

WINTER

SKILLS AND DRILLS





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Introduction

Golf is a game of confidence. One of the primary goals of the off season is to build on that confidence by improving your technical proficiency. It's a great time to develop proper feel as well as technique.

The goal of this process is to have a more clear understanding of your swing, develop the right feel for your body motion and movement patterns and to build confidence in your abilities as a player.

During the regular playing season, you will likely be out practicing on the range and ball flight can become a distraction. That's why the Winter season or off season is perfect for golf improvement.

Our ultimate goal is not to seek perfection, but to continue to gain knowledge so we can adjust our own game and reach our full potential as a player.

This is not another guide reviewing the basics of grip, alignment, posture and address. It is rather a guide about developing specific skills so you can learn how to apply what you know and begin the process of player development as you move from a good player to a great one.

One of the best things you can do for your game is to develop your skill set.

The great news is that you don't have to tinker with your swing or change your mechanics. When you focus on essential skill building, you are merely fine tuning the elements that contribute to an optimal golf swing.

Too many golfers put away their clubs during the off season. Depending on where you live, adverse weather conditions can take you out of the game for 3 to 4 months or more.

Many of the golf tips and drills we see on tv and read in magazines focus on practicing on the range, the putting greens or short game practice areas. At the same time, our courses are covered in ice and snow and many even close for the winter months. So, we often think we can't practice or get better because we can't play.

This is not the time to put away your clubs. In fact, just the opposite. This becomes the perfect time to develop your golf skills!

Avid golfers and seasoned professionals know their technique can get sloppy over a busy playing season. Taking time to step away from the ball and work on elements like a synchronized swing, better balance, awareness, etc. helps us build on our foundation so we are better players when it's time to get back out on the course.

Here are some of the things we will be focusing on for essential golf skill development.

- Clubface awareness
- Grip and tension awareness
- Body motion and balance
- Rhythm and tempo
- Isolated and integrated movement

Remember these are essential golf skills every player needs to succeed. Regardless of your season or weather, follow these skill development drills and you'll emerge a better player.

Here's to improving your game and loving every minute of it...

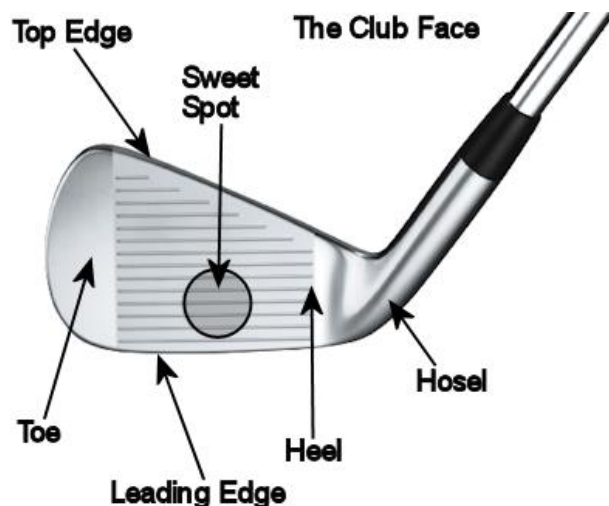
Clubface Awareness

Whether you are a technical player or feel player, it's important to develop club head awareness. This level of awareness allows you to know when your club is in balance as well as in the right positions during your swing.

One of the most powerful things you can develop is taking full ownership of your swing. That means on a shot by shot basis, you learn the 'how' and 'why' your ball is flying a certain way and what to do when your swing is off track.

The other issue, and this is pretty significant, is understanding where your ball is making contact with your club. In other words...IMPACT. Are you making center contact on most shots, some shots or no shots?

If you are hitting the ball with the toe or heel or anywhere other than the 'sweet spot' with your club, then this is obviously one of the main issues with consistency and accuracy with your shots.



It is the cause and effect of poor shot making. Being aware of your club positions throughout your swing will allow you to have more control because you can self-correct along the way.

Here are some great drills to help your club head awareness.

