



Golf Strength Coach

HOW TO BECOME A SCRATCH GOLFER

Everything you need to learn and do to go from shooting 100 to under par

GolfStrengthCoach.com

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INTRODUCTION

What is a scratch golfer?

First though, it's important to define the term "scratch golfer." Over the years, I've heard many people referred to as a scratch golfer when they were nowhere near that good. So, here is the definition as I see it...

A scratch golfer is one who is capable of shooting under par under individual tournament conditions, away from their home course.

In other words, if you shoot 72 or 73 now and then at your home track, you are nowhere near being a scratch golfer. You may have a 3 to 5 handicap, but you are not a scratch golfer.

Scratch golfers have a handicap of 0 or less (+1, +2, +3, etc). The typical PGA tour player has a handicap of +6 or better.

In other words, if a tour player is playing an amateur golfer who carries a 0 handicap, the tour player must give the amateur a handicap of three shots per nine, or six shots in total for a full round of golf.

The skills of a scratch golfer

For the most part, the typical scratch golfer can drive a golf ball 250 yards, hits about 9 to 10 greens in regulation per round, will get up and down about 50% of the time when they miss the green, and will average about 30-31 putts per round.

The farther you can hit a golf ball, the more upside potential you have. It is much easier to hit more greens in regulation when you have shorter shots into the green as a result of longer tee shots. You also will hit the ball closer to the hole, which allows you to hole more putts.

Outstanding putting and short game skills can make up for lack of distance off the tee.

The average amateur golfer cannot break 90. The average male golfer hits their tee shots less than 225 yards, will be lucky to hit more than a couple greens in regulation, rarely gets the ball up and down, and averages 40 putts or more per round.

What does it take to become a scratch golfer?

By now you may be quite intimidated. Scratch golfers are really, really good golfers. They are among the top 1% of all golfers.

Do you have what it takes? Most people don't. However, that's no reason not to apply the information in this eBook to become the best golfer you can be!

The following are what it takes to become a scratch golfer, in no particular order...

- Athletic ability
- Time
- Patience
- Discipline
- Knowledge
- Determination

Athletic Ability

Most of my friends who are scratch golfers are pretty good athletes. Among PGA Tour players, Dustin Johnson, Gary Woodland, Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods are notable for their athletic ability. Jack Nicklaus played catcher on his high school baseball team. I've seen video of an 81 year old Gary Player doing a back flip off a boat. That's athletic ability!

However, I do know a couple scratch golfers who haven't displayed much athletic ability away from golf.

Ultimately, if you have average athletic ability, you can become a scratch golfer. A high school teammate of mine did just that by learning everything he could about the game and getting coaching from the best instructors in our area.

It is interesting to note that among the athletes from other sports who have demonstrated pretty good skill on the golf course, most of them are either NFL quarterbacks (Tony Romo, Aaron Rodgers) or Major League pitchers (John Smoltz, Rick Rhoden).

The commonality among these athletes is the throwing motion, and the ability to control distance and direction with that motion.

A few hockey players have also demonstrated good skill on the golf course, most notably Mario Lemieux. The motion and hand-eye coordination required to play hockey translates well into golf.

So, with that said, one of the first tests I conduct with a prospective golf student is their throwing ability.

If they don't have a very natural throwing motion, they will likely struggle to play decent golf. Therefore, they will need to focus a good bit of their time developing their athletic ability.

For now, that is beyond the scope of this eBook.

Time

Obviously, if you don't have much time to play and practice, you probably won't be able to become a scratch golfer.

Once you get to that level, however, you can stay close to it while playing as little as once per week.

If you are starting out as an abysmal hacker (can't break 100), then you will need a lot of time to devote to the game.

Patience

Golf will try your patience like no other game. One day you will shoot your best score ever, and the next, you may play close to your worst. I've seen this happen at every level.

Therefore, you'll need to remain patient and continue to work on the skills necessary no matter what.

Discipline

To become good at anything in life, you need the discipline to do what's necessary to achieve your goals.

First, you need a plan to follow. Once you have that plan, discipline is critical. This may mean doing some practice in bad weather, or working out when you don't feel like it.

When you do practice, you need to have the discipline to develop a practice plan, and then stick with that plan. You also need to practice with intent.

Just going through the motions with no idea what you are doing will get you nowhere.

Knowledge

Most golfers have no idea what they need to do to become a better golfer. They are not familiar with the fundamentals of the game, do not know how to execute certain shots, and have no idea how to manage their game on the golf course.

All of this comes through the general learning process, but most people only pick up tidbits here and there.

With this Blueprint, you'll be provided with the basic foundation of knowledge to build on.

Determination

Last, but not least, is determination. I suppose this goes hand in hand with passion. If you are not passionate about the game, you likely won't have the determination to get better.

The best golfers in the world do what it takes to get better. There is no better example than Tiger Woods himself. As much talent as he has, he has always done what he thought he needed to do to get better.

A PLAN

As I mentioned, if you want to see significant improvements in your game, you need an overall, long term game plan.

One of the first things I do when I take on a new student is grill them about their goals and overall life situation.

How old are they? Did they ever play any sports? Are they married? Do they have kids? What is their job? How much time do they have to devote to practice and playing golf?

These are critical questions that must be answered realistically.

Over time, as I've taught more people, I've come to understand that most golfers are not quite up to the challenge as much as they think they are.

For example...

A couple years ago, a golfer in my old stomping grounds reached out to me, desperate for help. He had never broken 90, but indicated he was willing to do what he needed to do to achieve his goals.

Since I still travel up that way regularly, I agreed to meet him, watch him hit balls and talk things over.

After our meeting, I started sending him information to provide him with a foundation of knowledge, and I indicated my fee for working with him.

After a couple weeks of being sent some information, all of which you will find in this eBook, he declared that he was simply overwhelmed and would not be moving forward with my services.

Yes, perhaps my fee was too high for him. But, that also indicates a lack of commitment as well.

Bottom line.. he was clearly not interested in doing what he needed to do to reach his goals. Instead, he was hoping that I could wave my magic wand and turn him into a good golfer.

It just doesn't work that way.

Therefore, you've got to be real with yourself and set realistic goals based on your current lifestyle and abilities.

Where to start

First, you should start out by learning about the fundamentals of the game. There is a lot to learn.

Very few people can just go out and wing it and become a decent golfer.

Therefore, learn the ball flight laws, the Kinematic Sequence of the golf swing, how to hold a club, the set up, swing plane, etc.

Then get to work on building your game from the ground up (if you are a beginner or just a bad golfer) by starting with short shots around the green first.

Then proceed to building your swing with small swings with a wedge before you progress through the bag to the driver.

Tip

Most new golfers and bad golfers do not have the patience to focus only on the short shots around the green.

Realistically, that is where their focus should be in order to develop the ability to make consistent contact.

Therefore, feel free to give your driver a rip on the driving range.

First though... make plenty of swings without a ball. After a thorough warm-up, put a tee in the ground, or use the rubber tee on the mat, and perform 20 swings as hard as you can without the ball. Just make sure you hit the tee every time.

Then, hit ten balls, swinging as hard as you can.

Here's the key to this exercise... don't worry about where the ball goes.

Your goal here is just solid contact while swinging hard.

Why do you want to do this?

Speed is hard to teach.

Learn how to swing fast early on. As your swing improves with knowledge and practice, you'll start making better contact.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled program...

Work on your putting skills at home

Get an indoor putting green and some other training aids to help you develop a solid, repeatable putting stroke. It only takes about 15 minutes per day to do this.

If you have enough time, devote one session per week to development of your short game skills.

Another tip

If you are a new golfer, or long term hacker, get to work on hitting chips and pitches with only your lead hand on the club (left hand if you are a right handed player).

You will learn pretty quickly that proper technique is required to hit the ball with solid contact with one hand on the club.

The main points for hitting crisp chips and pitches are...

- The lead wrist must be flat at impact
- The shaft of the club should be leaning toward the target at impact
- The club should hit the ball first, ground second

When you are able to make consistent, solid contact, get the ball online toward the target, and have some distance control, then start hitting shots with both hands on the club.

If you are an experienced golfer and you are struggling with consistency in any area, get some instruction, particularly video analysis.

Or, learn how to do that yourself as I demonstrate in this training.

Learn your strengths and weaknesses. Keep track of important statistics from your rounds of golf to understand your tendencies. Work on your weaknesses and continue to build on your strengths.

Learn how to practice with greater focus. Always have a plan when you get to the practice facility. In fact, plan out each week in advance.

If needed, work on your fitness to help you execute the golf swing better, and to build stamina.

Alright, let's start to build on your knowledge!

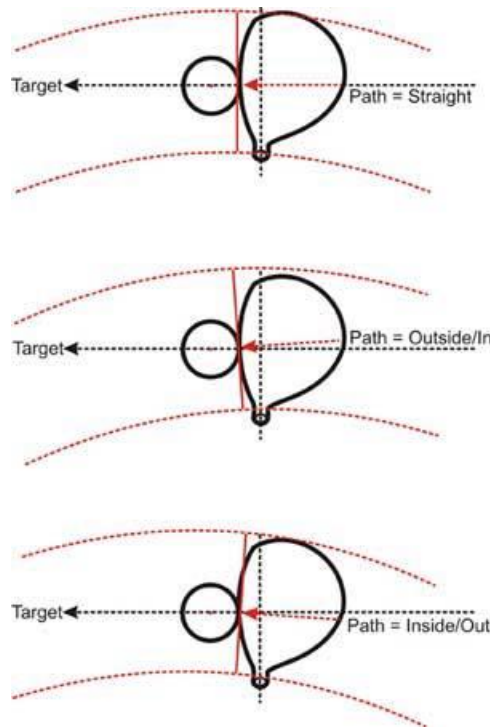
BALL FLIGHT LAWS

I find it incredible that most people try to learn golf, yet they learn nothing about the ball flight laws. How is it possible to learn this game without having any knowledge about what makes the ball fly a certain way? The result is that we see all kinds of crazy swings on the driving range because people are so pre-occupied with trying to hit the ball straight, or simply trying to hit it in the air!

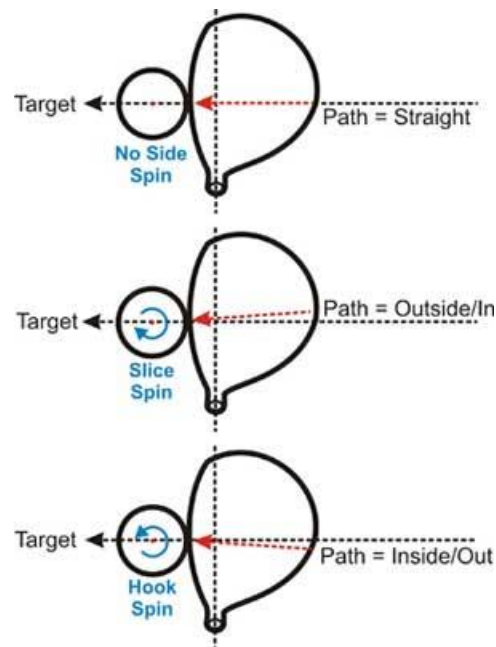
With that in mind, I felt that before we even get to the golf swing, we need to discuss the ball flight laws. The diagram below shows you how the golf ball will fly based upon the path of the swing and the angle of the clubface at impact. A study utilizing the Trackman launch monitor indicates that the clubface angle is responsible for 80-85% of the initial direction of the ball.

