TEACHING THE ARCHERY MERIT BADGE

A practical guide to teaching the archery merit badge as part of an on-going program.

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Pikes Peak Council
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OVERVIEW

Some of the most rewarding work I have done as a volunteer has come from the time I have spent on the archery range. Being able to help these young men learn about focus and self-discipline, watching them realize that they are able to control their own bodies and complete a difficult task, is my motivation for doing what I do. These rewards don’t come without effort; a successful archery merit badge session take planning, and lots of help.

This guide is intended to present one way of conducting an archery merit badge class, in a single day, for a group of 12-15 scouts. We shoot on an indoor range using Genesis bows. Our scouts will complete requirements 1 thru 4, 5-B “a” thru “e” and requirement 5-B “f-2”. I offer this class twice a year, each spring and fall, and always have a waiting list.

This guide is presented in three (3) sections:

- **Preparation**; developing a plan and having the resources needed.
- **Execution**; the secret to success is flexibility.
- **Follow thru**; you’re not done yet!

If all you are looking for is the actual instruction, feel free to skip straight to **Execution**.

The author of this guide is a certified instructor in BSA trainer development / Leading edge, Woodbadge, NRA Basic Instructor and NAA Level/1 and Level/2 instructor. The approach I take to the classes draws from these sources as well as my own personal experience. Still, this is not the only way of conducting an archery merit badge course, and several of the actual lessons and methods can be done in any number of different ways; ultimately you can make adjustments for what works best for you.
PREPARATION

In order to conduct a course, you need to be prepared. For an archery merit badge, this means:

- **Facilities**: where will you conduct the course?
- **Equipment**: what will they shoot with?
- **Supplies**: the requirements include making an arrow and a string.
- **Participants**: who are you offering the class to and how do they know about it?
- **Instructors**: you can’t do this alone.
- **Communicate**: yes!

FACILITIES

This guide is based on using an in-door range and conference rooms for the class. Our council center has an activity room with tiled floors, reinforced ceiling braces for a shooting sports curtain, ability to control access and sufficient length to support the 15 yard requirement.

We use a rotation schedule where some scouts are shooting while others are reviewing the book, learning about equipment, making arrows or strings and taking a test. Thus, in addition to the range itself, we have two areas where we deliver the rest of the course.

Having these separate areas, also under our control and immediately adjacent to the range provides a place for scouts to store their coats, lunches, and other gear safely away from the range.

Assume that not all boys will successfully qualify in a single day. Make sure you have facilities reserved for a future “range-only” day.

EQUIPMENT

We shoot with the Genesis © and Genesis Mini © constant draw compound bows. Our instruction, worksheet and quiz are aligned with option “B” of requirement 5 “Compound Bow”. The equipment is regularly maintained (see the section below on Instructors and NAA Level-1 training) and inspected prior to use. An inexpensive work stand makes a great bow rack. The arrows used for qualification shooting are 30cm high quality aluminum.

We maintain enough right-handed (normal size) bows for each shooting position and a spare, two (2) left-handed, two(2) right-handed minis and one (1) left-handed mini. Occasionally we will move boys to a different group in the rotation sequence so that everyone is using the best equipment. We set the “minis” to 12lbs (full) and will back off to 10lbs (1-turn) if needed. The regular size bows are set at 2-turns out from full (~16 lbs).
The target stands are a simple tripod of 2x2s. An old canvas tarp protects the floor and helps prevent the targets from shifting. Behind the targets is a nylon mesh archery curtain. We have been shooting at this curtain for 5 years, both indoors and out with only one “snag” in the fabric. For arrow quivers, PVC pipe mounted to a collapsible wood “X” via a PVC end-cap work great and store easily.

A supply of arm guards of different sizes and styles will insure that you are able to provide protection for boys of widely varying sizes. Some boys may need two arm guards to protect the entire length of their arms. Finger protection may be standard “tabs”, on-string “finger Savers” © or simple stretchy woven gloves.

