



**The official handbook of
Steve Dresser Golf Academy**

GOLF FROM THE GROUND UP

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Steve Dresser's

GOLF FROM THE GROUND UP

**This book is dedicated to all the people who
have told me “you need to write a book!”**

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INTRODUCTION

The single biggest problem for all golfers can be summed up in one word; *inconsistency!* I can't begin to tell you how many times I've watched someone string together a succession of good shots only to say, "Why can't I do this all the time?" I hear it from everyone; brand new players and experienced ones. I honestly believe the culprit is the fact that the ball sits still. Think about it. In other sports like baseball, tennis, racquetball, even bowling, we make motions that are similar to those found in the golf swing. The body rotation is much the same and so is the free swinging of the arms. The biggest difference is that we are in motion and our muscles are *relaxed* and therefore able to function in a reactionary manner. In golf, we attempt to make these same motions from a tension - filled standstill and expect similar results. Unfortunately, **you can't think your way through an athletic motion.**

I should mention that most people actually swing the club fairly consistently. Don't be fooled into thinking you swing differently every time just because you're seeing mixed results. Sorry to have to say this, but *it's your consistent swing that's producing your inconsistent results!*

So what can we do to make our swings feel more natural? Let's start by accessing the hard drive inside our heads and deleting the word "*hit*." You feel better already don't you? By eliminating "hit" you'll become less "ball bound" and be able to focus on swinging the club, not hitting at the golf ball. You've heard it before. "Gee, you sure have a nice practice swing, why don't you use it when the ball is there?" Most players have no intention of using their practice swing on the golf ball. They just go through the motions without paying attention to what the swing actually feels like. If there were a way to sneak a ball in the bottom of the practice swing, we'd all be golf pros! But alas, as soon as we put the club behind the ball, all those nice relaxed, free swinging motions vanish as we zero in on the ball, our grip tightens, our shoulders tense up and the only thought occupying our minds is **HIT!**

Now that you've deleted "hit" from your golf vocabulary you should have more room for the word "**patience**." It's arguably the single most important word in golf. It took almost 35 years of playing before I truly began to realize this. I hope it doesn't take you quite as long! Most of us want it all, and we want it now, and if things aren't going our way, we become easily frustrated and begin making poor swings and poor decisions. There is no magic dust or miracle cure for golf. It takes determination and persistence to play this game well. Certainly for some it comes easier than for others but I truly believe everyone has the ability to play golf well enough to enjoy it.

Throughout the years, I estimate to have given lessons to over 35,000 people. I'm often asked if I ever get tired of saying the same thing over and over again. Sure, we all need a vacation occasionally, but the truth is, the golf swing is so individualistic; I don't have to say the same things over and over. If I did, that would mean I'm not paying attention to the uniqueness of each player and I wouldn't be a very effective teacher.

Many people have told me they've taken lessons and their game deteriorated or worse yet; they were told they had no chance and ought to consider doing something else. I can't believe an instructor would say that, but it happens. To me, that's a case of an awful teacher, not a poor student.

Experience has taught me that when it comes to teaching golf, it's usually easier to talk to the brain rather than to the body, meaning most learn best through visualization. Whether it's a video analysis or one of my crazy props, when I can implant an image in someone's mind, and then allow that player's body to respond to that image naturally, progress is achieved quickly. That's not to say it's never good to tell someone directly what to do with their body or to put them in a particular position in the swing, but it's cool when you can get a player to move the way you want them to without them having to think about it.

Most of us who teach the game for a living started out as aspiring competitive players. I'll never know what it feels like to win the Masters, but I can honestly tell you it is very satisfying and rewarding to hear from a student who just won the Club Championship or broke 90 for the first time. I get to share the glory with hundreds of people, the recreational players, the people who make up the heart and soul of golf. Not a bad way to make a living, is it?

Hopefully this book will give you the necessary tools to make your goals a little easier to attain. Will it cure your game? I doubt it. If all the books, videos and training aids out there did what they claim, the average score for 18 holes would be 18! Will you pick up a few tips that might knock a couple strokes off? I certainly hope so!

ATTENTION LEFT HANDERS

This book has been written as if speaking to right handed players. They account for over 90% of all golfers, and it would be too confusing to try to write this in both left and right handed terminology. I speak both languages, I just can't write them! Hope you can follow along anyway.

I. SHORT GAME

The short game consists of any shot requiring less than a full swing. It is used mostly on and around the green but there are other situations, such as escaping from trees, where short game techniques are utilized. It accounts for a majority of all shots yet most amateurs practice it the least.

There is no way to put a value on a good short game. Some of my best scoring rounds have featured mediocre ball striking but spectacular chipping and putting. A good short game gives you confidence and takes pressure off your long game.

We often start our golf schools with putting and move up from there. That's where the title of this book, "Golf From the Ground Up," was derived. It's not intended to be some world stopping, high - tech teaching method, it's just a sequence that most students find sensible and easy to follow.

Establishing good short game skills prepares our students to make the transition to the long game. It's like building a house. You don't start with the roof and work down. You construct a solid foundation on which to assemble your structure.

When you watch golf highlights on TV, almost all the shots they show are short ones. As fun as it is to launch the ball a mile, there is not a more exhilarating feeling as sinking a long, important putt or chipping in from off the green.



Practice your short game diligently. You'll reap tremendous rewards.

PUTTING

Putting accounts for over 40% of your score. Improved putting produces lower scores.

The basic requirement is to contact the ball on the sweet spot of a putter face that is square to your intended line and with the proper amount of speed. Sounds simple enough but there are some key elements that help you get the job done consistently.

Let's start by identifying the true "sweet spot" on your putter. It isn't always where the manufacturer has put the line. As shown in the picture, hold your club very gently just below the grip with your thumb and index finger. Take the pointed end of a tee and tap on the clubface till you find the point that resists twisting. If this point is not where the manufacturer has indicated, you may want to mark this spot with a dab of paint or scribe a small line with a hacksaw. **Solid contact is often taken for granted in putting but is a key ingredient toward developing consistency.**



It's easy to find the sweet spot or *center of gravity* on the putter face by holding the putter very gently on the shaft, right below the grip and tapping the face until you find the spot that resists twisting. In this case I'm using a tee but you can use the scorecard pencil or even the end of your finger.

Practice a few putts with masking tape on the putter face and look to see where you're making contact.

Missing the sweet spot by just a fraction of an inch can adversely affect both distance and direction.

THE KILLER MOVE







One of the most common errors we see in all shots is pictured to the left. **The Dreaded Flip!** Let's figure out what's wrong with this picture. Take a look at the left arm, most notably the wrist. See the giant crease in the wrist? This is a classic case of the club head passing the hands due to excessive wrist action. At this point in the follow through, the club shaft and left arm should be forming a relatively straight line. The left wrist should be flat and the right wrist should be creased. As you can see the wrists are exactly opposite that position. In addition, the arms should be forming a "TRIANGLE" or "V." We call this "**Flipping**" at it. One of the reasons we begin with putting is to tackle this problem right from the start. This same move has been known to rear its ugly head in other golf shots too.

Kids: Do not try this at home. The **KILLER MOVE** leads to dangerously high scores!

Now we'll talk about how to hold the putter. There are many different ways but we'll focus on only a few. Your hands are the link between you and your golf club. A good, comfortable grip on the club is important however, some players change the way they hold the putter every so often in hopes to find magic!

A lot of putter grips these days are much thicker than they used to be. The theory is the larger grips discourage wristiness.

Here are a few popular ways to grip the putter. *While a majority of players hold the club conventionally, don't be afraid to experiment* a bit and learn what works best for you.

	
<p align="center">Conventional Reverse Overlap</p> <p>Hands very close together. Thumbs on top of handle.</p>	<p align="center">Reverse overlap (cont)</p> <p>Notice that the left index finger overlaps the right little finger.</p>
	
<p align="center">The Claw</p> <p>Allows hands to stay passive and soft on club. Works well on fast greens.</p>	<p align="center">Left hand Low or Cross-Handed</p> <p>Aligns club more with lead (left) arm.</p>

There's no right or wrong. Whatever works for you is what's suggested. Because wrist action is not required, you can hold the club numerous ways.

DISTANCE FROM BALL

It is generally accepted that the best place to position the eyes is directly over the golf ball or a little inside the ball. By so doing, you'll get the best view of the line you want the ball to travel on and have a much better chance of aiming properly.



Eyes Inside the Line

Standing too far away positions your eyes between your feet and the ball. The hole will appear to be more to the right than it is and you will tend to take the club head back to the inside or toward your body.



Eyes Over the Line / Ball or a Little Inside Ball

From here you have your best chance for aiming properly and executing a back and through stroke.

Note most of the bending is at the hips and the weight is on the balls of the feet, under the shoelaces.



Eyes Outside the Line

If your eyes are positioned too far outside the golf ball, the hole will appear more to the left than it is and you will tend to take your backswing to the outside (away from your body) because your arms won't have enough room to swing straight back.



This is called the Sight Line from Eyeline Golf. I am standing the correct distance from the ball when the white line on the mirror at the end blocks my view of the red line on the floor. In my case, my eyes are a bit inside the line.

Note: You can keep all kinds of elaborate putting statistics but the easiest, and most important, is total putts per round. After 5 rounds, determine your average. Good putters take fewer than 30 putts per round. If you are averaging 36 or more, you're leaving a lot of shots on the course!

BALL POSITION



A little forward or left of center for a right handed player is a good starting point. If the ball is too far forward, or left, you may tend to aim left. Too far back or right can make you aim to the right.






A simple guideline would be to position the ball about 1 putter head to the right of your big toe on your left foot. There is wiggle room. This is just a suggested starting point.

GETTING STARTED

Now that you've identified the sweet spot on your putter and chosen a way to hold the club, let us put our plan into action. For the remainder of this chapter, we'll assume you are holding the club conventionally. If not, these recommendations will still be easy to adapt to your own style.

THE TRIANGLE

		
<p style="text-align: center;">Address</p> <p>Notice the TRIANGLE formed by the arms at address. The idea is to stay pretty still and swing the club and triangle as a single unit.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Backswing</p> <p>The head and body stay still while the TRIANGLE stays intact. The gap between the wrists hasn't changed from address. Your weight should start and remain fairly evenly distributed throughout the stroke.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Follow Through</p> <p>Again, the head and body remain very still while the V or TRIANGLE is still intact.</p>

When addressing the ball, we like to see the arms form a **TRIANGLE** or “V” which means the arms need to be fully extended but not locked straight. ***This is accomplished by bending mostly from the hips so the arms have plenty of room to hang naturally.*** You may find that your putter is too long for you to get into this position without gripping way down toward the bottom of the handle. This is perfectly acceptable however; if the handle is too close to your body, consider having your putter shortened. This is a simple process which should only cost a few dollars at a repair shop.

NOTE: Though we are trying to move as few parts as possible by swinging the triangle and putter as a single unit, avoid being rigid and tension – filled in your hands, arms and shoulders. Good putting requires touch and feel which becomes nonexistent with tension.

You may benefit from practicing without a club by forming your **TRIANGLE** and pressing your palms flat together. Now stand as still as possible and move only the **TRIANGLE** back and forth.



EXECUTING THE STROKE

Now that you're armed with all this information, let's try to sink some putts. We'll start with short putts, 4 feet or so, and work our way back.

It's a great idea to create a practice station. This one consists of 2 alignment rods and 4 tees. The alignment rods help for aiming and for getting "squared up." Total cost was about six bucks!

The tees create a putter gate, which we don't want to hit while swinging, and a start gate 2 – 3 feet in front of the ball. We'd like to putt "through the wicket" if we can.

You may have noticed this station is aimed a little left of the hole. That's because this putt curves, or breaks, a little to the right. The arrow is pointed at the entrance to the cup or, at about "7 O'clock!"



Work on creating a flowing stroke. The pace should be smooth with a sensation of allowing the club to swing through the ball as opposed to hitting at the ball. Try to make the backswing and follow through the same size. Although this may not be absolutely necessary, it's a great thought to have when putting.

Following are some key elements to good putting:

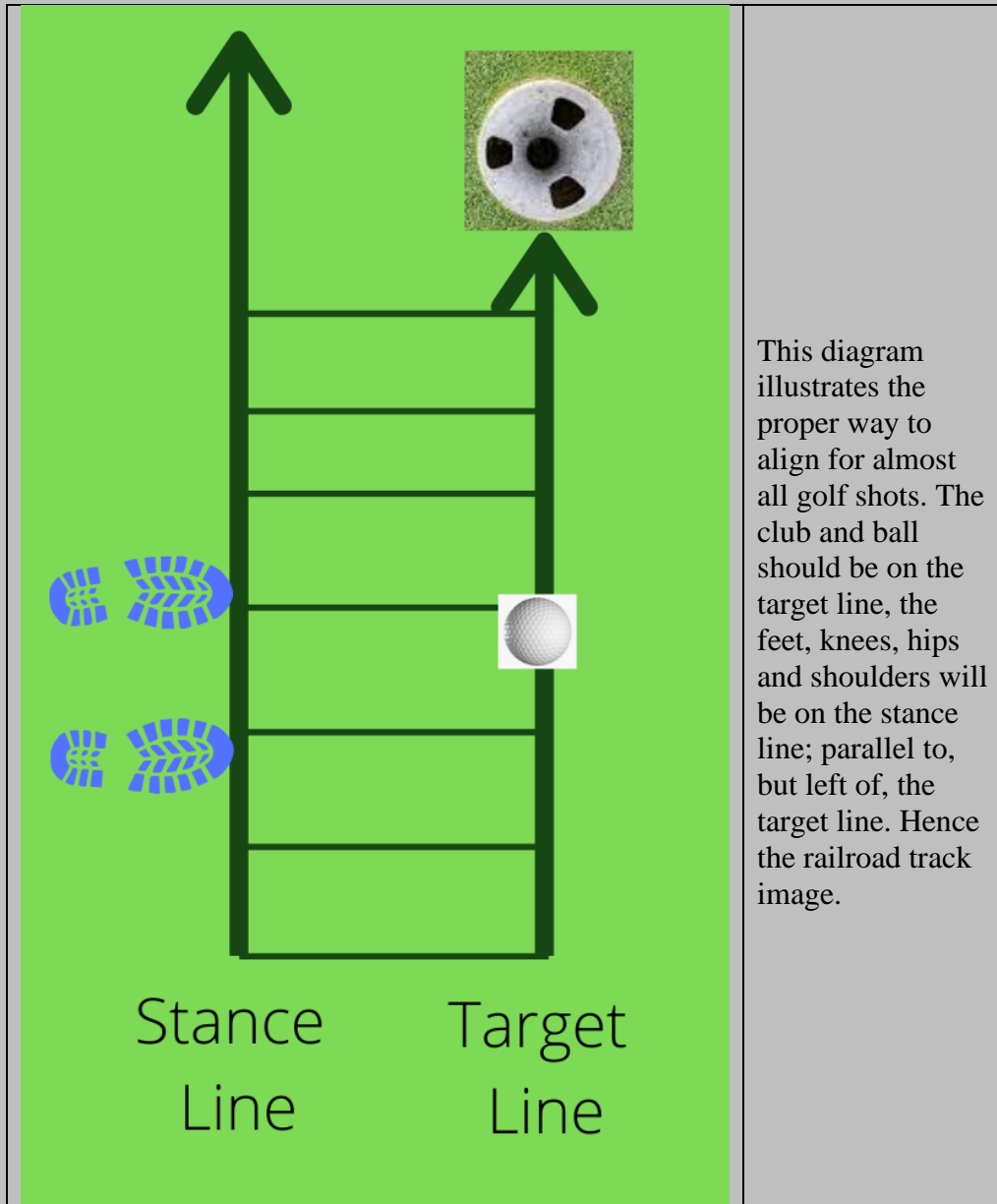
- Relax, Relax, Relax. It starts with the shoulders. The arms should hang naturally and feel very light.
- Soft Grip Pressure.
- Steady Head. If the head stays steady, so will the body.
- Listen for the ball to drop in the cup, do not look, especially on short putts.
- Rhythm. Think “Tick – Tock” not “Flip – Flop!” The ball just gets in the way.
- Your body should act like a grandfather clock. The shoulders, arms, wrists and club are the pendulum; working as a single unit. The **TRIANGLE!!**



An old trick to stay still when putting is to lean another club against the back or side of one of your legs. It works!

AIMING




Oh yeah, we have to aim at something too, don't we? Almost everyone has trouble with alignment but it shouldn't be that difficult. Most of the time we just neglect to pay careful attention to where we are aimed. To be able to aim properly you need to understand the "Railroad Track" analogy and what "Parallel Left" means.



Okay, got it? Now let's try to read the green and see if the putt will break or curve. We also need to establish a routine so we're sure to be doing the same thing each time.

Reading the greens is somewhat of an art. No matter how long you've been playing, there will still be some guesswork involved but that doesn't mean you can't come up with a plan for every putt.

- Get a good look at the green from the fairway. Envision water draining from the green and look at the overall contour.
- Don't overanalyze. Looking at the putt from every angle will likely confuse you and make you wonder why your friends don't call you to play golf anymore. Often your first intuition is your best.
- Take a quick peek from the back of the hole, preferably on your way to your golf ball, as you approach the green. While walking to your ball from the hole, take note through your feet as to whether you are walking uphill, side - hill or downhill.
- From behind the ball, in a crouched position, look to see if there is a low or high side to the cup. The ball will break toward the low side.
- Picture water being poured in front of the cup. Which way will it drain? The ball will go in the direction of drainage.
- Faster green surfaces will produce more break than slower greens.

		
<p>This is the best place from which to read a putt.</p>	<p>Always line up the club first.....</p>	<p>...then step in to finish your stance and grip.</p>



Notice the tee in the green a couple feet left of the hole? Having already read the putt I've determined I need to start the ball toward the tee as the putt will break from my right to left. This means the entrance to the cup is where the arrow is pointing.



This putt breaks a lot from right to left. I'm aiming on the yellow line, anticipating the ball to curve toward the cup on the red line. If you like to line up the stripe on the golf ball, you would align toward the yellow (starting) line. You may also be able to find a blemish or discolored area just a few feet down your starting line. Many players use that as an *intermediate target* much the same as bowlers use the dots in the lane.



This putt will move from left to right. Notice the red stripe on the ball is aligned toward the starting line and not toward the hole.

GRAIN

Grain is the direction the grass is growing. It mostly affects speed but can affect break a little also. In almost all instances, grass grows downhill, so if you know which way the grass is growing, you know which way the ground is sloping! Grain is a larger factor on Bermuda grasses, mostly in warmer climates, compared to cooler climate grasses like Bentgrass.

- If the grass looks dark, you're into the grain. (slower) A lighter, shinier look to the grass means you're down grain and the putt will be faster. You may very well have a 'multi grain' putt at times.
- Look for the "ragged edge" on the rim of the cup. The grain is growing toward it.



