

by Randall Grayson

# Teaching Archery

## *Games, tips, and techniques*

**A**rchery has been enjoyed for centuries and can add a level of intrigue and excitement to any camp program. The key to running a successful archery program is to make it as fun, and safe, as possible.

### Using the right tool for the job

First, a brief note on equipment. There are a few things every instructor or potential instructor should be aware of. Fiberglass bows, although cheap, should be avoided because they are extremely inaccurate; they make it difficult or impossible to play some archery games, and using them detracts from the fun of archery, discouraging campers from the sport.

Wood recurves – either one piece or takedown, which can be disassembled – are the best bows to use in a camp program. Recurves have an indentation in the middle of the bow where an arrow rest is placed. At the ends of the bow, the limbs take a sharp turn – between 40 and 80 degrees – that yields greater power in a smaller form. They also have a hand grip, which makes the bow easier to handle and use.

Also, a smart archer never fails to use the proper safety equipment. Whenever shooting, make sure participants wear proper armguards and finger protectors. A bowstring can seriously injure an unprotected arm, and blisters will eventually appear without a finger guard.

### Setting up the range

- Use volleyball line and 6-inch galvanized nails to make the firing line.
- Have a waiting line 12 feet back from the firing line.
- If the range is in the sun, place sun canopies over the firing line and the waiting area.
- Bury coffee cans at the target distances (15,20,25,30,40, and 50 meters) so they're level with the ground. This preparation makes moving and replacing targets much easier!
- Use 48-inch target mats (foam or straw) and skirted, tough target faces. All tournaments and national archery guidelines are based on this size. Also, your campers' scores will go up 10 points by using this size, as opposed to the 36-inch mats.

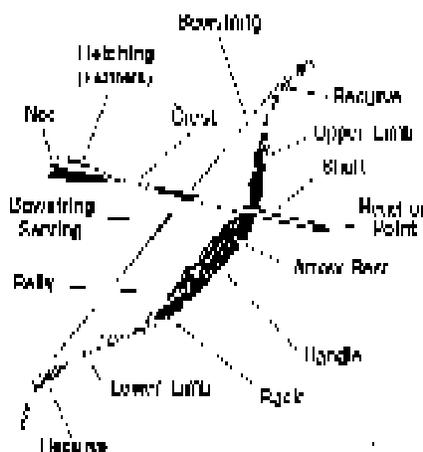
Have the targets 18 inches off the ground.

- At most, schedule twice the number of campers as firing positions.
- Have the archery shack next to the range. Make a large window on one side of the shack to hand equipment through. Post rules and hints on the inside of this window. When the window is open, the rules can be viewed; when closed, they are protected from the weather.

### Blunders and their remedies

#### *Drawing back to different points*

The most common mistake campers make is not consistently drawing back to exactly the same point. There are two choices here: drawing under the chin or to the corner of the mouth. A good way to illustrate the latter is to grab the corner of your mouth like a hooked fish (although the correct form is to just place the index finger at the corner). For the former, have campers imagine the string is going to split their noses and tell them to draw back without moving their heads. Demonstrate that a properly anchored shot will land on the mark and a draw that is  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch off that point will land two to four rings away. A final technique is to bring the campers to the target with an arrow and move the arrow around



the target face, demonstrating that small differences between anchor points on their faces translate to large ones on the actual target.

### ***Jerking the shot***

Another common mistake is to twang, or jerk, a shot, pulling the hand away from the face. When this problem occurs, the camper draws back to the appropriate spot, holds, and aims the shot — only to release

the string with a twang. The proper method is to allow the string to slip off the fingers without moving the hand at all, or to have the hand fall back to the shoulder naturally. Demonstrate the disastrous effects of this mistake by sinking a shot in the bull's-eye and then purposely twanging a shot and having the arrow miss the mark or even the whole target.

The proper method to hold and draw the string is to use three fin-

gers. One finger rests on top of the arrow nock and the other two rest below, with the string on the tips of the fingers — no farther back than the fingertip mound. The instructor can demonstrate that holding the string farther back on the fingers results in an automatic twang as the fingers uncurl to release. Also, if campers squeeze the arrow between their fingers or curl their fingers around the string, the arrow will likely fall off the arrow rest.

### ***Incorrect position***

Campers often make the mistake of not standing sideways on the firing line; the correct position causes an arrow placed against the toes to point straight toward the bull's-eye. Demonstrate the importance of this position by dropping one foot back and having the shot land lower and to the left.

