

# Crowood Sports Guides

## Golf

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## **Objective of the Book**

Welcome to Crowood Sports Guide to Golf. The aim of this book is to equip players of all abilities and experience with the tools to excel at golf and to enjoy the game. This book is aimed at the complete beginner just looking to start the game and at experienced players looking to take their game to the next level. It is important to understand a number of different areas to play to your best and many areas will be looked at so that you have the tools to improve and enjoy the great game of golf.

## **Structure of the Book**

The introduction to the game will take you through the history of the game with the hope that the great players and history of the game will inspire you to play and understand the modern game. Then in Section 1 we will take you through how to get started in the game, to the basic of the technique or the swing, putting and the short game. This is designed for the beginner player but even the experienced player should review this section and there will be something to help even the most advanced player.

In Section 2 we will cover more advanced swing ideas and then take you through other areas that have an impact on your performance and enjoyment of the game, such as to how to use your practice time, the mental game, how your equipment performs and your fitness for golf. It will also cover subjects like how to keep improving your swing, understanding how the body works, swing plane and the correct impact position.

Each chapter will begin with what the objectives are and then go into more detail about how you can achieve these objectives.

Also, when appropriate, the book will assume that the player is a right handed player. If you are a left hand player simply reverse the terms.

## Introduction to the Game

### Chapter 1

## The History of the Game of Golf

### Objectives

\*Understand Golf's beginnings

\*Learn about the greats of the game to be inspired and learn from them

### Early History and its beginnings

The game of golf has a long history and the first mention of a stick and ball game go back to the Netherlands in 1297. The Dutch played a game with a stick and a leather ball with the aim of getting the least number of strokes to a target a few hundred yards away. And there is even evidence of it some form of the game being played in China in around the year 1000AD. But the consensus is that the modern game evolved in Scotland but golf as it is today which is played over 18 holes, originated in Scotland.

The first documented mention of golf in Scotland appears in a 1457 Act of the Scottish Parliament. King James II of Scotland prohibited the playing of the games of goulf and football as these were a distraction from archery practice for military purposes. Bans were again imposed in Acts of 1471 and 1491, with golf being described as "an unprofitable sport" and an unwanted distraction. Mary, Queen of Scots, was accused by her political enemies of playing golf after her second husband was murdered in 1567. George Buchanan subsequently wrote that she had been playing "sports that were clearly unsuitable to women". Golf was banned again by parliament under King James VI of Scotland, but golf clubs and balls were bought for him in jest 1502 when he visited the home of golf St Andrews in Scotland . The account book of lawyer named Sir John Foulis of Ravelston records that he played golf at Musselburgh Links on 2 March 1672, and this proves that The Old Links, Musselburgh, is the oldest playing golf course in the world. Plus , there is a story that Mary, Queen of Scots, played there in 1567 demonstrating she was the first golfing celebrity of her time.



### **1.1 Mary Queen of Scots- The first golfing celebrity**

#### Early era 1860 to 1930

Golf started to become established as an international sport in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with over a 1,000 courses coming into existence in the UK. It also started to expand in the United States with 267 clubs in 1910 and 1,100 clubs by 1930. Golf was truly on the rise and growing rapidly. The golf ball was also changing rapidly as prior to 1930 there were numerous different types in use and it was continually evolving. The first balls used were called 'featheries' as they were made up of a stitched leather outer layer stuffed with feathers, due to the cost of manufacturing these golf balls they were replaced by Gutta Perca balls which were made from the dried sap of a Malaysian Sapodilla tree. They developed from there into a ball with a liquid filled core which was surrounded by a layer of rubber thread and a thin outer layer. This was first developed by Coburn Haskell in the early 1900's and this concept of a wound ball was developed and refined and was still in use until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The modern golf ball is made of several layers of differing synthetic materials such as urethane. By using differing materials and layers plus with the aid of modern design technology balls can have a variety of playing characteristics that will suit different players. The design process

and quality control has improved which has meant the balls are much more consistent in their performance which is something that the early balls didn't have.

The current majors started to be played during this era. The Open Championship started in 1860 and the US Open started in 1895. These helped popularise the game and encouraged participation.

One of the great players of the era was Bobby Jones who, as an amateur, won all the major tournaments of this time. In 1930 he completed the Grand Slam, where he won the U.S. Open, Open Championship, the British Amateur and U.S. Amateur championships. He would also open the Augusta National Golf Club where he founded one of the modern majors, The Masters. Playing his first Open Championship at St Andrews in Scotland he famously withdrew after 11 holes by tearing up his score card stating he didn't like links golf. **Despite this he was well known for his sportsmanship both on and off the golf course.** Ironically he won the Open Championship at St Andrews on his way to the Grand Slam in 1930. Another great player of the era who helped popularise the game was Walter Hagen, famously playing numerous exhibition matches across the United States and around the world. He had an aggressive style of play and a love of tailored clothing which helped raise the profile of professional golfers and the game.



### 1.2 Bobby Jones winning the Grand Slam in 1930

#### 1930 to 1960

During this period equipment further developed with the introduction of steel shafts in the clubs to replace the wooden hickory shafts that were previously used. This meant that the swing began to evolve to cope with the different playing characteristics as the steel shafts were more uniform in the way they played, could be tailored for mass productions and modified to suit the individual.

The great players during this era were Ben Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson. Byron Nelson famously won 11 consecutive tournaments and 18 events during 1945 with a stroke average of 68. This record remains to this day and his stroke average is similar to that of modern players but considering he had inferior equipment (compared to today) and played on courses that were far less manicured than today, this demonstrates his ability.



### 1.3 Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson and Sam Snead

Ben Hogan was a legendary ball striker known for his tremendous work ethic plus his ideas on how to swing. His book 'The Five Fundamentals of Golf' has had a huge influence on the modern swing and coaching. He overcame much adversity during his life starting with his father who committed suicide when he was a child. After struggling early on in his career he continued to work hard and developed his technique. He was penniless a number of times and didn't win his first professional tournament until he was 28, ten years after he turned professional. In February 1949 he was involved in a car accident which left him with a fractured pelvis, collar bone and left ankle, chipped rib and blood clots from which he nearly died. Despite this Hogan returned to the golf course within a year and went on to win the 1950 U.S Open. In 1953 he recorded one of the best seasons in professional golf winning 3 of the 4 modern majors. He was not able to compete in the USPGA Championship as the dates clashed with the Open Championship. His achievements were even more impressive as the injuries he suffered would affect him for the rest of his life. **He is**

regarded as one of the greatest golfers of all time and one of the best ball strikers. His determination and dedication to the game is something many players have tried to emulate.



**1.4 Ben Hogan's famous shot with a 1 iron at the 18<sup>th</sup> at Merion winning the 1950 US Open**

Sam Snead is the last of this great threesome, he currently has the most wins on the PGA Tour with 82 and was known as "Slammin' Sam". He possessed a great natural swing which created seemingly effortless power and was a natural athlete. He was the opposite of Ben Hogan, who worked so very hard to become a great player and soon found his feet on the tour by winning five times during his first year. He had a long career which could be attributed to his flexibility and fitness. He is the oldest player to win on the tour at 52 years old and his swing and style of play was natural and was admired by many.



**1.5 the Sam Snead swing in full flow**

During the 50's the game continued to develop in its expansion. Golf was broadcast on the TV for the first time which helped bring its popularity to a wider audience. Magazines and news media coverage helped increase interest in the game.

### **1960 to 1980's**

In most eras of golf great players have come in threes. Heading into the next era these players would be Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Gary Player. This threesome became known as the 'big three'. These players all had different styles and would excite the golf world throughout their careers. In the early sixties Arnold Palmer had emerged as the dominate golfer whose attacking 'go for broke' style of play was admired and had won him an army of fans who were affectionately known as 'Arnie's Army'.



**1.5 Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Jack Nicklaus in the 1960's.**

Jack Nicklaus emerged at the US Open in 1962 and beat Arnold Palmer in a play off to get his first win and major championship. This proved unpopular with Arnie's Army and was the beginning of a great rivalry that created a lot of interest in the game to help grow its popularity. This was the beginning of Nicklaus going on to become the most successful of all time. By the end of his playing career he won 2 U.S. Amateur championships, 18 professional major championships, 73 PGA tour wins and 8 major wins on the Senior Tour. He finished in the top 3 in major championships 46 other times. His consistency over many years can only be admired. His last major win came at 1986 Masters and is considered to be one of the greatest tournaments of all time. He marched through the back nine in 30 shots to win his 18<sup>th</sup> Major. **The biggest lesson we can all learn from Nicklaus was his mental game and course management.**



### 1.6 Nicklaus winning the Masters in Spectacular fashion in 1986

Arnold Palmer was most dominant from 1960 to 1963 before Nicklaus arrived on the pro scene but he continued to win numerous tournaments and won 7 professional majors. He also popularised the Open Championship in Britain with the top American professionals as at that time they didn't want to travel to play in the tournament. Palmer won the tournament in 1961 and 1962 raising international interest in the event. He was intent on being a world player versus just focusing on the American circuit. His popularity helped to grow the game massively which meant the growth of professional golf continued. **He played golf without fear and was always aggressive which made his style fun to watch.** His charisma took the game to a new level as he created a lot of interest in the game in much the same way as Tiger Woods did in recent times.



### 1.7 Arnold Palmer attaching another drive

Gary Player was one of the most travelled athletes in history plus he possesses great enthusiasm and drive for everything that he does. **He was a major advocate of being fit and was one of the first golfers to use fitness as a way to improve his performance. This is something we can learn a great deal from.** He was not as long as Nicklaus and Palmer but he made up with it in determination, mental strength, a great short game and hard work. He won 9 major championships, 6 Senior Tour majors and over 120 professional wins. He was also a great ambassador for South Africa during a difficult time in its history and was voted sportsman of the century in his home country and even had his face on a stamp. He estimates that he has travelled over 15 million miles in his career in his desire to be a world player and to popularise golf around the world.

All of the big three have left a large legacy in the game, including traits we can learn from them and in particular in designing numerous courses around the world. Gary Player has been involved in over 300 course design projects, Nicklaus over 300 and Palmer has over 250. These courses are all over the world and will ensure that they will keep players enjoying the game for many years in the future. They have also inspired many people with their skill, sportsmanship and love of the game.



