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Editor of Australian Golf Digest *magazine*

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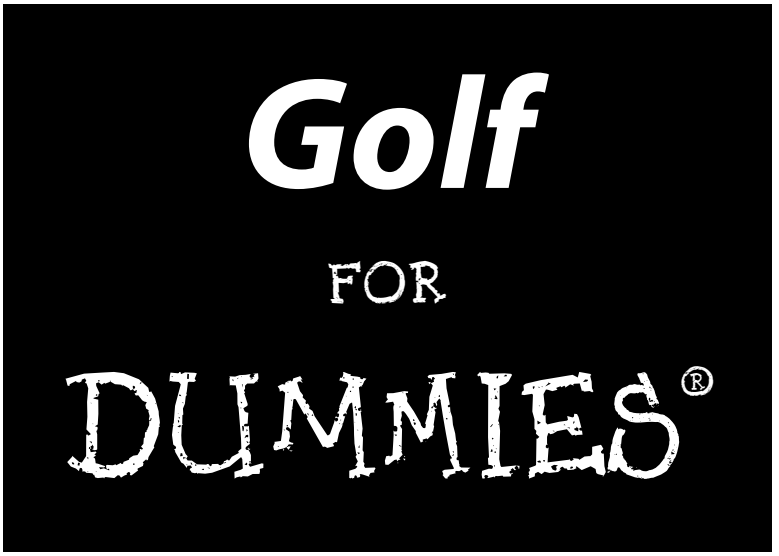

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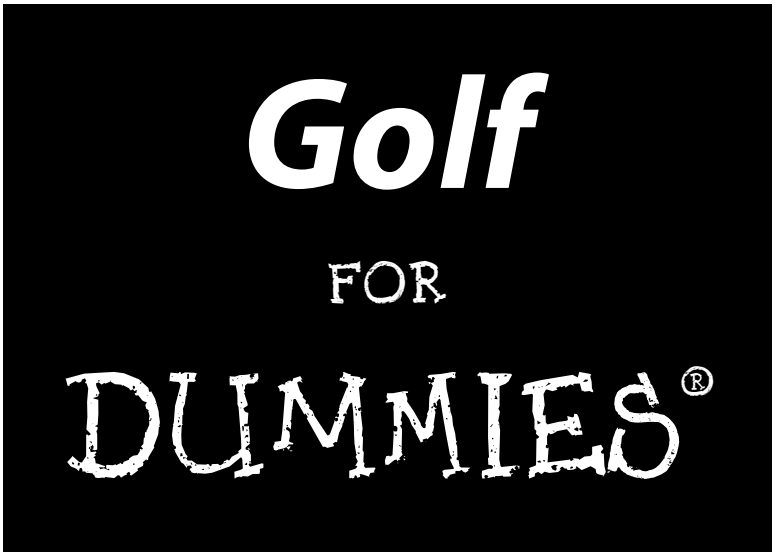

by Gary McCord & Steve Keipert

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About the Authors

'Life is full of ups and downs, and it wouldn't be fun any other way.' Living by this optimistic philosophy, **Gary McCord** persisted through years of mediocrity before finding success. An outstanding player, television announcer, instructor, author, speaker and even movie actor, he has become a golf celebrity.

McCord is well known for enduring 23 years and 422 tournaments on the PGA Tour without nabbing a single victory. A man of good humour, he sported a 'NO WINS' licence plate for years to poke fun at his less-than-glamorous work as a professional golfer.

'Trapped in the headlights of bankruptcy', as he liked to put it, McCord pursued other avenues in golf and found himself launching a broadcasting career. He scored big when a CBS Sports executive tossed him a headset and asked him to do golf commentary — giving him only 15 minutes to prepare. McCord jumped in with no fear and impressed CBS with his performance. Twenty-five years later, he's still providing colourful commentary for CBS golf events. Fans and critics praise him for his knowledgeable perspective, refreshing humour and sometimes irreverent wit towards a game known for taking itself too seriously.

Broadcasting changed his perspective on golf. Realising that a better understanding of the golf swing would help his TV work, McCord studied the swing for two years. He emerged with knowledge, confidence and an improved golf game.

McCord's own golf really came together as he began his career on the Champions Tour after his 50th birthday. In 1999, his first full season on that tour, he won two events — the Toshiba Senior Classic and the Ingersoll-Rand Senior Tour Championship — to finish 17th on the official money list with nearly $1 million in prize money. Since then, he has often finished in the top 30 on the money list while playing a limited schedule of 10 to 15 events per year.

When he isn't broadcasting or playing golf, McCord keeps busy with myriad other projects. He portrayed himself in and served as technical director for the golf movie *Tin Cup*, starring Kevin Costner, Rene Russo and Don Johnson. He's also a writer. In addition to writing *Golf For Dummies*, Gary's the author of a collection of essays about his life on tour, *Just a Range Ball in a Box of Titleists*. His bestselling *Golf For Dummies* was released in DVD form in 2004.

McCord and his friend and CBS Sports colleague David Feherty became known to millions of golf fans and gamers as the voices of EA Sports' Tiger Woods PGA Tour video games. McCord also instructs and consults with more than 20 PGA Tour players.

Gary brings a sense of fun to everything he does and never takes himself too seriously. He and his wife, Diane, share the 'ups and downs' of a busy life together at their homes in Scottsdale and Denver.

Late one afternoon in February 1987, a 10-year-old **Steve Keipert**, and his father, strolled onto North Turramurra Golf Course in northern Sydney and within a casual nine holes sparked an obsession with golf that grew with every round and each passing year.

Steve has never and will never reach the on-course feats of his co-author Gary McCord, but his passion for the game and knowledge of the biggest events and leading players is first rate. A university-educated journalist who entered the golf media more than a decade ago, Keipert's first involvement with *Australian Golf Digest* came in 1997 as a final-year journalism student seeking work experience.

Three years later he joined the editorial staff of Australia's leading golf magazine and in 2004 assumed the role of editor, a position he still holds today. While his lowest handicap is six and today he remains mired in the good-but-not-great level of low-80s scores, Steve's love for golf has never waned.

Steve lives with his wife and two young daughters in Sydney.

Dedication

Gary dedicates this book to spike marks, the wind just came up from the other direction, bad bounces, wrong yardage, rising barometric pressure, solar storms, dirt got in my eyes, yin and yang, the big bang theory, Brownian motion, dark energy, escape velocity, entropy, Newton's laws of motion and a bad caddie. All the things we golfers can blame our erratic play on instead of ourselves, providing peace of mind in the unstable environment of this maniacal endeavour.

Steve dedicates this book to Claire, Ashleigh and Jillian, whose smiling faces make even the worst round acceptable. Also to my dad, who started me off in this mad, mad game all those years ago and my mum, who kept me at it once the 'golf bug' had taken hold.

