Special thanks to my family: Charlene my wife, Jennifer and Ashley.

To Phil Blackmar, Mark King, Steve Lowe, Julie Yang, David Huffman, Steve Lotz, and Bob Gaus at Tower Tee St. Louis for outstanding contributions with content. To George Reynolds for keyline design.

To Bob Toski – without him, the teaching profession would not be where it is today. “His instinct for the game and his enthusiasm for teaching are an example to all of us.” And to Jim “The Master” Edgeworth and Dr. John “The Knife” Campbell for their commitment to the game and for helping with this book.

I would like to offer a note of sincere gratitude to the Superstition Mountain Golf Club, its members and ownership, for a 14-year professional relationship and for the opportunity to work at such an inspiring venue.
I have never been one to look back and reflect. I prefer to look ahead and focus on how I can positively shape the future, be it mine or the game of golf. I believe that one’s legacy is based less on wins, records and accolades than it is about leaving the world a better place. That legacy is my passion in the world of golf.

I have always tried to surround myself with likeminded people whose love for our sport has translated into a passion for embracing its great traditions, promoting the fun and beauty of the game, and protecting its future. Mike Malaska is of like mind and spirit.

I have known Mike for more than 25 years, and it has been gratifying to witness his maturation into an outstanding teacher of golf, as well as a spokesperson for the game. Mike has a strong commitment to the game, an unwavering zeal for teaching it. He brings an infectious enthusiasm every day to the golf course or practice tee. He possesses the rare ability to not only motivate people to learn but also put them at ease during what can be at times a stressful process. He takes the technical out of technique, while emphasizing the fun in fundamental. Mike inspires people to continue to grow, learn and enjoy the game. These are the types of people we need in golf to help secure its future.

Mike spent many years working alongside my long-time friend and instructor Jim Flick, and Jim’s influences on Mike are evident. Mike understands how I like to approach the game from both a playing and teaching perspective, and like Jim, he has a deep-rooted dedication to passing along the game to the next generation. Just as important, Mike was and is a tremendous athlete who has a strong understanding of the physical make-up of the body and the mechanics behind the swing. In an era where we are seeing wonderful athletes gravitate towards golf, Mike is able to bridge the body’s mechanics and teaching methodologies to get the most out of a person’s game.

For many years, Mike has been a wonderful representative of our Jack Nicklaus Academies’ program. His ability to help countless golfers of all ages and levels of playing ability have made him a wonderful representative of the game of golf. Hopefully after reading Mike’s first-ever book about golf instruction, your game will be in a better place than you found it.

-Jack Nicklaus
When I think about my golf experience I can only imagine where I’d be if it weren’t for Mike. More than likely I wouldn’t be able to play golf at all. Some say I still can’t play, while others say I never could.

When I first went to see Mike, he spent a great deal of time with me before I even hit a golf ball. Mike used that time to ascertain what I could and couldn’t do physically.

Being a former hockey player, I’ve had too many injuries to count, too many surgeries to recover from, and as my friends say, “too many pucks to the head.” However, Mike was able to help me achieve my goal of being able to continue to play golf.

After each one of these surgical train wrecks, Mike would put me back together again with a different swing based on whether I had knee surgery, shoulder surgery, a back injury, cancer, or an abdominal surgery.

At various times in our lives, we all have different goals for our golf game. Early in life, that goal may be to play competitive golf for high school, college, etc. Next in that life cycle, we try to play competitive golf as amateurs, and then as we age, the injuries and illnesses set in. Now it’s time to continue our golf for our enjoyment and to play with our kids.

As we age and health issues inevitably arise, Mike works within the framework of our physical abilities to keep us playing our beloved game. Many of us joke that we have swing “S2A” or “B3B,” a “bad-left-knee swing,” “bad-right-knee swing,” “bad-shoulder swing,” “bad-neck swing,” “bad-gut-surgery swing,” “bad-back swing,” and so on...

Mike’s unique ability defines each student’s capability. He’s not into any one method. He understands each person’s physical and psychological makeup. Mike then conforms his knowledge and imparts it to each student as that student is capable to absorb it.

I don’t know where I would be without Mike. Both my kids and my wife have also benefited from his teaching. Mike is truly the Family Golf Guy! We are blessed to have learned the game of golf from him.

-Jim Edgeworth
Jim is a graduate of Dartmouth College and now works in the insurance industry in Houston, specializing in sports and special risk. He played professional hockey and is now an avid golfer.

In recent years, it has become popular to utilize a scientific approach when teaching the game of golf. While this approach has some benefit, ultimately the game, as it is played, is more of an art form than a science. A person’s swing, short game and mental approach needs to be more a reflection of the individual – not a model – if they are to perform on the links and under pressure. The path to this realization for Mike has been interesting, intriguing and maybe a little longer than it should have been – but the benefit to this is that it has provided him a unique and diversified base which makes him a perfect messenger to share with you his powerful insight.

-Phil Blackmar
Phil has played on the PGA Tour and Champions Tour for 20 years. He won multiple titles in 15 years on the PGA Tour before joining the Champions Tour in 2007.
INTRODUCTION

Current golf instruction tends to focus on the technical aspects of swing analysis. In many instances it has missed entirely the proper order to learn.

For example, why work on backswing or hip rotation if you have no feel for proper impact?

I have written this book to help you understand a personal sequence of learning.

The challenge of this book is to keep the learning process simple, allowing you a hand in developing a game that is unique to you.

The first half of the book offers an in-depth perspective into game play. (Above all, golf is a game.) These sections offer insight into the mental game, practice and your own personal athleticism. These sections show you how to incorporate the way you think and move into your golf swing, while accessing the knowledge you gained from the other sports you’ve played.

In the game theory sections, we offer a sequential approach to help you understand and build the full swing in a personalized way. In this way, you are literally your own golf swing.
My Favorite Lesson

Joe Nichols, one of the greatest golf teachers, gave me the best lesson I ever had. I am confident that you will learn from it as much as I did.

Shooting Your Lowest Score

It’s the best round of your life, and suddenly, your swing is starting to elude you. It’s hard to survive the bad days. It’s harder to survive the good ones.

Curing Shot Dependency

You love golf. But what happens when the puts miss the hole, and the tee shots miss the course? How do you make the demons go back to sleep when the bad shots wake them up?

What Are You Playing For?

If you play for perfect rounds, you’ll rarely be happy. To challenge this, we’ll look at the important factors of the game that are easily forgotten.

You love golf. But what happens when the putts miss the hole, and the tee shots miss the course? How do you make the demons go back to sleep when the bad shots wake them up?
How did I end up twenty yards off the fairway on the first hole? How was this my favorite lesson?

My Favorite Lesson

I was stuck behind a tree on the first hole about twenty yards off the fairway with a shot to the green – but not much of one.

I took a swing at it, knocking it down, flying it somewhere close to the fringe... but now I am ahead of myself.

How did I end up twenty yards off the fairway on the first hole? And how was this my favorite lesson?
ell… before the round started, I was with my teacher – Joe Nichols – in the club house. We usually met outside, but for this special lesson, he told me to meet him in the club house, where he explained that we were going to have a playing lesson – and not just a regular playing lesson. Today there would be some extra shots involved. So I showed up early, warmed up on the range, then headed on in to find him.

The game was seemed simple enough. “We are going to play nine holes,” my teacher explained, “We’ll tee off on the first hole.” Easy enough. But here came the twist. He was going to pick up my tee shot on every hole and place it anywhere he wanted – in some diabolical spot. I would have a shot at the green, but not a good one. The bet was to see if he could place the ball in a spot so bad off every tee that I wouldn’t be able to break 40. At the end, he’d pay me if I won the bet.

“Fine,” I said. “I’m up for the bet.”

So… to get back to our story, I was on the first hole, stuffed behind a tree with only a slight chance of making it to the green. I hit the shot with true determination, just to show him – and landed the ball close enough to get up and down. Par. “That’ll show him,” I thought.

On the second hole, I hit my tee shot well enough. Joe picked up my ball and put it in the deep rough off the left edge of the fairway. It was on a side hill lie, sloping even further left. No joke, and I wasn’t laughing – but I was certainly up for the challenge.

Hole after hole, Joe moved my ball to the most treacherous of places. I would have a shot at the green, but not a good one. The bet was to see if he could place the ball in a spot so bad off every tee that I wouldn’t be able to break 40. At the end, he’d pay me if I won the bet.

I did have a few crazy up-and-downs to shake off. But my determination held firm, and before the nine was over, I began to really enjoy the challenge. We finished the front nine and I put up a 37, “Not bad,” I thought. “I did it,” I was thinking.

We walked back to the club house and sat down. I expected some version of an acknowledgement that I won the bet. But no such luck. He put it something like this:

“Let me ask you, Mike. On the first hole, after I put your ball behind the tree, how excited were you to hit that shot? You see… you were intent on proving me wrong. And the shot was hard, true… but you managed to make it work. And again on the second hole, I hooked you way left – and again you managed to make it work.

“So you’re all pleased and excited that you won some sort of bet. But let me ask you this:

“What would you have done on the first hole, if you’d actually hit your tee shot where I put you? You’d have been mad – if not fuming. But, for the sake of the argument, let’s say you shook it off. After hitting that lousy tee shot on the first, you backed it up with an equally bad tee shot on the second.

“At some point you’d have gone crazy and broken down mentally. You’d have no confidence in your game or your ability to shoot any score at all.

“So tell me this – what score would you have shot if you’d hit every tee shot where I left you? If you’d hit a hideous slice on One… a terrible hook on Two… a buried lie in the fairway bunker on Three? The real bet is this. Would you still have shot a 37? Tell me yes, and you win the bet.”
Above all else, golf is a game.

So I stopped. And I thought. And I realized. And to be completely honest, I had to tell him, “No.”

Truth was, if I’d hit a string of tee shots that bad, by the third hole, I would have been set for an asylum. I would have been fuming. There was no way I could have played those second shots, as difficult as they were, and from all those crazy places, and still shot a 37.

“And yet,” my teacher said, “you did shoot a 37 from all those places. You really did.”

That was the end of the lesson as far as he was concerned. He walked away after I paid him his $10. I knew he was right, and I’d guess he’d be right for any one of us.

Now you didn’t get to take that lesson. But it was such a great lesson, we can all take something from it.

How well do you play, when you aren’t playing that well? How great is this game, when the first shot off the tee really doesn’t matter? We hear so much about hitting it further and hitting it harder and longer… and in our misplaced efforts, we end up in some crazy places on the course.

But who cares? Seriously.

What’s the difference between the ball my teacher hides behind the tree and the shot we hit there in the first place? What is the difference? There isn’t one – certainly not in terms of the next shot. The difference is in our minds. It’s in our expectations. It’s in the fact that we don’t yet understand this game.

The ball goes where it goes. You just get to hit it. What we can always hit a shot so great from a place so awful, just for the sheer love of the game. Forget the past. Forget what happened.

Changing my thought process proved to be the best lesson. It’s the best lesson. It changed my life.

The lesson reminds me of a story Jack Nicklaus told me. He said a shot just creates a new situation with a new set of variables and a new set of options – just for you to sort through, pick the best of what you’ve got, commit to it and hit another shot until the game is over. In other words, we do not go quietly into the night.

Great wisdom from great teachers. Glad to share it. If my lessons are half as valuable, we’ll get there.

Humility, good. Expectations, bad.

We can always hit a shot so great from a place so awful, just for the sheer love of the game. Forget the past. Forget what happened.

Changing my thought process proved to be the best lesson. It’s the best lesson. It changed my life.

Joe Nichols was a genius in that he could give you what you needed in your swing, but also in your head, relative to the game and how it’s played.

The lesson reminds me of a story Jack Nicklaus told me. He said a shot just creates a new situation with a new set of variables and a new set of options – just for you to sort through, pick the best of what you’ve got, commit to it and hit another shot until the game is over. In other words, we do not go quietly into the night.

Great wisdom from great teachers. Glad to share it. If my lessons are half as valuable, we’ll get there.

Humility, good. Expectations, bad.

........................................

"Above all else, golf is a game."
The brutality in golf is that great shots don’t necessarily mean great scores.

Shooting Your Lowest Score

For most aspiring golfers, shooting your lowest score ever can be summed up in two words. Emotional panic. Strange how success often seems to have such a detrimental effect on the golfer.

As one improves, your lower scores form a psychological hurdle – creating a curious obstacle we all have to “get over” in our need to improve. The brutality is that great shots and great scores can suddenly make you shoot far worse.

So, what’s going on in all this? Is it all just mental. And if so, what can be done about it? If you can’t break through your mental barriers, how can you ever shoot your lowest score?
he mental side of shooting your best score brings with it the anticipation that you’re close to accomplishing something new – but how do you overcome that mental hurdle?

There’s no way to totally avoid this reality – but we can talk about a couple of ways to make it work.

First, let’s try to just ‘stay in the moment’ and hit one shot at a time.

**Plan A: Play One Shot At A Time.**

You hear guys on tour talking about one shot at a time, don’t get ahead of yourself, stay in the moment, hit the shots.

But all of a sudden you’re aware: “Oh wow, I’m on 15 and I’ve never broken 80 and all I have to do is bogey in and I can shoot 79.”

In this scenario, when you find yourself in uncharted waters, try to focus on yourself as the good players do. What shots can you hit – and what shots can’t you hit – at that moment? Now, what most people try to do is to make their very best swing – which is OK – to get rid of the tension, stand up, get your target and go.

And once you feel this anxiousness, you sense the anxiety of scoring pressure. The goal here is to intentionally practice a shot on the range for when you get nervous or jumpy or out of sorts.

Relaying on this practice shot will allow you to break through the difficult mental barriers. We’d love to just stay focused on where we are. But when this doesn’t happen, the ‘go-to’ shot lets you have a very good chance of keeping the ball in play.

Every player at the tour level has a preferred shot they practiced, so they can hit under pressure. The goal here is to intentionally practice a shot on the range for when you get nervous or jumpy or out of sorts. Relying on this practice shot will allow you to break through the difficult mental barriers. The goal here is to intentionally practice a shot on the range for when you get nervous or jumpy or out of sorts.

Having options is the first cure.

**Plan B: Learn Your ‘Go-To’ Shots.**


As an example, “let’s ask what would Jack do?” In a critical moment, Jack Nicklaus would most likely play a fade. This is the shot he likes. Tom Watson would hit a draw. Tiger has gone through a period where his low shot – the low stinger – is the ‘go-to’ shot he’s been able to play. Now it’s not maybe the best shot, but it’s a shot he knows he can keep in play.

Every player at the tour level has a preferred shot they practiced, so they can hit under pressure. The goal here is to intentionally practice a shot on the range for when you get nervous or jumpy or out of sorts.

Relaying on this practice shot will allow you to break through the difficult mental barriers. We’d love to just stay focused on where we are. But when this doesn’t happen, the ‘go-to’ shot lets you have a very good chance of keeping the ball in play.

Now let’s take one step deeper into the mental game of performance. Beyond the ‘go-to’ shot, there’s still a place where everything can fall apart. What we’re describing here are the nightmare circumstances that no amount of practice on the range can fix.

It won’t always be blue skies and bluebirds. So where do you go when the very game you love becomes unfair, if not unkind? Bad breaks. Bad bounces. Horrendously bad luck.

So… what are these situations that disrupt you when all is good – and can even wreck your entire career?

**Plan C: Learn To Love Your Demons.**

Regardless of the level of player, the uncertainty of what’s going to happen affects the way you play. For some, these nagging issues drag on for years. Maybe it’s a chip shot you just can’t hit. Maybe it’s a particular hole you double bogey every time you play. Maybe it’s a shadow on the ground, or a break on the green.

Before you become a great player, you’ll have to manage your own personal demons.

The demons are anxieties. And what does or doesn’t happen only fuels these demons – feeds them. So how, then, do we beat them?

My own demon was the 90-yard wedge shot into the green. At critical moments, I started to hit it fat. So believe me, I feel your pain.

The key to the darker side of golf is not to avoid the demons, but to play with them. First, realize that they will never go away. The more you are afraid of them and the less willing you are to deal with them, the bigger they become.

Having options is the first cure.

**Plan D: Have Options.**

Let’s say that suddenly you can only hit a 40-yard slice, and you are on a dog-leg left. If you don’t have the ability to hit a draw, you have to aim well left, and cut the ball into the dog-leg. What this does is help lower your anxiety level. This will help to quell the demons, because you aren’t trying to hit a difficult shot.

There is another way to look at demons. Demons are trying to save you.

“You just can’t hit this shot – really. Don’t,” they seem to say. Or they make you aware that you are in a situation where you need to do something special – or try something else.

Being 100% committed to a shot that is 50% correct is better than being 50% committed to something that is 100% correct. Again, the ‘right’ shot is the shot you can hit.

By far the ‘maddest’ you get with yourself is attempting a shot you just knew you just couldn’t hit at that particular moment. It’s not logical – and regrettable, it never will be. Sorry, the demons are here to stay.

Welcome to the purely mental side of the game.
“You bash the ground and call it ‘letting off steam’ but in reality, you have no reaction management.”

Curing Golf Shot Dependency

In this chapter, we’ll talk about everyone’s favorite subject: getting mad. (And sometimes, it’s getting really, really mad.)

To make this work, and approach the level of a lifelong lesson, you’ll need to imagine you’re on the first tee, setting up for a much anticipated round where you just know you’re going to play well. Today, you’re going low. You just know it.

You put on your best outfit, your best pair of shoes, a brand new glove right out of the wrapper. You breeze off the range to the first tee. You stand up there, tee it up, take a few practice swishes, and whack one high, arching and beautiful – and straight out of bounds.
You agree golf is a mental game, a game of managing your emotions. All this is fine. But where many players fall so many times is in their inability to manage their reactions. When so many outcomes are in play, why do we ruin all the rounds where it just doesn’t go our way?

For your soul and your sanity – not to mention your clubs – I’ll offer a cure for the maddening moments when the game ruins your day.

Do You Have Shot Dependency?

I freely admit that I have been shot dependent. I admit that on the sunniest of days, in the company of great friends, I have ruined many rounds when a shot made me so mad, I forgot where I was, and thought – for one dark moment – that I hated this beautiful game.

I can feel your pain. Trust me. So let’s discuss how our mind is often dependent on how we are playing that day. We can call this issue ‘shot dependency.’

Step 1: Create A Post-Shot Routine.

There’s plenty of insight into pre-shot routines, but there’s a lack of consideration for where your mind goes after hitting a shot – good or bad.

One reason for this is you’re dreaming. You see a perfect round of golf ahead of you, and when the dream is dashed, you become instantly desperate. You bash the ground, and call it ‘letting off steam’ – but in reality, you have no reaction management.

When the good players hit a bad shot, it doesn’t affect their confidence. Inside, they may feel disappointed. But they quickly take on the idea that after a bad shot, they’re due for a good one.

This reminds me of a Japanese phrase, “Sodom oh ki kata, ochidu” – which means, even monkeys fall out of trees. Unless the monkey is falling out of the tree on a consistent basis, the monkey won’t start to question its climbing ability. So – to love the game, you must start to control how you react.

Step 2: Are You Mood-Dependent?

There is a concept in psychology called mood-dependency, where your mood can be changed by the whims of the day. If your boss smiles, you’re happy. If your boss frowns, you’re sad.

This is true in golf, where the player under par is the man talking his head off, and the player shooting ten shots over is walking dejectedly, head down, skulking around in the beautiful scenery. Now granted, it may only be the second hole – and it’s a little tough to be joyful where you’re ten over on the second, with so many more to go – but even so, mood-dependency on your golf game is a serious issue.

