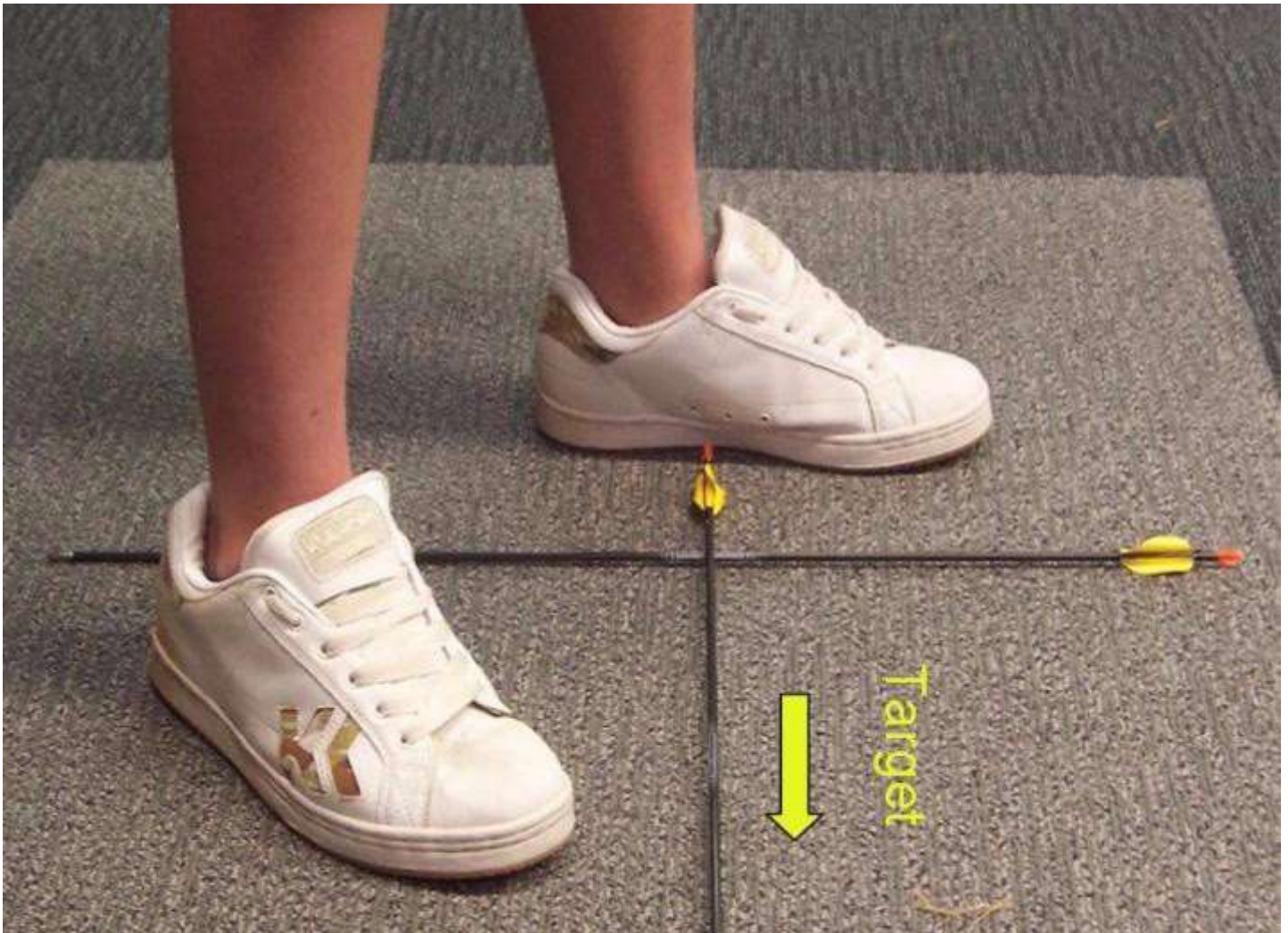


Practice Makes Perfect! How to Fix 3 Common Archery Mistakes

So you've seen the trailers for the upcoming “Wonder Woman” premiere, and you're thinking, “Man, I'd like to shoot archery like that!” Well, although we can't help you shoot a bow from mid-air – (insert “don't try this at home” disclaimer here) – we *can* help you improve your shot so you feel just as fierce as Gal Gadot.

Whether you enjoy shooting in your backyard, on a 3-D archery course, or at the local archery range, or just want to explore the sport's ins and outs before trying archery for the first time, these tips will help you channel your inner bow-and-arrow superpowers, and put more arrows in the middle.



An open stance, as seen above, is done by straddling the shooting line with your feet shoulder-width apart. The arch of your back foot should line up with the toes of your front foot, with both feet pointing in the same direction, roughly a 30-degree angle to the shooting line. Photo Credit: KSL International

1. STANCE AND POSTURE

In archery, your lower body supports your upper body and all the work you're doing, so it's important that your stance – the way you stand – is consistent and helpful to your shots.

With that being said, **stance and posture** are probably the No. 1 mistakes of new archers. It's easy to grab your bow, nock an arrow and send it downrange without noticing where you're standing, how you're standing, or if you put your feet in the same place for the next shot. These options will help you deliver a consistent stance with each and every arrow.