**1.8 Gary Player showing his determination and fitness**

### **1980 to mid 1990's**

As the 1980's came along the big three were still playing but a new wave of golfers came to the fore. American players were leading the way, but there were also some great players emerging in Europe. There was a belief that American players were superior to the Europeans and this was demonstrated in the Ryder Cup. The Ryder Cup was founded as a biennial match for professional golfers played between the USA and Great Britain and Ireland. Up until 1977, the USA had won 21 out of 24 of the matches played and 10 in a row. To make the match more competitive in 1979 it was decided that the matches would now include Europe as well. One man in particular was to prove inspirational in changing the balance of power in these matches, Severiano Ballesteros. Seve, as he was affectionately known, was becoming a great player having won the Open Championship in 1979 and the Masters in 1980 and had a very distinctive style of play.



**1.9 Seve Ballesteros in full flow winning the 1988 British Open**

He was not always the straightest player off the tee but he was able to recover in spectacular fashion most of the time and had a great short game. He turned pro at 15 and learnt the game with a 3 iron by practicing on the beach near his home in Santander, Spain. He used to build his own course on the beach and would use his imagination to play all different types of shots. The result of this was that he could produce different types of shots and had a great feel for the short game. He also possessed an undeniable will to win and a respectful love of beating the Americans. The match versus the Americans in 1983 proved to be a turning point in the Ryder Cup. The match was won by the Americans but this match was the closest it had been in a number of years. Nick Faldo says that Seve walked into a despondent dressing room and said that it proved they were beatable. This new found belief carried over to the next match where Europe won at the Belfry. The momentum continued to build and in 1987 Europe won the Ryder Cup for the first time on American soil with Seve, suitably holing the winning putt. This match symbolised a great new era in European golf with great players winning the world's biggest tournaments. Seve would win 5 majors, Nick Faldo would be on his way to becoming the best English golfer of all time winning 6 majors. Sandy Lyle and Bernhard Langer would win 2 majors each and Ian Woosnam won the Masters in 1991. These five golfers would be Europe's big five players of their generation and would continue to be instrumental for Europe in the Ryder Cup and winning tournaments around the world.



### **1.10 Seve winning the Ryder Cup in 1997 as Captain**

An official World ranking system was introduced in 1986. There were other great players during this period notably Greg Norman and Tom Watson. Greg Norman has a great charisma and his style of play was aggressive and explosive. He was one of the greatest drivers of a golf ball. He won the Open Championship twice plus 90 professional wins all around the world, he has also become a very successful business man away from golf. He is best known for his near misses in the majors and was unlucky on several occasions as well as hitting some poor shots at the wrong time. In 1986 Bob Tway holed a bunker shot on the last hole to beat him and in 1987 Larry Mize holed an outrageous chip across the green on the 2<sup>nd</sup> playoff hole to beat him in the Masters. He was also a victim in PGA Tour events when Robert Gamez holed his second shot from the 187 yards to beat him on the last hole at Bay Hill and David Frost holed from a bunker to beat him in New Orleans. He led all four major championships going into the last day in 1986 but only won one of them. He let a number of tournaments slip through his fingers, particularly the 1996 Masters when he had a six shot lead going into the final round before surrendering to a magnificent Nick Faldo display. He could have won numerous more majors especially the Masters but all in all he had an outstanding career and was ranked world number one for 331 weeks during his career.



### **1.11 Greg Norman attacks another shot**



### **1.12 Larry Mize chipping in a playoff against Greg Norman at the Masters in 1987**

Tom Watson was a great all round player and won 8 major championships from the late 70's and enjoyed 5 wins in the British Open where he was especially good at handling the bad weather and seemed to love the conditions. In 1977 he had one of the great duels with Jack Nicklaus at Turnberry in Scotland. Both played exceptional golf with both players separating themselves from the rest of the field on the final day. Watson hit the ball to a few feet on the last hole to beat Nicklaus by one shot, this tournament became known as 'the duel in the sun'. Watson went on to win over 70 events and 6 senior majors. In 2009 he returned to Turnberry at the age of 59 for the Open. He led until the last hole needing a par for victory. On his second shot he hit it very much like he did in 1977 straight at the flag but a firm bounce carried it through the green, a missed 8ft putt resulted in a bogey. He lost in the play off to Stewart Cink and left everyone disappointed that he didn't win a record sixth Open championship and become the oldest winner of a major championship.



**1.13 Tom Watson who came close of winning the 2009 British Open at Turnberry at the age of 59**

As well as the above great players of the game there were numerous other players making their mark. Payne Stewart was a much loved player and won 3 majors including the US Open in 1999. Known for wearing plus fours and his smooth languid swing, he was tragically killed in a plane crash later that year.



**1.14 Payne Stewart winning the 1999 British Open at Pinehurst shortly before his death in a plane crash**

### **1996 to the modern day**

In 1996 Tiger Woods turned professional after winning 3 consecutive US Amateur Championships and he quickly made his mark by winning two tournaments and then in 1997 he won his first major, The Masters, by 12 shots. He dominated fields by hitting the ball longer and straighter than had ever been seen before and displaying excellence in all areas of the game. **His biggest influence on the game was his mentality that to be a successful golfer you had to be an athlete, his superior fitness level was a tremendous asset plus he really was an excellent all round player.** He excited the golfing audience with increased television viewing when he was playing and he would go on to dominate golf with a standard of play that was exceptional. Up until 2009 he won 14 majors and was Player of the year 10 times in 12 years. He created excitement each time he played and hit numerous great shots when he needed to.

He was trained from a young age by his father Earl and won numerous events at junior level, then amateur and then professionally. He used Jack Nicklaus as a model and together they set the aim of beating Nicklaus's record of winning 18 professional majors. In 2001 he won The Masters meaning that he held all four major tournaments at the same time. This had not been achieved before in the modern era and was dubbed the 'Tiger Slam'. Although the wins were not achieved in the same season, it is still seen as the greatest achievement since Bobby Jones' Grand Slam in 1930. After fitness and personal problems starting at the end of 2009 and through 2010 he continues in his quest to beat Nicklaus's record.



**1.14 Tiger Woods wearing his Sunday red**

During this time there have been numerous advancements in the use of technology. The construction changed from a wound ball core to a new multi layer construction made of synthetic materials. This resulted in better performance that meant it would go further and the performance of the ball could be manipulated to produce different spin and feel. Today's players are aided by computer designed equipment, better materials and the ability to fit the clubs to individuals, which in theory, makes the game easier for the average player and increases performance at the professional level. The development of launch monitors which track the golf ball's spin and trajectory as well as club path and face angle at impact gives great feedback as to a player's swing specifications. With wider options of clubhead design and choices of golf shafts this has meant that clubs can be more easily fitted to players at all levels of the game. This technology has also aided designers in developing clubs.

The improvements in club and ball technology have resulted in players hitting the ball longer distances. Many courses including those used for championships have been lengthened and new courses have been designed with length in mind. Tiger Woods has inspired a new generation into golf who see that golfers now have to be athletes meaning that many players are stronger and more flexible and are consequently able to hit the ball further. Coaching has also changed with the development of new technology to measure player performance; it has meant that players can have better information to work on and improve their games. Players are now able to get information and programs to develop fitness, club fitting, swing technique, short game coaching, nutrition, psychology and lifestyle to maximise their performance.



**1.15 A driver from the 80's versus the modern day driver**

The game of golf continues to grow and develop with continuing advancements and inspiration of great players past and present. Golf remains one of the world's most popular sports and thanks to its great history and people this will continue for many years to come. Each of the great players that have been mentioned have made a great contribution to the game and there is something to learnt and be inspired by from each one of them. Also, by understanding where the game has developed from we can have a greater appreciation of the game and their legacy.

## **Aims of the game and Basic Rules**

### Objectives

- \*Learn how to get started in the game and how to get involved
- \*Understand what equipment you need
- \*Where you can play

The basic aim of golf is to hit the ball from the tee into the hole in as few shots as possible. To do this for 18 holes and to get the lowest score possible. It sounds simple but as Arnold Palmer once said, 'Golf is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated.' This is different from many other sports where the goal is to get more points or goals. In golf, less is more.

In many sports you are faced with a direct opponent or opposition team. This is also true in competitive golf; however you are also faced with the distinct challenges of the golf course, weather conditions and your own mental state. Golf also has a high level of sportsmanship as there is generally no referee and the rules are administered by the people playing. The spirit of the game is one of honesty, integrity and courtesy which is something that golfers value highly.

## **Equipment- What you need to get started and your different options**

Golf is perceived as an expensive sport but it doesn't have to be when you first start. There is no need to spend a small fortune on buying top of the range equipment. If you are unsure whether you will play the game a lot you can start with one or two clubs to discover if you enjoy the game and want to take it further. Beware - it will only take a few good shots to ensure that you become hooked!

Your options as a beginner are:

- \***Get one iron and a putter-** Many golf shops will sell you individual clubs which are relatively inexpensive. You will want to get a 7, 8 or 9 iron as these are the game improver clubs because they are the easier clubs to hit as they are not long and have enough loft to aid getting the ball into the air. Plus, a putter will mean you can start to develop a very important part of the game.
- \***Get a package set-** another option is to get a package set of clubs in which you will get everything you will need. You will get irons, woods, putter and bag. This will vary from different sets and manufacturers. But, these are a very cost effective way of getting everything that you need to play. These sets are often not of great quality and as you play more you may want to upgrade but they are sufficient at the beginner stage.
- \***Buy a second hand set-** You could buy a second hand set but be careful to make sure they are designed for a beginner. A great deal is no use if they are the incorrect specification for you. It is advisable to choose clubs designed for game improvement such as a perimeter weighted club head with large cavity and enough flexibility in the shaft of the club.. Also, ensure the grips are not worn out or if they are get them re-griped by a PGA professional.
- \***Rent a set-** Most golf facilities will let you borrow clubs or rent a set for the round. There will usually be a charge for this and the quality of clubs you get will vary. Plus, you will not be able to get used to how a club plays. Be sure to check that the facility has this option before you go.

Unless you go to a driving range you will need to provide your own balls, tees, appropriate clothing and shoes.