Authors' Acknowledgments

Gary would like to acknowledge the game itself, golf. It's a clever game worthy of perspective. I'm not astute enough to unravel it all, but if you can get a good author, bingo, the game is easy. Thanks Kevin Cook for the time and effort he put into this edition.

To my wife Diane, my mom Ruth, my sister Karen and her late husband Chris, my daughter Krista and her husband Mike, and my four granddaughters Breanne, Kayla, Jenae and Terra: See what you can do with spell check!

And many thanks to the great golf team Wiley put together: Acquisitions Editor Stacy Kennedy; Senior Project Editor Chrissy Guthrie; Copy Editor Megan Knoll; photographers Erick Rasco and Matt Bowen; models Clayton Allen, Robin Anderson, Robert Gaier and Swati Gunale; and Technical Editor Emily Hallberg.

Steve would like to say a huge thank you to all the professional and amateur golf bodies, both state based and national, in Australia and New Zealand. Special thanks to Catherine Spedding, Hannah Bennett and Rebecca Crisp at John Wiley & Sons Australia for their support, encouragement and advice throughout the editing and adaptation process.

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Foreword

Golf has been around for centuries. It is a complicated and intriguing game that has us all baffled and mesmerised at times. If you're reading this foreword you're obviously interested in buying a book that can help you either start playing golf or perhaps get better. *Golf For Dummies* can help.

Growing up in the small country town of Goulburn in New South Wales, I had a hand at every sport there was. At the age of 11, I headed down to our local golf course, Tully Park, which just so happened to be about 150 metres from where I lived. It was one of the only games that I hadn't tried as a kid, so I thought, 'why not give it a go?' After a couple of airswings and a few shots hit along the ground I started to hit a few sweetly and they travelled for seemingly miles in the air. I thought, 'this is a cool game'.

My main focus at that time was hockey and Rugby league, but at 14 years of age golf was starting to take a priority. My handicap started at 32 and in no time had come down to single figures. With the tuition from my club pro and a job after school in the golf shop I narrowed my handicap to 1 by the time I was 16. Not long after I won the Senior and Junior district Champion of Champions in Canberra and from there I knew golf was going to be my career path.

Many instructional books have been written over the years but I've never come across a more informative, easy-to-read and fun book than *Golf For Dummies*. It covers absolutely everything you need to know about this wonderful game, from playing with a professional, to the planning strategy of a course, to which courses you should play.

From starting out to playing in a pro-am with a professional, *Golf For Dummies* covers every aspect of golf and I know that you will keep this book proudly on the coffee table for visitors to pick up and read.

Great golfing,

Brett Ogle
Australian golf champion

Introduction: Should I yell 'Fore!' or 'Four!'?

It's hard to believe this is the second Australian and NZ edition of *Golf For Dummies*! If it's the first golf book you've ever held in your hands, don't worry. We've read more of them than we can count and this one's a particular favourite. To bring you this edition we've gone back through everything we wrote in the first edition, updating some material, writing a bunch more to keep up with this fast-changing game, and making everything even clearer and easier to follow.

Not to mention funnier!

Because golf, like life itself, can be hard, but must be enjoyed. Please remember that as you begin your adventure in the most maddening and wondrous game of all: Golf is fun. And the fun starts here.

About This Book

Although Gary's buddies on the professional tours will probably read this book just to see if he can write a coherent sentence, we like to think that we have something to offer golfers at every level, even the pros. The guys Gary grew up with at San Luis Rey Golf Course in Southern California will check out *Golf For Dummies* to see whether he's used any of their funniest lines. And we hope that the title piques the interest of many others who have never played the game.

This is no ordinary golf instruction book. Most of the golf books you'll find in your local bookstore (or, increasingly, online) are written by professional players or teachers. As such, they focus solely on the golf swing. *Golf For Dummies* covers a lot more than the swing. This book ought to be the only one you need as you develop a golf dependency. (Feel free to consult a doctor when you feel the first symptoms coming on — grinding your teeth, talking to yourself after missing a shot, punching the air after making one. These are the warning signs. *But remember:* This book is cheaper than a visit to the doctor.)

Having said all that, we're assuming that you have dabbled with golf and would like to get better. In our experience, most people give golf a try before they seek instruction. It must be an ego thing, kind of like those people who don't like to ask for directions when they get lost because they feel that it's an admission of failure. If that's you, then think of us as your personal GPS: Your Golfer Positioning System.

Golf For Dummies will put you on track to becoming not just someone who can hit a golf ball, but a real golfer. There's a big difference between the two, as you'll soon discover.

Conventions Used in This Book

When this book was printed, some web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that we haven't put in any extra characters (like hyphens) to indicate the break. When using one of these web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending that the line break doesn't exist.

What You Don't Have to Read

We've put this book together with your convenience in mind. Nice, huh? What that means is simple:

- When you see the Technical Stuff icon (shown later in this Introduction), you can skip that text if you want. It's not essential to understanding the rest of the book.
- The same goes for sidebars, which are scattered through the book, printed on grey backgrounds. Sidebars are extra added attractions. We've tried to make them fun and informative, but they aren't crucial to the rest of the book. Feel free to skip over them — you won't hurt our feelings.

Our Crazy Assumptions

Because you picked up this book, we assume that you're interested in golf. We also assume that you're not already a great golfer, or else you'd be out there making millions on tour. Beyond that, we're going to figure that you're a little like Gary was when he became a professional golfer.

When Gary started out on the United States PGA Tour in 1974, he was full of fight and enthusiasm but lacked a basic knowledge of golf-swing mechanics. A warm panic would start to rise in him about ten minutes before he was due to tee off. Gary's old friends Doubt and Dread would join him at the first tee. His brain would be racing, trying to figure out what *swing thought* (that one aspect of the swing that you meditate on to keep focused) to use that day. Most of the time, he'd be left with a thought like, 'Keep the left elbow towards magnetic north on the downswing'. Usually, that action resulted in a silly-looking slice into uncharted territory.

Gary swung the club that way for most of his career. So he knows what it's like to play without knowledge or a solid foundation. Gary's a lot happier — and having a lot more fun — now that he knows what he's doing.

The reason he's qualified to help you is that he's made a serious effort to become a student of the game. When Gary started working on golf telecasts for CBS, he didn't know much about the inner workings of the swing. But his new job forced him to learn. Gary's odyssey led him to seek advice from some of the world's greatest teachers.

One of them was Mac O'Grady, a golfer Gary grew up with in Southern California. O'Grady had researched his method with passion since 1983. The result was a swing model that worked. Gary was lucky to study under O'Grady and can't thank him enough. But we don't cover Mac's model in this book; it's for advanced golfers. We're gonna stick to basics.