The Ragged Edge

Sounds like the title of a suspenseful movie but it is just a way of referring to the down-grain side of the hole. Note the top of the hole is ragged, the grass is growing away from it, while the grass at the bottom is growing toward the cup and over the edge.



The grass at the bottom of the picture is lighter than the grass beyond where I'm standing. The lighter grass is "**down-grain**" which will allow the ball to roll faster and smoother. As soon as the ball reaches the darker grass, **into the grain**, it will slow down and maybe even "shimmy" a little.



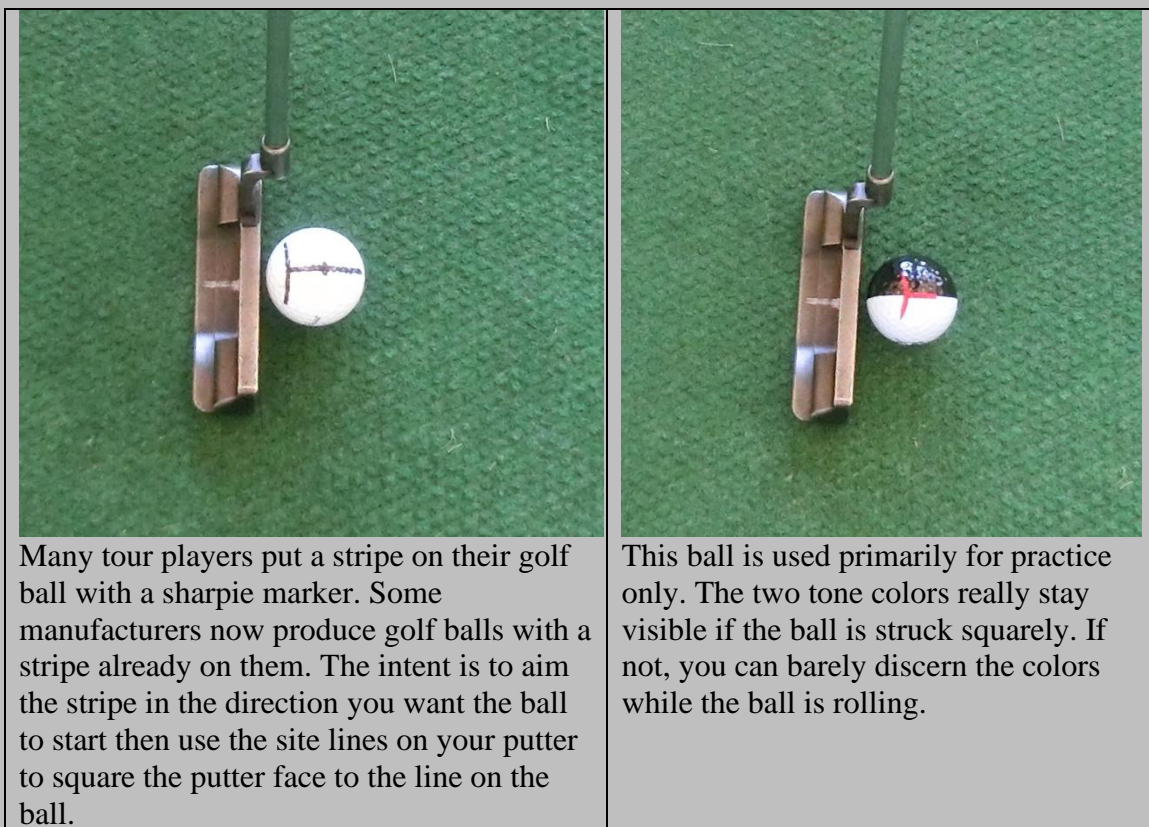
Believe it or not, my putter is pointed at nearly the identical spot as in the picture to the left only this was shot from the other side of the green. Note how the shades have reversed. What was dark is now light and vice versa.

So far we've talked about technique and aiming, but we haven't addressed the most difficult aspect of putting; ***distance control***. Take a look at how you and others putt. You'll see that most of the time your distance is worse than your aim. Why is this? Because most of direction is taken care of before we even execute the stroke. Distance control is almost all "feel" and requires a tremendous amount of practice. Not only are you constantly confronted with different length putts, some are downhill, uphill and across the hill, each requiring a different touch. Then of course, there's the green speed that varies from course to course. Unfortunately, there is no substitute for practice but that doesn't mean there aren't a few drills you can do to improve.

- ***Practice with one ball.*** You play golf with only one ball, don't you? Using one ball and going from hole to hole is a great way to mix it up and not just putt the same putt over and over again. It makes practice more like playing. If you can find a playing partner who likes a friendly wager, it will make things more fun and help you learn to concentrate.
- ***Putt with your eyes closed.*** Go through your entire setup routine, and then close your eyes before you make the stroke. Picture in your mind the distance from the ball to the hole.
- ***Look at the hole while you putt.*** Similar to the last drill but look at the hole instead of the ball. A good way to build in feel.
- ***The Par 6 Drill.*** Place three balls on the same line at 6, 12 and 18 feet. Start with the closest ball and try to sink all 3 in no more than a total of 6 putts. Experienced players should try for 3 putts. Change angles and distances frequently.
- ***Putt one handed.*** Try your right hand first. Think of the shaft as an extension of your arm and the clubface as the palm of your hand. Try to envision that you are rolling the ball underhanded with your "extra-long" arm. Note how freely you stroke through the ball and that you don't flip your wrist. Left handed works well too especially for getting the feel for keeping the left wrist stable through contact.
- ***Putt to edge of green.*** Drop a few balls in the center of the green and see how close you can putt to the edge of the green without going off the green.

- ***Get the ball to the hole.*** I try to roll my putts fast enough so that if they miss, they go about 1 foot past the cup. Obviously they need to have enough speed to get to the hole, but running it 6 feet past is not much better than leaving it 6 feet short. The only advantage is you can watch the ball roll past the cup and get a good read for the putt coming back.
- ***Putt with a stripe on the ball.*** Usually a range ball will do or draw a stripe on one of your own golf balls. Line up the stripe in the direction you want the ball to roll. If you contact the ball squarely, the stripe will remain visible throughout the roll. If you miss – hit, the stripe will barely be visible. By making consistent contact, it will be easier to judge how hard to contact the ball.

AN “END OVER END” ROLL OF THE BALL IS ESSENTIAL



- ***Use the same kind of ball.*** It makes sense to use the same kind of ball all the time. Some balls are harder than others and come off the clubface a little faster. Find out if you prefer a softer or harder feel and stick with it.

LONG DISTANCE PUTTING

We have covered a lot of information regarding aim and alignment, but if you don't hit the ball the right distance, it really doesn't matter how good your aim is! If you have a thirty foot putt that burns the edge of the cup but runs seven feet past the hole, that's really not a very good putt. In contrast, if you hit the same thirty-footer two feet off line but with perfect distance, you now have a two foot 2nd putt, not a seven footer!

Moral of the story: **most 3 putts happen because the first putt doesn't stop close enough to the hole and more often than not, it's because we've hit that first putt too long or short, not too much left or right.**

Here is a great drill for distance control. Do this repeatedly from different angles and distances to develop a nice touch for distance control.



We've unhooked a hula hoop and place it behind the hole with the intent of trying to get putts to stop within the framework of the semi - circle. Anything in that range means the ball made it is far as the cup but still stopped within a makeable range. You can place clubs or alignment rods on the ground to create a similar target.



Here we've placed the balls at 10 foot increments starting at 15 feet. Start with the closest one and work back. You may even want to develop a scoring system such as 5 points for a make, 2 points for within the frame, 0 points for missing the frame and minus 2 points for leaving the ball short!

You're probably clever enough to come up with some drills of your own too. Here are a few I've been known to practice.



The cup reducer. Place 2 tees about 3 inches apart in front of the cup and try putting your ball between the tees. This helps you focus on the center of the cup and trains you to putt to a smaller target.



Tuck a long club or alignment rod under your arms and you'll get a good sensation of an arm & shoulder motion. The club, or rod, should rock up and down, not twist sideways.



With one end on the putter and the other on my belly, the alignment rod acts as an anchor. Any "flipping" here will tear a hole in my shirt! Remember you can't do this while playing; only practicing!

- ***The Clock face.*** 3 – footers (about the length of your putter.) Too far away for a tap – in, too close to not make. With the hole as the center of the clock face, start at the 1 o'clock position, 3 feet away and work your way around to 12 o'clock. Don't stop till you've made all 12 in a row. If you miss one, sorry, it's 1 o'clock again!
- PRACTICE WITH PURPOSE (and pressure)**



➤ NORTH, EAST, WEST, SOUTH



3 balls from 4 different directions. In this case they are placed at approximately 3, 5 and 7 feet. Start with the closest, then middle, then longest and move on to the next line. Again you may want to come up with a scoring system and by all means, vary the increments.

PUTTING TRAINING AIDS

We use an assortment of teaching aids in our golf school. Some we make ourselves, others we purchase the same way you would.



The Kure

This device attaches to the front of the shaft and fits between the forearms. It is a very effective way to retain the **TRIANGLE** and combat flipping the wrists. You can create a similar feel by putting something like a large sponge, roll of paper towels or nerf ball between your arms.



This is a device we manufacture ourselves called the “Stroke Straightener.” It rests on the ground and guides your stroke by keeping the putter head between the lines. Note the “ruler” for gauging the length of the stroke.



This putting mirror from Eyeline Golf is very handy for setting up squarely and aiming correctly. There are numerous places to insert tees to control the stroke. It’s available in different sizes too.

Pictured below is the ***Putting Arc***. Line it up in the right direction, then practice strokes while keeping the heel of the club in contact with the trainer throughout the stroke.



- Every time you putt the ball, your goal should be to *make* the putt. That sounds incredibly obvious but most people don't expect to sink the putt, they just hope the ball will end up somewhere near the hole. With a positive "I can make this" approach, you'll eventually convince yourself that you are a good putter and you'll actually make more putts.

- Despite your efforts to be positive, don't be disappointed if every putt doesn't drop. Even a PGA tour player misses 1 out of 3 from six feet and has a 50 / 50 chance from just under 8 feet. Take a look at the chart.

Distance (feet)	One putt probability	Three putt probability	Tour Average putts
2	99%	0.0%	1.01
3	96%	0.1%	1.04
4	88%	0.3%	1.13
5	77%	0.4%	1.23
6	66%	0.4%	1.34
7	58%	0.5%	1.42
8	50%	0.6%	1.50
9	45%	0.7%	1.56
10	40%	0.7%	1.61
15	23%	1.3%	1.78
20	15%	2.2%	1.87
30	7%	5%	1.98
40	4%	10%	2.06

The following page can be printed. It is a test you can do on your own to determine your putting handicap. It consists of 55 putts of varying lengths and curves. Take it periodically to chart your progress. Good Luck!



PUTTING HANDICAP TEST

NAME _____ DATE _____ PREVIOUS SCORE _____

1. Lag: 10 Balls: 60, 40, 80, 60, 40, 80, 60, 40, 80, 60 >6ft=0, 3-6=1, <3=2, Make=4

										TTL
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------------

2. Long: 10 balls: 30, 35, 25, 30, 35, 25, 30, 35, 25 30 >6ft=0, 3-6=1, <3=2, Make=4

										TTL
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------------

3. Short: 10 Balls: 6 foot circle Miss = 0, Make = 1

										TTL
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------------

4. Breaking: 5 balls: 25, 15, 35, 20, 30 L-R repeat R-L >3ft=0, < 3ft =1, Make =2

										TTL
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------------

5. Makeable: 10 balls: 12, 15, 18, 21, 24 Repeat >3ft=0, < 3ft =1, Make =2

										TTL
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------------

6. Short 10 balls: 3 ft circle Miss=0, Make = 1

										TTL
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------------

GRAND TOTAL

SCORE	HCP	SCORE	HCP	SCORE	HCP	SCORE	HCP
117	PLUS 8	66	4	38	16	18	28
113	PLUS 7	64	5	36	17	16	29
109	PLUS 6	61	6	35	18	15	30
104	PLUS 5	58	7	32	19	14	31
99	PLUS 4	5	8	31	20	12	32
94	PLUS 3	54	9	30	21	11	33
89	PLUS 2	52	10	28	22	9	34
85	PLUS 1	49	11	26	23	8	35
80	0	46	12	24	24	6	36
76	1	45	13	23	25	5	37
74	2	42	14	21	26	2	38
68	3	40	15	20	27	1	39

Before we close this chapter, let's talk a little bit about the putter you are using. Your putter is the most used club in the bag yet often the most neglected. It is important you have a putter that truly fits. We use a putter fitting system that factors in your vision (eye dominance, near sightedness, etc.) as well as your physical makeup and we use lasers to show you how to aim. If you know of a good putter fitter in your area, it's worth the time to find out if the putter you're currently using is right for you.



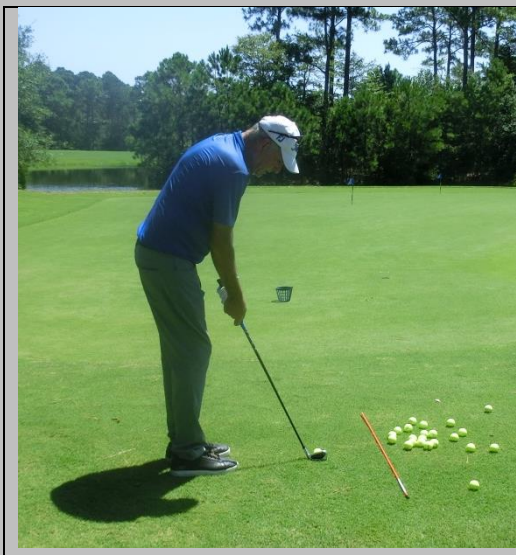
Some of the specifications we consider when fitting a putter include:

Length, Lie angle, Grip size, Grip material, Weight distribution & static weight, Club head material. Cosmetics, Clubface material, Offset, Shaft material, Loft, Balance of face, Quantity and placement of sight lines.

Never underestimate the value of being a good putter. It takes pressure off your long game and can really frustrate your opponents. You can score well on days when you're not contacting the ball solidly, but no one can score well without good putting.

CHIPPING

The chip shot is described as a low, running shot that is usually performed from very near the edge of the green. It is a valuable shot to have and also serves as a primer for learning to make solid contact in the iron game. The technique does not change much from putting; the biggest changes take place in the setup.



An example of a chip shot is pictured here. The ball is a few feet from the edge of the green and the hole is about 60 feet away. The object is to produce a shot with a low trajectory that lands near the basket on the green, about 15 feet away, and rolls the rest of the way. ***There is no need for a high, soft shot here because the only obstacle that needs to be carried is the grass between the ball and the edge of the green.*** Try this shot with a variety of clubs to determine your carry to roll ratios with each club then stay with the one that feels most comfortable. **Note the alignment rod on the ground. It's always good to use one.**

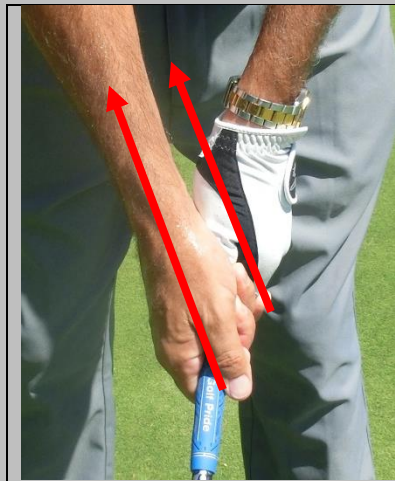
Before we discuss technique, let's talk club selection. In nearly all chipping situations, it is best to ***use the least amount of loft the shot will allow.*** We usually teach with an 8 or 9 iron but if a putter will work, that will likely be your best choice. Not that you should plan to fail but, just in case, a poor shot with a putter is usually better than a poor shot with an iron. Otherwise, choose the club that enables you to land the ball on the edge of the green and roll it to the cup. ***It is much easier to roll the ball to the cup than it is to carry it there.*** That's why you should use the lowest trajectory possible.

GET A GRIP!

This is also the point where we need to determine how we plan to hold the club as the putting grip usually differs from the grip on the rest of the clubs. That said, because little to no wrist action is required when chipping, you can still use your putting grip if you wish.

Each player will hold the club a little differently but there are some basic guidelines we can all follow.

- Grip pressure should be soft enough to maintain good feel but firm enough to maintain a constant grip on the club. About a 6 on a scale of 10.
- Hands should be close together to encourage working as one.
- Palms should oppose one another.
- Left thumb should fit into lifeline of right hand.
- Overall grip is more in fingers than palms.






This would be considered a good, conventional grip. Notice the “V’s” formed by the thumbs and index fingers. Both point toward the right shoulder.



When the V’s point to the player’s left, it encourages an open clubface (right of target at impact) and is considered a “weak” grip. Note the handle is visible in the left (gloved) hand.





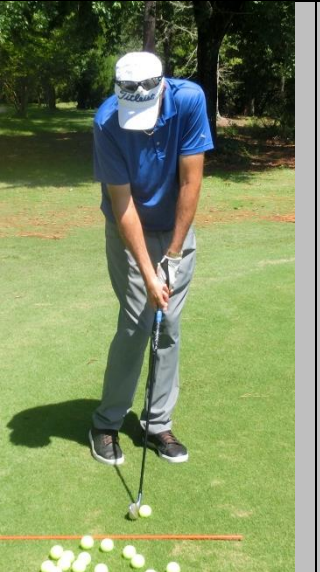

A “strong” grip is when the player turns his hands clockwise on the handle and the V’s point well right. This will promote a closed clubface. (Left of target at impact.)

		
<p>When the right little finger overlaps the left index, it is called an overlapping or “Vardon” grip.</p>	<p>Here the same two fingers form the “interlocking” grip.</p>	<p>This is the ten finger or “baseball” grip. Make sure your hands stay close together if using this grip.</p>

- Find the grip that works best for you and stick with it. Make sure you have a fundamentally sound grip. It's the hinge between you and your club and will affect how you swing. ***If you do not start with a good grip, it can be difficult to change it later.***

Back to chipping.....

BASIC CHIPPING TECHNIQUE

			
<p>Setup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Grip down a little. ➤ Narrow stance. ➤ Ball centered or slightly forward of center. ➤ 2/3 of weight left. ➤ Handle slightly forward. ➤ Shaft fairly vertical (discourages wristiness) 	<p>Backswing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Body still. ➤ Hands quiet. ➤ Maintain TRIANGLE. 	<p>Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Nearly same as address. A little more dynamic as right knee is starting to kick in. 	<p>Follow Through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Club head low. ➤ Right knee toward target. ➤ TRIANGLE intact. ➤ Left wrist stable.

The feel of the chipping stroke is similar to putting in that the wrists remain quiet and the **TRIANGLE** stays intact. The differences are the backswing will come up a little so we can contact the ball slightly on the downswing and we'll add a little body **ROTATION** on the follow through, *much like tossing a ball underhanded.*

- *In general, the stance will be slightly open (left foot pulled back) or square but it should be a narrow stance (feet close together) as a reminder not to swing hard and to make it easier to stand close to the ball.*



Once again we are trying to avoid this “scooping / flipping” action that will result in skulled shots where the ball runs along the ground at a high rate of speed or fat shots where the club hits the ground before it hits the ball.



