

# SCA Target Archery 101

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From the days of antiquity, archery has been the means of supplying the fruits of the hunt and of fighting great battles. Today it connects us to the stories and legends of archers past. The fascination we have for the bow is something seemingly indefinable, growing and strengthening with each draw and loose. After the expected probationary period of sore fingers, tired shoulders, untrained aim, and other learning experiences necessary to the refinement of the art, comes the love of it. The many difficulties archers overcome become just so many incentives, until such things no longer stand in the way but serve as an indication of increasing skill. Eventually, the novice becomes the veteran and will recount his exploits (as he remembers them), to those now taking up arms for the first time. Archery instills dedication and focus, strengthens the body, and above all, teaches patience. You will find that all ages and skill levels are welcome at the line, so get started in archery today!

Beginning archers often encounter a number of issues they never anticipate, so here are a few helpful tips, garnered from the years of experienced archers, to get you started.

First, visit your local archery group during their normal practice times. Often, there will be some amount of free loaner gear (bows, arrows, and gloves) for you to use, so don't be shy about attending even if you don't have your own equipment. Use this time to make friends and get a feel for the basics. Also, remember that the archery marshals are here for your safety and assistance. Pay attention to them as you learn the ropes and never hesitate to ask questions.

Second, when you are ready for your own equipment, be sure to research your bowyer carefully and thoroughly. Beware especially of online sellers as you will not be able to inspect the bows or arrows beforehand. Although cheap, buying archery equipment online runs a high risk of receiving gear that is too old, bent, or flawed for use. Only purchase equipment from reputable sellers.

The basic equipment you will need is:

1. Bow – Bows should be as close to traditional medieval bows as possible. We typically recommend wood bows made in a traditional shape, however, fiberglass bows are also accepted as long as they too are made in a traditional shape. No compound bows or rifle stock crossbows are allowed in SCA archery.
2. Arrows – Only wood shaft arrows with field points are used in target archery. No aluminum, carbon fiber, or fiberglass shafts are allowed. Tips must be metal field points, no hunting or decorative points are used so that we may better preserve our targets and the arrows of our fellow archers.
3. Arm Guard
4. Shooting Glove
5. Quiver – Hip quivers, shoulder quivers, and ground quivers are all acceptable.

All archery equipment is inspected by one of the marshals before it's allowed on the line, so be sure to present any new equipment for inspection before you use it. If you are planning on purchasing a bow but are unsure what to look for, talk with one of the marshals beforehand and have them go over the major points of inspection with you. This will give you an idea of how to spot common problems in bows, such as improper strings, limb twist, or delamination.

Third, before the summer event season, remember to shoot a few rounds dressed in the garb you plan to wear. This way, you will quickly discover if your sleeves are too long or too loose, or if your clothing prevents you from raising your arms high enough to safely control the bow. Pay careful attention to hats or veils as well, as these items can easily catch in your string.

Also be especially mindful of dangling earrings, necklaces, and other jewelry. Do not attempt to shoot your bow while wearing anything that could potentially be caught by the bow string or the arrow fletching. There are often painful consequences for forgetting this point.

Lastly, as you begin a regular practice pattern, focus on consistency before you worry about accuracy. Learning to draw your bow to the same distance each time or set your aim point at the same level will improve your archery skills much quicker than simply trying to hit the center circle every round.

And most importantly, play and have fun. The SCA community of archers welcomes any and all new faces to join us and enjoy!