How This Book Is Organised

Golf For Dummies will lead you through the process of becoming a golfer. Beginners need many questions answered as they take on the game. We've organised this book so that you take those steps one at a time and can flick back to them any time for quick reference. May this journey be a pleasant one!

Part 1: Welcome To a Mad Great Game

Where do I play and what's the course record? Wait a minute! First you need to know what this game is about. You need clubs. You need to know how to *swing* those clubs. You may want to take a lesson to see whether you like the game, then find golf clubs that fit you. In this part, we show you how to choose your clubs and give you some tips on the questions to ask before

you make your purchase. Then we give you some ideas about what kind of golf courses to play. Picking up golf is a never-ending process of discovery and it starts right here.

Part II: Getting Into the Swing

This part gets right to the point: We give you a close look at the workings of the golf swing and help with your mental preparation. You also get a good look at the short game, where most scoring takes place. We show you how to blast your way out of bunkers and how to develop a sound putting stroke.

Part III: Common Faults and Easy Fixes

In this part we tackle the tough shots and help you deal with bad luck and bad weather. You'll develop many faults during your golfing life and this part tells you how to fix most of them. You took a great first step by buying this book.

Part IV: Taking Your Game Public

In this part, you get the final touches of your education as a golfer. You learn how the rules were established, how to conduct yourself on the golf course and the fine art of betting. You even get the do's and don'ts of golf-course etiquette. After you read this part, you'll be able to walk onto any golf course and look like you know what you're doing. Because you *will* know what you're doing.

Part V: How To Be a Smart Golf Consumer

A sad fact of life is that you can't always be out on the course. In this part, we show you how to max out a day as a spectator and how to tap into the best of golf on TV and online.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

This part contains the best of, the most memorable — and some stuff that won't mean much to anybody except us. We just thought you'd enjoy knowing about it.

Part VII: Appendixes

Golfers have a language all their own. Appendix A lists the terms you'll want to add to your vocabulary. Appendix B lists some of the more popular golf organisations, products and resources, along with a select list of schools in Australia and New Zealand.

Icons Used in This Book

As we guide you through this maze of golf wit and wisdom, you'll spot several handy road signs. Look for these friendly icons; they point you towards valuable advice and hazards to watch out for.

Duck! This is an awareness alert. Pay attention.

This icon marks golf hazards to avoid. Be careful!

This icon flags quick, easy ways to improve your game.

Do this or Gary will never speak to you again.

Talk like this and golfers will understand you.

This might make your head spin; take two aspirin and get plenty of rest.

This icon flags information that's important enough to repeat.

Where to Go from Here

Feel free to flick through this book, picking your spots. It isn't designed to be read like a novel from cover to cover. If you're a complete novice, you might take a look at Appendix A first — get comfortable with the language. If you're a little more advanced and need help with a specific aspect of your game or swing, you can find that information in Chapters 6 through 10. The rest of the book will help you make that vital jump from 'golf novice' to 'real golfer'.

As Gary's former boss at CBS, Frank Chirkinian, said, 'Golf is not a game; it's a way of life. If it was a game, someone would have figured it out by now.'

Frank was right. But you *can* figure out how to get started in golf the right way and how to enjoy the game. That's what this book is for.

Part I

Welcome to a Mad Great Game

'Beware Birnam Wood, MacBeth.. especially the seventh hole, it has a small tricky green protected by a bunker to the front left.'

In this part . . .

This part explores the basics of golf: Why would anyone play such a crazy game? How did golf begin? What makes the sport special? In this part of the book, we describe a typical golf course. We also show you how to buy clubs and accessories that will make you look like a pro. We discuss how to get into physical shape for good golf, where to take lessons and how best to survive the lesson tee. In this part, you get a whirlwind tour, from the driving range all the way up to a full 18-hole course — including the penthouse of golf, the private country club.

Get ready; it's time to tee it up!

Chapter 1

Why Play Golf?

In This Chapter

- Knowing the point of the game
- Learning how golf began
- Answering the question 'What makes golf special?'
- Looking at a typical course
- Becoming a 'real' golfer
- Being bitten by the golf bug

Golf is simple. You've got clubs and a ball. You have to hit the ball into a series of holes laid out in the middle of a large, grassy field. After you finish the 18th hole, you may want to go to the clubhouse bar and tell lies about your on-course feats to anyone you didn't play with that day. But if you're like most golfers, you'll play the game for much more than the chance to impress gullible strangers. You'll play for relaxation, companionship and a chance to enjoy the great outdoors. Of course, there are some hazards out there. The game isn't always straightforward.

The Point of the Game

Simply stated, the goal of golf is to get the ball into each of 18 holes in succession with the fewest number of shots, using no more than 14 clubs. After you hit the ball into all the holes, you add up your scores from all the holes. The lower your total score, the better. That's it.

The game's charm lies in the journey. As you play, you'll find there are countless ways to get the ball into the hole in as few strokes as possible. Many outside stimuli — and many more inside your head — make this one of the most interesting, maddening, thrilling and just plain *fun* endeavours you'll ever find.

The best advice we can give you is to relax. Stay calm, make prudent decisions and never hit a shot while contemplating other matters. Golf should be played with complete concentration and no ego. The game tempts

you to try feats of derring-do. To play your best, you must judge your talents and abilities honestly. You alone determine your success or failure: Should you try to make it over the water and go for the green that's 220 metres away? Or play it safe?

Figure 1-1 shows a smart course of action. You start at the tee and hit your drive to Point A. From there, it's 220 metres to the green, with a watery grave lurking to the left. So you lay up to Point B and go from there to the green via C. This approach won't always work — you might *aim* for Point B and still yank your second shot into the pond — but it's the smart play. And that's the key to good golf.