Can you see the alignment rod along my left arm? I’m holding it and the grip of the club simultaneously. If I make a scooping move, the alignment rod will hit me in the ribs! Using this as a trainer reminds me to maintain some structure in the arms. I’ll be encouraged to use my hands less and my body more.

INSIDE INFORMATION



Many players take the club back too far behind them or “inside” making it difficult to produce crisp contact with the ball.



Instead, keep the club more in front of yourself. Note the club head is still inside the line the ball is on (target line) but not behind the feet.

Here are a few ideas and drills to help you visualize and feel a properly executed chip shot.



That's a small range ball basket wedged between the arms. It helps maintain the structure of the triangle. I've used anything from a rolled up towel to a nerf ball, grapefruit or roll of toilet paper!

- Try a few shots with only your right hand on the club. Sense that you are simply tossing the ball underhanded with your golf club. Notice how your lower body helps just a little. Now apply that sensation with both hands on the club.

The Teepee



Two alignment rods make a useful gate to chip through. A low follow through is a sign of maintaining the triangle and not “flipping” the wrists. For crisp contact, envision chipping the ball under a bench, coffee table or the “teepee.”

Are you connected?

Holding a towel against the chest with the upper arms is a great way to get the body and arms working together and not flip the wrists. We call this ***staying connected***. It’s also a great drill for putting and longer shots.



PITCHING

Opposite of a chip, the pitch shot spends most of its time in the air and rolls less than it carries. The trajectory resembles that of a pitch thrown in slow pitch softball. Usually performed with a wedge, pitch shots come in many shapes and forms and require a good deal of skill, finesse, creativity, touch and **PRACTICE**. This is arguably the most important part of the game, yet one of the least practiced by weekend players.



Do try to practice these shots as much as possible using the various wedges in your bag. These are the shots that will reveal the artist in you!

Now we're about 15 yards from the green but still going for the same hole and trying to land the ball on the same spot as we did while chipping. I'll need a much higher trajectory or the ball will come in too low and run past the hole. I'll also need a bigger swing which will require more moving parts.

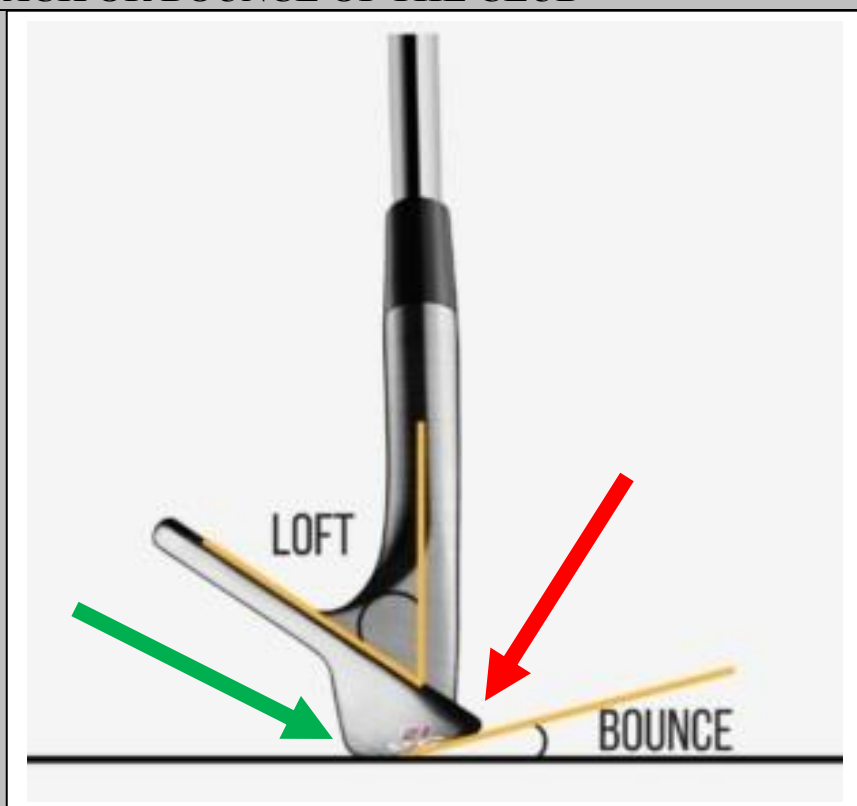
In this case, there's no bunker or long grass to fly over and the green is not elevated so I could opt to chip but I'd have to bounce the ball on to the green to avoid going too far. It's hard to predict how the ball will react when not landing on the green but the **bump & run** is an option.

As we expand our swing to execute a pitch shot, we need to involve a few more body parts. This is where we begin to rotate the body toward the target on the follow through. This is necessary to provide room for our arms on the follow through and avoid flipping and to give us a little extra power to carry the ball farther.

It has been said that the **body rotation** is the engine of the golf swing. We make similar motions when throwing a ball, swinging a racquet or baseball bat. The difference is we do it in a reactionary manner with relaxed muscles, whereas in golf we start from a standstill, often with tension - filled muscles.

Solid contact is essential for good wedge play. You can miss – hit a wood or iron and still get away with a decent shot. A miss – hit with the wedge usually adds more than one stroke to the score. To make solid contact, the club must find its way under the ball. To do so, the club must be traveling downward as it contacts the ball. Any attempt to lift or scoop the ball will either contact the ground behind the ball or worse yet, the middle of the ball with the bottom of the club. This will send the ball screaming along the ground, completely out of control.

USING THE BACK OR BOUNCE OF THE CLUB



The soles of wedges come in various grinds and degrees of bounce. Simply put, bounce is how much lower the trailing edge (**green arrow**) sits versus the leading edge (**red arrow**.)

The leading edge of the club is sharp and can dig in very easily. For most pitch shots, you'll want the club to bottom out about halfway between the trailing edge and the leading edge.

If you tend to dig into the ground a lot with wedges. Consider a high bounce angle, perhaps 12 to 14 degrees.



Most wedges have a wider sole than regular irons to create a sliding, not digging interaction with the ground. If the face is open, top left, the leading edge is removed from the equation and you'll be able to skim the club on the ground utilizing the bounce to its fullest effect. You will sense you are hitting the ground with the back of the club when, in actuality, you'll be hitting with the part marked in red, top right. The club will feel slippery as it slides across the ground.



This may be getting redundant but try to look less like that guy above left and more like the guy above and to the right. Notice we have mentioned this in all segments of the game so far? There's a reason we call the FLIP the Killer Move!

BASICS OF A PITCH SHOT



SETUP

- Weight left.
- Hands slightly left or even with ball.
- Stance open (if desired) and narrow.
- Ball slightly forward (left) of center.



TAKEAWAY

- Body still.
- Club moves more up than it does in chipping but not inside or behind the player.



IMPACT

- Similar to address.
- Weight starting to rotate to left side.



FOLLOW THROUGH

- Body rotated.
- Arms still in **TRIANGLE** because body has rotated
- Very little weight on right side.

- Ball position is influenced by the type of lie you have and the required trajectory. **Generally, the worse the lie is, the more you need to play the ball back, or to the right, in your stance.**
- If you have a good lie with the ball sitting atop the grass, you can probably use a stroke similar to a chip or a putt; very little wrist action.
- If the lie is poor, such as in deep grass or a divot, you will probably need to hinge your wrists a little on the backswing to establish a steeper angle toward the ball. This will aid in getting the club down low enough to get under the ball.
- To fly the ball higher, play the ball more toward the left (forward) side of your stance. This is where it's best to use the bounce on the club. (Open club face)
- Playing the ball toward the right (back) side of the stance will fly the ball lower.

Here are two images that may help you execute a pitch shot.



The requirements to throw a ball underhanded are similar to those needed to execute a pitch shot. Here I've already completed the back swing and am starting forward. Look how the body is already rotating which will allow me to toss the ball smoothly with no need for a quick "flip" as I let go.

It's remarkable how golf can be easier if you don't think about golf!

Let's take that underhand throw a step farther and lengthen the arm by adding a club.



With the club in your right hand, grab your right pocket with your left hand and start your downswing by pulling the pocket.



This will teach you to lead with your lower body and swing smoothly.



Follow through to a balanced finish. Congratulations. You just learned how to **ROTATE!**

MORE PITCHING TIPS



See the orange line across my toes?
That's the **"roadmap"** for the golf swing. Make sure your club swings back over or at least near that line.



If you go back way to the "inside" as I have here, you'll come in from too shallow an approach and blade, chunk or shank a lot of shots.



What's the opposite of inside? You guessed it! Here the club is too far away from me or "outside" going back. Not ideal but usually not as bad as going back too far inside, at least on short shots.



If you **ROTATE** on the through swing your hands and arms don't have to do much. The fact that my arms are hidden means they are still in front of my chest, in a triangle, just like at the start of the swing. Note how the club is moving left, toward the orange line and the club face has rotated only as much as the body has. No extra hand action!

THE FLIP FROM THE BACK SIDE



The "flip" is evident here as the hands are still in front of the body. Lots of mis-hits when this happens



Here the **TRIANGLE** is intact, the body has rotated and the club shaft is still in line with the left arm.

VARYING DISTANCE: Does anyone know what time it is?

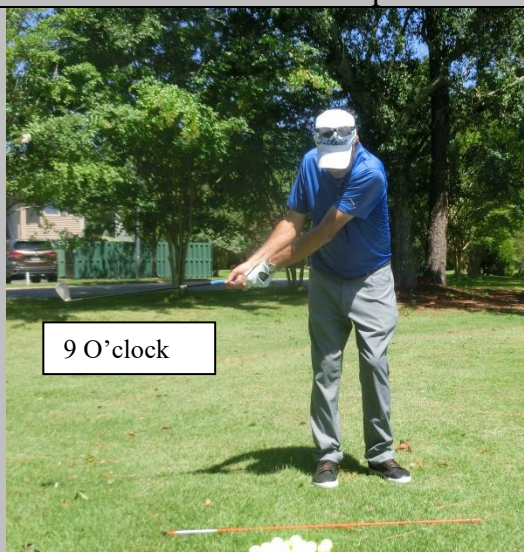
Imagine standing in a clock face with 12:00 o'clock above your head and 6 o'clock at your feet.



Here's a short pitch. My club points to 8 o'clock on the back swing. Very little wrist action. Much like a chip.





On the follow through the club points to 4 o'clock and the arms are still in the **TRIANGLE**. Note a hint of **rotation** here.



A longer swing points to 9 o'clock with a little bit of wrist cock.



A 3 o'clock finish requires a little more **rotation**. The arms are still in the **TRIANGLE**.

	
<p>To point to 10 o'clock, let your wrists hinge more as opposed to lifting the arms up. Think "Thumbs Up."</p>	<p>To complete the 10 to 2 swing the wrists re-hinge on the follow through and the body has fully rotated.</p>

- Each player will achieve his / her own distance results based on individual styles.
- Try all 3 shots with different lofts and take note of your yardage / trajectory with each one.
- You'll likely end up with a "go to" wedge for most shots but it's encouraged you *try hitting to the same target with at least 4 different clubs, then try hitting to at least 4 different targets with the same club.*

THE SQUARE PINCH

This shot is used when the lie isn't very good (down in a depression, longer grass, etc.) or if you want the ball to come out lower and hotter which is handy when there is a lot of green to let the ball roll on. It works well when the ball is sitting on an uphill lie too. Because the face is square for this shot, that sharp leading edge comes into play, so place the ball well back in your stance to increase the odds of hitting the ball first, not the ground.



For this shot the ball is back, or to my right, with the hands well left of the ball creating forward shaft lean and a de-lofted clubface. Lots of weight on the left side.



The body stays still while the arms lift the club up on the backswing setting up a downward strike into the back of the ball.



Impact looks a lot like address. The forward shaft lean helps to assure I'll hit the ball before I hit the ground. You'll learn later how important that forward shaft lean is when hitting full shots too.



The finish is abbreviated with firm wrists and a low club head. Sort of like a check swing in baseball or a volley at the net in tennis.

THE FLOP SHOT

This shot can be a bit risky as it requires a very long and loose swing so even a slightly miss – hit ball can end up in disaster. Use this shot when you need to get the ball way up in the air so it drops straight down and rolls very little after landing.

The shot to the right where I have to fly it over the bunker but then stop the ball quickly is an appropriate place to hit this shot.



Start with a forward (left) ball position and an open club face. Each will encourage a higher ball flight. You'll feel more behind, or to the right of, the ball.



The wrists hinge fully while the body stays fairly still.



Sense the back of the club sliding on the ground and under the ball. The bounce!



No stopping short here. You must continue through to a full finish to execute this shot successfully.

II. FULL SWING

You've already built the foundation for your full swing by working on your short game. Now we'll increase the size of the swing; altering the set up and turning the body a bit more. Before we get into that, let's talk about some of the fundamentals and terminology.

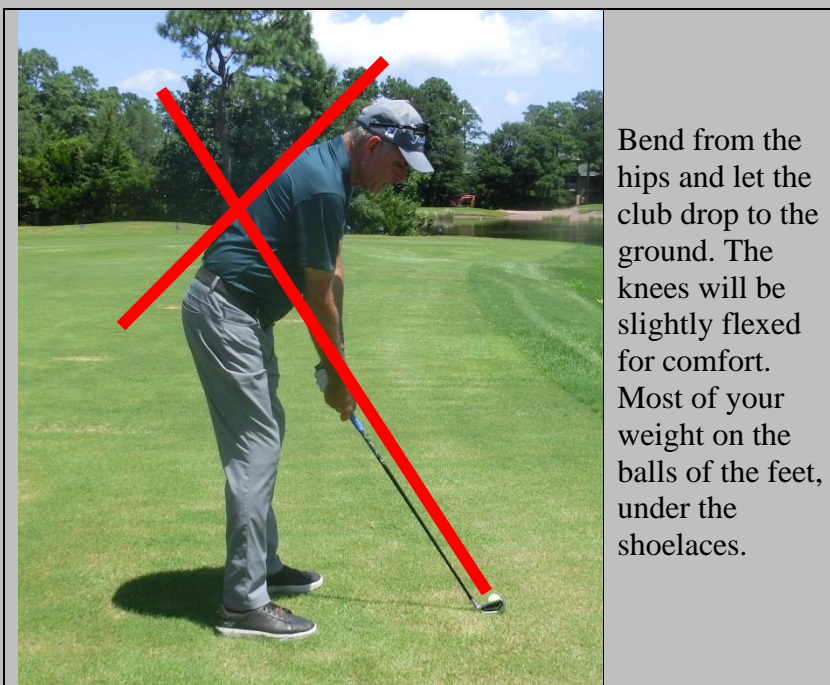
FUNDAMENTALS

- **GRIP.** Continue using the same grip you chose in the chipping chapter. (Assuming you changed from your putting grip)
- **ALIGNMENT.** This is probably the most abused fundamental in golf. In fact *nearly 90% of right handed players aim to the right* of the target. This is because the tendency is to aim the body at the target which places the club well to the right. Remember the railroad track image we discussed in putting? The exact same technique applies to the full swing as well. Get in the habit of aligning your clubface to the target first, use an intermediate target if necessary, then align your body parallel but left of the target line. *Remember, the club aims at the target, the body aims left of the target. This is extremely important because if you are not aligned properly you'll have to make some sort of mid swing adjustment to make the ball go to the target.*



My target is the flag under the bill of my cap so the club face aims directly at it (red arrow) while the stance line (yellow arrow) runs parallel to the target line but ultimately left of it. Note the alignment rod on the ground. Just another good practice habit!

- **POSTURE.** You can follow these easy steps to find proper posture and distance from the ball for every club in the bag.







The shaft is roughly perpendicular to the spine with about a **hand span between the butt end of the club and your body**. Your arms should hang freely and feel very light. It is very important to **maintain your posture and spine angle throughout the swing**. Notice the back of the belt is higher than the front.

- **STANCE WIDTH.** It varies a bit from player to player. A tall person may require a wide stance for balance but too wide can restrict rotation, especially toward the target. A good starting point is to align the outsides of the feet with the outsides of the shoulders. Turning the left foot toward the target a little helps you rotate toward the target and is less strenuous on the back.
- **BALL POSITION.** This also varies among players due to eye dominance, range of motion and swing styles. Generally, the ball should be positioned about in the center of the stance for wedges, a little left of center for short and mid irons, a little farther left for long irons and fairway woods and just opposite the inside of the left foot for tee shots. When using an iron from a tee, play the ball a little more forward (left) than you normally would. ***There is no need to position the ball right of center for any full swing shot if you're trying to achieve normal trajectory. That side of the stance is for specialty shots which we'll discuss later.***

- **WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION.** During the short game we kept our weight to our left side because we were trying to stay very still on the backswing. For the full swing, weight distribution varies somewhat as you work your way from shorter clubs to longer ones.

Notice below how spine tilt increases as the clubs get longer. Also note the two alignment rods, one for aiming, and another for ball position. Practicing good habits helps them to become automatic!

			
<p>For wedges, play the ball in the middle of your stance with your weight slightly favoring the left side and the shaft leaning toward the target. Any ball struck from the ground should be done so with the club still descending. The low point of the swing should be to the player's left of the ball, <i>after</i> impact.</p>	<p>For irons, the stance will widen somewhat, and the ball should be forward of center or opposite the left side of your face. The shaft should still lean slightly toward the target.</p>	<p>Fairway woods should still be swung in a manner that allows contact with the ball on the downswing. I like to take a small divot with a fairway wood. However, too steep an attack angle will destroy any chances to get the ball airborne. Position the ball left of center but set up a little more on your right side to hit it higher.</p>	<p>To drive the ball, contact should be made past the bottom of the club's arc and actually slightly on the upswing. I like to think of a jetliner just lifting its nose wheel on its takeoff roll. To promote this type of swing, position the ball opposite the left instep and really tilt your spine away from the target. Your left shoulder will be farther from the target than your left hip. Tee the ball as high as you comfortably can.</p>

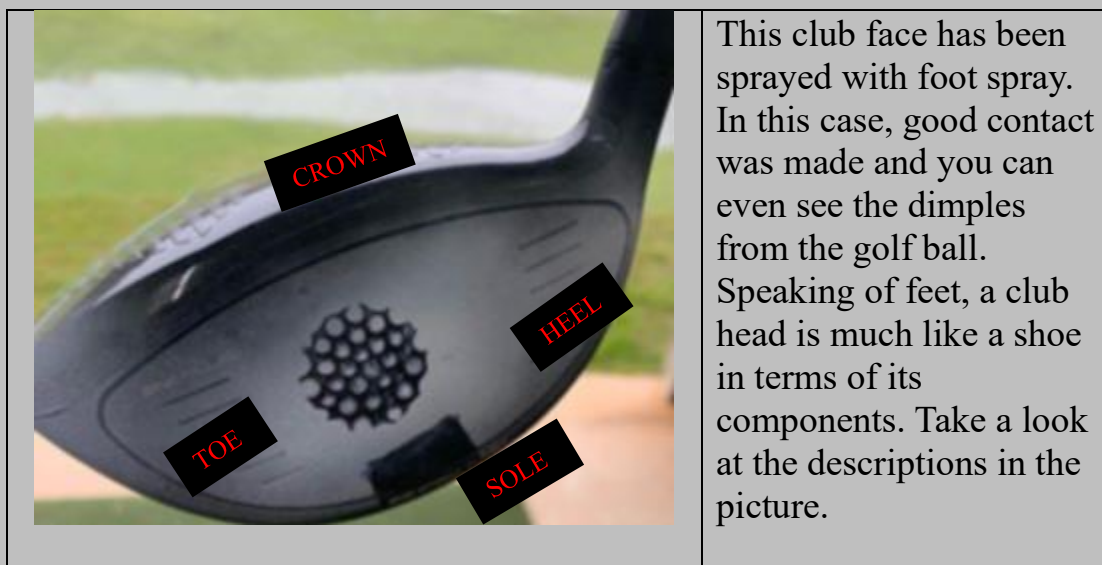
Note: We don't set up differently for each club, but we do for each group of clubs such as short irons, mid irons / hybrids, fairway woods and driver. The reason for varying ball position and weight distribution is because each group of clubs requires a different angle of attack, which you'll read about in a few minutes.

