

Simple Pro Golf Tips To Help You Become A Master

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This is a short and to the point e-book designed to give you a few simple pro tips in helping you to become a golf master. This won't make you the next Tiger Woods, but it definitely will help you come along your way.

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Build Your Accuracy First, Then Your Distance

What is the easiest shot in golf that all beginners can properly execute? It's the "gimme" putt. As the distance between the cup and the ball becomes greater, the tougher it is to make a shot.

Start Small.

Beginning with this idea in mind, you will see that when honing your golf skills it makes sense to start with smaller swings, then build up to the full swing. This is the reason why a person just learning the sport will learn and teach the body the correct motions in developing an accurate and powerful swing by starting with the short swing. Trying to learn the full swing first makes it much more difficult to learn the correct muscle coordination that the full swing requires.

Learning to hit for distance and then accuracy is putting the cart before the horse. It works the other way around. Ultimately, accuracy will create distance.

Stroke The Ball, Don't Hit It

Often the difference between a strong, powerful swing and a misguided hack is the tendency to hit, rather than stroke, the ball. The difference can be seen when examining a short putt, when it is easy to stroke the ball. Hitting is not an option for a short putt, which makes it the easiest shot in golf. No desire to hit the ball allows a stroking, swinging motion. Perfect this technique for short-distance shots and you will find increasing accuracy and distance with your long shots as well.

Learn To Read To Improve Your Game

Now, after hitting the shot, you must read it correctly. You must be in a balanced finish to read it properly, so you can check your alignment in case the shot is off line. As you stand in a perfectly balanced finish and watch your ball, ask yourself: how does my balance feel, how was the brush, how was the path, was the club face in the correct position, and did I hit it in the center of the club face? Then, either focus more on what is missing, or play it and go fix it after the round. You will only be able to accomplish 8 to 10 perfect shots per round, so be mentally prepared!

Perfecting Your Swing Through

One very effective drill in perfecting your swing is to let the ball 'get in your way' as you swing toward the target. In other words, you let the ball get hit because it was sitting there in the way of your swing, not because you were swinging at it.

This drill shows why many people have better practice swings than actual swings where a ball is involved. Without a ball it is easier to swing through, yet this is the very motion that is needed when perfecting your swing.

A key in helping correct this tendency is to learn how to separate the optical eye from the 'mind's eye'. The optical eye sees where the ball is sitting, while the mind's eye sees the ball sailing toward its target. Remember, the ball is not the target, so the key is to avoid being tricked by your optical eye. Instead, let your mind's eye swing to your target, which is the fairway or the green.

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This is not to say that you don't look at the ball at all, but rather to stress that there is a great difference between looking at the ball and concentrating on it.

Check The Size Of The Grips On Your Clubs

In my 28 years of teaching students of all levels, I have found that making the needed adjustments concerning grip type and grip size gives you the best chance of realizing improvement very quickly. If the grip is too small and slippery, you will tend to hold on much too tight, creating a host of swing problems. If using what are considered standard size grips by most manufacturers, chances are their grips are too small. Be on the lookout for this ongoing potential for trouble.

Understanding Golf Swing Alignment

Poor alignment is the single most destructive area for players of all levels, when it comes to taking the game from the practice range to the golf course. This means alignment is extremely important for you as a beginner - so don't put it on "the back burner" of your learning priorities. There are two main elements to be considered when lining up a golf shot. First and foremost is the target line (the line that the golf club is actually on). Secondly - the stance line, also known as the body line. Both are important, but the stance line must always be determined first by the target line if the stance line is to have any true meaning.

The 50/50 Feeling To Good Balance

The title of this teaching tip may sound somewhat contradictory, so allow me to explain.

Canadian golf legend George Knudson dedicated an entire instructional booklet on the importance of good balance. All good players and top instructors agree that without balance throughout the swing (both physical and emotional) you have no chance of producing good shots consistently.

For good static balance, I suggest feeling your body weight is 50/50 back to front (heel to toe), and 50/50 side to side (front foot to back foot). Assuming you have a correct spine angle at address, your weight back to front will tend to favor the balls of your feet - which is why you need not over emphasize this sensation. Conversely, if you over emphasize weight on your heels, you may lose your spine angle, and this will throw you out of balance to the rear.

