

Hobbit Invasion – what to do with youth on the archery range

What is different about youth than adults?

- In many cases, nothing!
 - I've seen some young archers act more responsibly than some adults...
 - There is no age limit, though usually ~5 is as young as I see usually able to pull a bow and focus. Judge on an individual basis – if they're behaving safely, they may shoot.
- In some cases, attention span
 - Pointing downrange – turning to talk to friends
 - Focus – some end up wanting to tell stories, or run off and do something else
 - Keep shoots relatively short if very young (< 10 yrs old) are playing
 - ~ 4 rounds is generally good, probably no more than 6, unless very few (<6) participants are there
 - May get very excited by a successful shot, and stop shooting to talk/brag about it (not always different from some adults!)
 - May need reminders not to stand in front of targets when pulling arrows, to take turns, etc.
- In some cases, experience
 - More likely to not have years of shooting experience – though some do!
- In MOST cases, lower poundage bows
 - Youth ranges are usually 10, 15 and 20 yards, in part because of this
 - You can do 100 yards with a 25# bow, but it can be an extra challenge...
 - If laying out a range, set marker nails to these distances, if youth are expected (run lines later, during youth shoot, to prevent tripping on them during longer shoots)
- Nowadays, liability
 - If it is a youth ONLY activity, need 2 people on the “approved to work with youth” list
 - If it is open to all ages, but focused at youth, need 2 or more adults present
 - My preference – 1 marshal for every 4 youth, with youth's parents/guardians/responsible adult or older sibling PRESENT. Range is not a babysitting service!
 - Need extra diligence to make sure they are conducting the activity safely, not crossing the line, returning from behind targets after retrieval, etc.
 - Ask youth to tell the marshal if they decide to leave mid-shoot, so there is not the sudden mystery of a missing child between rounds

General Tips for youth-focused shoots

- At large events, I try to have at least one youth-focused shoot for each day
- Keep things moving somewhat quickly
 - More marshals can greatly help with this, keeping younger ones on task
 - Many youth will NOT wait 10 or more minutes between rounds – need to be engaged
 - Get targets up promptly, lines out ahead of start time, etc.
 - Can choose responsible helpers to aid you in changing targets between rounds
- Keep rules and scoring simple and clear
 - Have one or more scoring “helpers” per target (can be marshal or older youth)
- Keep ranges short (esp. for very young, < 8 yrs old)

- Shooting 20 yards for many of them is like shooting 40 yards for us
- Do not turn youth away from **any** shoot if you can help it
 - Many, especially older ones, can handle adult ranges and challenges
 - Even if the shoot is hard for them to excel at, they are still getting practice in
- Prizes for all comers helps encourage everyone
 - Prizes not mandatory, just nice – can often find donors
 - Can do a “first pick” for the highest scorers if you want to award skill too
- Remember, there’s a huge difference in ages/experience levels
 - “Youth” range from 5 to 15ish generally – your challenge has to engage them all
 - Can have “barn door” size targets that allow newest/youngest to hit sometimes, with more challenging areas (eyes, gaps in armor, etc.) for those with more skill

What are some youth shoot ideas?

- Story shoots
 - Archers are told a story, with targets fitting the theme
 - May be a quest (save the dragon, etc.)
 - Can be period tales, but keep presentation between rounds short (1 minute or less)
- Animal Hunts
 - Stuffed animals of varying sizes, at varying distances
 - You hit it, you win it
 - May need extra marshal spotters to tell who hit/hit first
 - Try to have enough for each youth to win one or more
 - Often, have those who won one stop until everyone else has gotten one
 - Archers can shoot on behalf of each other (ie, big sis wins one for her, one for younger sibling if they’re having difficulty, adults shoot for a child if the child runs out of arrows, etc.)
 - Can often get donations, or from garage sales
- Winter Shoot/Royal Rounds
 - See youth division variations
- Almost any adult shoot at a shorter range
 - Chances are, if adults thought it was fun, kids will too

Youth are the experts – what do they like or dislike about shoots they’ve seen?

(This area for taking notes about what the youth in the class have said)