A simple way to remember correct weight distribution when addressing the ball is ***the closer the ball is to the green, the closer your weight should be to the green and the farther your ball is from the green the farther your weight should be too.***

THE 5 BALL FLIGHT LAWS

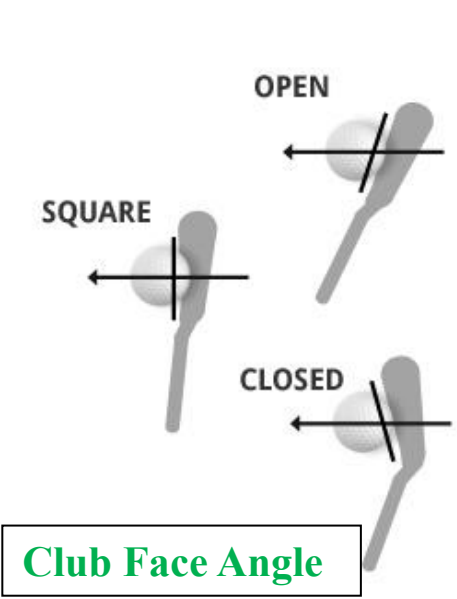
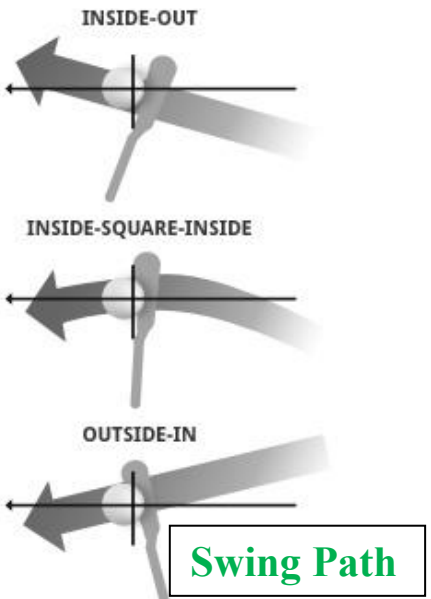
Oh boy, this is going to be exciting! According to the PGA Teaching Manual, ball flight laws "rank as the first priority because they are absolute rather than arbitrary. They work every time without fail." In other words, an understanding of the physics behind ball flight provides a clear image of why shots go where they go. I'm a big believer in understanding ball flight. If you understand why the ball went where it did, you can self-diagnose and improve on your own.

1. Let's start with the most obvious ball flight law, **SOLID CONTACT**. No matter how pretty a swing may look, it is useless if the ball is not struck squarely on the clubface. You can tap the face of an iron in the same manner in which we tapped the putter face. You may be surprised to find the sweet spot is a little closer to the heel of the club in the irons and therefore not in the measured center of the face. You may want to mark an iron face with a sharpie to help you zero in on the exact spot where you want to make contact. Do the same with your woods. For the most part, you'll want to try to contact the ball on the exact center of the face with the woods.



2. The **CLUBFACE ANGLE** be it square, open or closed has by far the biggest influence on both starting and ultimate direction of golf shots.

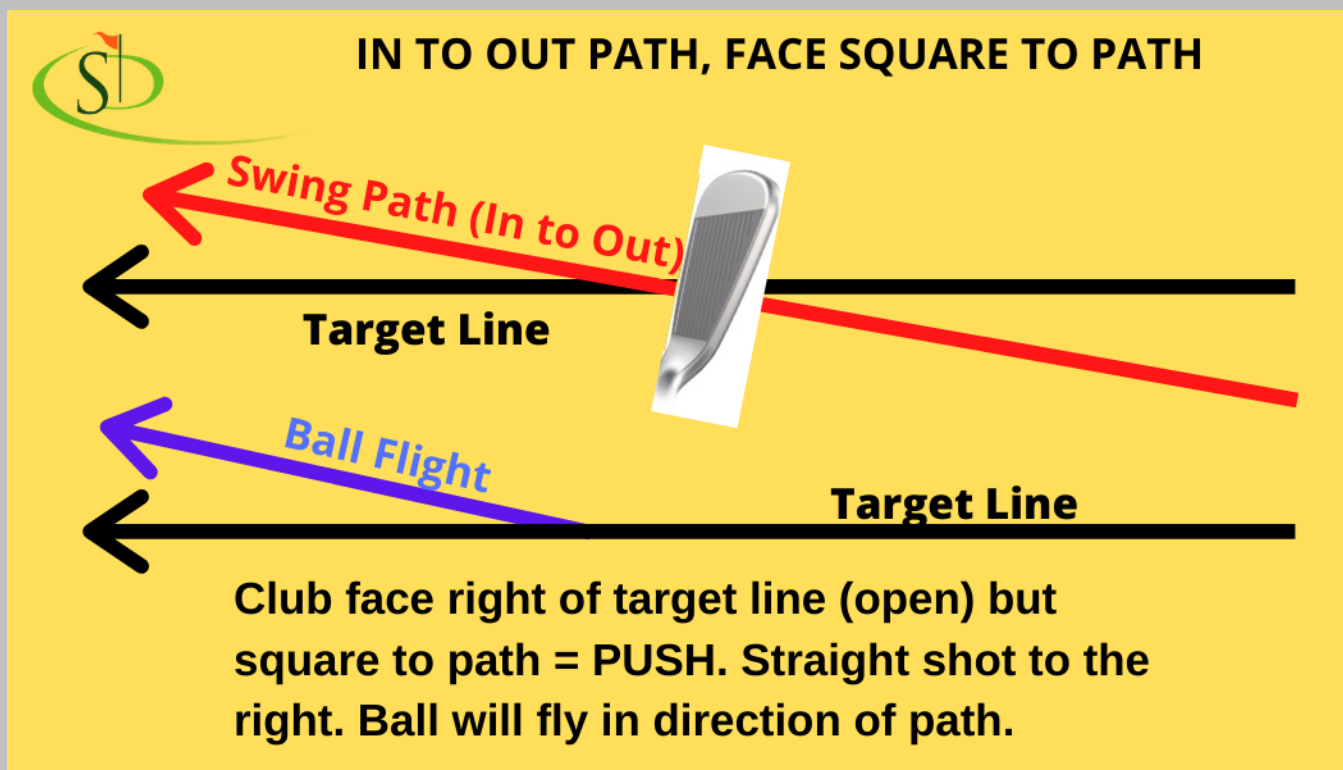
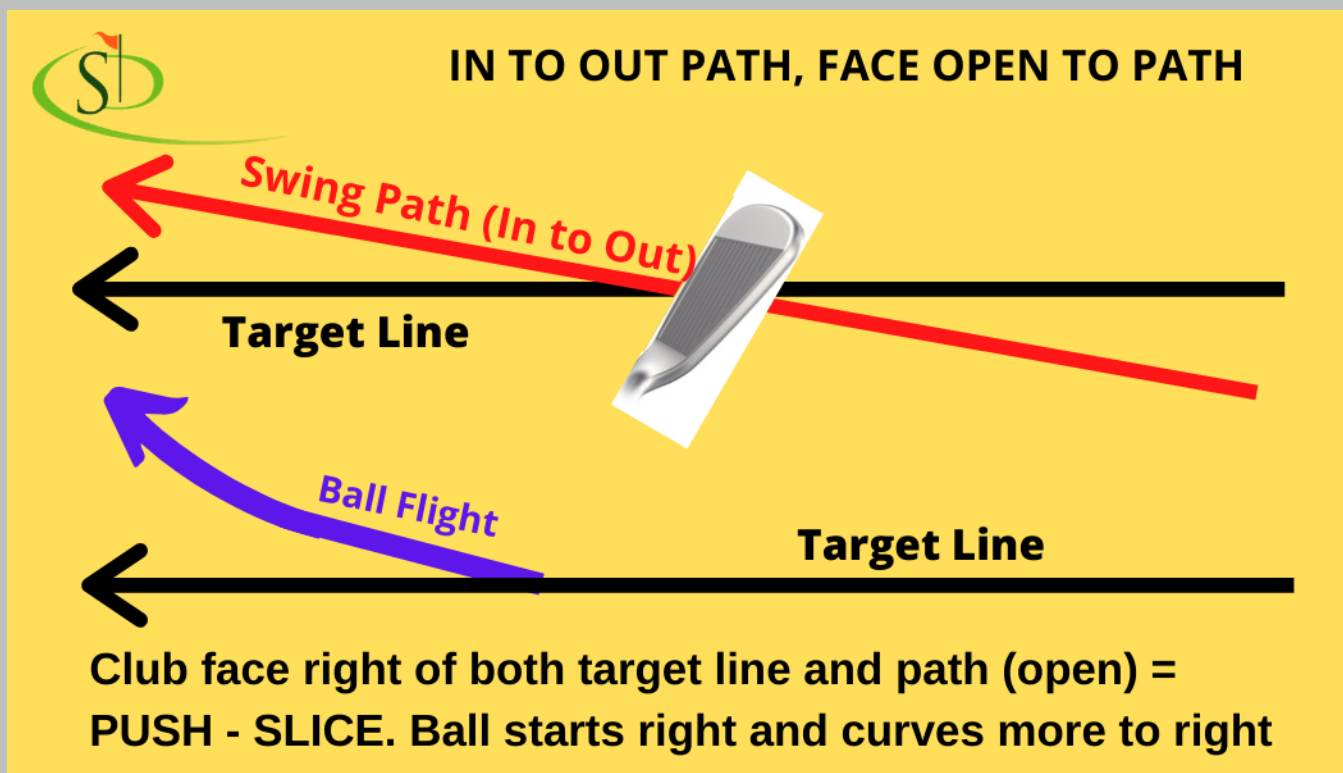
3. **Swing Path** is the direction the club head swings relative to the target line. It will have some influence on the starting direction of the shot.

 <p>Club Face Angle</p>	 <p>Swing Path</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ A square clubface will produce a straight shot➤ An open clubface will start the ball to the right➤ A closed clubface will start the ball to the left	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ An inside - out swing path is when the clubhead travels from the player's side of the target line across the line and out to the right of the target➤ Inside – square – inside is a circular path through impact. The club approaches from the player's side of the target line (inside) then curves back to the inside. Usually considered ideal➤ Outside – in is when the club crosses the target line diagonally from outside the line back to the player's side of the line.

Assuming solid contact, the swing path and clubface angle combine to determine the shape of your shots.

You absolutely want to familiarize yourself with how the various combinations of Path and Face affect ball flight.

Let's start with an inside to out swing path.





**IN TO OUT PATH, FACE CLOSED TO PATH,
OPEN TO TARGET**



**Club Face right of target (open) but left of path (closed)
= PUSH - DRAW. Ball starts slightly right, curves back to the left**

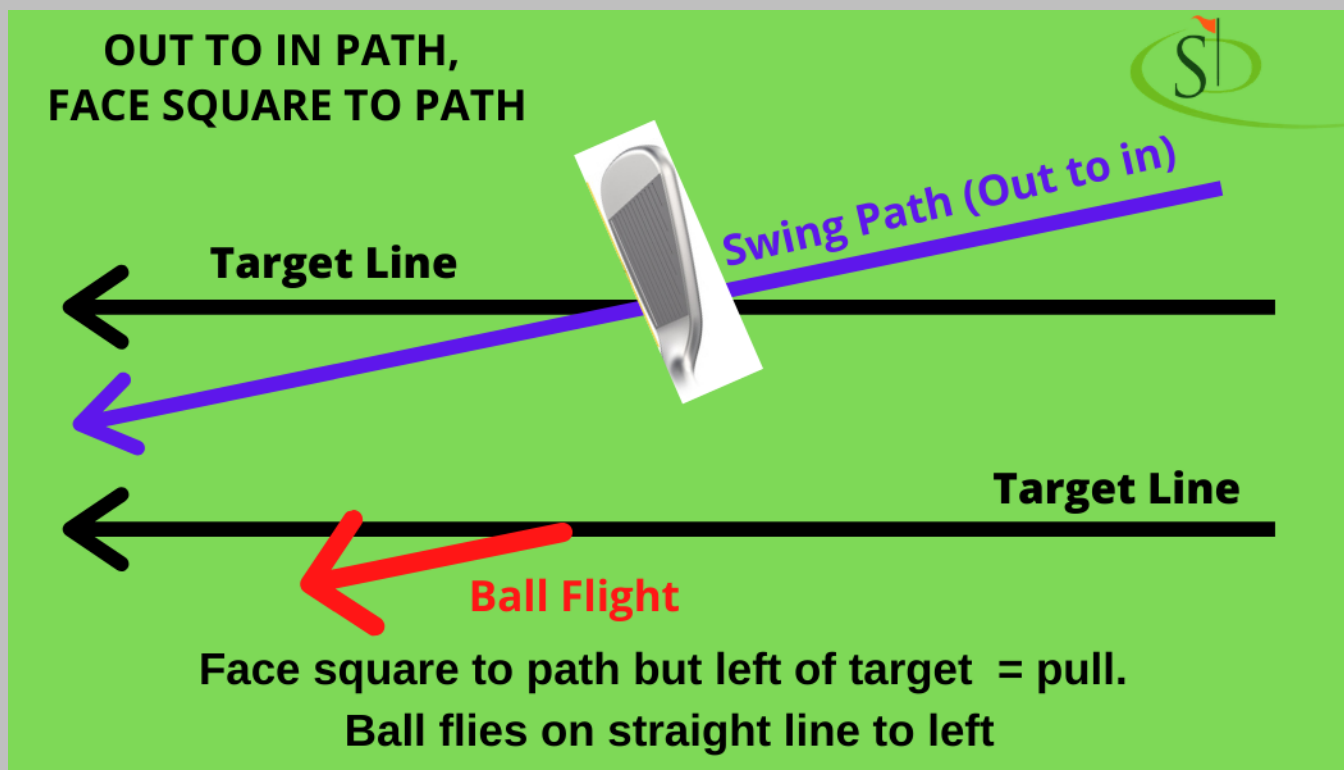
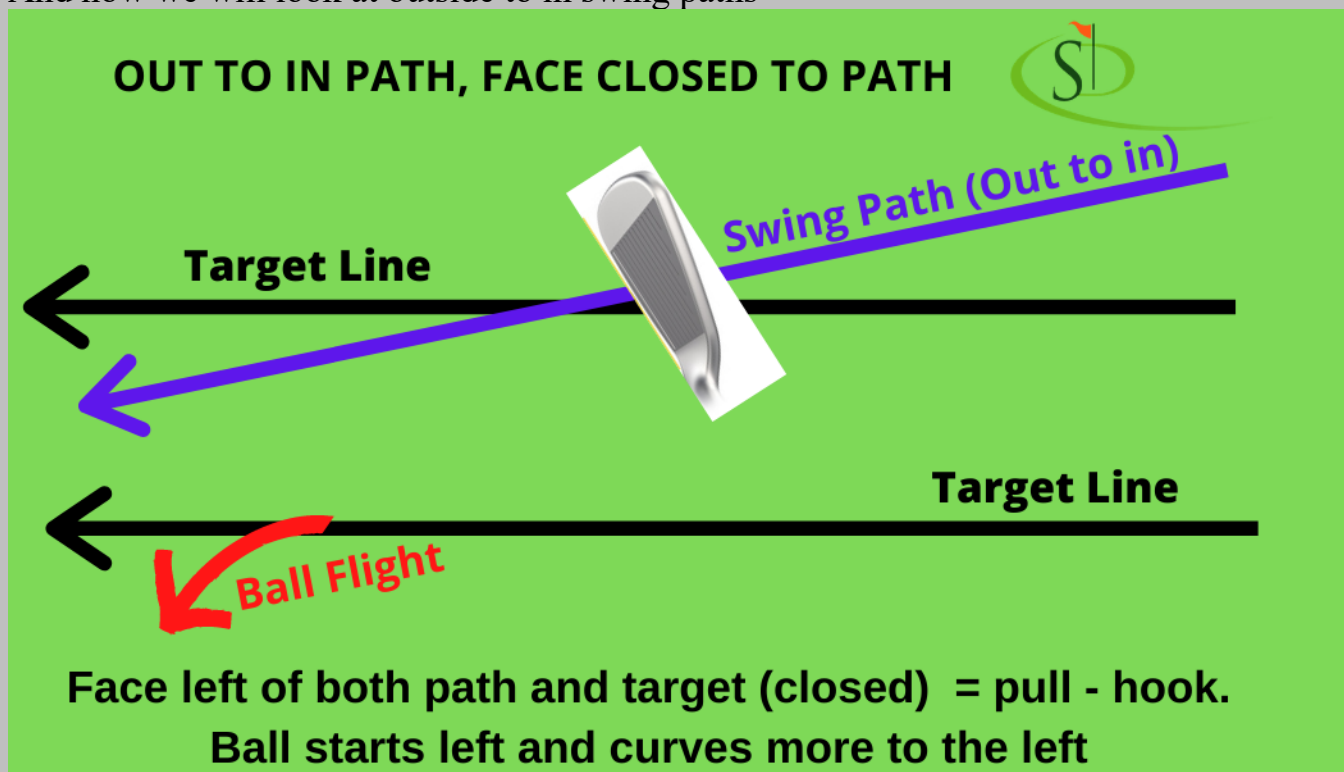