Are you seriously thinking you’ll only be happy when everything goes right? And certainly, there are times you’ll three-putt when a birdie was possible. The problem with mood-dependency is no one hits great shots all the way around. You tap one in for an easy par, and you regret not making a birdie. You go for ‘more’ on the next hole, then you make a double bogey, and now you’re thinking that golf is a lonely game. You get mad. You want to break your clubs. But that’s OK, right? It’s OK to hate this game. Everyone does it.

Step 3: Let The Ball Go Where It May.

Every successful golfer needs to learn to let the little ball go where it may. There are good bounces and bad bounces.

Golf catches the universe in a bottle. To be part of it has to be enough. Find the strength to hit that ball and learn from the outcome. Once you’ve found that strength, consider your options and pick the best one for you. Then commit to the shot, hit the ball, and let it fly where it may.

If you learn one thing about the mental game, it should be that where the ball lands can no longer affect your mood. Shot dependency means you’ve let one bad shot ruin the round. Now you’re not having any fun and you are playing worse as a result of it. – and playing worse because of it.

Try creating a post-shot routine. Break your mood-dependency. And let the ball go where it may. The beginning of reaction management.

MALASKA TIP

Achieving your potential depends more on your attitude towards the learning process than on your talent level. Many pros prove this to be true.
What Are You Playing For?

I know this question has an obvious answer. Of course, you’re playing for your score. But such obvious answers are rarely the best.

You’re also playing to beat your friends. You’re playing to achieve one of any number of firsts — your first birdie — your first round under 90 — your first front nine without losing a golf ball — or even your first win in a major on national TV.

Certainly, golf is a game of firsts. But in this way, golf is hardly unique. With a score and a set of visible achievements, it is like any number of games you play.

To find a more inspired answer to the question of what you’re playing for, let’s take a look at what is truly unique about this crazy little game.

“Faith. That’s a good word for it. Believe in yourself, not your score.”
en all start with a swing — one that we are born with. You have an idea that you’re supposed to hit that ball a long way, but realizing it is small and that the hole is a mile away poses several problems. How does the ball fly up into the air, when it starts on the ground? How do you make the ball go where you want — or “approximate the direction of your choosing?”

The confounding truth about golf is that at first glance it looks easy enough. You hit the ball. It flies towards a hole. You hit it some more. And eventually, you just tap it in. To make it even simpler, there is a flag to aim at, a smooth surface to roll the ball over those last few feet — and you don’t have to hit the ball until you’re ready. Surely, it can’t be that hard.

Once you’ve hit a few good shots, you tend to become hooked — on the sheer ease of the ball flying through the air. Nothing complex. Easy to fall in love with. But now, suddenly as the love develops, so do the disasters. You watch one perfect shot, and now it’s hard to understand why you don’t always hit good shots. If I can do this once, I should be able to do this a thousand times, surely? But no. There now follows a little prayer. This is a far better lesson to learn than how well you play. You play to learn about yourself. Now surely, you want to learn how to rip the driver and make every putt. But how will you react when you don’t? How will you react when you fail? Golf is the favorite game of business partners, because you see how a player acts at his best, when everything is rolling hole-ward, and at his worst, when everything is rolling rough-ward, sand-ward, water-ward and otherwise-ward.

Your attitude towards the process — your successes and failures — is more important in obtaining your potential in the game than your talent ever will be.

You play to be humble. And certainly, what an awful reason this is to play. But if you don’t play to love the humility in the world, and figure out how small you really are in the big scheme of it all, then you’re missing one of the great opportunities to connect with the world.

You throw up a shot almost like you’re throwing up a little prayer.

You toss it up into the sky, just to see what the world will make of it. It goes where it goes. And too often, you lose the thrill of the unexpected by forcing every shot and every outcome to conform to your expectations. Certainly, you can try — but once you pull the trigger, you must learn to accept that the chips will fall where they may — as will the putts, the tee shots, and the approaches. One bounce in the wrong direction cannot be so overwhelming as to unhinge your entire world.

Every shot has a consequence, so every shot has a chance to make us humble in the face of triumph and disaster. Golf is a great teacher in learning how to react. You play to be honest.

Honesty is another ‘life lesson’ some feel they can do without. But there are ample chances to lie to yourself. And this doesn’t just mean using the foot-wedge to nudges a ball clear of a wayward oak tree. This applies to your methods of practice and learning. Do you have the new skill learned, or is it still a little suspect? Could you make the short putt, or was your conscience pricked when you turned it into a gimme? Do you understand what your teacher said? Can you really hit it 300 yards? Did you really shoot the score you said you did?

There are many reasons to play for more than just a score, or just for distance, or just for show. Golf offers a rare chance to meet yourself at your best and your worst, as much of the game is not measurable by a number. Success can be staying focused for the entire round, or never losing your cool. It can be playing with the same ball for 18 holes. It can be hitting every green, just as easily as it could be laughing with your friends, after the treacherous quad on the 17th killed your score.

There are a thousand reasons to play. Let’s not turn these life lessons into lessons on bunker shots and tee shots. This is a chance to connect with something great — and this is a far better lesson to learn than how well you score.
The Mental Game Chapters

Every round played is an opportunity to develop your mental skills. The same mental discipline or approach that you use to turn the worst round of your life into one shot better is the same mental discipline that you use when you’re 5 shots better than you’ve been, and you still have 3 holes to go – and the wheels start to come off the rails.

If you give up on a bad round, you will just as easily give up on a good one.

Don’t ever waste a perfect chance to learn how to deal with the emotional challenges of the game – and life.

The mental game is misunderstood. The dream is that you enter some euphoric walk in nature. The reality is that every round will challenge you with emotional conflicts. How you handle with these challenges determines your success far more than your talent level ever will.

Golf is game of emotion and adjustments. It’s your ability to read yourself both physically and mentally and pick your best shot to get the most out of your game at any point in time.

Faith. Looking back on my career, I think that’s a good word for it. Believe in yourself, not your score. In that, golf is the world’s greatest game.
Yes – you can make your practice on the range show up on the course. It’s not impossible. It depends on how you practice, and how you evaluate your performance on the course. In this chapter, you’ll learn to manage your expectations, and see how the range and the course work together – not apart – to guide the learning process.

Bridging The Gap Between Practice And Play

Progress is motivating. And if you are motivated, you’ll enjoy your practice. But if you only recognize progress as an improvement in your score, then you might as well quit. In this section, you’ll learn that identifying progress is something of a game in itself.

Learning To Love Practice
What are you practicing today? Is it working? Have patience. Don’t panic. Is something great just around the corner?

I worked with Jim Flick at the Nicklaus Academies – and I had to teach people how to practice. When I first started, I would ask people, “Do you like practicing?”

95% of people said they did not. The reason they didn’t like practicing is they felt like practice made them worse. They felt more confused. And even if they found something that worked on the range it would leave them on the course, so why bother?

Obviously, there is a problem here. Practicing plays tricks on you. It can make you feel like you have something, but you just can’t apply it to the course. If you don’t learn how to adapt and adjust, you may give up just before you achieve something great in your game.

Let me share a few ways that can help you see through the illusion that practice creates confusion more than progress.
Motivation comes easiest when you sense progress. Acknowledging these signs of progress is critical to stay inspired. If you only see improvement when your score drops, you’ll become so frustrated you’ll probably quit – or you’ll quit trying to improve on a daily basis.

How can we create this feeling of progress? The answer starts by learning to warm up properly each time you practice. You’ll need a checklist. My daily warm-up checklist is shown on the right. You need to start where you started yesterday. To skip a step, or all of the steps, is to invite frustration. Get back to where you were yesterday, then add a little more today. This is true progress and the key to motivation.

MALASKA TIP
As part of a warm-up routine, remember to warm up your body first. Stretch and loosen up before you hit. Check out the fitness section for more.

**Practice**

**Warming Up Consistently Is The Key To Progress**

Motivation comes easiest when you sense progress. Acknowledging these signs of progress is critical to stay inspired. If you only see improvement when your score drops, you’ll become so frustrated you’ll probably quit – or you’ll quit trying to improve on a daily basis.

How can we create this feeling of progress? The answer starts by learning to warm up properly each time you practice. You’ll need a checklist. My daily warm-up checklist is shown on the right. You need to start where you started yesterday. To skip a step, or all of the steps, is to invite frustration. Get back to where you were yesterday, then add a little more today. This is true progress and the key to motivation.

MALASKA TIP
As part of a warm-up routine, remember to warm up your body first. Stretch and loosen up before you hit. Check out the fitness section for more.

**Practice**

**Warming Up Consistently Is The Key To Progress**

Motivation comes easiest when you sense progress. Acknowledging these signs of progress is critical to stay inspired. If you only see improvement when your score drops, you’ll become so frustrated you’ll probably quit – or you’ll quit trying to improve on a daily basis.

How can we create this feeling of progress? The answer starts by learning to warm up properly each time you practice. You’ll need a checklist. My daily warm-up checklist is shown on the right. You need to start where you started yesterday. To skip a step, or all of the steps, is to invite frustration. Get back to where you were yesterday, then add a little more today. This is true progress and the key to motivation.

MALASKA TIP
As part of a warm-up routine, remember to warm up your body first. Stretch and loosen up before you hit. Check out the fitness section for more.

**Practice**

**Warming Up Consistently Is The Key To Progress**

Motivation comes easiest when you sense progress. Acknowledging these signs of progress is critical to stay inspired. If you only see improvement when your score drops, you’ll become so frustrated you’ll probably quit – or you’ll quit trying to improve on a daily basis.

How can we create this feeling of progress? The answer starts by learning to warm up properly each time you practice. You’ll need a checklist. My daily warm-up checklist is shown on the right. You need to start where you started yesterday. To skip a step, or all of the steps, is to invite frustration. Get back to where you were yesterday, then add a little more today. This is true progress and the key to motivation.

MALASKA TIP
As part of a warm-up routine, remember to warm up your body first. Stretch and loosen up before you hit. Check out the fitness section for more.

**Practice**

**Warming Up Consistently Is The Key To Progress**

Motivation comes easiest when you sense progress. Acknowledging these signs of progress is critical to stay inspired. If you only see improvement when your score drops, you’ll become so frustrated you’ll probably quit – or you’ll quit trying to improve on a daily basis.

How can we create this feeling of progress? The answer starts by learning to warm up properly each time you practice. You’ll need a checklist. My daily warm-up checklist is shown on the right. You need to start where you started yesterday. To skip a step, or all of the steps, is to invite frustration. Get back to where you were yesterday, then add a little more today. This is true progress and the key to motivation.

MALASKA TIP
As part of a warm-up routine, remember to warm up your body first. Stretch and loosen up before you hit. Check out the fitness section for more.
**Practice**

*Progress Leads To Motivation*

While you’re warming up, you can also help yourself mentally. Practicing gives the golfer some valuable time to think. Rather than feeling frustrated, try to be relaxed and focused. Don’t practice making it ‘hard.’ Once good golf is a habit, it will become far easier. But practice ‘good golf’ mentally along the way. Don’t grind. Don’t allow yourself the luxury of hating every minute of it. This makes it far more likely for you to dread the next day. Enjoying small accomplishments and loving the moment will keep you coming back.

When you start warming up, don’t be afraid to use a tee instead of hitting off the ground. When you use a tee, you still have to control path and face. The only part that is made easier is angle of approach – allowing you to think the ball is easier to hit.

We’ve all heard that golf isn’t just score and distance. Progress can be measured in your approach to the game, or your ability to control certain situations. Strive to feel this in every shot. You can find success in feeling less tension in your body.

If you start to feel lost, don’t just keep hitting away. Step back, retrace the steps, then start moving forward again. Back and forth creates true progress.

In this way, finding progress becomes something of a game inside the game. When you talk to great players, they’re always working on something. They are trying to think or act a certain way all day long. And if it holds up, they say... ‘That was a great day.’

---

**Step 4**

Swing The Club Handle

- Turn the club around, and swing the handle.
- Make several practice swings. When you turn the club around, you’ll feel the weight of the clubhead.

**Step 5**

Pitching

- Hit a few shots to ensure a good sense of contact.
- Focus on feeling the weight of the clubhead.

**Step 6**

Feel Draw, Straight And Fade

- Feel the club with a shut face, relative to path.
- Feel the club with an open face, again relative to path.
- Finally, feel the clubhead square to the path.
Great Players Are Always Improving

When the best players are out there practicing, are they loving every minute of it? No, they’re not. In fact, it’s like working out. There is a pain these players go through—a mental or a physical pain—and they go through it because they know if they toughen up, they’ll play better. To them, motivation is just another part of the game they need to succeed.

Listen to a typical tour player in an interview: “I’m figuring things out. I’m getting better.” They pump themselves up. They are anticipating good, but they’re not devastated by bad. They know that great is just one step away.

You can learn from their experiences. After you’re warmed up, what are you working on? Can you find what the great players are striving for? Can you take your progress one step further?

Golf is a journey. The key is to be so motivated by successes and failures that you’ll try again tomorrow. Ask yourself what went right today, and where can you improve? Progress has two sides.

Step 7
Path Control

In-to-out path makes the ball start right.

Out-to-in path makes the ball start left.

Step 8
Height Control

Creating impact with your hands well ahead produces a low shot.

Hit shot controlling the height. Here is a higher shot.

Step 9
L to L swings to Full Swing

Slightly forward of the ball creates a standard shot flight.

Make an isolated swing through impact.

Use the L-to-L as a warm up for the full swing.

Finish with the classic ‘L’ shape as shown here.
If you’re going to practice, you’re working on technique. If you’re warming up to play, you’re figuring out what shots you have that day.

Whenever I’m going to practice, I’m going out to work on technique. I spend all day finding a feel for the weight of the clubhead, or how my left arm rotates down through impact.

When I prepare to compete, I might do all these things, but now I only hit a couple of balls with each drill and each club.

The reason for the quicker ‘run through’ is I’m looking to build up my swing and figure what will work for me that day. What’s the ball doing? What shots can I hit? I’m finding my swing, and the arsenal of weapons I have that day to compete.

A huge part of playing competitively is understanding what you can and can’t do today – so you can create a game plan when you’re out on the golf course. In this way, preparing to compete is totally different from practicing. Many of us go out onto the golf course focusing on mechanics, instead of trying to shoot a score. It doesn’t work. That’s not how you ‘play’ golf. So now let’s talk about what does work.
Can The Range Show Up On The Course?

If you’re planning to play, you need to know what shots you have in your arsenal. If you’re slicing the ball 40 yards on the range, when you get up to the first tee, you aim left and play the slice. You don’t try to hit it straight. You haven’t hit one straight yet—so why would you try to make your first shot on the golf course the first straight shot you’ve hit all day?

As we discussed in the last chapter, if you go to practice, there’s a checklist that you go through. If you go to compete, there’s a different checklist with a different set of desired outcomes. You practice. Or you play.

This brings us to the age-old question: how do you make what you can do on the range show up on the course?

Here’s my favorite drill to help. It’s taught by a number of great teachers. It lets you play a round of golf on the range. Try it.

Once you’ve warmed up and finished your practice, you find all the shots you can hit that day. Take a few moments to relax, then pick up the driver and pick out a fairway and a new target. Go through your standard pre-shot routine, set up—then hit your driver. Watch where it lands, then put the driver down.

Go get a drink or take a break. Walk around for a minute or two, then grab an iron for your approach shot. Set up to another ball, aiming at a different target, going through your routine. Then you try to hit the target.

Watch where the ball goes again, and if it’s on the green, you can make a putt, or move on to the “next hole.” If it’s not close, you give yourself a few seconds, set another ball down and hit the chip shot or the pitch shot. After the shot, put the club away.

Then take a break for 4 or 5 minutes, or at least a couple of minutes, and you pull out your driver again— or an iron for a par 3. You pick another target. You take aim, and you hit it.

As you work on this drill, pay attention to shot shapes and ball flight. If you see that your swing and your shots are consistent— you have control of the trajectory and where the ball is going—then you can start to expect that what you’re working on will show up on the course.

If you find you’re struggling to hit the ball solidly, or in the right direction, then you shouldn’t anticipate what happens on the range hitting multiple balls is going to hold up when you play a round out on the course.

As you’re playing this game, watch not only the shots you hit well, but also your misses. Playing on the course is learning how to play your misses, as well as your hits. Whoever mis-hits the ball the best out on the course wins.

Golf on the Range
How To Play A Round On The Range

Put away your aiming sticks and take out the driver.

Now set up and hit a tee shot.

Watch where it lands and evaluate the shot.

Wait a few minutes.
(On the course, you wait 5 minutes.)

Take out an iron. Set up in a different direction.

Hit your iron, and assess your result.
Assessing yourself honestly isn’t an attempt to put yourself down. This is just a reality check—an evaluation of where your game can actually function, relative to your expectations.

During the pressure of a round, your swing will tend to ‘break down’ or revert back to your original swing. As you train yourself on the range to replace the old habits with more advanced techniques, you can expect some improvement for the first few holes. It may even last for the entire front nine.

However, as you continue through a round, the tendency is for your old habits to return. This is the nature of golf, and the reason it is such a challenge. On the course, you tend to hit harder, and expect more. As the holes continue, it becomes likely that the new habits won’t hold. What do you do now?

Remember the process.

When habits are still new, you have very little chance of compensating. Once new skills leave, they tend to vanish completely. So before you expect to conquer the course with newly learned technique, you should first look to conquer ‘playing’ on the range. And yes, I feel your pain.

The Practice Chapters

Before You Move On

The key to practice is motivation. The key to motivation is to see improvement. To progress as a complete golfer, it is important to understand your successes on the range, then develop these into accomplishments on the course.

Do You Have A Checklist For Practice And Play?

1. A well-defined goal is critical when you are practicing—and before you go to play. Do you understand the difference between warming up to practice, and preparing to compete?

2. Do you focus on club and ball control—and how your body moves to assist in that goal?

3. Simulate the golf course. Put time between shots. Change targets and clubs. Can you perform doing this routine? Do you know when you can expect new skills and habits to start working more frequently on the course?

4. Every day is an opportunity to start from the beginning. Warm up your skills through a checklist. Never assume because you had success yesterday that it will automatically be here today. Do you understand why you don’t start with full swings and drivers? The best players re-build their games on a daily basis. Do you?
Section 3 Scoring

Chipping
One foot to 20 feet off the green. In its simplest form, chipping is off-green putting. The easiest chip is to use your putting stroke with a lofted club.

Pitching
10 feet to 50 yards off the green. Pitching is all about using the correct set-up. Use a conventional grip, and try to catch the ball on the clubface. Your set-up makes the pitch shot either very simple, or very difficult.

Bunker Shots
Although these are the hardest shots for amateur golfers, they are the easiest shots for the pros. With a little help, we hope you’ll agree with the professionals.

Putting
Learning the full swing starts with the putting stroke. Putting teaches you to roll the ball, square the clubface and separate your upper and lower body. All are critical skills as your game develops.
Most of the top twenty players in the world are also the top twenty in scoring from inside 75 yards.

Putting

There’s no question that the short game is probably the most important part of the game, relative to scoring.

The better you can be from inside 75 yards, the more likely you’ll be the best player in your group. It is by far the most convincing and the most important area in the game relative to score. The short game often determines success on the PGA Tour and at any level of play.

I spent hundreds of hours practicing putting, but my practice was significantly spent in vain. I didn’t focus on the main fundamentals needed to be a good putter.

The fundamentals are to hit the ball in the center of the face: make the ball roll, to see the line correctly, and to keep your lower body stable. The separation of upper and lower body is also critical when developing your full swing.

When I finally understood technique and how the club works through the ball, my putting improved dramatically – in a short period of time, and especially under pressure.
If putting is 45% of your score, then 25 minutes of every hour should be spent putting. For every full swing shot, you should also hit a putt. Now let’s talk about what to practice.

First, understand how you put your hands on the putter. Extend the index finger down the shaft, on either your right hand or left hand, to give you a sense of the direction the putter swings on.

