

# **BCAA Ten Steps ( Foundation for Archers)**

## **Introduction**

In any sport it is important to teach the proper techniques from the outset. Using good form makes the experience more fun and produces faster results and positive feedback to the athletes. Without a firm beginning, the athlete learns bad habits which lead to longer plateaus in performance improvement and which must be overcome if the competitor is to reach his or her full potential. Thus, the main purpose of this manual is to give new and beginning archers a reliable foundation in the sport of archery.

Archery is a sport that relies on consistent repetition of the shooting sequence. Whereas an elite archer may incorporate more advanced techniques, every beginning archer will benefit from working as closely to these principles as possible and modify their form as their performance level increases. By breaking a shot into ten steps, key aspects of each stage can be individually analyzed and reinforced without influencing the rest of the sequence. This compartmentalization allows coaches to accommodate the unique differences in ability and physical traits of each individual archer while still keeping to a core philosophy. These steps are a guideline for the majority of archers and should be very repeatable.

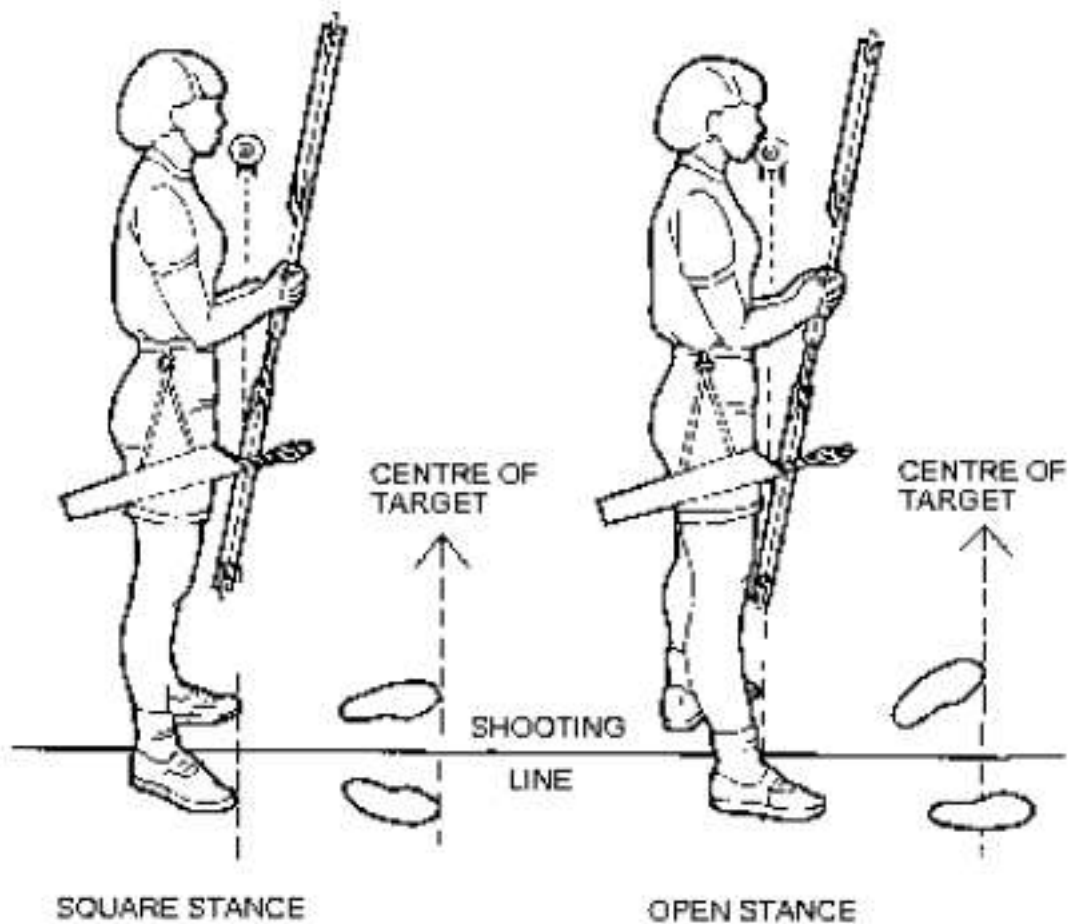
The basic steps are the same for compound and recurve although this does not attempt to deal with release aids.

