



Best All Time Golf Tips

*Golf's Best Kept
Secrets -
103 Game
Changing Tips
for Every Golfer*



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A Relaxed Swing



Walter Hagen 1922

History

In 2000, Hagen was ranked as the seventh greatest golfer of all time by Golf Digest magazine.

Major victories:

- U.S. Open: 1914, 1919
- British Open: 1922, 1924, 1928, 1929
- PGA Championship: 1921, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927

Golf Tip

Many players have complained to me that they can go out on a practice tee and hit one good ball after another, then come in and start a round on the links and miss half of their drives when face to face with an opponent. This is because of the fact that they relax easily while on the practice ground and hit the ball with a freer swing.

One is inclined to be a little more careful playing in a match or a medal round and the mind refuses to let the muscles have full play just as they did while hitting the ball in practice. Duffers are not the only ones that make this mistake. I have seen just such a thing happen in championship golf where the contest is close.

A player with a fairly safe lead figures that he cannot afford to take any chances and begins to play safe. This is about the worst thing that he could do. Unconsciously he permits the body to stiffen and the swing is thrown out of its rhythm. Bad shots follow each other in rapid succession. The player thinks it is hard luck, but it is nothing more than what I have described. It is not always a case of losing one's nerve.

A player with a lead of several holes finds the lead hard to hold on to when he begins to play for a half instead of a win. The man behind is going out after everything and as a result he is hitting his shots straighter and more firmly with a relaxed, carefree swing.

Credit: Walter Hagen

Golf Practice



Bobby Jones

Golf Tip

Bobby Jones regarding golf practice...

“The right kind of practice is just as interesting as playing. I never go on a practice tee unless I have a definite purpose in view. Some correction to make. I only practice so long as I can keep my mind on what I’m doing. This is the only kind of practice that does any good at all.”

What were some of the things that Bobby identified in his own swing that he wanted to work on?

His biggest issue was failing to cock his wrists at the top of the back swing when using his short to medium irons. He also believed he hung on to the club a little too tight and this throws off his rhythm.

“I like to feel the head of the club all the way through the stroke. Unless I use my wrist freely, my swing loses all of its snap and I have neither power nor control.”

With his long irons he sometimes found himself ‘snatching’ the club back. He takes the club back so fast that it upsets balance. He found he hits the ball better when his backswing is very leisurely.

When he is hooking the ball badly, he usually traces this issue back to his left side. He finds his left hip resisting instead of actually leading through the ball.

Credit: Bobby Jones

Driving Poorly

History

Walter Hagen was known as the showman of golf and he was the first full time tournament professional. Hagen won 11 professional major championships and between 1914 and 1929, he won the PGA Championship five times; the British Open four times and the U.S. Open twice. He also won the Western Open five times between 1916 and 1931 which was widely considered a major championship.

Golf Tip

If you find yourself driving poorly in a round there are a few things that might help you get back in your stride. One thing that I would suggest is to see that your feet are fairly well apart and that you are settled well back on your heels. It is exceedingly hard to press with your feet far apart. The temptation to sway back and forth is very great with the feet close together. The chances are that the mistake of getting the body into the shot too quickly will result from this stance.

Nearly every golfer knows that there are two styles of swings, the flat and the upright. There is more of a pivoting process with the flat swing than with the upright and there is always a great danger of turning too quickly on the ball and hooking it badly. It is difficult to keep the ball straight down the course unless your timing is perfect.

If one pivots, it is very necessary to keep the right elbow in close to the body. The straight left arm in the back swing is often talked about, but it can only be done when one uses the flat swing. It is physically impossible to keep a straight left arm in an upright swing.

If you are getting no distance in your shots, see to it that your grip on the club is tight. This often is the cause of bad playing. Knowing when to tighten the grip is important as many will begin their back swing with a death grip on the club as a result the whole body stiffens with it.



Francis Ouimet and Walter Hagen

Credit: Walter Hagen

The Simple Swing

Golf Tip

Many people consider Byron Nelson the inventor of the modern swing. While he doesn't like to take credit for this, he does acknowledge that he was in search of a more simplistic swing that was more predictable.

He did not want his body twisting and turning as much, so he came up with a method that allowed him to swing the club 'straight back' and 'straight through'.

Here's how he suggests you learn it:

- Think of the clubface as an extension of your left arm and wrist (straight back and through)
- Before you hit the club you should waggle it a little bit. This is always smooth and purposeful and never jerky. The purpose is to release tension as well as set the tempo for your swing.
- Begin your swing with a little forward press. You push the club away with the left side.
- You want a smooth one piece takeaway with your shoulders, hips, arms and hands working together.
- The first 8 to 10 inches of the takeaway, bring the club straight back away from the ball.
- As you take the club back, your weight shifts to your right side
- If your takeaway is solid, then your wrists cock naturally
- Make a good full turn
- The left shoulder swings under the chin
- At the top of the swing, your back is pointed down the fairway
- Your left arm is pretty straight (but not rigid)
- Your right elbow points down towards the ground



One of his key swing thoughts was 'don't overswing'. A longer backswing does not produce a longer shot.

Credit: Byron Nelson

The Magic Move

Golf Tip

Byron Nelson had a specific leg action that he called his 'magic move.'

He is a proponent of a flexed right knee and a head that remains behind the ball at impact. This is an action that must be mastered by all golfers regardless of skill level.

He keeps his weight into his right side until he reaches the top of impact where he shifts his weight to the right side while bending his right knee.

What does he believe was his real secret to success?

"Developing a swing that keeps the clubhead on line as long as possible."



Credit: Byron Nelson

Timing and Rhythm

Golf Tip

A good golf swing comes down to two important things: **timing and rhythm**.

If you have both of those things then it is difficult to overswing. Overswinging is one of the biggest problems with amateurs as most golfers want to over-power the ball.

If you overswing, then you are likely off balance. Also look to see if the club has gone past parallel in the backswing.

To fix an issue with overswinging, Sam recommends practicing with your shoes off. By hitting balls with your bare feet, you have a better sense of balance. You can feel your leverage as you shift your weight to the right foot on your backswing and then over to the left foot on the downswing.

This is also a great practice idea for golfers who use too much of their hands and arms in the swing as it reminds them how to feel the swing from the ground up. It helps you to get more in tune with proper foot work.



Credit: Sam Snead

Best Swing Tip

Golf Tip

Johnny Miller claims to have the ultimate fix it for a number of common swing faults. He believes it has great benefit to all levels of play regardless if handicap. His tip revolves around the positioning of the left shoulder throughout the swing.

Here's what to watch for.

STEP 1: Take your normal address. Note the position of your left shoulder and burn it into your mind's eye.

STEP 2: Swing the club back. Regardless of whether you make a big or little turn, or a wide or narrow arm swing, your left shoulder will move out of the position it was in at setup -- and this shoulder movement is perfectly okay. Ideally, your shoulder should move under your chin, but that's not critical.

STEP 3: Here's the important part. As you swing down, concentrate on returning your left shoulder to its starting position.

Returning your left shoulder at impact to its address position does two things: First, it gives you clean contact, allowing you to trap the ball between the turf and the clubface. Second, it stops you from "hanging back" on your right side, or doing what I call the "sway and stay." Swaying and staying is a high-handicap move that produces slices and hooks in equal amounts.

Credit: Johnny Miller

The 'Secret'



Golf Tip

Hogan is thought to have developed a "secret" which made his swing nearly automatic. There are many theories as to its exact nature. The earliest theory is that the "secret" was a special wrist movement known as "cupping under".

The second element of Hogan's "secret" was the way in which he used his right knee to initiate the swing and that this right knee movement was critical to the correct operation of the wrist.

Hogan revealed later in life that the "secret" involved cupping the left wrist at the top of the back swing and using a weaker left hand grip (thumb more on top of the grip as opposed to on the right side).

Hogan did this to prevent himself from ever hooking the ball off the tee. By positioning his hands in this manner, he ensured that the club face would be slightly open upon impact, creating a fade (left to right ball flight) as opposed to a draw or hook (right to left ball flight).

Credit: Ben Hogan

Three Winners – One Teacher

Golf Tip

It is interesting to note that three of golf's most successful players – Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus, and Bobby Jones – all came from the teachings of one man named Alex Morrison. Jack's teacher was Jack Grout. Bobby Jones was taught by Stewart Maiden and Ben Hogan from Henry Picard. These three teachers all came under the direction or teachings of Morrison.

Morrison was well known for his visualization methods. In one of his books, *Better Golf Without Practice*, he suggested sitting in a chair and 'imagining' the key moves of the golf swing. This was a very early mental training activity recommended back in the 1930's.

Morrison principles:

-picture the swing as a whole not or one continuous motion

-only one or two key swing thoughts are necessary to drive the swing in the right direction. Too many swing thoughts and you'll lose the focus on the wholeness of the swing

He believes there are three main areas of freedom in your swing:

"The first is the upper section of the spinal column which affords freedom of action to the shoulders, arms and hands. This source is kept open by the proper pointing of the chin.

The second source, which affords freedom of action in the legs and feet, is the lower section of the spinal column. This is kept open by the side motion of the hips.

The third source of freedom is in the wrist joints. This source is kept free partly by having the hands on the club at approximately the same angle.

Look after these three main sources of freedom and you can always make your swing one continuous motion. I might add that the pointing of the chin is the connecting link, in a sense, between the body and the arms and hands; the one thing that will bring about some sort of coordination as long as it is kept from turning with the body during the swing."

Credit: Alex Morrison

Power and Touch



Ernest Jones

Golf Tip

“ In the short game control is everything. Nothing else matters. The primary question, then, for the golfer is how to control the behavior of the ball that is, how to gain control over the club head.

Control over the club head connotes two things: power and "touch." Power can be gained by gripping the club in the palms of the hands, but it is given only to few people to obtain "touch" in that way. "Touch "can be obtained by gripping the club lightly in the fingers, but power cannot be gained in that way. Some-thing between the two methods of gripping is required.

It is the blending of these two qualities which baffles the average golfer. He is apt to attach by far too much importance to power, and the result is that he manipulates his club ponderously and ineffectively, never for one moment realizing the idea of speed or " touch,' and usually failing to achieve his one objective power. His mental picture is ill-conceived, and therefore his action goes astray.”

Credit: Ernest Jones: Famous golf teacher in the early to mid 1900's

The Waggle

Golf Tip

Once a player's grip is set, it's time to practice the Waggle.

"Much is to be gained from the waggle treated as an exercise. The waggle should be performed, not aimlessly, but by the conscious application of power by the fingers.

The golfer should move the club-head back-ward, and then move it forward, thinking only of producing the movement by finger work. He will soon become at ease with his grip and on good terms with his club ; he will get the " feel " of the club, and become conscious of an increasing command over its movements. In doing this exercise he must determine

- (1) to grip the club firmly in the forefingers and thumbs.
- (2) to keep every other part of the body relaxed, notably the wrists, arms, and shoulders.
- (3) to apply the motive power continuously, persistently, by the fingers.

If these three points are observed, then

- (a) the body can never lead ; and
- (b) the body will always follow.

The player will quickly become an expert waggler, and he can then extend the waggle until it becomes a complete backward and forward swing. If the same principles be always borne in mind, the shoulders will turn and the knees will bend in due time and place.

This backward and forward swinging (which incidentally is an excellent physical drill) rapidly promotes that sense of balance and that feeling of control over the club which hundreds of rounds of golf often fail to give."

Credit: Ernest Jones: Famous golf teacher in the early to mid 1900's

Solid Iron Play

Golf Tip

All great players throughout history have been great iron players. This requires a solid shot as well as control over distance.

Amateurs tend to scoop the ball where the clubhead reaches the ball before the hands do.

One of the key points is to make sure the left hand is ahead of the clubhead.

At the point of contact, the left hand must be flat and leading the clubhead.

Try this drill where you place the ball back in your stance and with a shorter iron, hit a little punch shot with a $\frac{3}{4}$ swing.

Keep practicing until you get the motion of your left hand being ahead of the clubhead.

Your divot should be after the ball (not behind the ball or underneath the ball).

Credit: David Leadbetter

Gain Distance

Golf Tip

Jamie Sadlowski has some advice when it comes to his expertise – blasting the long drive.

Here is his list of to do and not to do's.

- never grip the club too tight
- never grip the club too weak
- the goal is to have a fairly strong grip but also to keep the hands nice and loose
- the club will go slightly past parallel for a lot of club hinge
- you don't want to hit it hard or from the top
- he tries to create all of the speed he can at the top and store it to explode at the bottom
- you can store it through lag, but you'll give the lag away if you throw the club down
- the speed is always at the ball or in front of the ball
- it's a gradual release of the right forearm
- keep your nose (and head) slightly behind the ball which changes the angle of attack to be slightly up on the ball

Credit: Jamie Sadlowski

Vardon Grip



Golf Tip

“My grip is not interlocked, but the little finger of the right hand overlaps the first finger of the left. The club is held in the crook of the first finger of the right hand, and lies rather across the palm than in the fingers—the right thumb is over the shaft, rather to the left of the centre.

The two middle fingers just close over the club. The little finger overlaps the first finger of the left hand. I grip firmly with the first finger and thumb, and there is decided pressure with the little finger on the knuckle of the first finger of the left hand.

The same principle of grip applies to the left half. The grip is mostly with the first finger and thumb and the little finger—the left thumb, however, lies down the shaft to the right of the centre, and is decidedly pressed against the side of it with the under part of the right hand.



