

Kyudo – Stringing a Yumi

Kyudo, or Zen Archery, is a Japanese martial art. Kyudo uses a yumi, or bow, which must be strung before shooting.

A yumi is a recurved, asymmetrical longbow. You will see the grip of the yumi has a long rattan wrapping at the top of the grip. The grip is approximately one-third of the way up from the foot of the yumi, or two-thirds down from the head of the yumi. Always hold the yumi with the head up. See Figure 1 for an unstrung yumi, see Figure 6 for a strung yumi.

NOTES:

- Do NOT wear your kake, or glove, when stringing the yumi.
- Select an appropriate strength yumi to string. If you think the yumi you have selected is too strong, put it back and select a less strong yumi.
- Make sure you have the tsuru, or string, for the yumi.
- Make sure you have plenty of room around you when stringing the yumi.
- You must be mindful and focused, DO NOT be talking to someone else when stringing the yumi.

Instructions for stringing a yumi:

1. Place the head of the tsuru, the red end, on the head of the yumi. The “necktie” of the tsuru should be on the “v” side of the yumi head. See Figure 2.
2. Lay the yumi on the floor horizontally in front of you.
3. Kneel on your left knee with your right knee up. Your right thigh should be parallel to the floor, your right foot flat on the floor in front of you. Your left knee will be angled, almost parallel to the yumi with your left knee pointing toward the head of the yumi. See Figure 3.

4. Reach down, using both hands, pick up the yumi and place the foot of the yumi on your right thigh and lay the head of the yumi on the floor to your left. The body of the yumi is at a right angle to your right thigh. Make sure that point of the "v" on the head and foot of the yumi is pointing straight up.
5. Slide the yumi body about 6 inches to your right, this slides the foot of the yumi to your right. The grip of the yumi is to your left of your left knee. The foot of the yumi is to the right of your right thigh, not directly on the thigh. See Figure 3.
6. Take the foot end of the tsuru in your right hand. Be sure that the tsuru is not twisted around the yumi.
7. Place your right hand about one-half of the way between the yumi grip and the yumi foot. Your right hand will provide stability as you string the yumi. Your right hand will be positioned to your left of your right knee. See Figure 3.
8. With your left hand, apply pressure on the yumi depressing the upper curve of the yumi to the floor. When you apply pressure, the pressure should be straight down only, not down and forward. See Figure 3.

NOTE: If you push down and forward, especially if the head of the yumi is up against a wall, you create stress on the upper curve and could break the yumi.

9. If the yumi begins to wobble, quickly but smoothly release the pressure on the yumi until it is completely relaxed again and start over stringing the yumi at Step 5.
10. Once you have the upper yumi curve touching the floor, keep the yumi depressed and reach back with your right hand to place the foot of the tsuru on the foot of the yumi. Do not look back, maintain your gaze at the upper body of the yumi. See Figure 4.
11. Place your right hand back on the yumi to stabilize it as you slowly allow the yumi curve to rise from the floor. This will increase the tension on the tsuru. See Figure 5.

12. Now that the yumi is strung and you have released all the pressure on the yumi, you should raise the head of the yumi from the floor and hold the yumi upright.
13. You may now stand up, remembering to never lean on the yumi when you stand up.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6