

I am a new archer looking to buy my first equipment or I am a parent looking for equipment for my child

Firstly it would be advisable to enrol the new archer with one of the learner programs that are run by archery clubs. This provides equipment, teaches some basic skills, an understanding of safety and enables you to judge whether they/you will like the sport before you spend money on equipment. Learner programs cater for adults as well as younger archers.

Most of the clubs in the Perth metropolitan area run these learner programs, varying from 6 -12 weeks. These are held on either Saturdays or Sundays and run for between 1-2hrs depending on the club. Some clubs even run programs where you pay from week to week, so if you decide its not for you after your first experience you haven't committed to an ongoing expense.

Contact information for clubs can be obtained through the State body - Archery WA and the club contact will tell you about their particular program and the costs. Some clubs have waiting lists while others will slot you into their program as soon as you would like.

When you have completed the program and decided what style of bow interests you:

- Recurve – the Olympic style bow and the one that most learner courses start with
- Compound – the more complex bow with cams and modules (originally for hunting but now also shot in target)
- Longbow - the traditional and minimalist style of bow and equipment

then you can purchase appropriate equipment that will provide a satisfying rather than frustrating, introduction to the sport.

If you are inexperienced, buying from the internet is NOT a good start.

Contrary to what you might think archery equipment is not a standard “one size fits all” item. If someone tries to tell you that it is, then question that advice. Choose someone reputable to obtain your equipment and advice. Seek advice from a club member or retailer who appears to be experienced and if someone offers you some secondhand gear from the “back of their car” seek some of that advice before buying anything. Purchasing without any advice can be a costly mistake.

The bow and the arrows need to be selected to fit the archer. Bows are different lengths and strengths depending on the age and capabilities of the archer and arrows are also different thicknesses and length depending on the body size and strength of the archer. If you don't know what you're buying then you may get mismatched equipment. Don't be beguiled by the “this will at least let you have a taste of the sport” argument. That will lead to frustration as the equipment will not perform properly and you will never achieve a good shot or be able to work out why not.

Secondhand equipment can offer a good and genuine deal but is best left to the experienced archer. Always bear in mind that number of years in archery does not necessarily equate to sound knowledge and if unsure ask around at your club to get an idea of whose advice you might rely on.

If you buy too short a bow for your size and arm length a number of things are likely to happen. The bow limbs may snap or crack, the string will come off the ends of the bow, the arrow will fall off the rest. Any of these things can result in injury to the archer and damage the equipment.

What about for growing children?

It is not recommended that very young children under six, take up archery, as a certain level of muscle development is required. Archery also requires focus and prolonged concentration. It is also difficult to obtain suitably sized equipment for small children. Once a child can manage the equipment, then parents should consider that children grow quickly and just like pairs of shoes, will outgrow their archery equipment, so new equipment will be required to keep pace with their growth. Overall bow length will need to increase as the archer grows and longer arrows will be needed as they get bigger. For recurve archers, combinations of new limbs and longer risers (handle), can be used to achieve the correct arrangement. So not every item must be repurchased but the cost of new equipment needs to be taken into account. The learner courses at clubs which provide all the required equipment are a good way of gauging both a child's interest and their capacity.

What is the basic set of equipment I will need?

Its not necessary to have every item at first, and archery items make good opportunities for Birthday and Christmas presents. The **items in red** are really the starter essentials and other items can be added later as desired.

There are also kits available which will give you most of the basic items, but you will need some help to make sure you get the correct kit matched to the archer. A kit can offer a cost-effective way to start out but if not fitted to the archer's size and strength will not turn out to be a good deal, as replacement items of the right size will have to be bought.

For Recurve -The basic set of equipment is:

- **Bow (of correct size for the height and strength of the archer) and a string**
- **Arrows of appropriate size, thickness and diameter (this is known as the "spine" of the arrow) The "spine" is selected to match the poundage of the bow and the ability of the archer to pull that poundage to its optimum performance.**
- Recommend 12 arrows as arrows get broken and damaged as a standard part of shooting and so a few spares are a good idea
- **Arrow rest to support the arrow before it is shot**
- **Bow stringer for safely putting on and taking off the string**
- **Armguard to protect your forearm from being hit by the string if a shot goes wrong. A slap from the string striking the arm can be very painful and put you off the sport.**
- **Finger tab to protect fingers which are pulling the string and to provide a consistent surface from which to release the shot**
- Quiver for the arrows
- Chest guard to protect from the string hitting against you or your clothes during a shot
- **Sights to provide a forward point of aim**
- **Pressure button which helps to steady the arrow as it passes from the bow during a shot**
- Bow sling – prevents bow from jumping out of hand after shot – assists stability
- Bow bag
- Spare fletches, nocks and glue to make small repairs to arrows

For Compound – basic set of equipment depends on which form of shooting you want to take up.

