

Believe It, Achieve It: Mental Training for Archery

The three steps to becoming a better archer are practice, practice and more practice.

But not all practice happens at the **archery range**. You can practice archery without shooting an arrow. How? By exercising your brain.

Anyone who wants to improve their shooting can learn from **the world's best archers**, who take mental training seriously. Elite archers know archery is mostly a mental game. It's all about focusing, ignoring distractions and calming your nerves. They sharpen these skills by exercising their brain with **drills and mental practice**.

Whether you're showing off for friends in the backyard, shooting in front of other archers at the range, or competing in your first tournament, stepping up your mental game will spark more impressive performances.

These four drills for boosting brain power can be practiced at home or work.

VISUALIZATION



Visualize yourself releasing a perfect shot or attaining a lofty goal on the archery range. If you consistently see yourself succeed, you gain confidence, improve concentration and boost positive thinking. Photo Credit: World Archery

If **daydreaming** about archery consumes most of your day, you're already on your way to practicing visualization. This means using your imagination to see yourself releasing a perfect shot or attaining a lofty goal.

A simple visualization exercise is to imagine yourself at a tournament or on the practice range. Walk through your shot process, focusing intently on each step. See yourself do each step and execute a perfect shot.

If you consistently see yourself succeed, you gain confidence and boost positive thinking. In turn, your concentration improves and you remove self-doubt. It's a good substitute for actual practice when life gets busy.

SETTING GOALS



Goal setting is an important part of training mentally for archery. Start by choosing a lofty goal - such as winning a prestigious tournament – then set incremental goals that help you achieve your larger goal. Photo Credit: World Archery

Setting goals and visualization go hand in hand. Start the process by choosing a lofty goal, such as hitting a high score, shooting a longer distance, or winning a prestigious tournament. Then set incremental goals that help you achieve your larger goal. When practicing visualization, see yourself attaining each incremental goal and your ultimate goal.

Some archers find it helpful to write the goals on flash cards and put them in prominent places. By regularly seeing these goals, you'll continually motivate yourself to achieve your potential.

DISTRACTION GAMES



Archery requires intense focus and the ability to block out distractions; noise can ruin your concentration and interrupt your shot process. Photo Credit: USA Archery

Archery requires intense focus and the ability to block out distractions. If you've ever been at full draw and then heard talking, a cell phone ringing, or a siren blaring, you know how noise can ruin your concentration and interrupt practice.

An easy **drill** to help you ignore distractions is to turn on the TV and slowly and silently count to 100. The goal is to not let the TV or anything else distract your counting.

Another drill is to read while listening to music. Tune out the music and focus on reading. When you finish the article or chapter, have someone quiz you to see how much you retained.

GLASS HALF FULL



An optimistic attitude contributes to the mental strength required to show out on the archery range. No matter where your arrow lands, stay positive and focus on small gains made over time. Photo Credit: World Archery

An optimistic attitude certainly helps in archery, but **this drill** actually requires a glass of water. Fill a glass and hold it in your nondominant hand.

With your arm extended, focus on the glass. Then try to keep the liquid as steady as possible for as long as possible. This is excellent practice for the focus needed when aiming a bow.

Archery requires extreme mental strength, both during routine backyard practice and when shooting **3-D targets**, spot targets or field targets. Try some of these drills, and see if they **improve your shooting**.