No matter what the club path is, there are three possible directions the ball may travel. If you swing the club on a relatively square path just before and after impact, and the face is square to your target line, you will hit a straight shot. If the face is closed, it will hook to the left, and if it is open, it will fade to the right. If you swing on an outside to in path, you can hit a pull if the face is square to the swing path, a slice if it is open to the club path, and a push slice if it is open to the target line. If you swing on an inside out path and the face is square to the club path, you will hit a push. If it is slightly closed compared to your path you will hit a slight draw, and you will hit a pull hook if the face is closed compared to your target line. Keep in mind, there is a difference between whether the face is square, open or closed compared to the club path compared to whether it is square, open or closed compared to the target line.

The image below shows the three typical swing paths from a top down view.



This next diagram indicates how the ball will spin based upon swing path.



Note that the clubface is kept square to the target line in the diagram. In the outside in swing path, a club face that is square to the target line is actually open to the swing path. That will cause a slice spin. In the inside out swing path, a clubface that is square to the target line will cause hook spin, because it is actually closed to the swing path.

This obviously just deals with the direction of the ball. The height of the shot depends upon the angle of attack of the golf club. Most people seem to think that they somehow must lift the ball with the club in order to get the ball in the air. Therefore, the club impacts the ball from an upward angle of attack, when in fact, with most clubs except for the driver, we should be attacking the ball at a downward angle of attack. The steeper the angle attack, the higher we should be able to hit the ball.

The reason for this is that we want to take advantage of the design of the club itself. Take the pitching wedge for example. The typical pitching wedge has about 46 to 47 degrees of loft. There are also a number of grooves cut into the clubface. The combination of the loft and the grooves will put backspin on the ball. The more backspin on the ball, the higher it will fly! However, in order to take advantage of the design of this club, it is necessary to be sure that the ball is

struck with a descending angle of attack. In other words, it is necessary to hit the ball first, and then the turf. This allows the ball to roll up the entire clubface, utilizing the loft and grooves. This is what gets the ball airborne.

Unfortunately, most beginners try to help the ball in the air by catching the ball on the upswing. By attempting to lift the ball in the air, they also move the body improperly during the swing. This will often lead to other swing faults.

Now that I've explained the ball flight laws, it's time to move on to the fundamentals of the swing.

HOW TO MOVE THE BODY IN THE GOLF SWING

This may be the most important chapter in this eBook. This is where you will learn how to move the body properly in the golf swing. If you can't get your body to move properly due to some physical limitations, you will also learn how to train the body as well.

As I hinted earlier, I think it is a complete waste of time to try and teach a beginner how to swing a golf club with the club in their hand. The swing is simply too complex to learn how to do this.

Beginners become overwhelmed with all this new information they are learning, i.e., grip, stance, posture, alignment, takeaway, backswing, downswing, follow through, etc.

In Kung Fu, we would learn a new form about four or five moves at a time. In some of our workshops we might learn a new form, but these workshops lasted 3 to 4 hours.

The regular class sessions were not that long, and learning a new form might only be a small portion of the class. Therefore, it would typically take us about two months to learn a new form.

The golf swing is much like a Kung Fu form. The entire body gets involved, yet at different points during the swing. The upper and lower body must move in the

proper sequence to develop maximum efficiency and power. If the body moves out of sequence, then there is a loss of power and accuracy. This is similar to most any athletic move, from throwing a baseball to throwing a discus, or even a jumping, spinning kick in the martial arts.

In all of these other activities, the athlete learns a piece at a time, never the entire move at once.

Yet, for some reason, that is how the golf swing is taught. Not here though. If you want to make significant improvement in your golf swing, this is THE most important chapter in this book. So, here we go!

The Back Swing

The back swing is the most complicated part of the golf swing, and now in today's instruction, many instructors do not even completely agree on how the body should move and how the club should swing. I guess that is why tour players often switch teachers and coaches.

In regard to how the body moves, there are some basic fundamentals. The weight shifts modestly to the back foot as the shoulders and hips turn. The arms must then lift, and to keep the club on a decent swing plane, there must be some rotation in the forearms. I am not worried about the action of the wrists at this point, because I am only concerned with how the body is moving without the club in our hand.

In order to learn how to move the body properly in the back swing, I break it down into smaller parts as follows:

Weight Shift

Starting from a standing position, with your feet shoulder width apart, and weight evenly distributed, I want you to simply shift your weight to your back foot. As you do this, be sure to flex the knee slightly as you shift the weight onto that leg. Also, try to maintain the tension on the inside of your leg, rather than shift the weight too much so that the weight gets outside of your back foot.



Do this a few times, then move on to the next step.

Weight Shift, Then Turn the Hips

Unfortunately, here is where things get complicated. Yes, believe it or not, adding a turn in the hips, AFTER the weight shift is problematic for some people, and this is the first reason why people struggle with swinging a golf club.

Once you have shifted your weight onto the back foot, I simply want you to turn the hips, up to a 45 degree turn. It is ok to let the shoulders and the head turn with the hips at this point. I don't want things to be any more difficult than the need to be. Unfortunately, some people are unable to turn the hips with a LEVEL rotation. Some, instead, tilt the hips. This is what causes a reverse pivot in some golf swings, or a change in spine angle in others.

When you turn the hips after shifting the weight, you should maintain the knee flex in the leg you are shifting the weight onto. You should feel the weight inside your back heel, inside the thigh and in the glute. For a right handed player, this would be the right heel, right thigh and right glute. Also, do your best to not lean either way with your upper body.



Repeat this sequence at least five or six times. If you struggle with it, then keep doing it until you get it right. Remember, shift the weight first, then turn the hips.

Shift Weight/Turn Hips at the Same Time

Ok, now we are going to start mimicking the golf swing a little bit. In the swing, we don't do things piecemeal. There is a flow, and everything starts together. At the beginning of the swing, the shoulders start turning, the weight starts shifting and the hips start turning as we take the club away from the ball. At this point, we are not yet concerned with the upper body.

So, as you shift your weight onto the back foot, turn your hips at the same time. Again, be sure the turn of your hips is level. There should be no tilt in the hips at all. Also, be sure that your weight does not shift outside your back foot. Your back knee should not point outward much at all. You want to feel as if the back leg is being used as a brace, and therefore, you should keep the weight to the INSIDE of the leg. Again, feel the weight on the inside of the back heel, inside the thigh and in the glute. Be sure to hold the position for a few seconds to get the right feel.

Golf Posture Shift weight/turn hips

Now that you are beginning to get a good weight shift and hip turn all at once, it's time to get into the golf posture. Without getting into too much detail at this

point, just get into a comfortable, athletic position where the knees are flexed slightly and you have a slight bend at the waist. I would also suggest holding onto a basketball at this point as well. This will be used in the next few moves. Let the arms hang naturally under the shoulders with your hands holding onto the ball.



These photos show the balanced, athletic stance with the ball, and then the weight shift and turn. The shoulders have turned as well, and now the center of my chest is essentially over my back foot.

Shift/Turn, Lift the Arms

Uh oh, now we are starting to really complicate things. This is where most beginner students, or golfers with significant difficulty maintaining the spine angle struggle. As soon as we start to lift the arms, things go awry!

This is where flexibility issues may come into play, or some issues with core strength. Many people are tight in the shoulders, and have trouble lifting their extended arms above shoulder height.

They then compensate by tilting their hips which results in the back shoulder rising above the front shoulder, and their spine leans toward the target. This is the reverse pivot. Now the student is in a poor position to make consistent contact with the ball.

Some students lack the core strength in the lower and middle portion of the back. They are unable to maintain their spine angle when trying to lift the arms. They then straighten up in the back swing, which means now they must change their spine angle again in the downswing in order to hit the ball. This also leads to inconsistent ball striking.

In this drill, it is not necessary to lift the arms above shoulder height. Most people can get them to exactly shoulder height and that is fine. The whole point to this drill is to be sure that the spine angle does not change.



Shift/Turn/Lift and Rotate

The final piece to the back swing puzzle is the rotation of the forearms. This mimics what happens in the golf swing with a club in our hand. At the top of the back swing, the left hand (for right handed players) should actually be on top of the ball, as seen in the photo. If we were swinging a golf club, the left hand would be on top and the club may actually feel like it is resting in the palm of the right hand.



In order to get a solid foundation into moving the body properly, the student should piece these moves together as I have shown. If there is one step in the overall move that proves difficult, more time should be spent on that step before combining them into one swing.

We have now completed the back swing, and now for the easy part!

The Downswing

Actually, most golfers try to make the downswing far more complicated than it needs to be. This is because they are trying to hit the ball, rather than just letting the club swing. They end up out of sequence by leading with the upper body rather than the lower body. This leads to poor ball striking.

Once we reach the top of the back swing while swinging the ball, the next move starts by shifting the weight, from the ground up, from the right foot into the left foot. The left hip will shift a little toward the target as a result. As this occurs, the arms simply start to drop. Unfortunately, most people want to turn the shoulders too much at this point, when in fact there is little shoulder turn at all from the top of the back swing. We simply turn the shoulders in the downswing to impact, as much as we did in the back swing.

At impact, the center of gravity has dropped a bit since the top of our back swing. Our weight has shifted almost entirely to the front foot and there should be flex in the front knee. The hips at this point are turned a little past the original set up position, and the back of the left hand should be square to the target. Notice how my chin is pointing straight at the center of the ball.



The key to this exercise is to learn how to move the body from the top of the back swing into impact. The bottom line is that the lower body does the bulk of the work, and the upper body just follows.

Follow Through

The follow through move is simply a further rotation of the hips as a result of the momentum carried in the downswing. It is no less important, however, as the shape of the follow through can dictate the shape of the shot.

Ideally, after impact, we reach the point where we have the most extension with the arms. We then finish in a balanced position with all of our weight on our front foot. There should be no arching of the back as in the old Reverse C position.



That is essentially how we train the body to move properly in the golf swing. Taking the club out of our hands makes this quite a bit easier. As I already indicated, this breakdown of the swing should be practiced daily until the student is able to perform each part of the swing well. Then, the entire swing should be practiced with ball in hand before moving on to using a club.

It is now time to discuss the Fundamentals of the Golf Swing.

THE GRIP

The Grip is the most important fundamental in the golf swing simply for the fact that it is our only connection to the golf club. Yet, the grip is probably the most overlooked aspect of the golf swing for most golfers.

I see many golfers that might not even have one of their thumbs or a forefinger touching the club when they swing it. The first thing I ask them is if they have ever seen a PGA Tour player grip the club that way. When they answer “No” I ask “don’t you think we ought to imitate the best players in the world?”
Why is the grip so important?

Because it controls the clubface angle at impact.

As indicated in the discussion regarding the Ball Flight Laws, the angle of the clubface at impact is most important to determining ball flight.

If the clubface is open at impact, the ball will likely fly to the right (assuming you are a right handed player).

An open clubface is typically caused by a weak grip. In other words, if you are a right handed player, your hands are turned too far to the left on the club. If you are a left handed player, your hands are turned too far to the right on the club.