The 50/50 feeling side to side is very easy to achieve, because it is, indeed, "just a feeling." In reality, if you have your upper body positioned properly behind the ball, your body weight will naturally follow, meaning your weight will favor your back foot.

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Head Movement During The Golf Swing

Does the head stay down and still? NO. If you look at the great players in the game, most have a slight movement of their head going back. It certainly varies from player to player, but it's still present in one form or another. Players like Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods have quite a noticeable head movement on the back swing (especially with their drivers). Other players, like Steve Elkington and Tom Purtzer, hold theirs a bit more stationary.

What's important to note with head movement, just as in the weight shift, is that it's not something you should think of. It is simply just a reaction to what you do with the golf club. When a golfer starts thinking of shifting their head a little bit here, and a little bit there, there is big time trouble awaiting.

Here is the proper head sequence?

On the back swing you have a little natural weight shift. Consequently, you have a little natural head move. This is perfectly O.K. This is the same move that you would make if you were to throw a rock into a lake. You would never think of anything other than the rock and the lake, but your weight and head would shift automatically. If you throw it 2 feet, you don't have any movement. But if you throw it 200 feet, there will be a more noticeable move.

On the downswing is where the key is. **YOUR HEAD MUST REMAIN BEHIND THE BALL AT IMPACT.** If you look at a face-on picture of any good player in the history of the game, they all have their head behind the ball at impact. You can even see in players like Nick Faldo and Greg Norman, that they actually move their head to the right to start the downswing. This just creates a more powerful, underneath, impact position. If you get your head moving laterally left **BEFORE** you strike the ball, you basically have no chance. You will be way steep, way over the top, and way far from hitting a good shot!

Post impact, your head will follow the rest of your weight to the left side. You don't want to hang back through the entire shot and snap your spine in half, or at least finish in a reverse-C.

Just remember that a good impact position will make it easier for this natural head movement to happen.

The Bottom Line? With regards to head movement, the idea is to hardly ever think about it (maybe to hold it still to start your downswing is okay). Just try to let it take its natural course.

Also, keep in mind to not freak out if you see it move slightly on the back swing, because Tiger Woods does it also. As I've said, if it's good enough for Tiger, chances are that it will be good enough for you, too.

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Choosing The Right Golf Balls

There is nothing worse for golfers than wasting a good swing. Maybe it was a perfect drive on the range right before tee off. Maybe it was that perfect practice swing. Or maybe, just maybe, you wasted a good swing because your golf ball was not suited for the situation, or was piece of junk altogether.

I see far too many instances where a player uses the wrong type of ball. They might have the Great Big Bertha, some space age composite irons, or even the fancy wing-tipped shoes, but if the golf ball does not suit the player or the circumstance, then the overall outcome of the shot will be adversely affected.

There are essentially three types of balls: balata, two-piece, or a combination of both. Basically, there are two things to consider when choosing the correct ball:

1. What are you looking for?

Are you a low handicap looking for ultimate spin and control? If so, choose a balata. This is essentially just a softer ball, which has a softer cover and allows for more spin. This is what Tiger and a lot of the big boys play (They are also quite a bit more expensive). If you are a higher handicap, you will be looking more for distance and durability. This is where a good two-piece ball will be best. This ball has a harder cover, and hence creates less backspin, which allows for you to hit it farther.

2. The elements?

It's important to look at things like the weather and the course conditions when choosing a ball. If, say, the course has been deluged with rain, then you will need a ball that will travel farther and produces less spin. If you are playing on a rock hard, sun-scorched track, choose something softer that will land soft and spin.

Also, keep in mind things like the temperature. If it's cold out, the ball will not compress as much, so you would want to play a 90-compression. (there are two compressions for men, 90 and 100.) Vice-versa if it's hot out.

Here are my recommendations for golf balls:

- Balata - Maxfli HT or Titleist Professional
- Half balata, half two piece - Precept EV Extra Spin or Titleist HP2 Tour
- Two-piece - Maxfli MD or Wilson Staff TC2

There are more and more pros nowadays going from the pure balata to the half-and-half ball. It's a great type of ball and something I recommend for any playing ability.

