

# Trigger happy

It's a small piece of kit, but getting the right release aid for you can make a big difference to your scores.

**Duncan Busby** takes you through what's available

It is said that for a compound archer the key to a good shot is in the release, and the more consistent and controlled this is, the better your results will be. This makes your release aid an important piece of equipment and an integral part of your shot, but many people put little thought into their choice of release aid, meaning they may not be shooting to their full potential. This article aims to highlight the differences between the most popular types of release aid available and enable you to understand the significance of your choice.

There are two different forms of release aid on the market, those that attach to your wrist and those held in your hand.

## Wrist Release

The wrist release consists of a body, which houses the jaws or callipers that attach to the bow string, and a strap for the archer's wrist. The archer draws the bow using the strap, then triggers the shot by increasing the pressure on the trigger using either their index or middle finger. On better models, the trigger tension of the release can be adjusted to make it harder or easier to activate, they can also include length adjustments to fit different-sized hands and a rotating head to minimize torque.

The wrist release is popular with hunters because their release aid is always close to hand and it's thought to be quieter than handheld models; it is however used frequently in target archery, especially with beginners. Although not as popular as the handheld release in this discipline, it has its



The Just B Cuz is Duncan's release aid of choice - what will work for you?

devotees and has been used to great effect, winning some huge titles.

<b>Pros</b>	The main advantage to this style of release is that it can be easier to draw the bow and execute the shot using the correct muscles in your back; it also allows the hand and fingers to remain relaxed at full draw which makes it of particular benefit to beginners.
<b>Cons</b>	It can be tricky to get into a consistent reference point on your face because of its small size and design, potentially causing some wayward shots and inconsistent grouping.

## Hand Held

The handheld release is, as the name suggests, held in your drawing hand, usually around the second knuckles. The archer uses it like a handle to draw the bow then activates the release through increased pressure in either their thumb or fingers. Handheld releases come in a variety of different designs – some models offer a small or large option, allowing you to choose a device perfectly fitted to your hand size. They can also come in two-, three- or four-finger designs to complement your shooting style and preferred handle shape. It is by far

the most popular option for target archers, comes in a wide range of colours, and in my opinion is the better long-run choice.

<b>Pros</b>	The main advantage to the handheld release is that it is very easy to get into a comfortable and consistent reference point, making the prospect of hitting the same place on the target much more likely.
<b>Cons</b>	Their main disadvantage is that they require a little more work to use the correct muscles when executing the shot, but discipline and a good technique should ensure that you use this style of release correctly.

Although all release aids should be shot by gently increasing the pressure in your back, there are several designs of release mechanism that are all activated differently. The four different types on the market are:

## Trigger Releases

This release is activated by increasing pressure on the trigger, using either your finger or thumb. Handheld models feature a cocking bar, which "clicks" when cocked; this engages with a series of sears inside the

casing which work with springs to release the clasp holding the D-loop or release rope.

They have adjustable trigger travel and spring tensions so you can alter the amount of pressure required to activate the release. I use the Carter Just B Cuz and would recommend it to anyone wishing to shoot a hand-held trigger release.

Wrist strap versions usually have a simple hook design without a cocking bar, making them a lot quieter. New innovations have seen some trigger models replace their usual tension springs with magnets to create a fast and easy release system – check out the Carter Lucky and the Whisper for wrist strap and hand held releases featuring this new technology.

<b>Pros</b>	The trigger system's main advantage is the archer has more control over its activation. Although constant pressure should be applied when aiming; the archer has the ultimate influence over their release which can eliminate any unexpected shots. Very little movement is needed to activate it which can make your shots more consistent and accurate.
<b>Cons</b>	The main problem with this release is unfortunately one of its plus points; it allows the archer to have ultimate control of their shot timing which can be abused and lead to poor form and aiming problems.

## Hinge / Back Tension Releases

The archer activates this release through the rotational movement of its casing by increasing the pressure in their shot or by twisting the release handle.

These are always handheld devices and feature a simple hook on a half-moon shaped hinge; when the archer increases the

pressure in the shot the twisting movement slides the hook off the half moon, triggering the release. The release speed is altered by adjusting the angle and position of the hinge, though new innovations such as Carter's Only have replaced the traditional half moon with three crescent-shaped cams, giving you total customisation of the release head angle and firing speed.

