

ANCHOR

Anchor is the position of your string hand on your face. Ideally the anchor should: Provide solid, bone-to-bone contact, such as a knuckle to the jawbone; keep your drawing-arm elbow and forearm in line with the arrow; ensure clearance of the bowstring past your chest; and allow you to see all your pins in the sight window.

A good anchor is especially important if you don't use a peep. Your anchor must be solid



Your anchor point determines the position of your arm and shoulder. The proper anchor point is one that assures that your release arm is in line with your arrow.

and absolutely repeatable, because with no peep the anchor is the rear sight. Moving your anchor up or down is like shooting a rifle with a loose rear sight – you'll end up with a lot of high and low shots.

Your anchor may simply be a finger in the corner of your mouth – the common anchor for fingers shooters – or it may incorporate a peep, a kisser button, and a knuckle against your jaw. Just remember, it has to be consistent. Once you've found your perfect anchor, practice until you can repeat it flawlessly under any conditions. Personally, I anchor with the knuckles of my index and middle fingers on either side of my jawbone. Also, I touch the string to the tip of my nose, and I always use a peep.

Shooting Tip *If you use a peep sight – and every bowhunter should – your anchor point will move slightly as you change from one sight pin to another. For example, your anchor point will be higher on your face when aiming with your 20-yard pin than when using your 50-yard pin. This can be uncomfortable for archers who become accustomed to shooting most of their arrows from one distance. To avoid this problem, mix up your practice sessions to include shots from every distance for which you have a sight pin.*

Set your peep sight so that your anchor point is in the most comfortable position for shots of average distance. This will likely be approximately 25 yards for a whitetail hunter and closer to 40 yards for those who hunt Western game in open settings. You can also open or close your jaw to adjust your anchor point for various shot distances rather than moving your hand up or down your face.

BOW HAND

Your bow hand is the only place you contact the bow once the string is released and the arrow accelerates forward. The way you put your hand into the bow and control that hand during the shot will ultimately determine your accuracy. Your hand position should eliminate bow torque (torque is any rotational force applied to the handle during the shot).

To find your torque-free hand position, put baby powder or some other slippery substance on your bow hand and draw the bow. Rotate your hand left and right on the handle until you find the center position where your hand doesn't feel like it's going to slip. This is your ideal hand position.

Not only must your hand be torque-free, it must remain relaxed throughout the shot. Theoretically, if your hand meets the handle so that the bones of the forearm line up perfectly with the pressure point (the torque-free position), you won't need to control your hand, and the hand can remain completely relaxed. Your bow hand must remain fully relaxed to allow the bow to move naturally, free from all interference.

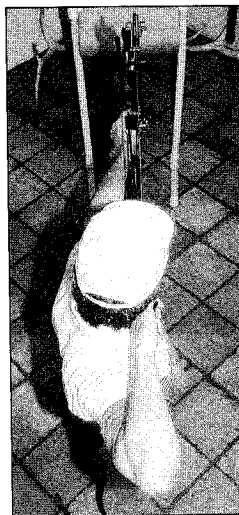
To make this possible, you must use a bow sling. Otherwise, to avoid dropping the bow, you'll tightly grip the handle during the shot or grab the bow as you release, both of which will torque the bow and hurt your accuracy. Use a bow sling and keep your hand fully relaxed in the natural position throughout the shot. That's central to accuracy.

Shooting Tip *Most bad shots under high-pressure conditions are due to tension in the hands. Because your hands are your only contacts with the bow, tension here affects the way you grip the bow, release aid, or string, and this tension ultimately affects shot placement. Even if you remind yourself to stay loose, the pressure of the situation can lead to an involuntary white-knuckle grip on both the bow and the release aid. When you find yourself fact to face with the buck of a lifetime, try squeezing the release aid and the bow as tightly as possible just before you draw. Then inhale deeply a couple of times, relax both hands and make the shot. Tensing and then relaxing muscles has long been practiced effectively in meditation disciplines to achieve maximum relaxation. Tensing and then relaxing will loosen up your hands.*

BOW SHOULDER

Your bow shoulder must remain relaxed throughout the shot. To find the relaxed position, hold your bow arm out as if you were shooting. Force your shoulder down as low as possible, and then relax it. This should be its position during the shot. The object is to create bone-to-bone contact between the arm and shoulder, which minimizes muscular involvement during the shot and allows the shoulder muscles to relax.

Another trick to keep your bow arm and shoulder in the proper position is to rotate your elbow down, so the bony part points straight down and the crook of the arm points up. This forces the shoulder to rotate down into a consistent, relaxed position.



Your head should be straight up, the forearm on the string side in direct line with the arrow, the bow arm and hand relaxed. Also, pull and hold with the big back muscles.

BOW ARM

Think of your bow arm as a post whose sole function is to hold the bow up and out. You have no control over it. Once it's in position, you can't move the post in relationship to your torso. Any aiming up or down, left or right must be done by moving your entire torso, which in turn moves the post. Over-control of the bow arm and hand creates tension, which interferes with the bow's function during the shot.

I like to keep my bow-arm elbow slightly bent during the shot for several reasons: It reduces kick from the bow by acting as a shock absorber. I can hold steadier with a bent elbow. And keeping the bow arm relaxed is easier with a bent elbow.

HEAD POSITION

To maintain your balance and remain steady, you must keep your head centered and upright during the shot. Any deviation from that natural position leads to instability and inconsistency. To keep your head in its natural position, do not move your head to the string at full draw. Instead, move the string to your face while maintaining your head in its natural position, directly over the spine.

Also, set the peep in the string so that it comes directly to your eye. You must not tilt your head forward or back to see through the peep.

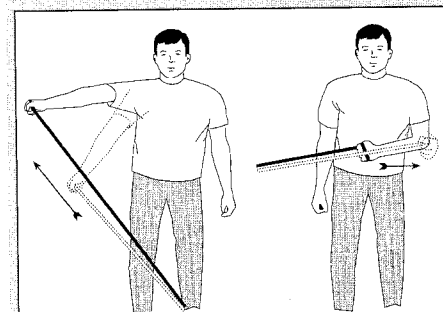
RELAXATION

One key to great shooting is relaxation. To stay relaxed, you must use only the muscles absolutely required to shoot the bow, while keeping all other muscles relaxed. One trick I've found is to use back muscles rather than arm muscles to hold the bow. Muscles of the back are larger and stronger, and they're more stable because they're closer to the spine.

Draw length is another key. To understand this point, hold your arms up as though you were drawing your bow. Now, pretend you're shooting a bow with a draw length 3 inches too long for you. Really stretch those arms out – and notice the tension you feel in your shoulders, back, and arms. Now, shorten your pretend draw length. Feel everything relax? Shorter is usually better when it comes to draw length.

One last note: When shooting, relax every part of your body not necessary for holding the bow up and back. In particular, relax the muscles of your face. Tension in your face radiates throughout your body. If your face is relaxed, your body tends to follow suit.

Shooting Tip *It's important to prepare your muscles, tendons, and ligaments for the stress of shooting before you begin. Take about 10 min-*



Two outstanding BowFit exercises that will help you build strong shoulders are the lateral shoulder lift (left) and the shoulder outward rotation (right).