Second, position your right forearm on the shaft with your forearms parallel to each other.

Next, work on solid impact in the center of the putter face. Placing your eyes where you see the line correctly is critical. Traditional advice is to keep your eyes directly over the line, but this is not necessarily the best place. I’ve included a drill to show you this.

Finally, you need learn to roll the ball consistently. To do this, your lower body needs to stay quiet while your arms swing, and your shoulders rotate back and through.

Remember that the short game is rather short on forgiveness — but it can also make up for a lot of mistakes. One good putt can make up for a number of bad shots. No other part of the game carries so much weight or consequence.

How To Practice Your Putting

How To Grip A Putter

Stand with your grip on the putter, and the putter shaft and your forearms at a 90-degree angle to your spine.

Then bend from your hips until the putter touches the ground. It is critical to have your forearms lined up with the putter shaft at address.

Putting Stance

The putter grip fits in the palm of the left hand, under the heel pad of the thumb, with the back of the left hand facing the target.

Note how the right index finger is extended, giving directional control.

Right Arm Only Drill

The right hand fits on the back of the shaft, with the right palm facing the target. The right arm is in line with the shaft.

The right forearm lines up perfectly with the angle of the putter shaft at address and through the stroke.
Putting Stroke And Drills

Scoring

Speed And Impact Drills

The Tee Drill:
Place the ball in the middle of four tees. Make a stroke and try not to hit any of the tees.

Also, maintain the roll on the ball so the drawn line doesn’t wobble.

The Marker Drill:
Mark a putting line with a tee. Adjust your eyes and set-up until it looks in line with a second tee 6 feet away.

Putting Impact Drill:
Just like in the full swing, impact with a putter has the right forearm lining up with the shaft.

Putting Stroke, Arc

Putting Stroke, Square

The Putting Stroke:
A stroke can be straight back and straight through, or it can be on a slight arc.

Here you see the take-away as an arc, curving inward of the line at set-up. This is a very common stroke for amateurs and pros alike.

Here, you see the putter stroke stays square through impact. But whatever stroke you use, rolling the ball solidly is all that matters.

Here the take-away is perfectly on the line. The putter follows the line of the marker, staying square.

Here, you see the putter stroke stays square through impact. But whatever stroke you use, rolling the ball solidly is all that matters.
Think of chipping as off-green putting. It’s the beginning of hitting the ball into the air.

Chipping

Now let’s move out from the hole, to chip. These shots are one foot to 20 feet off the green. A chip rolls further than it flies, so the skill to learn is how to ‘bump and run’ the ball.

Chipping is a critical skill for scoring. It is very similar to putting, and it is where you begin to trust that the clubface will get the ball into the air.

The key to good chipping is solid impact, very similar to putting. The less the ball flies, and the more it rolls, the more control you will have of distance.

As an introduction to chipping, think of it as ‘off-green’ putting. The only difference between putting and chipping is your weight moves slightly forward, and the ball is slightly back, to give you a descending blow at impact.

Now let’s take a look at chipping in detail.
Chipping involves a range of shots where the ball rolls further than it flies. The motion uses a shoulder motion that is very similar to putting.

To set up, use a putting grip. Your grip pressure should allow you to feel the weight of the club in your hands, so you need to be fairly loose. Use very little wrist action in these shots.

Practice until you feel solid contact with the ball. Then you can start to practice distance control. In chipping, this is referred to ‘carry plus roll.’

**Learn Carry Plus Roll**

Chip the ball with different clubs, producing different carries and rolls. Then chip using the same club, learning to carry the ball different distances. Start to get a feel for how far the ball carries and then rolls. Pros use the same stroke with different clubs to control distance. Try it.

Typically, you want to carry a ball just onto the green, then let it roll. The higher you hit the ball, the harder it is to control distance.

---

**Scoring**

**The Ball Rolls Farther Than It Flies**

Chipping involves a range of shots where the ball rolls further than it flies. The motion uses a shoulder motion that is very similar to putting.

To set up, use a putting grip. Your grip pressure should allow you to feel the weight of the club in your hands, so you need to be fairly loose. Use very little wrist action in these shots.

Practice until you feel solid contact with the ball. Then you can start to practice distance control. In chipping, this is referred to ‘carry plus roll.’

**Learn Carry Plus Roll**

Chip the ball with different clubs, producing different carries and rolls. Then chip using the same club, learning to carry the ball different distances. Start to get a feel for how far the ball carries and then rolls. Pros use the same stroke with different clubs to control distance. Try it.

Typically, you want to carry a ball just onto the green, then let it roll. The higher you hit the ball, the harder it is to control distance.

---

**Section 3: Scoring**

**The Ball Rolls Farther Than It Flies**

Chipping involves a range of shots where the ball rolls further than it flies. The motion uses a shoulder motion that is very similar to putting.

To set up, use a putting grip. Your grip pressure should allow you to feel the weight of the club in your hands, so you need to be fairly loose. Use very little wrist action in these shots.

Practice until you feel solid contact with the ball. Then you can start to practice distance control. In chipping, this is referred to ‘carry plus roll.’

**Learn Carry Plus Roll**

Chip the ball with different clubs, producing different carries and rolls. Then chip using the same club, learning to carry the ball different distances. Start to get a feel for how far the ball carries and then rolls. Pros use the same stroke with different clubs to control distance. Try it.

Typically, you want to carry a ball just onto the green, then let it roll. The higher you hit the ball, the harder it is to control distance.

---

**Scoring**

**The Ball Rolls Farther Than It Flies**

Chipping involves a range of shots where the ball rolls further than it flies. The motion uses a shoulder motion that is very similar to putting.

To set up, use a putting grip. Your grip pressure should allow you to feel the weight of the club in your hands, so you need to be fairly loose. Use very little wrist action in these shots.

Practice until you feel solid contact with the ball. Then you can start to practice distance control. In chipping, this is referred to ‘carry plus roll.’

**Learn Carry Plus Roll**

Chip the ball with different clubs, producing different carries and rolls. Then chip using the same club, learning to carry the ball different distances. Start to get a feel for how far the ball carries and then rolls. Pros use the same stroke with different clubs to control distance. Try it.

Typically, you want to carry a ball just onto the green, then let it roll. The higher you hit the ball, the harder it is to control distance.

---

**Scoring**

**The Ball Rolls Farther Than It Flies**

Chipping involves a range of shots where the ball rolls further than it flies. The motion uses a shoulder motion that is very similar to putting.

To set up, use a putting grip. Your grip pressure should allow you to feel the weight of the club in your hands, so you need to be fairly loose. Use very little wrist action in these shots.

Practice until you feel solid contact with the ball. Then you can start to practice distance control. In chipping, this is referred to ‘carry plus roll.’

**Learn Carry Plus Roll**

Chip the ball with different clubs, producing different carries and rolls. Then chip using the same club, learning to carry the ball different distances. Start to get a feel for how far the ball carries and then rolls. Pros use the same stroke with different clubs to control distance. Try it.

Typically, you want to carry a ball just onto the green, then let it roll. The higher you hit the ball, the harder it is to control distance.

---

**Scoring**

**The Ball Rolls Farther Than It Flies**

Chipping involves a range of shots where the ball rolls further than it flies. The motion uses a shoulder motion that is very similar to putting.

To set up, use a putting grip. Your grip pressure should allow you to feel the weight of the club in your hands, so you need to be fairly loose. Use very little wrist action in these shots.

Practice until you feel solid contact with the ball. Then you can start to practice distance control. In chipping, this is referred to ‘carry plus roll.’

**Learn Carry Plus Roll**

Chip the ball with different clubs, producing different carries and rolls. Then chip using the same club, learning to carry the ball different distances. Start to get a feel for how far the ball carries and then rolls. Pros use the same stroke with different clubs to control distance. Try it.

Typically, you want to carry a ball just onto the green, then let it roll. The higher you hit the ball, the harder it is to control distance.
The more consistent you are with your practice habits, the more consistent you’ll be with your speed control and the consistency of your short game.

Why do I say that speed control is all about impact? Because you can’t learn the feel or distance unless you consistently hit the ball in the center of the face.

The best short game lesson I ever took was from Paul Runyan. They called him “Little Poison,” supposedly the best short game player in all of golf. At the time, I was chipping terribly. He took me out onto the putting green at La Jolla, and he asked me if I was a good putter.

He made me chip while I was on the green. It scared me to death. I was terrified of taking a divot. Then he made me make a putting stroke. He told me to use this putting stroke with my chipping. He asked me if I’d ever hit a putt fat. I said no, and this gave me some confidence.

Within a week, I went from being terrible to being really good. Of course, if you took a divot out of La Jolla’s green, you didn’t come back.

Scoring

Chipping Drills

Left Hand Only

Right Hand Only

Both Hands Together

Speed Control Is All About Impact

Scoring

Chipping Drills

Left Hand Only

Put a ball on the ground as a landing point. Carry the ball to this same point with different lofted clubs. Notice how the roll changes with the loft of the club.

Chipping Lengths Drill

A

Chip with the left hand. Put the club behind your right foot.

B

Put the ball on the face, resting. Then roll or push the ball to the target.

Chipping Drills

Right Hand Only

Both Hands Together

Now repeat the drill using your right hand only. Push the ball the way you did with the left hand.

Now repeat the drill using both hands together. Roll the ball, focusing on creating your putting stroke.

Chipping Lengths Drill

Landing Point

Lob Wedge

Sand Wedge

Pitching Wedge

Put a ball on the ground as a landing point. Carry the ball to this same point with different lofted clubs. Notice how the roll changes with the loft of the club.
Further out from the green, you’re not just saving par. You’re also starting to take advantage of great shots to make birdies.

Pitching

Now you’re anywhere from 10 feet to 40 or 50 yards. This is a key distance for both scoring and saving par – and proper set-up is critical.

Pitching is a skill that clearly separates professionals and amateurs. For the pros, it is often the strongest part of their game.

The good news for the aspiring player is the shot is an easier version of a full swing. It makes a great part of your practice routine, so you should expect to see rapid improvement if you work on pitching every time you warm up.

The key with pitching is you’re not trying to lift the ball into the air. You catch the ball on the face, the ball pops up, and the club brushes the ground after you hit the ball. How you set-up makes this shot either simple or very difficult.
Scoring

Setting Up For A Pitch

When you set-up, keep your feet close together. Now move your weight towards your left foot. Generally, you should avoid hitting off your right side.

Your right shoulder moves higher, until you feel your weight is moving into your left hip.

Your spine angle now will be tilted slightly towards your target. If this is a new feeling, it will feel very strange. Now bend from the hips, and put the club onto the ground.

Your weight is on your left foot; your eyes and your head are forward of the ball.

From here, pivot around your left hip. Your arms and your left hip pivot together. Some feel the body leads. Some feel the arms lead and the body follows.

Problems occur if your body stops pivoting, and your arms keep going. It’s also problematic if your body “pulls” your arms. Match the rotation and the pivot in your body with the swinging of your arms.

Tilt To The Left:
Shoulders tilt left: To get the proper set-up, place a club on your shoulders and tilt to the left until you feel your weight going to your left hip. You will feel that your right shoulder is higher than your left.

Bend Forward:
Set-up: Once you have tilted your shoulders, now bend from your hips. Your eyes will be in front of the ball, and your weight will be on your left foot.

Club ‘Floats’ Behind The Ball:
Holding the club: Now put your hands on the club, and put the club head behind the ball – but don’t let the club rest on the ground. As you can see, now my shoulders are level, because the position of the right hand has lowered the right shoulder.

Pivot Around Left Hip:
How we pivot around the left hip: Here my arms have swung, my body has pivoted on my left hip, and I haven’t unhinged my right wrist. So this is an ‘arm’ swing and pivot on the left hip from the proper set-up. Open stance to make this easier to do.

Step 1
Setting Up For A Chip

Step 2
Hit With A Descending Blow

Step 3
Think Arms And Body Pivot Together

Your weight is on your left foot; your eyes and your head are forward of the ball.

From here, pivot around your left hip. Your arms and your left hip pivot together. Some feel the body leads. Some feel the arms lead and the body follows.

Problems occur if your body stops pivoting, and your arms keep going. It’s also problematic if your body “pulls” your arms. Match the rotation and the pivot in your body with the swinging of your arms.
Scoring

Advanced Insights For Pitching

If the bottom of the club is even with the bottom of the ball at set-up, it increases the chances for solid impact.

Whatever the situation, if the bottom of the club rests below the bottom of the ball, you have to compensate to hit it solid.

The biggest mistake players make is they lean their weight way left in their set-up, but they tilt their head back behind the ball.

The impact position of the right forearm is similar to the impact position for the full swing.

Through impact, the right forearm is lined up with the club shaft.

Try the Left Foot, Right Toe Drill:
Stand on your left foot, and use your right toe for balance only.

What Is Under-Reach?

Whatever the situation, if the bottom of the club rests below the bottom of the ball, you have to compensate to hit it solid.

If the bottom of the club is even with the bottom of the ball at set-up, it increases the chances for solid impact.

Try The Left Foot, Right Toe Drill:
Stand on your left foot, and use your right toe for balance only.

Here the bottom of the club is just touching the grass. This is correct for pitching and chipping.

When the club is resting on the ground it is called ‘over-reach’ – meaning you have reached below the bottom of the ball.

When your arms elongate during the swing you’ll hit the shot fat.

Impact position of the right forearm is similar to the impact position for the full swing.

Through impact, the right forearm is lined up with the club shaft.

‘Weight Left’ Warning

The biggest mistake players make is they lean their weight way left in their set-up, but they tilt their head back behind the ball.

Here the bottom of the club is just touching the grass. This is correct for pitching and chipping.

When the club is resting on the ground it is called ‘over-reach’ – meaning you have reached below the bottom of the ball.

When your arms elongate during the swing you’ll hit the shot fat.
Green-side bunker shots are the only shots in golf where you can miss the ball. In fact your goal is to miss the ball.

Bunker Play

Bunker shots are the easiest shots to be good at in golf. This is the only shot in golf where you can miss the ball by two or three inches and still be successful.

The shot is all about throwing or displacing sand. The ball is just another grain of sand. So you’re not trying to hit the ball – in fact, you need to miss the ball. We are not hitting the ball. This makes the bunker unique.

The second key: the ball goes where the sand goes, not where the club face is aimed.
Scoring

The ‘Easiest’ Shot

Once you know you’re hitting down into the sand behind the ball, the shot becomes very simple. Set up with an open face and stay on your left side to make this happen.

The goal of our first level of bunker play is to get out of the bunker somewhere on the green so we can two putt. This is not that far from the tour player’s average.

The average tour player won’t do much better than one shot out, and a two putt. The average amateur takes two or three shots to get out of the bunker, then they take three or four putts to finish the hole. Simpler is far better here than complicated.

How we set the clubface determines how deep the club will dig into the sand. The length of your swing, and the amount of face-angle determine how far the ball will go. If you understand these concepts, it’s easier to accomplish your first goal – which is to ‘just get out’.

How we set up to the ball needs to promote a downward hit, without us having to hit down. To learn this, first draw a line in the sand.

Now try to hit the line, and throw sand out of the bunker. Develop a feel for where the club hits the sand, and where it bottoms out – behind the ball.

The biggest mistake you can make is to lean back during the shot. Keep your weight and body leaning forward, onto your left leg. If your weight or shoulders fall back, the club will hit behind the line. Hitting too much sand makes the ball travel a very short distance.

The average tour player won’t do much better than one shot out, and a two putt. The average amateur takes two or three shots to get out of the bunker, then they take three or four putts to finish the hole. Simpler is far better here than complicated.

How we set up to the ball needs to promote a downward hit, without us having to hit down. To learn this, first draw a line in the sand.

Now try to hit the line, and throw sand out of the bunker. Develop a feel for where the club hits the sand, and where it bottoms out – behind the ball.

The biggest mistake you can make is to lean back during the shot. Keep your weight and body leaning forward, onto your left leg. If your weight or shoulders fall back, the club will hit behind the line. Hitting too much sand makes the ball travel a very short distance.
Hitting A Bunker Shot Is Like Throwing The Sand

When aiming, know the ball goes where the sand goes, not where the club face is aimed. Use an aiming stick to learn where the ball goes as you ‘throw sand out of the bunker.’

You don’t have to pick the club up and hit dramatically down into the sand. You only have to hit and throw sand.

How open you set the clubface determines how deep the club will dig into the sand, and how much sand you will throw.

You don’t have to hit the ball. Think about hitting the bunker shot so the sand carries the ball with it.
Before You Move On
The best way to lower your score is to improve your skill at knocking the ball in the hole.

Evaluation Of Scoring And Short Game
For putting, the most important test is your ability to make a line roll on the ball without any wobble. To test this, draw a line around the circumference of the ball. Place the ball on the ground, with the line vertical. Now putt the ball so the line rolls perfectly end-over-end – with no wobble. This is a major key to distance control, while ensuring a consistent stroke.

For chipping, set up in your chipping stance, then hit ten balls. Can you strike all ten chips from the center of the club face, while brushing the ground after you hit the ball? At first, distance control is not as important as center-face hits and angle of approach. Start with solid contact, then work on distance.

For pitching, set up on your left foot and use your right toe to balance you. From this set-up position, can you swing back, impact the ball, then pivot through without losing your balance? Use this drill every time you practice.

For bunker play, work on setting up on your left side with an open stance and open face. Hit the sand before the ball, then work on how much sand to throw to control distance.
Baseball hitters and pitchers have often been told that baseball is far too different to help their golf games. Not true at all. Learn to access batting and throwing skills, and you’ll see dramatic improvement in your power and contact with the golf ball.

The release patterns in bowling are so close to the release patterns in golf, they are almost identical. The back-up ball, and hooking action that brings you strikes on the alley can be turned quickly into perfectly shaped drives and approaches.

Tennis combines control of the racquet face with the ability to move your weight through the shot. There’s no better example of weight transfer. In golf, it is the hardest move to master. Tennis uses such a deliberate step into the shot, it’s the perfect teacher.

Hockey
Nicklaus said you can’t release the club too early during the downswing. A shot with a hockey stick brings with it a startling insight into how the face and stick work through impact. To learn what Nicklaus meant, you can grab a hockey stick before you grab a club.

Ping Pong
Nothing teaches face control like the game of ping pong. Learning to associate the face of the paddle with the face of the club brings you the ability to hit every kind of shot – on the table, and the course.
In baseball, you learn to hit to right field, left field and down the middle. You are training your hand-eye coordination to hit an object.

Hitting A Baseball

There are many benefits the golfer can get from hitting a baseball.

If you’ve played baseball, you’ve learned how to hit to right field, left field and down the middle. This can train a high level of hand-eye coordination to hit an object and give it direction. This is a critical skill in golf.

The baseball hitter has an ability to transfer force from the back foot to the front foot when moving to make contact. This sequence is similar in golf – and in all sports.

When the bat makes contact with the ball, the wrists unhinge creating a ‘release pattern.’ Nicklaus said you can’t release the golf club too early. Baseball gives us a startling insight into what he meant.
As you look at these pictures, keep in mind that in baseball, the handle of the bat does not go at the ball — it goes way inside the ball. In golf, your hands swing inside the ball, and the club head swings out to the ball.

Hitting A Baseball

You hit a baseball in front of your left foot. The forearms do not rotate at impact. Notice how your wrists unhinge through impact. The grip and the release pattern have to be different to make this work in golf. (In golf, the term release refers to the rotation of your left arm in the downswing and through impact.)

Hitting A Baseball Like A Golf Ball

Take a baseball tee to the batting cage, and place the tee in the middle of your body. Now hit the ball, trying to make it go to left field. This is more relevant to a golf swing.