The right palm, which applies this pressure, is gradually eased in the upward swing, until at the top of the swing it no longer presses the left thumb—at the same time the grip of the first finger and thumb and the little finger of the right hand is still as firm as those of the left. On the downward swing the palm of right hand and the left thumb gradually come together, and pressure is again applied at that point where it was eased in the upward swing.”

Credit: Great Golfers: Their Methods at a Glance by George Beldam (contributions by Harry Vardon)

Fix a Slice

History

Hank Haney is most well known for coaching Tiger Woods although he has worked with other tour players as well including Mark O'Meara. He is consistently ranked as a top 100 golf instructor by Golf Digest.

Golf Tip

The number one 'big miss' by the majority of golfers according to Hank Haney is a Slice. If you are hitting the ball to the right, then the clubface is open relative to the path of your swing.

As an example, let's say you are swinging in a path that goes 5 degrees to the left. If your club face is open any amount relative to that path, then your ball is going to tend to slice to the right.

To fix it, you need to get the path of your swing going more to the right. Take a practice swing with your club off the ground a few feet. This will help you to learn how to rotate the clubface through the golf ball. Feel the direction of your swing heading more to the right.

Second, make sure you square the clubface a little earlier-2 to 3 feet behind the golf ball.

The result is a golf ball that starts off to the right, then draws a little to the left.



Credit: Hank Haney

Bunker Fundamentals

History

Greg Norman dominated the world golf rankings in the 1980's and 90's. His career includes 20 PGA Tour events including two major wins at the Open Championship.

Golf Tip

Greg Norman believes you should keep your swing shallower (as opposed to steep), contrary to what many others say. It has everything to do with the flange of his golf club.

You should always get yourself rooted into the sand with a strong stable position. Your hands are low. Grip pressure is light. Hands are back behind the ball.

Begin by taking a nice low shallow swing. Be sure you are not cocking your wrists too early.

He suggests thinking about having the clubhead 'slice' underneath the ball as opposed to 'chopping' at it.

His key swing thought is the hosel of the golf club (the neck) is the leader through the swing. It will be pulled through with the rotation of your body.



Credit: Greg Norman

Backswing Technique

Golf Tip

Rick Smith describes power as similar to a spring where you have your upper body coiling into your lower body.

If you do not load yourself for power in the backswing, there will be nothing to be released in terms of energy going forward.

When you pull the club back into the backswing, you are activating the big muscles of the chest and core. The wrists start to cock. Your left shoulder should be coiled behind the golf ball. There is also space between your right hand and your right ear. This is important because many golfers collapse at the top. This is a critical place where the average golfer loses power.



As you bring the club back, make sure it is low with a little bit of wrist cock. One of the things you will notice is how your body turns.

When your body is at the top of your backswing, you will notice your left shoulder is pointing behind the ball. You should be able to see 90 degrees of shoulder turn against about half of that for the hips (or roughly 45 degrees).

If you are not getting proper loading at the top, look at a few of these possible mistakes.

1. Picking the club up with your hands and no body turn
2. Too much lower body activity on the backswing (ex. sway, poor weight shift)
3. You go back and up (not around your body)

Credit: Rick Smith

Positions of the Golf Swing



Golf Tip

Stance and Address: “ I advocate the two V overlapping grip formed by the thumbs and forefingers. The ball of the right thumb rests on the back of the left thumb with the little finger of the right hand over the middle joint of the forefinger of the left hand. Your weight is evenly distributed on both legs. No stiffness.

Beginning of UpSwing: Head is still. Left knee starts to turn inward which makes the body pivot at the hips. The wrist also turns along with the clubface.



Top of Swing: The left knee has continued inward while the head keeps perfectly still. The hips have finished turning and the weight is maintained with even distribution.

Beginning of Downswing: The clubhead has reached this stage from the top of the swing with only the arms having moved. It is at this point that the left knee begins to straighten and the right knee to bend so as to allow the hips to pivot.



Finish of Swing. The body has turned so that the player faces the line of play. The position of the head has not changed. The hips have completed their pivot and the weight has now moved to the left foot.

Credit: Harry Vardon

Short Game Grip

Golf Tip

Before mastering short game techniques, it is important to make sure you have a proper set up. Let's begin by reviewing the fundamentals of your grip. According to Seve, "the grip is the single most important factor for any golfer in producing a good consistent swing."

Key points:

- Seve prefers an overlapping grip.
- Your little finger goes on top of the index finger. It goes between the middle finger and the index finger.
- The left hand has to come naturally into the grip. Avoid turning the hand too much to the right or left.
- Your "V" should point to the middle of your chest.
- You should be able to see 2 knuckles.
- The right hand also comes naturally into the club.
- The right hand "V" should be between the right shoulder and the middle of the chest. You should only be able to see one knuckle on this hand.
- If you see more than 2 knuckles on the left side then your grip is too strong (likely cause of hooks).
- If you only see one knuckle then your club face will likely be open at impact and you will likely slice the ball.



Credit: Seve Ballesteros

Finding Good Posture



(A)



(B)



(C)

Golf Tip

Posture is supposed to be athletic and balanced. Balance is the key to efficient, repeatable motion and if you are too much on your heels or too much on your toes at address, your club and body will seek balance throughout the entire swing. Depending on where you start, you will either fall back or forward at the finish if you are not grounded from the beginning.

A very easy way to find your “center” is to get set in your current posture in front of a mirror (you want a side view –picture A). With your left hand, take a golf club and place it behind your right shoulder, the shaft should drop down and intersect your knee cap and the middle of your foot.

If the shaft is hanging in front of the knee cap (picture B), you torso is leaning too far forward and you could potentially be on your toes.

Conversely, if the shaft is hanging behind your knee cap (picture C), you are more than like getting too far back on your heels and you will also notice that your back-end is sitting outside of your heels. Neither of these positions are “athletic” and don’t promote athletic motion.

Again, neutral is your best friend and neutral is in the center of your feet where your arches are.

Flop Shot

Golf Tip

Phil is famous for his short game and his creative shots. Here is his description of a flop shot off of a tight lie.

- He wants the club to go underneath the ball
- the bounce kicks it into the ball and that's how it pops up
- open up the face until it's almost flat (the toe is almost touching the ground)
- weight goes forward (so he can drive the club into the ground and keep it underneath the ball)
- the arm and club must accelerate together through the ball or you'll blade it
- drive the club right behind the ball

IF your lie is on fluffy grass, then you need to make an adjustment with your weight. He makes his weight more even so he creates a more shallow bottom of his arc. This is adding bounce to the shot. It's also leveling out the angle of attack.

A reminder that it is not a high percentage shot, but in Phil's case it has been practiced an unbelievable amount of time.

Credit: Phil Mickelson

Pivot/Rotation Drills

Golf Tip

The Pivot

Body motion is the winding and unwinding of the upper body back and through the golf swing. The lower body resists the turning of the upper body in the backswing and this resistance unleashes power at impact. The coiling of the body around the spine angle controls the weight shift from one side of the body to the other allowing the arms to swing through impact. Pivots are excellent drills to practice because they help you improve your stability, flexibility and tempo.

How to Perform Pivot Drills: (you can place your clubs behind your back, in front of your chest or simply fold your arms across your chest)

1. Place the club in front of your shoulders and cross your arms and assume your set up position
2. Make sure your left shoulder is slightly higher than your right
3. Feel your left shoulder move down and across, over your right knee
4. Your head will move slightly to the right and your weight will shift to your right side



5. In the transition feel your left knee, left hip and left shoulder move away from your right side and shift the weight to your left side
6. Uncoil the upper body and feel your right shoulder move across over your left knee
7. Finish the drill with your weight on your left side and your right shoulder facing the target.

Bunker Lessons

Golf Tip

Once you land in a bunker, your first step is to assess the lie. You will be asking yourself a couple of critical questions like...

1. Is my lie uphill, downhill or level?
2. Is the sand firm or fluffy?

The answers to these questions will determine your stance and set up.

If you have an uphill lie or fluffy sand, you want to **make sure your weight is further back** so it shallows out at the bottom of the arc.

If you have a downhill lie, tight lie or you are in firm or wet sand, then **your weight should be more forward** to help the leading edge stay underneath the ball.

One of the most important factors in bunker play is to complete the motion of the hands all the way through to the finish. If they stop at impact, then you will likely not get the result you desire. The leading edge can come off the ground and make you hit thin shots. You also need to rely on the momentum of the swing to get the ball to pop up and onto the green.

Credit: Phil Mickelson

Hinge-Pivot-Hold

History

Rick Smith is widely considered one of the top instructors in golf. His client list includes Jack Nicklaus, Phil Mickelson, Vijay Singh, Lee Janzen, Greg Norman, David Duval and John Daly. He has been a writer for Golf Magazine as well as teaching editor for Golf Digest. In early 2018, he will have his own golf performance center at Trump National Doral.

Golf Tip

The secret to great chipping can be summed up into 3 important trigger words.

Hinge-Pivot-Hold

Set up to the golf ball with your weight on the left and your hands in front. Your feet should be fairly close together. You want your body to be open to the target in anticipation of your pivot.

Then hinge your hands slightly, pivot towards the target and hold the position for a small hold.

You will see a tendency for poor chippers to have a long follow through.

You will see this is a move often demonstrated by Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods as well as other tour players. Rick Smith used to be Phil's instructor.

There are many golf tips aimed towards the 'hinge and hold' methodology. However, Rick Smith adds the 'pivot' to make sure you understand the full sequencing.



Credit: Rick Smith

4 Stats to Track

Golf Tip

According to Haney, there are 4 critical stats you should take on your game that will determine how good you can become as a player.

They are:

1. Total driving
2. Greens in regulation
3. Scrambling (up and down)
4. 3 putt avoidance

With chipping, the average 20 handicapper really needs to improve at the straightforward short game shots. He believes the most damaging shots are 'two chips' for the amateur. A 10 handicapper needs to be worried about getting up and down.

Pros don't tend to miss 3 or 5 foot putts while playing, yet amateurs do. Amateurs also are at a loss of where to leave their lag putts to finish off the hole.

Here are some interesting statistics based on handicap levels.

Scrambling stats

Scratch	52%
10 handicap	32%
20 handicap	21%

Greens in regulation

Scratch	61%
10 handicap	39%
20 handicap	22%

Credit: Hank Haney

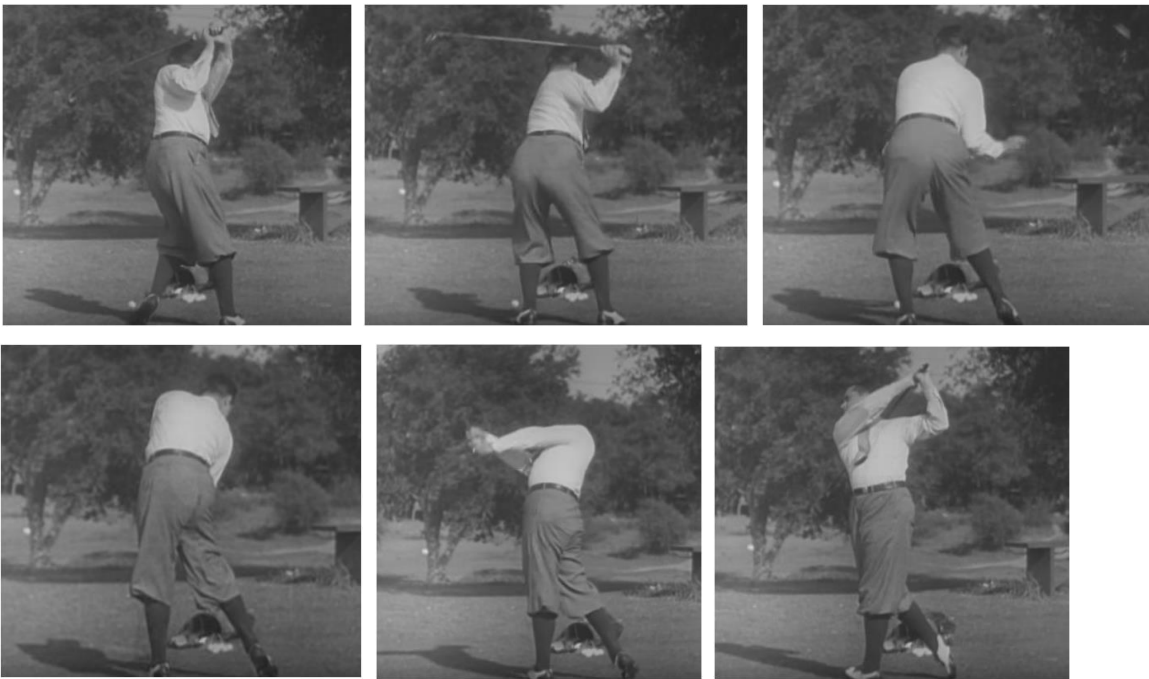
Looking for Length

Golf Tip

“When I go out for length, I swing the club back well beyond the horizontal. I like to let the backswing go just as far as it can go comfortably.”

“The full turn of the hips and the elevation of the hands give me full command of all the power I possess. I also have plenty of time to reach full speed by the time I hit the ball.”

At the top of the backswing is the elevation of his hands which give him great power. “This is made possible by a straight left arm. It’s almost as if the left arm is pushing the club away from the body to give the swing a broad sweep.”



Credit: Bobby Jones

G.A.S.P.

Golf Tip

John Jacobs has long been considered one of the best golf instructors to ever teach the game. One of his primary principles is in the acronym G.A.S.P.