Here are some guidelines for what clothing to wear. Golf has some guidelines of what you should wear and this is due to the tradition of the game. Dress codes have become more relaxed in recent years and each facility will be slightly different in its requirements but generally these will be the case:

- \*Avoid wearing denim.
- \*Wear a collared shirt.
- \*Smart trainers are fine if you don't have golf shoes.
- \*Wear smart trousers if possible but please check before you go. You will need these if you go to a private course.

## **How to get involved**

There are a number of ways you can become involved in golf and start playing. Once you have decided on getting some equipment then you have to decide where you are going to start playing. Below are some of your options:

- \*Driving range - A great place to start to learn how to hit the ball and develop your swing.
- \*Pitch and Putt / Par 3 Course - A short course where you can learn how to play short shots and learn how to putt.
- \*Public Course - A course where anyone can play but check the course difficulty as you may not want to venture straight onto a full course as a beginner.
- \*Beginners Groups - Learn the basics of the game and meet like minded golfers.
- \*Lessons with a PGA Professional - learn the basics of the game on a one to one basis.

## Playing with a friend or meeting fellow golfers

Even though golf is an individual game, players will find it more enjoyable if you embrace the social side of the game. This may mean learning with a friend or introducing yourself to other people at the golf course or asking your PGA professional to introduce you to a player of similar ability. This will make the learning process more enjoyable. Please also remember that other golfers are always looking for a playing partner and are in the same situation so don't be too scared as you are not alone in this regard.



**2.1- Golfers of all ages and abilities enjoying themselves**

## Basic Etiquette

In golf there are some basic rules of etiquette that should be followed which will help players have a better time playing.

- \*Play in a maximum group of 4- The maximum number of players in each group should be 4 people. Any more and this really slows down play.
- \*Stand behind the person who is playing- For safety reasons ensure that you stand well behind the player that is hitting the ball as it is possible that a mis-hit shot will go in a strange direction and being hit by a fast moving golf ball is dangerous.
- \*Shout 'fore' if you hit the ball towards another player to warn them that a ball is coming towards them. Fore is the recognized term in golf and other players will recognize this as a warning to get out of the way or to protect their heads.
- \*Let faster players play through- If there is a group of players behind you that are waiting for you please stand aside and let them play through.
- \*Play ready golf- Ensure you are ready to play when it is your turn as this will help you play without delay.
- \*Replace your divots and rake the bunkers- A well conditioned course makes the game easier and all golfers need to help the green keepers look after the course.

## The Process of Learning and How to Find a Coach

Whether you are learning the game from scratch, coming back to the game, or simply want to improve; the best and quickest way to achieve your goals is to find a coach. This will save you a lot of time and endless frustration as golf is a difficult game to learn. It will be different to how you learn a lot of other sports such as football or rugby where you learn the basics of the game by simply doing it. In golf it is essential that you learn the correct fundamentals of the game from the beginning due to the mechanical complexities of the golf swing. This will mean that you can ingrain good habits rather than bad ones. It will be much harder to correct your bad habits after you have played for a while. Many players hit a wall where they don't improve due to the ingrained bad habits. Here are some guidelines for you:

**Make sure the coach is PGA qualified-** The PGA is the governing body of Professional Golfers in Great Britain, Ireland and around the world. A PGA Qualified professional will have had a high level of training in all parts of the game and your game will be in good hands.

**Have an introductory session-** Most coaches will offer a discounted introductory lesson where you will meet with them and identify a plan of improvement. This will give you the opportunity to make sure their style of coaching suits you and you will both be able to get to know each other to discuss how best to proceed.

**Learning as a beginner-** As a beginner your aim will be to learn good fundamentals in all areas of the game. You will want to learn the basics of the set-up, how to make good contact, getting a good finish position, how to putt, etc. This is important as if you start with bad basics they will be much harder to correct further down the line.

**Improving as an experienced player-** As an experienced player you will want to identify your strengths and weaknesses so that you can understand why your game has not been improving as you would have liked. You will then need to understand why these issues are not helping your game and what the process is to correct the problem.

**Practice what you have been taught-** It is important that when learning you take some time in between lessons to practice what you have been working on. You don't have to spend a lot of time; just spending ten minutes in the

garden practicing your swing is very helpful to ingrain what you have been working on. Practising at the range or on the course is even better. No one ever achieved any improvement in anything without practice.

**Work on one thing at a time-** Don't feel as if you have to get everything correct straight away. If you get better at doing one thing at a time this will add up over time and result in great progress. If you think of how you build a house, you do this one brick at a time. Once you have mastered one thing you can move onto the next.

**Be patient-** Whether learning the game or making improvements remember golf can be a difficult game at times. Be patient when working to acquire a new move or skill. It will take time for the changes to become ingrained and for a time you may not see the results you would like. Remain committed to the process and you will be pleasantly surprised.

**Ask Questions-** If there is something that you do not understand or you are not seeing the result that you are looking for ask your coach for a different view and give them your feedback.

## Chapter 3

### Objectives

\*Learn the fundamentals of the set-up which are the beginnings of a great swing

### The Set-up

The set up is where all good swings start as there are key fundamentals which will make a successful swing more likely to happen. If you set up correctly it will mean that you won't have to make compensations later in the swing and you can develop good swing habits. Even top professionals check their set-up regularly and many faults start in the set-up. The elements of a good set-up are easily remembered as G.A.S.P which stands for:

#### **G. Grip**

#### **A. Aim**

#### **S. Stance**

#### **P. Posture**



3.1 The Grip



3.2 Alignment



3.3 Stance



3.4 Posture

### Grip

Jack Nicklaus said that good golf starts with a good grip. It is your only contact with the club and a good grip will allow you to have good control of the clubface at impact, help to create power and a feel and touch for the game. If the grip is incorrect a player will have to make compensations to get the club to square at impact which is more complicated to do.

**The Left Hand grip** – To start, hold the club out in front of you at chest height. We do this as it is much easier to view the grip compared to trying to do this when the club is on the ground where most players will struggle to adjust it. Hold the steel of the club just below the grip with your right hand (if you are a right handed golfer). From there put your left hand on the club as if you would shake hands. Ensure your thumb goes on the club slightly right of centre and the grip runs through the bottom part of your hand just above the base of your fingers.

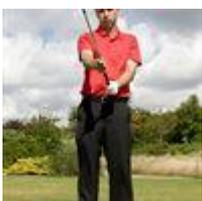


3.5 Get your grip by holding the club in front of you at chest height



3.6 In the left hand make sure the grip runs through the bottom part of your hand

**Adding the Right hand-** Once the left hand is on; open your right hand so that the shaft is in the bottom crease of your fingers. Then bring your right hand down the grip and close your hand so that the thumb of the left hand goes into the life line of your right hand. The right thumb and index finger form a V shape. This is very important as there is a pressure point in the first knuckle joint of the right hand which will help you apply pressure to the back of the ball during the swing. Then the thumb goes slightly to the left and there is a gap between your first finger and index finger on the underside of the grip.



**3.7 Once the left hand is in place add the right hand by having the steel in the bottom crease of the fingers.**



**3.8 Bring the right hand down the grip, close your right hand and make a V with your thumb and forefinger.**



**3.9 Put the club down on the ground and you have the grip**

**Overlapping Grip, Interlocking Grip or the Baseball Grip-** There are a number of options in how the hands work together for the grip. When the hands come together this refers to how the little finger of the right hand and the index finger of the left hand connect. It is personal preference which one you use but I would only recommend using the baseball grip if you are a beginner.

*Overlapping Grip-* This is where the little finger of the right hand sits on top of the gap between the index finger and middle finger of the left hand. This is the most popular grip and allows both hands to work together.



**3.10 The Overlapping grip with the little finger of the left hand sits on top of the gap between the index finger and the little finger**

*Interlocking Grip-* This is where the little finger of the left hand and index finger of the right hand interlock. This gives a more connected grip and is usually preferred by players with smaller hands. When using this grip be careful to ensure that the fingers are lightly interlocked together and not deep and tight as this would make it harder to get the correct right hand grip.



**3.11 The interlocking grip where the index finger and little finger interlock**

*Baseball Grip-* On this grip the fingers do not interlock and the little finger and index fingers sit together. This is an okay grip for a beginner but makes it more difficult for the hands to work together. The previous two grips will help the hands to work together better in the long term.



**3.12 The baseball grip**

### **Check Points for your Grip**

**Check the V's-** The V's or creases formed between your thumbs and index fingers on both hands should point at the seam of the right shoulder. You can easily check this when you are holding the club at hip height as the Vs will be apparent.



lines drawn on to show v's going to the right shoulder

### 3.13 The V's of both hands point to the seam of the right shoulder

**Thumb Position** - The thumbs should be slightly off centre with the left hand thumb (for a right hander) being slightly to the right and the right hand being slightly to the left. A common error is that the thumbs are both straight down, this causes a weak grip where the club will tend to be open. The V's formed in your grip will not point to your right shoulder and it will also mean the pressure points are not correct. Again check your thumb position when you are holding the club at hip height.

**Make a Peep Hole with your bottom hand** - As an exercise to get the bottom hand position correct take your bottom hand and make a peep hole between your index finger and thumb. The shape of your thumb and index finger is the same shape that you are trying to make in your grip. Notice that there is a gap between your index finger and middle finger.



### 3.14 Make a peep hole with the right hand to get the correct index finger and thumb position

**Grip Pressure** - You want to hold the club softly so that you have a feel for the shot. You should be able to move the club freely in your hands and make a circular motion with the club when it is at hip height. A tight grip pressure will inhibit you swinging freely and will slow the club head down which will cost you distance. Another way to think of grip pressure is to think of it being on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being as hard as you can and 1 being as light as possible. You want to be holding at about 3 or 4 compared to what many golfers do and hold it at 8 or 9.



### 3.15 To get the correct grip pressure you should be able to move the club around freely

**Pressure Points** - Remember we want the overall grip to be soft and also there are some points of the grip that apply more pressure on the club than others. In the left hand, more pressure is felt in the last 3 fingers (middle finger, ring finger and little finger) with the index finger and the thumb being relaxed. In the right hand both middle two fingers (middle finger and ring finger) apply the pressure with the index finger and thumb being relaxed.