Baseball players making a golf swing should also take a stronger grip in both hands — rotating the hands to the right when you grip. This allows you to use your baseball arm motion, while squaring the face at impact. Remember the key in golf — your hands swing inside the ball, and the club head swings out to the ball.
Playing ping pong in the off-season can be a critical part of preparing to play golf during the season.

Playing ping pong in the off season helps develop hand-eye coordination and face control. It can become a critical part of your preparation to play golf in the regular season.

By learning to control the face, you learn how to create topspin, sidespin and backspin. Practicing this with either hand develops your ability to control the face of the paddle.

Playing against an opponent forces you to impart a direction with a spin on the ball. You focus on putting the ball back in play while creating several angles that are hard to return. The ability to control these different angles and spin is a critical skill in winning at ping pong.

Now let’s look at how to relate these face-control skills to your golf game.
Golf is a bi-lateral game. Playing ping pong with either hand is the best trainer for learning face control with both hands.
This is one of the best drills for learning to control the club face.

Put a ping pong paddle behind the club, and line the paddle face-up with the club face as shown in Picture A. You can use your normal grip to hold the paddle and the club.

Take the club back (picture B) and notice how the paddle face rotates. This gives you an impressive visual reference to the face’s position during the backswing.

Swing down to impact, and create the three basic shot shapes – straight, draw and fade. Again, the paddle gives you a look and feel for the club face.

Finally, allow your wrists to release through impact, then allow the club to rotate in the follow-through, creating the finish you see in picture F.

The key to the drill is to associate the visual of the face with the feel of creating these different positions.
Tennis requires face control, a powerful weight shift, and a firm grip with a relaxed wrist. All perfect for golf.

Playing any sport where a bat or racket hits a ball develops hand-eye coordination and your ability to control a racket-face through different ranges of motion. In this way, tennis is very similar to golf.

The tennis ground stroke puts a path and a spin on the ball using a swing, while demanding control of the face.

In the tennis serve, the racket pivots the same way that the club pivots in golf at the bottom of the swing.

Now let's take a look at how ground strokes and the serve relate to the golf swing.
The tennis racket helps you feel the positions of the clubface at impact. Certain shots in particular relate well to your golf game.

**Topspin Shot**

In tennis, a topspin shot (picture B) has the racket leaning slightly forward at impact. In golf, the forward face angle will create a draw.

To finish the topspin shot in tennis you hit up on the ball. In golf, this is accomplished by the follow-through – so there’s no need to intentionally ‘hit up.’

**The Drop Shot**

In the drop shot (picture C) you open the face dramatically, and hit the ball with a glancing blow. This adds significant backspin to the ball. In golf, this face angle and approach will create a slice. The open face hits the golf ball with a glancing blow, and the ball curves dramatically right.

If you have issues with a slice, this can help you understand the swing you are making. Understanding is better than simply applying a ‘fix’ with your grip or posture.

The serve in tennis is very similar to a golf shot. When you toss the ball up in the air, there is a point when the ball is stationary. To serve, you must generate speed with the racket. Typically, you create speed and spin with center face hits when you serve.

The tension level in a serve is also very similar to the tension in a golf grip. The grip must be firm enough to control the face through impact. But loose enough to generate speed, as the ball is hanging up in the air.

At impact, (picture B) the right forearm lines up with the tennis racket handle. This is similar to the right arm position at the bottom of the golf swing.

The release of tennis racket in the serve is almost identical to the golf swing release (picture C.) The power of the serve is dependent on the relaxation of the wrists, and its ability to ‘snap’ when you hit. In golf, there is no ‘snap’, but there is definitely a high level of relaxation through impact. The more relaxed the wrists, the quicker the club can move through impact.
Much of what you’ve learned in other sports you can apply to your golf game. If you know how.

In hockey, you have a stick and a puck. To hit the puck, you have to control and release the stick. You catch the puck well behind you, and you keep it on the stick for as long as possible. You then ‘release’ the shot without a lot of tension. A similar motion is used when you pass.

How you release the stick and shoot a hockey puck is almost identical to the release you use for golf.
Adjacency
How Hockey Helps Your Golf

In hockey, the grip is split and the control hand is the hand closest to the body. You put the puck on the stick way behind your right foot. You can see the shaft lean. In hockey – like golf – you keep the puck on the ice. Do not try to lift the puck into the air. The stick leans forward.

At impact in hockey, the right forearm is lined up with the shaft to stabilize and pressure the stick through the puck. (The longer you maintain contact with the puck, and the lower the stick stays to the ice on the follow-through, the faster the puck will go.) This is identical to the right arm position at impact in the golf swing.

One of the best drills in golf is called the split-handed drill. It teaches you how to release the club through the ball and not drag the handle. You see a version of this with the hockey stick (pictures A, B and C.)

To try this with your golf swing: grip the club with your hands several inches apart on the club shaft. This helps you feel the rotation of the club through the downswing and impact.

Notice the split grip and the shaft lean. In hockey you try to keep the puck on the face as you begin the release.

At impact in hockey, the right forearm is lined up with the shaft. This position is identical to impact in the golf swing.
As you release the stick in hockey, the left hand stays stationary, and the stick releases past the handle of the stick. In hockey, the hands do not release the stick upward. If you did continue the release and rotate your arms, the stick would finish in this position.

Impact. Paddle and clubface are closed. Draw or hook.

In golf, the handle of the club and the left arm slow down. The club pivots or rotates as the clubhead goes past your hands. In golf, this is the ideal release position – where the left arm is rotated and folding, and the club hinges up.

In the golf swing, the clubface ’collects’ the ball, while it is aimed at the target. In hockey, your hands and arms control the stick, your eyes see the target and the stick holds the puck.

Hockey Is Like A Golf Swing
All the good bowlers hook the ball. This is very similar to creating a draw in golf.
Adjacency
How Is Bowling Like Golf?

From the pictures, you can see the release of a bowling ball, and how your arm and hand imparts spin on the ball. This is similar to the release of a golf club. Other similarities include the arm swinging independent of the shoulder motion. Your shoulder stabilizes, while your arm swings and releases the ball. The shoulder becomes the pivot point for the arm.

There are similarities in all sports, when you’re putting different types of curve on a ball or a face.

MALASKA TIP

The most important skills to learn from other sports are face control and hand-eye coordination. Whenever you work on these skills you can practice golf even when you aren’t playing golf.

A straight shot.
And a straight ball.

A fade. And a back-up ball in bowling.

A draw in golf.
A hook in bowling.
Golf is a great evaluator of your ability. But it doesn’t always provide the best way to learn skills. Also, sports such as ping-pong are available to practice year round.

Evaluation Of Adjacent Sports Skills
One of the most important considerations in adjacency is the development of hand-eye coordination and body movement patterns.

One of the best ways to determine and develop your hand-eye coordination is to practice with a ping-pong paddle and a ping-pong ball. First, hold the paddle in your right hand, then put the ball on the paddle and roll the ball around on the paddle – not letting it fall to the floor. Then bounce the ball on the paddle. Then rotate the paddle back and forth to use opposite sides of the paddle to hit the ball. Now change hands and repeat with the left hand.

Pick the sport you’ve had the most success with, and study the relationship of that sport to golf. Pay particular attention to the release pattern, and body motion.
Mobility of the spine is critical to gain and maintain relative to swinging a golf club. These exercises are some of the beginning activities that help enhance this critical mobility.

Fitness Starts With Awareness
Self awareness is where you start when creating your golf swing. Without an understanding of the body, you’re missing the point of how you can learn to swing as an individual.

Balance Prevents Injury
Balance is about controlling ground forces. The better you move, and the more you understand how to pressure the ground correctly, the more consistent you’ll be with your swing, and the less chance you’ll have for injury.
Without an understanding of the body, you miss the point of how people swing individually.

Fitness And Athletic Personality

There are four stages of fitness. The stages are awareness, injury prevention, conditioning and performance.

The first, and most important part of fitness is an awareness of who you are. You should be able to evaluate what you can and cannot do physically, based on your history of physical activity.

There are many tour players who don’t follow the perfect model of fitness or swing. However, all the tour players sequence from the ground to the knees to the hips to the mid-back. Then they fire the shoulders, arms and the club.

From player to player, there is a variance in the rotation needed to swing. One should take into consideration the force from the ground up.

A few parts of the swing are universal, but many are individual. By focusing on universal concepts, you can start to understand what works for each one of us as an individual.
Swing Like You Swing

If you watch the tour closely from week to week, you will see many personal swings making plenty of money. If the ideal swing was the only swing for everyone, we would then need to fix almost all of the tour players.

With all the technology out there, and all the kinesthetic awareness, we are understanding how the body creates and maximizes force. So if you’re just trying to create speed, there’s a way your body can do it.

When those forces are created, the body’s ability is maxed out. For every force that goes out, there’s an equal and opposite one that comes back.

If you’re not careful, you’ll focus just on force and not on control. The body won’t be able to handle the forces coming back. These turn into injuries. No question that they generate more speed. However, there are several considerations to make.

Is this the most efficient way to produce this speed?
Is this speed easy to duplicate? Is this the best way for an individual to generate power?

In conclusion, the swing is not about sameness. It’s about uniqueness. There are things everyone has to do, but within that framework, there is a lot of room for individuality.

Evaluation

Evaluation is done from the front and the side. When you look at a player within this matrix, you can see where their body falls out of these positions.

Are they tilted forward or backward? Are their hips level? Are they rotated forward or back? Are the knees pointing in or out? When the body deviates from its 90-degree angle, we’re uncovering compensations.

The bigger question is, why are you compensating?
There could be a reason for it. The compensation could be there to override a physical issue to allow your body to swing. Ideally, the more you maintain these 90-degree angles, and that ‘postural integrity,’ the better the body should work.
As a golfer, the most effective exercises for preventing injuries are stability, mobility, balance drills and bridges.

Balance Prevents Injuries

Once you have an understanding of your abilities, you can create an exercise routine that will help prevent injuries.

As a golfer, the most effective exercises for preventing injuries are balance drills and bridges.

A Note From Your Doctor: before starting any of these exercises, ask your physician if you are capable of performing the activities.
Fitness

Bringing Balance To Your Golf Game

Balance is a function of four systems—mobility, strength, proprioception and vestibular. Initially, the most important is vestibular. Most people spend very little time developing this system—yet it is one of the most important in balance. Dr. Bob Donatelli is an expert in this field and has helped me understand its importance.

Balance Drills
These are single leg balance drills, where you stand on one leg, then rotate your head or eyes in different directions.

Bridges help to stabilize the hips and the lower back—adding strength, so this area can protect itself from any rotational forces.

Putting more movement into our everyday life helps. In addition, you should learn basic nutrition.

The most important single improvement you can make is to drink more water. Most people are chronically dehydrated.

Major signs of dehydration are lack of concentration, muscle fatigue, and muscle tightness. These are also the factors that occur under pressure on the golf course, and in your daily life.
Strengthening Your Hips

The next important exercises are hip strengtheners. This is best developed using rubber bands.

Anything that can be done to create mobility in the mid-thoracic back is critical – developing the ability to twist. This mobility will take pressure off other parts of the body.

As a recommendation, anything you do – how you walk, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, sitting on a physioball at your desk or watching TV – can help develop mobility.

If you work out at the gym, spend some time on the treadmill walking backwards at slow speed. We tend to develop everything in the front of our bodies, and we forget to develop the back – the glutes, hamstrings, lower back muscles. Walking backwards can also help.

What’s the most outstanding exercise for your golf game? The backstroke in swimming.

As a general rule, if you add more movement to your life, you’ll be amazed how much better you concentrate and play.

Fitness

Hip Strength
Using Rubber Bands

- Walk forward. Then move side to side.
- Leg circles.

Lower-Back Stability
Hand Leg Opposite

- From your hands and knees extend your left arm and your right leg. Hold this position for one minute.
- Repeat exercise on the opposite side.

Using A Physioball

- Replace a chair in your home or office with a physioball.
- Extend either leg parallel to the ground for hip strength. Hold for one minute.
“Mobility of the spine is one of the most important benefits from fitness, relative to swinging a golf club.”

Mobility Activities

Over my career, I’ve been fortunate to be introduced to some of the best people in the fitness industry. They have helped me understand the priority list of activities that most people need in their daily lives to play this game at a competent level.

These activities were first shown to me by Al Vermeil. He has been one of my mentors in the fitness and training industry for years.

Mobility of the spine is one of the most important factors to gain and maintain relative to swinging a golf club. These exercises are some beginning activities to help enhance this critical mobility.
Fitness

Mobility Of The Spine And Lower Back

All of these mobility exercises should be done slowly, and held for one minute in each position. Holding the positions allows the body and the muscles to adjust.

Upper Spinal Floor Twist

Lay on two pillows placed below your mid-back. Lay your arms flat on the ground, then rotate from side to side.

Upper Spine Rotation Using Two Pillows

Fold your arms across your chest. Bend your knees to 90-degrees, then rotate from side to side.

Knee Pillow Upper Spinal Rotation

Place two pillows under your back.

Thoracic Spine Stretch

Place two pillows on the ground, just below your shoulder blades. Lay back on the pillows, put your head on the ground, and let your arms relax to the sides.

Press Up

For this, lay on your stomach, arms out to your side, as if performing a push-up. As you push your shoulders up, leave your hips touching the ground.

Only lift your shoulders as far as you can, maintaining your pelvis position to the ground.
The most important part of fitness routines is the consistency with which you do them. First, evaluate your day. How much do you move? What type of chair do you sit in? How much water do you drink?

Evaluation Of Fitness

Once you have an idea of your day and your habits, make small changes – for example, use a physioball to sit at your desk for 3 to 5 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Focus on how you walk. Add a glass of water before every meal.

As you have success with these small steps, gradually add more to your program. The key is that the program is accessible, and easy enough for you to do every day. If it requires going to a gym, or taking an hour out of your day, the chances become less and less for success.

Again, it’s better to start small, and gradually add exercises once you have been consistent.

---

**Foam Roller Exercises**

- **Foam Roller Extension**
  - Lay on a 5-inch foam roller, positioned under the center of your spine. Put your arms directly out from your sides, and let your back relax onto the foam roller.

- **Side-To-Side Counter Rotation**
  - For this, lay on your back with the foam roller in the center of your spine. Fold your arms across your chest. Rotate your upper body to the left and your lower body to the right.

- **Foam Roller Extension**
  - Lay on a 5-inch foam roller, positioned under your shoulders as shown in the picture. Lay your arms out flat and touch your head to the ground.

- **Foam Roller Extension**
  - Repeat the exercise in the opposite direction.
Backswing
How much hip turn do you need to make a full shoulder turn? The ‘cat and dog’ and ‘crocodile’ stretches help you decide.

Downswing And Follow-Through
The downswing requires both strength and flexibility. Assess your ability with bridges and the runner’s stretch.

Hands And Arms
Rule one: hold onto the club. Build up your hand and finger strength, and find the club grips that are right for you.

Set-up
Can you set up square and keep your balance? Here are some tests for evaluation and development.
No one was asking me if I was physically able to perform the movements they expected me to perfect.

You’ve probably heard of many full swing ‘secrets’ like the x-factor, and restricting your hips. I certainly did. When I was younger, instructors and magazines had plenty of advice, but no one was asking if I was physically able to perform these ‘tour-level’ actions. Was I flexible enough? Did I move that particular way? Well, no – I didn’t. And I ended up injuring myself. Here’s why...

To swing a club, your body rotates from the ground up – from your feet, to your knees, hips and mid-back – until the rotation reaches your shoulders, then your arms. The question is, how much can you rotate? How much force can your individual body handle? How does each body segment react to that force?

To answer these concerns, you’ll need to get to know your athletic personality. The tests that follow will evaluate your movement and flexibility.

Ignore your athletic personality and your performance will suffer – as will your health. Mine certainly did.
Standing Posture
Evaluation

The Most Efficient Stance

Functional Set-Up

Athletic Personality

Set-Up Assessment: How Well Do You Stand Up?

Your body was designed to work off 90-degree angles. Your shoulders and hips should be level. Your eyes should be parallel to the ground. Your head is vertical, and your neck is at a 90-degree angle to your shoulders – from a face-on view. Your knees are directly below your hips, and your ankles are directly below your knees. Your feet should point straight ahead.

From a side view, your ears should be over your shoulders. Your shoulders should be over your hips. Your hips are over your knees, and your knees are over your ankles.

This is the basic alignment design of the body. If the body is out of alignment in any of these areas, it will show up in compensations in your swing or movement patterns.

The alignment of your feet, relative to your knees and hips, has the biggest effect on your swing. It also tells a major story about the tendencies in your swing.

Pete Egoscue taught me how to look at the body relative to 90-degree angles. This was critical in the understanding of individual movement patterns.

From the side angle, ankles, knees, hip socket, shoulder socket and ear should be in line.

The most efficient use of the body in the golf swing is to set up from a square, parallel stance, with your feet pointed straight ahead. Any deviation in the causes compensations. What you may gain in one area, you may lose somewhere else.

This set-up is familiar on the Tour. The stance is narrower – with the feet and ankles directly below the shoulder sockets. The feet are straight ahead, maintaining the 90-degree angles. This is where the body is most efficient.
The traditional golfing footwear was dress shoes. Then traction was added with a steel shank in the sole, to attach spikes.

With new technology, you can find enough traction in athletic shoes - giving the feet the mobility necessary to move naturally.

Natural foot movement is the key for balance. Toes need to spread as you press the ground. Feet need to rotate in segments. And the heel and ankle need to rotate, while the ball of the foot is still pressuring the ground.

Set-Up Assessment: Grip With Your Feet

The more natural motion a shoe allows, the better it is for your feet and your balance.
Restrict your hips is common advice. But for most of us, it’s not good advice.

How far can you turn your shoulders, before you need to turn your hips? This is the key question when you evaluate your backswing.

The backswing is all about hip and shoulder separation. Here are several ways to evaluate your own flexibility and strength.

If you’ve been told to restrict your hips, these evaluations will tell you if that’s good advice.
Once we have balance, you can move on to separation of upper and lower body.

The body works in segments, divided into the upper and lower body. Each are rotating, but at different times – and on different planes. So training our bodies, and understanding the movement patterns they need to turn through, is critical in determining what your swing can and cannot do.

They work independently, but sequentially together – depending on the individual’s physical functioning.

Also, each body part accelerates and decelerates during the swing. Being in position to be able to handle the deceleration is as important, if not more important, than the acceleration. (Hit up against a firm left side – the traditional explanation of this concept.)

Can You Separate Upper And Lower Body?

Neutral starting position, where the hips and the shoulders are parallel to each other.

Starting Position

Neutral

Shoulders Square

Hips Rotate Right And Left

Shoulders Rotate Left And Right

Turn your shoulders to the left and the right, without letting your hips move.

Many tour players have little separation here. What’s important is what is possible for you. “More hip turn means more power” isn’t always true – or always possible.

Ideally, try to make a 90-degree turn without any hip turn. However, if you struggle with this, you can allow more hip turn on your backswing than the ‘typical’ tour player.

This move occurs on the follow-through and shows how the shoulders unwind relative to the hips in the finish.

Many tour players have little separation here. What’s important is what is possible for you. “More hip turn means more power” isn’t always true – or always possible.

Ideally, try to make a 90-degree turn without any hip turn. However, if you struggle with this, you can allow more hip turn on your backswing than the ‘typical’ tour player.
The amount of flexibility in your mid-back directly relates to the amount of rotation you can produce between your shoulders and hips. Here we see good flexibility – allowing more shoulder turn than hip turn in the back swing.

**Athletic Personality**

**Training Hip And Shoulder Separation**

Here are two exercises that will help improve your hip and shoulder separation.

**The Cat And The Dog**

The mid-thoracic region allows for much of the rotation in your golf swing. Players who restrict their hips and rely on a higher degree of shoulder turn, have a lot of mid-thoracic mobility. What this means is if you don’t have a high level of flexibility, you shouldn’t restrict your hips. This will only create a high level of tension in your back.