This stands for grip, alignment, stance and posture. While these four components may seem like golf 101 to many golfers, it is when one of these areas breaks down that you begin to have issues with your swing or ball flight.

Grip: Grip the club in the fingers for a right handed golfer. The V of your matching hands should point between your cheek and right shoulder.

Aim: Make sure the leading edge of the golf club is aligned perpendicular. Now 'stand to the handle'. As you grip the club, it should be pointed towards your belly button. The face will be pointed to your target.

Stance: Make sure your shoulders are parallel to the target line. Feet are shoulder width apart.

Posture: Bend forward from the hips. Keep your chin up which allows you to make a level shoulder turn. Make sure spine is in alignment.

Credit: John Jacobs Golf School

Using Your Legs for Chips

Golf Tip

Stan is a big fan of baseball and suggests envisioning the moves you might make for a free throw. You use the ground as well as your legs to get the ball up.

Most golfers only use their hands and this isn't correct.

He suggests:

- Setting up a little on your left leg
- Use a slight rotation motion with your lower body using your knees, thighs and hips
- this helps develop rhythm and touch
- a little weight and tilt to the left
- hit the chip with a pivot

This position allows you to have your club travel lower to the ground (more shallow). This also gives you more room for error with your shot.

Credit: Stan Utley

Improve Your Sand Play

Golf Tip

According to a research report by the PGA Tour, here are some interesting sand game percentages.

If you shoot between 84 and 97, then you have a 17% chance of a sand save.

Tips for Solid Sand Play

The most important thing to remember with your sand play is to open the face of the club before you

grip it. Begin with a wider stance with your weight slightly favoring the left side. The ball is forward in your stance, and your body is open with the knees flexed towards the target. Your hands are positioned low and your feet will dig into the sand for balance.

•Swing the arms along the body line keeping your arms and body connected in the backswing. Swing the club face towards the target in the follow through, keeping the right heel on the ground. This will allow the body to keep correct angles during the swing which will produce a shallow divot and help you control the trajectory and distance of each shot.

•Distance is controlled by alignment – the shorter the shot, the more open your body and clubface needs to be to the target. The longer the shot the body and clubface will be aligned square to the target.

Practice Different Shots:

Downhill lies – set up with ball back in the stance and your body aligned left of the target (body parallel to the slope) and swing down the slope.

Uphill lies – set up with the ball forward in your stance and your body aligned to the right of the target and grip down on the club. Your body should be parallel to the slope.

Buried lies– face closed to 11 o'clock or face open with hands forward and weight forward (both with short follow through). (Use a 9-iron for long bunker shots)

Table 1 Putting, sand game and long tee shot results.

	Putting		Sand game		Long tee shots	
	50% prob distance	Avg 2-putt distance	Sand save (%)	Median FRL (%)	75% tee distance	Std dev direction
Pro (64-79)	8.2	30	50	16	297	4.0
Am1 (70-83)	5.8	25	26	30	248	5.4
Am2 (84-97)	5.1	19	17	40	237	6.4
Am3 (97-120)	3.8	12	7	49	216	8.1

Credit: Gary Gilchrist

The Crossroads

Golf Tip

The 'crossroads' was a way of describing the moment the swing is at the top of the backswing, yet also signals where the downswing begins. Ben believed there were two critical moments and this was referred to as the second.

He described the first movement of this transition is the turning of the left hip to the left. He said not to worry about the arms, shoulders, wrists or the club at this point.

All of your speed and power are generated from your body before the hands and arms come into play.

With the turning of your hips to the left, you will generate enough lateral movement to shift your weight naturally to the left foot. Some golfers will try to hold back on their right which is not correct.

As you turn the hips, your club should follow simultaneously and create a swing from the inside out.

If, on the other hand, you try to move the club with your shoulders and hands, this will force the opposite and an outside-in swing.

The hips lead the movement to the left side and the shoulders are the last to unwind.

"It is my opinion that it is important to master the idea of starting the downswing with the turning of the hips because it is the difference between seventy and ninety-plus golf."

Credit: Ben Hogan

Putter Backswing

Golf Tip

If you're staring down a putt of 10 to 12 feet, it is important to have an appropriate backswing. The most common error is trying to putt that distance with a short backswing.

Most amateurs will have a short backswing then try to make up for it with an accelerated follow through. This is what leads to inconsistent putting.

For a longer putt, he suggests **bringing the putter head back a foot to foot and a half so that he can complete his follow through with an even tempo.**

This tip should help you have a smoother stroke while getting closer to the hole in your lag putting.

Credit: Stan Utley

Lower Scores

Golf Tip

This tip is very old and most golfers know it well by now. However, it still ranks as one of the single best ways to lower your score and your handicap.

Butch Harmon reminds us that 65% of the shots we make during each and every round are from under 100 yards. This is why it's so important to learn how to play (and master) all the short shots available to you like bunker shots, chip shots, pitch shots, wedge shots, and putting.

"If your long game never improves, and you improve your short game, you will drop 4 to 5 strokes per round."

Credit: Butch Harmon

Feel of a Swing

Golf Tip

A lot of golfers ask 'what does the proper golf swing feel like'?

The swing should feel like the pivoting of the club as you swing it back and forth in your hands.

The best way to practice this is by swinging the club with one hand (your right hand only) or your trailing arm.

The clubhead is outside your hands and moves to the other side. "The clubhead pivots behind your hands." Your wrists are hinged on the way up.

From the top of your backswing, the clubhead moves uses momentum, gravity and centrifugal force. The handle of the club comes down and the 'heel leads the toe.'

The momentum will naturally unhinge your wrists on the downswing and rehinge up top.

Your golf swing is nothing more than this pivot going back and through. Pivot Up. Pivot back down.

Credit: Mike Malaska, Top 100 Instructor

Get Rid of Fat Chips

Golf Tip

Start with an 8 iron and put it way back in your stance.

The two biggest issues with amateurs is they get too 'handsy'. They also put the ball too far forward in their stance or the middle. They hit it in the bottom of the arc which leads to a fat shot.

The only thing you want to do is "make a right size swing' and 'hit it solid'.

Place the ball across from your back ankle. Now, flare your toes forward so you can see the hole better. This also gets your hips out of the way.

Move hips, shoulders, and arms all 'back and through' with a little swinging motion until you learn distance control.

Your shot should be low and running with no back spin.

All you have to do from here is learn... "the right length swing for the right length shot."



Credit: Dave Pelz

Sand Play (Old School)

Golf Tip

The great essential for bunker play is accuracy rather than force.

Many golfers try to scoop the ball out, after the manner of playing a high lofting shot. I have seen others try to get the ball away by taking a full swing in a vertical direction, up and down the intended line of flight, taking plenty of sand behind the ball.

In my opinion their methods are altogether wrong. My experience is as follows: I address the ball in a similar manner as if I were playing an ordinary pitch. I stand very open, as if the direction were slightly to the left of the hole, or spot desired. To get the ball up into the air I consider two things necessary

1) that the sand immediately behind the ball should form at the moment of impact a cushion between the clubhead and the ball, and (2) that the arms should be drawn decidedly across the line of the intended flight, and not, as above stated, swing up and down that line.

In the swing back, the weight is kept down on both heels with the knees well bent as if the player were sitting down from the knees, when the muscles just above the knees will feel the strain. This position, assumed in the address, must be maintained throughout the stroke. It is also most important to remember to keep the heel of the club well down (which means that the hands are held low), because the heel of the club should come into contact with the sand before the rest of the blade. The club is taken back, not out, on the projected line of flight, but it leaves the ball immediately, and follows an upward direction between an upright and a flat swing (say about an angle of 45 degs.). There is little body movement, and the centre of gravity of the body is kept well over the ball.

The downward swing is a repetition of the upward, but after impact the club is not allowed to follow through as in a high lofting shot; the finish resembles the finish of a jerk shot, with the exception that the club has come well across the ball. In playing a bunker shot near the hole it is at all times advisable to hit hard, even when the ball is lying clean. The distance made will vary with the amount of sand displaced.

Credit: Golf Faults Illustrated, 1911

Lob Shot off a Tight Lie

Golf Tip

This shot is an extension of the Hinge and Hold method.

Set Up

When setting up for a lob shot, your body and clubface are open to the target. Your ball position is forward in your stance and your weight is slightly forward. Open the face all the way, then regrip the club. You will be entering the ground from behind the ball.

The leading edge will go underneath.

Your hands are even with the ball with your spine tilted slightly to the right.

In the downswing, swing your arms along your body line so the clubface can pass your hands at impact. During the follow through the club will reHINGE, staying open, and your knuckles will be facing upwards at the finish.

Short Shot Over Sand

Golf Tip

Hitting these short shots over sand can be very intimidating to the average players so they chunk shots and blade them. The closer to the green, the more nervous they get.

Some of the common problems are not accelerating into the ball, not committing to the shot and becoming too quick because they get nervous. This is what makes the shot get hit fat, thin, bladed, etc.

What should you do?

- Let the club create the speed and stay constant through impact

- Let the loft of the club do all the work

- Commit to hit down on the shot and the loft will bring it up

- If you are taking a divot with this shot, you have come in too steep

- You want to feel like the bounce on the club just bruises the ground



Credit: Butch Harmon

Breaking Putts

Golf Tip

When you are standing on the green, there are several ways to analyze the break before you make your putt.

1. Make sure you are standing on the low end of the putt. It is much easier to see the full break and shape of the putt.
2. Divide the putt into smaller segments involving the start, the high point and the target point. This allows you to see how the ball will move through the whole line.
3. At each stage you can analyze the speed and path so you have the best read.
4. Don't always assume the ball is going into the center of the cup. You may want it to enter from one side or the other, so visualize that as part of your overall plan as well.

Pitching Improvement

Golf Tip

If you want to improve your pitching, there are a handful of areas to monitor:

- how is your set up
- where's your balance
- how's your body moving
- does the club head have the energy

He prefers a square narrow stance with good balance. He likes a level stance with not much spine tilt. Shoulders and hips are level with a slight lean forward.

“Swing in a circle along the tilt of the shaft.”

Make a little turn off the ball and a little turn through. He pivots through the turn and into the finish. The grip finishes in close to his body at his hip level.

Credit: Stan Utley

Technical Training

Golf Tip

There are going to be times when you are actively learning and working on different aspects of your swing and game. Typically this is the off season. Here is the best way to make technical or swing adjustments.

- Use a mirror to watch yourself from various angles of your swing. Use slow motion swings.
- Seek the help of a PGA professional to video tape your swing and play it back repeatedly, making observations and notes on what needs to be improved
- Take a lesson (s) during this period. Be sure you take at least one lesson on the short game and one lesson on the golf swing
- Use swing training and teaching aids like a medicine ball, sponge ball, impact bags, alignment sticks and other tools to focus on swing positions
- Thorough equipment evaluation using a professional club fitter. Make sure each club in your bag is properly fitted to your body and swing. If you are unsure, visit your local club or golf retailer for a proper fitting.
- Equal time is given to the long and short game. The technical phase typically lasts 2 weeks in the off season or pre-season, depending on the level of proficiency of the player.
- Have a swing thought and feel the positions

Where not to place your focus:

- Do not be concerned with ball flight. Remember the focus in on the proper 'feel' and technique. Ball flight only serves as a mental distraction.
- This can be a frustrating period for golfers of all levels so patience is a necessity as you learn new skills
- Try not to focus on results. They will come with time. Stay focused on the process of learning.
- If you play golf during this phase, do not keep score. During this phase you can hit several balls staying focused on the changes.

Impact Position

Golf Tip

There is a significant difference between where great players make contact at impact vs. average players.

When great players make contact with the ball, their hands are up by their front leg.

Their leading wrist is flat

Their trailing wrist is bent

The body has turned into the ball which brings the hands from the center of the body to the front leg

Most average players make contact at impact with their leading wrist bent and their trailing wrist is flat. Their body is also square or facing the ball.

One way to accomplish this is by a single thought regarding your back shoulder. If you place your focus on it, then a proper shoulder move helps to turn your body. It will help you get behind the ball and also keep you from swaying.



Credit: Chuck Cook

Penick's Magic

Golf Tip

The legendary golf instructor Harvey Penick advocated letting the right elbow go up and back freely, then returning it to the side when starting back to the ball, what he called the “Magic Move”.

Here's how Penick described the Magic Move: “...to start the downswing, let your weight shift to your left foot (for a right-hander) while bringing your right elbow back down to your body. This is one move, not two...The secret takes different forms for different players...There really is no one Magic Move...But when you learn the left foot-right elbow move I have described above, you will hit the ball as if by magic.”

Many of the greatest golfers of all time let their back elbow move up and away on the backswing. Harry Vardon, Jack Nicklaus, Raymond Floyd, John Daly, Fred Couples and Bubba Watson all employ the “move”. Watson is a lefty, so it's his left elbow making the move. You can create a tremendous amount of leverage this way to generate clubhead speed on the downswing. All of these golfers are known for distance and the Magic Move is a major contributor.

Credit: Harvey Penick

Set Up for Distance

Golf Tip

David Leadbetter sees too many amateurs with the wrong set up for driving distance. They tend to set up just like their iron play.

What is the correct set up?

