

# OTOW Archery Club, Inc.

## What you need to know BEFORE you buy your first Bow

Purchasing your first bow can be an intimidating experience. Before you make that purchase take the time to be sure you have the right piece of equipment in mind. Getting advice and guidance from a mentor or experienced archer is advised. There are a number of critical factors that you will need to know before you start looking for the bow of your choice.

If you have not taken an archery class and/or have never shot a bow, now is the time to do so. Only after you've had that initial exposure to target archery and some level of education will you be able to formulate the parameters that will be necessary to purchase your bow. The parameters and measurements you will need to know are shown and explained below.

**Draw Length** – The distance from the nock point of the arrow to the throat of the grip plus 1 3/4". To measure your draw length, determine your wingspan (in inches) and divide by 2.5. Example: Wingspan of 66" / 2.5 = Draw Length of 26.4 (round draw lengths to nearest ½ inch) or 26.5" draw length.

**Draw Weight (Recurve Bow)** - The amount of force needed to pull a bow to full draw. We do NOT recommend using a 'draw weight chart', but rather we recommend testing yourself by drawing an actual bow with a known draw weight. Draw the bow and hold at full draw for 30 to 45 seconds. If you can comfortably hold that long that draw weight should suit you. If you can easily hold for a full 45 seconds you may want to try a slightly heavier (use 2 lb. increments) draw weight and try again. If you cannot hold for the full time or if holding is straining and uncomfortable, try lighter draw weights until you find a comfortable weight. It's very important to find a comfortable draw weight as you may be shooting upwards of 100 arrows per session / day for target archery. New archers are recommended to stay below 36 lbs. of draw weight with a recurve bow.

**Draw Weight (Compound Bow)** - Compound bows differ in that you may draw the bow through the draw weight into a 'draw stop' at which point the holding weight may be significantly less. This makes it much easier to hold at full draw. Using the hold for 30 to 45 seconds is not valid here. Instead, be sure you can comfortably draw through the bow's draw weight into the draw stop. Remember that as a target archer you will have to draw the bow successively upwards of 100 times. Find what's comfortable for you. New archers are recommended to stay at or 40 lbs. of draw weight with a compound bow. The compound bow will let you adjust the draw weight within the range of the limbs. Compound limbs come in different weight ranges usually 40-50 lbs., 50-60 lbs., and 60-70 lbs. There are compound bows in which limbs are adjustable within a wider range of draw weights, for example, 15 -70 lbs.

**Bow Size** – The size of the bow (**Recurve Bow**) should fit your draw length. Most will fit into a bow size from 64 to 70 inches. The chart below shows the relationship of draw lengths to bow size.

<u>Draw Length</u>	<u>Bow Size</u>
24" - 27"	64" - 66"
27" - 29"	66" - 68"
29" - 31"	68" - 70"

We recommended that you always move to the longer bow size if you are at or near the draw length dividing line.

The size of a Compound Bow, to some degree, is irrelevant because of its mechanical method of draw and release. However, longer compound bows are considered to be easier to draw, more stable, and more accurate. Shorter compounds are suited for hunting because of their compact size and power. Compound bows are measured in Axle to Axle (ATA) lengths with ATA of 35" and above being considered more in the target bow category. Another important factor for compound bows is that the draw length on some is easy to change and does not require a bow press and technical skills, whereas some require a bow press, technical skills, and "mods" that are draw length specific which may have to be purchased separately and can be costly.

This is the MINIMUM amount of information you need to accurately determine before purchasing your bow. We recommended doing as much research as you can about both recurve and compound bows before you make a choice. Ask questions and take every opportunity you can to try different bows to see what might be comfortable for you.

When you feel you've come to a conclusion on the type of bow and the specifications you will need, begin looking at the many choices you will have for a bow that fits your requirements. The most significant difference in the bows you will look at will probably be quality and price. We recommend that you purchase quality equipment. Buying used equipment in good condition can be a wise choice and save you money, however, be sure the bow fits you and meets your requirements. We recommend working with a mentor or experienced archer to find the proper equipment for your needs.