## **1 - Stance**

- Have one foot on each side of the shooting line. Right hand shooters will have left foot forward and hold the bow in the left hand [image below], lefties vice-versa. The feet should be about shoulder width apart, weight distributed evenly over them.
- Stand straight and tall with shoulders level.
- Keep the legs straight, with the knees unlocked and relaxed.
- Once the stance has been established for an end, the feet should remain fixed in place until all arrows have been shot.

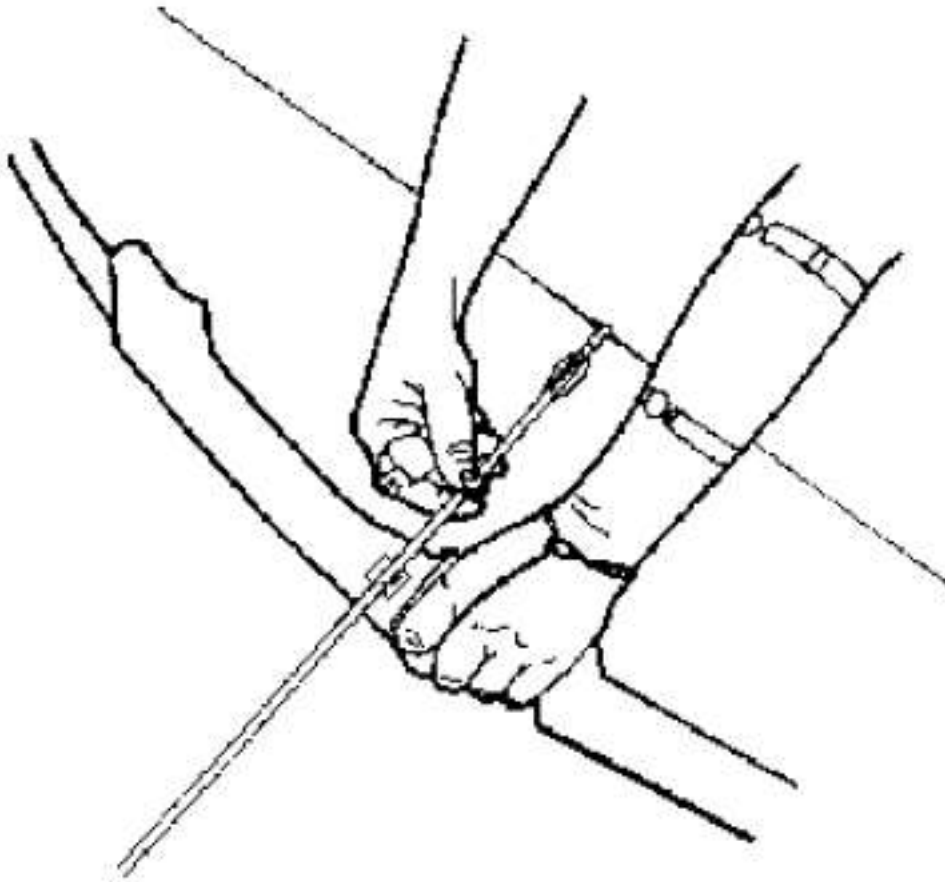
The best stance to start beginners with is known as a “square stance” where the archer straddles the line with their feet even with each other. It is simple to get into and easily repeatable. If the shooter has a clearance problem (i.e. the string makes contact with their arm or shoulder), the stance can be “opened” to allow a clear path for the string upon release. In either case, the archer should visually check their stance, using the relative positions of the feet as a reference, at the beginning of each end.

A good way to test stance for more advanced shooters is to draw of target with the eyes closed and adjust the stance so drawing is on center. During the shot, everything below the waist remains stable and unmoving. Any twisting or bending required to reach the target happens above the waist level.