A common error is where the pressure is applied through the thumb and index finger. Another key pressure point is the first knuckle joint of the index finger of the right hand. This pressure point is going to apply pressure to the backside of club for a downward strike through impact. If these pressure points are correct they will promote good use of the wrists throughout the stroke / swing.

**Drill** - Try this to get the pressure points in the left and right hand:

1. Hold the club in your left hand and take your thumb and index finger off the club so that you are just holding it by the last 3 fingers of the left hand. This will give you the feeling of where the pressure should be applied.



### 3.16 Grip the club in your left hand and feel the pressure points of the last 3 fingers.

2. Now, put your left thumb and index finger back on the club.
3. Take your grip with your right hand.

4. Now take the right index finger and thumb off the club. This will help you feel the middle two fingers (middle finger and ring finger) applying the pressure and take the pressure out of the thumb and index finger.



**3.17 To feel the pressure points in the middle two fingers take your thumb and forefinger off the club**

5. Make some practice swings doing this.

### ***Common Errors***

**Grip too Weak-** This is where the hands are too far to the left on the club and the V's will point more to your right ear or to your nose. This encourages an open clubface to your target line at impact and you will hit shots to the right of target.



**3.18 Grip is too weak**

**Grip too strong-** The opposite effect is to place your hands too far to the right of the grip. The V's will point too far to the right of your shoulder. This encourages the clubface to close at impact causing shots to the left of target. Being a little bit strong is not a bad thing either but this may need addressing if the ball goes to the left of target.



**3.19 Grip is too strong.**

**Grip pressure too tight-** if the grip pressure is too tight it will not let the wrists work correctly; they won't be able to hinge correctly on the backswing and then unhinge correctly on the forward swing. Tense muscles hinder flexibility, speed and timing in the swing. If the grip is tight it will spread up the arms and create too much tension in the swing. This will inhibit a free flowing swing and won't let you create club head speed for power as well as affecting the consistency of strike. You can see when someone is gripping too hard as the hands and arms will appear very tense.

**Gripping too much with thumb and index finger-** If the pressure is applied to the club with the index finger and thumb this will cause many of the same problems as with the grip being too tight. You will find it difficult to keep the wrist hinge into the downswing and this could cause you to 'come over the top' (see glossary). Try the above drill to get the pressure points correct.



**3.20 Too much pressure in the thumb and index finger.**

### **Aim**

If you are not aimed correctly your best swing won't hit the ball to your target and you will have to make a compensation to get it there. The main problem with aiming is that you are standing to the side of the ball as opposed to say snooker when you are looking directly down the line you want to hit. The key concept to understand to aim correctly is that your feet, knees, hips and shoulders have to be aligned parallel to your target line. If you stand directly behind your ball and draw a line from the ball to the target this is your target line. You then want to get set up with your body parallel to that line.



**3.21- Good alignment is when your feet, knees, hips and shoulders are aligned parallel to your target**

#### **Ways to check you alignment**

Here are some easy ways that you can check you are lined up correctly. You may like one of these methods or use a combination to ensure you are aiming at the target each time.

**Practice with a club on the ground-** When you go to the driving range to practice put a club, alignment stick or other straight edge on the ground so that you have a reference point to aim correctly. Stand behind looking down the target line to ensure they are aimed correctly. Alignment sticks are made of fibre glass and are available from most Pro shops. Many players have these in their bags for this reason.



**3.22 Put club on the ground to make sure you are lined up correctly**

**Put the club across your thighs-** The great teacher Harvey Penick recommended this way to help your alignment. When set up put the club across your thighs you then move this out to the target line. You will easily see if you are standing parallel to the target line. This is a great way to check alignment when you are on the course.



**3.23 Put the club across your thighs to check your alignment**

**Check how you look up at the target-** When you are setting up to the ball focus on how you turn your head to look at the target. You want to just swivel your head and you should be looking at your target. If you feel you have to look over your shoulder to see your target you are aiming to the right. Get used to just swivelling your head this way so that you train your eyes to get used to what correct aim looks like.



**3.24 Check how you look up at the target**

**Have a friend check for you-** Have a friend look behind you to give you some feedback about where you are aiming. You can then make adjustments.

#### **Drill**

**Line up to 10 different targets and check your alignment each time-** Then use one of the methods above to check your alignment. By changing target each time you will test how well you are aiming as this will simulate playing on the course as you will have to aim at a different target each time. If you are on the driving range it is easy to get lazy and just line up to where the range mat is pointing you and what happens on the course is you end up lining up along the tee line which often doesn't aim where you intend to go. Pick targets to the right and left on the driving range.



**3.25 check how you line up to 10 different targets**

**Stance**

The stance is how your feet stand to the ball. The main purpose of the stance is to give you a stable base from which to make a swing at the ball.

**Width of Stance-** The width of stance should be just wider than the width of your shoulders. To check this, if you drop the club down from the seam of your shoulder it should point down to the inside of your foot. This will allow for people who are of different builds. The width stays fairly constant with all of your clubs. With the stance getting just a little bit narrower with your wedges and slightly wider with driver. This may get an inch narrower with your wedges and an inch wider with your driver. A wider width of stance with the driver is necessary so that the spine may tilt away from the ball, which will put you in a position to sweep the ball from the tee as well as providing increased stability for the higher clubhead speed created by the longer shaft.



**3.25 Shoulder width stance**

**Ball Position-** The ball position is where the ball is in relation to your feet. To check this put a club or an alignment stick on the ground to see where the ball is in relation to your feet. We want the ball position to be just before your club reaches the bottom of your arc. This will be half way between the middle of your stance and the left heel. You can measure this easily by measuring one and a half club heads width from your left heel. This will give you a good idea where to position the ball but you can check this once you are making a correct swing by seeing where the club strikes the ground. The ball position does change slightly for different clubs. There are differing theories about where the ball position should be. Jack Nicklaus did advocate that each ball position should be off the left heel for every shot but very few tour players do this. Most modern players use three ball positions

No 1- for hybrids through to 9 iron- 1 ½ Club heads inside your left heel



**3.26 Ball position for hybrids through to 9 iron**

No 2- for Driver and fairway woods- 1 club head inside your left heel



**3.27 Ball position for Driver and 3 wood**

No 3- For wedges, chips and pitches- In the centre of the stance



**3.28 Ball position for wedge, chip and pitches**

The ball will get progressively further back for shorter clubs as you want a more descending blow and slightly further forward with the woods as you want to sweep these a bit more. However the ball position does not change dramatically and is only a slight change depending on the club being used. This makes it simpler to get correct for each shot.

## Posture

What you are trying to achieve with your posture is an athletic position where you are ready to make the athletic motion that is the golf swing. You want to stand to the ball like you would if you were doing any other athletic move such as jumping into a swimming pool or being a goalkeeper ready to save a penalty. You want to be on the balls of your feet, have some live tension in your thighs and have your back fairly straight with your shoulders back and bending from the waist. If you get your posture correct you will get your correct distance from the ball with every club. Although each club is a different length and the actual distance you are from the ball is different with each club, your posture shape will be the same.

Try these different methods to get your perfect posture with every club in the bag.

**Club out in front and bend forward-** Take your grip and hold the club out in front of you with the club parallel to the ground. And then bend forward from the waist until the club reaches the ground. It is very important that you bend from the waist and not from the torso. Where the club lands will indicate your distance from the ball.



**3.29 Start with the club out in front of you and bend forward from the waist.**

**Bend forward and let your hands clap together-** Lean your club on your thighs and bend forward from the waist. You then want to bend forward from the waist and clap your hands together. You want your hands hanging in a natural position under your sternum. Then take your grip without moving too much.



**3.30 Bend forward and clap your hands together.**

**Club behind your back with hands on the club-** This is a good one if you struggle to keep your back in the correct posture. This encourages you to pinch your shoulder blade together which is a characteristic of good posture. What happens when your back gets rounded, which is bad posture, is that your shoulder blades are a too far apart. If you put a club behind you at the bottom of your spine and then put your hands in an open position with your palms on the club you will feel your shoulder blades pinch together. Hold this position for 10 to 20 seconds and really get a feel for how your shoulder blades feel. Then bring the club around in front of you and take your grip while you are keeping your posture position. You should feel as if you are in a really athletic position.



**3.31 Club behind your back will encourage you to pinch your shoulder blades together**

**Let the right hand swing off and swing back in-** This is a really good check for your distance from the ball and hand position. When you are in your address position let your right hand swing off the club and back in again. You don't want to consciously control what your arm is doing you just want to let the arm swing back and forward without thinking about it too much. If your hand swings back into the same position it was to begin with, you are the correct

distance from the ball. If it comes doesn't come back to the same position this is telling you that you need to adjust your distance from the ball or your hand position.



### **3.32 Let the right hand swing off to check that you are the correct distance away**

#### **Does your everyday posture affect your golf posture?**

The answer to this is yes. How your posture is in everyday life will affect how your golf posture is. If you have a slumped or rounded posture in your normal day to day life it is much more difficult to make a golf swing with a good athletic posture. In modern life where we spend so much time in front of computers, TV's or have office based jobs which encourage us to have poor posture. This means that to help your golf you may have to address physical issues as well. Many fitness professionals will offer you postural screening where they will identify any issues you may have with obtaining a good posture and then give you a correctional program of some basic exercises to improve this. By doing this you help your golf and you will also look after your back and feel much better as well. Ensure you consult your doctor before you embark on any exercise program.



### **3.33 Bad everyday posture will affect your golf posture.**

## **Making Good Contact and Starting to Build the Swing**

### Objectives

- \*Why making good contact comes first before distance and accuracy
- \*Start to develop a good contact
- \*Develop the foundations of a good swing

### Understanding what is good contact and why it comes before distance and accuracy

The first element of a good golf shot is to strike the ball correctly, as without a correct contact you won't be able to consistently achieve distance and accuracy. The elements of good contact include striking the ball in the centre of the club face and the bottom third of the ball with a descending blow. If you hit the heel or the toe of the club you won't get the result you would like and you will not transfer enough energy to the ball to get its full distance. Conversely, if you strike the ball correctly you will get an effortless feeling and a soft clip sound which means you have compressed the ball against the clubface so that it will have maximum energy. The sound of the strike will give you great feedback as to how well you have made contact and is something each player should pay attention to.