If the clubface is closed at impact, the ball will likely fly to the left. A closed clubface at impact is typically caused by a grip that is too strong. If you are a right handed player, your hands are turned too far to the right on the club. If you are a left handed player, your hands are turned too far to the left.

Ideally, what we would like is a NEUTRAL grip. So how do we achieve that? Here are the basic points....

(Right Handers)

1. Your left hand should be placed on the club so that the left thumb points down the club shaft at about 1 o'clock. If your thumb is straight down the shaft, it is too weak.

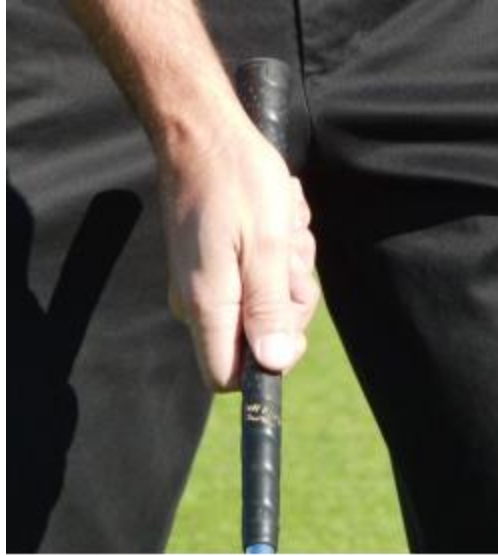
2. The V formed by your thumb and forefinger should be pointed between your right cheek and right shoulder. Then, if I am standing in front of you, I should only see two knuckles on the back of your left hand. If I see more than 2, your hand is

turned too far to the right (too strong). If I see only 1, it is turned too far to the left (too weak).



Left Hand Grip

3. Your right hand should be placed in such a way that the pad of the right thumb covers the left thumb. You then wrap your fingers around the club from there.
4. Your right thumb should be pointed at 11 o'clock down the club shaft.
5. The V formed by your thumb and forefinger should be pointed between your right cheek and right shoulder...parallel to the V formed by your left hand.
6. You should form a trigger with your right forefinger, and that trigger should be directly beside the right thumb, not underneath the club, and not on top of the grip.



Right Hand Grip



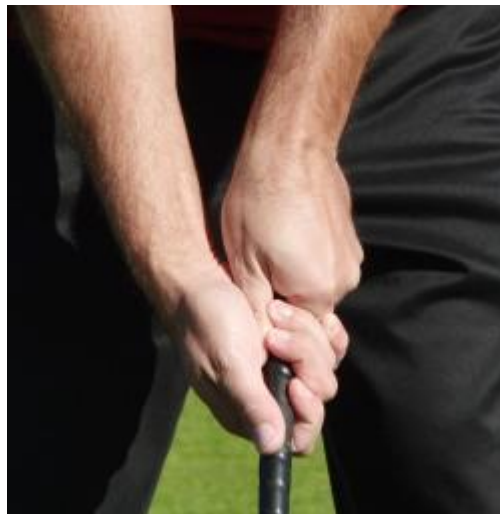
When you place your hands on the club in this manner, the palms should be facing each other.

(Left Handers)

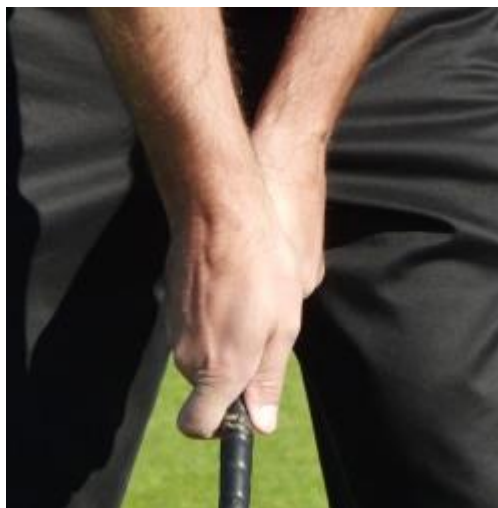
1. Your right hand should be placed on the club so that the right thumb points down the club shaft at 11 o'clock.

2. The V formed by your thumb and forefinger should point between your left cheek and shoulder.
3. Your left hand should be placed so that the pad of the left thumb covers your right thumb. Wrap your fingers around the club from there.
4. Your left thumb should be pointed at 1 o'clock down the club shaft.
5. The V formed by your thumb and forefinger should point between your left cheek and shoulder, parallel to the V formed by your right hand.
6. Form a trigger with your left forefinger, and that trigger should be directly beside the thumb, not underneath the club and not on top of the grip.

Whether you work with an overlap grip, interlock grip or a 10 finger grip is up to you. I personally recommend not using the 10 finger grip as that results in the hands working more independently than we like. We want the hands to work as one unit throughout the swing.



This photo demonstrates a strong grip. Both hands for the right hander are rotated too far to the right. The strong grip will have a tendency to result in a closed clubface at impact.



This photo demonstrates a weak grip for the right hander. Both hands are rotated too far to the left. Notice how the V of the bottom hand would be pointing at the LEFT shoulder, and how you can barely see the second knuckle of the top hand. The weak grip will tend to leave the clubface open at impact.

Changing your grip is often an uncomfortable change, but it is the key to hitting more consistent golf shots. The only way to get more comfortable with the new grip is to work on it, practice with it. Swing the club in the garage so you get used to it during the winter months.

However, I do not recommend you change your grip under the following circumstances:

1. If you have a strong grip as described previously, but you still slice the ball, then do not try to achieve a more neutral grip, as it will only worsen your slice. You have to work on your swing mechanics first.
2. If you have a weak grip and still hook the ball, again, do not try to go to a more neutral grip, as you will only hook the ball more. You have to work on swing path first.

In regard to grip pressure, most golfers have a tendency to hold on to the club too tight. Most golfers tend to slice the ball, and holding onto the club too tightly will

only make this worse. However, if you tend to hook the ball too much, try holding the club a little tighter. Ideally, we want medium grip pressure...not too tight and not too loose.

Work on this most important fundamental and in the long run, you will achieve greater consistency.

STANCE AND POSTURE

After the grip, how we stand up to the ball is the next most important fundamental. Most people do not realize how poor posture and alignment can immediately affect the golf swing. For instance, if you stand up too upright, you will likely take the club too low and too far to the inside on your takeaway. If you are too hunched over, you will likely take the too far outside and too steeply. In both cases, you immediately go off the swing plane and you will have to re-route the club at some point. If you are not successful in doing that, you will hit the ball inconsistently.

The keys to a proper stance are as follows:

1. Your feet, knees, hips, arms, shoulders and eyes should all be aligned parallel to your target line.
2. You should find yourself in an athletic stance....
 - a. feet shoulder width apart
 - b. knees slightly bent and turned inward toward each other
 - c. bent slightly at the waist...usually about 25 to 30 degrees. The longer the club in your hand, the less bend there will be.
 - d. arms hang down directly under the shoulders so that the hands are not too far or too close to the body when holding the club
 - e. back straight
 - f. chin is not tucked into the chest, but up a little bit
 - g. weight evenly distributed between each foot
 - h. weight should be just behind the balls of the feet...not on toes and not on heels

3. Your ball position will vary depending upon the club in your hands. Most shots played with a wedge through a 5 or 6 iron will be played in the middle of your stance. The longer the club, the more forward we place the ball in our stance, assuming a flat lie.
4. Your hands for most shots should be even with the golf ball. This will allow the triangle formed by your arms and shoulders to be directly in front of you. We do not want this triangle angled too far forward, with a strong forward press of the hands as this will take loft off of the club. We do not want this triangle tilted backward, as this will add loft to the club.
5. The right shoulder will be tilted slightly lower than the left simply because the right hand (if you are a right-handed player) is below the left hand on the club. However, we do not want more of a tilt than needed.



Face-on view of golf stance. Notice how I keep the triangle formed by my arms and shoulders right in front of my body. In this case, I am holding a 7 iron and I have positioned the ball in the middle of my stance. As you proceed through your clubs to the longer clubs with less loft, you will move the ball more forward in your stance as shown.



This is the down the line view of the stance. While remaining comfortable, you should try to keep your back as straight as possible.

Your feet, knees, hips, shoulders and eyes should all be lined up parallel to your target line.

Your hands should hang directly under your shoulders with short to mid irons. With longer clubs, you will stand a little taller and your hands will be a little further away from your body.

Your weight should be distributed evenly between both feet, and it should be centered just behind the balls of the feet.

That pretty much covers stance and posture. As you notice, there is a lot of detail involved in developing a proper stance. Well, that is certainly not by accident. Watch the pros, especially those with the great swings like Tiger, Ernie Els, Adam Scott, etc, and you will notice how they stand over the ball in similar positions.

Swing Faults Caused By Poor Set Up

There are a few swing faults that can occur as a result of a poor set up. Here are a few.

1. If you stand up too upright, the tendency is to pull the club too far inside on the takeaway. Therefore, bend a little more at the hips.
2. If you are bent over too far with your hands too low, the tendency is for a steep, outside takeaway. Bend a little less at the hips and try to keep your back a little straighter.
3. If you sit down in your stance too much, the tendency will be to rise up and down in the stance during the swing. Also, you will have too much weight on your heels. Therefore, you will need to do something with your upper body to compensate, such as lean toward the ball at some point during the swing.
4. If you tend to be up on your toes too much at set up, chances are you will rock back away from the ball during the downswing. As you pull the body away from the ball, you lose power.

THE SWING PLANE

Ever since Hank Haney began teaching Tiger Woods in 2004, the swing plane as a fundamental in the golf swing has received significant attention.

However, there is widespread disagreement about what it really means. One analyst or teacher may be referring to the plane of the shoulders in relation to the golf ball, while another refers to the swing plane of the golf club.

The idea of the swing plane dates back to Ben Hogan's book "...Five Fundamentals." In this book is a famous drawing of Hogan with a pane of glass drawn through his shoulders.

Hogan indicated that you needed to be sure to swing the golf club under this swing plane.

In the case of Hank Haney, the swing plane refers to the plane of the golf club as it moves through the golf swing.

Ideally, Hank says, the club will stay on a swing plane angle that is parallel to the original angle of the club established at address. This will make it easier to return the club to this same angle at impact.

By returning the club to this angle at impact, the golfer has a much higher chance of hitting the ball with a square clubface, which allows for more solid and consistent ball striking.

Here are two key takeaways about the swing plane. First, the steeper your angle of attack coming into the ball, the harder it is to release the club. As a result, you will have a tendency to slice the ball.

Second, the flatter your angle of attack coming into the ball, the more quickly the club will release. Therefore, if you have a flat type of golf swing, your primary miss will be a hook.

The goal is to find that happy place in the middle!



This idea of the swing plane will be highlighted throughout the discussion of the full swing.

BACK SWING

As mentioned, it is our goal to swing the club on the proper swing plane throughout the golf swing. The illustrations included here indicate the positions throughout the back swing we want to attain, which will allow us to keep the club on plane.

However, it is quite possible to hit the ball long and straight even if you deviate somewhat from this swing plane angle slightly.

Takeaway

The takeaway ends when the club is about parallel to the ground. As the club reaches parallel to the ground, it should be parallel to the target line.

The initial part of the back swing, i.e., takeaway, starts with the shoulders turning and a modest hinge of the wrists. At this point, the lower body is not yet active.