We purchase our bows, arrows and the shooting sports curtain thru the National Archery in the School Program (NASP: http://archeryintheschools.org/activea.asp, see: http://archeryintheschools.org/data/nasparchery/file/321_6305_2012_NASP_Order_Form_Private%20School%20or%20Non-Profit.pdf

**SUPPLIES**

Many manufacturers and suppliers will send catalogs, brochures, flyers and other archery related literature. Make these easily accessed by the scouts; those who are interested will take the time to look. Large posters of archery rules equipment and study aids can be printed and laminated to enhance the instruction sessions of the class.

For arrow making a short wood dowel makes a great take-home achievement which satisfies the MB requirement:

- 5/16” wood dowel, cut in quarters (10”-12”)
- Plastic vanes, at least 2 colors
- Tapered nocks
- Tapered points (*)
  - * these have been hard to find and we are now using stamped steel points, but need to make a tenoning jig.
- Nock beads
- NPV glue (or a common household cement)

One or two sets of the necessary jigs for assembly:

- Tapering jig (looks like a two-sided pencil sharpener, see above about a tenon jig)
- Fletching jig (eg: Arizona E-Z fletch ©)
- Nock pliers

A single string provides opportunity for 3 scouts to each do a section of service; top loop, bottom loop and center and can be made within a rotation of the schedule.

- Rayon bow string, pre-waxed. Ideally a light color (white, yellow)
Nylon serving, a darker, but not black, color (brown, purple, red, blue)

A single set of jigs (or more, depending on the number of instructors; this is VERY much guided)

- String jig (purchased or home made)
- Serving jig

Build a collection of various arrows; different heads and different shafts. Have a recurve bow available for identification of bow parts. Ask the other instructors if they have equipment they can bring in to show the scouts. A set of damaged equipment is also useful to show examples of what to watch for and what can happen when archery equipment is not properly cared for.

**PARTICIPANTS**

You can’t have a class without students! Are you going to offer this exclusively to Boys in troops? Is there a minimum age? What about Varsity teams, Venturer Crews and Ships? Our classes are open to all scout youth, second-year boys and older. When we first started this program, we welcomed any and all scouts. However, with the increase in distance from 10 yards to 15 yards (for SBf2) in 2011 revision, I do not recommend this class for younger, first-year scouts because of the physical and mental challenges this merit badge presents.

Use the fees and costs associated with your facilities, equipment and supplies to determine the budget for the class and the amount to charge each Scout.

Don’t forget wear and tear on the equipment and any jigs or other long-term purchases for the program.

I advertise the class thru several channels. Please see the appendix for a sample flier; we post this flier on our council website, as part of the calendar entry for online registration, in the monthly roundtable books and as printed copies available from at the council office (we have a wall with holders in which all upcoming activities and events are posted).

Our online registration system provides the ability to download an export of participants. Prior to the beginning of class, insure that you have a printed roster with minimum needed contact information, room to make corrections, blank lines for those unexpected walk-ins who somehow managed to register without showing up in the download (it always happens!) and extra columns to track progress on requirements. A sample roster may be found in the appendix.

**INSTRUCTORS**

Our shooting sports policies require that any operating range have a dedicated range master plus a certified archery instructor at a ratio of no more than 8 shooters to 1 instructor. This means that an archery MB needs an absolute minimum of 2 people and that the range will be closed when instruction is being delivered or the boys are making arrows or strings.
Our goal is to offer this class to 12 to 15 scouts using a rotation schedule of 3 groups. This requires a minimum of 4 instructors; the 2 on the range plus 1 with each of the 2 non-shooting groups. And more is better!

In addition to regular archery merit badge classes, I also offer regular (spring and fall) Adult NAA level-1 courses. The new instructors are asked to assist with merit badge classes to solidify their training and help support our ongoing program. These newly training adults, combined with returning instructors provide a great pool of resources. Our certified NAA L/1 instructors include 15 year-old Venturers who are great working with other scouts and have that “extra” rapport. The NAA classes also include work on equipment repair and maintenance providing further benefit to our program by doing basic arrow maintenance and string re-servicing.