### ***Arrow tip movement***

Arrow tip movement at full draw is something to examine closely, especially with more advanced archers. Small body movements, such as squeezing the shoulder blades, will make the tip of the arrow move back and forth from  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch to 2 inches. The result is a looser pattern of arrows on the target.

### ***Helping campers be successful***

It often helps to coach campers by simply standing by them and saying aloud, "Draw ... hold ... aim ... clean release." However, this technique isn't very effective for groups.

If a camper is having trouble with aiming, try handing him an arrow without a bow and asking him to rest it on his fist as if at full draw. Then ask him to aim the tip of the arrow at different things on the range.

It is important to impress upon campers not to change their aiming point every time an arrow lands outside the bull's-eye! Instruct campers to change their point of aim only if three arrows land in roughly the same undesired location. For most archers, the point of aim is to the right of the bull's-eye. Beyond that,

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## **Starting Out Right: A Checklist**

### **Bows**

#### **Type and number**

For a camp population of 7- to 16-year-olds, the following distribution of bows is appropriate for a range with eight targets: three 20# RH, one 20# LH, four 25# RH, one 25# LH, three 30# RH, one 30# LH. If your camp uses distances greater than 30 meters for target archery, I also recommend two 35# RH and one 35# LH.

I suggest the following set up for bows: saber plastic arrow rests with the "L" holder, a 14-16 strand double looped string for wood arrows (helps keep them on the string) and 12 strand for fiberglass or aluminum arrows, and string nocks appropriately positioned. These terms may sound foreign, but your archery supplier will know exactly what they are.

#### **Signs of wear**

- splinters in the wood
- damage to the bowstring
- loose or missing serving (serving is the thread wrapped around the middle and ends of the string)
- bent limbs (hold one limb out at arm's length and sight down the length of the bow at the other limb). If it is bent or leaning a little, you can try straightening it by applying pressure in the other direction. If a limb is bent more than 15 degrees, discard the bow.
- arrow rests in bad shape

#### **Target mats**

For styrofoam targets, shoot an arrow into the target from 15 meters. If the arrow sinks more than halfway, it's time for a new target mat. Consider using a drywall saw and replaceable target centers. If the targets are straw, discard them if arrows shot from 15 meters sink in more than one-third of the way.

#### **Miscellaneous items**

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|---|---------------------|
| ■ archery glue  | ■ masking tape      |
| ■ arrow nocks   | ■ posters           |
| ■ arrow rests   | ■ safety equipment  |
| ■ balloons  | ■ string nocks      |
| ■ bow square for putting<br>on arrow rests and string nocks | ■ string noc pliers |
| ■ bowstrings  | ■ string wax        |
| ■ fletchings  | ■ target faces      |
| ■ fletching jig to replace feathers                         | ■ target staples    |
| ■ H.T.M. hunting blunts                                     | ■ tennis balls      |
|   | ■ whistle           |

it will be lower or higher depending on the archer's height, the bow weight, and her draw length.

Campers are often discouraged with archery because it requires patience to excel. Tell campers to expect that they will not even hit the target with their preliminary shots. Warn them that it will likely take them two or three sessions before they can hit the target somewhat consistently. If they do hit the target, they will be thrilled!

Finally, videotaping campers so they can see their mistakes is an effective method of fixing errors.

### ***The short haul***

If campers are only going to spend a few periods at archery and will not have a chance to specialize, emphasize fun over accuracy.

Move the targets up to 10 and 15 meters for young or inexperienced

archers. Place balloons or other items on the targets after half the period is up. Try some archery games. Finally, let the campers shoot as much as possible in the short time they are there. Provide several instructors so safety isn't compromised, and try and allow each camper to shoot roughly 24 arrows (four rounds of six) in each period.

## **The games**

### ***Golf***

Yup, golf! You need a large, wholly deserted area for this game. Fill 55-gallon, heavy-duty trash bags with hay and seal with duct tape. Spray paint the bags florescent orange. Place about nine around a large field, laying the field out like a real golf course. Vary the distances of the bags (holes) between 75 and 300 meters and place obstructions so that campers will sometimes have to shoot from a certain angle to sink an arrow. A

lost arrow counts as a stroke penalty. Certain features of the fairway may constitute sand traps or obstacles — use your imagination. Fore!

### ***Soccer***

You'll need H.T.M. hunting blunts, wooden arrows (so you don't destroy the ball), and a playground ball. (A soccer ball is too heavy and too hard.) The playing field should measure about 40 meters by 20 meters. Teams of five work well, although more people can be included. Each team member gets two blunted arrows and a bow.