**Crocodile**

The Crocodile twist shows an overall ability to rotate your body independently of the shoulders. Whatever amount of rotation you can achieve lying on the ground is more than you can achieve when you address the ball and put an angle in your hips.

**Cat and Dog**

**Mid-Back Flexibility**

The amount of flexibility in your mid-back directly relates to the amount of rotation you can produce between your shoulders and hips. Here we see good flexibility – allowing more shoulder turn than hip turn in the back swing.

**Crocodile**

**Backswing And Follow Through**

This exercise shows shoulder to hip rotation. Lying flat, put your left heel on your right toe. Tip over to the left, and then look right with your head. This checks flexibility for the follow-through. Repeat this to the opposite side to check flexibility for the backswing.

**Limited Flexibility**

**How Will Your Swing Look?**

With limited flexibility, your shoulders and your hips will turn together.

With full flexibility, you can turn your shoulders 90 degrees, with minimal hip turn.

**Training Hip And Shoulder Separation**

**Here are two exercises that will help improve your hip and shoulder separation.**

**The Cat And The Dog**

The mid-thoracic region allows for much of the rotation in your golf swing. Players who restrict their hips and rely on a higher degree of shoulder turn, have a lot of mid-thoracic mobility. What this means is if you don’t have a high level of flexibility, you shouldn’t restrict your hips. This will only create a high level of tension in your back.

**Crocodile**

The Crocodile twist shows an overall ability to rotate your body independently of the shoulders. Whatever amount of rotation you can achieve lying on the ground is more than you can achieve when you address the ball and put an angle in your hips.
Downswing And Follow-Through

This brings us to one of the worst ‘killers’ of the golf swing. The killer? Standing up during your downswing. If you have this issue, chances are, you are lacking strength in your hips.

The reason standing up creates a so-called ‘death move,’ is that your hips ‘invade’ the space and the path of your arms on the downswing. Now your arms can’t deliver the club to the ball, and you are forced to ‘flip’ the club or come over the top.

What does all this mean for your golf swing? Let’s take a look.

“In the downswing, your body can’t invade the space you’re trying to swing your arms into.”
Developing control of your hips throughout the swing is critical in developing your swing fundamentals. It will also protect your back from potentially serious injury.

These exercises are designed to help you stabilize your lower back and give you control of your pelvis during the swing.

MALASKA TIP

Look back at the photo on page 128. This is what happens when you try to clear your hips incorrectly. Does your swing look like this?

**The Shoulder Bridge**

*Lower Back Stability*

The shoulder bridge establishes the stability in your lower back and pelvis. In this position, your glutes have to be engaged to be able to support you. Hold for one minute.

**Side Bridge**

*Pelvic Control*

This shows ability to control your pelvis in a different plane of motion. This move relates to backswing and follow-through. Repeat this to the opposite side. Hold for one minute on each side.

**Hand Leg Opposite**

*Diagonal Stability*

Hand-leg opposite. These develop a stabilization across the body. From right arm to left leg, across the pelvis. And again, repeat that to the opposite side. Hold for one minute on each side.
A particularly effective exercise is called the ‘Superman’ exercise. It has a strikingly familiar final pose.

Lie on your stomach, put your fingertips at the back of your head, lift your shoulders off the ground and hold for one minute.

To make this more difficult, straighten your arms – straight out in front of you, like Superman flies.

If you can’t maintain all of these positions for one minute, then as you try to rotate your hips through the ball, you will lose control of your pelvis.

For most people, this causes their hips to move up into the ball, invading the space they are trying to swing their arms into, while putting undue pressure on their lower backs.

Superman

Lower Back Control

This exercise is used for downswing assessment, and develops lower back control.

Full Swing Unstable

Hip Instability

Why is the downswing unstable? Lack of hip stability allows the hips to move towards the ball, blocking my arms as they swing down to the ball. Also notice the loss of spine angle.

Full Swing Stable

Hip Stability

Here the hips and lower body are stabilized, and maintain their position through the ball. Note how the spine angle remains the same.

Backswing Assessment: Training Hip Stability – ‘Superman’ To The Rescue

Backswing Assessment:

Training Hip Stability – ‘Superman’ To The Rescue

A particularly effective exercise is called the ‘Superman’ exercise. It has a strikingly familiar final pose.

Lie on your stomach, put your fingertips at the back of your head, lift your shoulders off the ground and hold for one minute.

To make this more difficult, straighten your arms – straight out in front of you, like Superman flies.

If you can’t maintain all of these positions for one minute, then as you try to rotate your hips through the ball, you will lose control of your pelvis.

For most people, this causes their hips to move up into the ball, invading the space they are trying to swing their arms into, while putting undue pressure on their lower backs.

Superman

Lower Back Control

This exercise is used for downswing assessment, and develops lower back control.

Full Swing Unstable

Hip Instability

Why is the downswing unstable? Lack of hip stability allows the hips to move towards the ball, blocking my arms as they swing down to the ball. Also notice the loss of spine angle.

Full Swing Stable

Hip Stability

Here the hips and lower body are stabilized, and maintain their position through the ball. Note how the spine angle remains the same.

A particularly effective exercise is called the ‘Superman’ exercise. It has a strikingly familiar final pose.

Lie on your stomach, put your fingertips at the back of your head, lift your shoulders off the ground and hold for one minute.

To make this more difficult, straighten your arms – straight out in front of you, like Superman flies.

If you can’t maintain all of these positions for one minute, then as you try to rotate your hips through the ball, you will lose control of your pelvis.

For most people, this causes their hips to move up into the ball, invading the space they are trying to swing their arms into, while putting undue pressure on their lower backs.

Superman

Lower Back Control

This exercise is used for downswing assessment, and develops lower back control.

Full Swing Unstable

Hip Instability

Why is the downswing unstable? Lack of hip stability allows the hips to move towards the ball, blocking my arms as they swing down to the ball. Also notice the loss of spine angle.

Full Swing Stable

Hip Stability

Here the hips and lower body are stabilized, and maintain their position through the ball. Note how the spine angle remains the same.
The hamstrings play a big role in how your body moves, and how your hips function.

On the backswing, if your hamstrings are tight and you want to make a full shoulder turn, you’ll have to allow your right leg to straighten.

On the downswing, tight or weak hamstrings will make your right leg straighten. And on the follow-through, they’ll make your left leg straighten.

If the average player straightens their left leg, they will lift their upper body, and pull out of the shot.

Maintaining some flex in your left knee through impact is the body’s shock absorber. If your hamstrings aren’t flexible, you’ll lose this ability, creating the possibility of becoming injured.

If you do feel pressure during the Runner’s Stretch exercise, your leg will tend to straighten early in the backswing or in the follow-through.

The Importance Of Keeping Good Posture

This exercise tests the flexibility in your hips and your hamstrings. To have a functional swing, you must at least be able to keep your legs and back straight, while bending down to create a 90-degree angle without any pull in the back of your legs, or your lower back.

Hamstring flexibility allows you to maintain flex in your right leg with minimal hip turn. If your hamstrings are tight, allow your right leg to straighten more in the backswing.

Limited Flexibility

How Will Your Swing Look

A

Lay down on your back and put a towel around your right foot. Then repeat for the left side.

B

Now stretch to 90-degrees. If this causes tightness, you have to allow for some straightening of your right leg in your backswing to allow a full shoulder turn, and not affect your spine angle.

Hamstring flexibility allows you to maintain flex in your right leg with minimal hip turn. If your hamstrings are tight, allow your right leg to straighten more in the backswing.

Hamstring Stretch

Hip Flexibility

A

This exercises tests the flexibility in your hips and your hamstrings. To have a functional swing, you must at least be able to keep your legs and back straight, while bending down to create a 90-degree angle without any pull in the back of your legs, or your lower back.

B

Now stretch to 90-degrees. If this causes tightness, you have to allow for some straightening of your right leg in your backswing to allow a full shoulder turn, and not affect your spine angle.

Runner’s Stretch

Hamstring Flexibility

A

Lay down on your back and put a towel around your right foot. Then repeat for the left side.

B

Now stretch to 90-degrees. If this causes tightness, you have to allow for some straightening of your right leg in your backswing to allow a full shoulder turn, and not affect your spine angle.
Big hands can call for big grips. But less flexible fingers can also mean you’ll want your grips to be bigger.

Hands And Arms

Are your hands strong enough to control the club? The answer to this can be to strengthen your hands and arms. But it could also mean you need to use bigger grips.

Developing your hand and arm strength is critical. After all, you can’t hold the club without them.
Hand And Grip Assessment

Hands And Grip Strength

In this lesson, we’ll evaluate your hands and grip strength. This also gives you an indication of the grip size you’ll need.

The golfer’s grip is an excellent exercise to develop grip strength and evaluate the overall function of your hands.

How thick are your grips? Bigger hands can call for bigger grips. Less flexibility in your fingers can also mean you’ll want bigger grips.

Hand Exercises

Golfer’s Grip Exercise

Open your hands as wide as you can – extended and separated. (A)

Now roll up your fingers at the first joint while maintaining tension in your palms. Repeat this exercise multiple times during the day to increase hand and finger strength. (B)

Closing Your Fingers

Your finger tips should touch the palm of your hand. (A)

If you struggle with this you will need larger grips than your hand size indicates. (B)

Difficulties With Either Hand

The right hand closes, but the left hand can’t. In this instance, the left little finger will make it hard to control the swing at the top of the backswing. Work on the golfer’s grip exercise to help this. (C)

How thick are your grips? Bigger hands can call for bigger grips. Less flexibility in your fingers can also mean you’ll want bigger grips.
Before You Move On
The key to this section is that you do the exercises, and you understand your ability to move in the golf swing.

Evaluation Of Athletic Personality
One of the biggest misconceptions in the game is that there is a "fingerprint" for success, relative to the positions of the swing. You are the model. You need to understand how you move, and what your limitations are. You can’t copy motions that you cannot yet do and expect to have any success.

There are many ways to swing a golf club. Make sure that what you attempt fits who you are.

The key to understanding is that your hands and arms move the club. The club needs to swing in an arc. The simpler the arc, the better.

The body becomes critical in directing the club and your arms in the correct path and the correct sequence. Your body needs to be able to move in a manner that assists and doesn’t detract from this goal.
This is the connection between you and the club, so it is the most critical part of the game. In this lesson, you’ll find your own natural grip. Once you find your own natural grip, you’ll learn how to control the club and maintain perfect relaxation.

There are a few rules to help you master the concepts of ball position. You’ll find the perfect foundation for a consistent, repeating swing. You’ll understand how to change ball position to create draws, fades, high and low shots.

Learning To Aim

Golf is a visual game. In this lesson, you’ll learn how to make alignment and aim a part of your practice routine. You’ll also learn how to overcome an aiming illusion called Parallelogram Vision—which tricks you into aiming right and swinging left. This is a classic mistake.

Posture

Posture should be square and relaxed. You’ll learn how to establish basic posture that allows your body to access maximum rotation and power.

Ball Position

There are a few rules to help you master the concepts of ball position. You’ll find the perfect foundation for a consistent, repeating swing. You’ll understand how to change ball position to create draws, fades, high and low shots.
To find your natural grip, let your left arm hang naturally. Your left arm wants to return to where it naturally hangs.

You have your own natural grip. In this lesson, you’ll learn to find it.

Your own grip has the best chance of holding up under pressure. It also gives you superior control over the club, allowing you to execute trajectory and spin at a much higher level.

Perfecting your grip allows you to access the greatest amount of power from your body and your swing, and put this energy into the club and the ball.

Great golf starts with great shots. And great shots start with a great grip.
Pre-Swing

How To Grip The Club

Left Arm Hangs Down Naturally
To determine the position of the left hand, stand and bend from your hips – then let your left arm relax and hang in front of you. Notice where it naturally hangs. This is where your left arm and hand should end up when you grip the club. (Refer to the pictures.)

Most people’s left arm hangs with their arm rotated to the right, or slightly inward. This is why you see many tour players with strong grips.

Once you have the position of the left hand at set-up, you need to hold the club.

Grip The Club In Your Fingers
The grip needs to be in the fingers, diagonally through the palm of the left hand.

When you let your left arm hang down naturally, with the club in your fingers, this left hand grip fits you as an individual. It is your ‘own’ grip.

Now connect your hands by interweaving your left little finger and your right index finger (see 148 for three options on how to do this). Once your hands are connected, close your right hand around the left hand with the palm square to the target. This hand is going to support and push the club through the ball.

If the right hand is out of position, and not square to the face, it will tend to open or close the face at impact.

Establish how your left arm hangs naturally. This is the amount of left forearm rotation you should have.

The right hand grips the shaft with the thumb against the pad of the index finger.

Find the lifeline of the right hand.

Your own individual grip. The left arm is naturally rotated. The right hand is square to back of the shaft.

The Left Hand

The Right Hand

Both Hands Together
Different Grip Types

The little finger of the right hand can connect in three different ways, as shown in the pictures on the right.

Adjusting your grip can be used to fix certain unwanted ball flights – like the hook or the slice.

Weak Grip ‘Fixes’ A Hook
If you use less left forearm rotation in your set-up, this is called a ‘weak grip.’ It can be used to ‘fix’ a hook. Another way to think of creating a ‘weak’ grip is to turn your hands more towards the target.

Strong Grip ‘Fixes’ A Slice
Alternatively, if you fight the slice, you can try turning your lead hand more inward – away from the target. This gives you more rotation at set-up, and is called a strong grip, that can be used to ‘fix’ a slice.

The little finger of the right hand can connect with the left index finger in three different ways.

The little finger is on the club, and on the side of the left index finger. – the Baseball grip.

The little finger is over with the index finger – the Vardon grip.

The little finger is interlocking with the index finger – the Interlocking grip.
**Pre-Swing**

**Establishing The Perfect Grip Pressure**

To find the correct grip pressure, first take your grip. Hold the club vertically with your elbows at your sides. This pressure is too light. Now let the club drop down to parallel to the ground, so your forearms tighten. Now your grip pressure is too tight.

Lift the club up halfway between parallel and vertical. Start to bounce the club around a little so you can feel the weight of the head. Gradually tighten your grip pressure, until you can’t feel the weight of the club anymore—all you feel is the grip. Now loosen your grip again to feel the weight of the club. This is the correct grip pressure.

Now make small swings where you feel the motion and weight of the club head making your wrists hinge and unhinge—without losing the feel of constant pressure in your hands.

---

The grip is too light: when you hold the club directly above your hands, the club feels very light because it is balanced.

The grip is too tight: when the club gets parallel to the ground. Supporting the club takes too much effort and your grip gets too tight. 45 degrees is about right.

---

The Correct Grip Pressure

With the club at 45-degrees, the arm tension and grip pressure is correct if you can still feel the weight in the club head.

The club must be secure, but your forearms and wrist must be relaxed. The rule is to never lose the feel of the club head. Grip pressure is about developing a feel for the club and control of the weight of the club head without creating tension.
Any alteration to a neutral posture will force compensations. These can cause tension which will eliminate natural movement.

Set-Up

When you set-up to the ball, your posture should be in a very natural, relaxed position. This will allow your body to function at its maximum ability through the shot – producing movement with balance, speed and control.
How To Take A Stance

When you take a stance beside the ball, your feet are flat and square to the target line.

If you turn your feet in or out, it will change the way your body moves. We'll talk more about this later. For now, set-up square.

Once your feet are square, your knees and hips should follow along. Most important is that your eye-line and shoulders are parallel to the target line. The club will tend to follow where your shoulders and eyes are aimed.

Once you've created a posture that is square to the target, you now need to create the ideal spine angle.

To do this, first stand up straight. Now hold a club behind you, against the line of your spine. If you stand normally, the club should touch at the top of your hips and up through your mid-back. Your head will be some distance in front of the club.

As you lean forward to take your stance, the distance between your head and the shaft needs to remain the same. Do not force your head back to touch the shaft. Also, do not slouch over too far, so the club is further behind you. Any alteration in this posture will cause tension, and start to lock up your hips and your shoulders.

Now you have your individual perfect posture.

MALASKA TIP

Your body functions best from 90-degree angles. Any variations to this will force you to make compensations to your swing.

Pre-Swing

MALASKA TIP

Your body functions best from 90-degree angles. Any variations to this will force you to make compensations to your swing.

To create a square stance, first establish your basic posture by making sure your shoulders and hips are parallel to the ground.

Bend from your hips, keeping the club in the same position relative to your spine and your shoulders – and the back of your head.

From this square stance, take your normal standing posture, and place a club on your back, touching your hips and your mid-back.

With the same posture, take a club and bend down from your hips until the club sits on the ground, allowing a slight flex in your knees. You now have a functional square-set position.
Once you have a square stance, ball position is the next important step. Consistent ball placement is critical for consistent contact.

Put the ball on the ground. Now set up so that the back of the ball is in the center of your stance. When you swing, the bottom of the swing will be slightly ahead of the ball – allowing you to trap the ball with the face against the ground.

As a general rule, the longer the club, the further forward you set the ball. Here we see an iron set-up close to the middle of your stance, and the driver set-up just inside the left instep. The ball moves forward with the driver to allow impact to occur slightly ahead of the bottom of the circle.

As an option, you use the same ball position, regardless of the club. This set-up is preferred by many notable tour players, including Jack Nicklaus.

MALASKA TIP

The Fingers And Toes Drill. Lay your palms on the ground. Tense your hands so your fingers come off the ground. Then push down with your fingers as your palms come off the ground. Now lay your palms flat on the ground again. This is how relaxed your feet should feel when you swing. Balance is best when your toes are quiet.

Visualizing Ball Position

Place a ball on the ground. Place the hula-hoop so the bottom is slightly ahead of the ball.

Take your normal stance with the ball just forward of center. The hula-hoop now shows you the angle of approach the club takes into the ball.

As a general rule, the longer the club, the farther forward you set the ball. Here we see an iron set-up close to the middle of your stance, and the driver set-up just inside the left instep. The ball moves forward with the driver to allow impact to occur slightly ahead of the bottom of the circle.

As an option, you use the same ball position, regardless of the club. This set-up is preferred by many notable tour players, including Jack Nicklaus.

Ball Position At Set-Up
How To Create Your Own Ball Positions

There are a few concerns for you to keep in mind when establishing your own ball positions.

The further forward of center your ball position is, the more tendency there is for the swing to move across the ball to the left. This also requires more lateral movement in your body, to make the bottom of your swing circle happen in front of the ball. A forward ball position will tend to cause a pull, and/or a slice.

The further back the ball is, the more the swing comes from the inside, making the ball start right and draw. So ball position can be used to create different shots.

Ball Position And Ball Flight

The final decision on ball position is based on your intentions for ball flight, and the curve of the ball. For example, lower ball flight is generally produced with a ball further back in your stance.

Once you establish a ball position, it’s very important to be consistent – because small changes can create dramatic changes in what happens to the ball, and the timing of the swing. Small changes in ball position can also be used to correct impact and ball flight issues.

If the ball is placed forward in your stance, the club will travel to the left as you impact the ball. This means the ball will tend to start left.

If the ball is placed in the standard position relative to your stance, the club will be traveling straight as you impact the ball.

If you place the ball back in your stance, the path of the club will be traveling to the right, tending to start the ball right of your target.
“Golf is a visual game. The key is that your eyes need to see and understand the path of the club and the ball.”

The last step in the pre-swing sequence is learning to aim.

What do we mean by alignment? Golf is a visual game, and it’s very difficult to train your eyes to see exactly what you want the ball to do, because you are standing beside the ball — unlike other target sports, where your eyes are directly over the line. In golf your eyes are to the side of the line you are trying to swing down.

The key is that your eyes need to see and understand the path. Now let’s look at how you train yourself to do this.
First, we set up a target line. Place a marker on the line in front of the ball that shows our intended ball flight.

