

Return to Archery – 2021

Written by John Searle



Looking after your arrows

General condition:

Arrows come in a few different materials – Aluminium, Carbon, Wood, and a hybrid of Aluminium and Carbon. Their general condition is important regardless of the materials used. The shaft should not have any dents or deep scratches, and they should be straight and true. Any damage of this sort could mean that the arrow could break either, in the bow (on release), in flight, or on its impact with the target. Always have more arrows than you need at any time as you can then replace damaged arrows immediately.



Care for arrows is very basic. Make sure they are clean and dry, if you shoot outdoors it would be useful to have a cloth or 'Tassel' available for the cleaning process. Don't shoot arrows which have dents or cracks in them – it's too dangerous.

Nocks:

Nocks should be in good condition. Any damage to the 'ears' (the part that attaches to the string) can result in it breaking on release – resulting in a 'Dry-fire' release which can in turn damage both the bow and the archer. Scratches down the shaft of the nock should be checked carefully and an assessment made on their continued suitability for use. It is always wiser to be cautious.



Nocks come in different types. We have glue-on, pin, and insert. Replacement is slightly different in each case.

Glue-on: These are the oldest style of nocks currently in use today. The arrow shaft in this case either has been 'swaged' (made into a cone), or has an insert glued in that makes the cone shape. Nocks are then glued on to the cone with a 'superglue',

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and removal of the nock requires some manual effort and the use of a knife or pliers.

Pin: These work with inserts that glue into the arrow shaft. The nock is generally just pushed onto the pin without glue, but some people use a spot of glue to make sure that they stay in place. Removal is simple as long as no glue has been used – simply pull off with a pair of pliers.

Insert: Used on arrow shafts without 'swages', these nocks simply push into the back of the arrow shaft without glue. As with the pin nocks, removal is easy – just requiring a pair of pliers to pull them out.

Fletchings:

Fletchings assist the arrow in maintaining a good flight towards the target. They should not be bent, dog-eared or missing. Arrow flight will be seriously affected in all of these cases. They should also be securely attached to the shaft. Fletches need to be appropriate for their use. Indoor arrows require larger fletches to quickly control the arrow flight, whilst outdoor arrows require a smaller fletching in order to minimise drag over longer distances.

They come in a few different materials – the most popular appear to be plastic, although feathers are used on wooden arrows. Other specialty fletchings are available – it all comes down to your choice in the end.

Most fletchings require you to use a jig in order to affix them correctly. Always a good idea to have one, but if you don't – talk to your coach.

They are glued onto the shaft (I use Gorilla Glue Gel) and allowed to set before shooting them again. Your coach can show you how this process works.



Points:

It is very important for the points to be in good condition. If the tip is broken or bent over from centre then it will affect arrow flight. To be honest, most archers will not notice the difference, but as you progress through your archery career it will become more and more important to your shooting.

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Getting used to this way of thinking early on in your career will pay dividends in the future.

Check the point carefully – the point is manufactured so that the tip is concentric to the shaft. If it looks bent over or broken, replace it. Keep a few spare points if you can.

They are fixed into the arrow shaft using hot melt glue (please don't use Araldite or similar), and the process is very simple. Your coach can show you the steps involved.



Lastly, are they bent?

Are any of your arrows bent? You can ascertain this very easily by spinning it on the palm of your hand, running the shaft along a known flat surface, or looking straight down the arrow. If you're not sure how to do this, ask your coach to show you. Your coach can also straighten aluminium arrows if necessary, using an arrow straightener. Carbon and hybrid arrows cannot generally be straightened, and wooden arrows are almost impossible to straighten successfully.



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