There are options for a proper, consistent stance, but most **recurve** archers prefer a more **open stance**, which is easy to learn. First, put marks on the floor where you want to place your feet. This will be your “shooting line,” where you'll stand to take your shot. Next, straddle the shooting line with your feet shoulder-width apart. The arch of your back foot should line up with the toes of your front foot, with both feet pointing in the same direction, roughly a 30-degree angle to the shooting line.

Another option is a **square stance**. That means your back foot – which is the same foot as your draw-hand side – and front foot will be shoulder-width apart and parallel to the shooting line. Your toes and heels should rest equally on each side of the shooting line.

Meanwhile, many **compound** archers also prefer an open stance, but they'll vary their stance much more than recurve archers.

After stance comes **posture**. Whether you're shooting a compound or a recurve, it's important to stand up straight by activating your core muscles. That makes you shoot better and more consistent, which results in more arrows in the middle of the target!



The anchor point is the spot on your face where you always press the bowstring after pulling it to full draw. If you anchor in different spots, your arrow will hit slightly different spots on the target. Photo Credit: ATA

2. ANCHOR POINT

Another common mistake among archers – whether they’re at the beginning or intermediate levels – is not anchoring consistently for every shot. Your anchor point is the spot on your face where you always press the bowstring after pulling it to full draw. If you anchor in different spots, your arrow will hit slightly different spots on the target.

Anchoring is especially critical for recurve archers seeking consistency. Unlike compound archers, recurve archers don’t use peep sights. A peep sight is a small, doughnut-shaped ring that's installed on the bow's string. Peep sights give compound shooters a common reference point to look through while aiming. Recurve archers, on the other hand, use many “tricks” to achieve a consistent anchor point.

1. **Kisser button:** This can be any bead or knob attached to the bowstring. **Your local archery shop** can help you determine if you could benefit from a kisser button, and install it for you. When you draw the bow, the “button” should meet the same point on your mouth every time, as if you’re kissing the string. That’s why it’s called a “kisser button.”
2. **Add a shelf to your finger tab:** Recurve shooters who use a **finger tab** – a piece of leather that fits between your draw-hand fingers (the hand pulling the bowstring) and the bowstring – can use what’s called a shelf. The shelf attaches to the finger tab, and functions like a kisser button. Touching the shelf to your chin assures you that you’re touching the same spot each time.
3. **String on the nose:** When you draw your bow, make sure the string touches a spot on your nose that remains consistent for you. If you feel it resting anywhere *but* that spot, you’ll know your shot feels “off.”
4. **Place your thumb behind your neck tendon:** Some beginners don’t know where to place their draw-hand thumb, which could cause hassles. You can either touch it to your pinky, or - if your hands are large enough – rest your thumb behind your neck when reaching full draw.

Most compound archers use a release aid to shoot instead of fingers. Much like recurve archers, they must find a consistent anchor point, which means anchoring where it feels natural. Compound archers enjoy the benefit of using three reference points for a consistent anchor. First, it’s important that compound archers have solid bone-to-bone contact between their hand and the side of their face when at **full draw**. A solid anchor position requires at least one knuckle of the drawing hand to stay in solid contact with the jaw. Compound shooters can also note the placement of the string on their nose, and the placement of the peep and sight, which help them aim. Those physical cues make it much easier to spot when something is “off” and start the shot over.

Remember, your No. 1 priority is finding an anchor point that feels easy for you. If it’s not comfortable, you’re less likely to repeat your anchor point time after time, which could result in inconsistent shots.



As a compound shooter, keeping a tighter aiming point is essential. However, it shouldn't be at the expense of trying too hard to stay still. Having confidence in the shot and executing can sometimes be a better option over a steadier aim. Photo Credit: World Archery

3. OVERAIMING

Once you achieve a consistent stance and anchor point, beware a common mistake among recurve and compound archers. It can be especially frustrating as you move from beginner to intermediate-level archery. It's called "overaiming."

For recurve archers, it's much harder to finish the shot when you're overly focused on your sight picture. An easy way to correct this problem is to focus on the release – instead of aiming – to get through expansion of your shot. When you set your mind to something, you can't think about aiming. Since the brain processes a limited number of thoughts at the same time, you'll focus on one thing (your release) and not overaiming.

Aiming is a vital step for compound archers, too, but not at the expense of executing the shot. Too many compound archers focus on waiting to release until one of two things happen: the pin within the sight – a

device used for aiming – is perfectly still and/or the pin is dead center on the target.

Both of those goals can cause “punching” the shot or triggering the release too early, which brings big misses downrange. It’s important to maintain back tension and let the shot naturally happen. That is, it should be a surprise! Even elite compound archers see pin movement. Archers must become comfortable with seeing the pin move. This is a normal part of the shot process since holding completely still like a statue is near impossible!

As with most things in life, “practice makes perfect.” Visit a [local archery shop](#) for expert advice and help with your archery gear. You’ll be shooting like a superhero – or at least arrowing more bull’s-eyes – in no time!