

# Got a Mini Merida on Your Hands? Where Kids Can Learn Archery Around Puget Sound - ParentMap

Thursday, April 30 2015, 9:34 AM

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## Got a Mini Merida on Your Hands? Where Kids Can Learn Archery Around Puget Sound

Learning the challenging sport of archery safely

By Gemma Alexander



Once the realm of medieval folk heroes, archery has been given a boost from Hollywood. The elves of Middle Earth, Marvel's Hawkeye, Disney's Merida and especially *The Hunger Games'* Katniss Everdeen have encouraged kids to pick up the bow in record numbers. With the influx of new practitioners, archery in Washington state has shifted from a small group of sport hunters to a larger, mixed-interest community with a greater focus on Olympic-style competition.

If your youngster has recently been captivated by the art of the bow and arrow — perhaps also inspired by Seattle Children's Theatre's production of [Robin Hood](#) — and you're game, there are a number of places around Seattle to learn the sport. Archery ranges throughout Puget Sound house competitive leagues, host tournaments, offer individual and group lessons and provide space to practice independently.

Many even host birthday parties. Seattle fifth-grader Sadie chose archery for her birthday party last summer after enjoying two summer camp sessions at [The Next Step Archery](#) in Mountlake Terrace. She and her brother Leo were inspired to try archery by *The Lord of the Rings* books and movies.

“Both of them **were surprised by how physically challenging it was** — the bows are very heavy — and to be safe, they really had to focus in and listen to the instructor,” Sadie's mom, Susanne Donaldson, remembers. Sadie's arm bruised before she developed good technique, while Leo, who just met the camp's minimum age of 8, really worked at concentrating. The siblings were challenged by different aspects of the sport, but they both had fun and have asked to do it again.



Learning archery at Skookum Archers in Puyallup

“Students compete as a team, but archery is also an individual sport,” says Darrin Barry, General Manager at The Next Step. Archery competitions are arranged similarly to track meets. Students usually enter as a team, but compete as individuals.

Proponents say that archery is a sport that's truly for everyone. “**Archery is extremely adaptive. A lot of people with challenges — physical and emotional — compete in archery and do very well.** Anyone can shoot archery,” says Janet Allen, Activities Director for [Skookum Archers](#) in Puyallup. In fact, one member of the South Korean

Olympic archery team is legally blind. Locally, both Barry and Allen have witnessed many kids with learning disabilities, on the autism spectrum or with ADHD, find success in archery.

Perhaps ironically, the fact that **archery involves a potential weapon makes it one of the safest sports available**. “The only sport with fewer reported injuries than archery is badminton,” says Allen. Kids are given safety training first; when they are allowed to shoot, the rules for behavior are strict and there are no exceptions.

## Tips on learning archery

- **Try a single lesson:** If your child wants to be the next Katniss, Barry recommends starting with a single lesson. Skookum Archers offers a drop-in trial class. Sometimes that's enough.

- **Private or group?** But if your kid is hooked, the next step is to choose between private and group lessons. Group lessons are generally offered for age 8 and above, but most ranges will consider younger children for private lessons on a case-by-case basis. “The bow is a weapon, so focus and maturity are critical to practice safely,” says Allen.

- **Rent or buy?** Neither Barry nor Allen recommend buying equipment right away. Beginner classes usually include all necessary equipment, giving students time to figure out what style of shooting they most enjoy before investing in gear. When it comes time to buy, the sky is the limit, but an initial outlay of \$150–\$200 will adequately serve a beginner.

Archery can become a lifelong pursuit. Many of the first students at The Next Step are now coaches themselves. But archers don't always start young. “What we see a lot of is parents bringing in kids for lessons and then getting interested themselves. It's a great activity for the whole family,” says Allen.

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## 5 places where kids can learn archery



Kids learning at Next Step Archery

## Next Step Archery, Mountlake Terrace

Next Step is a family-owned nonprofit indoor archery education center offering group lessons, private lessons and special events like birthday parties and tournaments. They offer three 6-week series courses that take students from absolute beginners up to eligibility for competition. Equipment is provided for lessons.

**Details:** 22313 70th Ave W, Suite U1A, Mountlake Terrace; 425-977-2770

## The Nock Point, Mountlake Terrace

On the same site and owned by a member of the same family as Next Step Archery, The Nock Point is an archery supplies store that also manages competitive leagues.

**Details:** 22313 70th Ave. W., Suite U5A; Mountlake Terrace; 425-672-8080

## Kenmore Shooting Range, Bothell

Offering both indoor and outdoor shooting ranges, this facility is owned and operated by the nonprofit sportsman's club The Wildlife Committee of Washington, Inc. It provides ranges for rifle, pistol, shotgun and airgun in addition to archery. The youth archery program, which meets on Monday and Friday from 5–7 p.m., focuses on competition. Their students compete at the national and even international levels. They provide all equipment necessary for beginners.

**Details:** 1021 – 238th S.W., Bothell; 425-481-8686

## Skookum Archers, Puyallup

One of the oldest archery clubs in the state, this nonprofit clubhouse, range and shop offers a \$5 drop-in trial class for ages 8 and up on Thursday nights. If you want to commit, you can join the Skookum Rangers, a Tuesday night practice archery program open to both youth and adults of all archery shooting styles. The program is an affordable \$20 per quarter, but you must become a member and have your own equipment to participate.

**Details:** 11209 Shaw Road E., Puyallup; 253-770-4177

## Great Northwest Archery, Puyallup

Great Northwest Archery is an archery supplies store with an indoor range for practice time, lessons and competitive leagues. They offer indoor, private lessons at \$25 for 30 minutes and one-hour birthday parties for \$150, with equipment provided. Their outdoor range is provided through Skookum Archers.

**Details:** 11209 Shaw Road E., Puyallup; 253-841-0991

April 29, 2015

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