Second, we set up a line parallel to the target line, slightly inside it—or closer to our feet. This is a reference line for your eyes, shoulders, hips, knees and feet. They should all be parallel to this line. (If they aren’t parallel, you’ll be creating compensations. These may be necessary later, but to begin, you should be parallel at the set-up).

Third, we use a marker stuck in the ground to show our target line. To do this, we place a stick in the ground, six feet in front of the target line marker. This gives your eyes a sense of where to start the ball. There is an optical illusion created by standing next to a ball and a target line. This aiming marker creates the daily training necessary to overcome this illusion. We discuss this in detail in the next chapter.

Fourth, create two gates by putting sticks in the ground to the left and right of the center marking stick. The gates create targets for you to hit through. They also show us where the ball started relative to the target line. If we are hitting a little left or a little right, these gates give you instant feedback. You can also use the gates to train more advanced shots, such as draws and fades that curve back to the target line.

Your feet, shoulders and hips need to be consistent. Your eyes need to understand the path that the club is on, and where you’re trying to start the ball.

MALASKA TIP

As a final thought, make sure the ball is set up on the target line every time you hit a shot. This takes some discipline, but most tour golfers work more on set-up than anything else.

Using 5 Markers To Create A Practice Station

It takes five sticks to set up a practice station. (Use roadway markers from a hardware store as your sticks.) First, set up a target line and a marker for foot and eye line.

Now set up three sticks as an aiming gate. The aiming gate is set up with one stick in line with the target line. Then put a stick on either side of this.

These gates create targets for you to start a ball right or left of the target line.

The practice station in action. Foot line is parallel to target line. Shoulders, hips, knees and eyes all line up at 90 degrees.
The most important angle is how your eyes see and relate to the target line. You train your eyes and your body to be parallel to the path you want the ball to travel on.

Now you've learned to set up a practice station, let's consider another reason why aim is difficult. When you stand next to the ball, you have an instinct to aim way right. Why? There is a visual illusion created by the golf shot.

Parallax is a phenomenon that describes visually what happens because your eyes are not directly on the target line. You will always tend to believe the target is well left of the actual line – meaning you will tend to aim way right to compensate.

The way to combat this illusion is to set up your practice station, where you create a target line and specific gates for the ball to travel through.

One of the major difficulties in playing golf is not just aim, it’s your ability to trust a picture that doesn’t look correct. This picture needs to be understood – and you need to train your eyes to see it on a daily basis – so that your brain will learn to believe that if you start the ball on this correct line, the ball will actually go at the target.

Golf courses of today not only challenge us from a physical perspective, but designers intentionally make the layout of tee shots and second shots visually very confusing. Learning to be able to see the correct picture, and trusting that picture, becomes critical in hitting consistent shots on the golf course.

The Straight Hat Drill

Flatten your baseball cap, and level the brim with your eyes. Now make sure that your eyeline/hat-line is parallel to your target line – because your swing tends to follow your eyeline. An easy way to remember this is you tend to hit where you look.

A

B

Picture A shows a flag directly in front of the ball. When you set-up to swing, you line up left of the target line. Picture B below shows what the perfectly straight shot now looks like. The real target line now looks way left, due to the parallax illusion. Until you train yourself to make your target this far left of what you see, the result is a career of shots hit well left of your intended target – as the illusion tricks you into swinging over-the-top.

A

B

If your eyes turn to the left in your downswing, your arms will follow your eyeline and hit the ball left. This is the classic ‘over-the-top’ swing.
Randomly hitting balls is like blasting the entire pile in one blow. It doesn’t do much good for your progress.

Evaluation Of Grip And Grip Pressure:
1. Do you understand the value of grip and how it fits into the ability to control the club?
2. What is the perfect neutral grip for you? Where is the left hand and the right hand?
   If you change this grip, how does it affect the way you release the club to hit the ball?
3. Can you consistently place your hands on the club correctly?
4. Do you understand what grip pressure is, and how to maintain it?
5. If your grip pressure changes, why did it change?
6. Can you make a swing where your grip pressure doesn’t change? Try this first without a ball, then with a ball.

Evaluation Of Posture:
1. How do you find your personal ‘perfect’ posture?
2. What is a balanced posture? Can you attain it consistently?

Evaluation Of Ball Position:
1. Why is a specific ball position necessary?
2. What ball position do I recommend and why?
3. How does your ball position affect trajectory, curve and direction of the ball?

Evaluation Of Learning To Aim:
1. Visually, what is the correct starting line to hit the ball at your target? (Will it ‘look’ left, right or straight?)
2. How does aim affect the shape and path of your swing? What tends to happen if your aim is incorrect?
3. Your eyes are your connection to the game. Do you understand their importance, and how to train them properly? Do you understand how they can trick you?
Many amateur golfers try to play without understanding why the ball slices, hooks or even goes straight. Developing a repeating full swing starts by understanding how the club, and the golfer, create different shot shapes.

Controlling the clubface comes from an understanding of how the club and the clubface work in your hands. Every shot is possible - straight, draws, fades, high and low - when you know how to control the clubface.

The Wrist Hinge
All the force and power you generate in your swing will only affect the club if your wrists function properly. Once you understand how the wrists work, you can start to unlock true power and consistency in your full swing.

Release
Jack Nicklaus said it best. You can’t release the club too soon from the top. But what does release actually mean? Knowing the answer makes the club square to the ball with power and consistency.

Where The Ball Goes
Many amateur golfers try to play without understanding why the ball slices, hooks or even goes straight. Developing a repeating full swing starts by understanding how the club, and the golfer, create different shot shapes.
I don’t like the word ‘fix.’ There are fixes for slices and hooks, but in the end, the only permanent ‘fix’ starts with true understanding.


One of the greatest mysteries for my students seems to be understanding why the ball goes where it goes. It’s far better to understand why you hit a slice, than it is to chase after another fix.

We all hit bad shots. What can help us improve in the game is when we can understand why these bad shots happen. Once we do that, we can turn all our bad shots into good shots. Because if you hit a slice on purpose on a dogleg right, you’re in great shape.

The most powerful fix for all the errant shots we tend to hit, is to understand why we hit them.
There are several factors that determine where the ball goes. In this section, you'll learn about the two that are most critical. If you understand how these two factors work together, you can understand where the ball starts, and where it curves.

The first factor is the club's path. The path is the arc the club swings on. The club can swing straight at the target, called a straight path – as shown in the first picture. This is a called straight path because it perfectly matches the target line.

The club can also swing out to the right, as shown in the second picture. This path is called ‘in-to-out.’ The third path has the club swinging out to the left, also known as ‘out-to-in.’

‘In’ means inside the target line. ‘Out’ means outside the target line. So ‘out-to-in’ means starting outside the target line before impact, and moving inside the target line after impact.

Once you understand path, you need to understand the second factor – face angle. Face angle is where the club is pointed at impact.

The simplest way to understand how path and face work together is to hit shots where the club points in the direction of the path (also known as a square face).

A straight path with a square face makes the ball go straight.

The path travels out-to-in. The face is square to the path. The ball goes straight left – with no curve.

The path travels in-to-out. The face is square to the path. The ball goes straight right – with no curve.
Learn To Feel The Clubface

Feeling the clubface is the best teaching method I have found in helping people to understand how it works on impact.

With a round shaft and a round grip, it’s hard to understand how the face works. To create the feeling of how the face works through impact, put the head of a club in your hand – as shown in the photos (preferably use a 5-iron or 6-iron).

Good players feel the clubface in their hands. Once you have a sense of the clubface, you can understand how the face works through impact. Then you can start to feel how to hit the shots you want – and make the ball go in the direction of your choosing.

To practice control of the clubface, practice moving the face into every impact position to create every type of shot. Get a feel for high, low, draws and fades. Make this a daily part of practice, and it will quickly become second nature.

**Step 1:**
Clubface In Your Right Hand

Lay the back of the clubface in the palm of your right hand. Simulate your right hand grip as you feel the clubface.

Close your fingers around the clubhead and feel the clubface in your hand.

**Step 2:**
Clubface In Left Hand

Feel the front of the clubface in your left hand.

Close your hand, and get a sense of how the club works through impact.

**Step 3:**
Clubface In Both Hands

Put the clubface in your left hand, as if you are gripping the club.

Place your right palm on the back of your left thumb and take your normal grip. And now feel the clubface in your left hand as it goes through the ball.
Practice this drill using a remote or a cell phone. Focus on feeling face angles through impact.

If you don’t have a club head, another easy way to practice this anywhere is with a TV remote or a cell phone. So go grab one, and try this simple exercise.

If you follow the pictures around the page, you’ll see how the clubface can create all the shots you need. Learn to feel these when you’re at home watching TV, or at the office with your cell phone. Then go out to the range and start trying to hit all these different shots.

You can also check out my phone app at AIGOLF.com and use your cell phone for training with this and many other exercises.

Practice this drill using a remote or a cell phone. Focus on feeling face angles through impact.

**Step 1: Straight**
Face Is Square

Close your right hand around the face, as if you are taking your regular grip. This is the clubface at impact.

You can also try this with your left hand.

**Step 2: Draw**
Face Turned To The Left

Rotate your right hand turning the face to the left through impact – creating a draw.

Now repeat with the left hand. Turn the face to the left – this again is creating a draw.

With the left hand, again leaving the face open.

**Step 3: Fade**
Face Turned To The Right

Leave the face open as shown. This creates a fade.

Now repeat with the left hand. Turn the face to the left – this again is creating a draw.

With the left hand, again leaving the face open.
Impact

How To Make The Ball Curve

Making the ball curve is easy enough by mistake. You can slice or hook the ball like crazy. Making it curve intentionally is one secret to dramatic improvement.

With a straight path, experiment with opening and closing the face. When the face doesn’t point in the direction of the path, the ball will curve.

If the path is straight, the ball will curve wherever the face is pointing. Try this to make both fades and draws.

Now keep the face square to the target line and try changing the path.

If you master these shots, you can start the ball straight with a curve (for a tee shot on a dog-leg) or start the ball left or right and curve back to your target (for approach shots to a flag).

Understanding why you hit slices and hooks will help you start to fix your bad shot tendencies. True understanding is a far better cure than any fix you may seek out.

**Step 1:**
**Start On A Straight Path**
Curve Left, Curve Right

Where does the ball go? Here, the path is straight, and the face is ‘open.’ The ball will start slightly right and curve further right.

Here the path is straight and the face is closed. The ball starts slightly left and curves further left.

**Step 2:**
**Start The Ball Left**
Curve the Ball Back To The Right

The path travels out-to-in, following the white stick. The face is square to the target line. The ball starts left and curves back to the right. This is often used on approach shots, fading the ball back in towards the flag.

**Step 3:**
**Start The Ball Right**
Curve the Ball Back To The Left

The path travels in-to-out. The face is square to the target line. The ball starts right and curves back to the left. This is often used on approach shots to draw the ball towards the flag.
Nicklaus said it’s impossible to release the club too early. The challenge is to figure out what he meant by release.

Wrist-Hinge And Release

The last piece of the impact puzzle is release. The great Jack Nicklaus said it’s impossible to release the club too early. If the greatest golfer said this, then surely it must be important.

As a teacher, I am constantly reminding my students of Jack’s famous comment. The challenge for all of us is to figure out what Nicklaus meant by the term ‘release.’

In this section, we’ll take a look at what I teach as a ‘release pattern.’ A release pattern is how you let the weight of the club do all the work during the downswing, so that the club pulls you through the shot.

Once you let the club do the work, you can access great amounts of almost effortless power. Which is why the comment on release from Nicklaus is so valuable.
Impact

The Hinging And Unhinging Of The Wrist

You can think of the wrist hinge as hammering a nail into the ground with the club. How do we do this?

Grip the club and line it up with your left arm. Pick the club straight up into the air parallel to your left arm, and you’ll see how the wrists hinge.

On the backswing, as you turn back your wrists hinge upward in the same way.

As you start down, your wrists stay hinged – also known as lag – until the momentum of the club unhinges the wrists through the ball. The unhinging of the wrists is an important speed producer through impact, but the weight of the club causes the wrists to unhinge – it is not a forced action. The wrists will rehinge in the follow-through.

MALASKA TIP

The rotation of the left arm in the downswing, in combination with the unhinging of the wrists, is what is meant by ‘releasing the club.’

Step 1:
Line Up Shaft
Left Hand On The Club

Line the shaft up with your left forearm.

Step 2:
Hinge Wrist
Raise Club By Hinging Wrist

Pick the clubhead up as if you were preparing to bang a nail into the ground.

Step 3:
Top Of Backswing
Wrists Hinge To 90 Degrees

Turn to the top of your backswing, with your wrists hinged. This is the correct position to start your downswing.
Impact
Wrist-Hinge In The Full Swing

If your wrists hinge correctly, your left hand and the clubface will line up at the top of your backswing. The wrist hinges should make a 90-degree angle.

When you swing down to the ball, the wrists unhinge, allowing the clubface to square itself to the ball - producing the feeling of effortless power.

So what did Nicklaus mean by 'release,' and how does it relate to wrist-hinge?

Jack figured out that he had to immediately direct the momentum of the clubhead back towards the ball. This is achieved with the rotation of your arms, starting your downswing. The club's momentum becomes the force that causes the unhinging of the wrists through the ball.

If you look at the pictures on the right, you’ll see the unhinging of the wrists through impact. However, you won’t see the momentum of the club, or the effort it takes to rotate the club and redirect this momentum – because many forces are invisible.

---

Step 1:
Backswing
Club Weight Hinges The Wrists

Step 2:
Downswing
Wrists Unhinge Through Impact

Step 3:
Finish
Wrists Re-Hinge To 90 Degrees
Evaluation Of Where The Ball Goes:
1. What has more effect on where the ball goes – the face or the path?
2. What combination of path and face makes the ball curve right-to-left, and left-to-right?

Evaluation Of How To Control The Face:
1. Do you understand how the clubface fits in your hands – both left and right?
2. Can you make small swings with a clubface in your left hand, right hand and hands together, controlling the face through the impact area?
3. Can you hold a club – or a cell phone, remote control – and create all the different shot shapes with the left hand, right hand, and hands together?

Evaluation Of The Wrists And Wrist-Hinge:
1. Do you understand how the wrist-hinge is like hammering a nail into the ground?
2. Why does the up-and-down action of the wrists happen?
OVERVIEW

How The Left Arm Rotates

The left arm starts the downswing. The question is, how?

The Correct Way To Create Lag

There is a right way and a wrong way to create lag. We’ll discuss both in this section.

Hands Don’t Swing At The Ball

Your hands don’t swing at the ball, but your subconscious probably thinks differently. These skills help end the conflict.

How To De-Loft The Club

Many methods talk about secrets to the professional swing. The skill of de-lofting is a legitimate secret to greater power and control.

Downswing And The Racecar Analogy

Physics gives great insight into the skills you need to control the forces in a golf swing. This racecar analogy makes the science simple—and almost fun.
“Fixes are like a band-aid. They can help you save a round, but they can’t help you develop a career. It’s important to understand the difference.”

Progress is made by a dedication to change. It takes effort, time and understanding. If this is the ‘truth’ of the game, then let’s dispel one huge myth about how you make true progress. Let’s say this right now: “Fixes aren’t progress.”

The only way to truly evolve your game to the next level of ability and success is by replacing bad habits with good ones. Once you understand, then you repeat the skill until it becomes a habit. Swing skills, not swing fixes.

Instead of ‘band-aid’ fixes, you can learn swing skills and an understanding to create permanent changes that lead to permanent improvement.
The Left Arm Doesn’t Pull It Rotates

One of the biggest misconceptions in the game is the role of the left arm in the downswing. For years it was thought to be a puller, because that was the word professionals used to describe what they thought they were doing when they started down at the ball. In the first two pictures, you’ll see a pulling of the club. There’s an arm pull, and a shoulder pull.

Try both examples. Notice how your left forearm doesn’t roll over when you pull the club.

The reality is, the left arm is more of a rotator than a puller. What does this mean? Take a look at the wrist watch drill for a perfect explanation, allowing you to see the difference between pulling and rotating.

MALASKA TIP
A swing fix is more of a band-aid. A swing skill is based on understanding. With practice, this skill will create more permanent, effective improvement.

What Is A Pull?
Left Arm And Shoulder Pull

- A
  - The Left Arm Pull:
  - The left arm separates from the body, and the clubhead drops behind the hands. The tour players call this ‘stuck.’
- B
  - The Shoulder Pull:
  - Here we see the shoulder trying to pull the club into the downswing – so they unwind and move the hands closer to the ball. This can cause pull hooks, slices and a steep approach – big divots.

MALASKA TIP
After impact, let the left elbow fold, as the left arm continues to rotate.

Put your watch backwards on your left forearm.

Malaska Tip

- A
  - Put your watch backwards on your left forearm.
- B
  - Rotate your left arm as you swing down to impact. Notice where the watch face is now.
- C
  - After impact, let the left elbow fold, as the left arm continues to rotate.
- D
  - Now put both hands on the club, and copy the watch position shown here on the follow-through.

Rotation Visualized
The Wrist Watch Drill: Showing The Left Arm Constantly Rotates

The Wrist Watch Drill: Showing The Left Arm Constantly Rotates

Put your watch backwards on your left forearm.

Malaska Tip

- A
  - Put your watch backwards on your left forearm.
- B
  - Rotate your left arm as you swing down to impact. Notice where the watch face is now.
- C
  - After impact, let the left elbow fold, as the left arm continues to rotate.
- D
  - Now put both hands on the club, and copy the watch position shown here on the follow-through.
Swing Skills

Left Arm Only Drill: Correct Left Arm Action

A. From the top, let the left arm immediately and constantly rotate down to the ball.

B. With constant rotation, the clubface squares itself at impact.

C. The left arm folds up and continues to rotate into the follow-through. Notice you cannot see the left elbow, because the left arm has rotated correctly.

Rotation With Both Hands On The Club

Notice how correct rotation looks when both hands are on the club. Make sure you can identify the correct left arm action in this picture. The left arm – and particularly the left elbow – is in front of the body.
You don’t create lag in the downswing. We should write this in big letters. You don’t create lag. It is an effect, not a cause.

The Correct Way To Create Lag

Once you’ve mastered the concept of rotation in your downswing, you can add the concept of lag and the proper hinging of the wrists.

However, there are two ways to create lag – and of course, only one of the two is correct. You don’t just ‘create’ lag by pulling on the club at the start of your downswing. Instead, if you swing properly, lag happens by itself. Correct lag is an effect. You don’t have to force it to make it happen.

You don’t create lag by holding the angle in your wrists at the start of the downswing. Instead, if you swing properly, lag is an effect and not a cause.

Now let’s take a closer look at the real way to create lag.
Swing Skills

Lag Is An Effect, Not A Cause

In some players, the angle in the wrists, or lag, is created in the change of direction. The wrists aren’t quite hinged, but the change of direction will complete this on the downswing.

Lag In The Downswing
Weight Maintains The Lag

Maintain the wrist-hinge at the start of your downswing. This is the lag picture most of us try to force. It should be caused by allowing the weight of the clubhead to hinge and unhinge the wrist, instead of you forcing the wrists to hinge.

Lag In Other Sports
Baseball Throw Creates Lag

When you throw a ball, you can make a case that you hold the angle at the right wrist.

However, it is a gradual and continual release as you start forward.

Centripetal force holds the wrist angle – not an intentional holding of the angle.
Until you’ve trained yourself otherwise, your hands will move towards the ball in the downswing.

The goal through impact is to get your hands back to where they started. Everyone knows this, of course. However, the subconscious is a stubborn part of the brain, that tends to ‘override’ your best conscious efforts.