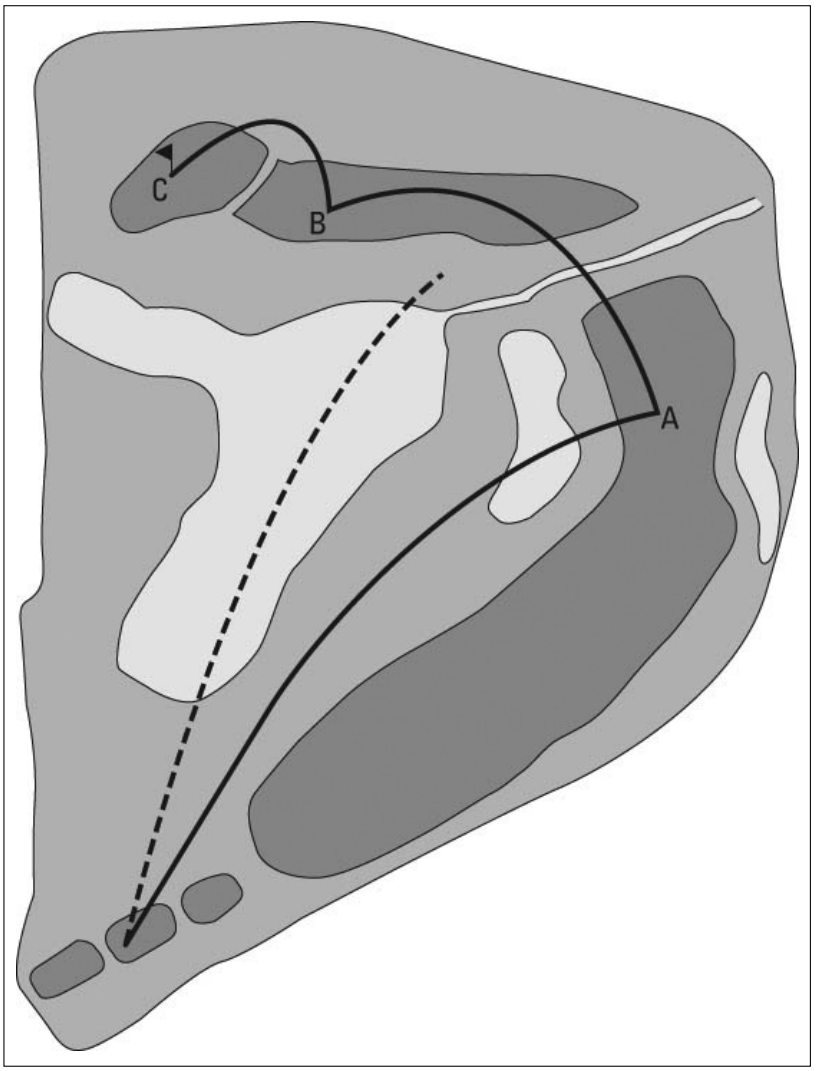

Figure 1-1: Don't get greedy — play the game one step at a time.

Score is everything. As you see in Chapters 8, 9, and 10, the most pivotal shots occur within 100 metres of the hole. If you can save strokes there, your score will be lower than that of the player whose sole purpose in life is to crush the ball as far as possible. So practise your putting, sand play and chip shots twice as much as your driving. Your hard work will pay off and your friends will be the ones dipping into their wallets.

How It All Began

The game dates back to medieval Scotland — on the gloomy, misty east coast of the kingdom of Fife, where Macbeth ruled in the 11th century. Some historians say golf began when Scottish shepherds used their long, wooden crooks to knock rocks at rabbit holes. Their hobby became so habit-forming that the Scots of later centuries played 'gowf' instead of practising their archery.

The first printed reference to golf came in 1457, when Scotland's King James II banned 'gowf' so that his subjects could concentrate on their archery — the better to beat the hated English on the battlefield. Golf was outlawed until 1501. After that James's descendants, including his great-great-granddaughter Mary, Queen of Scots, embraced the game. (The original golf widow, she scandalised Britain by playing golf in the days after her husband, Lord Darnley, was murdered.)

The wooden golf balls of Queen Mary's day gave way to 'featheries' — leather pouches stuffed with goose feathers — and then 'gutty' balls made from gutta-percha rubber imported into Scotland from Malaysia in the 1850s. In 1860 one of the best Scottish golfers, Tom Morris of St Andrews, helped organise the first Open Championship, the tournament that launched modern professional golf. Scottish pros emigrated to the United States, introduced Americans to the game and the rest is history. And frustration. And fun.

Why Golf Is Unique

You've probably heard that business leaders are constantly making huge deals on the course, advancing their careers. Well, 'constantly' may be an overstatement — business leaders, like other players, spend much of their time on the course looking for wayward golf balls. But it's true that golf can help you climb the corporate ladder. That's one reason to play.

And it's about the 167th-most-important reason. More important reasons include spending time with friends, staying in shape and enjoying some of the most beautiful scenery you'll ever see. (All tennis courts are pretty much the same, but each golf course is different from every other and many are designed to show off their gorgeous settings.) Golf is a physical *and* mental challenge — it tests your skill and your will.

Golf is also a game for a lifetime. Your friends may play football and cricket in high school, but how many are still scoring tries or hitting boundaries when they're 30 or 40 or 60 years old?

The most important reason to play, though, is that golf is magic. It's maddening, frustrating, crazy — and totally addictive. Once golf becomes part of your life, you can barely imagine life without it.

Golf is also a famously *difficult* game. As we see it, two main reasons exist for this:

- The ball doesn't move on its own.
- You have, on average, about three minutes between shots.

In other words, you don't react to the ball as you do in most sports. A cricket ball gets bowled, hit and spat on. A football gets passed, kicked, and run up and down the field. A basketball gets shot, rebounded and dribbled all over the place. But a golf ball just sits there, daring you not to lose it.

In most sports, you have only an instant to react to the action — your natural athleticism takes over and you move to the ball. In golf, you get far too long to think about what you're doing. Thinking too much can strangle the soul and warp the mind.

Maybe golf would be easier if the ball moved and you were on skates. Then you could stop worrying and *react*.

But if it were easy it wouldn't be golf, would it?

What You'll Find on a Typical Course

Most golf courses have 18 holes, although a few, usually because of a lack of money or land, have only nine. Courses beside the sea are called *links*, in honour of the parts of Scotland where the game began. (They were the link between beach and farmland.) The *19th hole* is golf speak for the clubhouse bar — the place where you can reflect on your game over a refreshing beverage of your choice. (See Appendix A for the lowdown on golf jargon.)

How long is a typical golf course? Most are between 5,500 and 7,000 metres. A few monsters are longer, but leave those courses to the pros you see on TV. Start at the low end of that scale and work your way up.

Every hole you play will be a par-3, a par-4 or a par-5. (Par-2s are for mini-golf courses; the exceedingly rare par-6s tend to be gimmicks.) *Par* is the number of strokes a competent golfer should take to play a particular hole. For example, on a par-5 hole, a regulation par might consist of a drive, two more full swings and two putts. Two putts is the standard on every green.

Three putts is too many. One putt is a bonus. The bottom line is that in a perfect round of par golf, half the allocated strokes should be taken on the greens. That premise makes putting crucial. (We talk about how to putt in Chapter 8.)

Obviously, a par-5 is longer than a par-4 (two full swings, two putts), which in turn is longer than a par-3 (one full swing, two putts). With rare exceptions, par-3s are from 90 to 230 metres in length; par-4s are from 231 to 440 metres long, barring severe topography; and par-5s are from 441 to 630 metres.