-the ball should be forward in your stance (off your left heel)

-tee up the ball fairly high

-take a wide stance

- a little more weight on your right foot (about 60%)

-your chest and hands are behind the ball

-swing back and get behind it

-focus on a good turn

-hit the ball on the upswing

Credit: David Leadbetter

Strategic Putting Practice

Golf Tip

An ideal practice session will have all components built into it. It will include technical training (grip, stance, etc.); feel and touch; speed and control; and evaluation for future improvement. Here is what a strategic putting practice session should look like.

Sample Putting Practice

-30 minutes: Spend half hour focusing only on technique which involves your grip, alignment, putting stance, posture, body position over the ball and putting stroke, etc.

-30 minutes: Shift your focus by spending the next 30 minutes working on distance and feel of the greens while closely examining your putts-left to right, right to left, uphill, downhill, break patterns, etc.

-30 minutes: “Okay, now I’m going to work on competition.” Set up some putting drills that apply the principles of competitive pressure, like the first putt is for par, the second putt is for birdie, and so on.

-Reflection following your practice session, ask yourself the following questions... “How’s your technique,” “How’s your feel for distance”, “How are you putting under pressure”? “How good are you at reading greens?” “How solid is your routine and how positive is your attitude?”

Crisp Iron Shots

Golf Tip

If you want to hit a crisp iron shot you need the body to work together. If you break your wrists too much, you will start 'scooping' the ball and lose that solid contact.

Make sure you are hitting down on the ball and keeping the club low and towards the target. Let the loft of the club do the work for you. Many golfers try to scoop and lift the club to get it up into the air.

Your right shoulder should be lower than your left at impact and keep your hands low.

A simple drill she learned from her swing coach was to try and hit a penny. Place a penny on the ground and try and hit it with your irons.



Credit: Annika Sorenstam

Working with a Golf Instructor

History

AWARDS AND HONORS

- British Open (1929)
- British Open (1928)
- PGA Championship (1927)
- PGA Championship (1926)
- PGA Championship (1925)
- British Open (1924)
- PGA Championship (1924)
- British Open (1922)
- PGA Championship (1921)
- U.S. Open (1919)



Walter Hagen

Golf Tip

Lucky is the man that starts right and does not later have to reconstruct his game.

It has been said that it takes six years to make a golfer. Three years to learn the game and then another three to unlearn all that you have learned in the first three years. You might be a golfer when you arrive at this stage, but I am inclined to believe that you are just starting.

Too many of us start out trying to pick up the game without the aid of an instructor. As a result we form bad habits that sometimes take a long time to correct. Others start out with an instructor who teaches them a style of play unfitted for them. All professionals are different, just as all doctors differ in diagnosing a case, or lawyers disagree on a point of law.

Professionals all have the same fundamentals, but here is where most of us stop and branch out along different ways. If it so happens that you get hold of the wrong instructor and find that your game is not developing, take a few lessons from another teacher. No pro should feel badly at losing a pupil under these circumstances. He probably has done all he can for you and has lost interest in your case. Perhaps it is your fault and you have lost interest in your instructor. A change of scenery will do you a world of good.

Credit: Walter Hagen

Mastering the Short Putt

Golf Tip

Dave Pelz feels the short putt is the single most important shot in golf. "Half of all putts are hit inside 6 feet."

The best way to practice this is to place 10 balls in a circle around the hole. Each ball is about 3 feet away. You should practice by hitting each ball in the circle until you can get 10 in a row. If you miss, start the drill over. He says Phil Mickelson does this same drill with 100 in a row.

If you have trouble with these putts, then you are either aiming it wrong or continue to mishit it.



Credit: Dave Pelz

L to L for Distance

Golf Tip

For the sake of simplicity, think about forming two L's. One for your backswing and one for your forward swing and into the finish.

The first L is made by making a 90 degree angle in your backswing.

The second L is made by making a 90 degree angle in your follow through.

As you come off of impact, make sure you do not pull the club into the follow through.



The momentum of the club will make your wrists hinge naturally in the finish. Do not try and 'pull' the wrists through to the finish.

To form your L shape at the top, your arms bend and wrists hinge.

Use your body for stability with this drill, not speed and power.

Credit: Mike Malaska

Arm Hang at Address

Golf Tip

When you are facing the mirror in your address position, the triangle should hang in front of your body and the inside of your left elbow should be slightly exposed.

Your arms have to rotate in the golf swing and they cannot do it if they are not hanging properly at address. Obviously, if they don't rotate on the way back, they cannot rotate on the way through.

This lack of rotation can cause the club to be closed at the top of the back-swing and for the club to work steeply as well. If this happens in the backswing, the downswing will be affected as well as the ball flight. Some ball flights would include heavy, thin and high right shots.



YES

Your body type will affect the way that your arms hang. If you have a large chest, the tendency is to get your arms sitting on the sides of your body. This encourages your wrists to get involved when moving the club away rather than being able to move the triangle away.

Lastly, with regards to arm hang; your arms should hang naturally from your shoulders and the distance from your body to the butt end of the golf club is generally one hand length.

Depending on your arms; if they are long or short compared to your torso, the butt end will point just below the belt buckle, at the belt buckle or just above. You want to avoid excessive bowing or cupping of the wrists at address. A good frame of reference is that when looking in a mirror from a side view, you want to be able to see two lines; one line from the club head to the butt end and another from your hands to your shoulders. It should not be one line.

Releasing Lag

Golf Tip

How do you know where you are releasing your lag?

Try the whoosh drill.

To do this drill, turn your club head upside down and use your normal grip positioned near the clubhead.

Take a couple of swings and pay attention to where you hear the whoosh sound. Where you hear the whooshing sound is where your club is traveling the fastest and it is where you are releasing your lag. If you hear your whoosh at the top, then you are releasing your lag too early. It is also called casting.

If you hear the whoosh at the back of the swing or the bottom of the swing, you are releasing too early. You are stopping your rotation at the ball.

The objective is to move your whoosh as far forward in your swing as possible. The reason is because you still want to be accelerating at the target as you rotate through the impact zone.

As soon as you stop your rotation, your hands will release.

What you want to do is allow your core rotation to carry your lag position through the impact zone.

Try to imagine what you would need to do to make the whoosh sound as far forward in your swing as possible. You would need to rotate and then release.

3 Reasons for a Slice

Golf Tip

According to Bobby Jones, there are 3 main reasons why a golfer will slice.

1. Keeping too much weight back on the right foot and hitting the ball
2. Using the right hand too much at the top of the swing and starting the club down
3. Getting the right elbow too high at the top of the swing

Any of these 3 mistakes will force the club outside the line. This will make you cut across the ball from the outside in.

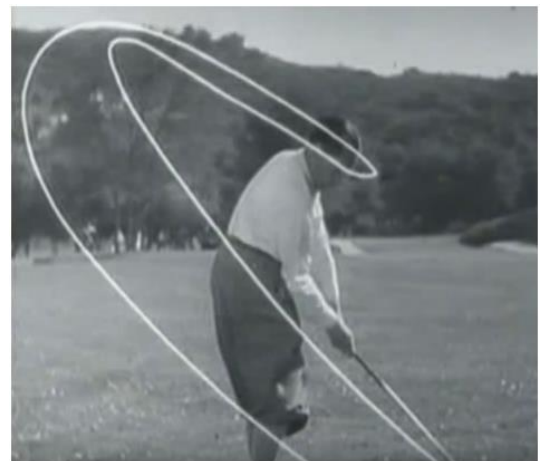
The goal is to move the club exactly along the line of flight as when it strikes the ball. The face follows through to its objective.

The diagram shows that the club never passes beyond the white line on the ground which represents the line of flight. The swing approaches the ball from inside this line. At the instant of impact, the club is moving along the line.

He makes no effort to stop the club once he makes impact. It travels of its own momentum until it completes a natural finish.

It is fatal to have the hands moving in one direction while the body moves in another.

Credit: Bobby Jones



Creating Lag

Golf Tip

Lag is created by the relationship between the left arm and the club shaft. It refers to how far behind the club head are the hands as you get into the impact zone.

The hands return to the impact position first while the club head lags behind. Whatever core speed you generate on your downswing, it is multiplied by the lag you release at impact. You can still generate club head speed simply by unhinging your wrist. The key is to not release your lag until you get to the impact zone.

As soon as you start swinging your arms in the downswing, your club picks up weight. On a 100 mph swing, the club head weighs the equivalent of 15 lbs.

At the top of your backswing you are in your maximum lag position. Your left arm and your club shaft form a 90 degree angle. If you rotate your body to the target without letting your arms drop down towards the ball your body rotation will carry your lag position to the impact zone.

Turn towards the target first, before you let your arms swing down away from your shoulders.

2 Pitching Techniques

Golf Tip

Seve shows us how to hit two types of shots from off the green: The Pitch (goes high and lands soft) and The Punch (that runs).

For the basic pitch, he plays the ball forward in his stance. His club face is set slightly open to the target. He uses his regular grip, but his hand is pointed just inside his left leg.

Weight is 60% of his left side with an open stance.

His feet, knees, hips and shoulders are all in alignment.

The swing path is out to in and it is also fairly steep to get the right height of the ball.

Notice that in his backswing, the angle between his left arm and the clubhead form a right angle.

Make sure the clubhead is not closed at the top. His right knee moves in towards the target.

The **Punch Shot** is yet another type of pitch shot used around the green.

The ball position for this shot favors the right heel in your set up. Place a bit more weight to your left side. You will be bringing the club back a bit steeper.

This will bring the club back more vertical giving you less loft and the ball will fly lower. The clubface must stay open.



Credit: Seve Ballesteros

Golf Athletic Development

Golf Tip

-Train movements, not individual muscles –For decades we have learned where our large muscle groups and small muscle groups are located. We have been taught that in order to develop each muscle we must contract it to help it grow in size and strength.

‘Isolation’ of muscle structure like performing bicep curls has been replaced with a more dynamic approach to golf specific training called ‘integration’. In golf, many muscle groups work in a coordinated fashion to produce explosive strength and power and should be trained as such.

-Train Explosively - The amount of force needed for a given activity is supplied by the use of two different types of motor units found in the body, fast twitch and slow twitch. Each varies greatly in their ability to generate force. Fast twitch fibers are much better at generating short bursts of strength or speed but succumb to fatigue more readily. Golfers, like sprinters, basketball players and other quick burst sports count on fast twitch muscle fibers to fire more rapidly creating more power. In contrast, slow twitch fibers favored by long duration sports like marathoners and bike riders fire more slowly, but can go for a long time before hitting fatigue.

-Principle of Variety – Yes, the body has an amazing ability to adapt to the imposed demands. Not only is variety the spice of life but it’s keeps the body guessing and more importantly, progressing! There are many ways to add variety to any routine. This may include new exercises, changing the order of your exercises, changing the frequency of your workouts and/or changing the time you work out. Loads can be increased and decreased depending on the repetition range and the intensity of the stage of your fitness program. During the pre-comp phase, we will overload the body so that it is always progressing at a moderate pace. In competitive stages, the volume may decrease but exercise selection changes can still create variety and the training responses you desire.

-Vary your planes of motion - A golf fitness program will have varying planes of motion as part of your weekly strength routine. Planes of movement include front to back motions, left to right and rotational exercises. This variety allows you to explore your freedom of movement and prepare your body for the demands of golf.

Greg Norman's Diet

Golf Tip

Greg Norman is widely recognized for his game as well as his physique. At the age of 62, he looks strong and fit. Many golfers want to know some of his diet secrets so this tip is for you.

-He always has a protein drink after his workouts (every time)

-His workouts typically last an hour and a half to 2 hours

His typical diet when competing: steak and eggs with honey on top for breakfast. This breakfast was designed to promote steady play with no peaks and valleys in energy.

He avoids anything with sugar before play.

In his bag, he likes to have a protein bar or energy bar.

The afternoon he would follow it up with a regular healthy meal as he got off the course.

When he is not playing or competing, he eats differently. For breakfast, he eats cereal and whole wheat toast or an omelet trying to maintain the same steady energy levels for daily meetings. He eats a salad for lunch almost daily. He eats healthy, clean, fresh and easy types of food.

In general, he doesn't eat anything white. This includes white rice, white bread, white potatoes, etc.

He drinks 100 oz. of water a day on a regular basis.

Credit: Greg Norman

Clipping the Tee

Golf Tip

Kathy Whitworth used to use a swing thought as she approached impact with each golf shot.

Her swing thought was 'clip the grass in front of the ball' or 'clip the tee' in case it was teed up.

It manages to solve a number of issues with this simple message.

1. Keeps your focus on the ball in front of you
2. Keeps the head back naturally
3. Keeps the momentum going forward in your shot

Credit: Kathy Whitworth (88 career wins)

Putting Tempo

Golf Tip

The two most important elements of putting are learning how to control distance and direction.

Direction is controlled by your clubface and the path of your stroke. By establishing a solid grip, your clubface has a better chance of staying square and following the intended path along the target line. A good set up will ensure your putting stroke will be consistent along the path, both back and through.

This leads us to distance control. *Distance is controlled by the length of your backswing and the tempo of your stroke.* When we talk about length, we are referring to how far back you take your club in the backstroke.

Tempo refers to the total amount of time it takes to move your putter from start to finish in your stroke. Interestingly, all golfers can have slightly different versions of tempo.

Some tempos are more relaxed with a nice smooth back and forth sweeping motion while others tempos may be more energetic and punchy, with a faster pace both back and through. Neither is more correct than the other. It usually reflects on the golfers' personality or even the way they have learned to play golf.

Fixing a Snap Hook

Golf Tip

The most important thing is to gain more control over your club by using your body instead of your hands. As you are coming through on the downswing, you likely have too much activity in your hands and wrists.