One team stands at its goal line; the ball is in the middle of the playing field. All the firing archers stand on a make-believe firing line while the other team stands behind them. The idea is to hit the ball with the blunted arrows and nudge it across the other team's goal line. After the first team shoots, the other team takes up position on its goal line, with the first team now standing behind them. Caution: If the ball is closer than 15 meters, do not allow the shot. The arrows can rebound almost that far.

### ***Flight***

Basically, launch an arrow as far as possible. For this activity, I recommend a 50- by 200-meter area. This activity is especially fun when all the group members fire at the same time. Again, the utmost confidence in the safety of this extended range needs to be present — no people, activities, or structures anywhere nearby.

### ***Clout***

Similar to flight, except a wood pole is sunk about 75 to 100 meters out. Tie a rope to the base of the pole and mark off 3 feet on the rope for each color of the target — white, black, blue, red, yellow. The idea is to get as close to the pole as possible. If a large area is not available, this game can be played using flu-flu arrows and a 40-meter range. Flu-flu arrows have enormous feathers on them that slow the flight and limit the range to between 30 and 40 meters.

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### ***Pin up target shooting***

*Candy shoot:* Place some candy in balloons. You pop it, you get it.

*Balloon animal shoot:* Have campers make balloon animals and shoot them. Balloon objects have the added benefit of usually requiring two to four hits to deflate.

### ***Instinct shoot***

There's a difference between target shooting and Robin Hood style shooting. Robin Hood never really knew how far away his targets were, so he couldn't use aiming techniques very well. These two types of shooting require very different skills, and often a camper who is lax in target will excel in instinct shooting. Remove all the targets and any obvious clues to distance. Then, place various objects around the range. You can also lay target mats on the ground at strange angles, positions, and distances to provide a fun and challenging instinct shoot range.

### ***Field course***

This event requires a densely wooded and deserted area. Hay bales (usually two tied together) are placed along a path so that they are visible only from a certain point or perspective. Attach laminated posters to the bales (dragons and dinosaurs work well). Use clear packing tape if laminated posters are unavailable.

Campers march through in single file. From a predetermined spot, the first camper in line takes two shots, then the next in line, and so on.

### ***Marbles***

Place tennis balls in a small pyramid surrounded by a rope circle with a 10-foot radius. Using blunted arrows, the campers have to try and knock as many of the balls out of the ring as possible in a certain number of shots. The rules of marbles can readily be applied to create a number of variations.

### ***V-shoot***

This activity is best played by archers with some experience. A large masking tape "V" is placed on the

target. Two archers then face off by trying to hit lower on the "V" than the other.

### ***Archery challenge***

At an all-camp meeting, the archery instructor challenges the camp to a contest in a grand and overdramatic way. The instructor has to use a fiberglass bow (one of those that your camp wisely shelved) and warped wooden arrows. Anyone who can beat

the instructor at 20 meters with 30 arrows gets to throw a pie in his face in front of the whole camp. Whether one person or 30 people win doesn't really matter, the enthusiasm generated for the camp and archery will be well worth the effort!□

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# More archery information for camps!

## Archery & Archery Clout

Our Archery program has been personally developed over the past 20 years by our director, Randall Grayson Ph.D., who has trained numerous state-level child archers.

Archery is one of our most popular activities to date, and recently we added archery clout to our line-up to provide a new and exciting deviation from the norm.

The archery program is made up of level classes which campers can progress through, perfected to find a suitable balance of learning and fun. For example, our level 3 class includes timed shoots, moving targets, and various instinct shoots requiring the archer to develop an instinctual and intuitive feel for the sport.

Included in the archery package is everything we have researched and developed which will assist you in creating an archery program at your camp. You will find answers to these questions:

- \* What is the best equipment to use and where can I buy it from?
- \* Where can I set up my archery range?
- \* How far do I want my targets to be?
- \* How do I teach campers to string and unstring a bow safely?
- \* Which lesson plans work best for teaching campers in a group?
- \* A flaming arrow??? Surely not...!

...and SO much more!

Also included is archery clout, which uses a different type of arrow, and campers will learn to shoot on a trajectory – the target is a flag in the ground, and the archer aims up at the trees to curve the arrow and (hopefully) hit the target!

As with our archery program, we have designed lessons for teaching clout which maximize a camper's potential for learning and enjoyment. We will provide you with all the information we have collected and learned through our own experiences so that archery and archery clout can be an effective and exciting new activity for you to add to your camp this summer!

[www.greatcampprograms.com](http://www.greatcampprograms.com)