

Life Skill #719

How to throw a dart

In nearly every bar is a darts champion waiting to happen. That's how it happened for Rebecca Rainwater, anyway.

While working in a bar in St. Louis, Rainwater's friend begged her to sub in a darts match. She agreed, warning her friend that she wouldn't be any good. But not long after, she joined an American Darters Association league and took first place in her first major tournament.

Seventeen years later, Rainwater earned the title of Women's Soft Tip MVP at the 2013 ADA National Championship in July.

"Darts is for any age group, any skill level, and if you want to try out something to get out in the social world, you can't find a better sport," Rainwater said.

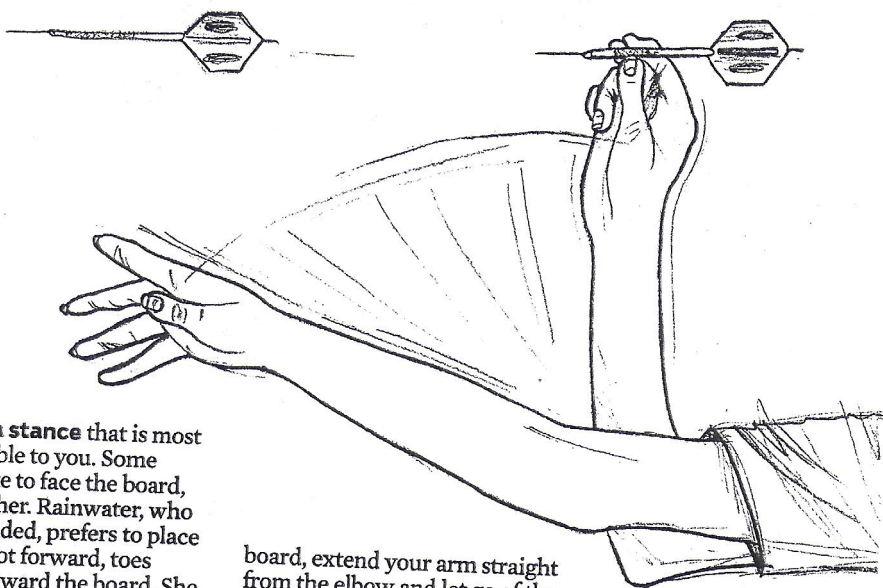
Soft-tip darts have plastic tips that work with electronic dartboards. Steel-tip darts, which are usually heavier than the soft tips, are also popular and just as easy to use.

Here are Rainwater's tips to help you hit your target.

— Heather Schroering, Tribune Newspapers



Degree of difficulty: It will get easier with practice.



TRIBUNE ILLUSTRATION BY
ALEXANDER HELBACH

Choose a stance that is most comfortable to you. Some people like to face the board, feet together. Rainwater, who is left-handed, prefers to place her left foot forward, toes pointed toward the board. She angles her right foot and right shoulder away from the board so her body is at a diagonal to the board, with the left shoulder forward. So play around with your stance. "With each person, it's whatever feels natural," she said.

Eyes on the prize: Don't stare at the whole dartboard. "Concentrate on the number you want to hit."

It's all in the elbows: "Pre-tend that your arm is on a shelf," she said. The power in a throw should come from the elbow, so she keeps her arm at a 90-degree angle to the floor. Hold the dart at eye level, gripping its midsection toward the tip, then pull back next to your ear. While looking at your target on the

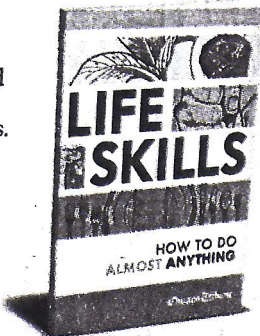
board, extend your arm straight from the elbow and let go of the dart with a flick of the wrist. At the end of the throw, "your index finger should be pointing at what you're aiming at."

Practice is key to perfecting your throw. If you're interested in competing, you have to prepare your arm for the long days. But don't overdo it; your arm will get tired, and that will affect your throw.

Own your darts: Once you get serious, Rainwater suggests buying your own darts. She said prices vary from \$20 to \$150, depending on the material.

hschroering@tribune.com

Go to darting.com/darts-rules/ to find dart games to hone your skills.



Now available in print

Whether you need to fix a leaky faucet or ask for a raise, **Life Skills**, a unique collection of tips taken from the Chicago Tribune's popular column, has answers. \$15. Available now wherever books are sold.