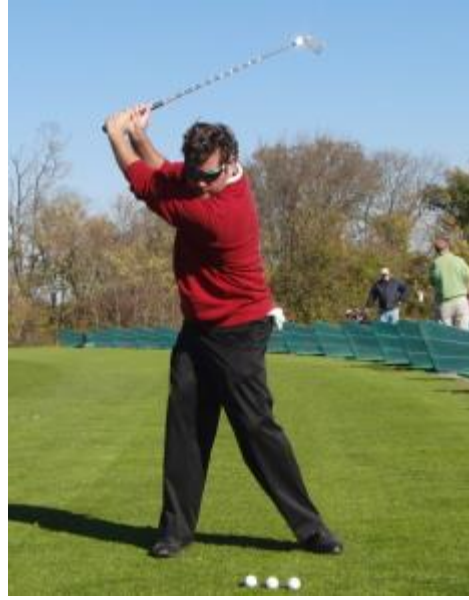
As the backswing continues, we try to keep the club on a swing plane angle that is parallel to the shaft angle at address. The club swings a little inside and a little up. The shoulders continue turning and the hips resist turning as much.





Notice how the club shaft half way back is parallel to the green line, my original shaft angle at address. In the photo to the right, my weight has shifted to the back foot a bit, but the body stays centered. There is no major lateral shift.

Also notice how the club has begun to lean toward the target in the photo to the right. This is a result of the cocking, or hinging in my wrists.



At the top of my swing, since I am short of parallel, the club should still point off to the left. The club shaft is still nearly parallel to the original shaft angle at address. I normally do not get the club to parallel at the top of my swing with an iron.

Notice in the photo to the right that my shoulders have turned just about 90 degrees, and my hips about half that much. My right leg acts as a brace in the back swing. The weight is loaded into my right heel, inside my right thigh and in my right glute. My left foot remains flat on the ground, but the left knee has moved toward the right. This leaves me in a more balanced position, and my swing is leveraged.

Many amateurs may shift the weight and turn the shoulders and hips, but they like to lift the left heel off the ground. This causes them to not have proper balance in the swing, and they achieve no leverage, and thus no storage of power.

At the top of my swing, my left wrist has a similar angle as the clubface. I also have decent extension with my arms. Finally, my spine is tilted slightly away from the target.

When the shoulders are done turning, the backswing is complete. If my club shaft were parallel to the ground, it would be parallel to the target line. If the club goes past parallel, it will cross the line, but that is ok, I would still be on plane.

Ultimately, I would not regard this as a perfect back swing, as I would prefer to have a more shallow swing plane. In other words, I swing the arms a little too high for my liking.

However, I do a lot of things well, particularly with the body, and that is why I can hit the ball consistently well. I view the body movement as more important than what the arms and hands are doing at this point.

My philosophy is that if I have a good neutral grip, good balance, and move the body well, I will hit the ball consistently well, and this has definitely been the case.

In fact, the photos presented are not of my actual swing. The body movement is the same, however, my takeaway is too much inside. This is because I rotate my forearms at the start of the takeaway.

But that is ok. All I do then is lift the arms up, and let my wrists do the rest of the work at the top of the swing, and that gets me where I want to be, or close at least. It is not how you get the club in the right position at the top, as long as you can get there.

Keep in mind, I actually pay very little attention to what my arms and wrists are doing in the golf swing, it just happens.

Here again are the keys to a good backswing.

1. You allow the shoulders to turn while the lower body resists. Ideally, when we complete our backswing, the shoulders turn about twice as much as the hips. This gives us the torque that will be unwound in the downswing.
2. You absolutely must get your weight shifted to your back foot. However, this will vary with each club. The longer the club, the more weight you want to shift for maximum power. With shorter irons, we want more control, so we will not shift the weight as much. For right handed players,

you want to feel the weight on the inside of your right heel, inside your right thigh and in your right buttock as you reach the top of your back swing. Too often, golfers fail to transfer their weight to the back foot, and instead swing with a reverse pivot. Their spine angle tilts toward the target and their weight is still primarily on their front foot. This results in a lack of power.

In order to get a good shoulder turn and weight transfer, try to feel the center of your chest turning over your right foot (if you are a righty), and be sure to try and keep your eyes level during the backswing. Also, you must maintain a flex in the right knee. A straight right leg in the backswing is a sure sign that you have not transferred your weight properly.

3. As the shoulders turn, the arms lift and there is some forearm rotation and wrist hinge. At the top of your backswing, the clubface should be at the same angle as your left wrist and forearm.
4. There should also be good extension with the arms as well. We want to create width in the backswing, which means we want there to be good distance between your right shoulder and your right hand (if you are a right handed player). Too often, golfers do not create this width. As a result, their swing speed is the same with their driver as it is with their 5 iron. This should never be the case since the driver is longer, and should automatically create greater swing speed from a greater arc.
5. At the top of your backswing, no matter how far back you have swung the club, you should have enough wrist hinge where the angle formed by your left forearm (for a right handed player) and the golf club is 90 degrees. The uncocking of this wrist hinge just before impact is a key to generating more swing speed.

Ideally, at the top of our backswing, we are on the proper swing plane. If the club is parallel to the ground at this point, it should be parallel to the target line. The clubface will then be square as well.

If the club is short of parallel, it should be pointed off to the left of the target line. If it is past parallel, it should be pointed to the right of the target line. However, one key to remember, once the shoulders stop turning, the backswing should be complete. Many golfers try to get the club to parallel to the ground with their hands and arms, but this results in timing issues and inconsistent ball striking.

That covers the back swing, and now the rest is easy!

DOWN SWING AND FOLLOW THROUGH

The downswing essentially starts before the backswing is completed.

In other words the left hip starts moving forward as the weight shifts from the back foot to the front foot, before the shoulders have completed turning into the back swing. This is what creates the lag in the golf swing, and that whipping action of the hands at impact.

Ben Hogan's swing probably is the best example of this lag, and he was known for his ball striking and the ability to hit the ball a long way, while being relatively small in stature. Unfortunately, most golfers tend to do the opposite of this.

They start the downswing with their upper body, and this often leads to an early release of the club, and a loss of power.

In other words, they try to "hit" the golf ball with the upper body, rather than swing the golf club by letting the lower body lead. The fact is that your legs are far more powerful than your upper body. You can leg press far more weight than you can bench press.

With this in mind, it is crucial to learn how to start the downswing with the lower body. I often equate starting the downswing with throwing a punch. Once the golfer has reached the top of the back swing, it is crucial to generate power from the ground up as the downswing begins.

When throwing a punch, you will have far more power if you remain grounded, or rooted to the ground. This is also the case with the golf swing. You must draw the energy from the ground and transfer through your body, into your hands, and ultimately through the golf club at impact.

When you get to the top of your back swing think “feet, knees, hips.” Think of corkscrewing into the ground as you begin the weight shift to your front side and your left hip shifts toward the target. Then feel the energy from the ground travel up to your hips, which then turn to the left.

The transfer of weight to your front foot leads to the unwinding of the torque



created by your shoulders being turned more than your hips in the back swing. As the hips move forward and begin to turn, the arms start to drop, but the upper body stays back. It is important to maintain your original spine angle and keep the head from moving forward in the downswing. Furthermore, it is key to keep the shoulders from turning through too soon. It is absolutely crucial that the hips lead the shoulders all the way to the follow through.

At this point, I am halfway down in the downswing. Ideally, the club will be parallel to the original angle achieved at address. Mine is typically a little flat, so I was over emphasizing as I demonstrated the swing for these photos, so it is a little too steep at this point. In the photo to the right, you can see how the weight is shifting back to my left foot. Notice the angle between my left forearm and the club is about 90 degrees. You will see a difference in my actual swing photo below with the driver.



My swing with the driver is an example of some extreme lag that some golfers create in the downswing. Notice how when my left forearm is parallel to the ground, the club is still tilted toward the target.

In the case of many golfers I teach, in this position, their club is pointed away from the target. That is an early release position and leads to very weak shots because the stored up energy is released too soon.

At impact, 90% of your weight should be on your front foot, and you should have a strong front side. Ideally, your left arm is nice and extended at impact and the back of your left hand faces the target.

Your upper body may be straight up or have a slight lean away from the target. After the club passes through the impact zone, your hips continue to turn and your arms will be fully extended about two feet beyond impact.



Here I am at impact. Notice how similar the angle of my club shaft is on the left as it is compared to my set up position on the right. You can see in the photo to the left that I have shifted my weight to the left foot, and my hips are now more open. Also, my center of gravity has dropped, and while my upper back is a little more rounded, I have maintained my overall spine angle pretty well.



Halfway into my follow through position you can see the extension of my arms after impact. Again, when the club reaches parallel to the ground, it should be parallel to the target line, or slightly inside of that. The head should be going with the ball now as well.

Many students are told to keep the head down because they top the ball, and they end up keeping it down too long. This results in a disconnect between the upper and lower body.

At the end of your golf swing your belly button would be facing the target, all your weight should be on your front foot, and you should be standing tall. You should be up on the toe of your back foot, but totally balanced on your front foot.

If you pick up your back foot, you should not have to adjust your balance to avoid falling over. If I were standing behind you, I should see the entire bottom of your back foot. If I don't then you have not transferred all of your weight.



And now you have the fundamentals of the full swing.

The golf swing is a complex, athletic move, but it is no more so than pitching a baseball, skipping a stone, or rolling a bowling ball. If you have average athletic ability, you'll have the opportunity to develop a decent enough golf swing to become a scratch golfer.

Speaking of that...scratch golfers have a WIDE variety of swings.

In 1979 I caddied in the U.S. Amateur for a player from my club who had one of the funkiest swings you could imagine. He even made the cut to match play, which was pretty incredible.

Jim Furyk has another very funky golf swing and look what he's done in his career.



Jim Furyk Back Swing

What both of these golfers have been able to do is REPEAT that swing and make solid contact.

The key is this...in both cases, they have a good enough Kinematic Sequence that allows them to make solid contact, and hit the ball pretty straight.

The Kinematic Sequence in the golf swing is essentially the sequence of body movements that transfers energy through the body.

According to the Titleist Performance Institute (TPI), all great ball strikers have essentially the same Kinematic Sequence. In other words, Jim Furyk and Tiger Woods have a nearly identical sequence.

“All great ball strikers begin by generating speed from their lower body and transferring this speed through their torso, into their arms, and then into the club. What style they use to complete this signature is completely unique to each player.”

So, why do I bring this up? You don't have to have a pretty or perfect golf swing to get the job done. But, you've got to have the basic movements, or sequence correct in order to become a consistent ball striker.

This is why it is absolutely critical to your success that you practice the body sequence I described earlier. I highly recommend at least 5 minutes per day in slow motion.

Once you feel comfortable, feel free to set up near a solid wall, and release the ball in the follow through as if you are releasing it in the direction you would be hitting a golf ball.

Final thoughts – The golf swing

You now have a pretty good idea of how to swing a golf club. I also recommend you head on over to YouTube and check out some examples of some great golf swings.

Mechanically speaking, Tiger Woods has probably achieved the best golf swing I have ever seen. In fact, I would even argue that his swing in the 2019 Masters may be his ultimate masterpiece.

Other golf swings that I have found to be aesthetically pleasing are... Payne Stewart, Louis Oosthuizen, Adam Scott, and Fred Couples (for his beautiful tempo).

