

Buying Guide Part 2 Bows and Arrows

Even a casual glance at the equipment available on an archery shop's website will demonstrate that there is plenty of choice out there so before we delve into how to select the right bow for you there are a couple of things to bear in mind whilst you read this guide.

Time and Budget

Like any sport, or indeed skill, it takes a lot of practice to be very proficient at it, so be realistic about how often you are going to get down to the range and let that guide the budget you set for yourself or your child. If you are certain that you can attend sessions once or twice a week, come rain or shine, then it might be worth investing in a bow that's a little more advanced than a basic bow. If it's something you have to fit in around a busy schedule and can only make it two or three times a month and you are perfectly happy just pinging arrows down the range then something more basic may meet your needs.



Archery Goals

It is also worth thinking about what you want to get out of your archery. If it's more about engaging in a social activity or just doing something together as a family on a casual basis then there is no point in buying higher performance equipment. If you are very competitive and want to progress to shooting longer distances and are prepared and able to put the time in on the range, then spending a bit more on a bow will prove worthwhile.

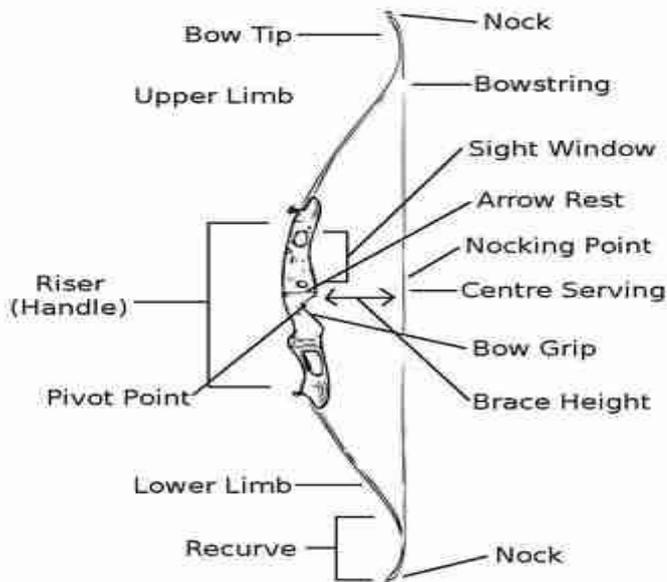
The type of bow we use on the Beginners Course is called a recurve bow (because the ends recurve away from you). It is the most commonly used type of bow and it's the type that they shoot in the Olympics. That being so, recurve bows offer the most choice in terms of length, power (or draw weight) and price. We would strongly recommend that you buy a recurve bow (whether barebow or freestyle) and the rest of this guide will concentrate on recurve bows. If you are really interested in taking up a different type of bow, then please talk to Lloyd or myself first.



At the end of this guide we've put some indicative costs of various types of bows, arrows and other items of equipment, along with a shopping list.

Take Down Bows

The majority of recurve bows are 'take down' bows. They separate into three pieces for ease of storing and carrying. They comprise of a handle, also called a riser, which is typically made of plastic, wood, or metal for stability, and two limbs which slot or screw into the riser and to which the string is attached at either end. The diagram below shows all the different parts of a recurve bow – we'll explain most of the terms in this guide or on the course.



Many risers and limbs come with what's called an International Limb Fitting (ILF). This is a standard slot system for the limbs to attach to the riser. The ILF means that you can mix and match between different makes of riser and limb to get the right combination of power and length. The advantage of this is that as you get stronger and your technique develops you will probably want to increase the draw weight (power) of your bow. The ILF system means you just need to buy stronger limbs and swap them out – you can keep the same riser, string, arrow rest etc. For this reason we tend to advise spending more money on getting a good riser and less money on the initial limbs. For example, if you had £150 to spend on the bow then spend £90 - £100 on the riser. You will need to buy a bow that is both a suitable length and draw weight for you. The next sections explain how we work that out.

Limb Length

Limbs come in different lengths and poundages, which give different draw weights (the amount of weight you hold on your fingers at full draw). The bows you have been using on your taster session and Beginners Courses have been 18lbs assuming a standard draw length of 28 inches. This is the average draw length for adults and all bows are measured to this length. If your draw length is longer or shorter than 28 inches then you are drawing either 1 – 2 lbs more or less than the advertised draw weight. So an adult with 26in draw length using a bow that is measured as 18lbs will actually only be drawing around 16lbs of weight. Limbs mostly come in 3 standard lengths – short, medium and long and these will be appropriate for most adults and young adults.