If you are more of a technical player, you can perform the following drill in front of a mirror so you can observe the various positions – one step at a time.

As a feel player, simply pause for a second in each position so you can determine and reinforce the feel of each position throughout your swing.

Golf Drill #1



One of our favorite golf drills for clubhead awareness is the **Two Club Balance Drill**.

It forces you to swing both clubs in balance using your arms, wrists and upper body and allowing the lower body to remain stable.

How to Perform the Drill: Grip two clubs - one in each hand - and make sure you choke up on the clubs and start with both of them off the ground. Keep your hands a few inches apart during the drill.



Golf Drill #2

Swing Plane Drill: This will allow you to feel the golf club in balance and reinforce the right positions in the golf swing.

Simply grip down on the club so you can see the end of the grip between your arms. The golf club will be off the ground.





Golf Drill #3

Sync Drill:

This drill will give you a feel of the clubface being square throughout your swing. You will also feel your grip more in the fingers.

Take your athletic set up. Grip way down on the club - about 8 inches from the clubhead. Then place the grip end on your left hip.





Golf Drill #4

Connected Drill: This drill helps to develop a more connected swing. Place a golf towel underneath both arms. Your arms and body should work together for a more compact swing. Practice this drill with a short iron and only make half swings – back and through.



Golf Drill #5

Split handed drill: Take your normal grip, then slide your right hand down a few inches – assuming you're right-handed.

Once in place, take a few golf swings and notice your primary golf positions – takeaway, half back, backswing, downswing, and follow through. Many pros swear on this drill because it forces more correct positions in the takeaway, coming back down into the ball, and where the club shallows out.

This drill is especially good for golfers who come over the top too much or have issues whipping it inside. If your hands are separated, you're not going to be able to take it inside.



Grip and Tension Awareness

Your grip pressure on the club can lead to a number of common swing faults.

Here are some of the main issues:

1. It can limit clubface rotation which can affect your accuracy
2. It can affect your wrist set which can alter your ability to produce lag (and power)
3. It limits your ability to control the ball

When you are practicing for having the right grip pressure, it is important to look at any excessive tension you may have in your wrists or in your fingers.

When it comes to grip pressure, most people don't pay much attention; we tend to care a lot more for the position of our hands. How tight you hold the club can actually have a huge impact on your shot though.

The most common issue is gripping the club too tightly. A grip that is too tight is difficult to move. It means that the muscles in your hands are tense.

Muscle that are flexed don't have great range of motion. This means that, as you come through impact, you'll struggle to rotate your hands and close the face down. A lot of times, when golfers have a grip that is too tight, they'll tend to push or slice shots.

To check if your grip pressure is too tight, think of your club's grip as a tube of toothpaste with the cap off and opening pointing down. If you were to swing that tube, would toothpaste come out? If so, you're probably gripping it too tight.

On the other hand, some players have a grip that's too loose. If that's you, you might struggle with consistent contact. It might feel as though the club is shaking in your hands at impact. In that case, imagine holding a bird in your hands, if your grip is too loose the bird will fly away.

On a scale of 1-10, make your golf grip pressure a 4 or 5.

There is a great drill to practice if you want to get the correct feeling of grip pressure.

To swing correctly, the right amount of **grip pressure**—and where you apply it—is important. You should feel the **club** being supported by the last three fingers of your left hand (above, left). Those fingers should **grip** the firmest.



Test and Drills

Grip Pressure Drill

Begin by gripping the club as you normally would. Once your grip is set, bring your arms up to waist level or slightly higher with the clubhead facing up.

Back off your normal grip and simply hold the club in the air. You want to feel like you are simply supporting the weight of the club and the club could move freely any direction if it wanted.

Can you feel the weight of the head? **If you can't, then you are gripping it too tight.**

Grip Pressure Circles



Place your hands on the club with a normal grip and extend your hands so that the golf club is pointing out straight from your waist.

Your shoulders are relaxed and your elbows are slightly bent.