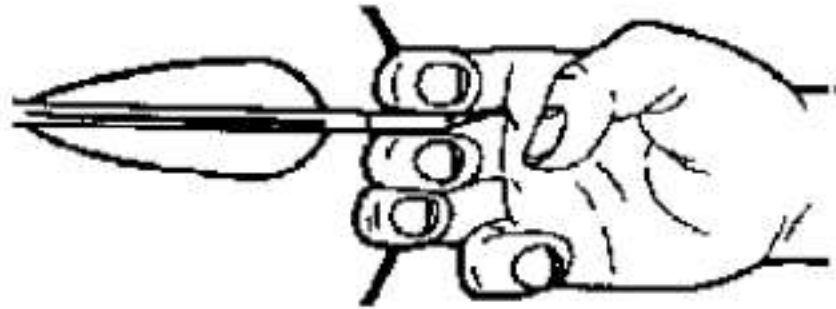
## **2 - Nock an Arrow**

- With the bow arm down and relaxed pick up arrow below the fletch with the string hand.
- Rotate the arrow so that the cock fletch (the odd coloured fletch) points away from the bow.
- Place the nock below or between the nock points and pull back till it clicks on the string.
- The nock should fit snugly on the string. The arrow should not fall off the string if allowed to dangle, but a tap on the string should be enough to knock the arrow free.



### **3 - Set Drawing Hand**

- Holding the bow in front of the body at enough of an angle to keep the arrow on the rest and 90 degrees to the shooting line, set the string fingers on the string: the index above the nock and the second and third fingers below. There should be no contact between the string fingers and the nock of the arrow.
- The thumb and little finger should be kept away from the string, relaxed and tucked into the palm.
- A good, deep hook, with the string resting between the first two joints of the fingers allows the string hand to be most relaxed, keeping the back of the hand flat and yielding the cleanest release.



#### **4 - Setting Bow Hand**

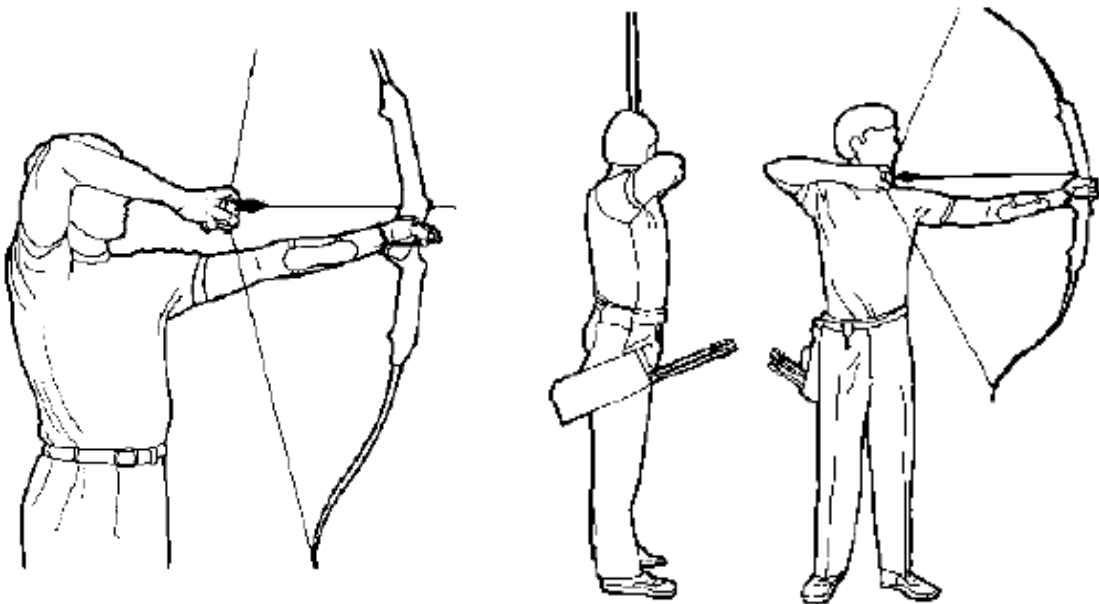
- The bow hand should be set having the center of the riser lined up with the "V" in hand between thumb and Index finger. Pressure should be taken up on the pad of the thumb (thumb side of lifeline). This pad should be the main contact point pushing energy forward.
- The back of the knuckles of the bow hand should be at an angle of about 45 degrees to the bow.
- The bow hand should remain as relaxed as possible throughout the shot, allowing the bow to jump forward on release. If available, a bow sling will allow the archer to keep his or her hand completely relaxed and catch the bow for them.