Many golfers will make more hand adjustments with each swing to try and correct this. This leads to a snap hook on one hole and a slice on the next.

You need to start using your body and especially your core as the driver of the swing. Let the body move the club around while the hands are more passive.

A great drill to try is the baseball drill. Grip the club at the middle point and begin swinging so you can get the proper feel of the body rotating and moving the club through the swing.

Credit: Michael Breed

Body Motion

Golf Tip

If you are struggling with any aspect of your game, then set down your clubs for a few minutes and remind yourself of good body motion.



Perform a basic pivot move.

Body motion is the winding and unwinding of the upper body back and through the golf swing. The lower body resists the turning of the upper body in the backswing and this resistance unleashes power at impact.

The coiling of the body around the spine angle controls the weight shift from one side of the body to the other allowing the arms to swing through impact.

Pivots are excellent drills to practice because they help you improve your stability, flexibility and tempo.

The pivot is the essence of the golf swing – moving around your spine - and by working on controlling the movement of your body you will have more control of your arms and a better feel for impact.

Exercise Continuum

Golf Tip

In order to learn how to transfer the loads that the body is subjected to in the golf swing, there is a continuum in exercise progressions that can be an important part of your development process.

Progress from Simple to Complex - Begin your exercise program by mastering the simplest forms of exercises first. Progress your golf training design to increase in complexity as your body grows and develops and as you learn proper stabilization of your core region. An example of progression for the legs may be to perform two leg ball squats prior to performing the one leg version.

Progress from Known to Unknown: The training environment should begin with controlled, low-neuromuscular-demand exercises and then proceed to less-controlled, more challenging environments. Think about performing a set of abdominal crunches on the floor, then proceeding to a fitness ball.

Progress from Low Force to High Force: Train lower-force, more-controlled movement until the golfer can master them, then proceed to higher-force, ballistic movements.

Progress from Static to Dynamic: Start with exercises in a stationary posture, then as those movements are mastered, add more dynamic movements.

Pitching Technique

Golf Tip

Set Up:

- Grip down on the club making sure you have a light grip so you can feel the clubhead during the swing. The stance is narrow at address with the lower body open to the target with shoulders square. Feel the impact position (keep secondary spine tilt), knees toward target, ball position middle (depending on length of shot and trajectory), arms hang, hands ahead of ball, and weight about 60% left.
- The swing is a miniature version of the full swing where your arms and chest control the motion. The wrists hinge to ensure a good plane and a fluid motion. Accelerate through impact with a follow through to match the length of the backswing.
- The difference between a chip and a pitch is distance and time in the air. A pitch, unlike a chip shot, has maximum air time and minimum roll, stopping quickly due to spin on the ball.
- Control distance by width of stance (longer shots need wider stance), length of backswing (longer backswing for longer shots) and club selection.
- Direction is controlled by alignment, path and face.

Use this shot for:

- Distances of 20 – 100 yards to the green
- For recovery shots

Putt Chip

Golf Tip

A putt chip is used to give golfers more options and to help save shots around the green. They are also played when there is a hill or slope between the player and the hole.

Set Up

This shot is played with a putting grip.

1. Ball position is under your right eye.
2. Body is aligned open to the target.
3. Grip down on the club with arms at your side.
4. Stance is the same width as your putting stance.
5. Your hands will be forward of the ball for a descending hit on the ball.

The Stroke

1. Backswing and follow through is the same distance.
2. The goal is to hit the ball off the toe of the club.

Putting Set Up

Golf Tip

- Hands should sit under the shoulders and arms and elbows resting on the side of your body.
- The thumbs sit on top of the grip and the palms of both hands oppose one another.
- Slight knee flex and bend over from the waist and hips.
- The eye line is over or slightly inside the ball.
- Ball position is forward in the stance under the left eye. This controls the path of the putter.
- Your stance is square to slightly open depending on how you see your target line.
- The shaft of the putter sits at 90 degrees to the target line.
- Your posture is created by the length of the putter and your weight is 50/50.



The Stroke

- The path moves back straight and through for short putts and gradually moves inside on long putts.
- Direction starts with a square putter face at set up.
- You control the face with the grip and the path with the movement of your shoulders and forearms.
- Keeping your head and lower body still and quiet throughout the stroke will help produce better results under pressure.

Key Points

- The length of the backswing controls distance.
- The tempo of the stroke changes with the speed of the green.
- Trust the read of the green from the lowest point of the green.

Improving Practice

Golf Tip

If you want to improve quickly, practice like you play. Here are some scenarios you can practice to resemble real life scenarios.

- Practicing your pre-shot routine with each shot
- Visualizing then executing the different shots: draws, cuts, knockdowns, lobs, etc.
- Vary your distances and yardages using your new variety of shots and clubs. Hit it high and watch the ball flight. Hit it low and notice the difference on how your ball behaves with your trajectory.
- Practice various lie positions including: uphill and downhill, ball above your feet and below your feet, poor lies, etc.
- Practice in varying weather conditions: rain, wind, and other adverse conditions. Remember adversity builds character.
- Practice putting left to right, right to left, uphill and downhill
- Finesse your ability to read the greens
- Practice varying levels of speed with your putts
- Practice a specific putting routine, just like your course pre-shot routine
- Apply new breathing techniques and relaxation methods
- Start each session with a physical warm up which prepares your body for practice or for play
- Experiment with different swing tempos and watch the difference in spin that is created with your ball. A faster tempo creates more spin.

Dynamic Warm Up

Golf Tip

According to a study produced by the British Journal of Sports Medicine, a dynamic warm up can have a significant impact on your club head speed. A study conducted on golfers confirmed those who performed dynamic warm up stretches as opposed to those who did nothing before play, club head speed was increased by over 24%!

Dynamic stretches are those that keep the body in constant motion. These are stretches you hold for no more than 1 to 2 seconds and keep your body temperature warm with fluid movements. One of the critical reasons why golfers use this stretching method is based on research which has shown that static stretching (stretch and hold) performed just prior to an event can temporarily decrease strength levels.

Each stretch should be repeated 10 times on each side. Hold each stretch for 1 to 2 seconds while breathing out on exertion.



Credit: Susan Hill, Golf Fitness Expert

Playing Into Heavy Winds

Golf Tip

This is a great tip especially if you play links courses with heavy cross winds. This is a must learn technique if you play in places like Scotland.

The goal is to hit a $\frac{3}{4}$ shot with low trajectory.

An example is using a 4 iron with the ball in its normal set up position. However, when you swing, you will finish a little lower.

If it's a left to right wind, aim slightly left. If it's a right to left wind, aim slightly right.

Here are some swing cues:

- Hit a $\frac{3}{4}$ shot (the harder you hit it, the more spin you put on the ball)
- 80% of weight on your left side (with some spine tilt)
- In backswing, weight stays in the middle of your stance
- Your ball should go dead straight (after its correction with the wind)

Credit: Gary Gilchrist

Gaining Distance off the Tee

Golf Tip

Distance determines your 'potential' in the game of golf. According to Haney, if you only hit it 150 yards off the tee, you'll never be a single digit handicap player. Distance is always relative to the standard of play you want to accomplish over time. The more competitive you want to be, the more distance you will need.

"Nobody hits the golf ball too far."

The single most important factor to distance is swinging faster, not harder.

On average, for every 1 mph of additional clubhead speed will give you 2.5 yards of distance.

Haney believes every golfer has the potential for atleast an additional 4 mph within them.

There are still golfers who believe they swing too fast. Haney doesn't believe this problem exists. Average clubhead speed for male golfers is about 86 mph. He contrasts this with the average (min) clubhead speed on the PGA tour is 105 mph.

The biggest issue amateurs have is swinging too hard and having a rigid, stiff swing.

The key is to swing much faster, but in a relaxed manner. This means to relax your grip, your arms and shoulders. Concentrate on making a loud 'swish' with each swing.

John Jacobs coined the phrase, "the golf swing is nothing more than two turns and a swish." You turn back, you turn through and you make a swish."

One way to swing it faster is to get a wider arc in your swing. This requires you to make a slightly bigger turn with your feet out a little more so you can get your hips to turn. One way that golfers shorten their arc is because they don't hinge their wrists enough.

Credit: Hank Haney

Arm Hang and Grip

Golf Tip

We are not all built the same. Our arm hang, length of arms, torsos and legs affect the way we hold the golf club and the way we stand to the ball. The “two knuckle” rule is not a standard. As you can see by the three different ways the arms hang below; two knuckles would not be neutral for the person in the first picture or the person in the third picture. Neutral is dependent on your personal arm hang.



With your hands hanging naturally at your side, move your hand to the golf club and place it on the handle at the same angle that it was resting at your side. If your arms are turned in, with your knuckles facing out, you will see more knuckles at address than someone who has their palms at their side when just standing.

If after you place your hands on the grip (and all other things being equal) you are not moving the ball the way you want, you can correct by placing your hands further to the left or to the right to achieve the optimal ball curvature. Starting off in a position other than neutral will promote compensations in the golf swing that have a tendency to compile and thus make the swing less repeatable.

Once you have determined how your left hand should sit on the golf club, your right hand has to “match”. Since your hands are the only connection to the golf club, it is imperative that they work together. So, once you get your left hand on, place your right hand on so that the right hand faces the left. A good check point is if you were to remove your fingers from the golf club your palms should be facing each other.

Furthermore, the lines that are created between your index fingers and thumbs should be running parallel to each other. Again, depending on your arm hang, the lines may point just left of your right shoulder, at your right shoulder or just right of your right shoulder.

Shallow Out Your Swing

Golf Tip

Many golfers have issues with being too steep with their angle of attack. According to Fulton (and TrackMan), amateurs are typically measured at -4 and -6 degrees. Pros come in at 0 or -1 degrees. This means that amateurs are too steep to take advantage of good distance.

To correct this, he recommends a few things to watch for:

-check your shoulders at address. When your shoulders open too much, it creates a steeper angle and a swing direction that takes the ball left.

-check your set up and forward lean. Your shaft should be more up and down or 'neutral' and not too much forward lean. Your ball should be opposite the tip of your left shoulder so the club makes contact at the low point of the swing.

-Check your upper and lower body rotation. Your hips and shoulders should not be moving at the same rate.

Credit: Travis Fulton, Tour Academy Director

Chipping vs. Putting

Golf Tip

Jack Nicklaus tells a story about a time in history when he changed his thinking about how to hit shots around the greens. It proved to be a pivotal moment and one of the greatest golf tips he ever received. It was back in 1962 at a practice round in Palm Springs when he was standing next to Arnold Palmer.

Jack was practicing his chips using a number of different clubs. Arnold reminded him that he had much better odds with a putter if he wanted to get it close to the hole.

“Your worst putt is always going to be better than your best chip.”

From this event on, Jack used this tip as an instrumental part of competition. In his regular clinics where he offers tips, he says he uses this strategy 11 out of 10 times (obviously emphasizing how important it is).

Credit: Jack Nicklaus/Arnold Palmer

Fix a Slice

The next 5 tips are dedicated to fixing a slice – one of the most common faults faced by amateur golfers. However, we have prepared 5 different tips from leading experts in the field. Each tip is from a different top 100 instructor. See which golf tip works best for you. Enjoy!

Golf Tip

The number one 'big miss' by the majority of golfers according to Hank Haney is a Slice. If you are hitting the ball to the right, then the clubface is open relative to the path of your swing.

As an example, let's say you are swinging in a path that goes 5 degrees to the left. If your club face is open any amount relative to that path, then your ball is going to tend to slice to the right.

To fix it, you need to get the path of your swing going more to the right. Take a practice swing with your club off the ground a few feet. This will help you to learn how to rotate the clubface through the golf ball. Feel the direction of your swing heading more to the right.

Second, make sure you square the clubface a little earlier-2 to 3 feet behind the golf ball.

The result is a golf ball that starts off to the right, then draws a little to the left.



Credit: Hank Haney-Top 100 Golf Instructor

Fix a Slice

Golf Tip

David Leadbetter believes your current stance is preventing you from hitting the shot you really want to make.

While his theory does not agree with what other experts suggest for fixing a slice, he recommends using an open stance.

To fix your slice, your feet should be aligned to the left of your target with a slightly open position and shoulders square.

It is when you close your stance that Leadbetter believes it makes golfers “cut across the ball even more.”

He also suggests adjusting your eye line to point right of your target. This combination will encourage an in-to-out swing and correct your slice.



Credit: David Leadbetter -Top 100 Golf Instructor

Fix a Slice

Golf Tip

If you are slicing the ball with your irons, there is one main reason – you are swinging out-to-in instead of in-to-out with an open clubface.

So, what's the best fix?

Begin by bringing your club up and off the ground a few feet above the ground. Now take a few golf swings in this elevated position. You should feel your left arm goes back and across your chest. Think about shallowing the club more from the inside. You should be swinging in-to-out.

Keep practicing those swings of 'back' and 'through.' You should feel your weight as it goes to your right, then your left.

After performing a handful of swings with your club in the air, move back to your set up. Aim your face a little further right. Your ball position is a little further back in your stance. Then swing 'in' and 'out'. This should produce a little draw while ridding yourself of a slice.