Many courses have a total par of 72, consisting of ten par-4s (40), four par-3s (12) and four par-5s (20). But you can find golf courses with total pars of anywhere from 62 to 74. Almost anything goes. Table 1-1 lists the distances that determine par on a hole, for men and women. It's worth noting that these guidelines don't always refer to precise distances, but to what the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews and the United States Golf Association call a hole's 'effective playing length'. A 420-metre hole that went straight uphill, for example, could be a par-5 for men.

Table 1-1 Regulation Distances

	Women	***Men***
Par-3	190 metres or less	230 metres or less
Par-4	191 to 365 metres	231 to 440 metres
Par-5	366 to 525 metres	441 to 630 metres
Par-6	More than 525 metres	More than 630 metres

Source: United States Golf Association.

That's the big picture. You often find several different teeing areas on each hole so that you can play the hole from different lengths. The vast majority of holes have more than one teeing area — usually four. We've seen courses with as many as six different tees on one hole. Deciding which tee area to

use can make you silly. So the tee areas are marked with colour-coded tees that indicate ability:

- The **black tees** are invariably the back tees and are only for long ball strikers.
- The **blue tees** are usually slightly ahead of the black and make the holes shorter, but still hard. Club competitions are usually played from these tees.
- The **white tees** are for everyday, casual play and are the right choice for beginning golfers. Stray from the white tees at your peril.
- The **red tees** are traditionally used by women, although many women use the same tees as men.

How to Become a 'Real' Golfer

What's a 'real' golfer? There are three essentials:

- You understand the game.
- You can play it a little.
- You never dishonour its spirit.

Anyone can smack a ball aimlessly around a course. (Gary can already hear his fellow professionals saying, 'Yeah — like you, McCord!') But that doesn't make you a real golfer. There's much more to this game than hitting a ball with a stick.

How can you start becoming a 'real' golfer? It's easy: Read this book. You'll find everything you need to get started, from equipment to instruction to common problems, etiquette, betting and more. We tell you about the pitfalls that beginners face (and I'm not just talking bunkers) and how to avoid them.

You need to start by buying golf clubs and balls. You don't have to shell out thousands of dollars to get started. You can start simple — use cheap equipment at first and spend more if you enjoy the game. (Check out Chapter 2 for tips on what you need to get started.)

After you have golf clubs, you need to know how to grip the club: The *V* between the thumb and forefinger of your top hand should point to your right shoulder. That seems simple, but you wouldn't believe how many beginners get it wrong — and complicate their voyage to the promised land of 'real' golfers. (Chapter 6 has more information on this gripping — pardon the pun — topic.)

When you've got the grip down pat, you're ready to swing. Believe me, the swing is not as easy as it looks. That's why I devote an entire chapter — Chapter 7 — to developing your own swing. That's where you can determine what type of golfer you are. You can also find out about swing plane, various checkpoints during the swing, and what amateurs can glean from the swings of such great players as Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Annika Sorenstam and Tiger Woods.

You've probably heard about golf etiquette, handicaps, and one- and two-stroke penalties — and maybe even such odd-sounding things as nassaus, skins and barkies. If not, don't worry. You'll soon be tossing such terms around like a pro. (Chapters 13, 14 and 15 give you the fine points of playing with experienced golfers on public and private courses.) Knowing when to hit (and when *not* to), how to keep score and how to bet are integral parts of the game.

Living the Golf Life

As any true golf nut will tell you, there's more to the game than playing it. There's the fun of feeding your addiction by watching the sport in person or on TV, following it on the internet and playing virtual golf when it's pouring rain outside. (See Chapters 17, 18 and 19 for our guide to these topics.)

If the golf bug bites you, as it has bitten millions of others, that little sucker will have you living and breathing birdies, bogeys, barkies and digital dimples — all the stuff that keeps golf nuts going when they're not actually out on the course, slapping balls who knows where.

Fun facts from golf history

- Dutch historians including Steven von Hengel have argued that golf originated in Holland about 1297. A form of the game, called *spel metten kolve* and also called *colf* (which means *club*), was popular in the late 13th century. Colf, it is believed, was played mostly on ice.
- The first instruction book, written by Thomas Kincaid, appeared in 1687. Among his surprisingly sensible tips: 'Maintain the same posture of the body throughout (the swing) … and the ball must be straight before your breast, a little towards the left foot.' How did he know?

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- In 1743, a shipment of 96 golf clubs and 432 golf balls made its way from Scotland to Charleston, South Carolina. Such a big order suggests it was intended for a group of golfers. Another golf club or society may have been organised in Savannah, Georgia, in 1796, only to be disbanded later. It would be another century before American golf got going for good.
- The first major tournament, the Open Championship, was held at Prestwick Golf Club on the west coast of Scotland in 1860. There were only eight players. Old Tom Morris finished second to Willie Park, whose prize was a year's custody of the Championship Belt and a purse of £0. That's right — zero pounds. In those days the honour of victory was thought to be prize enough.
- The land that would eventually become Australia's first golf course, Ratho Golf Links in Bothwell, Tasmania, was settled in 1822 by the Reid family, who emigrated from Scotland. The nine-hole course is not only Australia's oldest, but also the oldest golf course outside Scotland that still exists.
- Otago Golf Club, New Zealand's first golf club, was formed in 1871.
- America's first permanent golf club was formed in 1888 in Yonkers, New York. The St Andrews Golf Club played on a three-hole layout that ended near a large apple tree. The club's golfers became known as the Apple Tree Gang. They hung their coats on the tree before they teed off. According to legend, they finished play one day to find their coats stolen by a rival gang known for its disdain of fruit.
- In 1890, the term *bogey* was coined by Hugh Rotherham — only back then it referred to playing a hole in the perfect number of strokes, or a *ground score,* which today we call *par.* Shortly after the invention of the Haskell ball, which made reaching a hole in fewer strokes possible, bogey came to represent a score of one over par for a hole.
- The term *birdie* wasn't coined until 1898, emanating from Atlantic Country Club out of the phrase 'a bird of a hole'. This gap in terminology is no doubt attributed to the difficulty in attaining a bird, a fact that endures to this day.
- A match-play exhibition was held in 1926, pitting Professional Golfers' Association members from Britain and America. Played in England, the home team dominated 13½ to 1½. The next year, at Worcester Country Club, the teams met again, only this time possession of a solid gold trophy was at stake, donated by a wealthy British seed merchant named Samuel A. Ryder. Thus were born the Ryder Cup Matches.
- The Hershey Chocolate Company, in sponsoring the 1933 Hershey Open, became the first corporate title sponsor of a professional tournament. So blame the cocoa guys.
- A local telecast of the 1947 US Open in St Louis marked the advent of televised golf, a red-letter day in golf history if ever there was one. Now Gary could finally have a job.