Subconsciously, your brain has a misconception that you need to hit the ball with your hands. What does this mean? Until you’ve trained yourself otherwise, and you understand the correct picture, your hands will move towards the ball in the downswing.
Swing Skills

Hands Do Not Swing At The Ball

This is going to sound obvious: you don’t hit the ball with your hands, you hit them with the club.

Every golfer must develop the skill needed to maintain the correct path. The key is to remember that the left arm rotates from the top of the downswing. This rotation makes the left arm move back to initial position, while the clubhead moves out to the ball. The rotation keeps your hands close to your body at the downswing.

A couple of drills will help develop this skill. For these drills, set a marker stick in the ground, at a 45-degree angle, as shown in the photo on the right. This marker should be close to your arms, while leaving enough space to allow your hands and arms clear passage to the ball. This marker will tell you if your hands move towards the ball.

Make sure you understand how rotation returns the club to the ball, as your hands stay in.

The Correct Downswing

The Hands Swinging Inside The Ball

If your hands swing inside the ball, the clubhead will move out to the ball. Most amateurs unwind their shoulders too soon in the downswing. Notice how this move keeps my shoulders turned longer and my chest facing the ball. Jack Nicklaus said he felt the placket of his shirt was facing the ball at impact.

Swing With A Club

Club In Both Hands

Swing Without A Club

Focus On Position Of Palms

A

Set-up to the ball. Keep your hands in position and drop the club.

B

Swing to the top.

C

Swing back, and your hands should be where they started – no closer to the ball. Feel how your body moves, and how your arm moves to accomplish this.

D

Now make a downswing, holding a club. Rotate the left arm from the top.

E

Now set up with the club.

F

Hands return to the starting position. Rotation moves the club out to the ball.
De-lofting is the true ‘secret’ to professional control of the clubface through impact.

How To De-Loft The Club

What golf book would be complete with at least one ‘secret’ of the professional game?

De-lofting is the start of professional control of the clubface through impact. It not only squares the face, it starts to optimize the angle of descent of the club into the back of the ball, which in turn optimizes ball flight.

De-lofting delivers a downward strike to the ball. This ‘traps’ the ball during impact, and creates an optimal flight that maximizes distance and ignores the wind. Both of these outcomes are desirable in the professional game.

How then do you create this professional level of de-lofting and face control?
The key to good contact is ‘de-lofting’ the club. ‘De-lofting.’ What exactly does that mean?

In terms of the club, it means leaning the shaft forward. This reduces the angle of the club as it hits the ball – turning, for example, a 7 iron into a 5.5 iron. It gives the ball a ‘sizzling’ ball-flight.

How do you create this ‘de-lofting’ action?

Let’s put a dot on a 5 iron, in the center of the face, on the fourth groove – using a black Sharpie. Then put a dot on the back of the golf ball, in the center. The game is to match the dot on the club with the dot on the ball. This is how the club face runs into the ball. In order to ‘connect the dots’ you have to hit down on the ball – hence golf is a ‘de-lofting’ game.

MALASKA TIP

De-lofting delivers a slight downward strike to the ball at impact. Most amateurs add loft through impact. De-lofting, therefore, is one of the professional secrets to distance.
"Trapping" is why the Tour players hit the ball so far, while the amateur hits so much shorter.

The loft of a club is measured when the shaft is vertical. When a tour player hits with a 7 iron, they lean the shaft forward.

The average amateur does the opposite. The higher handicap players add loft to the club by scooping the ball up into the air, rather than trapping it down into the ground.

The amateur presumes the way to launch the ball in the air is by driving the club under the ball. The reality is, because of the angle of the club, you can hit down into the ball to make it rise. A downward strike compresses the ball, making it climb up the face.

In what direction are we hitting this ball?

The low point of professional impact is 3 to 4 inches in front of the ball – this is the deepest part of the divot.

Try stepping on the ball and making it pop into the air.

The pros trap the ball against the ground.

The amateurs ‘Scoop’
The amateurs add loft.

Pros Trap The Ball
The pros try to trap the ball on the face, against the ground.

The amateurs hit behind the ball, adding loft.

In what direction are we hitting this ball?

The pro hits this shot towards the right. The amateur is hitting this ball towards the left.
The physics in golf tends to be misunderstood. And most of these misunderstandings occur in the downswing.

Much has been made of the science of the game. Books worthy of rocket scientists explain swing planes and forces. Turns out, it’s not quite so complicated to understand.

Almost all of the relevant physics occurs in the downswing as the club accelerates towards the ball. Creating a swing that efficiently uses this acceleration can deliver the most force into the back of the ball with the most control.

To explain this, we offer the great racecar analogy. Science is always better when you add a little fun.
Swing Skills

The Downswing: Think Left Hand Turn

The curved path of the downswing is like turning a corner on a race track.

Now imagine you are sitting on a golf club at the top of the golf swing. As the club starts down, it will fall through a smoothly banking left turn. The clubface rotates as it turns, until it is square to the ball at impact. Then the club hits the ball.

Now imagine you’re in a racecar. You’re traveling at about 180 mph, and you enter a banked left corner. You turn the wheel, and the car starts to fight against you. The car rides up into the corner, requiring strength to keep it on the track.

The line the car holds is a combination of how hard you steer and how fast you are going. The faster you go, the harder the car is to control. Go too fast, and you’re in the wall. Go too slow, and you lose the race.

The same combination of events happens as you turn a club through the banked left turn of the downswing. The club fights against you, just as a racecar fights a driver.

Why does this happen? Physics can explain.

The club fights because of a concept in physics called momentum. Momentum is another word for ‘desire to keep going the way you’re going.’ It’s determined by weight and speed. The faster and heavier an object is, the less it wants to turn.

Simply put, fast moving objects don’t want to turn around corners. Physics says they prefer to travel in straight lines – and the race car would confirm this. Go too fast, and the car won’t turn. It has too much momentum, so it fights against you and wrecks – preferring a straight line into the wall over a smooth turn through the corner. This is just the way the world is made.

In racing, the challenge is to control the momentum, so you make it around the corner as fast as possible. If you are in control, your momentum will sling you out of the corner into the straightaway. The same can happen in your golf game.

Control the club through the turn in the downswing, and as you straighten out, the momentum now works in your favor, and shoots you into the ball with a great burst of power and speed.

How do you accomplish this ‘slingshot’ effect? Again, physics gives us the answer.
What Is Momentum?
A boulder running down a hill has ‘momentum’ – that is, a desire to continue on the path it is going.

Downswing And Momentum

Remember what Nicklaus said, that you can’t release the club too early to start the downswing. Physics would agree.

In a car, you avoid the wall by anticipating the corner. You ‘set the car up’ for the turn. In the golf swing, you set the club up to negotiate the corner of the downswing by rotating with your left arm (if you’re right handed) as soon as you start your downswing. This makes sense of what Nicklaus said. You can’t release the club – as in rotate from the top – too early.

It is a brilliant insight. And it’s no coincidence that it was made by one of the game’s greatest golfers.

As the club drops through the turn in the downswing, the club will be accelerating the whole way – courtesy of gravity. You’ll need to counter the club’s desire to fight you. In a racecar, you use the steering wheel. In golf, the ‘steering wheel’ is the left arm rotating the grip and the shaft.

This is the force you have to learn to control when rotating the club into and through the downswing.

Momentum Defined:
‘Going The Way It’s Going’

Jack Nicklaus knew early on, as he said in his book, *Golf My Way*: “It’s impossible to release the club too soon from the top.” That means you need to start an early rotation of the left arm during the downswing, delivering the club into the back of the ball.

Release From The Top
Left Arm Rotates Constantly

With proper rotation, the downswing will feel like this.

Releasing from the top, using rotation.

The first foot of the downswing sees the club increase in weight from 14 ounces, to about 5 to 10 lbs. of force. Directing the clubhead in the correct arc uses momentum to our benefit. If you just let the club drop, momentum will act against you.

What is Momentum?
A boulder running down a hill has ‘momentum’ – that is, a desire to continue on the path it is going.
Swing Skills
How The Club Turns The Corner

Halfway Down In The Downswing

From the top, imagine the weight of the car pulling against you as you turn the tire - or the golf club - through the turn in the downswing.

Now It’s Time To Hit The Gas

Imagine the force of the car going through the turn, and how the rotation of your left arm counters this force – allowing you to accelerate as you approach impact.

Impact – And The Club Is Square

At impact, much like the car coming out of the turn, momentum will stabilize your club through the downswing. Notice how early release minimizes face rotation at impact – meaning much straighter shots.
One last consideration about “driving” the club through the downswing.

Surprisingly enough, rotating the club to start its journey down is very controversial. This is mostly because you can’t see any of the forces in play on a video. Offsetting forces are invisible. If you didn’t know the club was rotating through the downswing – and fighting you as it goes – you’d never notice. Physics calls this component forces.

Invisibility has led to some misunderstandings. The benefits of early rotation in our downswing are numerous – but two in particular make this action critical.

First, early rotation means the club face will have minimal rotation through impact. The less the club rotates through impact, the more accurate you can be – as the club stays mostly square.

Second, the rotation of the club from the top will counter the forces working to pull the club off the track, allowing a smoother – and far greater – degree of acceleration through contact.

In the racetrack analogy, the race is won by the driver who can negotiate the corners fastest.

The same is true of the pro golfer. Turning the corner of the downswing perfectly brings with it great speed and great accuracy – and the best ball-strikers are always in the hunt to win.

If this analogy sounds complicated at first, remember the reward. Delivering the club with consistent power through the downswing into the impact area is certainly worth the effort. Minimal face rotation (or car rotation) and maximum power wins the race – and the tournament.

Joe Nichols: “Feel like you stand the club up at the start of the downswing.”

As we discussed, this is more of a feeling than a reality.

Physics: The club works like a stick with a weight on the end. As the speed increases, the weight rotates more. Rotate early.

How to ‘drive’ through the downswing: Make sure the heel of the club leads the toe in the downswing.

How not to ‘drive’: If the toe leads the club through the downswing, the face will be shut at impact, hitting left or hooking.
Section 9 Swing Skills

Two Release Patterns

There are two distinct release patterns that are used to play the game.

The first is the ‘Forearm Release’ where the forearms rotate on the backswing and on the follow-through. This pattern fits a player with a neutral grip and more of an arm swing than a body turn action.

The second is the ‘Minimal Face Rotation Release’ for a player who wants to use more body rotation than swing. To do this the grip is stronger and the clubface is closed on the backswing and on the follow-through. The clubhead passes the hands but the clubface and the forearms do not rotate nearly as much.

(Many players who have played baseball find success with this because it fits the normal hit action used in baseball.)

The downside to the strong-grip closed-face pattern is that it is more difficult to get the ball in the air with longer clubs. It also can cause a lot of tension which can drastically affect the ability to create speed.

If you allow the clubface to work the way it was designed, it will have a moderate amount of face rotation caused by a neutral grip. This allows you to fully utilize the momentum of the club. This forearm rotation release will maximize your ability to create speed and put the least amount of pressure on your body.

This release pattern is used more on tour than the strong grip minimal release because of the potential for speed and consistency. Try each and see what works for you. But remember, regardless of the pattern, the left arm folds and the club head passes the hands after impact. Do not hold-off the release of the clubhead.

MALASKA TIP

The Minimal Face Rotation Release pattern is valuable for hitting bunker shots and lob shots. It minimizes the amount of face rotation and adds loft to the face.

Minimal Face Rotation Release

At the top, the face is in line with the left arm.

Here the face is closed relative to the left arm – it faces the sky.

At impact, the face is square and the right arm is on the shaft plane.

Notice after impact, your right palm faces your left shoulder. There is less rotation in your forearm.

Forearm Release

At the top, the face is in line with the left arm.

Impact. Face is square, and the right arm is on the shaft plane.

Notice after impact, the right palm faces the ground. Rotation continues through impact into follow-through.

At impact, the face is square and the right arm is on the shaft plane.
The Swing Skills Chapters

Swing Skills Test:

In this section, you should be able to have more control of the club and the clubface. These drills are focused on the basic swing skills you need to advance in the game.

1. Learn to swing the club with just your left arm, with your legs crossed - so there is virtually no body rotation, but just an arm swing and a rotation from the left shoulder. The wrist should hinge and unhinge because of the weight of the club.

2. Hinge the club up in front of you, and hit down as if you are driving the nail into the ground. This gives you a sense of how your wrist hinges and unhinges during the swing. Repeat with the right hand.

3. Be able to swing the club from address to left arm parallel to the ground in the backswing, with a 90-degree angle between the club and your forearm. Swing down and hit the ball, and duplicate the same 90-degree angle on the follow-through side, where the right arm is parallel to the ground.

4. Set-up parallel to a target line, make a swing, and make the ball start right of the target line, and then curve back to the target - hitting a draw. This becomes the most important test in this development cycle.

5. From the same set-up and ball position, make the ball go higher than normal, and lower than normal with the same club.

TEST

The Swing Skills Chapters
Body Rotation

The body moves to assist and accommodate the arm swing. The arms and hands control the golf club. This is where the full swing starts.

Foot Action

Much is made of foot work for balance. But foot action also determines how your feet pressure the ground and how your body moves in an efficient manner, relative to how you swing the club.

Overview Of The Full Swing

A great accomplishment in anyone’s game is mastering the full swing. Here we use a sequential method to build the swing one step at a time.

Full Swing Drills

These are the drills every golfer should master and repeat to build the fundamentals of the full swing.
The rotational motion of the left arm in the full swing is so familiar to good players, it's as natural signing their name.

Now you're ready to start studying the full swing. This overview builds the full swing in a series of steps from easier to more advanced. Learn the first step before advancing to the second. In this way, this chapter will give you a sense of what many of us spend years searching for – the feeling of the full swing.
Now you’re ready to start working on the full swing.

First, here’s a common skill that you see almost every tour player using. The body is still. The lead arm swings, rotates, and the wrist hinges to the top.

The arm then rotates the clubface back to square and allows the club to rotate past the body, while the elbow folds and the wrist re-hinges.

This motion is almost like writing their name for most good players. The majority of average players often don’t understand this first, basic move.

The second step is to put your feet into your set-up position. Use the same arm motion that you established with your feet crossed – but now your feet are square, and your body and your feet begin to pick up the rotation of the club.

The ‘Look Cool’ Drill

One of the major keys to the golf swing is how the left arm rotates on both sides of the swing – and how the elbow folds on the follow-through as the wrist re-hinges.

Most people try to pull with the left arm, ruining this fundamental.

To practice this, make practice swings without a ball – and learn to ‘look cool’ like the Tour players.

Many players practice hitting balls this way.

Notice that the left arm is rotated and folding up, not straight. This should be second nature.

Most people from this set-up will try to use their body too much, instead of just letting their left arm swing and fold-up.
Full Swing

Swing With Both Hands

Now put both hands on the club, then establish both feet, and create the same motion you had with a single arm.

Your body begins to rotate to allow the club to swing in its arc. Your feet action becomes critical here. Now you use your feet to push into the ground makes your body move in a manner that either supports what you’re doing with the club, or gets in its way.

When you place the right hand on the club, the body has to become more involved with the overall swing. This part of the swing is similar to the l-to-l drill.

Watching some tour players, you’ll see the right heel come off the ground early in the downswing and follow-through. However, their bodies don’t invade the path of the club. Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus, Nick Faldo and Greg Norman keep their right foot on the ground through impact.
Full Swing
Full Swing Motion

The final stage is nothing more than increased rotation on the backswing and finishing the rotation on the follow-through.

One of the big misconceptions in people learning the game is they don’t understand the parts of the swing, and how it’s put together. Now that you understand the sequence, you should be able to identify the pieces of motion in the full swing.

Both Hands Making A Full Swing

Notice how the pieces of the full swing fit together.
I feel your pain. Here’s how to avoid feeling mine.

At first, I saw the golf swing as nothing more than a low outside pitch in baseball. I adopted a grip and a path to the ball that allowed me to use a lot of my baseball swing to play the game.

I became proficient fairly quickly, then I took an official lesson, where they told me the golf swing was nothing like a baseball swing – and that I needed to learn a number of new and very different fundamentals. The reality is, this couldn’t have been farther from the truth.

So, how can you avoid the same pain?

You need to learn what the full swing really is. How your foot action controls your body motion. How your body begins to move in response to what you want the club to do. And what drills you need to repeat on the range that will teach you to build the fundamentals of the full swing.
As we take a look at the drills that make the full swing work, I’ll accompany the exercises with some lighter-hearted insight into the science of the swing. Understanding what we don’t understand about the theory of the golf swing adds strength to our technical efforts.

There is an old joke that says, “Don’t over think this, it ain’t rocket science.” Well... unfortunately golf is rocket science. We launch a ball into the air, then we fly it to a target. And, similar to rocket science, golf is dominated by physics.

Full Swing
Understanding Our Misunderstandings

Hold the club in your left hand, using your normal grip position.

Make your backswing, and let the left arm rotate the club. As your arm moves to parallel, your wrist hinges to a 90-degree angle.

On the downswing, your left arm rotates the club down into the ball. It then rotates as your left arm doesn’t pull away from your left side until the finish. Continue until your hand passes waist-high in the follow-through. Repeat this exercise with the right arm only.

Left Arm Only

A

B

C

Hold the club in your left hand, using your normal grip position.

Make your backswing, and let the left arm rotate the club. As your arm moves to parallel, your wrist hinges to a 90-degree angle.

On the downswing, your left arm rotates the club down into the ball. It then rotates as your left arm doesn’t pull away from your left side until the finish. Continue until your hand passes waist-high in the follow-through. Repeat this exercise with the right arm only.
If we’re looking to play golf and want to learn how a golf swing works, we have to realize that every time we hit the ball, we are conducting an experiment in physics. Where the ball goes—its direction, distance and spin—can all be explained by the science.

Now, to properly understand golf, we also have to understand that physics is not always kind. It can play tricks on us. Not everything we think we see is real. To understand our misconceptions of golf, we must understand how physics can turn the pursuit of a great golf swing into something of a mystery novel—where physics hides the truth.

**Set up with the club in your right hand, using your normal right hand grip.**

**Make your backswing. Let the right arm fold, and the right wrist hinges to a 90-degree angle.**

**On the downswing, your right arm rotates back to address position. Your right wrist unhinges to the ball, then re-hinges into this position. The right wrist is correct when it’s in a cupped position, as shown above.**
Physics hides the truth because all forces are invisible.

The common approach to the game is to study pictures of professional golf swings. We assume if we look at the pictures and the videos, and copy them, we will learn their golf swings. Unfortunately, this is not true. Why? Physics is deceiving us.

What we see isn’t real, because many of the forces at work in a golf swing are invisible. You can’t take a picture of gravity. It’s not possible.

So much of what we’re looking for cannot be seen — hence the great debates over what is actually going on. At first, this may sound like nonsense. But no — it’s not nonsense. It’s physics. You can’t see the forces. Instead, you can only feel them.

Sit down with a driver. Drop your right foot back, then make a swing at a tee while keeping your back on the back of the chair. Once you can hit a tee consistently, then hit the ball. The chair drill keeps your body from unwinding too quickly, and helps you to feel how your arms swing past your center.

When you swing the club back, make sure you swing the club around you so that your wrists hinge and your forearms rotate.

Hit the ball, allowing your arms to swing past your center. Your left arm remains, then folds into the finish.
Full Swing

Golfers Have Opinions, Physics Has Laws

Physics teaches us we have to learn golf by creating feelings, not by matching pictures.

This brings us to our second point. The forces at work in the golf swing are not opinions or ideas. Gravity is not an idea. It is a law. Gravity works all the time. As methods for swings change, forces of the swing remain constant.

A popular physics t-shirt reads: “Physics. It’s not just a good idea. It’s the law.”