## **5 –Shoulder Set Down and Drawing the Bow**

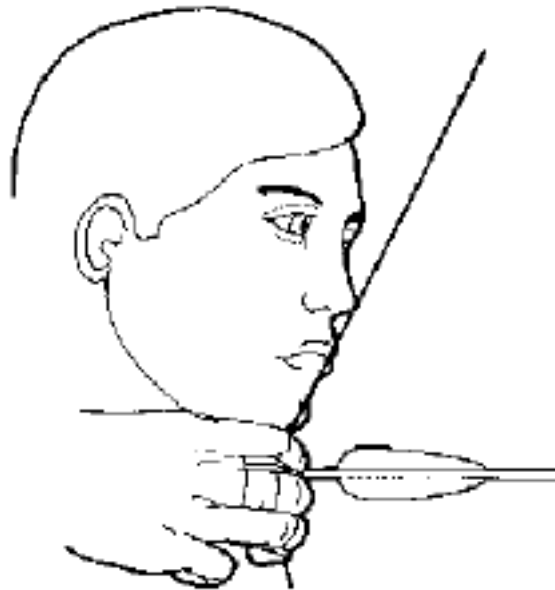
- The archer should stand tall and turn his or her head to the target.
- Keeping the bow shoulder low and keeping the crook of the elbow pointing towards the bowstring, raise the bow arm to the target.
- As the bow is raised towards the target the archer breaths in.
- Set the drawing elbow high (at eye level or above), to help engage back muscles during draw.
- Both shoulders should be "set down", so that the top of the upper bow arm seats well into the socket of the shoulder blade.
- The skeletal frame is now in a position to take stress from the muscles
- In a controlled motion, draw the string straight back to the anchor position (step 6 below).
- During the draw step and throughout the rest of the shot, the "T" shape formed by the spine and the shoulders and arms should stay constant.
- If string clearance troubles arise (i.e. if the string touches the archer's bow arm) open stance (see step 1 above) and the shoulders to clear the path for the string.
- If the string is hitting the bow arm this could also be an indication that the shoulders are not being set down.

Note: In a good position of full draw the bow arm shoulder will be  $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" below the arrow.



## **6 - Anchor**

- The anchor position is the repeatable, consistent positioning of the archer's hand on his or her face during the shot between the draw and the follow-through.
- For beginners, an anchor with the index finger in the corner of the mouth is a good reference.
- A slightly more advanced anchor is done by setting the index finger of the draw hand under the jaw. The draw length is then determined by the string lightly touching the tip or side of the archer's nose.
- At full draw (anchor) the elbow of the drawing arm should be in line with the arrow or slightly higher.
- The back of the draw hand is flat (not cupped) and parallel to the string.

