

CAN'T MISS!

How You Can Improve Your Bowhunting Accuracy



BY BILL KRENZ

TEACH YOURSELF TO SHOOT BETTER

CONTENTS

Preface

You Can Teach Yourself to Shoot Better	4
--	---

Exercise One

Eliminate Right and Left Misses by Finding Your Ideal Draw Length	5
--	---

Exercise Two

Your Shooting Consistency Will Soar Once You Develop a Torque-Free Grip	7
--	---

Exercise Three

You'll be Able to Sight-In More Precisely with Just One Line	9
---	---

Exercise Four

You Can Actually Extend Your Effective Range with Double-Distance Practice	11
---	----

Exercise Five

Your Confidence Will Go to an All-Time High with Routine Broadhead Practice	13
--	----

Exercise Six

What You Should Think About to Avoid Buck Fever	15
---	----

Conclusion

The Complete <i>Can't Miss</i> Program	18
--	----

Have you ever blown a perfect shot opportunity? Or just generally wondered why it's so difficult to shoot a hunting bow in the field with any sort of consistency?

You're not alone. Those are common thoughts. After all, your practice sessions go reasonably well. So do mine. In the quiet of our backyards, you and I can stack arrows. But in an October treestand, with a deer carefully approaching, our composure seems to melt and our well-practiced shooting form seems

to fall apart.

It's as though all the summer practice we've done goes right out the window. In the worst-case scenario, we fail to pick a spot, we shoot too fast and we probably punch our release. Afterward, we're not even 100 percent sure which pin we used. The only thing we know with any certainty is that we got excited, we shot and we missed. And we're really depressed about it. It might be years before we get a shot like that again.

CAN'T MISS!

You Can Teach Yourself to Shoot Better

CAN'T MISS!

This booklet was written to help you avoid that scenario. *Can't Miss* is all about teaching you new skills, through six self-help exercises, that will shore up your shooting form, steel your mind and help you make every bowhunting shot you take. Utilize these six exercises, in practice and in the field, and your shooting will improve.

EASY-TO-DO EXERCISES

The six *Can't Miss* exercises presented in this booklet are easy to understand and very easy for you to implement all by yourself. If you follow these straightforward directions, you will see immediate results.

Have you ever scratched your head over arrows that seemed to hit the target randomly? One shot goes to the right of the spot, and the very next shot hits to the left.

I know you work hard on your shooting, but if that sort of right-and-left inconsistency describes your results, it's time to look more closely at the draw length of your bow. When the draw length of your compound bow is either too long or too short for you, important elements in your shooting form get out of alignment at full draw and promote right-left misses. Those crucial elements are your bow hand, your drawing hand and your drawing elbow. Only when the draw length of your bow is correct do those elements line up properly.

MEASURING DRAW LENGTH

Over the years, there have been lots of ways to measure draw length. Most common is to simply have you draw a lightweight bow with a measuring arrow. But unless you already know exactly what length to draw that bow, the natural tendency is to draw too long. As a result, lots of bowhunters today are shooting bows that are really too long in draw length for them.

Those archers (and chances are you're one of them if you have chronic problems with rights and lefts) would discover significant right-left improvements if they would shorten their draw length.

A better way to measure your draw length—based on your actual arm length—is to stand with your back to a wall and with your arms outstretched comfortably and the palms of your hands facing forward. Measure your wingspan from the tip of the middle finger on one hand to the same point on the other hand. Then consult **Table I** on page 4.

Some compensation may need to be made for unusually long or short fingers, but this draw-length approach is a much more accurate way to measure your draw length. Still, it's only a place to start.

EXERCISE ONE

Eliminate Right and Left Misses by Finding Your Ideal Draw Length

TABLE 1

67-INCH WINGSPAN	26-INCH DRAW LENGTH
68-INCH WINGSPAN	26.5-INCH DRAW LENGTH
69-INCH WINGSPAN	27-INCH DRAW LENGTH
70-INCH WINGSPAN	27.5-INCH DRAW LENGTH
71-INCH WINGSPAN	28-INCH DRAW LENGTH
72-INCH WINGSPAN	28.5-INCH DRAW LENGTH
73-INCH WINGSPAN	29-INCH DRAW LENGTH
74-INCH WINGSPAN	29.5-INCH DRAW LENGTH
75-INCH WINGSPAN	30-INCH DRAW LENGTH

FINDING YOUR IDEAL DRAW LENGTH

To find your ideal draw length, follow this three-step process:

1 • After you've measured your wingspan and checked the chart, adjust the draw length of your bow to the suggested setting (or try another bow). See your bow's manual or check with your dealer to do that.

