

THE NEW ARGONAUTS: SERPENT ARCHER

In some snake cults, there are those who admire serpents for their beauty, some for their wisdom, and some for their abilities as predators. Within this last group are a subset that see a serpent's abilities as weapons to be used and exploited rather than worshiped or emulated. These are the serpent archers, combining the deadly powers of snakes with their own natural aptitude with bows. The serpent archers respect their scaly brethren and practice a strange way of melding their skills with the abilities of the ophidians.

In the world of the ancient Greeks, any sort of hero may learn the necessary skills to handle snakes. Barbarians are the most likely to reject civilized ways and embrace this nature cult, and rumors say that there are some evil serpent archers who serve the gorgons, and one tale of a gorgon archer who plucked living snakes from her own head to use as arrows.

Serpent archers can be part of a small clique but are just as likely to be unique individuals within a particular group. When working together, they often share their pets and resources to strengthen the group as a whole. Serpent archers exist on the fringe of snake-loving society, for many ophidiophiles object to how the serpent archers place snakes in danger.



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Requires use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Third Edition Core Books, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This document utilizes updated material from the v. 3.5 revision.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a serpent archer, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Skills: Handle Animal 8 ranks or the wild empathy ability.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (any bow or crossbow).

Special: *Venomblood:* The character must have been exposed to venom from at least three different kinds of snakes or serpentine creatures (amphisbaenas, Greek gorgon, poisonous hydra, and so on). The character need not have survived the exposure, but he must not have been protected from the effects with magic or some other ability (such as *delay poison*, *neutralize poison*, or another ability that renders the character immune or incredibly resistant to poison). Each venom must have dealt at least 1 point of ability damage to the character. *Only those that have suffered the bite of the snake can truly understand its potency.*

Class Skills

The serpent archer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the serpent archer prestige class.

Weapon and Armor

Proficiency: Serpent archers gain no proficiency with any weapons, armor, or shields.

Snake Charmer: A serpent archer can use the Handle Animal skill or wild empathy ability to affect normal snakes (animals) as if they were domesticated animals instead of wild. A typical serpent archer keeps a bag or cage of Tiny snakes that he has tamed (these snakes must be cared for and fed like any other animal).

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Serpent Arrow: As a move action, a serpent archer may remove a Tiny snake from a container (similar to drawing an arrow from a quiver) and pull its body straight and stiff, suitable for firing from a bow (longbow or short bow). When fired from a bow in this manner, the snake deals normal damage for the bow. If the snake is a poisonous snake, it also injects the target with poison as if she had been bitten by the snake. After being fired in this manner, the snake is stunned for 1 round (normally falling to the ground at the feet of the target). Once the snake recovers, it continues to attack the target if the snake is of a size that would normally attack a creature of the target's size, otherwise it tries to leave the target's threatened area.

Bows made for Large creatures may fire larger snakes, one size category of snake per size category increase of the weapon. For example, a Large short bow (normally a Medium weapon) could fire Small snakes (one step larger than a Tiny snake).

If not fired, a drawn snake relaxes from its stiffened state after one round.

A Tiny viper can be purchased in any settlement near the natural habitat of such creatures for 1 gp.

Snake Poison: Serpent archers are familiar with handling snakes and dealing with snake venom. Beginning at 2nd level, they never risk accidentally poisoning themselves when handling snakes they have tamed.

Poison Potency: At 3rd level, the archer learns ways to enhance the poison of his pet snakes by special feeding and handling methods. This increases the snake's poison DC by +1, but the snake loses this bonus if it is ever out of the archer's care for more than one week. At 7th level, the poison DC increases by another +1.

Bow Feat: At 4th and 6th level the serpent archer gains a feat from the following list: Far Shot, Improved Critical (any bow), Mounted Archery, Weapon Focus (any bow), Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run. The serpent archer must still meet all prerequisites for the feat.

Rapid Serpent Arrow: Beginning at 5th level, a serpent archer can draw and straighten snakes as a free action up to once per round per class level.

Table 1: The Serpent Archer

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Snake charmer, serpent arrow
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Snake poison
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Poison Potency (+1)
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Bow feat
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Rapid serpent arrow
6th	+6	+2	+5	+2	Bow feat
7th	+7	+2	+5	+2	Poison Potency (+2)

(There are only 7 levels to this class.)

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