

# 3 D Shooting Tips

The Sport of 3-D archery centers on shooting at life-size targets consisting of polymer Animals such as deer, elk or raccoons. Hunters shoot in 3-D archery tournaments to improve hunting skills, while recreation shooters participate to improve their overall archery skills. Becoming an proficient 3-D archery shooter may take years to accomplish, but following a few basic tips can instantly improve your results.

## Mental Checklist

Run through a mental checklist before every shot. According to Darin Cooper, tournament shooter and bow hunter, 3-D archery is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical. The sport requires habit and repetition for every shot. Forgetting to do one thing can dramatically decrease accuracy. Everyone's mental checklist may vary, but focus on relaxing, picking one aim point or a smooth release. During competition, you might forget the mental checklist. To prevent this, Randy Ulmer, professional 3D shooter, carries a written checklist with him during a 3D shoot. He concentrates on relaxing his hands and shoulders as he takes a deep breath; he also focuses on staying relaxed throughout the shot.

## Shooting Form

Practice proper shooting form. You'll never reach your full potential as a 3-D shooter without good shooting form. Ulmer recommends keeping your body shaped like a "T" with your shoulders, hips and feet in a vertical line. Don't lean back, and keep your arms out to form the "T." Keep the bowstring free from any interference such as your bow arm, face, nose or chest. Use the same shooting form for every shot. "By using proper form, it will make it more likely for us to repeat every shot the same each time," Ulmer says.

## Long-Range Shots

Archers should feel comfortable with long-range shots. During a 3-D archery tournament, you may have to shoot a long-distance shot of around 40 to 50 yards. Practicing at targets farther than 60, 70 or even 80 yards away will increase your comfort level with a long-distance shot. Shooting long-distance will not only increase your shooting confidence---it will also improve shooting form. You will easily notice mechanical mistakes made at 20 yards once you shoot from 80 yards. When it comes time to shoot the long-distance 3-D target, you will have confidence to place the arrow accurately in the bulls-eye.

## Don't Hold Too Long

- Take your time, but not too long. Some 3-D archery tournaments can have 40 or more targets, which can cause mental and physical fatigue as you near the finish. Don't spend too much anchoring and holding the bow at full draw. This can cause excess fatigue, which will decrease accuracy and may lead to bad shooting habits. Mike Slinkard from Winner's Choice Bowstrings prefers to shoot after about five seconds from when he steadies the pin on the 3-D target. Anything longer requires him to restart the aiming and breathing process.

## Judging Distance

- Learn to judge distance. One of the many challenges to 3-D archery centers on the ability to judge the distance to the target accurately. The most successful shooters, such as Ulmer, have the ability to judge the distance within 1 to 2 yards. To judge distance with such precision, Ulmer uses a system wherein he splits up his judging into 20-yard increments. For targets closer than 40 yards away, Ulmer may use a "snap judge" technique, wherein he looks at the target and immediately guesses the yardage. This technique benefits the bowhunter, who needs to make a split-second decision on the yardage of a deer or elk. Practice judging distance by using a range finder to double-check your range estimate.