Riser Length

Risers also come in different lengths although the standard length is 25in. Taken with the limbs of one of the three standard lengths, adult bows are either 66in, 68in or 70 in. **They are also either left handed or right handed.**

Working out bow length

The optimum length of the bow is worked out by measuring your draw length (basically, the distance between the anchor point on your face and the arrow rest) and adding 40. So someone with a draw length of 28in would need a 68 in bow. If you are 'between' lengths you can choose the length either side e.g. 29 in draw length could have either 68in or 70in bow, although it's probably best to go for the longer length. We can work out your optimum bow length for you.

Draw Weight

For beginners we would recommend the following draw weights as a starting point – a lot depends on general strength however.

Juniors 8 – 10 YO	12–15lbs
Juniors 10 – 16 YO	15-18lbs
Juniors 16 – 18 YO	18-20lbs
Ladies	18–24lbs
Gentleman	20–26lbs

All limbs should come with their draw **weight** at 28in of draw **length** marked on the bottom or lower limb.

Juniors

ILF Risers also come in shorter length to make bows that are more suitable for juniors, including 19in, 21in and 23 in. There are also bows that are not ILF that have been designed specifically for juniors so come in shorter lengths – usually starting at 54in for 8 to 10 years old, with 60, 62 and 64 in bows for those in the lower teens.

Arrows

Arrows are best bought at the same time as your bow as they need to be matched to your draw length and the type and draw weight you are pulling on your chosen bow. This is because arrows need to have a certain amount of flexibility to be able to curve clear of the bow as it leaves the rest but straighten in time to hit the target. This flexibility is called the **spine weight** of the arrow and that differs depending on type and draw weight of bow. The need to both fly in a curve and to fly straight at different times is called the Archers' paradox; see video below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGNslUNBrEM>

Types of Arrow

There are basically five types of arrow – aluminium, which you have been shooting on the course, carbon – aluminium hybrids, pure carbon, wooden and fibre glass. We would recommend aluminium arrows as they are the cheapest and sturdiest option suitable for use with recurve bows. Whilst aluminium bows can bend, they rarely break or shatter. Carbon content arrows are faster and lighter but much more expensive and can splinter, although the aluminium core stops them shattering and sending tiny shards of carbon into the grass. Wooden arrows are typically used with traditional bows and are slower and heavier than metal or carbon bows. Finally, fibre glass arrows are very cheap but also tend to shatter and splinter badly and we would strongly advise against purchase of this type of arrow. We would also recommend against buying all carbon arrows at this point because they are very, very expensive and also very difficult for our metal detector to pick up in grass, should you happen to miss.

You can buy arrows already made up; that is fletched with three fletchings (plastic 'feathers' also called vanes) of two different colours, a tip and a nock to attach to the string (not to be confused with the tip of the bow which are also called nocks). When buying your arrows, there's usually choice over colours of your vanes. You should consider purchasing some additional vanes and nocks as vanes can come loose over time and nocks get broken.



Bow accessories

The bow needs a string of the right length and an arrow rest. Strings are sold by the length of the bow, so typically a 66, 68 or 70 inch string. The string itself is slightly shorter than the bow which enables the archer to increase the tension in the bow. Bows and arrows will usually come boxed but you can look at getting a bow bag as well to keep everything together. If you are shooting 'Freestyle' you will also need a sight. One other piece of equipment you are likely to need is a pressure button. These screw into the side of the bow by the arrow rest. They act as shock absorbers and take some of the vibration from the arrow as it leaves the rest, making for a smoother flight. These are not essential to begin with if you buy a rest that come with a bar to rest the arrow against but you might want to factor the cost of one into your overall budget.

Where to buy

If all this sounds hideously complicated, **please don't worry**. We will show you examples of ILF bows on the course as well as different sort of arrows.