Now, let's move on to building your golf swing!

BUILDING YOUR GOLF SWING

If you are a beginner, or a golfer who has never broken 90, it's a good idea to start building your golf swing from scratch.

I recommend you start doing this with short shots around the green.

Start first with a basic chip shot from just a few feet off the green on short grass. Use an 8-iron to chip toward a target that is about 50 feet away, and slightly uphill.

When you are able to start controlling your distance and direction well (75% or more of your shots within 5 feet of the target), then move on to a pitch shot.

With a pitch shot, you want to be positioned about 10 yards off the green, on short grass. Pitch to that same target as before (you'll now be about 10 yards further away), and use a sand wedge.

The pitch shot is a longer shot, and more difficult to control distance with it. Therefore, if you can get 75% of your shots within ten feet, you are doing well.

The point of working on these short shots first is that you are learning what it feels like to make solid contact. You have to make solid contact to control distance.

When you are having pretty good success with the pitch shot, you can then move onto the 9 to 3 swing.

9 to 3 Swing

The 9 to 3 golf swing is simply a half golf swing.

For a right handed player, the back swing ends when the left arm is parallel to the ground. The follow through ends when the right arm is parallel to the ground.

Now, here is the process you should undertake to master this swing.

Session 1 – 9 to 3 swing, sand wedge only, 50% speed, 40 to 50 balls, one or two slow motion practice swings between each ball.

Session 2 – Sand wedge only, increase to 75% speed after 20 or 25 balls **only IF you are making solid contact.**

Session 3 – Sand wedge only, starting at 50% speed, ten balls. Increase to 75% speed if making solid contact. If making solid contact on every ball at 75% speed, then for last 10 balls, increase to 100% speed.

REMEMBER – Even at 100% speed, you are still only making a 9 to 3 swing!

As you can see, I literally recommend that you don't even bother to hit any club other than a sand wedge in your first three practice sessions.

The next step is then to move on to a longer swing... 10 to 2, then 11 to 1, and then if you have the flexibility, go to 12 to 12.

Keep this in mind though...there is no need go beyond 10 o'clock in the back swing.

One of the longest hitters on tour, Jon Rahm (pictured below), goes back to about the 10 o'clock position (2 o'clock for lefties). Of course, he generates enough swing speed that he finishes in the 12 o'clock position.



Many new golfers seem to think that they need to have a Jon Daly type swing to generate a lot of power. However, they are physically not capable of doing it properly, and ultimately, major swing flaws develop as a result (I'll get to those down the road).

Therefore, don't get obsessed with having a big long back swing...it's not needed to become a scratch golfer!

IMPROVING YOUR GOLF SWING

If you've been playing golf for a while or a long time, you've obviously developed your own golf swing, and if you are reading this eBook, you likely have some significant flaws in that swing!

In this section, I want to deal with some of the more common swing issues and how to fix them.

The Slice

The vast majority of golfers slice the ball, and as a result, are unable to improve their game enough to become a single digit handicap.

Aside from a weak grip, there are two swing plane issues that will result in a slice. The most common swing type is the inside takeaway-over the top swing. The other is the outside in, steep swing.

Over The Top Swing

In this swing, the golfer will pull the club too far to the inside during hit takeaway. They take the club so far to the inside, that if they moved the body properly in the downswing, they will hit a foot behind the ball.

As a result, they compensate for the inside takeaway by leading with the upper body in the down swing. This causes the club to attack the ball from too far outside, and too steep of a swing plane. The combination of the two results in a pull slice.



Notice that at the end point of my takeaway, where the club is about parallel to the ground, the club is pointed way off to the right compared to where my feet are aligned.



Ultimately, due to the inside takeaway, at the top of the backswing, the club has crossed the line. At this point in my swing, my club is short of parallel, yet it is still aimed well to the right of where my feet are aligned.

The average golfer who tends to slice the ball will do this, and then lead the downswing with the upper body.



Halfway through the downswing, the club is coming down too steeply, and the club shaft is now pointed to the left of where the feet are aligned. This is the classic over the top move.

Okay, now you see the classic over the top move, so how do we correct it? Well, what you need to learn how to do is hit the inside of the ball. The over the top move results in you hitting the outside of the ball, never a good thing.

How do you learn to hit the inside of the ball? Well, you need to reverse your inside over the top loop first. In other words, instead of that inside takeaway, you need to take the club more to the outside in your takeaway.

Do the following drill.

First, standing upright with a 5 iron in your hand, simply start swinging the club to your left first. Then, just make a circle with the club, swinging your arms without moving the body. You will swing the club clockwise.

Do this a number of times, say ten.

Next, from your golf stance, I want you to pick the club straight up in front of you by hinging the wrists, and lifting the arms slightly. Next, I want you to turn your shoulders as in your golf swing.

Thirdly, lay the club off, or lay it in a more flat position, with your hands.

Finally, swing the club from that position by moving your lower body. Be sure to just let the arms follow.

Shift your weight and turn your hips, let the arms follow, and then finish in your follow through position.

Do this over, and over again, first slowly. As you become more comfortable moving the club slowly, then slowly pick up the pace of the swing.

While you are doing this, you should be brushing the ground with your club.





The photos here show you how to hinge up the club, turn the shoulders and flatten the club, and then the impact position.

You must not deviate from these positions at all as you are working the drill. If you continue to hit a slice, it is because of one of two reasons.

First, after you flatten the club in the back swing, you bounce it back up to a more vertical position. Or, you still lead the down swing with your upper body, rather than your lower body. It is crucial that you get the sequence in the right order.

Now, it is time to hit a ball. The first few times, I want you to tee it up. With a flatter swing plane, it is easier to hit the ball with it teed up, and that is what you are trying to achieve with this drill, attacking the ball on a flatter swing plane.

Many students hit a draw with the first swing where there is a ball involved. If you continue to struggle with the drill, work on it slowly in front of a mirror.

If you are having good success with this drill, simply start the swing with an outside takeaway, and then be sure to get into position two above.

Ultimately, you want to be able to make this move with a normal, on plane takeaway, which will lead to a better swing shape.

Slice Swing 2

The other type of slice swing is a more simple outside in golf swing. The right handed golfer tends to aim everything left of target, takes the club up and to the outside of the swing plane too much, and then comes right back down that same line. This golfer also tends to have a weak grip, but not always.



This photo shows the steep, outside takeaway. The club is pointed well to the left of where my feet are aligned.



On the way down, the club is coming in from way outside and the club is pointed well to the left of where my feet are aligned.

So how do we fix this type of slice swing? Well, the opposite of a steep, outside in swing is a flat, inside out swing. You need to learn how to feel what it is like to swing the club on a flatter swing plane.

If you have this type of swing, here is the drill that will help. Stand straight up with a 5 iron in your hands. Hold the club so that it is pointed straight away from you at just above stomach height.

Now you simply swing the club at that flat level in the back swing and follow through as shown in the photos below.





Swing the club at this level a few times. Then drop the club head down to about knee height, and swing the club at that level a few times through the hitting zone.

Naturally, the club will be higher than knee height in the back swing and follow through. Get used to the feel of this flatter swing. Then, set up in your normal golf stance and take a few practice swings duplicating the flatter swing you started with in the above drill.

Place a tee in the ground with the top of the tee about an inch above the ground. Try to hit the tee without hitting any turf. When you are able to do this, place a ball on the tee, and duplicate this practice swing.

Your shot should turn to the left (if you are right handed), assuming you have a neutral or strong grip. If your ball still slices, do the entire drill again, with at least ten swings at each level.

You should easily hit a draw with this flatter swing.

Ultimately, you will need to place a ball on the ground. You should be able to hit a draw with this flatter swing, and your divots should be more shallow.

Ideally, you should work toward a more on plane swing. Quite often, when I teach a golfer who slices, and I ask them what their goal is, they say they just want to learn how to hit the ball straight.

Well, you can't go from slicing to hitting it straight. You must first learn to hit a draw. Once you are capable of doing that, then you will have the ability to hit the ball straighter.

This requires that you change the shape of your swing. If you attack the ball from the outside as in the two slice swings demonstrated, you will rarely be able to hit the ball straight.

You must change the swing path, and to do that you must change the shape of your swing.

This will take some practice, but it is far from impossible. Work on these drills along with the Golf Swing Sequence drill I described earlier, and you'll be on your way. I recommend about 15 minutes of at home swing practice everyday to get your body used to these changes.

The Reverse Pivot

The reverse pivot is probably the most problematic swing fault for golfers. Many golfers who slice the ball also have a reverse pivot.

As a result, they not only slice the ball, but they don't hit the ball very far either because the reverse pivot does not allow for any leverage to occur in the swing.

Also, the reverse pivot can also lead to the early release of the hands, which will drain power even further.

Unfortunately, for many students, the reverse pivot may be a symptom of physical issues.

Golfers with low back issues tend to have a reverse pivot swing.

Golfers with limited flexibility in the upper body will often have a reverse pivot swing.

Golfers lacking in core strength or who have some hip issues may have a reverse pivot swing.

The reverse pivot swing is one in which at the top of the backswing, the upper body leans toward the target, which is the opposite of what it should do.



This is the classic reverse pivot position. Instead of turning more level, the hips tend to tilt instead as the golfer tries to lift the arms. This causes the upper body to lean toward the target rather than away from it. Also, the golfer's head tends to tilt toward the target as well.

The way we try to cure this particular swing fault is, in the backswing, to try and get the center of the chest over the right foot, while keeping the eyes more level to the ground.



To work on this you need to work on the drill above. First, get yourself to shift the weight and turn the hips properly, without tilting them.

If you are unable to turn the hips without tilting them, you won't be able to get rid of the reverse pivot without putting more strain on your back.

If you are able to turn the hips properly, but you struggle to raise the arms as seen in the photo to the right, then you likely have some shoulder flexibility issues and potentially some shoulder strength issues.

Strength and flexibility training will be key to solving this problem.

Nonetheless, it is still possible to play well even if you have a modest reverse pivot. The main issue is that you need to forget about trying to lift the arms so high in an effort to get the club to parallel.

Some golfers who are more athletic, can still hit a draw with a reverse pivot. These golfers learn to reverse the spine angle in the opposite direction in the downswing from the way it leans in the backswing.

However, this is not a great way to swing because it will cause some stress on the lower back as well.

Fix Your Hook

While most golfers struggle with slicing the golf ball, some golfers actually have trouble with hooking the ball too much.

Golfers who hook the ball too much tend to be better players, because they've developed a swing sequence that is closer to the professional golfer.

As such, fixing your hook golf swing should be less of a challenge.

Most commonly, the golfer who hooks the golf ball has a swing shape that results in the golf club crossing the line at the top of the swing as in the photo below.



In this case, the tendency for this golfer is to pull the club to the inside too much on the takeaway, and then cross the line at the top.

From this position, the more skilled golfer will start the downswing with the lower body as they should.

In the downswing, the club approaches the ball too far from the inside. If the golfer does not aggressively turn through the shot with the lower body, and hangs on his back side a little too long, the hands take over, and release the club too soon.



In this photo, in the impact position, I have too much weight still on my right side.

My shoulders are tilted far too much, and in most cases, the shoulders will be aimed out to the right too much.

Golfers with this swing fault tend to also have a pretty strong grip.



