

## Shooting Safely & Ethically - Appendix D

One of the most common reasons bowhunters miss opportunities to take an animal is because of the excitement of being close to their quarry. “Target Panic” or “Buck Fever” may cause them to completely forget the fundamentals of shooting and miss the shot. Planning a shot strategy before the animal arrives increases the chance of taking game.

Shot strategy, which involves determining possible pick-off points and shot angles in a given hunting area, can be accomplished best through visualization and simulated practice.

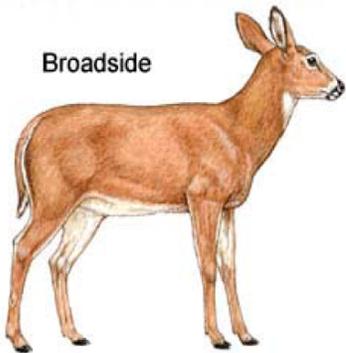
### Visualize and Practice Your Strategy

Mentally run through all the likely routes the animal may take and identify exactly where and when you’ll take your shot if it comes from the left, from the right, from behind, or in front of you. Take a few practice shots, and log the distance to each spot. Your shot strategy will help you concentrate on making a good hit when the moment actually arrives.

### Choose the Proper Shot Angle

The shot angle is the angle at which the animal is standing in relation to the bowhunter. Knowing which angles offer the most effective—and least effective—shots is an essential part of being a responsible bowhunter.

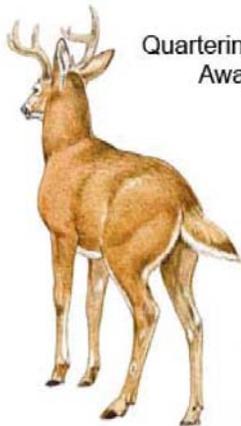
Broadside



#### **Broadside**

Given the thickness of their chests, a broadside shot on deer offers the shortest distance through the chest cavity.

Quartering  
Away



#### **Quartering Away**

- The animal is usually looking away from the hunter.
- The aiming spot will be farther back than with the broadside shot; the exact spot varies depending on the degree to which the animal is quartering away.
- The opposite front leg is a good reference point for the aiming point.



### Quartering Toward

- This angle offers a poor shot opportunity and **should not be taken.**
- Shoulder bones shield the majority of vital organs from penetration.
- The animal is typically looking toward the hunter and will likely spot the hunter's movements.



### Head-On and/or Rear-End

- These angles offer very poor shot selection and **should not be taken.**
- Bones in front and muscle mass and non-vital organs in back block penetration of the main vital areas.



### Above the Target

- A tree stand or elevated platform offers good shot opportunities, especially from broadside and quartering-away shot angles.
- As a bowhunter climbs higher, the vital area becomes a smaller target area because the animal's shoulder bone and spine shield more of the vital organs.
- The shooter needs to "bend at the waist" and not drop the bow arm while at full draw. Often the reason a hunter misses is because the point of aim and impact has changed.

## Long Shots

Although the average hunter has a maximum effective range of 25 yards, most bowhunters shoot game from a much closer range. They know that the chance of wounding game increases as distance increases because:

- It becomes more difficult to hit the vital areas
- The arrow may be deflected by unnoticed brush
- The longer the arrow is in the air, the greater the chance the animal will move

\*\*When bowhunting, you should never take a shot when a deer or other big game is looking at you because it is difficult to go undetected when drawing your bow.

A mortally struck animal may die in only 10 to 30 seconds. A white-tailed deer can cover a lot of ground in those few seconds and could disappear from view. An animal struck with less than ideal arrow placement may travel a longer distance before collapsing. With the exception of a spine shot, a wise bowhunter gives the animal time to expire. Bowhunters should be patient and allow the broadhead to do its work before approaching or trailing the animal. Approaching a downed animal or starting the tracking process too soon may cause it to run even farther away, making the recovery more difficult. Usually you will find a well-hit animal within 200 yards. A poorly hit animal may travel considerably farther, but never give up while there is sign to follow.

If it appears that the arrow penetrated deep into the chest, wait 30 minutes to give the animal a chance to calm down and die, and then follow the trail carefully.

If you find the arrow with signs of a gut hit and the trail is skimpy, back off and wait six to eight hours or the next day. If you shoot and believe that you hit the animal in the gut, don't even follow the trail far enough to retrieve the arrow. Wait at least six hours before following the trail, even if rain, snow or darkness threatens to obliterate the trail. It's easier to find a dead deer under six inches of snow within 200 yards of where you shot it than to find one under three inches of snow two miles from where you shot it.

On a poor hit outside the chest or body cavity (neck, leg, rump, or back), the animal may run away quickly and then stop, calm down, and stop bleeding. Often the animal will survive. If you can follow the animal rapidly and aggressively, it will continue to bleed, even from a relatively minor wound. It may lose enough blood to get careless and give you another shot. It may even die from a wound that would not normally be considered fatal. If you're certain you have this type of hit and the conditions are right—open terrain, tracking snow, or a good initial blood trail—it's best to take up the trail immediately and push the animal.

When in doubt, it's better to wait 60 minutes and then carefully start trailing the animal. If you're new to trailing and recovery, it's best to have a more experienced hunter with you.