

Best of the Rests

Duncan Busby presents his guide to choosing a compound arrow rest

Your arrow rest is one of the most essential pieces of your equipment; it would be impossible to accurately shoot a compound and achieve the high scores seen in competitions today without one. Its function is pretty simple – it supports your arrow through drawing and holding, and on release provides a straight path of trajectory without interfering with your arrow flight.

A good rest will improve your accuracy and success in competition, but with so many different makes and models available how do you know which one is best for you and your shooting style? There are several different designs available which support the arrow and affect its release in different ways; each comes in a range of adjustability and prices so you should be able to find one to suit you and your budget.

DROP AWAY REST

Also called a fall-away rest because of the unique design, the drop away arrow rest drops the launcher arm away from the arrow on release, eliminating any concerns about fletching clearance by allowing even the largest helical fletchings to pass the arrow shelf without the slightest bit of contact. These rests work by having a reverse tension in the launcher arm; when you draw the bow the rest pulls up to its final position, this is usually achieved using of a piece of rope or elastic attached to your cable(s) or cable slider, though a few models are activated by the bow's forward inertia at the shot or the even movement of the limbs. On release, the tension in the rope is relaxed and the rest arm falls back down to its starting position.

Their popularity has fallen among target archers recently because they require extra effort to set up and maintain, but if you decide to try a drop away make sure you set the timing properly; a rest that drops too soon will lead to inconsistent groups and very low sight marks, whereas a rest that drops too slowly will give

FLIPPER AND SPRING RESTS

The cheapest and simplest types of rest available are the flipper rest and the spring rest. These are usually only suitable for beginners because of their limiting designs. There are very few flipper rests designed purely for compound bows on the market. Unlike recurve flipper rests they do not have a pressure button, so they offer little or no adjustability and, as a result, they can make tuning difficult. They comprise a flexible or sprung arm which supports

the arrow, usually attached above your arrow shelf with a simple allen bolt.

A spring rest or 'springy' consists of a thin metal arm which supports the arrow. This forms the end of a spring and is held to the bow by a threaded bolt and nut. The Martin springy rest is a perfect example of this design. Because of their restrictive nature and low cost, these rests are most suitable for the novice archer on a tight budget, who's not quite ready for fine tuning or competitions.

Pros

These rests can be used by either finger or release shooters, which makes them perfect for beginners looking for a little flexibility. They are extremely cheap to buy.

Cons

Neither of these rests provides much scope for tuning, and can create a lot of arrow contact.

Spring rests are also good for novice compounders as they get used to the bow

Drop aways can be tricky to get right, but don't have the clearance issues for helical vanes that some launchers might

contact problems. Once set up correctly though, they will work just as well as any other type of rest. As they do have moving parts it's important you choose a rest that is well constructed, as lesser-quality models are prone to failure, which will always happen at the worst possible time! Many models offer micro-adjustability and vibration dampening features, such as the Mathews Ultra Rest and the Trophy Taker Smackdown Pro. These are arguably some of the most advanced rest designs available.

Pros

The drop away is the only rest that guarantees perfect arrow clearance no matter what size fletching or points you use, and since most drop away arrow rests have large notches or prongs that cradle arrows much better than a launcher, there is less chance your arrow will fall off.

Cons

The set-up and tuning procedure can sometimes be long and difficult, and continued maintenance of the moving parts may be necessary to keep it in tune.



LAUNCHER REST

By far the most popular type of arrow rest in target archery is the launcher, named after the arm that supports the arrow. Unlike flipper and spring rests, the launcher has a large range of options and adjustability to fit both your bow and your arrows.

The rest consists of a body that attaches to your bow via an allen bolt and an arm. One end of the arm is fixed into the body of the rest while the other end holds the launcher (where your arrow sits). The body of the rest houses the parts for making adjustments, and a good rest should allow you to make adjustments to the centre shot position, arrow height and, in some cases, the spring tension in the launcher arm.

