade on the bow-side remains in place until the release is initiated. Then both shoulder blades move towards one another during follow-through.



Teaching Suggestion 4.8 1, 2, 3 . . . Release

Some students will have difficulty releasing the string from their fingers. To help the student initiate the release, when the archer reaches anchor and is aiming, remind the student to keep muscles active, and then count - 1, 2, and 3. Let the string go on "3" as the shoulder or arm moves rearward and the back of the hand and fingers of the drawing hand are relaxed at the same time. The string hand thumb should touch or be near to the shoulder at the conclusion of follow-through.



Teaching Suggestion 4.9 The Continuous 'Swing' of an Archery Shot

From drawing the bowstring (step 6) through follow-through (step 11), an archery shot should be a deliberate/fluid motion. The fluidity of an archery shot could be compared to a baseball batter or golfer swinging at a baseball or golf ball. Neither would stop their swing when bat or club strikes they ball. They would follow through thus completing their swing.



Fig. 4.13



Teaching Suggestion 4.10 The "Myth" of a Stationary Bow Arm

Many archers were trained to leave the bow arm up and steady until the arrow strikes the target. In fact, upon release of the bowstring a properly active bow arm will move slightly towards the target and then fall down and to the side (left for RH archer opposite for LH). Trying to keep the bow arm up after releasing the string is an unnatural effort that leads to shooting difficulty.



Checks for Understanding

After follow-through, where should the thumb of the drawing hand be?

If the bowstring is hitting the archer's arm, what key form factors should be checked?

If the arrow keeps falling off the arrow rest as the string is drawn, what might the archer need to do?