2 • Stand straight up with perfect posture and slowly draw your bow to full draw. Ask yourself if the bow doesn't feel more comfortable to you and more in control at full draw, and if your bow hand, drawing hand and drawing elbow don't seem to line up better with that new draw-length setting.

The best way for you
to determine your
correct draw length is
to measure your
comfortable
wingspan.



3 • You should also note that, with the proper draw length, your drawing arm and shoulder will have room to naturally move backward at the shot. Using a bow with a draw length that is too long results in the overextension of your drawing arm and shoulder to the point where there is little or no room left for a natural backward continuation at the moment of release. With the proper draw length, the follow-through of your drawing arm and shoulder will be smooth and fluid at the shot. With a too-long draw length, that follow-through will be jerky and abrupt.

Now, shoot the bow and note the effect that the adjusted draw length has on your right-and-left shooting consistency. The best way to do this is to place a single black vertical line on your target (more on this in Exercise Three). Shoot at that solitary vertical line. Disregard, for the moment, the elevation of your hits. Did your draw-length change improve your right-left consistency?

You can take this even further by micro-adjusting the draw length of your bow until your right-left impacts are at their smallest spread. That is your ideal draw length.

Have you ever noticed that your bow twists in your hand as you release the arrow? That twisting, which professional archers call bow torque, rotates the bow's arrow rest while the arrow is still in contact, and that will seriously erode your accuracy.

The secret is to find a torque-free position for your bowhand on your bow's grip, and then utilize that position to maximize the consistency of your shooting. Doing that involves finding your ideal pressure point and your ideal bowhand position.

EXERCISE TWO

Your Shooting Consistency Will Soar Once You Develop a Torque-Free Grip



To find your ideal pressure point, use the thumb of your opposite hand.

Marking your bow and your bowhand will help you develop a torque-free grip.



FINDING YOUR IDEAL PRESSURE POINT

When you put your bowhand into the grip of your bow, you have the option of placing the pressure point of that hand to the right, to the left or in the horizontal center of the grip. The pressure point is the exact point on the inside of your hand that exerts the most pressure on the bow at full draw. Ideally that pressure point is located in direct line with the major bones of your forearm. For most archers

that puts their ideal pressure point quite near the inside base of their thumb.

You can find that ideal pressure point by putting your bowhand into a relaxed shooting position, and then using the thumb of your other hand to press against the point you feel is your ideal pressure point. If, as you press, your bowhand moves up or down or right or left, you don't have the right spot. Move your thumb around until you locate your ideal pressure point.

DEVELOPING A TORQUE-FREE GRIP

Only experimentation on your part will determine where your ideal pressure point can be placed on your bow's grip so that your bow does not torque at the shot.

To find that grip position, make an ink-pen mark on your bow and another on the top of your bowhand. Put the first mark on the top center of your bow's grip (or the arrow shelf) at a spot just above your hand when you naturally grip the bow. Put the second mark on the top of your hand just below the bow's mark so that the two marks line up perfectly.

Next, shoot the bow with the two marks in alignment and note how the bow reacts at the instant of release. Does it twist and torque with the shot? If it does, try shooting with your hand (and its mark) slightly to the right and the left of the mark on the bow. Shoot until you discover the exact position and alignment that

delivers a torque-free shot. Once found, mark that alignment on your bow and on your hand.

If you look closely you will often find grip and hand marks on the bows and bowhands of the top tournament archers. Some go so far as to have a tiny line tattooed on the top of their hand to help with consistent bowhand placement. A tattoo may be a bit much, but you will often find a small ink dot on my hand in that very position.

One way to test your torque-free grip is to apply a small amount of baby oil to your bow's grip, position your hand just so and then very carefully draw your bow. If your bow twists during the draw or at full draw, you do not yet have the perfect no-torque position.

Experiment to find the right position, and then utilize that position to boost your accuracy.

Have you ever spent a frustrating afternoon struggling to adjust your sight pins first one way and then the other in order to get your bow accurately sighted-in?

