

Meridian Archer Ranking System

Approved by the Crown as of Pennsic, A.S. XXXVIII
Peregrine Fairchylde, Deputy Earl Marshal for Live Weapons

In order to encourage participation in archery in the Kingdom of Meridies, and to recognize those archers who excel at this skill, a system for ranking Meridian archers is hereby established. While these are not official Kingdom awards and carry no precedence, they will stand as a means by which archers may recognize each other's accomplishments.

An archer's rank is based upon the average of his or her best three Royal Round scores submitted during the preceding 12 months to the Deputy Earl Marshal for Live Weapons (or that office's designated scorekeeper). Scores may be submitted from Royal Rounds shot at an event and in the presence of a warranted Live Weapons Marshal. At least two persons must be present at the time of the Royal Round (including the LWM), and the marshal must submit the score(s) with the following information for each archer: Date, event, location (group/kingdom), SCA name, mundane name, bow type (longbow/recurve/crossbow), bow weight, scores at each distance, and total score.

Only two scores may be submitted for rank from any given event, and they should be reported within a reasonable period of time after the event (two weeks at most). If an archer is allowed to shoot more than two Royal Rounds at an event, he or she may submit the best two results. Royal Round scores may be submitted from out-of-kingdom events provided that a warranted archery marshal from that kingdom supervised the shoot and submitted the information.

Consult the following table to determine the archer's current rank:

Average Score	Rank	Tassel
0-24	Archer	White
25-44	Bowman	Black
45-64	Marksman	Blue
65-84	Woodsman	Red
85-104	Yeoman	Gold
105+	Toxophilite	Gold and Green

An archer's rank can change as their skill level (or luck) changes. An archer's average score is not rounded off; for purposes of advancing to the next rank, a fractional score is counted as the lower of the two ranks (i.e., 24.9 is still an Archer, 44.9 a Bowman, etc.). Archers who fail to submit three Royal Round scores in a 12-month period will be dropped from the rankings.

However, those archers who reach the rank of Toxophilite will be allowed to carry that title for perpetuity, in honor of their noteworthy dedication and accomplishment. The title is derived from "Toxophilus," the archery manual published in 1545 by Roger Ascham, tutor to Edward VI and Elizabeth I. Toxophilite societies — archery clubs — are still around today, and use of the term reflects upon those who seek to achieve the mastery of the bow and arrow that Ascham wrote about.

Archers who move to Meridies from another kingdom, and who hold a rank from their previous kingdom, will be afforded the courtesy of the equivalent Meridian rank, based on their most recent average; as soon as they submit three Royal Rounds as a Meridian, a new average will be calculated and the appropriate rank assigned.

The tassel is a traditional element of the archer's kit (it was used to clean off arrows) and a standard emblem of an archer's rank in many kingdoms. When an archer's rank is confirmed by the DEMLW office, the archer may procure a tassel of the appropriate color and about 12 inches in length. The knot at the top of the tassel will be made of alternating bands of white/black/white to symbolize the archer's Meridian heritage. It is the archer's responsibility to obtain the appropriate tassel.

Rankings will be posted on the internet and will be published quarterly in *Popular Chivalry*. If an archer believes his or her ranking incorrect, they must contact the scorekeeper with the correct information, verified by the marshal who ran the shoot, before the next list is published in *Pop Chiv*. After that, the score will stand.

At the time of this writing, the scorekeeper for the Meridian Archer Ranking System is Nikolai Russ. Scores may be submitted electronically to him at MeridiesArcherRanking@yahoo.com, but the signed scoresheet MUST be submitted before those scores are posted. Mail scoresheets to Rob Russ, 351 Yellowjacket Lane, Clinton, AR 72031.

How To Make A Tassel

While the DEMLW and the scorekeeper will endeavor to provide archers with a tassel appropriate for their rank, an archer is far better off knowing how to make his or her own tassel so they will be able to display their newly-attained rank right away.

Besides, if the DEMLW had to make his own tassel, you do, too.

For starters, you'll need yarn. I got mine at Wal-Mart, which isn't saying you can't bribe a fiber arts Laurel into spinning you some if that's what you really want. In any event, I used 100% acrylic Red Heart brand in the following colors: Aran (white), Black, Royal (blue), Cherry Red, Bright Yellow and Paddy Green. The colors for the Meridian knot are White and Black. Please note that Aran, for the Archer-level tassel, is actually an off-white; this makes the Meridian knot stand out better.