**IN TO OUT PATH,
FACE CLOSED TO PATH AND TARGET**

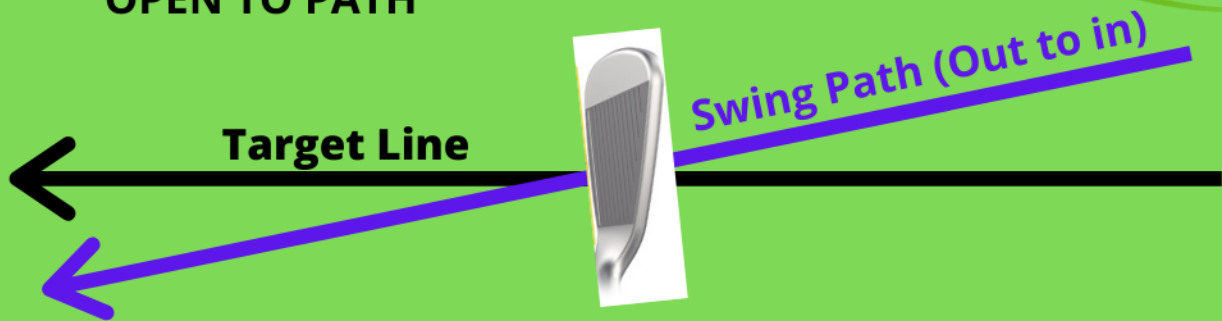


**Face left of both path and target (closed)
= hook. Ball starts left and curves more to the left**

And now we will look at outside to in swing paths

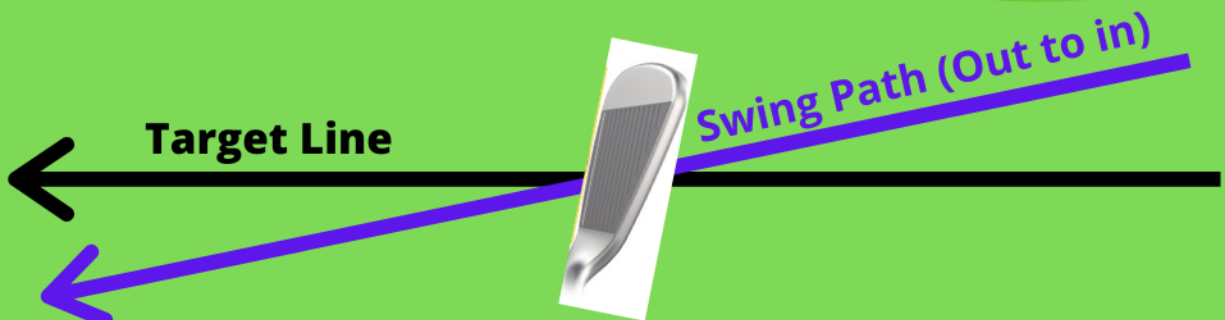


**OUT TO IN PATH, FACE
OPEN TO PATH**



Face open to path but closed to target = pull - fade .
Ball starts slightly left, curves slightly right

**OUT TO IN PATH,
FACE OPEN TO PATH AND TARGET**



Face open to both path and target = pull - slice .
Ball starts slightly left, curves significantly right

And now inside square inside swing paths, generally considered to be ideal

INSIDE SQUARE INSIDE PATH, FACE SQUARE TO PATH AND TARGET



Face square to both path and target = straight

INSIDE SQUARE INSIDE PATH,FACE CLOSED TO PATH AND TARGET



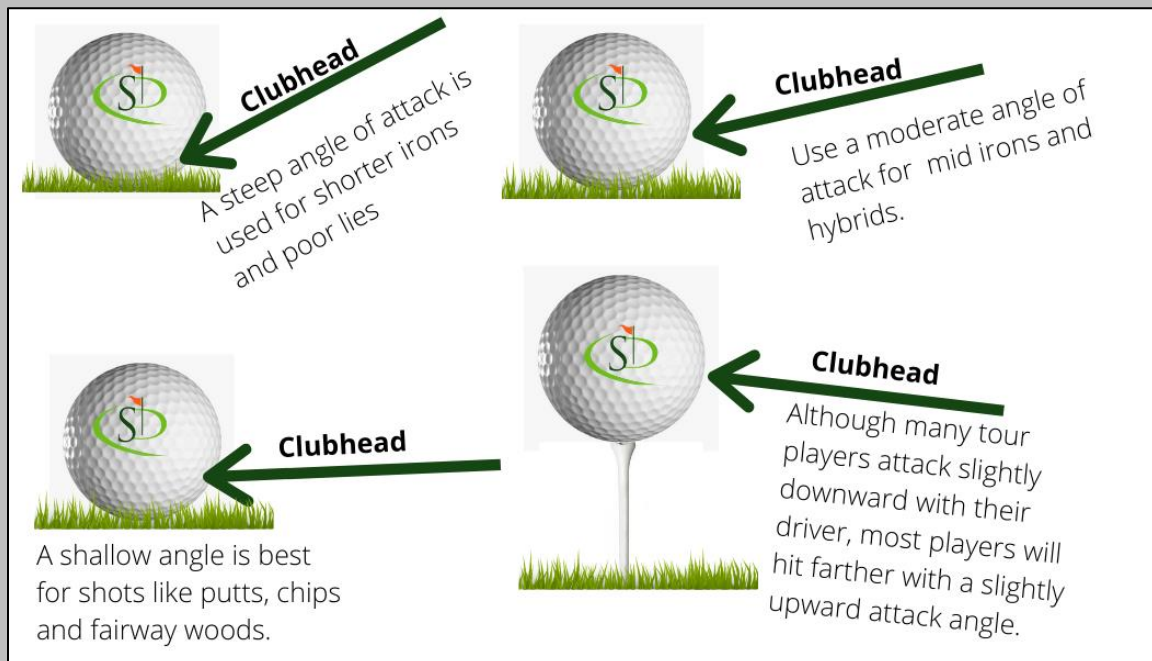
Face closed to both path and target = hook to left

INSIDE SQUARE INSIDE PATH, FACE OPEN TO PATH AND TARGET



Face open to both path and target = slice to right

4. The **ANGLE OF APPROACH** or attack influences the initial (launch) height of a shot. One of the reasons we change ball positions in our stance is to alter the angle of approach.



A few pages ago we discussed how the set up varies by groupings of clubs. This chart illustrates the average angles of approach or attack for LPGA and PGA Tour players. A positive number indicates the club is moving up at impact. Negative numbers mean the club is moving down.

CLUB	A.O.A. LPGA	A.O.A. PGA
DRIVER	+3.0°	-1.3°
5 WOOD	-1.8°	-3.3°
4 IRON	-1.7°	-3.4°
7 IRON	-2.3°	-4.3°
PITCHING WEDGE	-2.8°	-5.0°

As you can see, the shorter, more lofted clubs require a steeper or more downward angle of attack. Typically the more lofted the club is, the more the shaft will lean toward the target (handle left of ball) at impact. This has a de-lofting effect on the club face and creates a “low point” of the swing left of the ball or *after* impact. The men hit more “down” on the ball than the women, even with the driver. Most amateurs should strive to swing up with their driver unless they have the club speed of a PGA Tour player.

It's important to note that all attack angles are descending for shots hit from the ground and not on a tee.

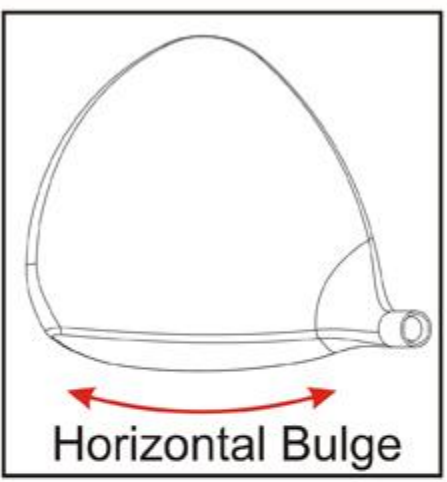
5. The final ball flight law is **CLUB SPEED**. There are many devices that measure club speed in miles per hour. More speed equals more distance. However, there is no substitute for solid, square face contact. Tremendous club speed will actually not help if your shots are being miss hit. It will only make your ball go farther into the woods! That said, we want you to swing the club as fast as you comfortably can. It doesn't necessarily require brute force. Good technique and sequencing will produce good speed. So will a tension – free swing! ***The only thing that needs to be going fast is the clubhead!***

FYI the average club speed on the PGA Tour with a driver is 114 mph! The LPGA averages 94 mph as does the average male recreational player while the average female recreational player averages 65 mph.

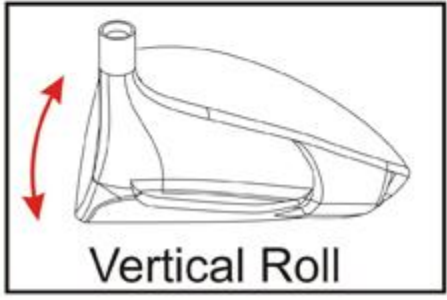


GEAR EFFECT

Where you make contact on the clubface can also influence direction, especially with the driver. This can sometimes skew the path and face theories, which is why it's important to know where on the club face you are making contact.




Horizontal Bulge



Vertical Roll

As this diagram to the left illustrates, club faces are not flat, particularly on the driver. They are manufactured with a “bulge and roll” which actually makes the club more forgiving. The convex shape to the face allows for shots hit off center to still have a chance of staying in play.

Shots hit on the toe will start right but curve back to the left due to the ‘gear effect’ produced by the bulge and roll on the club face.


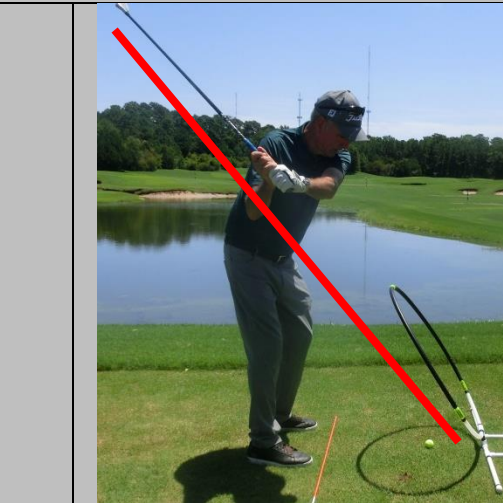



Heel hits will start to the left but curve back to the right

You’ve just completed physics 101. Congratulations! Before we move into the “how to” part of the full swing, we have to study just a bit of geometry. You need to understand the **SWING PLANE** and how it relates to your technique. Fortunately we have a scientific device called a hula hoop which helps to illustrate what the plane is.

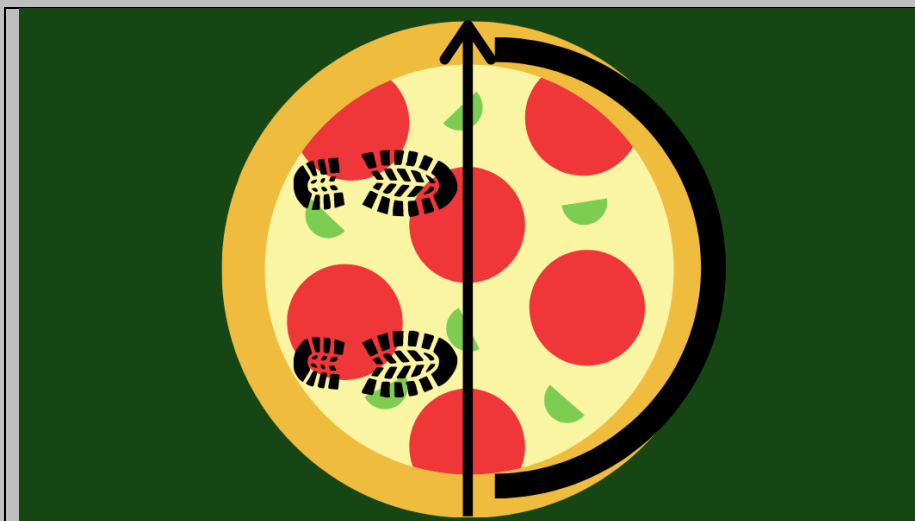
THE SWING PLANE

The swing plane is described as the tilt of the swing relative to the ground.

		
<p>This is a 7 iron with a 62 degree lie angle. Notice the hoop is at the same angle.</p>	<p>Halfway into the backswing, the shaft remains parallel to the hoop or, ON PLANE. We'd like a similar plane on the downswing swing too.</p>	<p>Even on the follow through the shaft is on the same plane. See how it lines up with the hoop?</p>

Sports such as baseball and tennis require a nearly horizontal plane compared to say cricket or croquet which use a more vertical plane. The golf swing plane falls somewhere in between, influenced much by the lie angle of the club. The shorter clubs have more upright lie angles requiring you to stand closer to the ball and swing more vertically. In contrast, your driver has a much flatter lie angle and due to its length, you must stand farther from the ball and swing more horizontally. ***You shouldn't try to consciously change your swing plane from club to club, it should happen naturally, in response to your setup change***

The plane of a golf swing has been described as halfway between a merry – go – round and a Ferris wheel!



We stand on a straight line, aim on a straight line, but should swing the club on a rounded path.

Sometimes I'll tell a student to envision standing in the middle of a pizza and swinging the club along the crust!

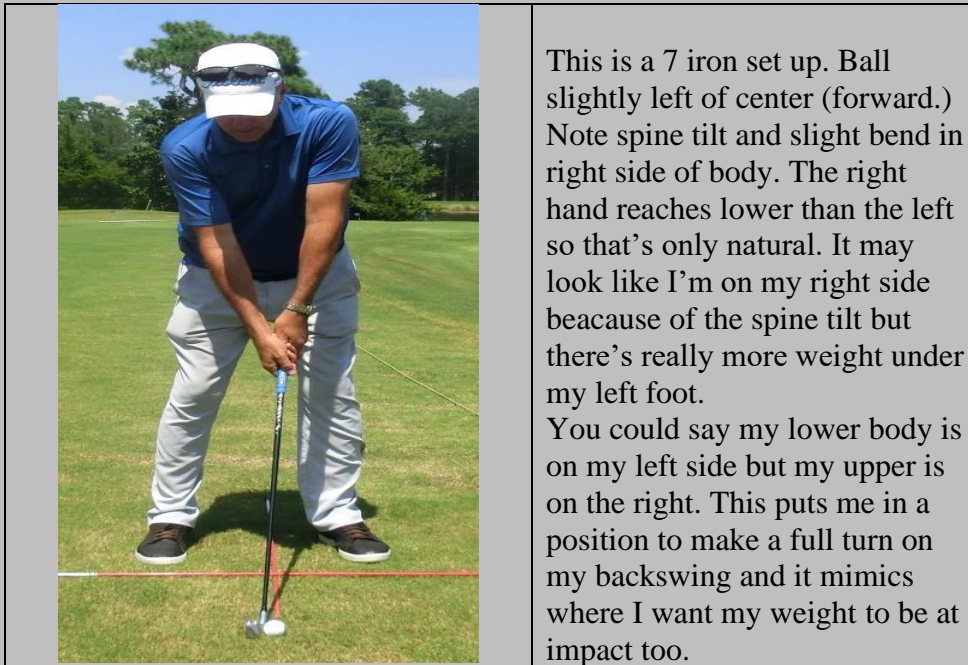
PUTTING THE SWING TOGETHER

Although the golf swing should be one continuous, smooth flow of motion, we will attempt to explain it from start to finish in the following segments:

- Setup
- Takeaway
- Wrist set
- Top of backswing
- Transition
- Downswing
- Impact
- Follow through
- Finish

Be advised that as you study these photographs, we are simply trying to illustrate various positions that most good players get into. These are basic guidelines and it is strongly suggested you choose one aspect of your swing that needs the most work and focus on it. ***Improving one part of the swing will likely improve other parts too.***

1. STARTING POSITION (SETUP)



Thoughts and tips for set up

- Feel like your body is a little concave on the right side and convex on the left.
- No tension! Soft, light feeling arms. Grip pressure minimal.
- Feel like your feet are gripping the ground.
- RELAX, RELAX, RELAX.
- Not enough can be said for relaxing! Let the air out of your shoulders!

2. THE TAKEAWAY



Try to make the triangle and club move together. Sometimes called a one piece takeaway.



Club head staying slightly to right of hands. I don't want to pull it inside or behind me.

Thoughts and Tips for a good Takeaway

- Start back smoothly. A quick start makes it harder to benefit from a good upper body coil.
- Imagine putting the club head in the “catcher’s mitt.”
- Keep the club in front of your body.
- Envision shaking hands with someone to your right with either your left or right hand.

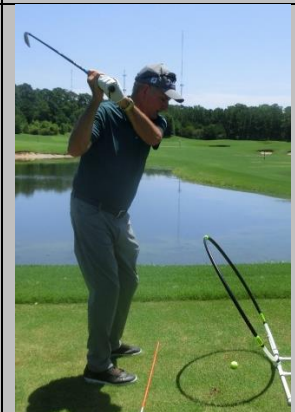
What to Watch Out For on the Takeaway

Starting the club too far to the inside, behind the body, leads to a lifting of the arms, not a turning of the body, and often a straightening of the spine. Posture changes make it difficult to get back to where you started.

The shaft will “cross the line” or point to the right of the target at the top. The swing will have to be re-routed from here. Not an impossibility but not always easy to do.

When the swing starts too much to the outside, the arms “separate” from the body. Its best to keep your upper arms close to the chest throughout the swing.

The shaft will tend to “lay off” or point to the left of the target at the top. The face will likely be open here and once again the swing will need to be re-routed.



3. WRIST SET



A little beyond the halfway back point and the wrists have hinged to form the letter “L” with the left arm and club. Upper body is rotating while lower body is fairly quiet although hips have turned a bit.




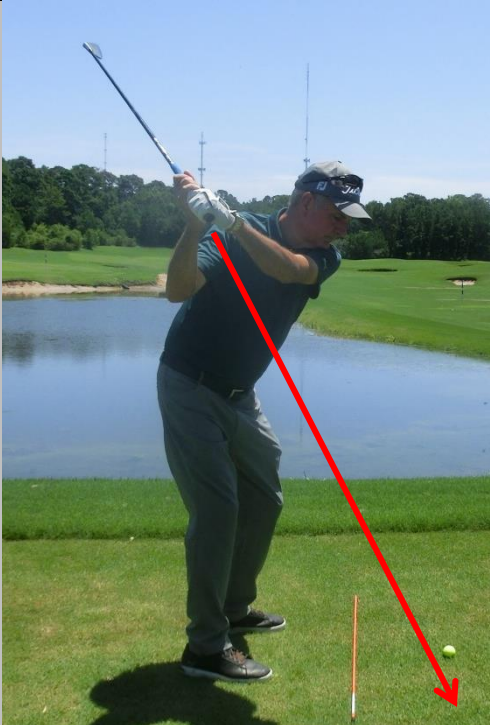
With this “setting” of the wrists, the stars have aligned! Club head, hands and ball.