Notice with this golfer, where the feet are aligned. Yet, as the club is just inches from impact, the shoulders are aimed well to the right, and club is coming into the ball from well inside.

To fix this swing fault, as usual we want to exaggerate the correction. With this swing shape the golfer tends to have too much of an inside out swing. So, we need to get them to do the opposite.

This starts with the takeaway. The takeaway needs to be more outside, as seen below.



Next, we will then want to get the club into a more laid off position at the top of the swing, rather than across the line.



From this position, the golfer will have a better opportunity to get his hands more in front of his chest in the downswing.



Typically, a golfer who hooks the ball tends to be a better, more athletic player. They will have a bit better understanding of what kind of swing they need to make to change the ball flight.

In this instance, we simply want them to get a better feel for how to slice the ball, which is the opposite of what they do. Usually, when they first start trying hard to slice the ball, they will actually hit the ball fairly straight.

While they may feel as if they are making a significant outside in swing, they really are getting much closer to the correct swing plane.

However, we still want them to eventually have the ability to slice the ball. Then, we work back into what I call the “happy place in the middle,” which is a better swing shape overall.

The other swing shape that results in more hooks is the flat swing shape.

Earlier when I discussed curing the outside in slice swing, I mentioned swinging the club on a flat swing plane to get a feel for curing that swing fault.

The drill I used was to do the opposite and learn how to swing the club on a flatter swing plane.

With someone who has a flat swing plane, we just try to do the opposite. This is actually the same thing we do to cure the other hook swing described above.

I would also note that many golfers with a tendency to hook the ball keep the head down too long after impact.

Keeping the head down too long causes a disconnect between the upper and lower body. As a result, the hands release too soon and this results in a pull hook.

The Shank

Last is the dreaded shank!

A shank is when you strike the ball near the hosel of the golf club. For a right hander, the result is a shot that shoots off to the right, and is usually on a much lower ball flight than normal.

The shank is generally caused by one of two swing faults... 1) You are either attacking the ball from a swing path that is too far inside, or 2) Your spine angle is changing during the swing.

One drill you can work on is to find a soft object and place it just outside the golf ball as you hit a shot. An impact bag is a good piece of equipment to use.

Just start out by hitting some balls with a 9 to 3 swing. If your club is hitting the impact bag at, or just past impact, then you are attacking the ball from too far inside.

Believe it or not, at certain times in my career I've had to fight off the shank. In my case, it was because I tended to lean toward the ball in my back swing.

If I did not correct this in the down swing, my arms would not have the room to properly make impact, and I may catch the ball on the hosel.

I never knew this was the case until the issue was picked up on video the first time I travelled to Dallas for the Haney teaching seminar. I then realized I needed to really focus on maintaining my spine angle in the golf swing.

That covers a few of the most common swing faults. Let's move on to some thoughts on the golf club set.

THE BASIC GOLF SET

For most golfers, the basic set of golf clubs consists of a driver, 3 wood, 4 wood and 5 wood, 3 iron through 9 iron, pitching wedge, sand wedge and a putter.

However, this basic set can vary quite a bit depending upon the skill level of the player, and how far they are able to hit a golf ball.

For me, my set up includes a driver, 3 wood, 2 iron through pitching wedge, sand wedge, 60 degree wedge and a putter.

Keep in mind that you are allowed to carry a total of 14 clubs.

Driver

The driver is often the first club that beginners reach for on the driving range to see how far they can hit it.

The swings I often see as a result just make me shake my head. Many times, people are literally falling backwards because they are so far off balance, and have employed the wrong Kinematic Sequence.

In any event, the driver is clearly an important club in the bag. Typically, an 18 hole golf course will consist of at least 14 holes that are either par 4 or par 5. As such, hitting a driver off these tees is an option, depending upon your length off the tee.

Because the driver has so little loft (typically 9 to 12 degrees), the club creates more side spin than other clubs. This is why it is more difficult to hit a driver straight.

Also, the lack of loft makes it difficult to hit in the air, which is why we place the ball high on a tee in the tee box. Because we typically tee the ball fairly high, we also want to set up with the ball more forward in our stance when we hit the driver.



Generally speaking, the less loft on the club, the more forward you set up the ball in your stance to help you get the ball in the air more easily.

In the case of the driver, since we are teeing the ball high (a good rule of thumb is that about 50% of the ball should be above the top of the driver), we want to catch the ball on the upswing. Moving the ball more forward in our stance allows that.

With the driver, the ball is typically set up somewhere between the heel and big toe of the front foot.

Fairway Woods (Yeah, I know, they aren't made of wood anymore)

The fairway woods should also be played from forward in your stance, but not as far forward as the driver. These will have a much smaller head than the driver, and have more loft, so we are not trying to hit the ball on the upswing with these clubs, but much closer to the bottom of our swing.

Long Irons and Hybrids

The long irons and hybrids will also be played forward of center. If you don't generate a lot of swing speed, you'll likely want to replace the 4 iron with a hybrid club, and instead of carrying a 2 and 3 iron, carry a 4 wood and 5 wood.

The reason being is that long irons are more difficult clubs to hit, particularly out of the rough. The hybrids and higher lofted wood clubs can get through the longer grass more easily and since they have larger heads than the long irons, they also have a larger sweet spot to allow for more consistent contact.

Mid and Short Irons

The mid irons and short irons should then be played from about the middle of your stance. These clubs have more loft, and then more grooves to create more back spin.

The back spin is what allows the ball to climb higher into the air. With a good golf swing, you'll be able to take advantage of the design of the club by hitting the ball first, then the turf. The loft of the club and the grooves will then create the back spin that creates the higher ball flight.

One of the keys to playing golf is then learning how far you can hit each club. Distance control is really what sets the better players apart.

The tour players' ability to control distance with their short to mid-irons is what allows them to be so precise with shots into the green.

Swing Speed and Club Shaft

Club shafts generally come in regular, stiff and extra stiff shaft stiffness. Golfers that are capable of generating swing speeds of about 110 mph or more with the driver will tend to need extra stiff shafts.

Once you have learned to play a bit, it's a good idea to see a club fitter. The fitter will also recommend an appropriate shaft length. Clubs generally come in a pretty uniform length, but if you are taller than normal or shorter than normal, you may need an adjustment.

That about covers the basics of the golf club. Let's start hitting some balls!

SET UP ROUTINE

When you watch a tour player, you'll notice that they ALL have a pre-shot routine that they run through to get them focused on the task at hand. They also use this routine to get themselves properly aligned at the target.

Most amateur golfers have no routine whatsoever. Occasionally they take one practice swing, and then for another shot, they may take four or five.

Many also have no clue how to get themselves lined up at the target.

The set up routine serves several purposes.

First, it helps the golfer become more relaxed. We are always more relaxed when we are performing a routine task. A tour pro goes through the routine as if they are on the driving range.

Therefore, no matter how important the shot may be, performing the familiar routine helps them calm the nerves a bit.

Second, it helps the player focus on the task at hand. What they are trying to do is execute a shot. They've executed virtually every shot they've ever hit in a tournament THOUSANDS of times. The set up routine helps them stay focused.

Lastly, the set up routine helps with their alignment. I'll make a few comments about this here.

In my routine, I visualize the shot I want to execute from behind the ball. Once I've visualized that shot, and get myself relaxed, I focus on my alignment. If I am not properly aligned, I can't execute the shot properly.

So, from behind the ball, I pick a spot a couple feet in front of the ball. That spot is lined up with my target.

So, when I step in to set up beside the ball, I square my club up to that spot. I visualize a line running from the ball to that spot, and I then align my feet parallel to that line.

After a couple waggles of the club and another look at the target, I settle in and perform the golf swing.

I highly recommend that you use a set up routine before you execute most of the shots you hit on the driving range as well. This will get it more ingrained so that it becomes more natural on the golf course. Also, it will help you become more focused in your practice.

Time to move on to how to practice!

BASIC DRIVING RANGE PRACTICE

How you practice will have a significant impact on how quickly you will improve.

First of all, you don't need to spend hours upon hours on the driving range to improve your swing.

What you need is FOCUS. Therefore, spending too much time hitting balls can actually be detrimental, because after a certain period of time, you start to lose focus.

50 Minutes

Generally speaking, studies have shown that 50 minutes is about the maximum amount of time that the average student should spend on a single practice session, as they tend to start losing focus after that.

Therefore, if you have not accomplished your goal for a particular practice session within that time frame, then take a break for 10 or 15 minutes to recharge your batteries. Then get back to work.

A Plan and a Goal

Secondly, you need to have a plan for the session, and that session should have a goal. The goal may simply be to make more solid contact with the driver, or perhaps you are trying to learn how to hit a draw.

With the goal in mind, you can then devise a plan to achieve that goal.

For instance, if your critical ball flight error is a slice, then you know you've got to work on attacking the ball with a more shallow swing plane in the down swing.

If you are a beginner though, your primary goal is just to learn how to make solid contact with each club in the bag.

Therefore, after your first couple of practice sessions, your goal for each ensuing session should be to move further into your set from the wedges on up to the longer clubs and eventually the driver.

Down the road, you can then start paying more attention to your ball flight and learn how to correct any critical ball flight errors that arise.

Warm Up and Stretch

The golf swing is a complicated move that involves the entire body. Therefore, it is critical that you warm up and stretch properly before any practice session. The

last thing you need is to injure yourself, as that will only set yourself back in your progress toward becoming a scratch golfer.

Wedges

To develop some rhythm, just hit about 8 to 10 balls with a wedge at 50% to 75% speed. This will also help you to become more warmed up.

NEVER ever start a practice session with a driver! This is a good way to injure yourself, because if you make full speed swings with a driver before you are thoroughly warmed up, you can easily pull a muscle or worse.

Practice Swings

For every ball you hit, take two to three FOCUSED practice swings with the primary goal of the session in mind.

If you are a beginner and the goal of your session is simply to make better contact, your swings should focus primarily upon the Kinematic Sequence as discussed in Golf Lessons 2, 6 and 7 in the Free Training section of my website.

These practice swings should therefore be pretty slow.

Visualize

Visualization plays a key role in golf. You've got to see the shot in your mind to get yourself focused on the task at hand.

Therefore, be sure you visualize the shot you are trying to hit, from impact, all the way to the target.

Set Up Routine

With each ball that you hit, you should also go through your set up routine...it should be exactly the same as you use on the golf course.

You don't want to immediately hit another ball without going through this process. Quality is much better than quantity.

Ball Flight Patterns

At some point, you'll notice that your bad shots tend to be similar. Make note of that in your journal. The pattern that shows up the most, such as a slice, will be related to your critical ball flight error. We'll deal with learning how to correct many of these down the road.

So, to recap, here are the basic points to remember about how to practice on the driving range...

- Identify the primary goal for the session
- Have a written plan for the session on how to achieve the goal
- 50 minute sessions...10 to 15 minute breaks between sessions if want to practice longer
- Warm up and stretch first
- Hit 8 to 10 wedge shots at half to $\frac{3}{4}$ speed to get your rhythm, more if needed
- Focused practice swings in between each ball you hit
- Visualize the shot you are trying to hit (as you will on the golf course)
- Pay attention to the ball flight and make note of any problematic shot patterns that arise (slices, pulls, tops, fat shots, etc)
- Understand that you may not achieve your goal every practice session, but this is what will require you to continue to practice
- Record in your journal your thoughts on the session

Full Swing Practice At Home

You can actually make even faster progress if you can take 10 to 15 minutes each day to make practice swings.