Credit: Gary Gilchrist-Top 100 Golf Instructor

Fix a Slice

Golf Tip

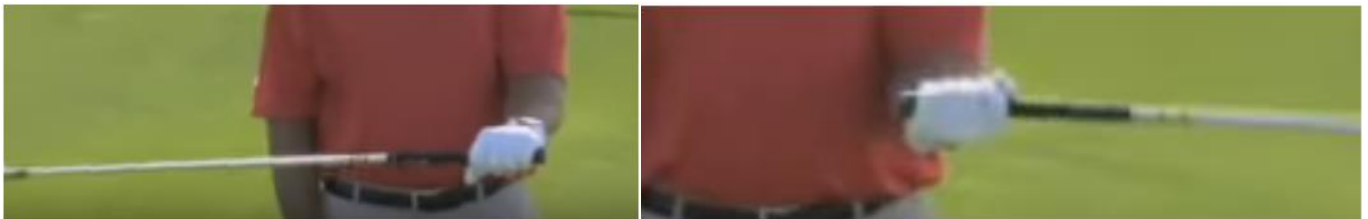
The biggest challenge for amateurs is controlling the clubface to the ball.

A slice is caused when a clubface runs into the golf ball with the face aimed to the right. It puts side spin on the ball and makes it curve to the right.

The goal is to catch the clubface up. The best way to do this is the rotation in your lead forearm. It might be a coordination issue or a strength issue with the proper rotation.

Ideally, from the top of your swing, your left forearm needs to start rotating and bringing it back to square. If it doesn't rotate properly, then the face will be open on impact.

To strengthen your forearm and develop the right coordination, he suggests placing your left hand on the club with your wrist pointing down. Turn it to the other side and repeat for more repetitions. Make sure you don't feel any pain or discomfort in your elbows while you are trying to strengthen your forearms.



Credit: Mike Malaska-Top 100 Golf Instructor

Fix a Slice

Golf Tip

If you want to fix a slice, then try this drill as part of your practice swing just before you hit your shot.

- Grip the club with your right hand.
- Place your left hand across your chest and on your right shoulder.
- Practice swinging back and as you come forward, think about holding that right shoulder back.

Harmon believes the right shoulder often leads too much on the downswing and causes the out-to-in swing.

This drill helps you get the feeling of the club dropping to the inside on your downswing.



Credit: Butch Harmon

Shot Visualization



History

Jack Nicklaus is considered by most to be the greatest golfer the sport has ever seen. With 18 major victories and 73 PGA Tour wins.

Golf Tip

“I never hit a shot, even in practice, without having a very sharp, in-focus picture of it in my head. It’s like a color movie.

First, I see the ball where I want it to finish, nice white and setting up high on the bright green grass.

Then the scene quickly changes and I see the ball going there; its path, trajectory and shape, even its behavior on landing.

Then there’s a sort of fadeout and the next scene shows me making the kind of swing that will turn the previous images into reality.”

Credit: Jack Nicklaus: Golf My Way

The Decision Line

Golf Tip

A revolutionary concept was developed by Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriot who have trained many champions including Annika Sorenstam with their Golf54 approach.

One of their key concepts was in playing golf with a visual 'Think Box' and 'Play Box'. The Think Box was the area where you evaluate all aspects of the shot in front of you. This is where you will be determining your shot selection by factoring in critical information.

- Yardage from target (measuring to lay-up area/front edge of green/pin position, etc.)
- Wind (downwind/headwind/crosswind)
- Lie (ball on sitting down in rough/perched up on tuft of grass/sitting on short grass)
- Slope (ball above/below feet, upslope/downslope)
- Course conditions (wet/hard/soft)
- Elevation change in shot (uphill or downhill to target)

You will also be evaluating the specific target, shape of the shot and club selection from these details.

Once you have made these decisions, you take a step forward into the tee box or 'play box' where the only thing you are now thinking of is execution of the shot.

Once you cross the decision line between the two, you must be fully committed to the shot at hand.

Credit: Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott: Every Shot Must Have a Purpose

Conservative and Cocky

Golf Tip

“Hit the shot you know you can hit, not the shot Arnold Palmer would hit, nor even the shot you think you ought to be able to hit.”

Bob Rotella believes all players should have a conservative strategy on the golf course, but use a ‘cocky’ swing to execute each shot. The opposite of this would be to have a bold strategy with a shot you are not likely to be able to execute and with a swing that lacks confidence. This second combination rarely, if ever, turns out well on the golf course.

When you practice your swing and you have learned to trust it, then you should be free to execute it with total confidence on the course. This means you can swing more aggressively.

This is how the swing and strategy work together. If you are attempting shots you know well, this helps you focus only on the swing and executing shot after shot with confidence.

Credit: Dr. Bob Rotella: Golf Is Not A Game of Perfect

The Groan Zone

Golf Tip

Managing your emotions on the golf course is a critical part of the game. Allowing your emotions to go too high or low can have a negative impact on your performance and create needless distractions.

Dr. Mo recommends creating a 'groan zone' on the golf course. Your groan zone is a physical boundary that you designate to express your emotions. It helps you stay mentally composed.

Having various emotions are normal. It is the way you react to them that creates the issues with your game. Let's say you are on the tee and go through your regular set up routine. You hit the ball and it does not go where you want it to.

You can feel anger, frustration and disappointment. However, these emotions should be contained within a physical boundary that you establish in advance as part of your routine. This process creates a healthy boundary for your emotions.

Examples of physical boundaries that you can set might be as you walk to put your club back into your bag. Once you place the club back into your bag, the emotion has been expressed. You can also use the tee box as a physical boundary. Once you hit your shot and return your club to your bag, you can use the short walk to express your emotions. However, you need to train yourself that once you leave the tee box area, your shot and an emotions related to it are done.

Credit: Dr. Mo Pickens: Sports Psychology Coach, Sea Island Resort

The 'One Shot' Model

Golf Tip

For golfers who want to eliminate fear, grief, frustration and anxiety on the course, they need to make a critical shift in their thinking which allows them to stay present in the moment and concentrate only on what is in front of them.

Playing in the present is exactly what it is -- the present. You are in the present when you are without any thoughts or concerns about the past or future. Nothing else exists except the present and the truth of your circumstances.

Learning to play in the present on instinct requires time and effort. That is why experience is such a priceless commodity. By training your mind to play in the present, you can shorten the time required to experience the power of being free to play on instinct and in the zone.

Here is how you approach a shot with the one shot model.

A golfer approaches his or her next shot by collectively relevant information like yardage, wind, lie, slope, elevation changes, etc. Then, they choose the correct club for the conditions.

Here's what it looks like in motion.

Plan Assessment and Decision → Shot Commitment → Shot Execution → Recover

You will notice this is all a very structured and practiced way to stay focused on the task at hand and eliminating needless distractions. The average golfer places their thoughts on distracted thinking like their score at that moment, what is happening with the group ahead of them and behind them, how the playing partners in their group are playing, and, even, who is or is not watching them play.

Credit: Neale Smith

Example of Pre Shot Routine

- Take a full-tempo rehearsal swing standing next to the ball
- Get four to five steps behind the ball and look down the line of the shot
 - Pick a very specific target to which you are hitting the ball
 - Visualize the shape of the shot flying through the air
 - Take a big, deep, cleansing breath
 - Pick an intermediate target (12-24 inches in front of the ball) to which you will square your clubface
- Walk into the shot with your eyes fixed on the intermediate target until the clubface is square to the target and your body is appropriately set-up to the club
- While waggling the club, stare at the target and glance at the ball
- GO!

Playing Within Yourself

Golf Tip

Performing your best and playing your best is more about knowing your game and your limitations. When we “play within ourselves”, we are playing the shots that we have a high probability of making based on our experience. They are shots we have practiced over and over and shots we typically make. It does not refer to the one time you made a crazy shot that you were never able to duplicate.

Playing within yourself doesn't have to mean laying up, playing safe or being weak. In fact, it is quite the opposite. It means you are confident with your game and the shots you know you can make (or your probability is strong) and you engage the mental strength within to play just within that boundary.

It creates an air of invincibility that has been demonstrated over and over by Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus. They were both famous for playing within themselves as a guiding principle to keep making smart decisions, shot after shot, only focusing on the task at hand.

Watch and observe the best players on tour and you will see them selecting a precise target within the boundaries of their comfort zone and capabilities, then aggressively executing the shot. By playing this way, they can play with more comfort and ease instead of trying to force shots that can push their limits too far.

Playing within yourself requires trust, commitment and honesty about where your game is and where your capabilities lie at any given time.

Exercise #1

Remember ‘playing within yourself’ has to do with knowing and playing your usual shots, not your best shots. Of course, you won't know this until you try this drill.

Mark off a practice area that represents an average fairway. With the average fairway being 40 yards wide, get a visual to work with.

-Hit 10 balls with your driver.

-Hit 10 balls with your fairway woods.

-Hit 10 balls with your hybrids.

-Record your results in a notebook.

Now, repeat with an area you mark as the green. The average green is about 20 yards at its widest.

-Hit 10 balls from 100 yards

-Hit 10 balls from 125 yards

-Hit 10 balls from 150 yards

-Record your results in a notebook.

Fear vs. Desire

Golf Tip

There is a psychological theory that stipulates that all of our behavior falls into two basic categories. We either behave to get something we want or we act to avoid something that we don't want. Sigmund Freud called this the pleasure/pain principle. We seek pleasure and stay away from pain, whether or not we're conscious of this motivation.

Whether or not you put much stock in Freud, this theory, applied to golf psychology, has very real applications to you as a player. The players who think the best are those who have a picture in their mind of the type of shot they desire.

"I want to hit a draw, starting on a line toward that tree just beyond the fairway".

"I'm going to roll this downhill putt so that it dies right in the hole."

"I'm going to slow my tempo down so that I can put a smooth swing on the ball".

Those who struggle with this thought process more commonly fill their heads with pictures or words that describe things they're trying to avoid.

"Don't hit it left here."

"Don't blow this by the hole or you might be looking at a three-footer coming back."

"Don't start the club so far inside."

"Stop swinging so darned fast."

While avoidance motivation can be very powerful, its weakness is that it's primarily influenced by fear. No matter how talented or skilled you are, it's very difficult to play your best consistently when you're confronted by fear. The challenge for all of us in golf is to keep our thoughts and pictures in our minds on the things that we *desire*. This motivation is healthier for the psyche, easier on the blood pressure, and more likely to produce the results over time that we're working toward.

Overcoming Bad Shots

Golf Tip

Struggling with the outcome of poor shots is more of an issue with amateurs than the pros. Pros have typically been well trained in the mental game and know how important shot recovery can be. For amateurs, Dr. Gio points out the biggest problems amateurs face when they hit a poor shot on the course.

-they become too quick when they get frustrated and pick up their pace leading to a future train wreck on the course

-they immediately start thinking of too many technical thoughts about how to fix the issue. Golfers begin playing 'golf swing' instead of playing golf.

-they start worrying about their score as a result of one bad shot which creates more stress and worry

-they start taking more risk because they want to make up for the previous poor shot

Here is where he suggests you place your focus:

-bad play happens to good golfers and they make mistakes. Never compound one problem by adding more mistakes to the list.

-immediately default to your plan or routine. This is why it's important to have one. Once you hit a bad shot, take a nice cleansing breath in and exaggerate the exhale. Use the exhale motion to let go of the poor shot.

-move back to the question at hand – what's my new target and refocus on what is in front of you. Make a fearless swing at your target and keep moving forward.

Credit: Dr. Gio Valiente

The Present Mind

Golf Tip

Many mental golf experts teach the principles of playing in the present. This is a concept that is fairly easy to understand, but much more difficult to follow in practice.

The key principles are that once you begin play, there can be no judging or evaluating of your golf shots. No over analyzing or reverting to technical cues or thoughts.

On the golf course, “there is only trust and acceptance.”

To stay and play in the present, only one thing matters and that is the target in front of you. You have a shot to make and the only thing on your mind in that moment is your plan of execution.

You pick a target. Then visualize the ball moving towards the target. Swing freely. Accept the outcome. Move forward.

Credit: Dr. Bob Rotella, The Golfer's Mind

Process vs. Outcome

Golf Tip

Even after you've secured your mind in the present, you still have to direct it toward the task at hand, or "process." Most players think in terms of results, outcomes or consequences (i.e. thinking about making a birdie putt instead of focusing on the execution of the stroke required). While you're in action on the course, thoughts of winning and succeeding can actually inhibit performance.

"If I make this birdie, I go to two under par."

This type of thinking is extremely typical at all levels. And sometimes, despite poor thinking, the putt is holed. However, if you recognize this type of thinking while it's happening and put yourself back in the process ("Focus on rolling this putt toward the right edge"), you will discover that execute more consistently in competition over time.

Staying in the process is extremely challenging for players at every level, because the tendency to think and speak in terms of results is part of the paradigm of the game. You, for example, may say to yourself before a match, "If I win this match, I move on to the semi-finals of the club championship." And after the match, everyone you see will ask "How'd you do?" or "Did you win?"

Even for Tour players, pre-round discussions are rife with consequence and outcome questions, such as "What do you think you'll have to shoot to make the cut?" or "What was the number that won last year's event?" And after the round, other players or media ask "What did you shoot?" "Where did you finish?" "How many birdies did you make?"

The emphasis placed on outcome by others is very difficult to overcome, however if you listen to top players talk after a round they routinely say they stayed in the process of hitting each shot as well as possible, and that they didn't worry about other people, how others were playing, or what number they'd have to shoot.

Trust what you're trained (and prepared) to do and let the shot outcome be what it is without judgment.

A Decisive Read

Golf Tip

“It’s more important to be decisive about a read than correct.”