Part of the headache inherent in the typical sight-in process is that you're trying to do two things at once. Everyone does. You're trying to set both the vertical and the horizontal adjustments at the same time. Few can hold a sight pin rock steady on any target's center. The difficulty of trying to wobble a pin into that approximate position is severely compounded by trying to move the pin in two directions at once—both horizontally and vertically.

That's not the best way to do it. The best way to accurately sight-in a hunting bow is to separate the vertical and horizontal in the sight-in process.

To do that, you will need at least three sheets of white paper and a roll of 3/4-inch black electrician tape. You will also need the will to slow down and get it right.

EXERCISE THREE

You'll be Able to Sight-In More Precisely with Just One Line

THE ONE-LINE SIGHT-IN PROCESS

To begin, tape a band of the black tape straight down the center of all three of the white pages. Then take just one of the pages and tape a band of the black tape horizontally across the center of the page, bisecting the vertical band.

Take one of the target pages with a single black line and affix it to your target so that the page and the black line are perfectly horizontal. Walk back to whatever shooting distance will be the middle distance for which you will set your sight pins. For example, if you plan to set three pins for twenty, thirty and forty yards, step back to the middle distance of thirty yards.

Begin shooting and adjusting your thirty-yard sight pin until you can consistently hit the black horizontal line on the target page. Disregard, for the time being, where your arrows are impacting right or left on that horizontal line. Focus solely on adjusting your thirty-yard sight pin up or down in order to consistently hit that line.

You can use black tape and white paper to quickly create one-line sight-in target faces.

You will find that this is easier if you don't try to hit the center of the target page. Properly execute each shot whenever and wherever your thirty-yard sight pin settles onto that horizontal line. All you're doing here is adjusting that one pin up and down for that one distance. When you are finally satisfied with that distance, go through the same procedure for all of the other shooting distances you have planned.

Once your sight pins are set for the desired distances, grab a new target page with a single black line and affix it to your backstop so that the page and the line are aligned perfectly vertical. Then walk to your middle distance and shoot and adjust the middle distance pin in and out until you consistently hit the vertical black line. Again, forget about aiming at the center of the page. Simply aim anywhere along the vertical line.

If your sight features independent windage adjustment for each pin, you will need to sight-in every pin at its prescribed distance using the vertical-line target. If your sight has a gang windage adjustment



feature (a single right-left adjustment regulates the windage of all of your sight pins), you should find that the right-left impact of your arrows is very close at all distances after sighting-in vertically for your middle distance. Some fine windage adjustment may be necessary for short to long distances.

Now, attach the final target to your backstop. It's the one with the black cross bisecting its center. This is a checking target. Shoot at each distance and check to see that both elevation and windage are correct. Make minor fine adjustments as necessary to hit the center of the cross.

The confidence and accuracy you will gain from a properly sighted-in bow is immense. This is also the most headache-free way to precisely sight-in a hunting bow.



You can achieve very precise windage settings by sighting-in with a vertical one-line target face.

Have you ever wondered what shooting secrets are being employed by those bowhunters who routinely make perfect shots on game at forty, fifty and even sixty yards?

Statistics suggest that the average successful bowhunting shot on deer is taken at about twenty yards. In some especially thick areas it might even be less than that. Out West it might be a bit longer, but twenty yards is about where it's at for most bowhunters.

On the surface, that would seem to suggest that doing all of your practice at twenty yards would be the way to go. Nothing could be further from the truth.

To significantly improve your shooting, and at the same time extend your effective shooting range, there's a better way to practice. It's a *Can't Miss* exercise I call double-distance practice.

EXERCISE FOUR

You Can Actually Extend Your Effective Range with Double-Distance Practice

DOUBLE-DISTANCE PRACTICE

Different big-game animals, in different locations, conjure up different shot expectations. I fully expect to shoot most whitetails at twenty yards or less. I expect the same thing for baited black bears or antelope coming to water. On the other hand, timberline mule deer are famous for throwing bowhunters shooting curves. Thirty to thirty-five yards is a more realistic expectation when stalking big mule deer. In the same fashion, caribou on the open tundra tend to stretch the expected shot distance even further, habitually pushing things out to at least the forty-yard mark.

To practice for all of those bowhunting situations and more, simply double the distance at which you realistically expect to make your shot, and then shoot at least seventy percent of your practice arrows at that extended distance.

You will receive multiple benefits from routine shooting practice at longer distances.

The effect on your shooting will be amazing.

