

Bow Shooting From a Treestand Requires Its Own Set of Rules

Shots from Above

Most whitetail hunters and even plenty of elk and mule deer hunters wait for game in a treestand. And why not? These days treestands have set comfort and safety levels higher than ever. Without question it's a highly effective hunting technique, especially on predictable animals like those mentioned above. This technique can, however, cause a variety of problems to the ill-prepared bowhunter looking to ambush a none-the-wiser buck or bull.

Clearly taking an animal from 15 to 25 feet above the ground requires a little attention to detail on your part. To start with, you need a roomy platform that allows you to get shoulder width distance between your feet for target-like accuracy. But this can be accomplished easily today with the wide platform stands on the market (at least for hunters who don't mind spending a buck or two). After that, the rest of the challenge is left solely up to you.

To the untrained eye, animals appear somewhat smaller when seen from above causing archers to overestimate distance. Animals are also particularly good at string jumping arrows shot from treestands, as the bow noise travels almost straight down at them causing them to crouch and whirl. This increases chances for high hits and even higher misses. Many times you can't see this with the naked eye. But it's clearly visible on slow motion video when taped. Accurate range estimation and a lower hold of the sight pin on the bottom third of the animal makes this less likely.

When you find your-

self elevated up a nice tree on a deer trail or elk wallow you need to make sure tree limbs jutting around your platform cannot bump your bow and impede aiming. Carry a pair of ratchet sheers and a small fold-up saw in your daypack. Make sure also that you don't use a climbing treestand (mostly whitetail hunters) with an aluminum bar wrapping around the front that gun hunters use to rest their barrels on when aiming. This will cause a plethora of problems when trying to draw and aim and leave you with a great chance of not getting a shot at all. (Commonly as you aim your bottom bow limb will be obstructed by this.)

The next and probably worse blow to the gut of treestand hunting is shooting posture. You must bend your torso at the waist as if your hips are on a pivot and resist the idea to lean forward. Shooting from a treestand in your back yard can show you how to get good at this. Distorted form from an elevated position, just like from the ground, can definitely limit pinpoint accuracy afield.

The altered upper body posture typically increases your draw length on downward shots as you adjust muscle tension unevenly. This can cause you to pull the bowstring closer to your chest closing the angle between your aiming line of sight and where the arrow is pointing which throws hunting arrows left or right. This is not good when shooting at live animals. Just remember to bend at the waist and keep a tight frame up top without

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Keeping your legs firm and bending at the waist as to not stray from target-like form, bowhunters strive to make accurate shots.

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drawing into the bow too hard. An arrow shot from above also hits higher than normal since gravity has less affect on its trajectory. You must aim a tad lower than the ring on a 3-D target to compensate for this. Aim for the lower third like I mentioned earlier. This can be amplified more or less depending on how high you are above your target and how far your target is from the base of your tree. Only practice with your own particular bow-and-arrow setup can help you =figure this out. Practice always pays.

I know some bowhunters who treestand hunt almost exclusively will adjust their sight pins before season from a treestand sitting around 20 feet up. In this case there's no guess work and truthfully it's not a bad idea. Some hunters also use pendulum type sights that automatically adjust for various ranges when shooting from a treestand, typically out to 30-yards. These sights are dead-on and require no compensation. I see a lot of bowhunters who buy a new bow sight almost every year. I'm not sure I understand why they do that. Once you become familiar with something and it works, why switch just because something else comes down the pike. I've always felt it takes several years to get really use to any-



Roomy platform stands help you by giving you room to move and spread your feet apart for overall shooting comfort. Buy the biggest platform you can when choosing treestands.

thing like a bow, release aid, aiming sight, etc.

Some hunters in treestands also shoot from a sitting position when possible. But I've never tried it. I like to stand as soon as I spot an animal since it makes me feel more mobile should I need to adjust to get a shot. However, I do practice shooting from my treestand seat sitting (and shoot rather well that way) just in case an animal happens to pop up and I'm not able to stand. It hasn't happened yet, but never say never, right? If you haven't tried shooting from a sitting position, you can really hold the bow dead still as the center of gravity feels solid on your rear and keeps your upright form consistent without any complication.

All in all, shooting from a treestand is a process that can be semi-mastered if practiced and understood

enough. I say semi- because in bowhunting I'm not sure anyone can master anything. There are always new things to learn, ways to tweak certain elements. Taking animals from a treestand with archery gear is fun and exciting. I look forward to it every year. For bowhunters with good shooting it definitely works! Finally, here are some tried-and-true tips on shooting animals from a treestand.

- First, always be aware of clear shooting lanes and distances around your treestand, particularly landmarks beyond 20-yards.
- Next, remember a deer is practically the same size no matter what the angle, so don't let it play with your psyche.
- Third, practice shots to at least 40 yards. Even if your maximum effective shooting range is 20 yards after practicing 40-yard shots from a treestand, 20-yard shots will feel like gimmes.
- And last but not least, wear an armguard or chest protector (or both). Bulky hunting clothing can cause and interference when you shoot downward. Be aware of this fact and take care of it with a ten dollar arm or chest guard.



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