Practice swings at home should primarily be slow motion, and if you can get some mirrors set up to give you visual feedback...all the better.

Hank Haney indicated that Tiger Woods used to work on his swing in front of the mirror for as much as an hour, particularly when he was trying to make a particular improvement.

I also like using a weighted club while training in front of a mirror, as this sends stronger feedback to the brain for the positions you are trying to achieve in the swing. That should then allow these positions to feel more natural with a normal weighted club more quickly.

Training with a heavy club is also beneficial for helping to improve the range of motion in your golf swing.

If you can knock out 100 quality practice swings per day at home, I can guarantee that you'll improve more quickly.

I've provided a ton of information to you so far, and it may be a bit overwhelming, so take your time, go through the lessons as often as you need, and be sure to maintain a journal!

Speaking of your journal, be sure to keep track of your shot patterns on the golf course and when you practice. Are they starting left and curving right, or vice versa? Do you have trouble getting the ball in the air? Do you top the ball or hit too much of the ground?

Identifying your shot patterns will go a long way toward your improvement.

Let's move on to becoming a good putter.

PUTTING FUNDAMENTALS

To be a good putter, you need to be as comfortable as possible while you stand over the ball.

While some instructors will strongly suggest that you set up with the feet, knees, hips and shoulders parallel to your line, similar to a full swing, this can be uncomfortable.

With this in mind, the first key is to get comfortable.

The only two fundamentals of the putting setup that I preach are... 1) Set up with the eyes over the ball, or just inside the ball and 2) Position the ball more forward in the stance.

The first fundamental is necessary to help you stay focused on the line in which you want to hit the putt. If your eyes are out past the ball, you will have difficulty hitting the putt on the proper line.

The second fundamental is necessary so that you strike the ball on a very modest upswing when you hit your putts. This ensures that you impart a little bit of topspin on the ball, which will help it roll better toward the hole.

Aside from these two fundamentals, just get as comfortable as possible.

I personally set up to the ball with my stance slightly open to my target line.

This allows me to see the line better when I am putting, and, since I have neck issues, it allows me to practice a bit longer as well.

Lag Putting

Lag putting refers to how to handle the longer putts you'll be faced with. The goal of a lag putt is to get the ball as close to the hole as possible.

Due to the length of these longer putts (anything over 25 feet is generally viewed as outside the range would give serious thought to holing the putt), we simply want to get the ball as close as possible for an easy tap-in.

This generally means within two feet. If you have a putt of 40 feet or more in length, getting that first putt within three feet is considered acceptable.

So, AFTER you've become comfortable setting up to your putts as described above, it's time to work on a basic lag putting drill to help you get used to controlling the speed of your longer putts.

First, place yourself about 25 feet from the edge of one side of the green, where the green is fairly level.

Throw down about ten balls and then simply putt them toward that edge and try to get the ball as close to that edge as possible, without crossing onto the fringe of the green.

Count how many balls you get within two feet without going over, then try to beat that number with a second set of ten. Repeat the exercise until you beat the figure of the first set of ten.

Then, move on to a distance of about 35 feet, repeat this drill, then move on to 50 feet.

I highly recommend taking a few minutes before any round of golf to go through this drill. Remember, every day, the speed of the greens will be different, particularly if you are playing a different course.

So, if you want to have a decent day of putting, you'll want to get used to the speed of the greens with this drill.

Short Putts

In order to gain some confidence on the short putts, I will recommend a couple drills for you here.

The first drill is the Gate Drill...this is one that Tiger Woods has used on a daily basis throughout his career.

For this drill, you'll want to find a level spot on the green, and set up about 3 feet from the hole.

Set your putter down, square to the hole, and stick a tee in the green about ¼ inch from the toe of the putter and the heel of the putter.

Place a ball down just in front of the gate formed by the two tees, and set up to the ball with your putter between the gate. Now hit some putts without hitting either tee.

When you become capable of hitting these short putts without hitting a tee, you'll be able to make consistent contact with the ball, and you'll automatically make more of these short putts.

Tiger would finish every practice session by making 100 putts in a row with this drill.

The second drill I like to use is the coin drill.

Set down a coin at one foot, two feet, three feet, four feet and five feet from the hole, on the same line.

Starting at the one foot coin, try to make ten putts in a row. Once you do that, pick up that coin, and move to the two foot coin. Don't move to the next coin until you can make ten in a row.

When you are able to make ten in a row from each distance, you'll really start to build confidence in your putting.

Quick Thoughts on Short Game Technique

The short game involves a bit more fine motor skills, and it is difficult to describe the different shots in print.

Therefore, I highly recommend you had on over to YouTube and search for the short game series of videos that Brad Faxon put together with the Golf Channel.

Faxon was renowned for his putting and short game as an active tour player, and he does a great job of describing his approach to different shots.

VIDEO ANALYSIS

Take Some Video

A good idea to help your development is to take some video of your swing or get a lesson where video analysis is included. Then, it's a good idea to continue to take video to see your progress when working on swing changes.

When you are taking video, you'll want to be sure that the camera is set up properly.

For the face on shot, set the camera so that you can see from the golf ball at the bottom to about two feet above your head at the top. A video that doesn't encompass your entire swing, or one that makes you look too far away is useless.

In the down the line video, you set up the camera so that it is aligned with your hands as you address the ball, at about the same height.

It is very helpful to use a high speed camera that can take video at no less than 30 frames per second. That way you can watch the video in slow motion and pause it at appropriate points in the swing.

These days, smart phones can do the trick. Take video in both normal speed and slow motion. Normal speed helps with tempo work. Slow motion will reveal all of the warts and the strong points in your swing.

The pros all use a lot of video to help them fine tune their swings, so there is no reason for you to not do the same.

ADVANCED SHOT MAKING

If you are an absolute beginner, after you've played a couple rounds of golf you'll begin to realize how little you know and how much you must learn to become a good golfer.

It's one thing to learn how to hit a tee shot. You are standing on a well cut, level tee box, and you get to place your ball on a tee, at the desired height.

But, what happens when you hit that tee shot into the woods? Now you've got to figure out how to hit a low shot that will travel as far as possible. Or, perhaps you will also need to make the ball curve once it gets through the trees.

The golf course is not like being on a flat tennis court or basketball court. You will be faced with uneven stances, long rough, streams, trees, bushes and bunkers.

You will also be out in the elements. Try playing a round of golf when the wind is blowing 20 mph.

With this in mind, you are going to need to learn to hit a variety of shots with your golf clubs. The more advanced shot making skills you have in your bag, the more you can lower your scores.

However, this can't be done until you actually have the ability to curve the ball on command and this requires significant practice.

You can't become a scratch golfer until you can hit a draw

It's been estimated by the teaching profession that over 80% of all golfers hit a slice, and are unable to hit a draw.

This is why most golfers will never become a scratch golfer, or even a single digit handicap.

The inability to hit a draw means you don't have enough control of your golf swing to consistently hit quality shots.

You are effectively just hoping that your slice curves less than normal on any given day, so you can hit more fairways and greens.

But, the inability to hit a draw means you have a significantly flawed swing, which will keep you from becoming more consistent with your ball striking.

Learn how to hit a draw, and you will be well on your way to becoming a good golfer.

Learn and understand the Ball Flight Laws

I discussed the Ball Flight Laws previously to give you an understanding of why the ball will start in a certain direction and then curve a certain way.

To adjust the height of the shot, you then need to adjust the angle of attack into the ball and your swing speed.

To hit it high, your angle of attack should be steeper, and the swing speed should be quicker. That helps produce more backspin, which gets the ball in the air more quickly.

To hit it low, the angle of attack is more shallow, and the speed is slower. This reduces the spin, and allows for a more penetrating ball flight.

This is all stuff you can play with on the driving range!

PLAYING GOLF

And now, it's time to discuss the actual playing of golf.

If you want to become a scratch golfer, you need to play a lot of golf. In fact, between playing golf and spending hours on the practice range, you'll be better off playing.

Naturally, if you have time to do both, then do both. If not, then play, and try to spend 10 to 15 minutes a day at your home or office working on your swing and your putting stroke.

When you play, play with something on the line. Yeah, I said it, gamble!

As I said at the start of this eBook, a scratch golfer is capable of shooting under par under tournament conditions away from his or her home course.

You can't do that unless you play, and you have to play in competition.

If you are not good enough to play in competition, then gamble with your partners. That is how you can best simulate the pressure a competitor feels in a tournament.

You don't have to bet a lot of money either. Just losing a small amount to a friend or rival is enough to give you a sting. And the only way to prevent that from happening more often than not is to continue to put yourself in those conditions.

Consider how long it takes for many professional golfers to break through for that first win on tour. They knock on the door a few times, and get a top ten here and there.

Then, they hold the overnight lead a few times heading into the final round. That is when they feel tremendous pressure, and some handle it better than others.

Finally, they break through and get that win. For some, that may be the only win of their career. For others, the flood gates open and they become consistent winners. Scottie Scheffler is an excellent recent example.

That is also the process you will go through in becoming a better golfer.

First you will knock on the door of breaking 100 for the first time, then 90, then hopefully you can become one of the rare golfers that can break 80.

If you've got enough talent and skill, you will the set your sights on 75, then 70.

I first broke 80 when I was 13. Then it was a matter of performing in competition. I broke par for the first time in competition when I was 15, and then broke par for the first time in men's competition when I was 16.

My best competitive round was a 66 playing in a head to head match.

It's a process.

TRACKING YOUR GAME

Professional golfers pay close attention to their statistics when they play competitive rounds. The PGA Tour tracks a wide variety of their statistics, from average driving distance to the percentage putts holed inside six feet.

Keeping track of your own game will help you identify your tendencies and weaknesses so that you'll know what areas of your game need the most improvement.

Most golfers, however, don't keep track of the right statistics. Just keeping general statistics such as fairways hit, greens in regulation and putts per round won't do much for you. All you are doing is keeping track of how bad you are.

You'll have to go deeper.

On the following pages, I provide a couple Excel spreadsheet examples that can help you keep track of your game. These will help you identify the areas of your game that need the most work.

They will also help you identify your tendencies during a round of golf to help you manage your game better.

TEE SHOT FORM

CONDITIONS: Temp Range: _____ Feet Above Sea Level: _____									
Hole Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Club Used									
Shape of Hole (dogleg left, right or straight)									
Length of Hole									
Uphill, downhill or level tee shot									
Wind Direction									
Estimated Wind Speed									
Hazards? Yes, No, Right, Left, Both									
Results									
Distance Hit									
Where did ball end up (fairway, rough, water, OB)									
left or right									
Initial direction of ball flight									
Later curve of ball flight									
Shot height: Low, medium, high									

APPROACH SHOT FORM

CONDITIONS: Temp Range: Feet Above Sea Level:

Hole Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Club Used									
Type of Lie: Fairway, Round, Sand									
type of Stance: Side hill, up hill, down hill									
Elevation of Green compared to shot position in feet									
Wind Direction									
Estimated Wind Speed									
Yardage to Target									
Results									
Distance Hit									
Carry Distance Hit									
Where did ball end up									
Proximity to hole									
short, long, left, right									
Initial direction of ball flight									
Later curve of ball flight									
Shot height: Low, medium, high									

PUTTING FEEDBACK FORM																			
PUTT ID																			
HOLE NUMBER																			
PUTT NUMBER																			
CONDITIONS OF PUTT																			
DISTANCE IN FEET																			
BREAK: (L, R, S)																			
SLOPE (U, D, L)																			
RESULTS OF PUTT																			
MADE (Y, N)																			
DIRECTION OF MISS																			
LINE OF MISS (A,B,O)																			
DISTANCE (L, S, E)																			
DISTANCE LEFT																			

ADVANCED PRACTICE

The majority of golfers typically head to their practice facility, hit a bucket of balls, maybe a few chips and putts, and off they go.