1. Compound finger shooting – is what it says – shooting using your fingers on the string. This has higher inherent error level as the string gets torqued by the hand as the bow is drawn back. Requires experience and perseverance to do correctly.
 - Bow of correct size and strength for the archer’s capabilities. Recommended bow should be longer overall measurement to compensate for the torque effect of fingers on string. (If you plan to finger shoot a compound, a short bow will be even harder to master)
 - Basic arrow rest
 - Basic sights to provide forward point of aim
 - Set of arrows matched to the bow poundage and archers draw length
 - Quiver
 - Bow bag or case
 - Stabilising weights
2. Compound Field shooting with release aid (shooting in the bush setting and walking from target to target)
 - Bow of correct size and strength for the archer’s capabilities. Recommended bow should be shorter overall measurement as this is easier to handle among trees and plants in bush setting
 - “Captivated” arrow rest or launcher
 - Basic sights with multiple pins for instant sighting at different distances
 - Basic Peep sight (back sight) in the string
 - Release aid to assist hand when shooting the arrow and avoid torque on the string
 - Set of arrows matched to the bow poundage and archers draw length
 - Quiver (hip or fitted to the bow)
 - Bow bag
 - Armguard
 - Front weight for stability
3. Compound Target shooting – competition shooting with release aid, shoots at single target from fixed position, in open setting
 - Bow of correct size and strength for the archer’s capabilities. Recommended bow should be longer overall measurement for stability
 - High quality arrow rest (or launcher)
 - Competition sights with single aiming pin and scope
 - High quality peep sight (back sight) in the string
 - Release aid
 - Set of arrows matched to the bow poundage and archers draw length
 - Quiver (hip)
 - Bow bag
 - Stabiliser with Front weight for balance
 - Armguard

For Longbow – basic set of equipment is:

- Bow of correct size and strength for the archer’s capabilities and string
- Bow stringer for safely putting on and taking off the string
- Set of arrows matched to the bow poundage and archers draw length
- Fingerguard

- **Armguard**
- Quiver
- Chest guard
- Bow cover
- Bow sling – prevents bow from jumping out of hand after shot – assists stability

What questions should I ask?

When you do decide to purchase equipment, a competent retailer or experienced archer should:

- measure your draw length (how far you draw back an arrow) to ensure the arrows you purchase will be the correct length and spine.
- Check whether you are left or right eye dominant, this determines whether you shoot a left or right handed bow. (Note: just because you may be right handed in everyday tasks does not necessarily mean that your right eye is your aiming eye, your dominant eye may be your left eye)
- What poundage of bow you can manage comfortably as this, in combination with your draw length determines the “spine” size of the arrows you use. A competent retailer or archer will have a manufacturers chart to assist in determining the correct spine.
- Discuss with you what kind of archery you are interested in, as this determines what equipment you will need. ie are you interested in:
 - traditional (longbow) archery,
 - hunting,
 - field archery (walking from target to target in a bush setting) or
 - target archery conducted from a static spot in an open area (as seen in the Olympics)
- archery contains a lot of new terms and details and experienced archers can sometimes forget that these are unfamiliar to a new archer. Feel comfortable to remind them that you are unfamiliar and ask them to explain more fully what they are talking about.
- If you are interested in a kit – check exactly what is included as they all differ and often not every item you may want is included

IMPORTANT: Always make sure that you never pull back *and then release* the string (ie fire the bow) without an arrow loaded into the bow. The energy held in a bow once it has been drawn has to be absorbed somewhere and the arrow takes up that energy. If you release the bow without an arrow this is called *dry firing*. The stored energy goes through the bow and may break the limbs, drop off the strings or impact the other bow components causing structural damage. If the bow is a compound and needs the strings and cables to be put back together after dry firing, this can only be done safely using the correct equipment.