Physics is the way it is. Physics isn’t debatable. As humans, we all have opinions. Our ideas of what happens in a golf swing are dominated by what we expect to see. We can watch a golfer swing a club, and see the path the club follows – but we have to be careful, because what we’re seeing is based on our perception. Opinions cloud our judgment.

Physics tells us opinion and good ideas are not good enough. It suggests we should seek out laws.

Perform this drill after working on the foot drill in the swing skill section. Take your set-up. Put your left foot closer to the ball than normal. Drop your right foot back, until your right toe is even with your left heel. This gives you an extremely closed stance – but your shoulders are still parallel to the target line.

Make your backswing. Swing down and hit the ball – but leave your right heel touching the ground. Your weight moves to your left foot, but your right heel stays on the ground.

This leaves your right hip and your right shoulder back, and lets you use momentum to get the club back in front of you. Most players tend to drag the handle and club through impact, causing a slice.

Right Foot Back
Full Swing
The Ball Has To Go Where You Hit It

The most encouraging truth about physics is if you follow the law and do everything right, the ball will travel perfectly to where you hit it. It has to.

The ball couldn’t deviate from its path even if it wanted to. Good has to happen, as surely as bad will. Physics governs a good shot as much as it governs a bad one.

When you are driven to throw your clubs into the lake after your ball sinks, we can all agree on what really made you mad. You’re mad at physics. In golf, it’s your best friend and your worst enemy.

Physicists are fascinated with discovering how the world really works. They distill these forces and effects down to mathematical equations. So when you hit a golf ball at a certain speed and angle and spin, it is a mathematical certainty where that ball is heading.

Physics is that good. Physics is perfect.

The Pull Back Drill

A. You start in your normal set-up position. Swing back to a 90-degree angle in your backswing, so your left arm is parallel to the ground.

B. Now hit the ball.

C. Allow the club to continue into the follow-through, until your right arm reaches parallel to the ground.

D. Then pull the handle of the club back to the center of your body, until the club shaft points parallel to the target line.

This drill teaches you how to decelerate the handle of the club, so the clubhead accelerates through the ball. This effect is just like the cracking of a whip.
So our perception may be wrong – and what we see in another’s swing or feel in our own swing may not be real, and probably isn’t.

This brings us to a concept often discussed in golf. What is the ‘secret’ to the game?

Is there a real ‘secret’?

When people talk about the secret to the golf swing, they suggest there is one part of the golf swing that will make it all work. Physics tells us this just isn’t so. Instead, we should consider the story of the legendary Jack Nicklaus.

---

**Full Swing**

**Is There Ever A Real ‘Secret’?**

---

This teaches you how to pivot around the left hip in the follow-through, while maintaining your balance. Stand on your left foot, and use your right toe to balance you. There is no weight on the right toe, but it can be used to give you balance.

---

**Left Foot Only**

A: Swing the club back, hinging your wrists to a 90-degree angle. Start down, swinging your hands inside the ball, while rotating the club out to the ball with your left arm.

B: Impact the ball, then finish balanced on your left side, while rehinging your wrists, allowing your left arm to fold up on your left side. This gets you to feel the proper position of the left foot and left hip in the downswing and follow-through.

---

---
If you want to be great, you should copy greatness. And no one was greater than Jack Nicklaus.

When it comes to being consistent, no one has understood the process better than Nicklaus.

Every year, he stopped playing in November and did not play again until January. When the year began, he would call his long time instructor Jack Grout, and they would completely start over with his game. They began with the grip. They moved on to small swings, working on take-away and tempo. They took as much as a week to rebuild his swing. He worked on the same four or five fundamentals that he worked on his whole career. He believed these fundamentals were the foundation of his game.

The lesson for all of us here is that the best player in the world took the time every year to completely re-learn the game.

The reality of the professional game is that the best players in the world rebuild their swings on a daily basis. They start with basic concepts, and they follow a checklist.

As they begin each day, it is an opportunity to re-establish who they are and how they swing. Developing a priority list is critical in developing a game.

Stand on your right foot, and use your left toe to balance you. Don’t apply any weight on your left toe, but instead use it to keep your balance.

B] Swing the club back, hinging your wrists to a 90-degree angle. Start down, swinging your hands inside the ball, and rotating the club out to the ball with your left arm.

C] Impact the ball and finish without falling forward or back—while releasing your wrists, and allowing your left arm to rotate and fold-up on your left side. This gets you to release the club, keeping you stable and centered.
The other thing I learned from observing Nicklaus was how committed he is to every practice shot he hits. It would appear that he was hitting the last shot in a major even though he was just hitting practice balls.

The commitment to each shot and the clear picture of what you are trying to do is critical in the learning process. If you want to get to your potential as soon as possible, do not take a shot or a day for granted.

I had the opportunity to work with Jack for 25 years. I’ve seen him in his home town, at the kids’ football games and I know how he feels about family.

Jack always carries a pen with him, and he has never turned down anyone who asks for an autograph.

The man who rebuilds his game every year, and re-invents himself every day is also happy to sign every autograph. If there is a ‘secret’ to golf, this may well be it: Learn from each shot – and make every day an opportunity to grow in the game and in life.

Another way to put this is, the secret is there is no secret.
Full Swing

In Golf, There’s No Elevator To The Top

There is no one step you can make to climb a mountain all at once. The only way up is to walk there. You walk up the mountain, one step at a time.

If learning golf is like climbing Everest, there is no elevator to the top.

Why? Physics is the law. Physics will not bend to your wishes and dreams. The secret is to content ourselves with taking one step at a time, in the right direction, and allowing the process to take as long as it takes. There is no easy way home.

Now we get to the last trick physics plays on us, then we’re done.

The Walk-Through Drill

A
B
C
D
E
F

Put four balls in a line.

You set up, make a swing.

After you hit the first ball, your follow-through and set-up so that you can move into the next shot.

Complete the first swing, then swing back without stopping.

Once you reach the top again, step with your right foot, then your left foot and hit the ball.

You swing, then hit, then walk into the next ball. The goal is to hit all four balls without stopping.
Full Swing

Is What You See A Cause Or An Effect?

The last great trick is this. When you watch a golf swing, you see a tangled sequence of causes and effects. You have to be able to tell the difference.

For example, when you see someone’s head drop in a full swing, you would naturally think to make your own head drop. Unfortunately, the golf swing isn’t that easy. The lowering of the head is an effect. You perform the right cause – a proper weight shift – and your head drops by itself, as a reaction to the shift.

The golf swing is full of causes and effects. If you create the right cause, the effect will happen. Just creating the effect won’t work. It may look pretty, but physics dictates it will not work. Your swing should look pretty because it functions – not because you think it looks good. Enough said.

To summarize – to see what’s really there, realize much of what’s really happening is invisible. And keep in mind, what you’re seeing may be an effect, and not a cause. Good luck.

The Four-Step Drill

Set up to the ball. Fold your arms and elbows against your body. No tension in your arms or shoulders.

Turn into your backswing, until your back is facing the target.

Your right arm extends, taking your left arm across your chest, so that your left arm matches – or is slightly above – your shoulder plane. From here, you swing down to hit the ball, and follow through.
Much is made of the upper body motion and the arms. But too little is made of the use of the feet and the lower body.

Now we should do a little diligence to the foundation of it all – our footwork.

One of the most important parts of the game is how your feet pressure the ground. It’s probably also one of the most misunderstood.

We talk about foot action with regards to balance. However, your feet should also work correctly to drive the swing.

Your feet tell your knees, your hips and your body how to move. So foot action and how you pressure the ground controls your swing and the path that it’s on.
Full Swing

**Beginning Foot Action**

When you start to develop foot action, you start with small swings. You swing back and swing through while your feet stay flat on the ground.

As the club moves back, rotate into your right hip. This turn can be described as the feeling you get when you start a lawn mower with a pull-rope. As you move backward, your hips rotate, until you feel some pressure in your right foot and force in your right hip.

As you increase the length of the swing, you let the feet start to roll. The left foot rolls inward on the back-swing, and the right foot rolls inward on the follow-through, but both feet stay on the ground. Your weight is moving more laterally through the feet – than moving from heel to toe.

As your swing gets longer, the right foot turns inward then stands up. Let’s look at correct foot action by studying the photos on the right.

![Picture A](image.png)  
**A**  
When you start to develop foot action, start with small swings.

![Picture B](image.png)  
**B**  
At the top of your backswing, load into the right hip.

![Picture C](image.png)  
**C**  
At impact your right side drives your weight into your left hip.

![Picture D](image.png)  
**D**  
To practice foot action keep your right in step on the ground during the follow-through.

There are some players with a mainly rotational swing. This is characterized with a very strong grip and a closed clubface – but it’s not one I’d recommend to students.

![Picture E](image.png)  
**E**  
From picture D, as your arms and body turn into the finish, allow your right foot to come up onto the toe. The swing should ‘pull’ you into this final position.
Now let’s take a look at how weight shift works. In the golf swing, your backswing ends as you start a lateral shift to the left. It’s the shift in weight that stops your backswing, and begins the club on it’s swing downward.

The lateral move includes your knees and your hips. This forward motion causes your upper body to tilt a little and makes your shoulders start down, which in turn, makes your arms drop.

Instead of a lateral move, if the move from the top is a rotational move in your feet or your hips and shoulders, then your swing will tend to be over-the-top.

How you pressure the ground and how the weight moves through your feet becomes critical in making your body work correctly through the swing.

Practice the movement pattern of how the weight moves in your feet and how it affects the path that your arms swing – to develop your ability to get the club on the ball correctly.

### The Step-In Drill

**Moving Back And Through**

At the top of the swing, the stick under your feet shows you the direction that your weight initially moves in the downswing.

The invisible step

In golf, you ‘step’ with your left knee not your left foot. This is why it’s an ‘invisible’ step.

Once the weight reaches the left foot, and the left hip gets over the left foot, the body rotates into the finish. This has been called ‘hitting up against a firm left side.’

Now the right foot rolls inward – and then up to the toe. Learning this action is critical to make your body move in a way that assists the path of the golf club.

### Weight Shift

**Diagonal Shift, Invisible Step**

**Diagonal Shift**

At the top of the swing, the stick under your feet shows you the direction that your weight initially moves in the downswing.

**The Invisible Step**

In golf, you ‘step’ with your left knee not your left foot. This is why it’s an ‘invisible’ step.

As you change direction, your weight moves laterally through your foot, slightly on a diagonal towards the ball of your left foot.

Once the weight reaches the left foot, and the left hip gets over the left foot, the body rotates into the finish. This has been called ‘hitting up against a firm left side.’

Now the right foot rolls inward – and then up to the toe. Learning this action is critical to make your body move in a way that assists the path of the golf club.
The club runs into the ball. Your body should assist this, not detract from it. This is the key to the full swing.

Remember to keep in mind your limitations. Your body can only do what it can handle. If you’re not flexible, or if you have physical concerns, check the athletic profile section and the fitness section.

The full swing can be seen as two actions. The body turns, transporting the arms in the backswing and the follow-through. The arms swing the club and control the face. Both are equally important.

In this section, you’ll learn how to teach your body to turn.
This sequencing of rotation and arm swing is critical in training in the golf swing. The ball swings back in the throw as your body turns with it.

As you throw the ball forward through the impact area, the body rotates in sequence with the arms and the ball.

On the backswing, your shoulders turn at 90 degrees to your spine angle. Using a club on your shoulders, it becomes much easier to turn your shoulders on the correct plane.

Now try the rotation with a club. Make sure your shoulders turn on their original plane, and your body maintains its distance from the ball.

This is the fundamental in building the full swing.

Throwing A Medicine ball

Rotation Without A Club

Rotation With A Club
Evaluation Of Full-Swing:
1. Can you combine body rotation with foot action?

2. Without a club, get into your set-up position, fold your arms across your chest; now rotate back into your right leg. As you do this, you should feel the pressure in your right foot moving slightly towards your heel — but not so much that your toes lift off the ground.

Now as you move into your finish, allow the weight in your left foot to move to the instep or towards your heel, and your right foot to move up onto the big toe — with your right foot at a 90-degree angle to the ground.

3. Can you execute the swing drills?

4. Hit 10 balls with each drill. Assess your ability with each. Whichever drill you have the most trouble with should become part of your daily practice routine. Which drill is this?

5. Every few practice sessions, repeat the 10-ball test, and assess which is the most difficult. Then make this a priority in the next few days of practice. Repeat this process until you can perform every drill equally.
Modern clubs allow you to change shafts and shaft flexes. You can also alter the sole of the club and the shape of the face site at address.

By moving weights around the clubhead, you can change the direction and the curve of the ball dramatically with the same swing.

Adjusting the lie of the golf club can have a big impact on your ability to aim, control direction and create loft.

Many times errant shots, or lack of distance, or inability to maintain your balance, can be traced back to the instrument in your hands. Your driver, your irons, the stiffness of the shaft, or even the shoes on your feet, can affect your ability to move.

As I said before, taking control of the things you have control of is a big part of increasing your chances for success. You have control over the ball you choose to use, the driver you swing, the irons, the putter, the shoes. It is always worth looking at new technology to see if it makes a difference. The tour players are always looking for ways to make the game easier – and so should you. If it makes no difference in speed or control, then do not change.

If you have clubs in your bag that are over 5 years old, it’s worth looking at the new technology. The first consideration is to make sure that whatever clubs you have, the grips and grip sizes fit you. The shaft’s stiffness, lie and length should also fit you. The lie of the club should accommodate what you’re trying to do with your swing.

Depending on your level in the game, the type of club you use can make getting the ball into the air much easier. If that’s a given for you, then there are clubs that allow you to have more control.

The more proficient you become, the more technology can help you to customize the club to the type of game you want to play. Whatever your level, make sure the clubs fit your goals.
I Would Like To Offer My Thanks And Acknowledgement Of Support To:

Any time you win an award or finish a book, there are so many people to thank because it’s a culmination of all their efforts.

The first and most important is Charlene, my wife, who has been my rock for almost 40 years. She has pushed me to do things that I never would have tried to do before. And has done everything in her power to put our family in a situation that allows me to further my career. Without her, this never would have been an opportunity.

Jennifer and Ashley, my two daughters, who are probably the biggest and most cherished parts of my life. It’s such a pleasure to be able to just be their father. It’s an honor to watch and be involved in their lives.

My parents and my aunt and uncle, who raised me in sports – and especially to my dad and uncle who spent thousands of hours helping me with every sport, and developing my skills to play whatever happened to be. My sister who followed in the shadows of my sports career with our family, and was involved with all of it.

Tom Sorenson, my first golf pro, who saw a troubled youngster and gave him an opportunity to be a part of a game, at a course called Nibley Park in Salt Lake City, Utah. And to all of the Nibley family who gave me a home away from home. This was probably the turning point in my life.

Fred Baird, my high school swim coach, who saw something in me from a perspective of a person, and being able to play the game of golf. He pushed me to pursue golf when it really wasn’t what I thought I was supposed to do.

Don Johnson, who was the first golf pro I was involved with, who knew multiple methods and ideas and ways. He helped me with my career by giving me options, and helping me figure out my way through it. He also gave me the opportunity to play and be a part of a great Country Club, Hidden Valley. He knew that I was not a golf pro, but a player and a teacher – and he pushed me that direction.

Joe Nichols, who probably was the most important influence in my golf teaching, my playing, and a big part of my life. His insight into the game, how to swing a golf club, and how to make it work was way ahead of his time.

Weber State College, which provided me the opportunity to play there on a scholarship, I became an All-American and played four years there. This was the point where I decided to give golf a run. I cherish all the experiences and opportunities that they gave me both in sports and in education.

Tag Merrit, the first golf pro who introduced me to high-speed video cameras, and gave me an opportunity to move to California and have a place to practice and just to call my own at Fairbanks Ranch in Rancho Santa Fe, where he worked.

Pete Esocues, whom I met in San Diego. He had the biggest influence on my teaching career because he helped me to understand the physiology of people, and what they can and cannot do. This changed not only my own game, but it changed how I look at people.

Jack Nicklaus, was a motivator for me and an idol when I was a kid. Later on, while working with Esocues, I was able to work with Jack personally. This grew into an involvement in the Nicklaus-Flick Golf Schools that allowed me to showcase my talents relative to the physical side of teaching people to play golf.

Jim Flick, who in the Nicklaus-Flick golf schools gave me the opportunity to convince him that fitness had a place in the game of golf. And once he saw this, he gave me every chance to expose myself, my talents, my knowledge to the golfing population and the golfing world.

To the people in Japan, where I spent three years of my life – and to Japan Golf Digest where I really started writing articles. They published 52 consecutive weeks of my articles, and helped me become the #2 Instructor of the Year in 1994 in Japan.

Lyle Anderson, who offered me a position as director of instruction at Superstition Mountain when I returned from Japan. I have been here for the last 14 years, since it opened. Thanks also to the Hladky family who took over ownership, and have given me the opportunity to stay part of the Superstition Mountain facility.
To the Superstition Mountain family – all the members, and the staff – to everyone who has given me the opportunity to develop my skills as a teacher. It is such a marvelous facility. Especially the back of the range club. Not only have I helped them but they have a way of keeping a person grounded.

Phil Blackmar who has helped me dramatically with my own game, but more than that, has challenged me on everything that I thought was important in the game. He helped me break down golf into what was necessary to play and then to teach. There are a number of ways to swing but they all function under a different set of rules. He has also helped me to understand that teaching and playing are totally different arenas and the rules for what you talk about are as different as the rules that fit different swing types.

Scott Adcock who put me in charge of the Nicklaus Academies Worldwide. This gave me the opportunity to teach and learn from instructors all around the world. To Ted Simons, Director of the Academies who has tirelessly kept the Academies going and has kept me involved with teaching teachers around the world.

To Golf Magazine, who helped me continue to publish articles, and give me the opportunity to become the National Teacher of the Year in 2011 for the PGA of America.

To the PGA, the organization that started me into golf in the first place. They motivated me to play on the tour, and allowed me to be involved in their education department, providing venues for summits and education forums around the country. These allowed me to expose people to the things I’ve found to be important in golf – and to share ideas with one another.

To TaylorMade and Mark King, who took me on as someone who was a struggling teaching pro and got me involved as a consultant. This allowed me to continue to grow with them, and remain a part of that family. It is an honor for me to represent TaylorMade, and to be a part of what they are doing in the game. They allow people to experience their products and really enjoy the game, while looking at all aspects of playing.

Al Vermiel, who was a big influence in helping me understand the physical side of the game, and sports in general. And to Bob Donatelli. These two men in the fitness industry are leaders, they’ve contributed decades to their profession, and they were able to help me uncover what was good and bad in all the information that is out there.

Joy Schwertley for helping me to understand how people receive information and how to figure out the best way to teach the individual. Also for being a great friend and helping me to believe in what I had as a professional and as a person.

Charles Maka and Jay Schroeder with EVO Ultra Fit who have been instrumental in me understanding the developmental cycle of the body and adding a level of evaluation that is critical in helping people reach their goals.

Piete Blikslager. He is a positive, unique individual, who came into my life three or four years ago. Unbeknownst to me what his talents were, he convinced me to write a book this year. He told me that I was too hard to find, and I needed to put my ideas down. Writing this book has been the most life-altering experience I have ever had, other than childhood and marriage. It has been a real learning experience, and without his input and friendship and knowledge, this never would have happened.

Jim Edgeworth and John Campbell, both students who have impressed me with their commitment to the game, and the fact that they were willing to help me put this book together, giving me the resources to make it happen.

And finally, to the game itself. To all the people who play it. To the people who will enjoy it in the future – who will come to the game and aspire to find out the potential they have – and not only that. The most important thing is what the game can teach them on a daily basis – from how it brings families together, to how it pushes someone to their maximum in mental control, discipline, honesty, integrity. Everything that’s wrapped up into golf is something you’d want to teach someone in life.

-Mike Malaska