**4.1 This is Good contact**



**4.2 Hitting off the toe**



**4.3 Hitting of the Heel**

**Remember: Golf is a game of opposites. To get the ball into the air you must hit down on it slightly**

## **The Mini Swing and Keeping the Triangle**

One of the keys to great ball striking is to have a firm left wrist at impact for the right hand player. If you look at all the great players you will see that they all have this in common despite having radically different swing styles. This is an imperative of an effective golf swing and this is something that players need to start developing as soon as possible in their golfing careers as most people will do the opposite and try to scoop the ball in the air which means the left wrist is breaking down. This is a very hard pattern of movement to change.

A great way to picture this and to try to develop this is to 'keep the triangle'. This is where the shape formed by the arms at address is kept when making a mini swing. By just keeping the triangle you will be developing the skill of being able to strike the ball.



#### 4.4 Mini swing where you keep the triangle of the arms (Insert lines on picture to show triangle on picture focus more in on the triangle)

##### Drill- Mini Swings keeping the Triangle

If you work on this mini swing exercise by hitting shots 20 to 30 yards from a full swing set up and just work on making good contact and keeping the triangle. To start with work on this by hitting from a tee and as you see more success you will be able to move down to a lower tee and then the ground. Make sure you hold your finish to check if you have kept the triangle. Also, listen to the sound of the strike as you will quickly hear if you have done it correctly. You will also want to try doing practice swings where you are brushing the grass.

##### Common Mistakes

**Scooping the ball into the air-** If you are scooping the ball into the air what you must first understand is that to get the ball airborne you must hit down on it slightly and not try to lift the ball into the air. Signs that you are doing this are that the left wrist breaks down by bending on the mini swing and chip shots, your weight finishes on your back foot, and just after impact you will see your left arm breakdown. This will result in a lot of mis-hit shots where you hit the top of the ball plus shots will not have the power or effortless strike needed. To work on this remember the triangle and practice the above. This is a very common mistake and is not an easy pattern of movement to break.



#### 4.5 The triangle breaking down and trying to scoop the ball in the air

##### Developing the Three Quarter Swing

##### L to L Swing

Once you are striking the ball correctly with the half swing the next step to developing your swing is to make it longer and move to a three quarter swing. This is when the left arm is parallel to the ground on the backswing and the right is parallel to the ground on the follow through. A good way to picture what position you are trying to achieve is to think of swinging L to L. This is where the left arm and the club form an L shape on the backswing and this is mirrored on the follow through. This will help you to achieve the correct wrist hinge on the backswing and release the club correctly on the follow through. Once this is correct you will be able to get into a good position at the top of the backswing. The L on the backswing will show you if you have enough or too much wrist hinge; you are looking for approximately a 90 degree angle between your left arm and the club when the arm is parallel to the ground. On the follow through you are aiming to mirror the L shape. When the right arm is parallel to the ground the club should be pointing upwards but this angle should be slightly more than 90 degrees. This shows that you have released the club correctly



#### 4.6 Swinging L to L.(Add lines to photos to show the L Shape)

##### Drill One- Slow Swings and using a mirror for feedback

Work on this by checking in a mirror your L positions or video your swing and check these positions. Rehearse the L's by making half speed swings so that you train yourself to achieve the correct position automatically.

## **Drill Two- Grip down to check the L's**

Choke down on your club so that the grip is showing above the top of your left hand as this will help to give a clear visual indicator as to how well you are creating the L's in your swing. Aim to have the grip pointing downwards when the left arm is parallel to the ground on the backswing and then mirror that on the through swing.



### **4.7 Gripping down the club to work on the L swings**

#### **Common Mistakes**

**Picking the club up with the wrists on the backswing-** If you just use your wrists to take the club back the L shape won't be formed and there won't be any distance between your chest and hands. This is a very weak position and won't allow you to create any power. If you find yourself doing this, swing back to the three quarter position and push your hands away from your body so there is a gap between your chest and your hands.



### **4.8 Using too much wrists on the backswing**

**Chicken wing with the left arm through the swing-** This is where the left arm breaks down through the shot and the arm is very high on the way through. This is a sign that the club has not released and you will struggle with a slice which curves a long way to the right as this move makes it difficult to square the club at impact. This problem starts with the triangle breaking down earlier in the through swing and you should firstly work on getting the triangle working through the shot better. You can take this on another stage by trying to get the left arm working lower on the way through. What you want to see is the left arm being covered by the right on the way through and the arms being more level. If you see too much of the left arm from the front view you will be struggling with a slice.



### **4.9 Left arm is too high on the follow through**

## Chapter 5 Putting

### Objectives

- \*Become competent at the most important part of the game
- \*Learn from the hole backwards to see success from the start
- \*Learn fun skills tests to play and compete at on the putting green

Putting is often referred to the game within the game and it is approximately 40% of the shots that you will play during a round of golf whatever level you play at. The tour players usually average 29 putts per round when they are averaging rounds of 70 shots, whereas the player scoring a hundred will have around 40 to 50 putts per round. So it is a major part of the game and is the place where you can quickly improve your scores irrespective of your ability to strike the ball. Putting will allow you to take advantage of your good shots and help you recover from your bad shots.

**Exercise for experienced player-** Go through your last round and work out how many putts you had. This will give you an idea of what level your putting is currently at. How did this compare with what you thought it would be? If you want to go into more detail, note where your first putt was either long or short of the hole and note how many times you got the correct speed on your putts.

Picture of scorecard with number of putts written on there.

**Learning from the hole backwards-** When learning the game it is a great idea to start with a 2 foot putt and work your way backwards away from the hole. Moving from putting to chipping to pitching to irons shots etc and the last thing you would learn is driving. The advantages of learning golf this way is that players develop confidence and see success earlier as the tasks are easier to complete. Golf can seem very complex especially if you give a beginner a driver and ask him to hit it 300 yards compared to trying to hole 2 foot putts. What you see is that even complete beginners can achieve a good level of success and start to develop a base level of competence from which other skills start to develop. This also gives players a feel for the game and will keep learners involved and challenged. This method is called the backward chaining method. The other advantage is that by learning putting first you are practicing a big part of the game.

### Making the Stroke- Getting the basics

Many of the same ideas of the full swing apply to the putting stroke as this stroke is essentially a mini swing with the main difference being that power is not an issue. In the putting stroke short distances need to be covered instead of needing to cover a long way so we make the stroke accordingly. Like with the full swing we have to get a good set-up before being able to make the stroke correctly. If we don't we will have to make compensations during the stroke which makes it more complicated and harder to repeat.

### Key Concept of the Putting Stroke

The key idea we are trying to produce in a putting stroke is to make the stroke like a pendulum. This is a great image to have and you can try to recreate the tick-tock rhythm that a pendulum creates. A pendulum will take the same time to swing back and forth, within reason, irrespective of the length of the swing it takes. Hence it will have a tick-tock or 1-2 rhythm which is consistent. This idea is very important in how you control the distance of your putts and it will be discussed later. Keep this image in mind when you are putting.



### 5.1 Putter should swing like a pendulum

**Different Styles and Techniques-** What is covered below will give you some fundamental ideas on how to make a repeatable putting stroke. But, after watching a golf tournament on TV you will undoubtedly notice that a variety of techniques, grips, putters and putter lengths are used. All of these techniques may have an element of the below and ultimately if they get the ball in the hole that is all that matters. Most good putters have the same key fundamentals in their putting stroke. Feel free to experiment with those methods and putters. But, keep the below fundamentals in mind as they will help make your stroke simple and give you some good foundations which are the basis of an effective stroke.



**5.2 Colin Montgomerie using a belly putter and Adam Scott using a long putter**

**Set-up**

**Posture**

The first element of a good putting set-up is good posture where we are aiming to stand in an athletic and balanced position. As with the full swing posture aim to bend forward from the waist and let your arms hang down in front of you.

**Exercise to achieve the correct putting posture-** Allow your putter to lean on your thigh and then let your hands hang down and bend forward from the waist. Let your hands hang down in a natural position and clap them together. Ensure your arms are relaxed and try not to think too much about where your hands should be. Now grip your putter keeping your hands in that same position.



**5.3 Bend forward from the waist to get the correct putting posture**

By doing this exercise you will achieve the correct hand position which should be under your sternum and you also want to feel your weight on the balls of your feet and your eyes will be over the ball. They can be slightly inside of the ball but never on the outside. This will allow the putter to swing on the correct path and the clubface to remain square to the path.



**5.4 Ensure the eyes are over the ball or just inside them**

**Aim**

Aiming the putter face correctly can be more difficult than you would think and a large percentage of golfers do this incorrectly. This is hugely due to the fact that you are standing to the side of the ball and you are not looking directly down the target line. For instance imagine if had to play pool and instead of looking directly down the cue you had your head to side. This would make aiming the cue much more difficult. You have to train your eyes to what the correct aim will be. You will need some feedback on what correct aim is and will receive this by using some of the below drills.

**Aiming the Putter Face-** The most important element is to aim the club face correctly. By aiming the clubface correctly at address it will be simpler to return the club to a square position at impact. You can aim the clubface incorrectly and return it squarely but this will require a compensation move during the stroke and this will lack consistency.



### 5.5 Aim the putter face at the target

**Drill- Use the line on the ball-** Most Golf balls have a line marked on them or you can mark a line on the ball using a marker pen. You can stand behind the ball and line the ball up to your target using this line. On a straight putt this will be straight at the hole or on a breaking putt it will be at break point. Once this is lined up correctly you can address the ball and line up the line on the ball to the line on the putter. You can also use this on the course and you may notice this is what many professionals do as part of their putting routine.



### 5.6 Use the line on the ball to aid lining up the face correctly

**Drill- Putt a long a chalk line-** At most DIY stores you will be able to get a builders chalk line and believe it or not this is a great aid to help improve your putting. If you draw an approximately 10 foot line on a straight putt on the putting green and then putt along this line. The chalk line and the line on your putter will give you a clear indication of where you are aiming. You will also see how well you can roll the ball along this line and it will give you a clear mental image of what you have to do to roll the ball into the hole.



