

ANCHORAGE

Good shot execution starts with a solid anchor at full draw – John Dudley breaks it down...

High scores and performing well at high-level competitions go hand-in-hand with consistency. If you are consistent then you will enjoy archery to the full and be a strong force on the shooting line. If you are not you will know some of the frustrations in having constant highs and lows.

In my opinion, consistency is about being repetitive and solid in form and foundation. There are several key elements to being consistent but one that stands out is having a perfectly positioned anchor point. Without a good anchor point you can forget consistency, repeatability and proper arrow flight.

When I look at the anchor position of an archer there are two things I consider. Firstly, is the anchor position solid and capable of being repeated each and every arrow? Secondly, is this anchor point giving your arrow perfect clearance of face tissue and jaw line?

When the answer is yes to both of these you can avoid so many common problems, including poor arrow flight, shaft and sight pin alignment and poor scoring arrows when shooting up and down hill. The anchor is your stronghold and when done correctly will help you bring more arrows to the centre.



Finding a repeatable spot

There are two different anchor positions I like to use, depending on the release aid style, considering either the handheld or release strap. First let's talk about the handheld release aids, like a Carter, since they are most popular among target archers. When you hold a handheld release aid the head of the release will create a natural separation between two fingers, usually between the index and middle finger. When separated these fingers form a 'V' shape, which is very important and a pinnacle part of a solid anchor point with a handheld release.

This V should be placed on the jaw line so the index finger is under the jaw and the middle finger is above. I like this spot

is because when the V is on the jaw line it positions the arrow shaft perfectly between the chin and lips.

This placement puts your arrow in a saddle-like place on your face that will be contact free and perfect for proper clearance.

I commonly see people who anchor below this recommended position, with negative results. For example, many people naturally anchor lower than this for various reasons. I believe that for someone who has shot a recurve for years this lower anchor is more comfortable. The major problem with this is that the arrow shaft quickly leaves the saddle area and comes in solid contact with the chinbone or jaw line.



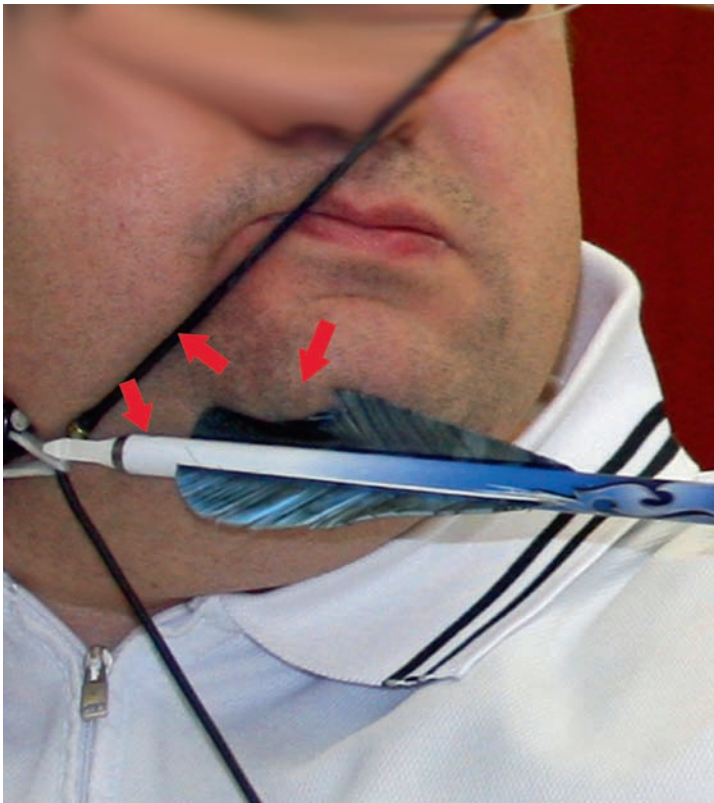
Left: The V shape created when you use a handheld release is a perfect fit into your jaw

When you have the shaft touching the jaw or chin you are immediately going to cause misdirection of the arrow unless you are perfectly consistent in all those pressures. I think the less you come in contact with your string and arrow shaft the better you will be – placing the V on the jaw line with the arrow shaft sitting between the chin and lips is the best place for a handheld release. With a wrist strap release I place the first knuckle of my index finger on the back edge of my jaw at my earlobe.

Below: Lightly touch the string to your nose, and keep your first solid

This position also puts the release along the top edge of the jawbone and keeps the arrow sitting directly in the saddle safe zone between the lips and chin. To be sure





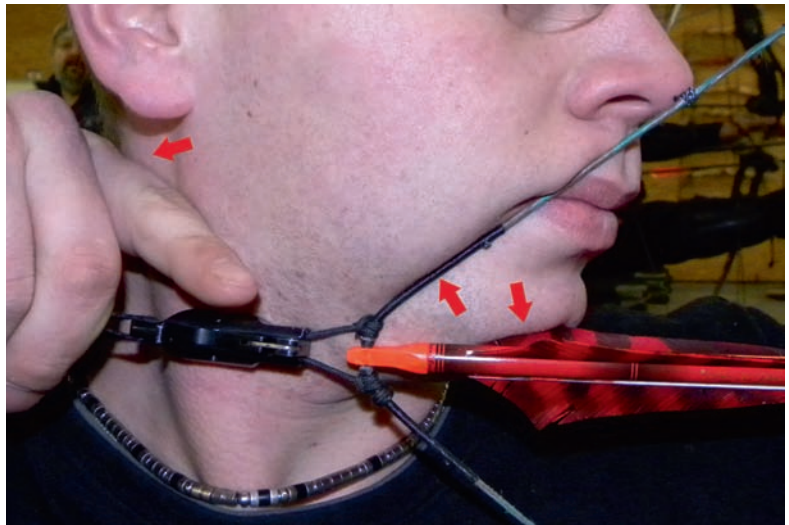
your release hand is in perfect form imagine holding a pistol and your index finger being curled around the trigger. Keep that exact position with a wrist strap release at full draw but with your index knuckle securely placed at the earlobe.