Thoughts and tips for wrist set

- Point the handle toward the ball
- Thumbs up, elbows down
- With proper hinging, the club will feel light

4. TOP OF BACKSWING

If it looks like I haven't taken the club much farther back than the previous pictures that's because I'm old! Do whatever you can to stay or become flexible.

	
<p>It may not be a big backswing but it's efficient. No wasted motion. Note the hands away from the head (width) and the upper body has rotated over my right side.</p>	<p>Spine angle has changed very little. Elbows are down. Left wrist is flat. Club face is parallel to left wrist / forearm. All good things! Note that the grip end of the club is pointed toward the same line the ball is on. (Target line)</p>

Thoughts and Tips for top of Backswing

- Point butt of club at target line
- Feel coiled
- Hands away from head
- Upper body over right side
- Maintain posture



If you take the club back with only your trail hand and arm (right for me) to where you feel you have the most power to sling the club down the fairway, you probably won't go back any farther than I have here and your hand will be pretty far from your head. (Width)

What to Watch Out For at The Top of the Backswing




One thing to avoid at the top is the dreaded **REVERSE PIVOT**. This is when the body tilts to the left instead of turning to the right. Notice the left shoulder is low, the right hip is high and the right side of the torso is slanted toward the target. This position often leads to a number of train wrecks throughout the rest of the swing.

Be sure not to **OVERSWING** as you go back. This is a false feeling of power when really all that's happened is the arms have collapsed and allowed the club to "flop" at the top. From here you'll have to use the first half of the forward swing just to put the club back in position. We often call this "runoff," the turn has stopped but the hands and arms keep going.



5. Transition / Downswing

The success of the move back down to the golf ball is largely dependent on your position at the top. Be sure to treat the change of direction or, *transition*, delicately. If you try to change directions quickly, you will likely expend much of your stored power prior to contact.

		
<p>As we start the transition into the downswing note the club head staying behind me (shallow) the hips are already turning and I am maintaining my posture.</p>	<p>Halfway down and the lower body has turned even more, the shaft is parallel to my aiming lines allowing me to deliver the club from “inside.” Note I’m still bent over. A lot of players begin to “stand up” at this point. More on that later.</p>	<p>Here the club has dropped into position to deliver the club head to the ball. Note the “L” formed by the left arm and shaft is still there. The lower body is driving forward while the hips are turning. The head stays slightly behind or to the player’s right of the ball due to the bend in the right side of the body.</p>

Thoughts and Tips For Transition / Downswing

- Don’t hurry down.
- Imagine a child on a swing changing directions. It’s smooth!
- Let gravity make the change of direction.
- Feel the club staying behind you to create a shallow plane on the downswing.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR ON THE DOWNSWING



We see this a lot! The club has been pushed out away from me instead of staying on or near the diagonal red line, on plane. Notice the hula hoop is pointed left. I'm about to cut across the ball from out to in. This is often called "*over the top*" and is typically not going to produce a desirable result!



The arms have no room, so they collapse forming the infamous chicken wing, poking out behind me. It's pretty hard to rotate your body correctly when your arms are swinging this way. If you know your ball flight laws, and you should, the club face angle will determine whether this shot goes left or right. Logic says left but an open clubface will actually make it slice to the right.



Now the hula hoop is pointed to the right and my club is swinging parallel to it. This is too much in to out. As my club is well under the plane. (red line.)



Under the plane before impact usually leads to above the plane after. While the path of the club was too much to the right, it's still up to the club face angle to determine where the ball will ultimately go.






We saw in the previous picture that a downswing that is too shallow or behind the player can result in too much of an in to out swing path. That said, many players need to work on shallowing their downswing and this old trick of hanging a towel toward the end of the club can help create the proper feel.



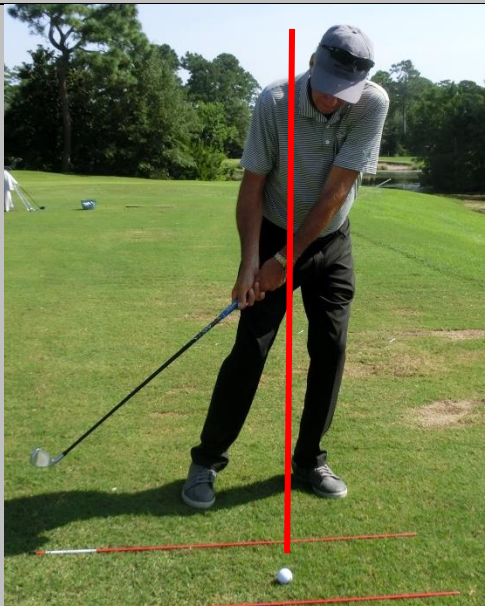
Often called casting, the wrists have unhinged long before impact which means most of the speed is used up before the ball is struck. Many players do this. It can be from not rotating the body (hang back and flip,) subconsciously trying to scoop the ball in the air, swinging out to in or trying to square an open club face.



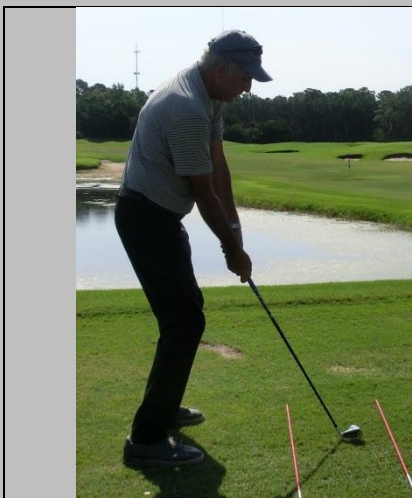
In this photo the club head is “lagging.” We want it to be the last thing to arrive at the ball, not the first. Note especially the position of the right arm compared to the picture above.

		
<p>A sidearm Frisbee throw is a good image for being in the right position on the down swing.</p>	<p>So is a left arm Frisbee throw.</p>	<p>Here is a sidearm throw with a golf ball. Again note the position of the right arm. Many players have already straightened their arm at this point.</p>

Getting Ahead

	<p>Instead of turning the lower body while my spine remains tilted to my right, I've shifted my weight by moving my upper body laterally, toward the target, and it is now ahead of the ball. I'll be forced to "save the shot" with my hands. Typically this produces lower shots too. Notice there is no bend in the right side of my body.</p>
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Loss of Posture



Here I've allowed my lower body to move toward the ball, known as early hip extension, which causes the spine to straighten. This loss of posture can cause poor contact and restrict body rotation.



In this picture I've maintained my posture and my hips are rotating, not moving toward the ball.



To help maintain posture, sometimes we'll place an object behind the player, such as a chair, and have them maintain contact with it throughout the swing.



The intent is to feel like you're pushing the chair farther behind you by rotating the left hip during the downswing.

IMPACT

The greatest players in the world have their own uniqueness to their swings but they all manage to get back to similar impact positions



Now you can see why we spent so much time working on the **TRIANGLE** in the short game. Note the left arm and shaft form a straight line, the head is behind the ball, the hips are turning left and the right knee is driving toward the target.



Open hips, square - to - opening shoulders. A good combination to have at impact. The hands are still about the same distance from the body and the shaft is on plane. The right heel is starting to leave the ground. The club has approached from the inside.

Thoughts and Tips for Impact

- **Keep going! Don't stop to hit. It's a swing!**
- **Drive a nail through the ball.**
- **Focus on approaching toward the 'inside quadrant' of the ball.**
- **Firm lead (left) wrist at the ball.**
- **Don't let your body stall out. Keep rotating!**

What to watch out for at impact



Yes, this is exaggerated but it is not at all uncommon for players to cast or unhinge the wrists early on the down swing allowing the club head to arrive at the ball before the handle. This happens for a variety of reasons one of which is simply the player thinks he needs to scoop the ball into the air. Over the top causes it too, as well as an open clubface as this is often a player's desperate attempt to square the face. I like to call this "*California Arm*" as my right arm has taken on the shape of that state.



The *Impact Bag* has been around for years. It's a vinyl bag filled with towels and practically everyone achieves a nice impact position when they swing into it. Note the handle leads the clubface and the shaft is in line with my left arm, much like baseball. I'm already turning into my left side, something most recreational players do way too late, if at all. I don't like that this device makes your swing come to a screeching halt but it is an effective way to capture the proper impact position.

FOLLOW THROUGH



Because the body has rotated toward the target, the arms are able to stay in front of my chest and retain the **TRIANGLE**.



From this side you can see the body has rotated. The club is working back over to the left indicating a circular path through the ball.

Thought and Tips for Follow Through

- Let your right side fire through!
- Shake hands with the target with your right hand.
- Feel like the butt end of the club is attached to your belly button.
- Keep moving!

What to watch out for on the follow through





There's the left arm chicken wing again. This can happen when the body doesn't rotate to create room for the arms to follow through and with an out to in swing. You want your arms and elbows staying close together.



This is about 5 feet of PVC pipe. When I swing it I'm forced to turn through and keep my arms close together. If I don't, the end of the PVC above my hands will smack me in my ribs on my left side. We call this ***The Punisher***. It works!

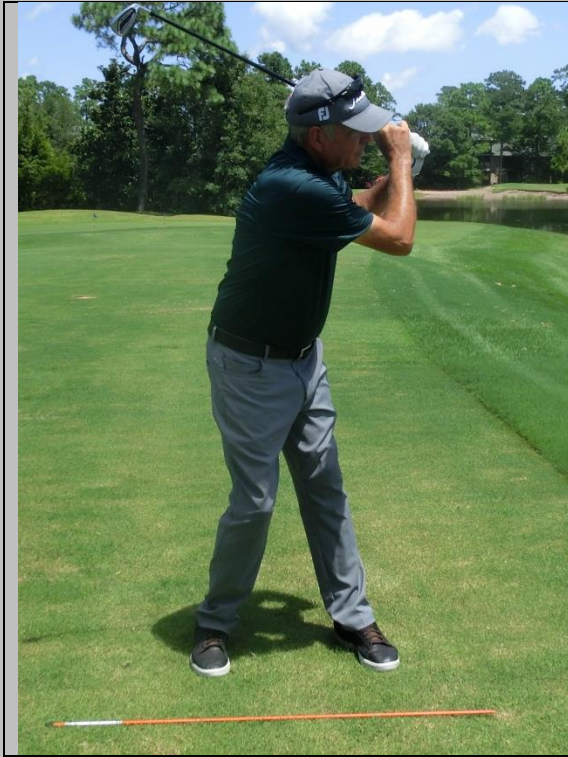
FINISH

	
<p>BALANCE is the key ingredient. The front of the body should be vertical, the right knee covers the left knee and the right foot is gently resting on the toes. All the weight should have turned on to the left side by now. The toes of the right foot simply resting on the ground.</p>	<p>There's the right foot giving us the "7 Spike Salute." A sign of a controlled and balanced flow of motion. Not a violent hack at the ball. The chest should face left of the target. From here we like to be able to see the player's left pants pocket and not the right. Flexibility would place the shaft more across by back.</p>

Thoughts and Tips for Finish

- Stick the finish like an Olympic gymnast!
- Hold the finish for at least 3 seconds.
- Be in a position that allows you to lift your right foot off the ground and stay in balance on only your left.
- Get your trail (right) shoulder past where the ball was.
- Have your chest facing left of the target.

What to watch for on the finish



If you only knew how often we see this! Go back and look at the last two pictures. It's important that you learn to rotate toward the target and end in good balance. If you have trouble finishing in balance, try "posing" in the ideal finish, then make some slow practice swings that end in that same pose.





If you have good *footwork*, you'll be able to get into a good finish. Practice by rolling your right foot up on its tiptoes as in the previous pictures. If you do that, your entire body will turn through.

Some of today's PGA Tour players can drive the ball 350 yards or more. I remember when 250 yards was considered a long way! Most amateurs should focus on making smooth, rhythmic swings with an emphasis on the body and arms working together, rather than trying to drive the ball 350 yards.

DRILLS

Following are some drills and swing thoughts to help you with your full swing.

Here's an all – encompassing drill that is easy to do and quite effective. I'm using an eight pound medicine ball with handles but you can use any kind of ball, a basket of golf balls, or hold two clubs simultaneously. It helps if the object is fairly heavy to encourage the body and arms to work together.

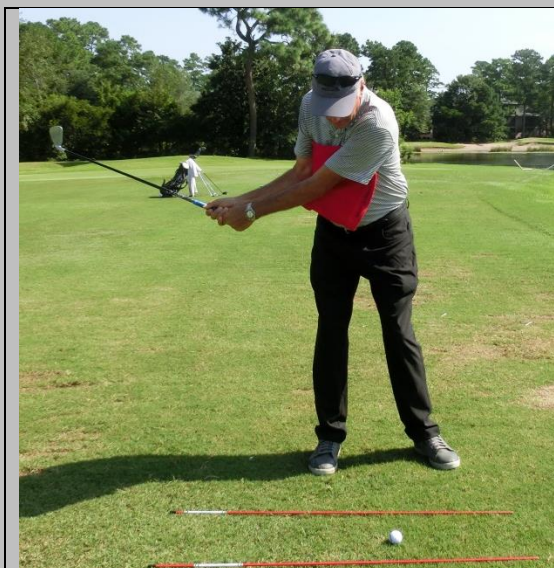
			
At the start we're in the same position we'd be in at address or setup.	Notice my upper body is coiling on top of my lower body.	At "impact" the lower body leads. There's a bit of bend in my right side.	No flip or chicken wing here! The weight of the ball requires me to turn by body, not flip my hands.

Here are some more full swing drills to help you become more consistent.

- **SWINGING WITH YOUR FEET TOGETHER** is a good way to improve balance and sense the arms swinging freely. Don't use more than a 7 iron. You may want to put the ball on a tee.
- **WHOOSH!** To increase club head speed, hold your driver on the opposite end, where the shaft is skinniest, and swing the grip end of the club through the air. Try to get the club to make a loud, whooshing noise as it travels through the impact area.

CONNECTION

We did this drill while chipping but it works well for full swing too. You don't even have to use a towel; you can just keep your upper arms close to your chest as you swing. Some players will bunch up their sleeves and tuck them under their arms or use a golf glove instead of a towel.



Hold a towel against your chest with your upper arms and try to keep it there throughout the swing.



This will help you develop a swing in which the body and arms feel "connected."



Using your body and arms together feels like less effort but the improved efficiency actually creates more power.

UNDER THE STICK



Many of the drills we do are to encourage players to swing from the inside as a majority of players swing steep (over the top) and from the outside.

The alignment rod has been placed in the ground about 10 inches beyond the ball and at about a 45° angle to both the ground and the target line.



The intent is to approach with the club under the stick (left) and not crash down on top of it. You'd be amazed at how many people do chop the stick!

THE OVER AND UNDER

Sounds like a bet you'd place in Vegas! This drill also helps you learn to approach the ball from the inside. We see so many players take the club behind them on the backswing and out in front of them on the downswing. This teaches you to do the opposite loop. It also seems to help with rhythm and tempo.



The club swings back to the outside or over the noodle....



...and under the noodle as it approaches the ball.

OPEN BELOW, CLOSED ABOVE



Yet another way to encourage an inside approach to the ball. My stance line is “open” (aligned left) and my shoulder line is “closed” (aligned right.)

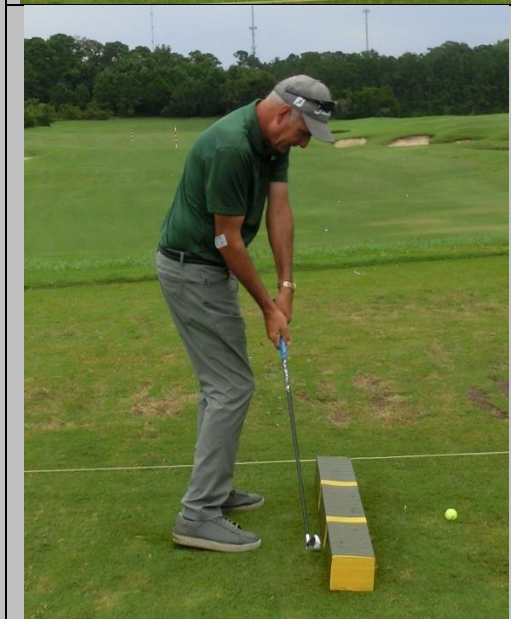
Keeping the upper body closed will help bring the club in from the inside while the open stance line will allow me to rotate to a full finish.

It's a bit of an exaggeration but most swing changes should feel exaggerated because *very few players make as big a swing change as they feel they are making.*

THE BOX



Often the best training aids are the simplest ones. Pictured is a cardboard golf club box, just to the outside of the ball, or target, line. This is to encourage an inside path to the ball. An out to in path will result in hitting the box first. It doesn't physically hurt to hit it but it can bruise the ego a bit!



Now the box is placed between the stance and target lines to help a player who swings too much in to out. As you can see I'm about to smash the side of the box because my swing path is pointed too much to the right of the target.

III. TROUBLE SHOTS

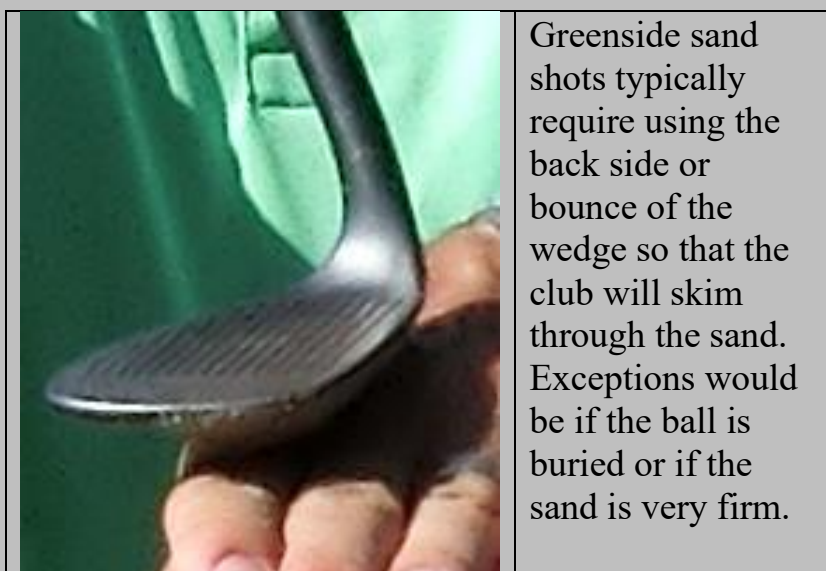
If you've read this far, you shouldn't have any need for this chapter! However, you may have a friend who does, so you'd better read on.

This chapter will deal with various situations in the sand, trees, rough, etc. I prefer to call them *“recovery shots”* which at least makes it sound like we have a chance!

GREENSIDE BUNKERS

Bunker shots needn't be all that difficult. It's a lot like a pitch shot, only a little faster swing. Besides, how often do you get to miss the ball on purpose? **The most important requirement is getting the club to bottom out in the right spot.** If you can do that, the ball will simply “surf” on the wave of sand you create with the swing.