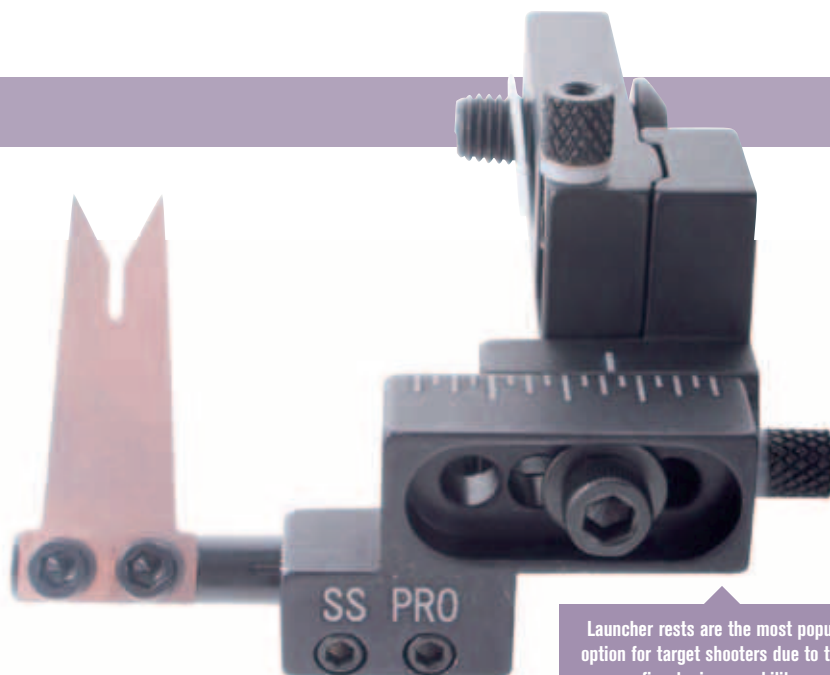
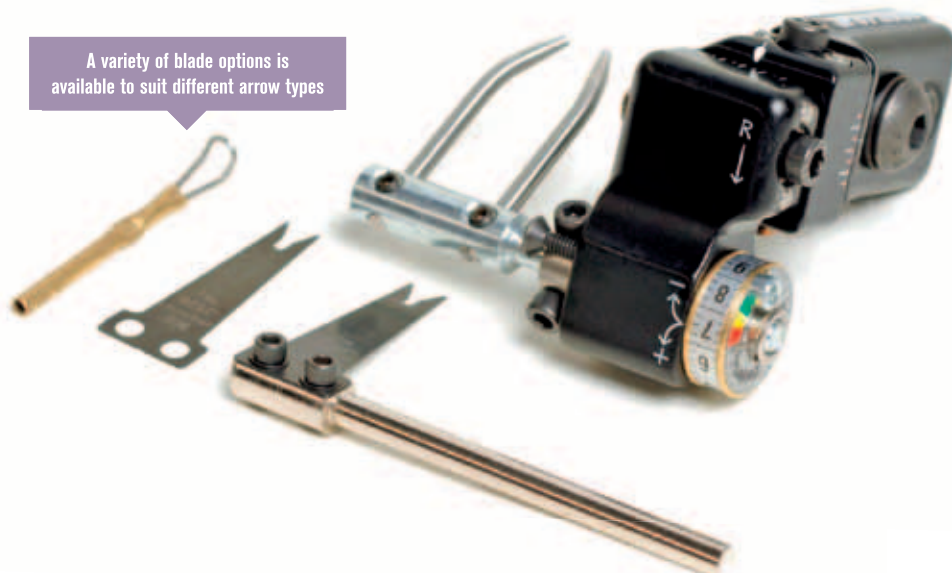
When choosing a launcher rest make sure you pick one that has a good range of adjustability with a solid locking mechanism; any unwanted movement will result in poor groups and the need to constantly re-tune your bow. It's also important that your rest is solidly made, as there is nothing worse than stripping a thread when tightening things down or having the adjustment mechanism break after only a few tuning sessions.

I have used a Trophy Taker SS Pro with a .010 'Best' blade launcher rest for years now, and have found it one of the strongest and most adjustable rests around. There are various different forms of launcher and the design you choose will depend on the type and size of arrow you are shooting, as well as your own preference.

Blade rests

The most common and easiest to tune is the blade. This is a springy piece of metal that comes in several different thicknesses designed to support your arrows, depending on their weight. There are typically three grades of blade available; .008, .010 and .012. I would usually only advise the weakest (.008) or the strongest (.012) blades if your arrows are

A variety of blade options is available to suit different arrow types



Launcher rests are the most popular option for target shooters due to their fine-tuning capability

unusually light or heavy, as most people will get the best results using the .010 blade for both indoor and outdoor arrows. Blades also come in various widths to accommodate different arrow diameters, so you need to be careful you don't choose one that is too wide for your arrows as this can cause contact problems with your vanes. Try and go for the narrowest blade possible but make sure it properly supports your arrow. If it is too narrow your arrows may fall off when you draw the bow, which can be dangerous. Poor tuning of this style of launcher can result in arrow contact, which can bend or even snap the blade, but careful tuning can help avoid any unnecessary damage and expense.

Prongs and bars

As an alternative to the blade, there is a range of different shaped prongs and bars for use with a launcher rest, also commonly referred to as a shoot-through rest because the bottom vane of the arrow passes between the prongs without making contact. Prongs and bars tend to be less popular in target archery as they can be a little harder to tune.

Achieving the correct spring tension in the launcher arm can be a bit of an art form, and getting it wrong can result in poor groups. That

Pros

The launcher rest is ideal for target and field archery. It is easy to use, simple to set up and offers infinite adjustment and tuning options. There is a great range available, offering anything from a simple fixed blade to a fully adaptable, micro-adjustment option with a choice of different launchers, so there's something for every budget.