Committing to a plan of action, a shot selection, or a putting line, and actually striking the ball with authority helps develop trust.

Without commitment, there is the tendency to be mentally distracted, have doubts, and second-guess yourself prior to executing. While the full trust that all will be well may not be achieved, with commitment you give yourself the best chance for something good to happen.

As the late Payne Stewart was quoted as saying, “it’s better to commit to the wrong thing in golf than to be uncommitted to the correct thing”. So, put in practical terms, how can you implement this notion into your game?

- If you are in between clubs on a shot, pick one, be decisive, and commit fully to that choice.
- If you aren’t sure if the putt breaks six inches or ten inches left to right, choose one and make an authoritative stroke.
- Begin to recognize how many times you’ve hit a shot without being committed, and challenge yourself to pull the trigger only after you’ve eliminated the other options out of your mind.

Credit: Dr. Bob Rotella: Golf Is Not A Game of Perfect

Swing Thoughts

Golf Tip

There is a lot of discussion in golf about whether you should have a swing thought or not when you step up to the tee. Many sports psychologists will say no and a few say yes. Dr. Mo believes it is fine as long as you keep the swing thought on the process and not tied to the outcome.

An example of a swing thought for yourself might be “I want to make a smooth takeaway and soften my right arm.” So, you say to yourself ‘soften and smooth’ as you step up to the tee.

What if you hit it poorly off the tee?

It is normal for an amateur to start producing new swing thoughts and further corrections which is a bad plan. It is really important to stick to the original plan when you started your round – regardless of the outcome of the shot.

Recommit to your original swing thought “soften and smooth’ and then hit again.

“No matter what, do not change the swing thought you are working with.”

The ONLY thing he advises to change on the golf course is your tempo.

You NEVER change your swing or swing thought on the golf course, only the range.

Credit: Credit: Dr. Mo Pickens: Sports Psychology Coach, Sea Island Resort

Building a Shot Routine



Golf Tip

A shot routine is a specific sequence you develop to prepare your mind and body for the upcoming shot. The goal of a routine is to occupy the mind with a focused and positive approach. This will eliminate negative thoughts and images that might otherwise be there.

Routines should be followed for each for each shot including tee shot, fairway wood, fairway iron, pitch, chip, bunker shot and putt. This routine should be practiced until it becomes automatic.

Here is the suggested pre shot routine.

- Assess the lie
- Visualize the shot, its shape, trajectory and where it will finish
- Make the club selection
- Feel the shot either physically through a practice swing; or mentally through visual rehearsal; or both
- Swing the club and send the ball to the target

-Evaluate the response. If it's a good shot, implant it in your brain. If it's not as expected or hoped for, create a new response (new practice swing) and visualize that result.

Credit: The PGA Teaching Manual

Self Control

Golf Tip

Jerome Travers was one of the top amateur golfers in the early 1900's with a U.S. Open win and 4 U.S. Amateur wins in 1907, 1908, 1912 and 1913. He is also honored in the World Golf Hall of Fame.

Even back in 1915, they were asking “why is it that I can play so well upon certain days – and so badly upon others?”

“These two main features are Nerve and Control of Nerve-quite separate and distinct, but entirely too often confused. It not only takes Nerve to win at golf, but in addition the complete control of nerves.

There are men who have raw courage enough to charge a lion's den, but who haven't control of nerves enough to make a three-foot putt in a tight match. Nerves must be used as something more than the plural of Nerve, as used in the sporting sense. The two are not the same.”

Back in this time period, he said the big three players were Vardon, Braid and Taylor – each with distinctly different forms and styles of golf. However, each possessed these important traits.

1. Control of temper.
2. Refusing to worry over any bad lie or any hard luck.
3. Playing easily within himself and never pressing.
4. Playing always for the hole, even when two hundred yards away.
5. Studying his game and practicing at every opportunity.
6. Making a point, even in practice, to follow all simple rules, such as keeping one's head still, looking at the ball, etc.
7. Keeping the body under control until perfect timing is developed.
8. Using an easy, natural, upright swing that stays as long as possible in line with the intended flight of the ball.

Credit: The Secret of Steady Golf: Jerome Travers (Open Champion) on Harry Vardon

Game Evaluation

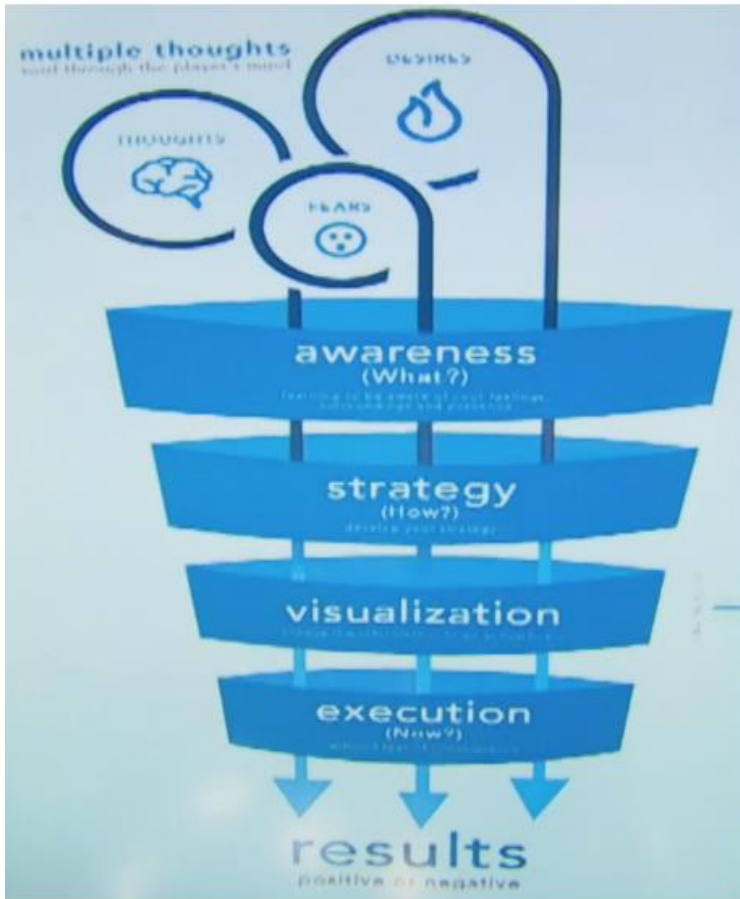
Golf Tip

Filling out an evaluation form such as this can provide a wealth of information. Perhaps you tend to get ahead of yourself rather than focus on the shot at hand. Or maybe you have difficulty reigning in your negative emotions after you hit a poor shot. Whichever may apply in your case, you can take steps during this assessment phase to prepare yourself for the hard work ahead.

Here are some observations you should be making as part of your self evaluation:

- Which clubs are you most/least confident with?
- How do you handle pressure and stress when playing?
- What is your ability to stay focused from one shot to the next?
- What inconsistencies have you noticed when playing? Do you begin optimistic and end pessimistic? Does your attitude change from one shot to the next or one hole to the next?
- Do you tend to play safe or take risks? Does your level of aggression change throughout the round? What factors cause it to change?
- Do you need more imagination when attempting to visualize potential shots?
- When faced with course hazards like water or sand, do you find it more visually distracting when the hazard is to your left, right or directly in front of your line?
- Are you able to control your distance like you want? Does your control change from woods to short irons or other club variations?
- How are you at reading greens? Do you read better on uphill or downhill lies?

Creating Focus



Golf Tip

Once a player moves from the range to the course, it is very common to have trouble focusing. On the range, all of the elements are fixed. For example, your targets are already set and your environment has little change. The true distractions begin when you walk up to the first tee. This is where your thoughts can become quite distracting.

According to Dr. McCabe, the multiple thoughts you likely are having (fear, desire, pressure), are only thoughts until you give them power.

Most thoughts are random and are popping into your head throughout a round of golf. As you become more aware of these thoughts, they should immediately move to a strategy for shot execution. Then you move to visualization so you can see the proposed shot clearly in your mind. Last, you move to

execution without fear or the other thoughts you might be having because you have followed the funnel indicated in the chart.

Find a 'spark thought'. This is an internal cue which should be paired with an external target. You can either 'feel' the motion of the swing you want to make or 'see' the swing in your mind or the shot you want to take. But, it must also move to an external element which ties it to an outcome. An example is... "I am going to hit a smooth $\frac{3}{4}$ swing and land it to the right edge of the green in the direction of that tall tree."

Credit: Dr. Brett McCabe

Improve Awful Shots

Golf Tip

Table 2 Short game and long game results.

	20-60 yards					100-150 yards			
	Pct on Green		Dist/dir	Median FRL (%)		Pct on Green		Median FRL (%)	
	Frwy	Rough	Frwy	Frwy	Rough	Frwy	Rough	Frwy	Rough
Pro1 (64-71)	96	87	1.5	7.3	12.9	85	63	5.4	11.1
Pro2 (72-79)	95	80	1.6	9.4	15.3	77	46	5.8	12.8
Am1 (70-83)	93	86	3.2	13.8	15.4	63	53	8.7	10.4
Am2 (84-97)	81	72	3.3	16.9	21.0	46	34	12.0	13.5
Am3 (97-120)	75	64	3.1	20.3	25.6	25	25	17.3	18.4

Table 3 Exceptional shots (excluding putts): total shot value and number of shots per 18-hole round.

	Total shot value per round					Number of shots per round				
	Pro1	Pro2	Am1	Am2	Am3	Pro1	Pro2	Am1	Am2	Am3
Awful shots	-0.1	-0.6	-2.2	-4.7	-10.7	0.1	0.6	1.9	4.1	9.3
Typical	6.7	4.6	-1.6	-8.8	-15.5	36.8	39.6	42.6	49.3	53.8
Great shots	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.2	1.4	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.2
Total	8.2	4.7	-3.2	-13.2	-25.9	38.3	40.9	45.1	53.6	63.3

Golfer consistency results are given in Table 3. The middle-handicap group, Am2, has 4.1 awful shots per round, on average. For almost 50 shots in the round, the middle-handicap golfer loses 0.17 shots relative to a scratch golfer for each shot hit, resulting in a total shot value of -8.5. Then with 4.1 awful shots, the golfer loses another 4.7 shots relative to the scratch golfer. Fewer than 8% of the swings produce over 35% of the shots lost relative to a scratch golfer. For the Am1 group, about 4% of the swings produce almost 70% of the shots lost relative to a scratch golfer. The awful shots could come from bad swings or from a strategy that is too risky, e.g., attempting shots with a low probability of success. Regressing the number of awful shots per round (A) on the golfer's score (S) gives a benchmark measure of consistency across golfers:

A golfer who shoots a round of 75 can expect to have one awful shot, while a 95-shooter can expect six awful shots. Individual golfers averaging more awful shots than the benchmark are less consistent and focusing on reducing awful shots may be an easy way to lower scores.

Credit: Assessing Golfer Performance Using Golfmetrics: Mark Broadie.

Creative Imagination

Golf Tip

Early in Tiger's career, he knew he had a creative mind, but he wasn't sure how to fully use it. One of his mentors described him as having a 'gifted creative imagination'. He also said that while most people admired Tiger for his drives and power off the tee, his early sports psychologist said the 'genius of Tiger Woods is in his creative imagination with his short game.'

When a golfer is in their true peak performance state, they have and tend to experience a heightened sense of awareness, an absorbed focus, there's an element of relaxation response, and they stay in the moment with a clear and uncluttered mind. This is where the performance just happens as opposed to being directed in any way.

Tiger describes his focus as so intense that he remembers pulling his club out of the bag and walking to the tee. The next thing he remembers is the ball flight. The moments in between are often difficult to remember for him because of his level of focus.

There is a '40 second sanctuary' of a pre shot routine where all of your focus should be dialed in.

For Tiger, the more intense things become on the golf course, the more he feels a deep sense of calm that he finds hard to describe.

He feels so prepared when he plays golf due to the training that he has done in practice that he feels 'he gets out of the way' while playing golf so his performance can just take over. His father who was in special forces helped him understand this. Tiger describes playing as knowing his body is present and performing the motions, but his mind is sitting back and observing.

His dad famously helped train his mind. One of the things he would do is drop something (like a golf bag) in the middle of his backswing. Tiger had to learn and practice how to avoid these kinds of distractions. His dad said, "Tiger I promise you. You will never meet another person as mentally tough as you your entire life. And he hasn't and he probably never will."

Credit: Tiger Woods (interview)

Setting Performance Goals

Golf Tip

When you are ready to take steps towards serious improvement, follow this sequence.

Step 1:

Make performance observations: “I am missing lots of putts left”, “I have a tendency to slice it off the tee”, or “I am having trouble finding the greens in regulation.”