### 5.7 Putt along a chalk line

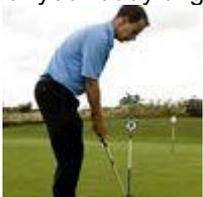
**Drill- Ask a partner to check your aim-** Ask a friend to check your alignment. Tell them where you think you are aiming and then get their feedback. Try this on a number of different putts and notice if there are any patterns to your aiming.

### *Aiming the body*

It is most important to aim the putter face correctly but by also aiming the body correctly it will aid good alignment of the putter face and a stroke on the correct path. The most important element is to get your shoulders parallel to the target line as this will influence how well you aim the putter face. The least important aspect is the feet as many players have played with an open and closed stance. For the sake of simplicity it is good to keep the feet parallel as well. However, it is okay to experiment on this to find out what works best for you.

### **Drill- Put an alignment stick parallel to the chalk line**

If you have your chalk line set-up you can put an alignment stick down parallel to it, this will provide a reference point for your body alignment.



### 5.8 An alignment stick parallel to your target line will aid lining up your body correctly

## Grip

There are a number of different grips that you can use. Just by watching a professional tournament you will see that there are many different grips that players use and you can experiment with these to find one that is most effective and comfortable for you.

### **Grip Pressure**

Whatever grip you use a common theme is that you must have a light grip pressure. This will allow you to have feel for the club head and create a pendulum rhythm on your putter.

*Two Putter grips that you can try!!*

### *Reverse Overlapping grip*

This is the standard grip and one of the most popular. This is where the index finger of the left hand sits across the fingers of your right hand. This helps to keep your wrists out of the stroke so that you can make a pendulum stroke.



**5.9 The Reverse overlapping grip**

### *Cross Handed*

This is a very popular grip where you turn your hands around where you have left hand below the right for the right handed golfer. This has the benefit of making your shoulders level and again helps keep the wrists out of the stroke.



**5.10 The Cross handed grip**

## **Making the Stroke**

We will cover some of the key elements of good putting and key fundamentals. These elements are noticeable in effective putters even though they may have differing styles.

### **Making Good Contact**

Like on full shots you want to hit the ball out of the centre of the putter so that you transfer a consistent amount of energy to the ball. If you hit the ball out of the toe or the heel of the putter you won't transfer the correct amount of energy to the ball meaning that your distance control will be inconsistent. Also, your direction will be incorrect as putts hit on the heel will start to the left and putts hit on the toe will start to the right due to the clubface twisting when struck incorrectly.

### ***Drill- Putt between 2 tees.***

On a four foot putt put two tees in the ground just wider than the width of your putter. Then put a ball slightly in front of the tees and make some putts. To hit the ball out of the centre the putter you will have to miss the tees on the forward stroke.



**5.11 Putting through the tees drill to ensure good contact**

### **Path of the stroke**

The path of the putter will follow a slight arc as below. It will start back fairly straight and then move onto an inward path and then move back along the curve to impact. The club then starts to move gradually back along curve to the inside and mirroring that path off the backstroke. Inside means inside of the target line which is the line that we are

trying to hit along. The club face will remain square to this path. By getting this motion you will be more likely to return the clubface to square at impact which will start the ball on the correct line. The amount of arc or curve on the stroke can vary from player to player. If the path gets too inside or outside of this curve it makes it more difficult to start the ball on the correct line. Keep this image in your mind when making the stroke.

### Insert diagram of a curve diagram 1

#### Use your body correctly

The putting stroke is a motion that is more focused on control instead of power so the motion of the body is going a lot quieter and a mini version of the full swing.

**The motion of the Shoulders-** The motion is controlled by the slight turning of the shoulders and works in a very small version of the full swing. The shoulders rock slightly back and forward and this motion is the engine of the stroke in a slight turning of the shoulders. By keeping the upper arms connected to the body this will allow the club to swing on the correct path.

#### Drill

**Club across chest and focusing on the left shoulder-** Get into your putting posture and put a club across your chest. Make a small turning motion back and forwards and try to do this as you would in a full swing but only in a much smaller version.



5.12 Drill to get the left shoulder working correctly

#### Drill

**Left arm only holding the shoulder with the right hand-** Take your stance then take your right hand and put it on your left shoulder. Then make some strokes one handed focusing on the movement of the left shoulder. The movement you are looking for is slight turning motion and you should feel the top of the left arm connected to your side.



5.13 Drill to focus on correct movement of the left shoulder

#### Stable Lower Body

The lower body should be very still and quiet as the bigger muscles of the legs don't need to work to create power. If the legs get too active it will discourage the putter working on the correct path and make it harder to make good contact. A good image to have for a stable lower body is to imagine that the legs are made of stone and shouldn't move during the stroke. Or

you can focus on your knees as if these move the rest of your lower body will move as well.



5.14 A stable lower body

#### Drill

**Super extra wide stance-** If you address the putter and then make your stance as wide as you can. This will mean that you cannot move your legs and make some strokes. You will get a real sense of having a stable lower body.

When you have done this a few times go back to a normal width of stance and you should have a more stable lower body.



**5.15 An extra wide stance to feel a stable lower body**

### **Distance control in Putting**

Once you are making a good stroke it is important that you start to develop the skill of controlling the distance of your putts. If the speed of the putt is good you will get the ball much closer to the hole which, if you don't hole it, will make your next putt much easier.

### **Rhythm and Length of Stroke**

Keep the image of a pendulum in your mind as this is a great image to have of the stroke that we are trying to make. Alternatively think of the swings at the park. Notice that this has a one-two rhythm with one being counted on the backward movement and two being counted on the forward movement. This pendulum motion is what we are trying to recreate in our putting strokes and is something that many good putters have in their stroke. The stroke will be even on both sides of the ball with the backswing being the same as follow through.



**5.16 The correct rhythm of the stroke is one-two with one being on the backswing and two on the downswing**

Add is lines with 1 and 2 of putter swinging back and through with line on backswing for 1 and coming through line with 2.

### ***Some interesting Stats from the Tour***

To illustrate the importance of distance control in putting, on the PGA Tour the number of 3 foot putts made is 100%. (Pelz, Putting Bible, 2000). This is a statistic that you would expect from the best players in the world. So on a 6 foot putt what would you expect them to make?? Being only 6 foot away this statistic drops to just 50%. This illustrates why distance control is important as by getting the speed slightly incorrect your chance of making the next putt reduces very quickly.

### **The same rhythm just change the length of stroke to control the distance**

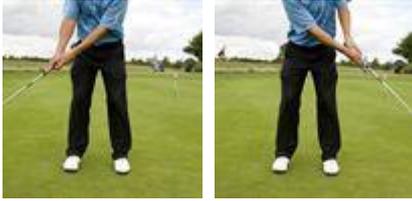
The key principal for controlling the distance of your putts is to have the same rhythm on all of your strokes but to change the length of swing to hit the ball different distances. The physics of a pendulum are that the time taken for a stroke will be the same no matter what the length of the stroke is. So the rhythm will be same for stroke no matter what length of swing that you make in a one-two rhythm. The one is where you start your swing and two when you start the downswing. By keeping the rhythm constant you will find it much easier to control the speed of your putts by changing the length of the stroke. The longer the distance to be covered the longer the stroke. Also, by taking the putter back and through the same distance this will promote a pendulum rhythm. The correct distance to take the putter back for each putt must be appropriate for the length of putt that is faced and take into account the speed and slope of putt.



**5.17 This would be approximately a 10 foot putt**



**5.18 This would be approximately a 25 foot putt**



5.19 This would be approximately a 50 foot putt

**Common Mistakes**

Same length of stroke but speed up the rhythm- If you make a short swing of the putter but have a long distance to cover the only way you can create enough force to get the ball to the hole is to speed up the stroke. This will create very inconsistent results and you will struggle to gage the distance.

Short backswing long follow through or long backswing short follow through- Both these mistakes will mean that you have to change the rhythm of the swing. When the backswing is too short you will have to speed up on the way through and conversely when it is too long you will have to slow down. When you change the rhythm it becomes a lot harder to control the speed.

**The Capture Speed of a Putt**

The speed the ball should roll at is important as the correct speed will maximise the size of the cup. This is referred to as the capture speed or how far past the hole the ball would roll if the ball didn't go into the hole. The ideal speed for this would be 6 to 12 inches past the cup. As the ball is hit harder the effective width of the hole becomes smaller. So if you hit the ball harder you will have to hit the centre of the hole for it to go in versus putting at dead weight where the effective width would be the entire hole. Another factor to consider is the imperfections on the green, these start to affect the roll of the ball as the speed slows so there needs to be some speed on the putt to reduce this. By aiming to get the ball 6 to 12 inches past the hole you are balancing these two factors.

Insert diagram 2 of capture speed. Hole width reducing as speed of the put increases

(Source, Aimpoint Golf) will need a diagram as may be copyright issues but to give an idea

**Make distance control instinctive**

Our aim is to make distance control in putting very instinctive much like you would pitch and catch a ball. When we are playing catch we don't think much about the technique or how far back we swing our arm we just trust our instincts and throw. In reality we had a period of training on how to throw a ball, probably in our childhoods, and that has developed into an innate skill. Much the same process needs to happen in putting and although the proper technique of swinging the putter in a pendulum rhythm needs to be trained, our brains function much better when we look at the target and react to it. The best way to make distance control instinctive is to practice the below drill;



5.20 Distance control in putting is instinctive like throwing a ball

*Drill*

**Putt to the fringe of the green-** Take five balls and pick a point on the fringe of the green which you can either mark with a tee or focus on in your mind's eye. Your aim is to roll each ball as close as you can to the fringe of the green. With this you will get feedback regarding how hard you have to hit the putt and make adjustments. Really notice how the ball rolls, the sounds and feel of the ball coming off the putter face and how far the ball finishes away from the fringe. This will give you feedback about your distance control and will help you learn to develop this skill. You will then make adjustments and you will be surprised at how good you can become at rolling the ball the correct distance.



5.21- Putt to the fringe or to in between 2 alignment sticks

## Reading the greens

It is important that reading the greens comes after learning the mechanics of the stroke and the pace of the greens as if you are unable to start the ball on the correct line at the correct speed you will not get consistent reads on the green. You will notice that the speed you hit the ball at affects the amount of break on a putt where too much speed causes the ball to break less and vice versa.