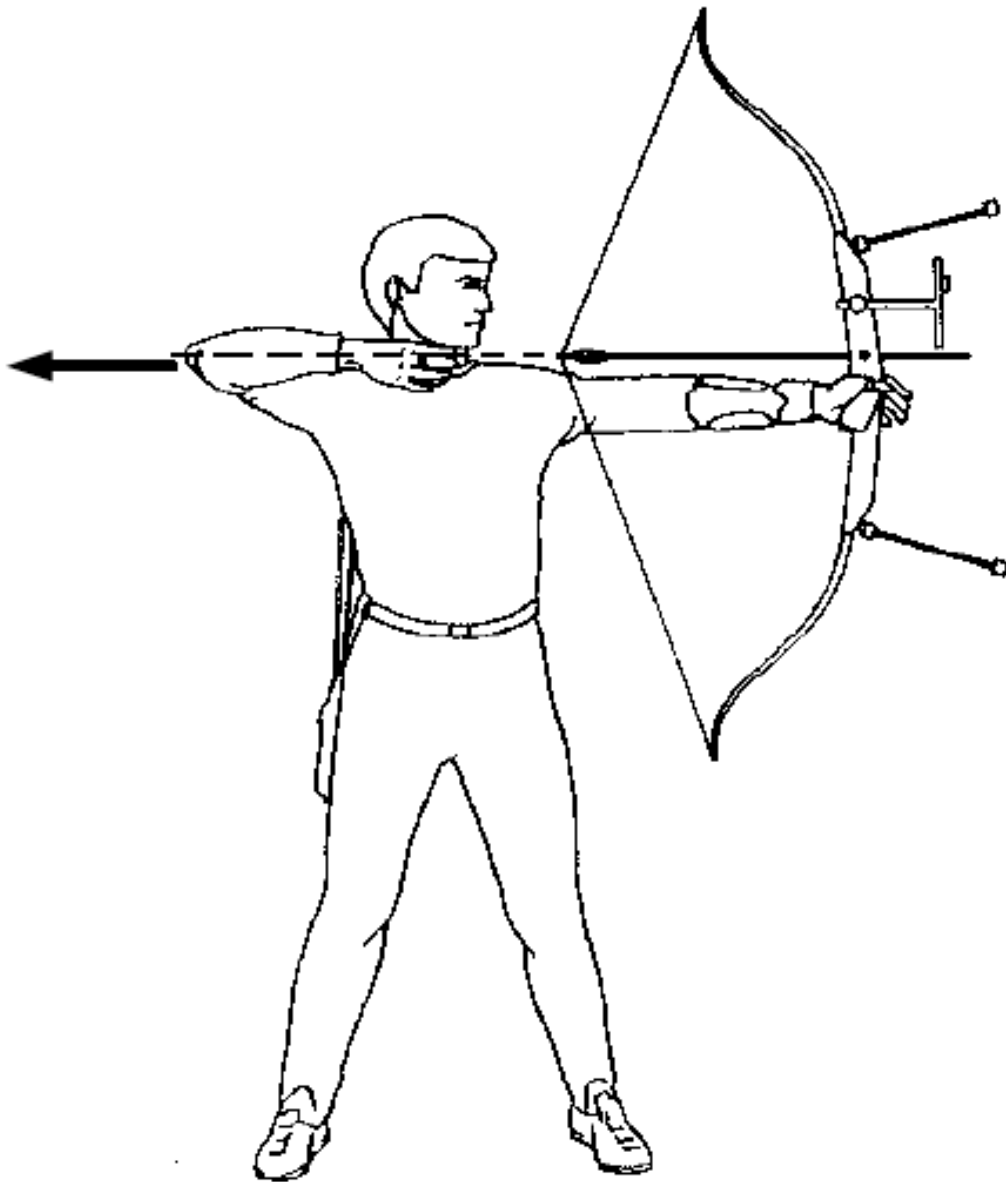


## **7 - Aiming**

- The aiming process is mostly passive and relaxed, with the archer focusing on the point of aim regardless of whether the he or she is using a bow sight, the point of the arrow, or some other method.
- When you get to full draw the bow should be close to its final shooting position, usually slightly high on target.
- A slow exhale into the anchor position will reduce the archer's heart rate and help them to relax during aiming.
- Just before the shot the breath is held until the shot is executed.
- Commit to the shot, or if the shot does not feel right, let it down and start the shooting sequence over from the start.