Make sure you have a decent sand wedge, it helps. If you play from deep, fluffy sand, you'll probably want a wedge with a lot of bounce. Harder, firmer sand requires less bounce.



Remember, this is actually a short game shot so the setup will be much like pitching. Weight left, stance a little open.

The first thing to do is to develop a consistent bottom to the swing. I've drawn a line on either side of the ball and will try to get the club to enter the sand on the first line and exit on the second. Keep practicing till you have a nice, long, shallow sand divot that begins at the first line. The sand should be flying high and far. You can practice this drill without golf balls too.



- You're not allowed to "ground" your club in the sand because bunkers are considered penalty areas. Make sure the club hovers above the sand while addressing the ball.
- It takes approximately 3 to 4 times the speed to get the ball out of sand as an equidistant shot from turf would take.
- Don't be afraid to take a swing at it and be sure to follow through to a full finish.



Play the ball a little left of center with your weight on your left side and your hands about even with the ball.



Aim just a little left of the target and bring the club up at a steep angle, cocking the wrists early in the backswing.



The “L” is created early in the backswing to encourage swinging downward into the sand.



Aim to make contact behind (to the right of) the ball. We don’t want to contact the ball at all. Just let the sand take it out.



Much like the full swing, the body should rotate and the arms should remain extended. Don’t be suckered into stopping at the ball!



Don’t be afraid to make a full finish. You’re hitting sand, not golf balls! Hit behind the ball and follow through.

You may have noticed there has been no mention of an extremely open clubface at address, aiming way left and swinging excessively out to in. We do want a little bit of each of those elements but too much can make it very difficult to escape the sand. ***Your primary concern is to get out of the bunker and onto the green!*** I will often demonstrate using a putter and a buried lie. As long as you can displace the sand surrounding the ball, it shouldn't matter what club you use!

- For a buried lie, close the clubface a little. It will dig in more easily.
- For hard or wet sand, swing easier and consider using a pitching wedge so it will dig and not bounce.
- Work your feet into the sand a bit if you desire.

THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR



Envision the golf ball sitting on top of George Washington's portrait on a dollar bill. Then aim to remove a stack of bills. Don't hit George!

THE SHELL GAME






This is a trick we sometimes play on our students. We ask them to take a swing at each pile of sand and try to make the sand land on the green. What they don't know is that there is a ball in the third pile. It almost always flies out high and softly.

TEE IT UP



Here we've sunk a tee in the sand under the golf ball. Practice knocking the tee out from under the ball and your club will bottom out in the right place more often.

THE WALL

		
<p>That's a wall of sand to the left of the ball (my right) I want the club to come in at an angle that won't hit the wall and then bottom out at the tip of the arrow.</p>	<p>If I make that same "hang back and flip" move we've seen so much in other shots, I'll smash the wall down.</p>	<p>This looks like a good angle to approach from above the wall then into the sand just behind the ball.</p>

FAIRWAY BUNKERS

This is another shot that doesn't have to be difficult. As in most cases, it's simply a matter of knowing what to do and getting over the "fear factor."

Here's how to get out of a fairway bunker.

- Look at the lie. If it's in a footprint, be realistic. Just get it back on the fairway! Now look at the required trajectory to get it out of the bunker. Don't be greedy! Take plenty of loft to get it over the lip.
- This shot is much like using an iron when the ball is on the turf. ***You should contact the ball first, on the downswing, then the sand.*** You might even take as much sand as you did in the greenside bunker, ***after*** you contact the ball.
- Work your feet into the sand just a little. This will stabilize your base.
- Play the ball about in the center of your stance.
- Keep the lower body as quiet as possible on the backswing. This is to keep from over swinging and to maintain posture.
- Your rotation will be somewhat restricted because it's easy to slip in the sand.
- Swing easier than normal. Balance and solid contact are vital.
- PRACTICE! This is probably the least practiced of all shots.
- A high lofted fairway wood or hybrid works nicely here.

ROUGH (Long Grass)

This is when strength in the hands, wrists and forearms can be helpful. The long grass grabs the club, slowing it down and twisting it closed. To test your hand strength, hold an ordinary bathroom scale and see how many pounds of pressure you can squeeze. Ladies should shoot for 100 pounds. Men should try for 150.

When escaping the rough, do the following:

1. Open the clubface a little, the long grass tends to twist it closed.

2. Hold the club tighter. 3. Play the ball slightly back in the stance. 4. Hover the club above the ground while addressing the ball.

5. Swing the club up at a steep angle on the back swing.

Swing down at a steep descent trying to get the club in and out of the rough as quickly as possible.

If you try to sweep the ball from long grass, the club will get stuck. Don't be heroic. Use plenty of loft and expect a shorter, lower shot than normal.



THE KNOCKDOWN

This is basically a mini golf swing. The smaller swing and ball position help to “knock down” the flight of the ball. Great for windy days, poor lies and controlling ball flight, especially with the shorter, more lofted clubs. **This shot can be a real game – changer!**

In fact most of my short irons shots have at least some elements of the knockdown. I like to take a little more club than I need and just “cruise” it in there.



Ball slightly right.
Weight slightly left.



Abbreviated
backswing.



De-lofted club at
impact due to
forward shaft lean.

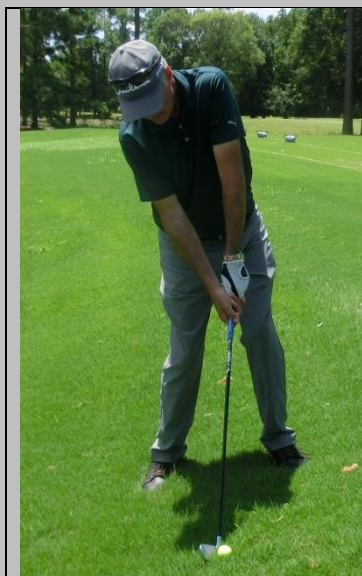


Passive hands at and through
ball leads to triangle staying
intact.

This is a great shot to practice the feel for the shaft leaning forward at impact!

UNEVEN LIES

Balance and posture are the keys here. Because you're standing on uneven ground, it's harder to keep your balance. You'll also have to alter your posture somewhat so it is even more important to stay in your address posture throughout the swing. In general, swing easier and focus on good contact and balance when swinging from an uneven lie.



Uphill

- Position ball forward (left) in stance.
- Align shoulders parallel to terrain.
- Use less loft, ball will fly higher.
- Guard against pulling ball to left as rotation will be restricted.



Downhill

- Position ball back in stance.
- Align shoulders parallel to terrain.
- Steep back swing and downswing.
- Let club follow terrain on follow thru.
- Take more loft; ball will fly lower.
- Guard against ball moving to right.



Side hill, ball above feet.

- Stand taller.
- Stand farther from ball.
- Grip down on club.
- Swing "around" body with a flatter plane, like baseball.
- Aim right. Ball will tend to go left.



Side hill, ball below feet.

- More knee flex.
- Stand closer to ball.
- Hold end of club.
- Swing with a more vertical plane.
- Aim left. Ball will tend to go right.

Note: We often use uneven ground to help people with their swings. For instance, swinging from an uphill lie is a great way to practice a driver swing as the terrain will make you sweep through the grass with a bit of an upward motion through impact. If someone has a swing plane we think is too vertical, we might have them swing from a side hill lie with the ball above the feet.

TREES

Take it from someone who has been there many times. In most cases it is best to take the safest route back to the fairway from the trees. Cut your losses. Only in the direst of situations should you try to pull off a shot when the odds are against you.



This is really just a mini version of the knockdown shot. You'll need a low shot to keep the ball under the branches. With a mid-iron, play the ball back in your stance with your hands and weight well forward. This will encourage a descending blow and de-loft the club to keep the ball flight low. Grip down on the handle; keep your weight anchored on your left side. Take the club back by cocking your wrists slightly then try to contact the ball with a sharp, descending action. Abbreviate the follow through and keep the wrists firm. (Maintain the **TRIANGLE**.) Watch out! Sometimes we hit this shot so solidly it goes across the fairway to the trees on the other side!

HOOKS AND SLICES

The simplest way to *intentionally* curve the ball is to alter the clubface angle, open or closed, *before* you address the ball. In fact, you should do so before you even grip the club. You'll need to experiment with varying degrees of open and closed to discover how much the ball will curve. Here we've placed a pool noodle over an alignment rod on the straight shot target to practice curving shots around it.



To fade or slice to the right, start with the face already open and aim left to allow for the curving flight.







Your backswing may be just a little more vertical, or upright, than usual.



I'm being careful not to allow the clubface to rotate or close through impact. The ball will start left because I'm aimed there, the open face will curve it back to the right.



Notice the toe of the club is pointed right. That's due to starting with an open clubface. The ball will tend to travel in the same direction the toe is pointed.

	
<p>For a draw or hook from right to left, start with the face closed and aim right.</p>	<p>Your backswing may feel more horizontal, or flatter, than usual,</p>
	
<p>Notice the inside path.</p>	<p>Now the toe points left because the face started closed and stayed that way.</p>

WIND

“When it’s breezy, swing easy,” an old saying that makes a lot of sense. An easier swing will impart less spin on the ball, making it less vulnerable to the wind.

- Widen the stance to keep from being blown over; even when putting.
- To keep the ball lower, play the ball back in your stance.
- Use a $\frac{3}{4}$ backswing and abbreviated follow through. (The knockdown shot.)
- Wind is a difficult element with which to deal. Be patient. Play some par 4’s as par 5’s and try to take advantage of the downwind holes.
- If you’re in a tournament, realize the entire field will likely be posting a higher score than usual.

EXTREME COLD, HEAVY RAIN, SLEET, SNOW

- GET A LIFE!

IV. COURSE MANAGEMENT


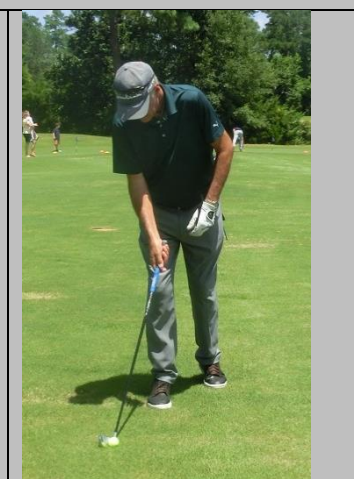
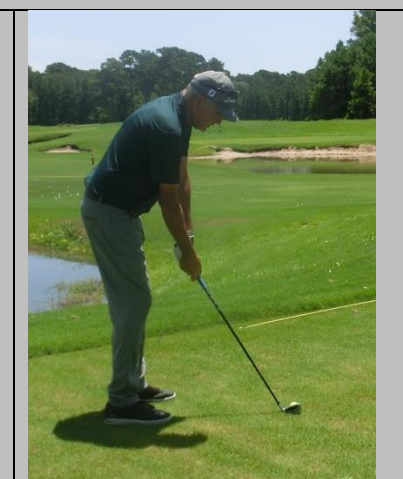
Course management is a fancy way of saying “smart golf.” It covers everything from club / shot selection to emotional control. At the highest level, smart golf is often what separates the winner from the rest of the field.

- Beginning golfers shouldn't concern themselves with scoring. Focus on making good contact and keeping the ball out of serious trouble.
- If you do keep score, set a personal par. Perhaps double bogey would be an achievable score. On a regulation course, your total par would be 108. If you make a bogey, consider it a birdie.

As your skills improve, you'll be able to manage your game more efficiently because you'll be a better ball striker and can predict your shots more easily. Following are some basic guidelines to help you manage your game.

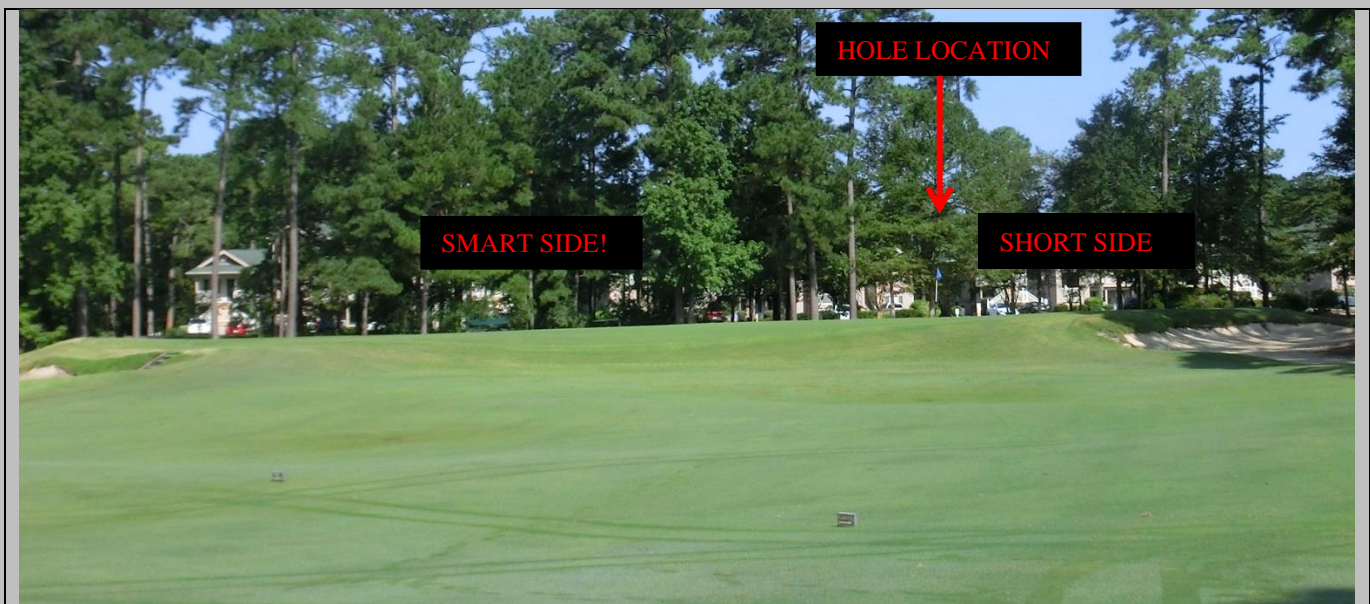
- Warm up before you play. Enough to get loose.
- Learn, and memorize, how far you can carry the ball with each club.
- Pay close attention to hole locations and yardage markers. A cup on the back of the green could add 20 yards to the shot.
- Do not carry any clubs in your bag in which you have no confidence. You'll only tempt yourself. If this means carrying fewer than 14 clubs, so be it.
- Very rarely should you swing with 100% power. The tour players claim that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the shots they hit are partial shots.
- Your driver is whichever club you hit the longest and straightest. Many players with slow swing speed carry the ball farthest with a 3 or 5 wood.
- After executing a shot poorly, it is best to not attempt to follow it with a miraculous one. Cut your losses and get on with your game.
- Do not let other players influence how you play. If you're paired with long hitters, let them blow it by you. A positive approach would be to realize you'll have the first shot at the green, and a chance to put the pressure back on them.
- Try not to get caught up in technique while playing. Save that for the driving range. Take one or two positive swing thoughts to the course.

- Do your best to forget about poor shots. They're history. This is easier said than done. Some people call it "golf amnesia."
- Try not to keep a running score total in your mind. It's tempting to think ahead, but doing so usually leads to disaster.
- In most instances play doglegs wide. Playing too close to the corner can block out your next shot.
- Establish a pre-shot routine:

		
<p>Start from behind the ball and envision the shot. Choose the line on which you want the ball to travel. Use an intermediate target no more than 3 feet in front of the ball.</p>	<p>Align the clubface to the target.</p>	<p>Then settle in to your setup position.</p>

- Establish a "personal" par for yourself. Par on the scorecard is for a scratch player.
- When laying up short of trouble, be sure to take a club that has no chance of reaching the trouble.
- Also, when laying up, be sure to consider the distance you'll have remaining for your next shot. Try to lay up to your most comfortable distance.
- Check the scorecard or consult the starter for local rules. Sometimes there are drop areas that can save many yards.

- Be careful not to “SHORT SIDE” yourself.



The short side is the side of the green on which the hole is located. In this case, the hole is on the right side. (Blue flag.) If I try to shoot directly at the flag and miss a little to the right, I'll be left with a difficult pitch or sand shot to an elevated green and with very little green to roll the ball after it lands. Aiming left of the flag is much safer. A straight shot will give me a makeable putt, if I pull the shot left, I'm probably still on the green and if I do accidentally hit to the right, I'll actually be close to the hole! This shot would favor a player whose natural ball flight is left to right.

One of the secrets to scoring is damage control. Play 9 holes as if there are no flags in the cups so you aim for the middle of each green.

- When you're having "one of those days," slow everything down. Usually our timing is off so take more club than usual and swing easier. This will help you find a rhythm to your swing.
- Be realistic with club selection. Base your choice on your *average* distances, not your potential or personal best.

➤ **WATCH WHERE THE TEE MARKERS ARE AIMED**



This teeing ground is aligned toward the right side, where the trouble is. (Blue arrow) It's easy to be lulled into aligning your shot the same way. Sometimes the tee itself, not just the markers, will be aimed to the side of the fairway. If you follow a good pre-shot routine, you'll likely aim where the red arrow is pointed.

➤ **USE THE ENTIRE TEEING AREA**






Many players tee up right in the middle of the tee markers, but using the entire width can make the shot play, and look, less difficult. You may also tee up to two club lengths behind the markers. While a couple yards may not seem like much, it can help on par threes.

V. ETIQUETTE

It's not just a matter of being polite and quiet. It's all about how you handle yourself on the course. Common sense is the best approach. Following are a few tips on how to behave on the golf course and to speed up play.

- Arrive on time to play. Don't be tugging on your shoes while hopping up to the first tee.
- Be prepared. Have plenty of tees, golf balls and carry a ball marker and a pitch mark repair tool for the greens.
- Keep an extra golf ball in your pocket. If you lose a ball in the woods or water, you won't have to go back to the cart to get another ball.
- In a friendly game, the "honor" of teeing first is often determined by a toss of a tee. Whomever the tee points to goes first. From then on, the lowest score on the previous hole takes the honor. If the previous hole was tied, go back to the last hole that was won or lost.
- Stand still and keep quiet while others are hitting.
- On the tee, the safest place to stand is in front of and to the player's right.

		
<p>This is the safest and most polite place to stand when someone else is hitting. Nothing's impossible, but if they get hit while standing there, then this guy is a trick shot artist!</p>	<p>Standing behind a player is not good. The player may not know just how far behind him you are or if you even realize he's hitting.</p>	<p>And this is just rude! Especially when putting.</p>

- For shots on the fairway, be careful not to get too far ahead of other players. Be aware of what's going on around you. Don't get caught in the line of fire!
- Replace divots or fill with the mixture provided by the course.
- Typically, the order of play is whomever is farthest from the hole hits.

However.....

- To speed things up, play “ready golf;” which is to proceed with play even if you’re not farthest from the hole. Make sure it is safe to do so and won’t interfere with other players.