**Drill**  
**Around the Clock focusing on Break-** Find a sloping piece of the putting green and put 12 balls evenly spaced around the hole all about 15 foot from the hole. By doing this you will have a lot of different types of putts. On each putt aim straight at the hole and notice what the break is on each putt and how the ball rolls. Don't try to play for the break or hole the putt. The aim is just to notice the break that is happening on each putt. Repeat this a few times and see if you notice any pattern? When were the putts straight; when were they right to left; when were they left to right.



**5.22 Place balls around the hole on different parts of the green and notice how they break**

## Understanding Zero Lines

By doing the above drill you will have started to see the key principle in learning to read the greens. You will have noticed that when putting the ball directly up or down the slope (along the zero line as it is referred to) you had a straight putt, to the right of that the putts were right to left and to the left the putts were left to right. This happens due to the effect of gravity and applies to any green that you will play. Once you have identified the zero line, understanding and working out the break becomes very predictable.



**5.23 Along the Zero line the ball will roll straight and there is no break**



**5.24 To the right of the zero line the ball will break right to left**



**5.25 To the left of the zero line the ball will break left to right**

*Angle of the putt to the slope-* This means where your putt is in relation to the zero line affecting your putt

*Slope -* As the slope on the green changes this effects the break. More slope will increase the break.

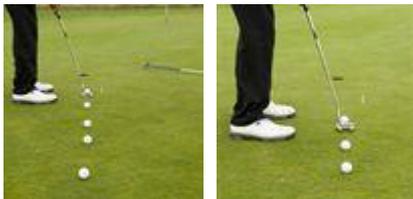
*Speed of the Green-* The faster the greens are rolling the more break there will be.

*Distance from the hole-* The further the ball is from the hole the more the ball will break.

This information has been gathered and developed by Aimpoint. These factors were first developed from where Aimpoint started 3D modelling greens for television in the USA. From doing this they noticed that there were certain patterns to reading the greens that applied to which ever green they modelled and they have developed a system from there. The great thing to know from this that green reading is very predictable versus the old model of learning greens which relied more on guess work. For further information on Aimpoint please contact your nearest certified instructor who will show you how to develop these skills further. Please see [www.aimpoint.co.uk](http://www.aimpoint.co.uk).

## Games and Skills tests to improve your putting

**Luke Donald Drill-** This drill will help you holing out short putts. You will need 5 balls and a tee for this drill. Place a tee 3 foot from the hole and ball next to it. Then put the next 4 balls a foot apart in a line away from the hole. Then putt all the balls from the hole backwards and repeat this 4 times. Keep track of your score out of 20 and keep aiming to improve on your score each time. Your aim is to get 15 or more. To make this more difficult move to a hole that is on more of a slope so that you will have more break on the putts.



5.26 The Luke Donald skills test

**Around the clock-** Place 5 balls around the hole a putter length away from the hole. Most standard putters are 35 inches so this will leave you approximately 3 foot putts. By having different putts around the hole you will have different angles of the slopes to deal with. Repeat this 4 times so you get a score out of 20. Your aim is to get 17 or more.



5.27 Around the clock skills test

**Putting Par 18-** On a putting green that preferably has 9 holes cut on it, play the nine holes around the green and keep track of your score. If there are not 9 holes play each hole slightly differently. Each hole has is a par of 2 and have holes of varying length and different slopes. Aim to get below 20 and keep trying to achieve a personal best.



5.28 Putting Par 18

**Birdie conversion test-** Place three tees at 5 paces (12.5 feet), 6 paces (15 feet) and 7 paces (17.5 feet) away from the hole. This test will develop your ability to convert those birdie putts as you are working on putts in the 10 to 20 foot range. Putt 10 balls from each tee peg and record your score. Your aim is to convert a third of your birdie putts on the course so aim on this skills test to get 10 or more.



5.29 Birdie Conversion Test

## **How to Chip and Pitch**

### **Objectives**

- \*Learn the next step of the short game
- \*Develop good fundamentals and ability to apply good technique from short range and bunkers
- \*Learn and Play fun skills test to improve your skills

Your short game is a key area for you to improve as chip and pitch shots will make up a large part of your game. Statistically 70% of your shots will be played from 100 yards and in. With 40% being putts that leaves 30% of your game being chip and pitch shots and this applies whether you are scoring around par or trying to break 100. The first swing that you need to get good at is the basic chip of 15 yards. This is a common shot that you will have on the course and a shot that can have a big impact on your scores. When first learning you can start by using a pitching wedge but you can use a number of different clubs with this same technique to produce a shot to work in each situation. But, before working on different shots it is important that the basic technique are developed. This shot should be simple but many players really struggle with it and becoming good at this can have a big impact and improving your scores.

### **Basic Chipping and Pitching Set-up**

As with the full swing it is important to get the setup correct. This will make the swing happen much easier by making the correct impact happen much easier.

***Ball Position, width of stance and going down the grip-*** The ball should be in the middle of the heel as this is where the low point is. The stance should be on the narrow side and narrower than you would have on a full shot. Then to get more control of the club by making a shorter grip down on the club.



**6.1 Take a narrow stance, ball in the middle of the heels.**



**6.2 Grip down the club for more control**

***Weight favours the front foot-*** 60% of your weight should favour the front leg as this will also help to ensure that the low point of the swing happens in the correct spot.



**6.3 60% weight should be on the front foot.**

***Keep the weight on the front foot as you swing-*** During the swing the weight should remain in its starting position. This is because the power that would be created by the weight transfer is not needed on shorter shots. By keeping the weight favouring the front foot you will also ensure that the low point of the swing happens in the correct spot.



**6.3 Keep the weight on the front foot as you swing**

**Keep the Sternum Moving through the shot-** When playing the shot it is important that you keep moving through the shot. A key to focus on is that the sternum keeps turning and moving through the shot. If the sternum stops, the hands will inevitably flip and breakdown causing fat and thin shots. This is something you would naturally do when you throw a ball towards the target.



**6.4 Keep the sternum moving through the shot**

**Keep the triangle** Much like on the full swing it is important when playing a basic shot that the triangle shape of the arms is kept. This will ensure that a flat left wrist is maintained at impact.



**6.5 Keep the triangle of your arms.**

**Keep the arms soft and a good rhythm-** It is important that you keep the arms soft when playing this shot so that you can get a good feel for the distance as tension will reduce the amount of feel you have for the shot. The rhythm of the swing should be a smooth swinging motion much like a pendulum.



**6.6 Keep the arms soft and keep a good rhythm**

**Drills**

**Hit off one leg to keep the weight forward-** Address a chip shot as normal and then take your back foot and take it backwards and put it on your toe. By being on one leg you will be forced to keep the weight on the front leg at address and during the swing. When you are doing this also make sure you keep your sternum moving.



**6.7 Hit off one leg to keep the weight forward**

**Hold the finish and check the left arm and club are in one line-** your finish position will give a good indication of how well you have made the swing. At the end of the chip swing the hands should finish just in front of your hips. If you take your right hand off the club the left arm and club should be in one line. If the left wrist has broken down you won't have this straight line relationship.



**6.8 Hold the finish and then check to see if the club and arm are in one line.**

**Keep the sternum moving drill-** Take your address position and then take your left hand and put it on your sternum. Now make some swings and focus on keeping your sternum moving through the shot. By having your hand there it will give you a good awareness of keeping that sternum moving through.



**6.9 Keep your left hand on your sternum and keep moving through the shot.  
Common Mistakes**

**The triangle breaking down and the wrists flipping-** Much like on the full swing the wrists flipping can be caused by the instinct to try and scoop the ball in the air. This causes fat and thin shots and makes it very difficult to make consistent contact.



**6.10 Wrists flipping and triangle breaking down**

**Keeping the head down-** This may seem the opposite to what your golfing companions have been telling you for years. What happens when you focus too much on keeping the head down is that the sternum stops moving through and often the weight will remain on the back foot and the triangle will breakdown with the wrists flipping as above. This will cause you to move the low point of the swing backwards which will cause fat and thin shots.



**6.11 Keeping the head down causes the sternum to stop and the wrists to flip**

**Hitting at the ball instead of swinging-** - Often when something above is not correct that will cause a miss hit, a natural reaction to to try and make good contact is for a player to speed up and make a jerky motion through the shot that hits the ball. This will make distance control and correct contact difficult and inconsistent.

### **Chipping to a Landing Spot- The Essential Skill of Good Chipping**

Once you have developed a good technique, the basic skill of chipping is to hit the ball to a point that will let it run out to your target. Much like if you were going to aim a ball at a target you are unlikely to try and land the ball straight into the hole. Instead you will try and land your ball on a spot or in a zone that you have judged depending on the distance to the target, ground conditions plus the trajectory and speed that you intend to throw the ball. This is something we all do instinctively without much conscious thought. What we are trying to do in a chip shot is the same thing except we are trying to do this with a club and ball. You may have seen footage of Rory McIlroy on a TV show when he was young chipping balls into a washing machine. He was very good at this and what that developed for him was the skill of hitting a ball to his landing spot. In fact, hitting to a spot on the green must have become very easy for him if he could land it in the washing machine. So when he got on the golf course all he had to do was learn how to pick his landing spot depending on the conditions he was faced with. As chipping is such an important part of the game, you can see that this skill contributed to him being able to save a lot of shots.



**6.12- Hitting your landing spot is the key to good chipping.**

### **Drill**

**Chipping to a circle-** Make a circular target that is 6 foot in diameter and place it 10 yards away. The target can either be a target circle or you can use a piece of rope. Take 10 balls and see how many that you can land in the circle and then record your score. I would recommend using your pitching wedge but you can try with different clubs. How did you do? Was this more difficult than you thought?



### 6.13 Practice chipping to a circle

#### **Finding out your Landing Spot- The key to Controlling the Distance**

Once you have become proficient at landing your ball on a landing spot what you then have to get good at is deciding on where your landing spot is for each shot that you play. There are many different factors that will affect this and you will not always get this correct but it is important that you practice and develop this skill. Be aware of the factors below that will affect where you judge your landing spot to be. There is not an exact science that will give you the perfect landing spot every time as there are many different factors to account for. Keep the below guidelines in mind and through practice you will develop the skill of judging where this landing spot is.

