

Your First Shoot

You've been at the range practicing, or maybe you've been hanging out watching your kid shoot. You've noticed some of the regulars there talk about going to shoots, the archery season, etc. and you decide to go, or bring your kid because it sounds interesting. If you don't shoot, but you have a child and he/she is dying to go, it's ok to tag along while they have all the fun.

- If you ask me about it, and you don't shoot, I'm going to encourage you to grab a bow and shoot as well. I'm going to tell you that you and your kids can compete side by side. You'll shoot at the same targets from different distances. New adult archers usually start out shooting bowhunter novice. Classes for younger folks are determined by age. The distances vary based on the type of equipment being used, and the age of the archer.

There are two types of shoots you'll encounter: 3D and Spots. Spots are normal targets, 3D are animal sculptures made out of high-density foam with target rings on them. Most of the shoots are 3D shoots. When I first started shooting, this information wasn't enough. I was still confused, so I'll describe the experience.

My first 3D shoot took place at Swampfox Archery club. I found the approximate location with my GPS, and even studied it with Google Earth. When I arrived at the address provided by my GPS we were on a road in rural South Carolina. There was a large field (farm) on one side, and a large field on another. There were no visible driveways. About a quarter of a mile back there was a road with woods on the opposite side. My daughter and I climbed on the roof of my car and looked around. We saw a bunch of trucks parked on that road, by the woods, so we figured that's where the shoot was. We drove over there, and sure enough we watched a guy with archery gear stroll into the woods. We followed him down a path and came upon the registration building. There was a guy at a table who helped us figure out which class to shoot, explained how the varying distances are marked on the lanes (little path the animal target is on that you are going to shoot), and helped us find people to shoot with.

I wish someone had explained what "Casual Start Time" means before I went to my first tournament. It means you start shooting when you get there. People can start shooting @ 8 - 9 a.m. at most tournaments, but you don't have to show up that early. I suggest you start - at the latest - by 1p.m. In short, show up sometime between 8 -12, find some people, sign up, and start shooting. Don't stress about it while you're driving to the tournament. Relax.

There's a path. You will go to the first lane - it will be marked with a one. There are marks of different colors, with a life size animal target at the end. My daughter shoots in the Cub class. I shoot Bowhunter Novice. She shoots from the blue marks. I shoot from the green. At first I thought all of my shots were going to be thirty yards, because it said green = 30 yds. Actually 30 yds is the maximum yardage for this class. Most shots are between 20 and 30 yds. Every time I step up to the stake (colored mark) I have to estimate yardage for my shot. Arrows drop as yardage increases, so this skill (learning

to estimate yardage) is hugely important and needs to be practiced and acquired because you can't use a range finder in most classes. I'll describe how I estimate yardage later. Cubs on the other hand, shoot up to twenty yards, but I've noticed most of the blue stakes are 10-15 yards.

There are two ways groups of people shoot: If everyone shoots from the same colored stake, the archers rotate who goes first. If the archers are of varying classes - like adults and kids - the adults usually shoot first and the younger archers shoot last. This way everyone stays safe by walking from the farthest stake (adults) to the closest stake (kids). Everyone shoots, then everyone walks up and takes score. How do you score 3D? Look on the Forms page of this website for the document titled "3D tournament description". People's philosophies on "pulling lines" get rather interesting and can be a great source of entertainment, frustration, and fiction as far as the scores go. It's pretty simple: If it cuts/touches the line, it gets the higher point.

Equipment - You can shoot traditional (recurve) or a compound bow. I suggest bringing at least five arrows (without light up nocks) and a quiver. If you have more specific questions about equipment, check out the 2015 shooting rules on the Forms page, or email me ratchetblock@gmail.com with questions.

I had no clue what I needed to bring to my first shoot, so I'll help you out.

- Binoculars - you'll need to see the scoring rings.
- Arrows, Bow, Quiver - Some people hold their arrows in golf tubes attached to their
- Hunting Chair or folding style chair. I have a small stool without a back rest. It has back pack straps and is extremely light weight. You will be walking all day with your chair. You will pick it up and set it down at least 25 times (every time you go to a new target you will move it). Light weight is key here. If you can't walk around the block carrying the chair you are thinking about bringing you should probably bring a different chair. I also leave my chair at home sometimes because I don't mind standing.
- Snacks. Drinks. Try to avoid caffeine and sugar because you are shooting. Once again, if you can't take it around the block, re-think what you're bringing.
- Cash - most shoots are 10-20\$ - you might want to bring enough to join the shooting organization if you intend to shoot more. Some of these places also have concessions. I'll never forget the first time I had a burger where the bacon and cheese were infused into the beef (Swampfox).
- I bring a tool kit but I usually leave it in the car. I might bring the wrenches I use to adjust my site if it's off when I'm warming up.
- Comfortable clothes and shoes you can move and shoot in.