Chapter 2

Choosing Your Weapons Wisely

In This Chapter

- Getting a sense of the game's costs
- Choosing a golf ball
- Buying clubs
- Knowing which club to use
- Selecting outfits and accessories

Today's clubs are unrecognisable compared to the rather primitive implements used by Young Tom Morris (one of the game's early pioneers) and his Scottish friends in the late 19th century. Yes, early golf equipment had more romantic names: Niblick, brassie, spoon, driving-iron, mashie and mashie-niblick are more fun than 9-iron, 3-wood, 1-iron, 5-iron and 7-iron. But today's equipment is much better suited to the purpose: Getting the ball down the fairway to the green, then into the hole.

Nowadays, you have no excuse for playing with equipment ill-suited to your swing, body and game. Too much information is out there to help you. And that's the purpose of this chapter — to help you get started as smoothly as possible.

How Much Is This Going to Cost?

Take one look at a shiny new driver made of super-lightweight alloys and other space-age materials. Beautiful, isn't it? Now peek at the price tag. Gulp! Each year the hot new drivers seem to cost a few dollars more — many now retail for $600 and up. And that's just one club. You're going to need 13 more to fill your golf bag and the bag itself can set you back another $200 or more.

Sure, James Packer, Bill Gates and Donald Trump are avid golfers, but do you have to be a billionaire to play?

Not at all. Just as there are countless ways to get a golf ball from the tee into the hole, there are just as many ways to get the equipment you need, including the ball.

The upscale approach

You may be planning to spend thousands of dollars getting started in this game. If so, let us have a word with you: Don't. Of course you can purchase a gleaming new set of clubs, preferably custom fit to suit your swing. But if you're a beginning golfer, your swing is sure to change as you become more acquainted with this great game. A top-of-the-line set can cost more than a used car. You can also opt for the high-tech golf balls that tour pros use — a dozen will cost you about $80. Again, that's a needless expense if you're a beginner.

Spending won't guarantee success. For that, you'll need a good swing. Still you can rest assured that when and if you do shell out your hard-earned cash for today's name-brand golf gear, you won't get cheated. Golf equipment has never been better suited to its purpose.

Golf on a budget

At the same time, bear in mind that it takes a pretty good player to get the most out of today's highest-priced equipment. Just as a student driver doesn't need a Maserati, beginning golfers can get their games in gear with the golf equivalent of a reliable clunker. In the old days, many golfers started out with hand-me-down clubs. They might be Dad's old set, or Mum's, cut down for Junior to try. The young phenom might graduate to a full set found at a garage sale and if those clubs happen to fit the young whippersnapper's swing and physique, Junior might make the school team. He might even be on his way to a long, winless PGA Tour career, like Gary!

Today's version of the old garage sale, of course, is that virtual marketplace we call the internet. (We discuss many of the best golf websites in Chapter 19.) Once you know what to look for, you'll be able to find precisely what you need, either online or in a golf shop — often for a fraction of what *Messrs* Packer, Gates and Trump would pay.

Golf Balls: The Dimple Derby

Many technological advances have occurred in golf over the years, but perhaps nothing has changed more than the ball. It's no coincidence that the United States Golf Association (USGA) and Royal and Ancient Golf Club (R&A) keep a tight rein on just how far a ball can go nowadays. If the associations didn't provide regulations, almost every golf course on the planet would be reduced to a pitch and putt. We'd all be putting through windmills just to keep the scores up in the fifties.

For the record, here are the specifications the R&A and USGA impose on Titleist, Callaway, TaylorMade and the rest of the ball manufacturers:

- **Size:** A golf ball may not be smaller than 4.27 centimetres (1.68 inches) in diameter. The ball can be as big as you want, however. Just don't expect a bigger ball to go farther — it won't. We've never seen anyone use a ball bigger than 4.27 centimetres in diameter.
- **Weight:** The golf ball may not be heavier than 45.93 grams.
- **Velocity:** The USGA has a machine for measuring how fast a ball comes off the face of a club. That's not easy, because impact lasts only 450 millionths of a second and a good ball can zoom off the club at more than 270 kilometres an hour. When world long-driving champion Jamie Sadlowski creams a drive, the ball takes off at an amazing 350 kilometres an hour!

  No legal ball may exceed an initial velocity of 76 metres per second at a temperature between 23 and 25 degrees Celsius. A tolerance of no more than 2 per cent is allowed, which means an absolute max of 78 metres per second. This rule ensures that golf balls don't go too far. (In addition to balls, the bodies now test bouncy-faced drivers to keep a lid on distance.)
- **Distance:** Distance is the most important factor. For years the standard was the USGA's 'Iron Byron' robot (named for sweet-swingin' Byron Nelson). No ball struck by Iron Byron could go farther than 256 metres. A tolerance of 6 per cent was allowed, making 271.4 metres the absolute farthest the ball could go. Today the robot has some help from high-tech ball launchers in the USGA labs and the upper limit has risen to 290 metres.

  Yeah, right. Iron Byron, meet the PGA Tour! Guys like Tiger Woods, Bubba Watson, Dustin Johnson and their buddies just aren't normal — they regularly blast drives past 320 and even 360 metres!
- **Shape:** A golf ball must be round. An anti-slice ball on the market a few years ago was weighted on one side and failed this test. Nice try, though!

Even with these regulations, take a look around any golf professional's shop and you'll see many different brands. And upon closer inspection, you'll notice that every type of ball falls into one of two categories: Either the manufacturer is claiming that this ball goes farther and straighter than any other ball in the cosmos, or that this ball gives you more control.

Try not to get overwhelmed. Keep in mind that golf balls come in three basic types: One-piece, two-piece and three-piece. (TaylorMade now offers a five-piece ball, the Penta.) You can forget one-piece balls — they tend to be cheap and nasty and found only on driving ranges. So that leaves two-piece and three-piece balls.

Don't worry; deciding on a type of ball is still easy. You don't even have to know what a two-piece or three-piece ball contains or why it has that many 'pieces'. Leave all that to the scientists. And don't fret about launch angle or spin rate either. Today's balls are technological marvels, designed to take off high and spin just enough to go as straight as possible.

Go with a two-piece ball. I wouldn't recommend a three-piece ball to a beginning golfer. Tour pros and expert players use such balls to maximise control. For many years, the best players used balls with covers made of *balata*, a soft, rubbery substance. Today, many high-performance three-piece balls have covers of something even better — high-performance urethane elastomer, which is a fancy way of saying 'expensive superplastic'. But you don't need that stuff. As a beginner, you need a reliable, durable ball. Unless you have very deep pockets, go for the surlyn, two-piece route. (*Surlyn* is a type of plastic developed by the Dupont Corporation, the same stuff ten-pin bowling pins are covered with.) Most amateurs with double-digit handicaps use this type of ball. A surlyn-covered ball's harder cover and lower spin rate give you less feel — which is why better players tend not to use them — but, assuming that you don't whack them off the premises, they last longer. They just might roll farther, too.