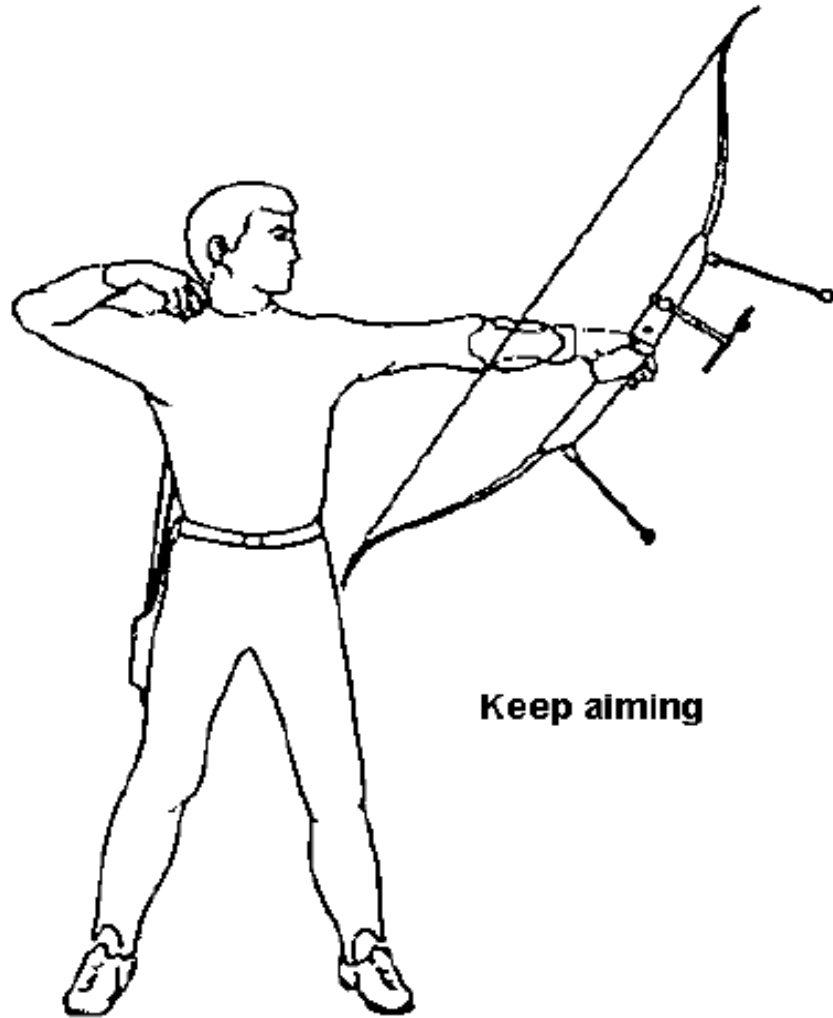
## **8 - Release**

- The release is done by relaxing the string fingers and letting the string pull through them towards the target. If it is executed correctly the string should seem to go through the fingers.
- The hand should not flare but travel straight back if the correct back muscles have been used.
- Coaches may have to stand opposite the archer and hold the wrist and elbow to direct the movement as arrows are shot until the archer understands where the string hand should finish.



## **9 – Follow-Through**

- Follow-through is done by maintaining the position of the shot with as little motion as possible (excluding an active release hand) until the arrow hits the target.
- The bow arm stays still and pointing towards the target.
- The string hand stays in contact with the face.
- The bow hand and fingers stays relaxed, allowing the bow to follow the arrow. This is more important than the pivot because it describes the bow's initial movement, which is straight forward. The pivoting is then induced because of the weight of the stabilizers.)
- The eyes stay focused on the point of aim.
- Stabilization applied to the bow can have a positive effect in how the bow finishes.



### **10 - Relax**

- After the arrow hits the target the bow and draw arm are let down in a controlled motion back to the starting position.
- The archer should take a few deep breaths while maintaining good posture to clear the mind and body and get ready for the next shoot.

### **Conclusion:**

These ten basic steps of archery have been around for a long time and have a proven record of providing beginning archers with a solid foundation that will allow them to progress to whatever level they desire. Starting archery with good coaching and on equipment that is of low enough draw weight to allow learning without injury is key to developing good form. Positive self-talk and

visualization outside of the archery range will also help improve performance. Keep the experience fun and focused by using different and inventive targets (e.g. balloons) and archery can be an experience ranging from a lifelong pastime to an Olympic passion.



**One straight line**

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