**Distance from the hole-** The distance from the hole will affect where you have to land the ball. The further you are from the hole the more spin you will be able to impart on the ball.

**Lie-** Different lies will affect the amount of spin on the ball and if there is grass in between the ball and the club the amount of the roll on the ball. Generally, the worse the lie the more the ball will roll.

**Elevation-** If you are above the landing spot you will get a softer bounce and run less. If you are below the level of the landing spot the ball will run more.

**Firmness of the green or area you are landing it on-** The firmer the green the more the ball will bounce and vice versa.

**Club you are using-** The club you are using will affect the trajectory and spin on the ball so if you don't have much green to work with you may want to use a more lofted club and if you have a lot of green use a less lofted club.

#### **Use the same club or use different clubs for Chipping?**

There are two different schools of thought when it comes to what club to use when chipping. Either you can vary the club you use or use the same club. The advantage of using the same club on each shot is that you will be able to get used to the way that club reacts and performs which should enable you to get the ball closer to the hole. The disadvantage is that you won't have much variety with the shots you will be able to easily play. You can either add loft which will hit the ball higher or de-loft, for a lower shot. But this can be more difficult to perform consistently.

Alternatively, you can vary the club to fit the type of shot that you have; using more loft when you have less green and less loft when you have more green to work with. This is a good guideline to have when you are starting to understand which club will suit you. Try several different shots around the practice green and use a sand wedge, pitching wedge, 9 iron and 7 iron to work out which club works best for you in each situation. Vary the length of shots you have and the amount of green that you have to work with.



### 6.14 You can use different clubs with the same technique to produce a variety of shots.

#### **More Good Ideas**

**Try to land on the green if you can-** You can't always land the ball on the green but try to if you can. This will mean that you get a more predictable first bounce. If you land the ball in the rough the first bounce will always be less predictable.

**Try to land on a flat spot-** This again will give you a more consistent first bounce. If you land the ball on a down slope the ball will tend to shoot forward and vice versa for landing the ball on the upslope. This won't always be possible but will allow you to get the most consistent first bounce.

**Tip- Look from the side to get a better view and decide on your landing spot-** When working out where your landing spot is try getting a side view of the shot you are facing as you will get a better perspective of the shot you are facing. You can do this as you are walking to the shot. You will find that the task will look different from the side than it will from behind the ball and you will be able to make a better decision from the side. Look for where you want to land the ball and visualise where you see the ball landing and how it will run.



**6.15 Look from the side to get a better view and decide on your landing spot**

**How to Pitch**

Pitching is much the same as chipping but the basic difference will be that a pitch spends more time in the air than on the ground versus a chip which will spend more time on the ground. The technique is very similar to the chip shot in that the same fundamentals apply.

**Controlling the Distance**

The key to good pitching is distance control. Most people will not be too far left or right of the target but will be either too far or too short of the target. Once you are making a good stroke and contact with the shot the key concept that will control the swing is the same as the putting stroke. **The distance is controlled by the length of the swing and the rhythm stays the same.** This will give you consistency, and the distance you hit your wedges will become very predictable.

**Using the Clock-** The key fundamental to controlling the distance of your wedges is to understand the varying lengths of backswing required for each distance. Imagine your left arm is the hour hand on a clock and different times give you different distances. Use just 3 to start off with and these will provide you with a good base. Begin with **8 o'clock, 9 o'clock and 11 o'clock or half swing, three quarter swing and full swing.**

Look at the pictures below and practise getting the correct length of backswing. You can use a mirror or video to give you some good feedback on how well you are doing. It is good to do this with all of your wedges and record each distance. You can then write this down in your yardage book or by putting a sticker on the back of your wedges.



**6.16 8 o'clock swing**



**6.17 9 o'clock swing**



**6.18 11 o'clock swing**

Wedge	O'clock	9 o'clock	11 o'clock
PW			
Gap Wedge			
Lob/Sand wedge			

**Get a Range Finder if you can-** A great aid to help you get better at distance control with your wedges is a range finder. When practicing on the range this will give accurate information about your targets and you can work out what length backswing will hit the club a certain distance. Plus, it will give you good information on the course to aid your distance control. If you don't have a range finder you can use a yardage book or pace out yardages. This will also

assist you with your 3 different distances with each wedge. But, a range finder will make this much easier and more accurate.



### **6.19 Use a range finder to get accurate distances**

**Have a good set of wedges with the correct loft progression-** The wedge set-up you have in your set will greatly help your distance control. The loft of the club is the angle of the club in respect to the shaft. You can have the loft checked by most PGA Professionals and what you want is an even spacing of the lofts so that you will get a good spacing of the distance you hit each wedge. The spacing should be approximately 5 or 6 degrees between each wedge. Common setups would be 47, 52 and 58 degrees or 48, 54 and 60 degrees. Be aware of this if you are buying new wedges.



### **6.20 Get your wedge set up correct with an even spacing of lofts.**

**How to Practice-** If you go to the range, work out how far away the targets are. Try to practice at a facility that has a good number of targets inside 100 yards and work on going to each target. Alternatively, if you have a facility where you can hit your own practice balls. Mark out 3 targets that are at 3 different distances such as 20, 40 and 60 yards and hit shots to them. You can use alignment sticks or an old shaft as your target. In each instance work out what length or swing is required to hit the ball the correct distance. Ensure you hold your finish and keep getting lots of good feedback.

## **Playing from Bunkers**

Bunkers are designed to be a hazard and are a source of much frustration for many golfers. They require a different shot to other parts of the game but by understanding a few simple concepts they are in some ways a simple shot. What happens to many players is that by not understanding the below simple ideas, going into a bunker can wreck your score by either leaving it in the bunker or thinning the shot through the green. If you apply some of the below ideas you can reach your first goal of getting out of the bunker and onto the green. Add in some practice and you could start to get your bunker shots up and down.

### ***Hit the sand and not the ball***

When playing a bunker shot you want to play it like an explosion shot where you hit the sand and not the ball. You want to hit the sand 1 to 4 inches behind the ball which as long as you use the bounce of the wedge correctly means you have a margin of error on this shot unlike on shots from the fairway. A great image for you to have is that the ball is sitting in the middle of a £10 note and you want to enter the sand at the back of the note and leave at the end. If you do not take any sand this would be too little and vice versa.



### **6.21 Imagine the ball sitting in the middle of a £10 note**

### ***Use the bounce of the wedge by opening the clubface***

If you look at the bottom of your sand wedge you will notice that the back edge of the club is lower than the front edge. This is the bounce and it is designed to do exactly what it says:-hit the ground and then bounce so that the club does not dig into the ground. This will be your best friend in the sand and will make a big difference to your performance in the bunkers. The amount of bounce that the club has in a square position is not enough for bunker shots so increase the amount of bounce by opening the sand wedge so that the club will point to the right of the target. Notice how much the bounce angle has increased.



### **6.22 Increase the bounce by opening the clubface**

*Open the wedge first and then take your grip-* It is important that you open the club first and then grip the club as opposed to taking your grip and then opening the club.



### **6.23 Open the wedge first then take your grip**

#### ***Driver width stance and dig your feet into the sand***

Take a driver width stance with your club as this will help lower the bottom of the arc of your swing so that you ensure you hit the sand before the ball. Then dig your feet into the sand which will also make sure that you hit the sand and not the ball. Digging your feet in will also enable you to test the texture of the sand to get a feel for the shot that you about to play.



### **6.24 Make a driver width stance**

#### ***Get your sternum behind the ball***

The bottom of the arc of your swing will be where your sternum is. So to ensure again that you hit the sand and not the ball you want your sternum above the 1 to 4 inch zone where you want to hit the sand behind the ball.



### **6.25 Get your sternum behind the ball**

#### ***Hit the shot harder***

As you are hitting the sand and adding loft to the club you will have to make a longer swing than you would for a shot for the same distance from the grass. A good guideline is to make a swing twice as long in the bunker as you would for a normal shot. On a standard bunker shot this will be an L to L Swing.



### **6.26 Make twice the swing you would make on a normal shot of the same distance.**

#### ***Hit the sand and keep turning through the shot to your finish***

Once you have set up to the shot correctly you have completed the most vital part of the stroke. During the stroke, aim to hit the sand and keep moving through the shot to a good finish position. At the finish your sternum should be facing the target with your weight on your left side and your arms extended into an L position. This is the same as with a pitch shot.



**6.27 Keep turning through to your finish.**

*Listen to the sound that your shot makes-* If you perform the shot correctly you will make a distinctive thud sound when you make contact. This will give an indication of how well you have used the bounce and will give you great feedback. Notice the sound you make and see if you can hear the difference between a good shot and a bad shot.

*Look at the divot you have made in the sand-* If you look at the divot you made in the sand and especially where the divot started this will give you great feedback as well. If you didn't take enough sand and hit too close to the ball you will hit a thin shot. If you hit the sand too early or the divot was too deep you will hit a fat shot. You are looking for a divot like the £10 note that was discussed earlier.

**Get good at the basic bunker shot**

Most bunker shots that you have will be greenside bunker shots which are 15 to 20 yards from the flag. Focus your time on getting proficient at this shot to begin with and then work on playing longer bunker shots and bad lie bunker shots later. The tougher shots are more infrequent and you shouldn't have them as often.



**6.28 Most bunker shots will be 15 to 20 yards so practice these the most.**

**Playing from different types of sand and lies**

The same technique will be effective from all different types of sand and textures of sand. Bunkers at courses vary greatly in the type of sand they have and the amount of sand in the bunkers. The above technique will work in firmer sand with the only adjustment being to go slightly closer to the ball. Versus very soft sand where you would aim slightly further behind the ball. These are just minor adjustments and the bounce of the sand wedge will help you play all different lie shots.

**Practice this shot often and it will help your long game**

You will develop competence in this shot by practicing it regularly. If you have had difficulty in playing this shot in the past, be patient implementing the above techniques into your game. By becoming competent from the bunker this will help your long game as you won't fear going into the bunker. The mindset that you need when playing to a green that is surrounded by bunkers is that if you go into the bunker you can play from them competently. If you fear going in the bunker this adds tension to your full shot swing and invariably increases the likelihood of the ball going into the bunker.



**6.29 By becoming competent at bunker shots you won't fear them which will help your long game**