Golf balls used to come in three compressions: 80, 90 or 100. The 80-compression ball was the softest and the 100 the hardest. When Gary was growing up, he thought that the harder the ball (100-compression), the farther it would go. Not the case. All balls go far when hit properly, but each one feels a little different. How hard or soft you want the ball to feel has to do with your personal preference. These days, you needn't worry about compression.

Here's a rule of thumb: If you hit the ball low and want to hit it higher, switch to a softer cover. Your drives will spin more and soar towards the stratosphere. If you hit the ball too high, switch to a ball labelled 'low-trajectory'.

Goose feathers!

Early golf was played with a feathery golf ball — a stitched leather ball stuffed with boiled goose feathers. A feather ball cost three times as much as a club and because feathery balls were delicate, players had to carry three to six balls at a time. The balls flew poorly in wet weather (a problem in Scotland) and were hard to putt, because they weren't round. They were closer to egg shaped, in fact.

Although the feathery ball was a vast improvement over the wooden balls that preceded it, the gutta-percha was an extraordinary breakthrough. In 1848, the Reverend Adam Paterson of St Andrews introduced the gutta-percha ball, or *gutty,* which was made from the sap of the gutta tree found in the tropics. When heated, the rubber-like sap could easily be fashioned into a golf ball. The gutty was considerably more durable than the feathery and much more affordable. After golfers discovered that bramble patterns and other markings on the gutty enhanced its aerodynamics, this ball swiftly achieved dominance in the marketplace.

After 1900, the Haskell rubber-cored ball quickly replaced the gutta-percha as the ball of choice. Invented two years earlier by Cleveland resident Coburn Haskell and manufactured by the B. F. Goodrich Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio, the Haskell ball, featuring a gutty cover and a wound rubber core, travelled farther (up to 20 metres more on average) and delivered greater durability.

It didn't take much time for this new ball to gain acceptance, especially after Alexander 'Sandy' Herd defeated renowned Harry Vardon and James Braid in the 1902 British Open at Hoylake, England, using the same Haskell ball for 72 holes. Most pro golfers today, on the other hand, use six to eight golf balls during a single round of a tour event.

The rest of the 20th century was spent refining the Haskell. In 1905, William Taylor invented the first dimpled ball, improving flight because the dimple pattern maximised lift and minimised drag. Around the time Taylor was playing with his dimples, Elazer Kempshall of the United States and Frank Mingay of Scotland were independently experimenting with liquid-core balls. In 1920, gutta-percha began to fade entirely from use, replaced by a soft rubber called *balata.* It was another 50 years before a popular alternative to the Haskell came along. In 1972, Spalding introduced the first two-piece ball, the Executive.

Today, multilayered balls dominate the market. (A three-piece ball has a thin extra layer between the cover and the core; a four-piece ball has a core within a core. TaylorMade's Penta has a cover, three 'mantles' and a core — much like Earth, but without all the lava.) Many pros use three- or four-piece balls whose cover hardness, launch angle and spin rate are perfectly tuned to their games.

Take all the commercial hype with a grain of salt. Make that a bowl. The most important things you need to know when buying golf balls are your own game, your own tendencies and your own needs. Your local PGA professional can help you choose the golf ball best suited to you.

What to Put in Your Bag

Deciding on a set of clubs to use can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it. You can go to any store that doesn't have a golf pro, pick a set of clubs off the shelf and then take them to the tee. You can go to garage sales or order clubs online. You can check with the pro at your local public course. Any or all of these methods can work. But your chances of choosing a set with the correct loft, lie, size of grip and all the other stuff involved in club fitting are worse than our chances of winning on *Dancing with the Stars*.

Having said that, we must add that it wasn't so long ago that *unsophisticated* was a fair description of every golf-club buyer. Even local champions might waggle a new driver a few times and 'know that it wasn't for them' — hardly the most scientific approach!

If you're just starting out in golf, keep in mind that you may discover that this game is not for you. So you should start with hire clubs at a driving range. Most driving ranges rent clubs for a few dollars apiece. Go out and test-wield these weapons. You can always buy your own clubs when the time comes.

Find an interim set of clubs

In your first few weeks as a golfer (after you've swung hire clubs for a while), find cheap clubs to use as an interim set during your adjustment period. You're learning the game, so you don't want to make big decisions on what type of clubs to buy yet. If you keep your ears open around the golf course or driving range, you may hear of someone who has a set that he or she is willing to sell. You can also ask whether anyone has any information on clubs that could be sold cheaply. Many garage sales offer golf clubs for sale. And, of course, you can check the internet — the fastest-growing marketplace in golf. (There's more on the internet in Chapter 19.) You can become your own private investigator and hunt down the best buy. Buy cheap for now — you've got plenty of time for bigger purchases.

Try all sorts of clubs — ones with steel shafts, graphite shafts (which are lighter and, therefore, easier to swing), big-headed clubs, *investment-cast clubs* (made by pouring hot metal into a mould), *forged clubs* (made from a single piece of metal) and *cavity-backed clubs* (ones that are hollowed out in the back of the iron). You have more choices than your neighbourhood Baskin-Robbins. ***Note:*** You're in your experimental stage.

Don't be afraid to ask your friends if you can try their clubs on the range. Gary does this all the time on the tour when a new product comes out. Try out these clubs and judge for yourself whether they feel good. But if you don't like the club that you just tried, don't tell the person who loaned it to you that the club stinks — that's not good golf etiquette. Simply hand the club back and say thanks.

Try this on for size

Today, club fitting is big business. Tour pros and average amateur golfers have access to the same club-fitting technology and information. It's important for all golfers — male and female — to use the right equipment for their body types and physical conditions. For instance, many manufacturers of golf clubs specialise in creating clubs for women, which have softer shafts and are lighter and more flexible.

Here are some factors every golfer should consider:

- **The grip:** Determine how thick the grip on your clubs should be. Grips that are too thin encourage too much hand action in your swing; grips that are too thick restrict your hand action. Generally, the proper-sized grip should allow the middle and ring fingers on your left hand to barely touch the pad of your thumb when you hold the club. If your fingers don't touch your thumb, the grip is too big; if your fingers dig into the pad, the grip is too thin.
- **The shaft:** Consider your height, build and strength when you choose a club. If you're really tall, you need longer (and probably stiffer) shafts.