The job of the primary instructor is to support the other instructors to successfully deliver a quality program to the scouts. As such, the primary instructor is not assigned to work specific parts of the rotation, nor with specific groups of scouts. Rather, this person will insure that needed equipment and supplies are where needed, when needed, be ready to assist instructors with specific skills, work with parents of scouts who may have questions or concerns, maintain track of the rotation schedule and sign blue cards (hopefully, lots and lots of blue cards).

For a smooth running class, you should have 5 instructors (and ideally a spare)

1. Primary instructor
2. Range master
3. Group “A” instructor(s) (stays with group thru rotation)
4. Group “B” instructor(s)
5. Group “C” instructor(s)

When possible try to keep one instructor with a single group of boys so that the instructor can get to know those boys and develop a connection. Also look for opportunities to rotate the range master position; those adults who have just completed the NAA L/1 course will benefit from being in all roles during this class and no one person should be limited to a single activity all day.

If it is within your budget and ability, have coffee, drinks and/or snacks for your instructors. You may be able to provide lunch, or if there is interest collect a nominal contribution from each towards a shared meal. If nothing else, some warm, homemade cookies can go a long way!

Each instructor should have a name badge and copies of their certifications. A printed sheet of standard name badges will provide a consistent and professional appearance for your staff. Any instructor actively on the range should be wearing a safety vest (bright orange) or otherwise clearly identifying their role.

COMMUNICATE

The secret to success is communication
Monitor the registration process. Even if the online registration system sends automatic e-mails, follow-up with a personal confirmation. Make sure that they know where to be, when to be there, what to bring (what not to) and how to contact you. Same thing with your instructors.

A few days before the class (3-4 days) send a “blast” reminder to all scouts and instructors reminding them of the event. This will greatly increase attendance and reduce surprises.

Be sensitive to any input from parents on scouts who may have learning differences. Scouts who have challenges with reading or writing may benefit from an advance copy of the worksheet or may respond better to verbal assessment of their knowledge of the presented material. Knowing this in advance can help you plan your needs for staff. The parent themselves might be able to help, also your council might have staff with useful knowledge and skills.
EXECUTION

This is it! The big day. You’ve done all the planning and preparation, your checklist is complete, the roster is full and you have instructors beating down the door anxious to help. Now what?

Be Flexible!

It’s gonna happen, an instructor will come down sick, there will be a traffic jam on the highway, a scout forgot they were signed up for the class, or scouts show up who weren’t on your roster but yet have a receipt from council showing that they paid and are registered. Don’t sweat it, just go with it. So long as you don’t compromise safety, do all you can to give the scouts every opportunity? There are times where I’ve pressed adult spectators into service delivering book instruction (have printed cheat-sheets ready) so that you can maintain the minimum for a safe live-fire range.

The goal is to complete the demonstration requirements including strings and arrows while teaching good archery form and shooting practices. This needs to happen without spending too much time on one subject, without their muscles getting tired too soon from continuous shooting and keeping them engaged. A rotation schedule works very well for this, and with a good mix of experienced instructors a 30 minute rotation works well for each group to shoot 3 ends, or make their arrows, a string, study the book or take the quiz.

SETUP

Begin setup 30-60 minutes before class is scheduled to begin. Setup the range, prepare the other rooms for instruction, hang signage and posters. Don’t forget the red flag for the live range (even indoors – place it conspicuously to arriving scouts and adults) other safety signs and several copies of range rules. Have the bows inspected, strings waxed, limb adjustments set to a known weight and neatly lined up on the bow rack, within the controlled range. Start with the targets turned away from the shooters; also known as “blank bale” shooting and the quivers and shooting line set at 8 yards. Take some practice shots so that you are comfortable that you can do a good shooting demonstration during the safety briefing. The first shooting period will focus on fundamentals of form.

The range and instruction areas should be clearly marked and identified to indicate which areas are open and which are controlled. The single entrance to the range should easily recognizable and gated (rope and hook is fine).

Review your schedule with the other instructors, make sure everyone has a job and knows how to do it. Make sure you know the full name, certification and credentials of all your instructors.