Cons

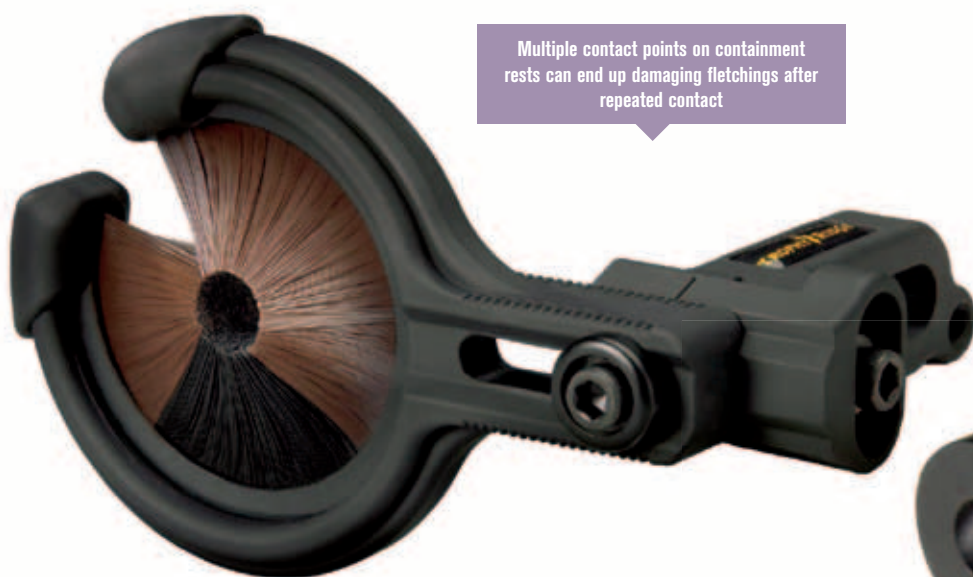
Launchers can be difficult to shoot if you have trouble keeping your arrow on your rest through the drawing process, and they are not suitable for finger shooters. Field archers can also find this style of rest difficult to use if they have to tilt their bow to make an awkward shot.

said, it can sometimes be easier to achieve proper clearance with a narrow scoop-shaped launcher than with a blade and some people just feel happier with a solid launcher than with something they could bend.

The Spot Hogg Infinity and Premier arrow rests are good examples of this type of launcher. Your choice will largely depend on the arrows you are using; as a general rule, the smaller the diameter of your arrows the narrower the launcher should be. If you decide to go with a solid launcher make sure your rest has a good range of tension adjustability as this will make going through the tuning process much easier.

Unfortunately, using prongs or bars with your launcher rest can come with some problems. If your vane contacts your prongs on release, your arrow flight can be disrupted and your fletchings may be damaged. This is most likely if you shoot with offset or helical vanes, so you may need to put more effort into proper tuning, spine selection and nock alignment when using this type of rest.

They should also only be used in conjunction with a release aid; unlike mechanically released arrows which tend to oscillate vertically, the horizontal oscillation of a finger-released arrow can make proper arrow flight difficult to achieve with a rest that cannot counteract this effect.



Multiple contact points on containment rests can end up damaging fletchings after repeated contact

Pros	Using an arrow rest that is designed for a specific application will benefit archers who require special characteristics from their equipment.
Cons	The features and design that make them of particular benefit to certain types of shooter can also make them unsuitable for use outside of that field.

A finger rest can work well for finger shooters as it corrects the archer's paradox



SPECIALIST RESTS

Containment rests

These rests are generally used by hunters. They either totally encircle the arrow or feature multiple contact points that hold the arrow in place. The most common complaint is fletching damage and, though not all containment rests are designed to make contact with the fletchings, the most popular style, the Whisker Biscuit, is designed this way. After repeated shooting the surrounding bristles will eventually wrinkle vanes and tatter the edges of feathers.

Multiple contact point rests are designed not to make fletching contact, but they can be fussy about nock and fletching alignment. Some are designed with fairly small clearance gaps that cannot accommodate most offset and helical fletchings, so a straight fletch may be required if you choose this kind of rest. It is not impossible to use a containment rest for target shooting, but due

to their specific design it would be inadvisable to go down this route. They are more suited to bow hunting.

Finger rests

Also referred to as a pressure or a plunger rest, this is a type of rest that 'pushes back' from the side to help counteract the horizontal oscillation of an arrow released with fingers (archer's paradox). This rest will allow the finger shooter to adjust the amount of tension or pressure the rest exerts on the arrow, to get the best possible tune from a finger-released bow. If you shoot compound off your fingers then a dedicated finger shooter rest is essential, as it gives the arrow all the support it needs while allowing a good level of adjustability.

The main rule to remember in selecting a rest is to make sure it is appropriate for the discipline of archery you are taking part in – other than that, it is down to your own personal preference and how much you are willing to spend. Just remember, a rest doesn't need to cost the earth to serve you well for many years, just make sure it's sturdily built and has a good range of adjustability. Good shooting. ☺

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