Then, they wonder why they make no actual long term progress.

First of all, you need to be realistic about the time you have to devote to practice. Unless you are single with no kids, or retired, you likely have significant limitations on your time.

Therefore, you must budget your practice time wisely, and then have a plan when you head out to practice.

As you have probably heard, if you have never broken 90, it is highly likely that most of your score improvement will come from an improved short game.

Therefore, at least 50% of your practice time should be devoted to short game and putting.

If you decide to work on your short game and putting in one session, and your time is limited to an hour or less, then pick one particular short game shot to practice for half that time, then spend the rest of your time on putting practice.

For your range practice, it is critical that you have a plan.

Is there a club or shot that is giving you trouble? Are you trying to make a particular swing change?

Practice swings in between balls hit are crucial to your success. These are necessary to try and get a feel for any changes you are trying to make.

Then you should go through your setup routine for each shot you hit.

During the session, pick one club or shot to work on, and use the Ball Flight Form (you will find this in the next couple of pages) to track your progress.

This will get you hyper focused for that particular part of the session.

The typical range session

The typical range session starts out with a warm up... light stretching and then about 20 balls with a wedge, working from the 9 to 3 swing at half speed up to a full shot.

Then perhaps work your way up through the bag all the way to the driver. Then finish with a few short wedge shots where distance control is the focus.

That is a typical maintenance session if you are hitting the ball well and are in full control of your swing.

If this is not you, then you need to be focused on making needed swing changes. Understanding what changes you are trying to make and why is critical to your longer term success.

So, if you are struggling to even hit your wedge or 9 iron with solid contact, don't get focused on trying to hit your driver well at this point.

You simply can't hit a driver consistently well if you can't hit a wedge consistently well. And by well I mean you are able to make consistent, solid contact, control distance and control direction.

However, as I mentioned in the Introduction, you will want to work on fast swings with the driver with no ball on a tee, and then with a ball while not worrying about where it is going.

Obviously, the longer the club, the more difficult to hit it consistently well. Therefore, consistent solid contact with the ball going in the direction you desire is the goal with each club beyond an 8-iron.

Take a break

If you are struggling during the session, take a break and regroup. Don't just continue to beat ball after ball while hitting bad shot after bad shot.

All you are doing is ingraining your swing flaws even more, which will make it more difficult to correct them. The same can be said for your short game and putting practice.

Therefore, take a break, regroup, think about what you are trying to accomplish during the session, then get back to it.

Focused practice

At some point during the session, whether you are on the range or practice green, you want to be HYPER focused.

This is where your skill development will occur more rapidly.

For your range practice, pick one club for the session to focus on. For each shot, pretend you are on the golf course, and go through your entire routine.

Determine what shot you are attempting to hit, if you are trying to work the ball. If you don't have that level of skill yet, pay close attention to your target, alignment, and how close you are able to hit the ball to this target, for about 20 balls.

At the very least, make a mental note about how you performed with each shot. Even better, keep a journal of your session and write down your performance for each shot.

You can also do this for your short game and putting sessions as well.

If you are able to improve your focus during your practice sessions, and hold yourself accountable, you'll definitely see faster improvement.

To assist with your practice, I've provided you with some excel files on the training page.

TRAINING AIDS

Training aids come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Most are just gimmicks that I feel have limited value in the long run.

There are a few, however, that I recommend as seen on the website.

First, particularly if you have limited time to practice, and you have the space, get yourself a golf net and practice mat like you'll find at the driving range.

If you can find time to hit a few balls in the backyard a few days per week, then you can speed up your progress.

Keep in mind, the goal here is to simply stay in touch with the game. Unless you have an adequate launch monitor, you won't get feed back on your ball flight.

Unfortunately, you'll need to spend about \$2,000 for this type of launch monitor. The Skytrak and Flightscope Mevo+ are the most prominent launch monitors in this price range.

One device that I recommend for backyard use, if you struggle to hit a draw, is the Deluxe Plane Trainer developed by Ted Sheftic.



This is a pretty simple device you can pick up for under \$200 and it comes with an instruction DVD to help you understand how to use it.

If you don't have an adequate surface at home for putting, then by all means get yourself a decent putting mat. I like the Big Moss products for this use.

For putting training aids, my favorite is the Edge Rail and Mirror system produced by Eyeline Golf.



This is my favorite device for developing a solid, repetitive putting stroke.

Get yourself an app or software for analyzing your swing on video. There are a few on the market now, with V1 leading the way.

I also use a weighted club for loosening up at home and for performing slow motion practice swings. Golf Gym produces the club that I use.

Aside from these training aids, I don't find much use for them. Alignment sticks might be helpful, but I've always just used a couple golf clubs for that purpose.

Let's talk a bit about managing your game on the golf course.

GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT

One area where many golfers can learn to lower their scores right away is simply by managing themselves better on the golf course.

Obviously, course management for a professional will be a bit different than course management for a golfer who has never broken 90.

A tour pro starts out with a pin sheet for all 18 holes before any round, and then determines how best to attack that pin from the fairway.

Once they understand which angle they want to attack the pin from, they determine which club to hit off the tee that will best put them in the proper position.

Of course, this doesn't always go according to plan.

Some days, the wind is howling, so you have limited control over where your ball ends up.

On days like that, your focus is simply on making good contact, and then dealing with what lies ahead with your next shot.

Where the tour pros typically do a far better job than the amateur is managing themselves after a bad shot.

Most amateur golfers will tend to compound the error of their ways after a bad shot by trying to hit a heroic recovery shot in their effort to imitate Tiger Woods.

If they hit it in the woods, they'll try to curve the ball around a tree, but instead hit the tree, which sends the ball deeper into the woods.

Or perhaps they'll hit a tee shot into long rough and be faced with a carry over water. Instead of laying up, they'll go for it, and dump the shot into the water.

All of these mistakes add up, which is why the scorecards of bad golfers are littered with double, triple and quadruple bogeys, or worse.

With this in mind, it's good to understand your own strengths and weaknesses.

For instance, let's say you typically hit a big slice with your driver and you are a right handed player faced with woods, or some sort of hazard to the right of the fairway.

What most golfers do is aim further left.

Because they typically do this mainly with their upper body, they end up hitting a bigger slice, and still get into trouble.

Instead, use a 3-wood off the tee, pick a spot down the left side of the fairway, get properly aligned and take a normal swing.

The ball will curve less with a 3-wood because it has less loft. Therefore, you may still use your slice swing, but the ball will curve less and you'll still be in play.

You can use this same mindset with shots around the green.

Until you develop the skills that allow you to occasionally pull off the heroic shot, your best bet is to always play the percentages.

If you are faced with a short pitch shot over a bunker with the pin tucked right behind it, just go for the fat part of the green and at least give yourself a chance to make a putt.

Ultimately, if you just learn to think better around the golf course, you'll lower your scores!

Let's move on to the next topic... the mental game.

MENTAL GAME

Many golfers struggle taking their good practice game to the golf course, particularly when they are playing in competition. These types of golfers are referred to as "Ranger Rick." They look great on the range and putting green, but just can't seem to execute on the golf course.

This is due to their inability to play golf under pressure. Just playing with people is enough to make people nervous.

Therefore, there is a lot of focus on the mental game of golf.

Learning to relax and just have fun will take you a long way. But, when you begin to play competitively, things will feel a bit different, and it will be necessary to learn how to adjust your thinking.

The greatest golfers seem to thrive under pressure, while other golfers have a tendency to wilt like a flower in the hot sun.

Playing competitive golf is a process, which I discussed earlier.

When it comes to the golf swing, you have to be able to do it well slow, before you can do it well fast.

You have to be able to hit it well on the range before you can hit it well on the golf course.

You have to be able to play well with friends before you can play well with competitors.

You have to be able to play well in the first round, before you can play well in the final round.

You've got to be able to win your club championship before you can win your county amateur.

And so on and so forth.

For some golfers, they are just naturally able to do this quickly. Other golfers fail to get over a particular hump in the process, even the pros.

With all this said, I am not a huge believer in the need to hire some sort of mental game coach or sports psychologist.

Just as an observation over a lifetime of following this great game, I've noted that golfers who've relied on such help have generally still been unable to get over the hump.

Some golfers simply relish the pressure, while others don't. Some learn how to deal with it, and others don't. It's just human nature.

Most golfers really don't have to worry about all this as they will not bother to play competitive golf.

Ultimately, our goal is to just have fun. Golf is the greatest game ever invented, and each of us can find out what makes it fun for ourselves.

Let's move on to our last topic... Golf Fitness.

GOLF FITNESS

Because the golf industry is always seeking ways to capitalize on golfers propensity to spend big money, a new industry was created in the last twenty years... Golf Fitness.

The Golf Fitness industry basically tells golfers who struggle with their swing that perhaps it is issues with their body that is preventing them from achieving their goals.

The reality is that it's a lack of athleticism that is preventing them from playing good golf.

Yes, some attention can be given to improving mobility, and that MAY allow a golfer to make a swing change.

However, unless you have a significant injury, you do not need improved mobility to learn to hit a draw.

I personally believe that improved fitness can help any golfer, no matter their level of skill.

However, I am not a huge fan of "golf specific" exercise.

I believe that "training" and practice are two distinct activities and should not be combined.

Similar to the golf training aid industry, the golf fitness industry is guilty of producing some ridiculous aids and exercises that will do little for your game.

Performing golf swings on one leg while standing on a bosu ball is just one ridiculous example. All this will do is waste your time.



If you want to have the potential to hit the ball further and have more stamina, then work on your general overall fitness... lift weights, stretch, and do some cardio.

As part of this training, I've produced a complete strength and fitness program that will be of significant benefit to you and your golf game.

Final Thoughts

I wrote this ebook to provide you with a guide to helping you fulfill your golf potential.

Now, you will want to get into the details of my program to learn how to get the most out of your game.

Again, it all starts with the fundamentals. While you don't need a perfect grip or golf swing to be a really good golfer, it's important that you know how your grip and other aspects of your swing can affect your ballflight.

I provide you with a ton of information in this program.

Don't try to apply it all at once. Pick a weakness in your game, and perhaps your fitness, and work to improve those areas.

Keep track of the progress of your game and your fitness with a couple journals.

Always look to improve.

There are two important things to remember...

If you aren't getting better you are getting worse.

If you aren't getting stronger you are getting weaker.

That's just a fact of life.

All we can do is try to slow down the process that aging creates for us.

Lastly, don't turn your golf game into work... it's all about having more fun!

Just remember to never let go of the dream and keep working toward your goals.

To your success!

Scott