Begin making circles with your golf club moving in a

clock fashion from 12 to 3 to 6 to 9 and back to 12.

What you are looking for is to make sure you do not have excessive tension in your elbow joints.

Tight pressure in the hands can often lead to other tightness in wrists, elbow and even shoulders. These circles will allow you to identify any especially tight areas while finding the perfect grip pressure.



Body Motion and Balance

Body motion is the winding and unwinding of the upper body back and through in 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.

Good body motion is the lifeblood of your swing. When you get this correct, everything else will follow along. Along with body motion is weight shift.

How is your weight shift in the backswing? Getting this down correctly and naturally is key to efficient power. Most golfers get this one step wrong and it throws off the natural rhythm of the entire swing.

There is a great drill that can help you with getting the correct weight shift in your backswing.

Drill #1

As you take the club to your backswing, lift your left foot off the ground. Think about how a baseball player performs his swing.

This will force your weight onto your right side and help you get the correct weight distribution.



Drill #2

Tap – Tap drill

Here's another variation you can do for a second drill. Perform your normal set up for a driver.

When you get to the top of your backswing, lift your left foot off the ground and do a 'tap-tap' to make sure your weight is on the right. 80% of weight should be loaded on the right leg.



will shift to your right side.

Drill #3

Club Front Pivot Drill

Place the club in front of your shoulders and cross your arms and assume your set up position.

Make sure your left shoulder is slightly higher than your right. Feel your left shoulder move down and across, over your right knee.

Your head will move slightly to the right and your weight



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.

Uncoil the upper body and feel your right shoulder move across over your left knee. Finish the drill with your weight on your left side and your right shoulder facing the target.

Drill #4

Body motion variation



Every time you change up your hand or arm position, you will feel the positions in a slightly different way. Now, put your golf club down. It's time to work on body motion and holding the club prevents you from 'learning mode' as you revert to old habits.

Take your left hand on top of your right in a criss cross pattern. Get into your good golf posture and begin to swing. The position of your arms forces your left shoulder to stay down, helps your right shoulder stay high and helps you find the coil naturally.

Just repeat this drill for 5 minutes or until it starts to feel more natural to you, then pick up your club and begin to swing again.

Drill #5

Body motion variation

Here is a second version of this same drill. It will give you a slightly different perspective on body movement and positioning.



Simply place your club behind your back and perform some golf swings while focusing on body movement. Perform 2 sets of 15 to each side.

Rhythm and Tempo

The golf swing is a mix of power and finesse; strength and rhythm. It's different than most other sports that are strictly explosive, yet many people approach the game the same.

We all want to hit the ball farther and, in our mind, that means adding power and speed. It's true that power and speed are important, but that's only half the story. Tempo is the timing that allows power and speed to realize their fullest potential.

Swinging faster and harder isn't necessarily a good thing for distance. There's a point where too much will result in decreased distance because of missing the center of the clubface. We never want to sacrifice centeredness of contact in order to gain swing speed.

The same is also true with the backswing. A fast backswing doesn't actually gain you any distance. Instead, at some point, it'll start to throw off your timing and you'll hit worse shots. So, the solution is to find the correct tempo that'll allow you to maximize your speed and timing.

Very simply, the ideal tempo is a backswing to downswing ratio of 3:1. Numbers are great, but they can also be difficult to put into practice. There are two tricks to nailing your tempo; counting and singing.

Counting can be as simple as slowly counting to three in your backswing and adding "four" through the downswing. Also, a 3:1 ratio is the equivalent of about 100 bpm in a song. So, get a song with that tempo stuck in your head. An example is "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen.

Golf Drill #1

When you have both timing and rhythm, then it is difficult to overswing. Overswinging is one of the biggest problems with amateurs as most golfers want to over-power the ball.

To fix an issue with overswinging, **it is recommended to practice 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.

Golf Drill #2

Quick Swing Tempo Drill

Every golfer has a best swing which is characterized by solid swing mechanics and an even tempo. Good swing tempo is defined as having the ability to maintain the same clubhead speed with both your backswing and

follow through. If you pull the club back quicker than you move it forward, both your technique and timing will be off.

