



KITTERY TRADING POST

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Choosing Your First Bow

by Seth Legere, KTP Archery/Fishing Manager

So you have made the choice to get started in the sport of archery. Whether your goal is to participate in next year's archery season or add another element of backyard fun, there are certain things that all consumers must know.

Before you make any purchase, the first thing that you want to decide is what type of bow you would prefer to shoot. Probably the most common choice for people with the aspiration to hunt is the compound bow. A compound bow is one that uses a pair or series of eccentrics as well as cables that link the eccentrics together, making them work as one. By using these, it not only lessens the amount of holding weight at full draw but also accelerates the arrow at a greater speed upon release. The other choice would be to go with a more traditional bow such as a recurve bow or longbow. Much like the compound bow, these styles can and often are used in both target and hunting forms of the sport. The backyard shooter often prefers recurve bows and longbows due to their average cost. Oftentimes one can purchase a starter recurve bow for under \$125, whereas most compound bow packages will start around \$300.

Once you have decided what style of bow you would prefer, the next step would be to set a budget, keeping in mind the average cost for starter packages, as mentioned above. However, when purchasing accessories such as arrows, rests, sights, and releases, there are all different styles and prices available. Most accessories are designed to fit to all bows (compounds), though there may be some specially designed for certain manufacturers. This is where the staff at Kittery Trading Post can help in the decision-making process. After you have planned your budget, the next step would be to get measured for draw length and decide on a draw weight that not only suits you but your needs. Having your draw length measured is especially critical if you plan to purchase a compound bow. Draw length is the distance that a bow will draw, and for each shooter, it will vary. Having an incorrect draw length leaves room for inconsistent anchor points. (An anchor point is usually the spot on the shooter's face where a bow string contacts at full draw.) Again, the KTP staff will have the knowledge and tools required for this measure to be taken accurately. When selecting a draw weight, there are several factors to keep in mind. First and foremost, you want to be able to draw the bow. Having a bow that is too heavy to draw multiple times will not allow you to be proficient or build strength. Archery is a sport that involves practice, and only being able to shoot a couple of times before fatigue sets in does not help. Secondly, you want to keep in mind that the sport of archery uses different muscles than are used in many other exercises. Because of this, these muscles will get stronger and the draw weight will get easier to handle, for most, over time. Next, if your plans are to hunt with your new bow, it is important to check



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with your state's minimum draw weight requirements. Making sure that your bow meets this requirement not only keeps you within the demands of the law but also helps ensure that your arrow will have a positive outcome upon contact. Most bows will have a 10-pound weight range, 50-60 pounds being the most common among adult males, 40-50 pounds among most adult females. Draw weight plays a factor in the speed of the bow as well as the kinetic energy it will transfer to the arrow.

Now that you have found out your draw length and decided on a draw weight, it is time to choose a bow. First and foremost, when selecting a bow, make sure it feels comfortable in your hands. Each manufacturer varies in the materials it uses and how it cuts its grips. Though there are good reasons for the ways in which bows will differ, a good rule of thumb is: If it does not feel good in your hands, you will struggle when shooting it. Simply put, if it makes you uncomfortable when holding it, the amount of time you spend shooting and practicing may shorten. Next, think about your interest level in the sport. If you feel as though this is a sport you will ultimately love, consider investing a little more into a higher-end bow. When you purchase a high-end bow, you not only get into a bow with the newest technology, you also get into a bow that will oftentimes produce higher speeds by using cam systems and shoot quieter by using built-in dampening devices, and a higher-end bow also allows you - as the shooter - to grow with the sport.

Finally, after the bow is selected, assembled, and fitted for you, the next thing to do is practice. With an occasional exception here and there, most bowhunters are not ready for the woods overnight. Getting comfortable with your bow and understanding the importance of form and consistency only come with practice. In addition, it is important to learn what your effective ranges are. Most bowhunters will try to focus on no more than 20-30-yard shots. Practicing and building effectiveness within this range will ensure that when the opportunity comes, you will make a lethal, ethical shot.

If you are still unsure what bow to purchase or would like help in getting started, the Kittery Trading Post staff are well equipped with the product, tools, and knowledge to assist anyone in search of a new bow.