GATHERING

As scouts arrive, have them (or their parents) check their entry on the roster for completeness and accuracy; you may need to be able to contact them later (for example, if the scout doesn’t qualify and needs additional range time). Have the scouts store their coats, lunches and other gear in the back of one of the rooms used for instruction. Have your range master on the range and clearly identified. Do not allow anyone (including
instructors) onto the range while scouts are watching without first asking for permission. Always model the desired behavior; you are the example of what you expect from the boys.

Collect their blue cards, make sure that they have filled out all their information and have their unit leaders approval to take the class.

Parents are welcome to stay and watch (you might choose to put them to work). Make sure that scouts have a way to contact their parents should they have any issues, or if they complete all requirements and qualification early.

SAFETY BRIEFING

When you have the majority of your scouts, and as close to on time as possible, collect the scouts on the range and conduct the safety briefing. This is your first opportunity to establish authority and control of the range. Ask the participants to come to the entrance and as a group ask permission to enter the range. Instruct the scouts to remain behind the shooting line (since the line and quivers are at 8 yards, there should be plenty of room).

Make sure you are wearing your arm guard and have finger protection, carry, or have close at hand, a bow and arrow for demonstration. Introduce yourself and the other instructors, sitting everyone’s credentials and certifications. Identify the areas of the range and the facility including restrooms, first aid and other resources. Indicate any areas which are off limits. Review the safety rules for the range and have everyone read them together, out loud. Make this interactive: “who are the instructors?”, “how do you know what is a safe direction?”. Encourage the scouts to ask questions if they are not clear on anything. Remind the parents to please not distract the shooters and to also follow all rules.

As you identify the areas of the range and discuss safe operation of the equipment, use yourself or one of your instructors to actually demonstrate the specific item; what it looks like to stand at the line, what it means to nock an arrow, or draw a bow. There will be boys who may never have touched a bow. Deliver a complete briefing as if no one has; there is no need to potentially embarrass anyone by asking if anyone has not shot.

Complete the briefing by demonstrating a complete sequence of approaching the line, shooting, returning the bow to the rack and retrieving the arrow. Ask the boys to divide themselves into groups for the rotation schedule, have your instructors join a group and re-introduce themselves. The instructors should do an initial assessment of the equipment needs for the boys in that group; eye dominance and bow size to determine if you need to make any adjustments to the groups so that you have enough of the right equipment for each group.

Dismiss the briefing. The first group will remain on the range to begin shooting, the other groups will ask for permission to exit the range and begin their assigned rotation schedule.

RANGE SHOOTING

As the groups rotate thru their schedule the range configuration changes to support development of the shooting fundamentals and building to improvement of fine skill during the day.
The first rotation is a short range with the shooting line at 5 yards from the targets and the targets turned around so that only a blank face is presented. The goal is first for the scouts to be successful with arrows on target, to develop basic shooting stance and posture and to correct any gross errors in form. Shooting without a target helps reduce any stress over being perfect. Depending on how much time was spent in distributing safety gear, selecting bows and with basic instruction, the 30 minute rotation window should allow 2 to 3 ends of 5 arrows.

The second rotation increases the distance to the first required 10 yards, but keeps the targets blank. This allows work on bow and string skills including grip, anchor point and release. Emphasize shot-group size and explain what various arrow patterns mean and how to make corrections. The boys understand the process better now and will be able to complete 3 ends within the 30 minutes.

The third rotation turns the targets around to show the 10-ring. Instruction will focus on aiming, follow-thru and overall consistency. Continue coaching as the boys shoot and interpret the shot groups and patterns. The boys will begin scoring and should again complete 3 ends in 30 minutes. The goal is for the scouts to exceed half of the required score (1/2 of 160 = 80, try to get 90’s or better) at this 10 yard distance.

The fourth rotation moves the targets to 15 yards to complete the MB requirement. Some (many?) of the scouts will complete qualification during this rotation. Those who don’t will continue shooting, alternating between 10 yards and 15 yards. Note that the qualification requires 10 yards AND 15 yards (not 10 yards THEN 15 yards) so if on the 5th rotation, at 10 yards, their combined score with the 15 yard 4th rotation is 160, then they succeeded!