Shop

We're lucky in that we have two archery shops relatively close by; Quicks in Waterlooville, near Portsmouth, and The Archery Shop in Bournemouth. Both shops run an appointment service and you can expect to be in the shop at least two to three hours. We have noticed recently that the Archery Shop does not stock a great deal in the shop itself so you may want to check that the equipment you want is available to try instore. If you buy in person you can try different bows in terms of both the riser and the strength and length of the limbs. Risers come in many different designs and colours, and some will be heavier than others and the grip will also feel different. You want one that is comfortable to hold and is not too heavy to lift. The shops both have indoor ranges and we would suggest that you shoot the bow for at least 30 minutes if not longer as a bow that feels fine for the first 10 minutes may feel very differently after you've been shooting it for 30 minutes.

The shops can also measure you for arrows and usually keep a good stock ready made in different lengths. They will add at least an inch on to what ever they measure you at to allow for your draw length increasing as your technique gets better. They will also provide an arrow rest and make sure you get the right length string and will do a basic set up of the bow for you. The biggest advantage is that you walk out of the shop with all your kit set up and ready to shoot and no waiting for the postie or courier to deliver either.

The disadvantage is that the shops are more expensive than the internet and offer less choice. We would suggest that it is worth it to get the right first bow especially if you are not sure exactly what you want. As long as you listen to their advice they won't let you walk out of the shop with a bow that is too big or too heavy. This is why it is also important to set a budget - it's easy to get carried away in the shop with all the different bows right there in front of you.

If enough of you are interested in buying a bow at the same time, or would have difficulty getting to the stores, we may be able to arrange a group visit to one or other of the shops.

Internet

If you do want to buy from the internet because there is much more choice and range than Lloyd or I can advise on any items you've selected if you are not sure. You can get some absolute bargains on eBay but you never know how well the bow has been kept (limbs can warp if not kept properly) so it is a bit of a risk. There are many online stores to go to -links at the end of the document. Many online stores have a series of related questions when you order a piece of equipment to make sure you get all the right configuration. They do want you to get the right bow so are usually very helpful if you contact them. We would suggest picking your riser first and working out everything else from there. The main downside is that you don't get to try the bow so you could end up with a bow that is too light, too heavy or not comfortable to hold or shoot for long periods of time. The bow needs to be set up or 'tuned' before it can be shot so you will have to arrange for myself or Lloyd to set it up for you – which we are happy to do but needs about half an hour so you may have to wait until we've got some free time to do it.

Illustrative Costs

The following packages will give you some idea of what you can get for your money. We will measure your draw length on the course so that you have a basic idea of the length you need for both bow and arrows. All prices as advertised at time of writing – they may change.

Basic Entry Level

Decathlon sell the Geologic I Club 500, 700 and 900 ranges of bows that usually come with a number of accessories like a carrying case, string, stringer (false string) and arrow rest included. Most of these are not ILF fitting, and typically only come in a narrow range of lengths and draw weights which you cannot mix and match. However, if one of these bows are the length and weight you are looking for and you are most likely to shoot on a casual basis then these sets are very good value for money. They also sell aluminium arrows but in very limited lengths. An arrow that is too short will come off the rest, which can be quite dangerous. One that is too long will be slower and heavier than you need – but will be safe to shoot so **always buy arrows longer than your draw length** if you are facing limited choice.

<https://www.decathlon.co.uk/C-880716-bows/N-187451-brand~geologic/N-187451-brand~ssa>

Price range £60 = £130.00

Quicks Archery Set (Adult and Junior)

A complete set of bow and accessories with options for bow length and draw weight. Includes arrows but only at preset lengths. Junior version only comes in 54in length but does have a wide range of draw weights. The bows are not ILF fitting so you may be limited to the Quicks own make in terms of upgrading the limbs to a heavier draw weight later. Again, good value for money for casual shooting.

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/archery-bow-sets/quicks-target-set-qb38.html>

Cost £143.00 to £166



Basic ILF Entry Level

Buying separate risers and limbs rather than a kit gives more choice in terms of riser length and draw weight of limbs. You do have to factor in that you may need to buy a string and arrow rest separately although these need not break the bank – a string will cost around £10 and a rest is £2

– 5. This is obviously in addition to the accessories mentioned in Buying Guide Part 1 and your arrows so don't forget to factor that into your overall budget.