The index finger should be curled around the trigger and not fully extended so only the fingertip is touching the trigger. When a release is set too long the trigger is towards the tip of the extended index finger, which can lead to punching the trigger – not good. Use a strap release that allows you to adjust the release according to your hand and curl your finger around the trigger. A release that doesn't have adjustment options may leave you with no choice but being anchored incorrectly. In my opinion, most of the fixed position wrist strap releases are much too long for the average person.

When the strap is too long it forces the archer to anchor behind the jaw and this causes multiple problems, again the main one being the interference of the face with the arrow shaft or arrow fletching. Many wrist strap shooters with longer strap releases put their thumb behind the neck so they feel a consistent anchor point. There are negative effects of being over extended and having a lot of contact on the face.

If you currently anchor behind the neck, work towards bringing that release hand forward and getting the index knuckle right at the back of the jaw line on the earlobe.

Above: Too much string/arrow contact will interfere with your arrow flight



Advantages such as better arrow flight and proper clearance are evident but there are other major factors to consider. When you are over-extended you will not be able to execute a shot using back tension or continuous pulling, because once you have pulled to a maximum extension and your elbow is down and level with the rear shoulder you will have no more pull to give. This will quickly lead to serious target panic problems and trigger punching is inevitable.

Get your length right

To have a correct anchor position and avoid over-extension, you must also have the draw length on the bow and

string loop adjusted correctly to match your release type. I like to see the draw length of the string stop at the corner or slightly past the corner of the mouth. I say "slightly" because many shorter axle-to-axle bows have a sharper string angle at full draw.

With these sharper string angles you may need a slightly longer fit so your head can stay in an erect position to look through your peep. This is where string loops are so valuable because they allow you to adjust the loop so your anchor is perfect along with the string fit. Even if you want to start anchoring properly but have a bow or loop length that is too long or too short you will have problems.





Left: You need your draw length to be comfortable, allowing you to make a comfortable T-shape posture, before trying to get a consistent anchor

Regardless of whether you are shooting a handheld or a wrist strap release your draw length and form should be able to remain the same. You may need to adjust your string loop slightly to accommodate either style release but the string position and clearance on your face will be the same. Look at the attached photos. Both show the same posture and positioning but with both release styles

Notice I am maintaining a T-formation and my anchor is secure on my jaw line and the arrow placement is trouble-free on my face. The arrow sits perfectly between the lips and chin and the vanes are free from contact on my face.

Keep your skin clean

When it comes to anchoring you must make sure that you keep your face as light to the string as possible – having excessive facial contact on the string or arrow causes variations in the start path of the arrow. With a compound bow the string is within the area of your mouth for the majority of a launch cycle. That said, the more you interfere with the string during that time the more variation you will see on impact. There are two common problems in relation to anchor position and string interference.

Firstly, when some people draw a bow they draw down under the face then bring

the release hand under the jaw and smudge a pile of skin on top of the string and arrow shaft. This process is extremely difficult to repeat and most likely will continue to cause problems and lower scores.

The other common problem is anchoring in a way that puts the shaft or fletching hard against the face. This is an easy problem to identify because the archer usually has one or two fletchings that show obvious wear, a sure sign of having a draw length too long or an anchor position too far back.

Thick beards can also be a problem – remember not to pull the anchor below the chin first so all of your beard and skin lies on top of the arrow. When I draw my bow I visualise pulling the V of my release hand fingers directly in line with my jaw. When the draw hits the stop I bring the V over to my face, keep the string light to my face and touch the tip of my nose softly to the string to acquire the peep. Practice pulling the V directly to the jaw repeatedly. Those of you who have shot recurve bows for many years have a natural habit of drawing under the chin, but with a compound proper form is to not do that. Keep the anchor solid but the string light to the face.

Anchor before your peep

With my shot routine I have only a few steps that I consciously think about on every shot. It is very important to mentally rehearse anchoring before looking through the peep sight: this will keep your form in check when shooting on angled shots either up or down.

Many archers make the mistake of pulling back on an angle and just focusing on being able to look through the peep sight without recognising where they anchor. This is not correct, you need to draw and anchor then bend into position to aim on the target. If you simply pull back until you see through the peep your anchor will be inconsistent, which will cause the anchor to be higher on the face when shooting down and lower on the face/neck when shooting up. Again, this will change the string and arrow pressures on your face, instantly causing a difference in arrow flight.

A solid anchor is imperative to a solid shooter. Consistent results come from consistent release hand placement. Many people have never thought about their anchor and some only anchor where they had to for the peep height originally set up on their bow.

Finding my repeatable anchor position was one of the best things I nailed down in my shooting form.

Good shooting, John Dudley

Below: Your hand should still follow your jaw line when using a wrist-type release