Some models also feature a safety catch which will ensure that the release cannot fire whilst you are drawing it.

<b>Pros</b>	This is one of the preferred styles of release aid for archers suffering aiming problems. The absence of a trigger ensures that you cannot consciously fire your arrow until the pressure is correct and sufficient enough to activate the release
<b>Cons</b>	Although this release teaches you to pull through the shot it's still possible to 'cheat' by consciously twisting the handle when you want to shoot your arrow. The amount of movement required to activate the release can also be disruptive to your shot execution and stability.

## Resistance Releases

This is the newest style of tension release aid and requires the archer to pull through the shot consistently and forcefully until the mechanism fires. It has no trigger but comes with an external arm resembling one – this is the safety catch; it is important this is engaged when drawing since your peak weight will be far more than the release's activation weight.

Once at full draw the safety is disengaged and the release fires when it reaches its activation weight; usually set at a few pounds above your holding weight.



The Whisper features new magnetic release technology



Resistance releases are good for those with aiming problems

Unlike the twisting movement of a hinge release or the conscious use of a trigger, this allows you to learn to do nothing but push and pull until the shot fires, and in my opinion creates the most disciplined shot execution of all.

Resistance releases are available in both hand-held and wrist strap forms. For those who prefer to shoot with a hand-held device I recommend Carter's Evolution series, or for those partial to wrist straps either the Carter Back Strap or Squeeze Me releases.

<b>Pros</b>	As with the hinge release this design is perfect for those who have trouble aiming and is of particular use for target panic sufferers, as it takes away the mental difficulty of centring your sight and consciously making a shot, allowing you to concentrate on your form without over-aiming.
<b>Cons</b>	Since this relies on a surprise release you cannot guarantee where you arrow will end up if you move off the middle of the target; this can be particularly tricky in bad weather.

## Automatic Releases

Automatic or hydraulic releases are the newest advancement in release aids. They are controlled through a hydraulic valve or an electronic timer that has been pre-set from zero to six seconds. The timer activates as you reach full draw, and then automatically shoots at the given time. Most designs also have a safety button that you can push to keep the release from firing.

These are not FITA legal and as such are not allowed on the tournament circuit, so as a result very few archery shops sell this style of release as there just isn't the demand out there for them.



Pros	Very accurate and useful for those with target panic
Cons	Expensive, tricky to use, and not accepted in tournaments.

**W**hatever you choose, make sure it suits your discipline and shooting style. It must fit you correctly; your hand should fit around the release without feeling squashed, and you should be able to form a natural, relaxed position at full draw.

The trigger release is my preferred mode, but when finding one to suit you must ensure that the trigger is positioned so your thumb or finger can comfortably sit around it, and you are able to execute a relaxed and controlled shot – if you are having to search for it at full draw this will cause unnecessary movement and tension which will disrupt your shot routine.

When it comes to trigger tension, the amount of pressure needed on the trigger to activate the release, you should have enough that allows you to place your thumb or finger on the trigger without the release activating prematurely, but not so much that your shot is laboured and slow. It requires time, but it's important to find an optimum trigger pressure for your shooting; if the trigger release is set and used correctly you should experience a similar feeling to that felt with a resistance release.

I would advise anyone to try a back tension or resistance release at least once to experience the feeling of the surprise shot, which will help you achieve the same feeling with other types of releases. If used well, the back tension and resistance releases will produce very clean shots and will force you to use your back muscles to pull through the release, which is crucial for a consistent and accurate execution. If yours doesn't have a safety catch, you must ensure that it has enough movement before it activates so it won't go off while drawing.

Again, it is important that you set the amount of pressure needed to activate the release correctly; a release that activates too easily can cause you to hang up on the shot, causing a weak execution and undesired results, especially in a release that does not allow you to control when it activates.

Remember, finding the most comfortable and consistent release for you will allow you to execute your shots with confidence, and making your shot as repeatable as possible will help you to achieve the results you want. So don't just copy the guy next to you, get out there and try some different models, find one to suit you, whatever the style, and make it yours. Happy shooting! ☺