To begin with, you'll discover that double-distance practice is an excellent way to polish your shooting form. At forty, fifty, sixty or more yards

there is very little in the way of shooting errors that you can get away with. Peek or drop your bow arm during the shot and you'll miss low left. Punch your release and you'll miss to the right. Align your pins too high in your peep sight and your arrow will impact above the spot. At twenty yards, such shooting mistakes are forgiven by the relatively short distance of the shot. Step back to forty yards, and the same slightly bobbled shot misses by a much wider margin. You're shocked and instantly challenged to improve. Your best shooting practice will take place when you challenge yourself, pushing beyond your comfort zone. Double-distance practice does that in spades.

In addition, double-distance practice will have a huge, positive psychological impact on your shooting. Imagine what the chest of a deer target will look like at twenty yards after weeks of practicing with that same target at mostly forty or even sixty yards. It looks like a barn door.





The terrain was pool-table-flat, but one perfect, much-practiced arrow at nearly 70 yards waylaid this big caribou for the author.

It looks like you couldn't miss it if you tried. It looks like your sight pin doesn't move. It looks great.

The other thing double-distance practice will do for you is slowly, inevitably increase your effective shooting range. If you don't seriously practice at longer distances, you'll never be able to shoot well at those distances. Hunting bows are relatively short-range weapons, although the exact definition of "short" is a bit up in the air. With diligent double-distance practice, almost anyone can learn to make perfect shots on game at longer distances.

The key, you'll find, is double-distance practice.

Have you ever headed into the woods harboring doubts about how your broadheads were flying or about where they were hitting in relation to your field points?

Let's look at this another way. Can you imagine any knowledgeable rifle hunter sighting in and practicing with one sort of

EXERCISE FIVE

Your Confidence Will Go to an All-Time High with Routine Broadhead Practice



TOP: It is illogical to expect that broadheads will fly exactly like field points.

BOTTOM: A wide variety of excellent broadhead-capable targets can make regular broadhead practice possible for you.

inherent strength of your chosen broadheads. Quality broadheads can withstand months of serious broadhead practice. Inferior broadheads may not last a single practice session. Which broadhead do you want to try to shoot all the way through a big buck?

Regular broadhead practice will also help you discover which arrow shafts, arrow rests, fletching types and more truly work the best with your hunting gear. Arrows tipped with field points can disguise arrow flight and accuracy problems. Arrows equipped with broadheads won't do that. They'll lay everything bare and help you make the necessary corrections long before hunting season.

ammunition, but then switching to a different bullet to go hunting, without re-sighting and without lots of additional practice? Yet plenty of bowhunters do just that. They practice 95 percent of their time with field points and switch to broadheads only at the last minute.

If you really want to become a better shot on game with a bow, you'll turn that lopsided percentage on its ear by practicing with broadheads at least 50 percent of the time year-round. Few things will have as big an impact on your shooting in the field as routine broadhead practice.

Regular broadhead practice will fine-tune your equipment selection and performance like no other practice. Just one of the things that regular broadhead practice will reveal to you is the

Doubts at full draw can spell disaster for your shooting in the field. If you think that you'll miss or even wonder if you will, chances are a miss is in the making. Such doubts are commonplace for bowhunters who haven't practiced enough with their broadheads. The only way to truly banish those thoughts is to practice with your broadheads regularly and year-round. Nothing builds bowhunting shooting confidence like routine broadhead practice.

TIPS FOR BROADHEAD PRACTICE

It's tempting to try to skip extensive broadhead practice, primarily because broadhead practice isn't convenient or particularly inexpensive. You'll go through a few broadheads and you'll chew up some targets. But never doubt that broadhead practice is worth it. It is. Regular broadhead practice is one of the real secrets that will make you a better game shot.

Various foam targets work extremely well for broadhead practice. Try Rinehart's excellent I8-I Target, The Block Target, Hips Hot Shot Target, Black Hole Targets, The Cube from American Whitetail and other superb foam targets from Delta, McKenzie and Morrell.

All of these targets tend to be fairly easy on broadheads, reasonably durable, freestanding and wonderfully portable. That means that you can take them almost anywhere, and practice with your broadheads almost anytime.

Don't even think about skipping extensive broadhead practice. To be the best bowhunting shot possible, practice with your broadheads at least 40 percent of the time year-round.

Have you ever been so excited that you got to the point where you simply wanted to get the shot over with? In your building excitement, you actually prayed that the deer would step closer so you could shoot sometime before you totally self-destructed.