The remaining rotations continue with the original group sequence and as scouts successfully qualify use the empty shooting positions to consolidate shooters. Typically, enough boys will qualify in the first set of 6 ends (2 rotations) that the remaining scouts will only need 2 lines for rotation. Take care to not allow a scout to grow tired; limit their shooting to 3, or maybe 4 ends. Their scores at each end will help you recognize a scout who needs a break to rest their muscles. Continue shooting and rotating with good instruction and guidance until you see significant decrease in scores, or the time reserved for the class expires. It’s not uncommon for there to be one or two scouts who are on the brink of qualifying; sometimes allowing these boys to shoot 5, or even 6 consecutive ends can yield success.

As each boy successfully completes qualification, indicate so in your roster and complete and sign their blue card. I make it a point to congratulate each boy by name and shake their (left) hand while handing them their card. I thank them for being a good scout and spending time on my range that day.

Talk with the parents of boys who will need extra range time and discuss options and insure that you each have the others contact information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Focus on</th>
<th>Ends / Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 yards</td>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>Stance, posture, follow-thru</td>
<td>2 / 30 min</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10 yards</td>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>Grip, anchor, release, shot groups</td>
<td>3 / 30 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 yards</td>
<td>10-ring</td>
<td>Aim, consistency, score</td>
<td>3 / 30 min</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>15 yards</td>
<td>10-ring</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>3 / 30 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>remaining</td>
<td>10/15</td>
<td>10-ring</td>
<td>Rotate distance as needed</td>
<td>3 / as needed</td>
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</table>
The rotation schedule includes 3 time slots for review of the material in the merit badge book.

The book instruction is delivered in the area setup with the range rules poster and sample target face. Using the merit badge worksheet, begin with review and discussion of the safety rules and types of shooting; working from the front of the book. Don’t worry if you don’t complete everything in 30 minutes, there is more time later.

The other instruction area is setup with sample equipment and instruction posters. Demonstrate the parts of an arrow, recurve and compound bows, safety equipment and their proper care and maintenance. If you have any damaged items, use them as examples of what to look for when doing inspections. Try to have examples of each of the 4 arrow shaft materials and as many different tips as possible. The personal equipment of your instructor staff can be of great use here.

A third rotation session is dedicated to finish up anything not yet covered. The goal is for each scout to have processed the information three ways: hearing, touching and writing. Give each boy a chance to ask questions and “fill in the blanks”. If needed, use the scheduled quiz time for additional review and administer the quiz during the open shooting at the end of the schedule.

I administer the quiz as “open note”. If the scouts have been paying attention and keeping good notes in their worksheet, then they will have no problem with the quiz. Any scouts who have difficulties with the quiz warrant a discussion; they might know the material and have writing challenges. A conversation with the parents will help determine if the boy should receive any accommodations. Don’t hesitate to withhold certification if you honestly feel that the scout does not deserve it.

ARROWS AND STRINGS

There are many, many ways to satisfy the “make an arrow” and “make a string” requirements. Arrow-pen kits are available which give the scouts a usable writing pen that looks like an arrow, or you can purchase high quality carbon fiber shafts, tips and fletchings and have the scouts cut and make custom arrows for themselves. You may also choose to make short demonstration strings, or use these classes to make replacement strings for council owned bows. It’s your choice and depends on how much time you want to spend and knowledge and experience of you and your instructors.

This is a real opportunity to have fun! Live it up.

Most groups can finish arrows in the 30 minute timeslot. Most strings take 30 minutes and will involve up to 3 scouts. Use additional time as needed during final range qualification to finish any boys who have not yet completed at least one serving on a string.

WRAPPING UP

Did you remember to take time for lunch? Have you given your instructors some breaks and helped them rotate so that they didn’t get stuck doing one thing? How many blue cards did you sign? Did you track each scouts
achievements on the roster so that you know who needs follow-up? Did you record the names of all the instructors who helped you? Did you find a little time for some fun and get in a few shots yourself?