Part One: The Cord

The first step is to make the cord from which the tassel will dangle. Go and get a drop spindle. What? You don't have a drop spindle? Okay, don't panic, we'll make one. First you'll need a pencil; sharpen it, then cut a small notch in the wood just below the eraser. Now grab a medium-sized potato. Stick the sharp end of the pencil into the potato, trying to keep it centered. Eureka! A drop spindle.

Now take the yarn of your tassel color and pull out a strand until your hands are stretched as far apart as they will go. Cut this off and tie one end to the drop spindle (just an overhand knot, you'll be untying it later). Now stand up, hold the loose end of the yarn, and spin the drop spindle **IN THE SAME DIRECTION** that the yarn is twisted; in other words, you're twisting the yarn even tighter. You'll have to spin it several times, until it really resists any further tightening and the strand is visibly shorter.

Okay, put the loose end you were holding into your mouth. Seriously. Don't let go. Untie the other end from the spindle, again not letting go. You'll notice the yarn really wants to kink up; that's good. Now, with your free hand, take the end out of your mouth, hold the ends as far apart as you can, then grab the middle of the strand with, you guessed it, your mouth. Bring the two loose ends together and grab them securely in one hand, and let go with your mouth. The yarn will spin together and form a cord. You'll probably have to run your free hand down it

several times to work out the spots where it goes sideways rather than down (you'll see what I mean), and maybe even untwist it a little, but once you have a single cord, tie off the loose ends in a knot.

Now do it again. Yeah, again. The whole drop spindle, twist it tighter, stick it in your mouth, bend it in half bit. You'll wind up with a stout cord that's much, much shorter than the strand you started with. Tie the loose ends off again, and set that aside. Now you're ready for:

Part Two: The Tassel

Now take a high school or college yearbook, or some other tome about a foot tall. Grab your yarn again, and start wrapping it around the book, long-ways. Count as you wrap, and when you get to 40 revolutions, stop and cut the yarn off.

(For anyone fortunate enough to be making a Toxophilite tassel, make about 25 revolutions with the gold, then cut it off; tie the green onto the end, and make another 25 or so wraps, all to one side of the gold. When you look at the finished product, it should be green on one side, gold on the other.)

Okay, grab the cord. Slip one end of it underneath the wrapped yarn at the top of the book. Then untwist the bent end of the cord (opposite the knotted end) just enough to feed the other end through it, and pull it very tight. The cord now secures the top of your tassel. Slide the tassel off the book, and with a pair of scissors cut the bottom end of the loop so all the strands hang free. Congratulations, you're halfway there. All that's left to do is:

Part Three: The Knot

Have you ever made a bowstring? Yes? Good, because this part is just like serving a bowstring.

You haven't made a bowstring? Hmm... Well, the explanation here may sound a little tricky, but it's actually pretty simple. If you have trouble with it, find a Middle Eastern dancer who's wearing a tassel belt and ask them how they made theirs. But be nice, offer to rub their feet or something.

To knot the tassel, first take the white yarn and pull out a strand (but don't cut it from the skein). Put the loose end of the strand about 1/3 the way down the tassel, pointing at the loose ends of the tassel; trail the yarn up to about where the cord is, then double back an inch or so. It should look a little like a letter "J" lying on your tassel. Now, holding the top end of the tassel (including the bend in the "J") firmly, start wrapping the yarn (from the end still connected to the skein) around the tassel. Wrap it tightly. You will be crossing over that strand of yarn you left, binding it down with the rest of the tassel.

Continue wrapping until you have about three inches covered, but **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** are you to cover the loose end of the white yarn! Leave at least half an inch sticking out. Once you've gone as far down as you should, double back and wrap upwards again, but not as tightly. Just enough to cover the first layer. When you get back to the top, cut the yarn so you have a couple of inches loose. Okay, see where that bend in the "J" was? It's now a loop sticking out from under the wrapping. Take your loose end and wrap it twice through this. Now, grab the other end of the white yarn, the one down toward the bottom of the tassel, and pull it gently but firmly until the loop at the top disappears underneath the wrapping. It's a miracle! Now cut both of the loose ends so they're flush with the wrapping.

To make the black band in the center of the white, do exactly the same thing, only smaller. Make sure to leave about one-third of the white showing on either side of the black.

Now, grab your scissors again and give the loose end of your tassel a trim, making sure it hangs nice and even. And you're done! You now have a rank tassel AND have acquired a valuable skill — one which you must promise never to use for evil. No telling what would happen if Meridian tassel-making technology fell into the wrong hands.

The DEMLW would like to humbly thank his lady wife, Amina al Sud, for divulging the secrets of tassel-making to him.