

## **Buying Your First Bow.**

Many first time archers come to us after their first lesson and ask about buying a bow. Our answer is simple. Wait. Wait until you or your child is sure that you are willing to make the commitment to archery. It takes a few lessons to get a feel for the sport. This is the reason The Papago FITA Archers runs a six-week “First Time Archers” Program. After 6 weeks of archery you will know if you are ready to make the investment of your own bow. Once your ready there are quite a few questions to ask and options to consider.

Question #1 – Do I want to shoot a Compound Bow or a Recurve Bow? If you have been using the PFA club equipment, you have been using a recurve bow. We use the recurve bows because they are good for beginners and if your goal is the Olympics, the recurve bow is all that is currently allowed. The PFA Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) program supports recurve for Olympic and international competition and compound bow for international competition. This article will deal with Recurve Bows.

Question #2 – What do I need to get? You need some basic equipment. A bow, at least 1/2 dozen arrows, an armguard, a finger tab and an arrow quiver to put your arrows in. There is some optional equipment to consider. A bow sight, a front stabilizer and a bow stand.

Question #3 – How much do I spend? Good question. Archery is like many sports; it has a wide range of prices. You can spend under \$200.00 for a complete set-up or you could spend over \$1500.00. We are going to deal with the \$200.00 to \$500.00 range.

*Before we get started on the equipment there is one thing about buying your first bow that will make your life very easy. Buy your bow from a local archery store. Stay away from mail order and your “big box” store. Your local archery store has the knowledge and the skill to fit you with the right bow. This is all they do. You might find it slightly cheaper online or at a “big box” store, but you’ll save yourself a lot of headaches by paying for the service and professional help you will get at your Archery Retailer. Seek out the archery retailer that has recurve bow knowledge. You can look at other avenues for equipment after you are more experienced.*

### **The Bow.**

The bow is the first item to consider. The recurve bow come in three parts. The Riser (the “handle”), The Limbs (upper and lower) and the String. Most beginning bows come with the bowstring so we won’t get into bowstrings. The riser is the bow handle. The limbs fit into the riser. There are two kinds of risers. Those that have “ILF” pockets and those that do not. “ILF” stands for International Limb Fitting. A riser that has ILF pockets enables you to use limbs from any manufacturer and not have to buy a new riser. This riser will allow you to increase the size and weight of your limbs as you improve your archery skills. A riser that does not have ILF pockets limits the type of limbs you can move up to. You usually have to stay with the manufacturer of the bow. The limbs are what the string attaches to and dictate the weight of the bow. Limbs come in different materials and

quality. Bows with ILF pockets are the most versatile and will be used by the first time archer for a longer period of time but the cost more.

The Evolution II is the most inexpensive ILF limb and riser bow on the market today. Proprietary bow and limbs (non ILF bows) can be found with the popular Optima manufactured by PSE, a Tucson AZ company. Note that you can buy varying limb length and limb weight.

The PFA uses the Rolan Dakota bow and the Bullseye wood bow. The Rolan Dakota bow uses a polymer riser which is light weight and excellent for children. Like the Optima the Rolan Dakota has additional proprietary limbs that can be purchased. Wood bows like the Bullseye and Buckeye are also lightweight but the thickness of the “riser” hinders tuning. Fiberglass and elementary compound bows should be avoided. If compound bow are of interest to you, consider the Genesis bow used by the National Archery in the Schools.

Recurve bow size. The appropriate size of a bow is based on the archers draw length, the distance from the arrow rest to the end of the arrow as the string at full draw.

Most men, with a 28” draw length use a 68” bow

Many women with a 25” draw length use a 66” bow.

Many purchase a 62” bow for a child until they grown into an adult bow.

Many 7-11 year old find a 54” bow to be a good choice.

## **Arrows.**

Arrows come in different material and sizes. They need to be fitted to the archer and the bow. The wrong size arrow will cause a lot of problems in flight and accuracy. Arrows come in wood, Aluminum, carbon/aluminum and carbon. For the beginning archery aluminum arrows are best and are considered safer than wood or carbon. The cost is reasonable and they are good for indoors and outdoors. Arrows come with points and feathers or plastic vanes. I like vanes because they last a bit longer and fly better outdoors at longer distances. You should get at least a 1/2 dozen but I suggest 1 dozen. Arrows do break and bend and you don’t want to find yourself in a tournament without a back-up arrow in case one breaks.

## **Armguard.**

The armguard protects your bow arm from the string. There are many different kinds. Get the one that feels good for you. A 6” long armguard is usually very adequate.

## **Finger Tab.**

The finger tab protects your fingers from the string. Finger tabs are a piece of leather shaped to the three fingers that “hold” the string. Some have a stiffener. After a long day of shooting your finger will be numb without a finger tab. “No Glove” finger shaped rubber tubes that fit on the string, they are great for club bows are not for someone hoping to achieve in archery.

## **Arrow Quiver.**

Some people consider the quiver an optional piece of equipment. The quiver fits around your waist and hold your arrows. Wearing a quiver is safer than carrying your arrows by hand back to the shooting line after you have pulled them from the target. Quiver can be very fancy or just functional. The simplest quiver is a tube and a belt clip. Get what works for you.

## **Bow Sight.**

This is optional. Some archers use a sight and others shoot “barebow”. If you are going to participate in JOAD or shoot competitive a sight is a must. The sight is exactly what it says. It is a device to help aim the arrows and hit the target in the Gold. Sights come in all different price ranges and if you are going to use a sight get a good one. A good beginning sight starts at \$60.00. Archers that want to shoot barebow in events are not allowed to use sights and many other equipment options. Talk to an instructor and discuss the opportunities and limitations of being a barebow shooter before making this decision.

## **Stabilizer.**

This is optional. The stabilizer helps with the bows balance and absorbs shooting vibration. There are front stabilizers and side stabilizers. Start with the front one first. 30” is a popular length for beginners. Stabilizers start at \$60.00

## **Bow Stand**

This is optional. The bow stand “holds” the bow when you’re not. Bow stands start at \$20.00

## **Basic Set-up**

A Basic set-up using a non-ILF bow (like the wood bows the club uses), 1 dozen aluminum arrows, armguard, finger tab and quiver will run about \$200.00. This set-up is ideal for children. It will last about 1 to 2 years and upgrades are limited.

A Basic set-up using an ILF bow, 1 dozen arrows, armguard, and finger tab a good sight and a quiver will cost about \$450.00. This will last quite awhile and can be upgraded easily.

One last thing, buying a bow for a child is different than buying a bow for an adult, Children grow and get stronger. Bows that worked great last month may not fit this month, that's why it's always best to use the club equipment in the beginning. When children get stronger, heavier weight limbs need to be purchased. When they get bigger longer limbs are in order and then a longer riser. ***This is very important***, when buying a bow for your child, never buy more bow than the child can handle. If your child can only handle 25lbs, do not buy a 35lbs bow and expect them to "grow" into it. Over-bowing puts them at risk for shoulder and back injury and is one of the biggest reasons they quit. Many instructor recommend starting with a 15# to 20# bow.

Buy a bow you or your child can handle without stress or strain. A little inconvenience in having to upgrade sooner than planned is worth being safe and happy.