Step 2:

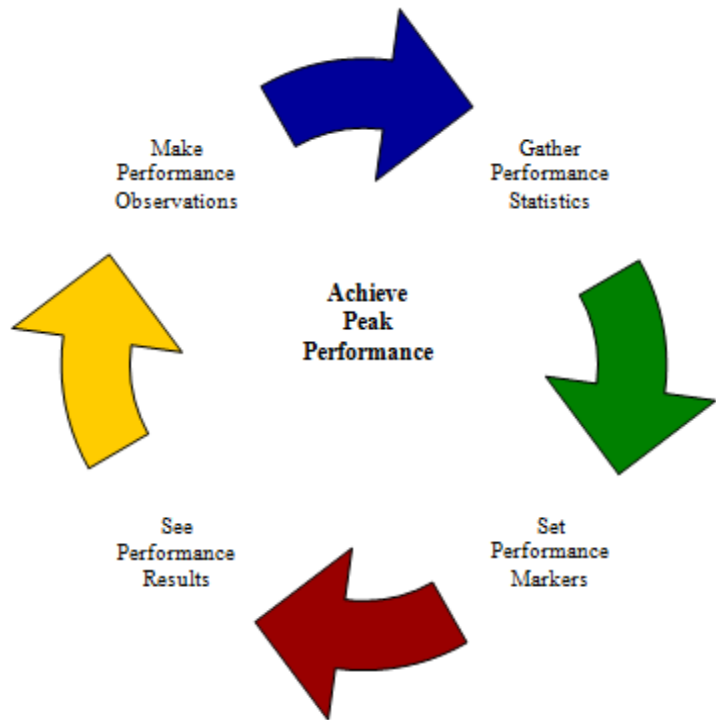
Is this true? Start recording or gathering statistics on different components on your game to prove your statements above are correct.

Step 3:

Set performance markers. Begin drills and practice sessions dedicated to improving one or more aspects of your game based on specific, concrete goals and performance markers.

Step 4:

See performance results. Start with just one dedicated goal and see it through to improvement. For example, if you choose to work on putting first. Most practice sessions will focus on feel, alignment, direction, etc. Once you see the performance results, you can move on to the next performance target.



Make a Motion

Golf Tip

“Never try to make a shot” in golf. “Make a MOTION. The motion makes the shot.”

The goal of this thought process is to teach and train the subconscious mind to perform motions (like the golf swing) repeatedly through practice. This practice then leads to a swing that you don't have to think about on the golf course **because** your body has already taught your mind how to do it.

Having a crystal clear picture of various golf swing positions in your mind is more important than thinking of what you want to have happen with your swing. As an example, don't try to focus on rolling your wrists or turn your forearms. Rather 'see' it in your mind's eye and practice it on the golf course.

There was research performed on three separate groups at an American University. The first group practiced free throws in basketball for 20 days in a row. They showed a 24% improvement in their accuracy.

The second group had no practice and did not see any improvement over the same period of time.

The third group 'imagined' they were throwing free throws for 20 minutes a day and were instructed to correct their aim in their mind if they missed a shot. This group improved by 23%.

This is the beauty of your creative **imagination in golf**. The secret is to train your imagination with the images of correct positions and movements so the body knows how to perform them in reality.

Here are some examples of things you can imagine:

- Clubhead lag
- Swinging on plane
- The flight of your ball

Credit: Homer Kelley: Golfing Machine

Practice Strategies

Golf Tip

Here are 4 easy ways to make your practice sessions translate to better golf while playing.

1. Change targets frequently. On the golf course, you rarely hit two balls in a row to the same exact target. Practice hitting to a different target with each shot. This has application whether with the full swing, pitching, chipping, or in the bunker. Each shot is thought through and executed as a unique entity- just like on the course.
2. Change clubs frequently. On the golf course, you rarely hit two balls in a row with the same club. If you regularly hit your 7-iron three or four times in a row on the course, your game is in big trouble! However, this is how people practice. Changing clubs regularly- say every second or third shot- is a good way to approximate what it feels like to be on the course.
3. Use your pre-shot routine more frequently. Preparation for each shot on the course and preparation for each shot on the range are generally vastly different for most players. This creates a rhythm that's different, a thinking process that's different, and a result that's different!
4. Putt using one ball. You are not given the luxury of hitting the same putt two or three times on the course. Yet many people drop two or three putts and stroke the same putt over and over to the same target. Practice using just one ball- with a full read- to create an environment that's similar to the golf course.

Credit: Jeff Troesch-Mental Game Expert

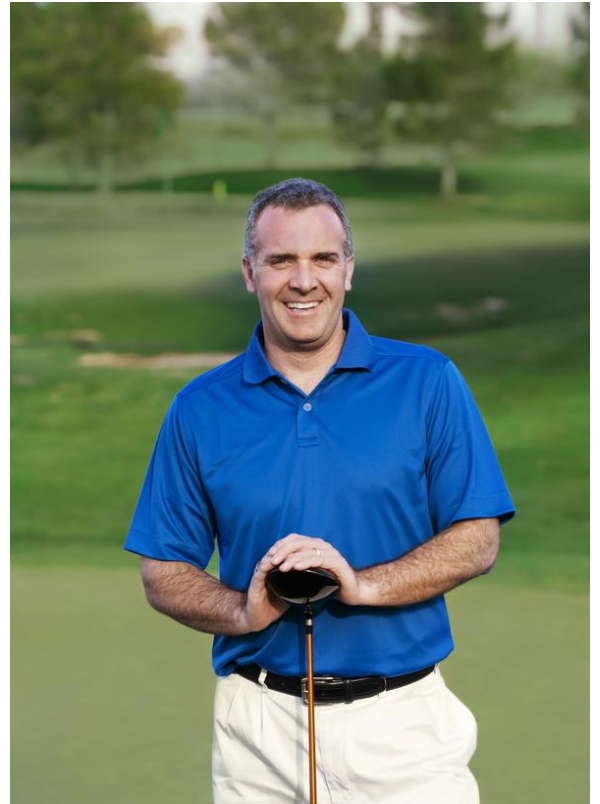
Course Management Strategies

Golf Tip

The most successful players know that course management strategies can save significant strokes when you know where to place your focus and how to play to your strengths.

Here are some specific course management strategies recommended in the PGA Teaching Manual.

- One can't always control the conditions, but he can control how he reacts to them.
- Tournament golf is an illusion. The only difference between the friendly round and the competitive round is in the mind.
- When under pressure, play the shot in which you have the most confidence.
- Playing in the present is a widely recommended by seldom utilized practice.
- Shutting down the left hemisphere (cognitive) just before and during each shot and releasing the capabilities of the right hemisphere (affective) is an essential part of the accomplished golfer's mental repertoire.
- An opponent is most vulnerable when he's ahead.



Credit: The PGA Teaching Manual

“Unthinkable” Golf

Golf Tip

One of the biggest misconceptions in golf is what you should be thinking about when you swing. An average golfer might respond, I was thinking about...

- not going to the trees on the left
- not screwing up this hole completely like I did the last round
- how bad I want to break 80!

However, the truth is that the best golfers perform their most impressive rounds when *they are not thinking*. It's not that they care less about the outcome, but you greatly increase your probability of success to achieve the outcome you desire by not thinking about it.

When we start to improve our thought process it creates feelings and emotions which then controls our actions. This is why it's important to develop and control our thought process. The ability to clear your mind of all thoughts takes time and mental training to accomplish.

To 'unthink' is also to disassociate with the outcome of your golf shots. Pros who use this technique have shown dramatic improvements in their games. It is a perfect way to help amateurs improve quickly and easily. Just as you have likely experienced, emotions can have a snowball effect and take you quickly from making one bad decision to ruining an entire round when you don't recover.

Mental Exercise #1

Many professional golfers have been highly successful with awareness drills. These techniques awaken the mind to what is happening in the present moment and take away any attention to the mindless chatter of the brain.

- a. Close your eyes and move your club from an open position to closed to square. See if you can feel the difference with the club in your hand without making any contact.
- b. Next, swing the club with your eyes closed to see if you can feel the angle of the clubface at impact.

8 Traits of Golf Champions

Golf Tip

In order to be make significant improvements in your game, you must first believe that you can! One of the few things that you as a golfer can completely control with regard to your game of golf is your attitude. Wind, rain, poor lies, playing partners who play slowly or talk too much can be frustrating and are outside of your control. Players who learn to shut out these distractions and have a winning attitude provide themselves the best chance to play at their peak level.

1. As a winner you believe in yourself – Without a strong belief in your own ability to execute shots, you will consistently doubt yourself on the golf course.
2. Winners accept challenges enthusiastically – Most players when faced with difficult situations look at them in a negative light. “Oh, just my luck, I hit a great drive and it lands in a divot” or “I can’t believe that the ball is buried so deeply in the bunker”. The great players in the game have an attitude of acceptance of these situations as a natural, “every day” part of the game, and they approach these circumstances with enthusiasm.
3. Winning golfers work hard and preserve – What does working hard mean to you? To the golfer who is serious about the game, this means doing whatever it takes to become the best player you can possibly be. If extra putting practice is called for, you see this player on the putting green. When the irons are shaky, you’ll see this player hitting extra balls at the range. When it is necessary to scale back on training because the player is over tired, this player gives himself time off to rest and recover. Perseverance refers to the player continuing to give effort no matter what the obstacles.
4. Winners make the best of his or her natural talents – The smart golfer with a winning attitude plays within his or her strengths. This includes working diligently to improve your weaknesses as well. The desired result here is to reach your ultimate potential.
5. Winners stay focused on their goals – This winning attitude is essential for the serious golfer at every level. Once your goals have been clearly defined, structure your practice and your play with this ultimate goal in mind. No single shot, no hole, no round of golf is as important as the goal that you’re attempting to achieve. Everything that you undertake in golf is with this purpose in mind.

6. Winners take responsibility – There are a million excuses that most golfers use for not achieving what they want to achieve. The golfer with a winning attitude takes responsibility for his or her development as a player, and uses no excuses along the path to success. Rather than trying to figure out whose fault it is that something went wrong, put more energy into finding alternative methods to achieve the success you seek.
7. Winning golfers keep it all in perspective – A winner doesn't let himself get too excited over victories or too discontent over defeats. While wanting to win, a winner typically doesn't feel as though he "has to" win in order to be "OK". Your winning attitude toward golf involves maintaining a sense of humor at yourself and at this game which is both challenging and frustrating for everyone who plays it.
8. Winners are flexible– Adaptability is the last characteristic of a winning attitude. Once a winner chooses his path he understands that there are going to be deviations along the way. A pilot flying an airplane between two cities may sometimes need to go higher or lower depending upon weather or air traffic, or may take a route that isn't a straight line because another route is safer for the passengers. A winner also keeps the destination in mind while remaining flexible and making adjustments when encountering things over which he has little control.

The Dehydrated Golf Body

Golf Tips

Through normal perspiration, respiration, and urination, the body can lose up to half a gallon of water a day. Actively training athletes can lose even more! To replenish fluids properly, the body's digestive system can only absorb about 1 quart of fluid per hour, so it is imperative to drink fluids at regular intervals before, during, and after exercise and golf rounds or practice.

- Dehydration can result in memory lapse, lightheadedness, difficulty breathing and headaches.
- Golfers need to rely on water to ensure that their mental capacity is at an optimal level. A lack of water short-circuits the brain.
- Excess water loss through perspiration if not replenished will speed up physical fatigue.
- Sports drinks with electrolytes are also a good drink. Be wary of sports drinks with sugar added, as they will give you a quick boost of energy (simple carb) but cause fatigue within an hour or two.
- Allows golfers to maintain constant body temperatures by providing perspiration for cooling and blood circulation for warming.
- Water helps to lubricate and cushion the joints and tissues of the body.

How Your Body Reacts When You Lose Fluids During Exercise	
Percent Weight Loss	Effects On The Body
1 to 2	Increase in core body temperature
3	Significant increase in body temperature with aerobic exercise
5 [*]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant increase in body temperature with a definite decrease in aerobic ability and muscular endurance • Possible 20 to 30 percent decrease in strength and anaerobic power • Susceptibility to heat exhaustion
6	Muscle spasms, cramping
10 or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessively high core body temperature • Susceptibility to heat stroke • Heat injury and circulatory collapse with aerobic performance
[*] With a 5 percent body weight loss, an athlete will need at least 5 hours to rehydrate.	

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Too many golfers wait until they are thirsty to take a quick drink from the water bottle. This is too late. Besides quenching our thirst, water transports the valuable nutrients that encourage our muscles to keep working and to continue the combustion of glycogen in our bodies.

A golfer should have a large glass of water prior to starting their round, and constantly replenish the stores every two to three holes. **At 1% dehydration, a golfer's body temperature is increased. At 3%, performance is impaired.**

Managing Injuries

Golf Tip

Treating an Acute Injury

If you suffer an acute injury, such as a strain or pull, immediately stop activity and use the RICE method of treatment. RICE stands for Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation.

- Rest will prevent further injury and will allow healing.
- Ice will stop swelling as it constricts injured blood vessels and limits the bleeding in the injured area.
- Compression further limits swelling and supports the injured joint.
- Elevation uses gravity to reduce swelling in the injured area by reducing blood flow.

It is important to begin RICE as soon after injury as possible. Use a sheet or towel to protect the skin and apply ice immediately. Next wrap an elastic bandage around the ice and injured area. Don't wrap this so tightly that you cut off the blood supply, but it should be snug. Leave ice on for about 15 minutes every three hours or so during the day. Once the swelling decreases, you can begin gentle range of motion exercises for the affected joint.

When to See A Doctor

Most acute injuries can be attended to using RICE, but some injuries need to be seen and treated by a physician. You should call your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- you have severe pain, or if pain persists for more than two weeks in a joint or bone.
- pain radiates to another area of the body.
- you have 'point tenderness.' That is, you can cause pain by pressing on a specific area, but pain is not produced at the same point on the other side of the body.
- you have any injury to a joint that produces significant swelling. If left untreated, joint injuries can become permanent.
- you cannot move the injured part.
- there is persistent numbness, tingling or weakness in the injured area.
- your injury doesn't heal in three weeks.
- you have an infection with pus, red streaks, a fever, or swollen lymph nodes.