Remember, you can cut off a few strokes per round by doing nothing more than choosing the correct ball. It's a good idea to keep a few of each in your bag and practice with them. Learn how they feel. See how you like them. Figure out which one to use so you can get an edge on your playing partners even before you tee off.

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Where Should You Position The Golf Ball

This is a personal preference area. Acceptable ball position is somewhere between the middle of your stance and heel of target side foot, with your hands slightly touching your target side leg to a hand-thumb out from your leg at address. To find your best spot, hit a ball from all 4 corners of the ball box and gradually adjust until you optimize ball contact and initial direction. Some players find this spot with every club. I think it's more consistent to have one spot for all clubs and change your spine angle and width of stance to accommodate the club you are swinging. Obviously, you can affect direction and trajectory by adjusting the front to back parameter. Front is higher trajectory and possibly in the direction of the front foot. Back is lower trajectory and possibly in the direction of the back foot. I say possibly because you could change your swing path if you wanted to. After all, you can do whatever you want. Understand that a slight realigning (positioning) of your body or club face may be easier to do.

Vary Your Practice Shots

Whenever you practice, you should spend some time playing with your ball flight. Experiment with all the possibilities. Spin the ball left and right, a little and a lot.

Then make the ball go high and low, a little and a lot. Practice this routine with all of your clubs. As you are able to do more with your ball flight, you will lower your score and have more fun.

Hip Movement During The Swing

The hips play a very important role in the golf swing. The problem is that most people do not understand the correct motion that they must make. The correct move is NOT a simple turn of the hips from the top of the swing, as many would believe.

In fact, the correct move is a slight lateral shift, or "bump", and then a turn. If you look at players like Tiger Woods and Nick Faldo, you will see a perfect example of this. These guys don't just turn their hips away from the top. Instead, their weight shifts laterally to the left side, which drops everything (arms and shoulders) into the slot. From there, they can just turn and fire through the ball as hard as they want.

Most over the top slicers do just the opposite of what Tiger and Nick do. They turn, instead of shifting, then turning. When they turn, their right arm and shoulder throw over the top of the plane.

Here is a checklist for you to develop the correct hip movement:

1. From the top, feel that you "bump" your hips laterally and slightly out to the right (out to right field). This will drop your arms into the inside slot, from where you can attack the ball.
2. Once you achieve that nice inside position, you are home free! It's now just a matter of turning your hips and firing through the ball aggressively.

Keep in mind not to shift your upper body along with your hips. It's simply a lower body shift.

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Thoughts On Some Common Trouble Shots

Trouble Shots

There are many types of trouble shots.

Here are a few suggestions to cover the most common ones.

Deep Rough

Long grass has the effect of closing the face of the club and decreasing the loft of the club. For this reason, the player should use a more lofted club than if the ball were in the fairway. If a player has a long distance left, the first consideration should be getting the ball out of the rough. Use of lofted fairway woods #5, #6, #7 is advisable in this situation. The long grass will decrease the loft of these clubs and the ball will actually go the distance of the less lofted fairway woods. Around the green, the player must again use a more lofted club. These types of shots are custom made for a wedge or a 9-iron. The effect of the long green will once again decrease the loft of the club. The ball will therefore fly lower and run more than if it were in the fairway. Remember, allow the loft of the club to lift the ball out of the rough!

Side hill, Downhill & Uphill Lies

Of course, few golf courses are flat. Here are some suggestions for playing hilly lies.

Take a practice swing and note where the club is striking the ground. If the club is striking the ground nearer the back foot, move the ball back in your stance; if the club is striking the ground nearer the front foot, move the ball forward in your stance. This system is the most accurate system to determine where the ball should be placed in the stance. Seldom does a player have a purely side hill or uphill lie. This system takes all the factors into account as the practice swing is the forerunner to the actual shot.

The general of thumb is to position the ball in the stance nearer the higher foot on the downhill lies, and about center on the uphill lies. On side hill lies, position the ball left center (as you normally would). If the ball is above your feet on the side hill lie, you will normally hit the ball straight or pull it to the left. If the ball is below your feet, most players will actually pull the ball to the left because their leg action will slow down as they try to maintain their balance.

The best system for determining which way the ball will travel for you on side hill lies is to try ten practice balls from each side hill position and see what really happens.