Risers Only

KAP Challenger

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/recurve-risers/3202-kap-challenger-23-riser.html>

Samick Ideal

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/samick-ideal-recurve-riser-25>

Samick Avante (right)

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/recurve-/4532-samick-avante-aluminium-recurve-riser-25.html>

£30 - £80 (Riser only)



Limbs Only

Kimetic Engage

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/recurve-target-bows/kinetic-engage-limbs-kb58.html?filter=12%2C21%2C17>

Core Element

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/recurve-target-bows/core-element-limbs-kb58.html?filter=12,21,17>

£60 - £70

Total cost of the bow £80 - 150

Mid Range ILF Entry Level

ILF Archery Kit

Quicks also sell a complete starter kit with the Samick Avante riser. This kit has everything you need to get started plus some kit for moving you into intermediate level shooting, including a pressure button and stabiliser rods. Comes in a good range of lengths and draw weights suitable for both adult and junior beginners. This is very good value for money for regular shooting.

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/archery-bow-sets/samick-avante-club-level-recurve-bow-set-sb09-seta.html>

Cost £350 - £390

Riser Only

Cartel Fantom (right)

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/recurve-risers/427-cartel-fantom-recurve-riser-25in.html>

Cost £92

SHOCQ Olympus

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/shocq-olympus-recurve-handle>

£85



Limbs Only

Winners Delta F3

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/winners-delta-f3-recurve-limbs>

£85

KAP Winstorm II (below)

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/recurve-limbs/3241-kap-winstorm-ii-carbonfoam-recurve-limbs.html>

Cost £99



Total cost of bow £160 - £190

Top End ILF Entry Level

Risers Only

Kinetic Arios

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/recurve-target-bows/kinetic-arios-2-25-riser-rh-only-kb62.html?filter=13%2C20%2C17>

£145

Sebastian Flute (SF)

https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/recurve-target-bows?product_id=5094

£189

Limbs Only

SF Neo

https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/bows/recurve-target-bows?product_id=5100&filter=13%2C21

£126

Winners Delta C3

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/winners-delta-c3-recurve-limbs>

Total Cost of Bow £270 - £300

What do I get for the extra money on a mid or top end riser and limbs?

The more stability and speed a bow can offer the better the shot. The additional cost basically buys you better build quality and stability in the riser and a smoother, cleaner draw from the limbs which together increase the straightness and speed with which your arrow leaves the bow, given a good technique. No amount of money will compensate for poor technique in the medium to long term.

The bows we've pulled out before are purely illustrative from what the two local shops currently stock— **you need to find one that feels and looks right for you and if nothing in the shop meets your needs we will help you find suitable options elsewhere online.**

Arrows

Bows are not much use without the pointy sticks. Even if you get your bow online it's worth going to one of the shops to get the right length and spine of arrow. The dominant maker in arrows is a company called Easton and they make a good range of entry level aluminium arrows such as the:

XX75

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/Arrows/ready-made/aluminium-arrows/easton-xx75-platinum-plus-arrows-with-g-nocks-and-ep33-points-set-of-12-es42.html>

Cost £50 - 90 for a set of 8 to 12 ready-made arrows. Typically, we shoot 6 at a time so 6 -8 is the minimum number you should buy.

Shopping Check List

What you need to know before buying

- Draw length
- Bow length
- Draw weight

Essential equipment to get started

- Riser (RH or LH)
- Limbs
- >6 Arrows
- Armguard - £ 3 and upwards
- Tab - £2 -3 and upwards
- Bow / finger sling
- Arrow Rest £1 – £2 and upwards
- String £10 and upwards (including nocking points)
- Sight £10 and upwards (be careful not to buy a junior sight if you are an adult).
- Quiver £12 and upwards (you can use a club ground quiver whilst at the field)
- Bow stringer £5 and upwards (you can use a club one whilst at the field)

Optional equipment

- Bow stand
- Bow bag
- Additional fletchings/ vanes and arrow nocks
- Pressure button
- Spare arrow rest

More help

If you have any questions at all, or are having trouble finding something suitable in your price range, do please ask myself and Lloyd and we will do our best to find suitable options.

Archery Suppliers

Local shops (also online)

<https://www.quicksarchery.co.uk/> (based in Waterlooville, near Portsmouth)

<https://theacheryshop.co.uk/> (Bournemouth)

<https://www.decathlon.co.uk/C-880718-archery-accessories#page2> (WestQuay, Southampton)

Online stores

<https://walesarchery.com/>

<https://www.archeryworld.co.uk/>

<https://www.merlinarchery.co.uk/>

<https://www.perrisarchery.co.uk/>

<https://www.bowsports.com/>

<http://www.clickersarchery.co.uk>