Once you get to the green, a whole new set of rules apply!

- Repair your ball mark and at least one other one.
- Do not step on another player’s line.
- Avoid dragging your feet.
- When another player is putting, stand still and out of their vision.
- Avoid casting your shadow across another player’s line.
- Use the continuous putting option whenever possible. This means to keep putting till you finish as long as it won’t interfere with other players.
- Be ready when it’s your turn. Read your putt while someone else is putting.
- Be sure to leave your golf bag or cart between the green and the next tee. This will allow your group to exit the green quickly.
- If you’re in charge of keeping scores, wait till the next tee to record them.

Now for some general etiquette:

- Do not offer advice unless someone asks you for it.
- Keep up with the group in front of you. If you can’t, let the group behind you play through.
- Be humble. Don’t brag about great shots or scores. Play it cool!
- Avoid whining about misfortune. We all get bad breaks.

And finally:

- If you find yourself often playing golf with someone you just don’t enjoy, find another playing partner!

VI. EXERCISES

It is no secret that physical fitness has become a huge part of championship golf. Added strength and flexibility can do wonders for your game. Most health clubs golf specific training programs. Anything you can do to improve your physical fitness, including nutrition, is wonderful. Following are a few simple stretches for before a round or practice session. Be careful not to aggravate any existing injuries.



Stretch an arm out in front of you and pull back on your fingers.



Next, pull the fingers downward.



Now try pulling the fingers down with your palm up.



Now grab the arm at the elbow and pull it toward you. Repeat all four with the other arm.



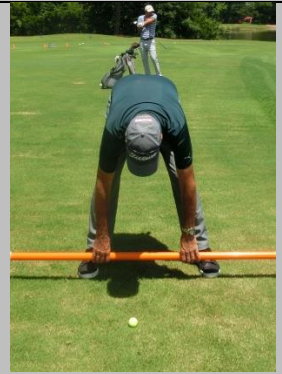
Thumbs on your temples. Fingertips on top of your head. Squish your elbows together and hold it for a few seconds.



Without tilting excessively, reach way down with one hand and way up with the other. Repeat on the other side.



Club (usually driver) or PVC, behind you, then lean forward and raise your arms as far as you can.



Just trying to touch my toes. Gets harder to do each year!



Shaft across back of neck. Rotate to your right keeping the lower body still and eyes focused on golf ball.



Turn in other direction. Try to get as much trunk rotation in both directions while the lower body resists.



Here's one with a bit of a twist. Hold your club in front of you then turn your right arm over left arm.....



.....then left arm over right arm. Again, your driver works very well for this exercise.

Swinging a weighted club or two clubs simultaneously is an effective way to learn to swing and to develop the proper muscles. The added weight tends to make you swing correctly whether you want to or not! One of our favorite trainers pictured to the right is called the Orange Whip. You're likely to see one in a Tour player's golf bag.



All of the above exercises are primarily for getting loose before a practice or playing session. It is strongly recommended you partake in a general fitness program that also includes golf specific training regimens.

VII. PRACTICE

Attaining your highest possible achievement level in golf requires a tremendous commitment of time, effort, desire and patience. To truly see gradual improvement, one must practice at least 3 times a week and preferably more. Bear in mind there will be many peaks and valleys. Sometimes you'll play worse than when you started and other times the game will seem easy. One must accept that this is the nature of golf and one of the many things that makes it so interesting.

HOW TO PRACTICE

Everyone has different ways of practicing. Some enjoy being totally isolated in their own little world not only to help them concentrate, but for the solitude itself. Others like to be in the midst of it all and enjoy having some commotion around them. Probably a mix of these environments is best. We all need a quiet area particularly when working on new things, but the game itself is played in front of others so we need to learn to perform at our best even if there is potential for distraction. Many enjoy practicing with one other person, especially someone who knows their swing. Not only can that person be an extra pair of eyes for you, he can also be a friendly competitor for putting contests, closest to the flag, etc.

STRETCHING

Always stretch for at least five minutes before starting a practice session. You don't have to partake in a major workout, just do some simple exercises to limber up and help prevent injury.

PUTTING

Work mostly on your routine and distance control. I often practice using just one ball to simulate a real game. Challenge yourself. Devise drills such as making ten four footers in a row, or a certain percentage of longer putts. Do anything that will toughen you mentally and prepare you for the pressure of a real match.

CHIPPING

The largest factor for club selection is not how far from the green your ball sits but how much green you have for the ball to roll on. In general, use more loft for less green and less loft for more green. Find a fairly flat chip shot of about 40 feet and set up no more than 3 club lengths from the edge of the green. Usually an 8 iron works well for this shot but try it with a 5 iron all the way up to a sand wedge. Take note of how far the ball rolls after it lands. This is called the roll to carry ratio (RTCR) and will help you for shot and club selection on the course. Remember if you're chipping from long grass you may need to swing faster so more loft will likely be needed.

Once you've established your RTCR's, practice different scenarios such as uphill, downhill, side hill, tight grass, long grass, etc. Even include shots where the ball is resting on the collar but is up against the longer grass of the fringe. You may consider a fairway wood or flange of a sand wedge for this shot.

As with any chip shot, your goal is to sink it and settle for being close. Keep track of the percentage of chip shots that stop inside 3 feet from the hole.

PITCHING AND SAND

Good wedge play is arguably the single most important part of golf. Being able to pitch the ball close to the hole makes putting much easier and takes pressure of your long game. Practice in a similar manner to chipping, creating as many different shots as possible.

Try combining your chipping, pitching and sand practice with putting. Using 3-5 balls from any certain spot, chip or pitch the balls as close as you can, then putt each ball into the hole. Keep track of your "up & down" percentages. Do at least 20 repetitions.

FULL WEDGES

It is estimated that 75% of golf is played from inside 100 yards, much of that from just outside pitching range but inside short iron range, hence the need for full wedge shots. Practice these shots in groups of 3 balls in 5 yard increments starting at 50 yards up to 100 yards then work back down to 50. Do at least twice. Use different lofts if desired and alter the distances to your ability.

IRONS

Start with the short irons and work your way to the long irons, then back to the short. You may consider using odd numbered clubs one day and even numbered the next. In addition to standard shots be sure to save some time for practicing knock downs, punches, fades, draws etc. It is also good to practice hitting a little harder and softer than usual for times when you are in between clubs on the golf course.

WOODS and TEE SHOTS

In addition to hitting fairway woods off the ground, practice tee shots with them for long par threes and tight driving holes. Create an imaginary fairway on the range and hit 14 drives to it. Count how many stay in. You should be able to get at least 10!

TROUBLE SHOTS

Focus primarily on good balance and solid contact from uneven lies and fairway bunkers. Take a little more club and swing easier. Practice 10 shots from the fairway bunker, uphill, downhill and side hill lies.

GENERAL TIPS

- Practice at a slow pace. Most people just rapid fire range balls and don't accomplish anything other than a little exercise.
- The best time to practice is after playing so what you need to work on is fresh in your mind.
- Always use your pre shot routine when practicing so these habits carry over to the course.

Set up a practice station with one club or alignment rod between your feet and the ball parallel to the target line for alignment and another club perpendicular to the target line for ball position



- Determine how far you can comfortably carry the ball with each club.
- Don't practice only from perfect lies.
- It can be difficult to find time to practice. Shorter more frequent sessions are usually better than "binge practicing." Practice swings at home will help a lot too.

PLAYING PRACTICE

- Play with others who are better players than you are.
- Putt everything in. No gimmes!
- Play the ball as it lies.
- Do not attempt to hit a shot you've never practiced.
- Play a round of golf on the range. Pretend you are playing a course and recreate each hole. Start with the opening tee shot, then hit the shot you would likely need for the second shot and so on. This will make practicing more like playing.

The next page is the form we use at Steve Dresser Golf Academy when we give playing lessons. In addition to scorecard information we track fairways hit, number of putts, and greens in regulation (GIR.) We like to track the number of shots to and from the 100 yard marker. For better players, we use the 150 marker and the 50 marker for beginners. You may photo copy this for your own use or make modifications. Once you've compiled 10 scores, do an analysis of total greens, putts, etc. to pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses.

The page after next is a short game self – evaluation. Use it to gauge your short game skills and take it periodically to chart your progress.

PGA Tour Level = Plus 6 to plus 2 LPGA Tour Level = Plus 2 to 2



PLAYING LESSON EVALUATION

NAME _____ HANDICAP _____ DATE _____ COURSE _____

RATING _____ SLOPE _____ CONDITIONS _____

HOLE	PAR	YDGE	SCORE	FWY?	# SHOTS TO 100	# SHOTS FROM 100	PUTTS	GIR?	UP&DOWN?	COMMENTS
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
OUT										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
17										
18										
IN										
TOTAL										

PLAYING TENDENCIES

ALIGNMENT: _____

CLUB/SHOT SELECTION _____

ROUTINE _____

RECOMMENDATIONS _____

SHORT GAME HANDICAP TEST

10 Shots each Station Outside 6 feet = 0 pts, 3-6 feet = 1 pt, Inside 3 feet = 2 pts, Hole-out = 4 pts

Player Name: _____

Date: _____

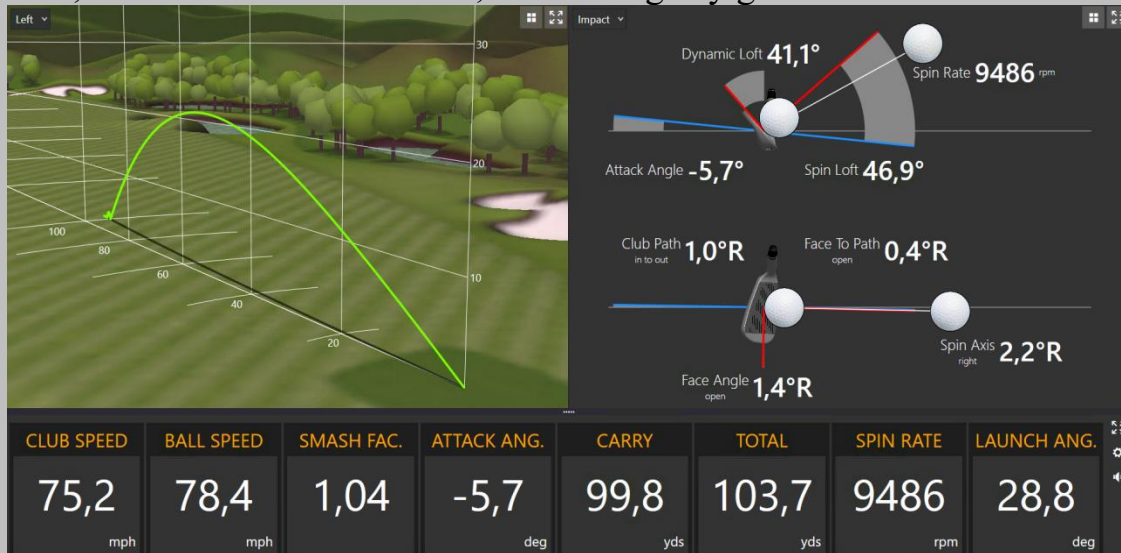
Previous Score: _____

Shot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
³ / ₄ wedge 40 - 70											
¹ / ₂ wedge 20 - 40											
Long sand 16 -35											
Short sand 7 - 15											
Long chip 15 - 30											
Short chip 8 -14											
Fwy pitch 10 - 20											
Rough pitch 10 - 20											
Lob 10 - 20											
GRAND TOTAL											

SCORE	HANDICAP	SCORE	HANDICAP	SCORE	HANDICAP
155	Plus 8	88	8	37	24
148	Plus 7	84	9	34	25
143	Plus 6	80	10	33	26
138	Plus 5	78	11	29	27
134	Plus 4	74	12	27	28
127	Plus 3	71	13	23	29
125	Plus 2	68	14	22	30
121	Plus 1	66	15	19	31
117	0	61	16	16	32
113	1	59	17	14	33
110	2	56	18	12	34
105	3	52	19	9	35
101	4	49	20	8	36
99	5	46	21	3	37
94	6	43	22	2	38
90	7	41	23	0	39

VIII. EQUIPMENT

Your golf equipment can make a world of difference in your game. You needn't spend a fortune to be properly fit. With today's launch monitor technology we can obtain information, such as in the chart below, eliminating any guesswork.



Following are the characteristics of club design and assembly that we take into consideration.

LENGTH	SHAFT FLEX	LIE ANGLE	CLUB HEAD DESIGN
SHAFT MATERIAL	SHAFT FREQUENCY	LOFT ANGLE	CENTER OF GRAVITY
SHAFT WEIGHT	SHAFT KICK POINT	FACE ANGLE	GRIP SIZE
TOTAL WEIGHT	SWING WEIGHT		GRIP MATERIAL

To fit the above specifications properly, we need a profile of the customer. Following are some of the ingredients that make up the profile.

HEIGHT	EXPERIENCE	BALL SPEED
BUILD	SWING STYLE	CARRY DISTANCE
STRENGTH	CLUB SPEED	TEMPO

The other major factor is set make up. Years ago our choices were limited but now it's not uncommon to see a set with more woods or hybrids than irons or with extra wedges. This is an important aspect of club fitting that should be considered carefully.

IX. RULES

The rules of golf are extensive and confusing but they really are designed to help you. There are a few basic rules everyone should know without consulting the rule book. In tournament golf, if you're unsure what to do, ask for a rules official.

OUT OF BOUNDS

O. B., re-tee, hit 3! This one's plain and simple. If your ball goes out of bounds, you must replay the shot from the same spot counting the shot that went O. B. and adding a penalty stroke. Out of bounds is usually identified with white stakes. If you're not sure whether or not you're O.B. you may hit a provisional ball. If you find the original ball is in bounds, you may continue playing it without penalty.



Note: Some courses have local out of bounds rules and allow you to drop a ball near the point where the ball went out of bounds.

UNPLAYABLE LIE

You may declare any shot unplayable and exercise one of three options. 1. You may drop the ball within two club lengths of where it lays no closer to the hole. 2. You may use the line of sight rule which means you envision a line from the hole back to your ball and drop farther back on that line as far as you want, as long as you stay in bounds. 3. You may replay the shot. All options come with a penalty stroke.



- *A handy rules tip to remember when taking a drop is if there is no penalty involved you are allowed one club length relief. If there is a penalty, two club lengths are permitted.*
- Free drop from cart paths, ground under repair, casual water, and manmade obstructions. Find the nearest point of relief, drop within one club length. Sometimes the nearest point of relief is worse than the existing situation. I've hit many a shot right from the cart path.

PENALTY AREAS

When the penalty area, in this case, water, is directly in the line of play, it will be marked with yellow stakes. You have three options:

1. Take off the shoes and socks, roll up the pants legs and play it! No penalty.
2. Most often, you will exercise the line of sight rule. Keep the point where the ball last crossed the hazard between you and the hole and go back as far as you would like. One penalty stroke.
3. Replay the shot. One penalty stroke.



If the ball enters the penalty area at the yellow arrow, you may keep that point between you and the hole and drop back as far as you'd like (blue line) as long as you're still within course boundaries.



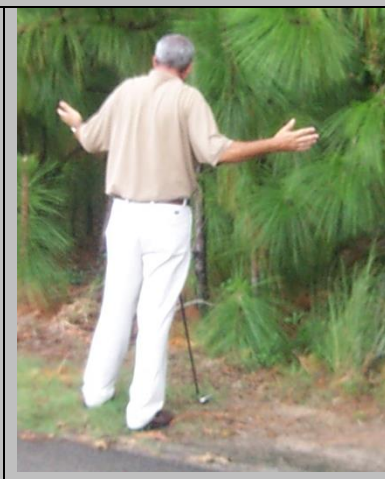
If the ball last crossed the penalty area where the red arrow is, in most instances you will establish the nearest point of relief, then drop the ball within two club lengths of that point, but no closer to the hole. You may also drop the ball on the other side of the penalty area at a point equidistant from the hole. Both options require a penalty stroke.

When the penalty area sits to the side of the line of play, it will be marked with red stakes and or paint. You get the same three options as the regular penalty area plus two more.

Note: There are often designated “drop areas” especially for yellow penalty areas. Be sure to look closely or consult the golf course scorecard or an employee for local rules.

LOST BALL, OUTSIDE A PENALTY AREA

Occasionally golf balls are lost in areas other than penalty areas such as deep woods or long grass. Because there are no yellow or red stakes, there is no way to determine where to drop the ball. The only choice is to replay the shot, counting the first one and adding a penalty stroke. It's practically the same as hitting out of bounds. You're permitted to hit a provisional ball. Be sure you declare it is a provisional or you'll have to play that ball even if you find the first one. Also be sure the ball is indeed not in a penalty area or you'll have to play the provisional ball.



X. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the years I've learned golf through trial and error, books, videos, observation and lessons. I've attended numerous seminars and workshops conducted by the likes of Butch Harmon, David Ledbetter, Chuck Cook, Jim Hardy, Jim Maclean and many others. I've had some excellent advice from many wonderful people. I'd like to mention a few of them and thank them for helping me with my game and career.

- First I need to thank my dad, Pete Dresser, "Clubmaker to the Stars" for introducing me to the game and for having the wisdom to have someone else teach me!
- That someone else was Joe Kirkwood, a world renowned trick shot artist and 13 time winner on the PGA tour. Thanks Joe, for sharing your *passion* for the game and encouraging me to be creative.
- I attended one of Peggy Kirk Bell's golf camps when I was 11. She was a "Top 100" Teacher and a friend of Joe Kirkwood. While there I gained *confidence* in my ability and broke 90 from the men's tees for the first time. I should note that both she and Mr. Kirkwood emphasized the "fun factor" of golf.
- Larry Startzel was our club pro, and excellent player, when I was a teenager. In addition to helping me improve, I thank Larry for teaching me to *respect* the game.
- Jim Beckett and I worked together at a golf school in the 1980's. At first, I thought our philosophies were miles apart. After a while, I realized he made a lot of sense. I thank Jim for "*demystifying*" (as he would have said) the golf swing.
- I have run my own golf school since 1989 and have had as many as 8 instructors on staff at any given time. There are too many to list here but I have learned from all of them and will continue to do so. I am grateful to all who have been on our teaching team at SDGA!



Steve Dresser has been teaching golf for over 35 years and estimates to have taught nearly 40,000 players! A Class A Member of the PGA, Steve has been recognized as the Carolinas Section Teacher of the Year, a Golf Magazine Top Regional Teacher, Golf Digest best instructors in South Carolina and the PGA considers him a Top 50 Growth of the Game Instructor. His Golf School has been listed on Golf Magazine's Top 25 in America and Golf Digest ranks the school as one of America's Top 100 Club Fitting Centers. He and his wife Terry have operated Steve Dresser Golf Academy in Pawleys Island, South Carolina since 1989.

**For information about Steve Dresser Golf Academy
go to www.dressergolf.com or call 843 650 2272**