How to Get Out of Trouble

So often we get into trouble and compound our difficulties by trying to play a miracle shot to get out. The best approach is to play the shot you know you can play, not the shot Arnold Palmer would be dubious about. When hitting over a tree, take one club extra. If you think you can clear the tree with a 7-iron, take an 8 or 9 iron. If you think a 5-iron will just stay under those branches, hit a 4 or 3 iron. This approach simply gives the player the benefit of the doubt and will take pressure off your shot. It also puts the percentages on your side. This is the chess side of golf that is as important to master as hitting the ball well.

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Some Thoughts on Putting

Putting is a matter of combining the distance of the putt and the direction of the putt. For the most part, the direction will be fairly automatic. Rolling the ball approximately on line is fairly automatic for even the newest golfers, but hitting the ball the right distance is an acquired talent that takes time and practice. When making a practice stroke, the player should concentrate on how hard the putt must be hit and then duplicate that stroke when making the actual putt. "Concentration" on distance rather than direction will result in rolling those long ones up for a "gimme".

When you have a short putt of a few feet that you certainly expect to make, roll the ball firmly enough to reach the back of the cup. Nothing is more frustrating than leaving a 3 or 4-foot putt short. Making the putt to the back of the hole will do three things:

- Eliminate or lessen the amount of "break".
- Putting greens are not perfect. If the putt has speed, little imperfection such as pebbles or sand will have less influence on the roll of the putt.
- Reduce the chances of leaving the putt short.

Practice

For practice to be productive we must first analyze what aspects of our game need the most work. This can be done best by counting how many drives hit the fairway, how many fairway wood shots reach their target, how many iron shots hit the green, how many putts we use per round, etc... After realistically determining what should be worked on, seek a Golf Professional to make necessary corrections. The watchful eye of a trained Pro can save time, and more importantly, strokes.

All practice should have a goal, whether it is trying to make a larger percentage of 10-foot putt or straightening out an erratic driver. Chart your progress on a notepad. This type of organization will prevent you from following the wrong path.

A good practice drill is the "Toe-up Toe-up Drill". Using a lofted short iron, make half swings with the hands swinging about waist high. On this length back swing, the toe of the club should also point up, and on the forward swing the toe of the club should also point up. A normal weight transfer will allow you to release your back foot so the heel is off the ground and you're balancing on your toe. If the toe of the club is not "up" on the back swing and follow through, look for corrections starting with the grip and then alignment.

We practice to improve both our score and our enjoyment. This acquires the ability to change, and most importantly, "to think". Limit the time of your practice sessions to the time you can be strong mentally and physically. Many good practice sessions do not produce the result they should because the player hit too many practice balls, got tired, and fell back into old bad habits.

Instruction and information combined with intelligent practice are the ingredients to a better golf game!

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Proper Golf Equipment Plays A Large Role

As a golfer today, you are besieged by advertising campaigns to buy the newest golf equipment. Longer distance golf balls, massive driver heads, and longer shafts all create mass confusion as to what is best for you. The shaft is the heart of the golf club and is one of the six important club specifications. Each golfer has his or her own swing characteristics. You may have a favorite club in your set, a club that you hit really well and it just FEELS GOOD!

The chances are excellent that you are dealing with a club that is close to your frequency. During a custom club fitting session, you will swing several clubs with different shaft frequencies, lengths, lie angles, materials, grip sizes, and grip materials. Proper club fitting can give you the consistency and distance you've been looking for. Once these club specifications are matched to your swing, you will experience maximum performance. With the right equipment, your game will improve dramatically, your handicap will be driven down, and you will enjoy the game more.

The Coach Is Always Right

There are so many opinions about how to play the game because a lot of it is personal preference. When you're first learning, you'll get a lot of information about a lot of preferences from many sources. This can be very confusing, especially if you still don't have a solid understanding of the laws and principles pertaining to the game of golf. The Golf Business is a billion dollar industry of misinformation!

To avoid this confusion, make a commitment to follow your instructor's recommendations until you feel you are well grounded in the basics which takes very little time. I have two rules regarding coaching golfers:

Rule Number 1: The coach is always right.

Rule Number 2: If the coach is wrong, reread rule Number 1.

"He was never defeated by the vicissitudes of the game."

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