



Archery Equipment – a Basic Guide for Beginners

by Simon Brown, Nethermoss Archers (revised May 2019)

The following beginners guide to archery equipment is based on my own experience and thoughts. It's only for recurve bows – you'll have to ask others if you're interested in long bows or compound bows! It's intended to provide you with the basic knowledge to select your own equipment. I have made some recommendations but please use these as guidance only – there will be other types/makes of equipment which will be equally suitable. Also, most archery shops will be very happy to provide advice and to assist in the initial setting up of your bow. The guide prices are for new items based on those of suppliers such as Merlin Archery or Bowsports which I find to be generally competitive. Decent equipment can be obtained for prices below my guide price but you will outgrow it more quickly. A general word of advice is to ask around at the club and beware of buying online from Ebay etc, especially for second hand equipment which can have problems which are not immediately evident. Once you have your equipment it will need to be set up properly – again ask any experienced club member for help and/or advice.

Also, our local archery shop, Archery World, at Bamber Bridge near Preston, hold a good stock of equipment that you can browse and are always ready to help. They also have a small indoor range that you can use to try equipment.

1. Bows

Riser or handle – this is the central part of a recurve bow. It can be wooden (usually for children's bows), metal or composite. A good quality riser will last you a long time. Risers come in 3 sizes – 23", 25" and 27". The size of the riser in combination with the length of the limbs sets the overall size (length) of the bow – the most common size is 25" which will be suitable for the majority of adults. Beware of 'Hoyt Formula' type risers. These will limit you to Hoyt 'Formula' limbs as the limb fitting is slightly different to the more universal 'international' style. The critical part of a riser is the grip (the bit you hold). Grips come in all sorts of shapes and it's best to try before you buy to see which suits you best. A well fitting grip is key to good shooting! My guide price for a good quality metal riser is £200. Makes to look for are Hoyt, SF, Winners (WNS).

2. Limbs

Limbs come in different lengths – 66", 68", 70". The most common size is 68" which will suit most adults. Note that this is not the actual length of the limbs but the overall length of the bow if fitted with a 25" riser. Limbs come in different stiffness ratings, or 'weight'. Don't be tempted go for a high weight of limbs to start with. A weight no higher than 25lb will be adequate for most to start with (and may in fact be too high for some). Too high a weight makes it difficult to develop good shooting technique. It's much better to start at a lower weight and upgrade later when you have developed your technique. Limbs come in all sorts of materials (wooden, glass fibre, foam or combinations of these materials) but there's no need to get too concerned about that for your first set of limbs. My guide price for good quality starter limbs is £100. Makes to look for are SF, Winners (WNS) (which are brand names of Win&Win).

3. String

Bowstrings are supplied for all common overall bow lengths. Different materials are available, the most basic (and so cheapest) being Dacron. In my opinion it is worth paying a little more for a more advanced material such as FastFlight. Note that the 'thickness' of the string must match the nock size of your arrows (normally this will be 'small'). My guide price for a decent string is £5. The nocking points will need to be fitted. Its best to avoid using metal ones – the easiest and best is to use cotton and superglue. The position of the nocking points is critical - ask any experienced member for help in fitting.

4. Arrows

A number of things must be taken into account when selecting arrows:

- a) Length – the length of your arrows must be matched to your draw length. The most important thing for beginners is that the arrows must not be too short which could result in them falling off the arrow rest and this can be dangerous. Ask an experienced club member or shop for help in determining what arrow length you need.
- b) Spine (or stiffness) – this should be matched to the weight of your limbs or the arrows will not fly properly. Again, ask for advice in selecting the spine of your arrows.
- c) Material – arrows for recurve bows are generally made from aluminium or a combination of aluminium and carbon fibre. Pure carbon arrows should be avoided particularly for outdoor shooting as they cannot be found with a metal detector!
- d) Points – can be glue in or screw in and come in a range of weights to allow for fine tuning (don't worry too much about this at this stage)
- e) Fletchings – these are usually plastic vanes – available in a variety of colours, shapes & sizes. Vanes can either be flat or curved (so-called spin vanes).

Arrows can be bought fully assembled. Easton XX75 Platinum aluminium type are suitable for your early days and cost around £8 each. You should take advice from the shop or an experienced club member to ensure you select the correct length (especially if using a clicker) and spine (stiffness).

5. Arrow Rest

It is very important to have a decent arrow rest. I recommend the magnetic type with height adjustment. This allows the height of the rest to be adjusted to match the diameter of your arrows. I went through a number of makes with varying degrees of success but have settled on the Shibuya Ultima. This costs around £30 which might seem a lot but it works a lot better than others I have tried. Other more basic arrow rests are available from around £5. The rest is fixed to the riser with double sided adhesive tape but positioning is critical and best done by the shop or an experienced archer.

6. Pressure Button

The pressure button is fitted in a threaded hole and protrudes through the arrow rest. Its function is to provide a sideways force to the arrow to ensure the arrow's stable flight. A basic pressure button (eg Cartel) costs around £5 and is all you need to start with, but if you feel like spending more then the Shibuya DX at around £22 will last you for years.

7. Sight

You can find a reasonable sight for around £15 (eg WNS SJA-40). If you want something a little more sophisticated the Soma Fivics FV-100 is around £60. If you want to spend a lot more on a sight that will last for years, Shibuya sights are very well built (around £200).

8. Stabilisers

The most important part of your stabiliser set up is the long rod, short rods can be added in time. I find it amazing how much stabilisers can cost but to start with you don't need anything more than a basic model, eg Cartel, costing around £15.

9. Clicker

It's good to get used to using a clicker as soon as your draw length has settled down. The clicker ensures consistency in your draw length. The length of your arrows needs to be suitable to use a clicker – ask the shop or experienced club member for advice. A decent clicker need not cost more than £10.

10. Finger tab

I recommend the basic A&F standard leather finger tab at round £9. I still use this type of tab after trying other more fancy ones.

Other things

You will need a finger sling (or bow sling), chest guard, arm guard, quiver & a bow stand (especially for indoors), an arrow puller and a bow stringer.