To perform this drill, simply complete your normal set up and make 3 regular golf swings in order. The first is usually stiff and not relaxed. The second is more natural and the third is typically your best golf swing.

You can use the quick swing tempo drill in practice or as part of your warm up routine.

Golf Drill #3



Feet together drill

Perfect for golfers with too much arm swing and those with too much body movement.

If the arms are too “locked up” to the body with insufficient swinging action.

Put your two feet together (touching each other) and hit some 6 irons or 7 irons. Do it off a low tee until you get a feel for it. You’ll notice that when you overuse the body (swaying, dipping, getting in

front of the ball, etc.) you’ll lose your balance.

Isolated and Integrated Movement

Getting the clubface to square at impact is critical to sailing the ball the direction you want. It's about mastery and control.

You absolutely must master body rotation from the start.

Once the body is in motion, most golfers become too active with the hands and almost immediately lose ball flight control.

Instead, keep your hands and arms passive, letting the club follow your body through impact. Keep your body rotation ahead of your hands and club, as if they are being dragged.

This set of drills helps you to focus on some simple isolated movements, then progress to more advanced integrated movements.

One of the most challenging integrated movements is the transition from the backswing to the downswing and impact.



Drill #1

Half way back

A great drill that ignores all of the excessive movement that gets most golfers into trouble is the Half Back Drill.

This will help you get the right weight transfer and from a half back position, it's impossible to come from the outside-in or over-the-top.

Grab your 7 iron and practice golf swings that only go as far as half way back. This will help you feel how to square the club by using the motion of your body rotation.



Drill # 2

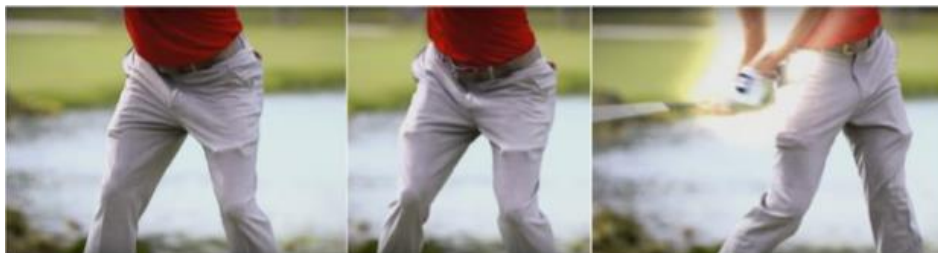
Angle retention

This drill helps you focus on getting your left hip in the right position on the downswing. It also helps you to maintain lag.

Take a normal backswing. Once you get to slightly below your waist, check to make sure you are holding your lag (see the lower L in the photo.) Shaft stays at right angle right above your knee.

Retain the angle of the golf club until you confirm your hips have moved and your weight is shifted to the opposite side.

Practice this 20 to 25 times.



Next practice your hip turn only.

Drill # 3



Step turn

Don't worry if you don't have a band for this exercise. Simply step back with your right leg and bring your arms into a follow through swing. You will notice your upper body is moving against a stable lower body.

This will help your movement patterns and coordination develop. Take 8 to 10 steps in repetition, then move to the opposite side.

Drill # 4



Partial squat to rotate

This is a great exercise to use with your leg on a chair or step. Place your right leg on a chair. Only extend it out as far as you are comfortable. You can even bend it.

The goal is to stabilize this leg while you

produce a weight shift with the other.

Now sit back into a squat. When you rise up, move your weight to the left side.

Drill # 5



Standing Rotations

Start by standing on one leg with knee flexed. Hold a 2-4 lb medicine ball out directly in front of chest with arms extended. Rotate your shoulders as if you are performing your backswing. Then rotate to your follow through. Perform 8 to 10 reps per side.

If you do not have a medicine ball, then place your golf club across your chest on front and hold onto it for balance.