Ask any remaining scouts to help you and your instructors clean up, break down and store away the equipment and range. Give all your instructors a hearty “thank you”, certificates of appreciation are always appropriate.
FOLLOW-UP

In the days following the class, take the time to follow-up as appropriate:

- Additional range time for scouts who need it
- Future plans for any scouts who could not attend
- Thank you’s to the instructors who helped you
- Return any borrowed equipment, door keys, etc...
- Start planning the next one!
APPENDIX

- Pre-class checklist
- Class Flier
- Class Roster
- Rotation Schedule
- Safety signs
- Range rules
- Worksheets, quizzes, with and without answers available on request from richardscout@gmail.com
Pre-class checklist for: 

- 15 yard open range with room for waiting and spectators
- Future “range-only” day reservation for the range
- Instruction areas for book work, arrows, strings
- Bows, bow stand
- Arrows, quivers
- Targets, curtain (if needed)
- Arm guards, finger protection
- Arrows: dowel, vanes, points, glue, jigs
- Strings: string, serving, jigs, nock beads, pliers.
- Budget
- Class flier
- Council website / calendar
- Roundtable books
- Class roster
- Instructors
- Name badges for staff
- Safety vests

NOTES:
Archery Merit Badge
Fall 2012 Course (684)

The Pikes Peak Council, Boy Scouts of America, with the assistance of the council Shooting Sport Committee offers this opportunity to work the merit badge requirements, including range demonstration.

This course is not recommended for first-year Scouts.

Certified NAA Level 2 Archery Instructor:
Richard Evans (719) 540-2760, richardscout@gmail.com

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Archery Merit Badge</td>
<td>Council Activity Center</td>
<td>Oct 27 2012</td>
<td>9 AM – 4 PM</td>
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<td>Limited to 12 Scouts, minimum of 4 needed.</td>
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- Scouts must bring a SCOUTMASTER APPROVED blue card.
- Print and bring a copy of this archery merit badge worksheet. (Note: this has been customized for this class and includes a scoring sheet; if you use the commonly available worksheet instead, then please print and bring the last page from this version).
- Bring a lunch and wear an activity shirt (T-shirt) or other Scouting clothing which does NOT have anything dangling in front which might be caught in a bow string (Field uniforms OK without scarf and any temporary patches).
- This course will provide the opportunity to complete a predetermined set of requirements for the merit badge: requirements #1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 option B, 5B option 2.
- Scouts may bring partial cards, but will be expected to participate in the entire course.
- Successful demonstration of knowledge and shooting skills is required but not assured; Scouts should study the Merit Badge book prior to arrival and may require additional range time outside of this class.
- Class end time varies per scout depending on success in completing the required shooting score. Additional range time on a future date will likely be required for most scouts.

PLEASE DO NOT BRING PERSONAL ARCHERY EQUIPMENT TO THE CLASS

This class is recommended only to 2nd-year and older scouts. The archery merit badge is physically and mentally challenging. Scouts must be able to draw the bow repeatedly over extended periods of time, and maintain focus and concentration with proper body alignment and aiming. Younger scouts and scouts in earlier stages of physical development will find the shooting requirements very difficult to attain.

Register online at http://pikespeakbsa.org

- or -

In person at:
BSA Pikes Peak Council
985 W. Fillmore St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
### Archery Merit Badge Roster (date):

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Typically, the most time consuming activity (other than shooting) is making strings. I want each scout to do one (1) serving which means that one string is a chance for 3 scouts (each loop and the center serving). It’s possible (but not easy) to do that in a 30 minute session, and with 5 or more scouts per group that take at least 2 sessions.

In general, flexibility is key; the instructors with each group will get a feel for their scouts and naturally make adjustments.
CAUTION

Live Range

ASK PERMISSION TO ENTER

CAUTION
ARCHERY RANGE RULES:

1. Always follow the Range officers Instructions.
2. Always keep the arrow pointed in a safe direction.
3. Only nock an arrow when instructed by the Range Master.
4. Only draw the bow and fire when instructed by the Range Master.
5. Always walk when on the range.
6. Always wear arm guards and finger tabs when on the range.
7. Always behave in a Scout like fashion.