EXERCISE SIX

What You Should Think About to Avoid Buck Fever



Thinking about a well-practiced and numbered shot sequence will help you avoid buck fever.

dumping an ant farm down your pants—but I doubt that would really work.

Instead, what you need to do to avoid the negative effects of buck fever is to learn what to think about.

The next time you're in a pressure-cooker bowhunting situation, here are three things that you can use to properly focus your mind and your body. All three will help you make a perfect shot.

First, you need to think about physically relaxing. Breathe fully. That's important. The tendency in buck fever is to hold your breath somewhat, and you need to avoid that. For peak performance, your body needs oxygen. You also need to consciously think about relaxing the muscles in your back, arms and neck.

Next, you need to think about positive outcomes for the situation at hand. Many leading athletes use visualization to improve their performances. You can do the same. Look at the animal and visualize a successful shot. See yourself slowly drawing your bow, coming to anchor, aiming and smoothly releasing. See the arrow impacting the exact spot you aimed at, and watch as it passes completely through the animal. Sense exactly how that will feel.

Lastly, as you get ready to shoot, you need to really focus on your

If you've felt that sort of buck fever, you're certainly not alone. Buck fever strikes even seasoned bowhunters, and the problem is that it can tear down your shooting form like a wrecking ball.

The problem within buck fever is tension. As a deer approaches, both physical and mental tensions build. Physically, you tend not to breathe fully and your muscles tense up. Mentally, your conscious mind goes into overdrive and you start to have all sorts of crazy thoughts, mostly about how the situation is surely going to go south.

Since all of your shooting practice has been when you were relatively relaxed, the added tension of buck fever tends to make you shoot poorly. I suppose that you could learn to practice with tension—maybe with blaring music or by

step-by-step shot sequence. In practice, you develop a shooting routine. You do this, then that, then this and then the arrow is gone. I'd suggest you go as far as to assign numbers to each shooting step in your routine. Step #1 might be that you position your bowhand for a torque-free grip. Step #2 might be that you slowly raise your bow and address that target. And so on and so on. Visualize those steps first (as many times as you like), and then actually implement them. Really bear down mentally on each step and on the smooth flow of the overall routine. The more you focus on your step-by-step shot sequence, the less pressure you will feel.

A fourth thing that sometimes works is to focus on the distance of the shot. This works best if you know the exact distance to a specific bush, branch or spot on the ground. A laser rangefinder, used ahead of time, or paced-off distances can be a godsend. Mentally calculate exactly how far away the animal is with each step that animal takes. Those calculations will keep you busy, and knowing the exact distance of the eventual shot will also boost your confidence.

You can beat buck fever by learning what to think about.



The author traveled over 2,200 miles from his home to take one shot in front of anxious Inuit guides at this trophy muskox. Calmly visualizing a positive outcome helped make the shot perfect.

The Complete Can't Miss Program

After you've mastered the six self-help *Can't Miss* exercises presented in this booklet, you will undoubtedly come to the conclusion that there are probably more new skills to learn, new challenges to meet and new aspects of bowhunting accuracy to face and conquer. I feel the same way.

That's why I'm currently working on a much more extensive and detailed full-length and fully-illustrated *Can't Miss* book for you. That book will include many more self-help shooting secrets, exercises and strategies.

The goal of the book will be to help you teach yourself to shoot a hunting bow more accurately and more consistently. The finished *Can't Miss* book will do that by presenting a complete *Can't Miss* Program designed specifically for you. That program will guide you through a step-by-step plan designed to improve your shooting like never before.

If you want to learn to shoot better, you'll want the *Can't Miss* book.

The *Can't Miss* book is in the works now. If you like, I can place your name on an exclusive mailing list to receive a very special introductory offer for the *Can't Miss* book just as soon as it is available. You can get your name and address on that special V.I.P. *Can't Miss* list in one of three ways:

Email me (bill@insidearchery.com) with a short note about *Can't Miss* and your name and address.

Mail me the same name-and-address information at *Can't Miss* Book, 2960 North Academy Blvd., Suite 101, Colorado Springs, CO 80917.

Or you can log onto www.bowhuntamerica.com and sign up there.

In all of those cases, I'll personally make sure that you receive the special V.I.P. *Can't Miss* announcement.

Bill Krenz

July 2007

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