  What does your swing sound like? If your swing makes a loud *swish* noise and the shaft is bending like a long cast from a fly-fishing rod at the top of your swing, you need a very strong shaft. If your swing makes no noise and you could hang your washing on your shaft at the top of your swing, you need a regular shaft. Anybody in between needs a medium–stiff to stiff shaft.
- **Loft:** Then there's your typical ball flight. If you slice, for example, you can try clubs with less loft — or perhaps offset heads — to help alleviate that common problem. For more information about slicing, see Chapter 11.
- **The clubhead:** Consider the size of the clubhead. Today, you can get standard, midsize and oversize heads on your clubs. The biggest are a relatively mammoth 460 cubic centimetres. We recommend bigger clubheads for your early days of playing golf. They're more forgiving — your mis-hits will go longer and straighter. A big clubhead can help psychologically, too. With some of today's jumbo drivers, your swing thought may well be, 'With this thing, how could I miss?'

- **The iron:** Advanced players choose irons that are perfectly suited to their swings. Forged, muscle-backed irons are for elite players who hit the ball on the clubface precisely. Cavity-backed irons (also called *perimeter-weighted*) are for players who hit the ball all over the clubface.

  The bigger the clubface, the more room for error — hence the bigger-headed metal woods that are popular today for all you wild swingers out there.

Because of all the technology that is available, purchasing golf clubs nowadays is like buying a computer: Whatever you buy may be outdated in six months. So be frugal and shop for your best buy. When you get a set that fits you and you're hitting the ball with consistency, stick with that set. Finding a whole set of clubs that matches the temperament of your golf swing is hard. Find the ones that have your fingerprints on them and stick with 'em.

Ten questions to ask before you buy

- **Do you have a club-fitting program?** Check with your local PGA golf professional. If he doesn't have a club-fitting program, he can direct you to someone in the area who does. After you've started this game and found you like it enough to continue playing, choosing the right equipment is the biggest decision you'll have to make. Don't leave your PGA golf professional out of that decision.
- **What's the price of club fitting?** Don't be too shy to ask this question. Club fitting can be expensive. You should be the judge of how much you can afford; however, many fitters in Australia will refund the cost of the fitting if you go ahead with a purchase.
- **What shaft length do I need for my clubs?** Golfers come in different heights and builds. Some are tall with short arms and some are short with long arms. People have different postures when they bend over to address the golf ball and they need different shaft lengths to match that posture. This is where PGA golf professionals can really help; they're trained to answer questions like these and can make club fitting very easy.
- **What lie-angle do I need on my clubs?** Here's the general rule: The closer you stand to the ball, the more *upright* your club needs to be. As you get farther from the ball, the lie-angle of your clubs should be *flatter.*
- **What grip size do I need?** The bigger your hands are, the bigger grip you need. If you have a tendency to slice the ball, you can try smaller grips that help your hands work faster. If you tend to hook the ball, you can use bigger grips that will slow down your hands and help you beat that hook.

- **What material — leather, cord, all-rubber, half-rubber — do you recommend for my grips?** Leather is the most expensive and the hardest to maintain, and is for accomplished players. We recommend that beginners stick to an all-rubber grip — and change grips every year if they play at least once a week. Gary uses a combination of rubber and cord — and it has nothing to do with his name. These grips help him hold on to the club in hot weather. Gary's hands are callused, though, so they don't hurt from the rubbing of the cord.
- **What kind of irons should I buy — investment-cast, forged, oversized or cavity-back?** The best advice we can give is to look for an investment-cast, cavity-backed, oversized golf club. For beginners, this is simply the best choice. Take our word for it — we haven't got enough paper to explain all the reasons.
- **Should I use space-age materials like boron, titanium or graphite in my shafts? Or should I go with steel?** Steel shafts are the cheapest; all the others are quite a bit more expensive, so keep your budget in mind. Test some of these other shafts to see how they compare with steel, which is still very good and used by most of the players on tour. In general, you want the lightest shaft you can swing effectively. And don't be intimidated by that tricky word *kickpoint*. Think of it this way: Kickpoint = trajectory. If you want to hit the ball lower, try a shaft with a low kickpoint; to hit the ball higher, get a higher kickpoint.
- **What type of putter should I use: Centre-shafted or end-shafted? Do I want a mallet putter, a belly putter or a long putter?** There's been an explosion of putter technology in the past few years. You can try out the result at the golf course where you play. Just ask the pro if you can test one of the putters on the rack. If you have a friend or playing partner who has a putter you think you may like, ask to try it. For more on putters and putting, see Chapter 8.
- **If you're buying new clubs, ask the pro if you can test them for a day.** Most of the time, someone who's trying to make a sale will give you every opportunity to try the clubs. Golf pros are just like car dealers; they'll let you test-drive before you buy.

The DIY way: Building your own clubs

Here's the ultimate in custom fitting: You can literally build your own set of clubs to your specifications. You just have to do some homework first. A lot of people are building their own clubs, judging by the success of firms like Golfsmith. And DIY clubs are cheaper than the ones you can buy off the shelf.

Although building your clubs requires time and effort, the end result can be rewarding. A hobby to go with your favourite new sport! You can get catalogues from component companies, call their toll-free numbers, or visit their websites (see Appendix B). Component companies offer grip tape, solvents, clamps, epoxy, shaft-cutting tools, shaft extensions, grip knives,

and every kind of shaft, head and grip imaginable. You name it, they've got it. If you're not sure, order a club-making video or book first. You never know — you may end up a golfsmith yourself.

When You Know Your Game

Before 1938, the rules of golf allowed players to carry as many clubs as they wanted. Since then, however, golfers have been restricted to a maximum of 14 clubs in their bags at any one time. But no rule tells you *which* 14 clubs to use. You get to match the composition of your set to your strengths and weaknesses.

We're assuming that you're going to carry a driver, a 3-wood, a putter and irons 4 through 9. Nearly everyone does. So you have five clubs left to select. The first thing you need to know, of course, is how far you're likely to hit each club. (That's golf speak for hitting the ball with the club. Don't go smashing your equipment!) After you know that, you can look into plugging the gaps. Those gaps are most important at the short end of your set.

I recommend that you carry three wedges, each with a different loft. I do. I use a 48-degree pitching wedge, a 53-degree sand wedge and a 58-degree lob wedge. I hit them 115 metres (pitching wedge), 95 metres (sand wedge) and 75 metres (lob wedge). That way, the distance gap between them is not significant. If I carried only the 115-metre wedge and the 75-metre wedge, that would leave a gap of 40 metres — too much. If I leave myself with a shot of about 95 metres, right in the middle of my gap, I've got problems. Carrying the 95-metre wedge plugs that gap. If I didn't have it, I'd be forced to manufacture a shot with a less-than-full swing. And that's too hard, especially under pressure. Full swings, please!

Okay, that's 12 clubs taken care of. You have two left. We recommend carrying at least one lofted wood or hybrid club. Make that two. Low-numbered irons are too unforgiving. So give yourself a break. Carry a 5-wood and even a 7-wood. These clubs are designed to make it easy for you to get the ball up in the air. They certainly achieve that more quickly than a 2-iron.

Sometimes called a *utility* or *rescue* club, the hybrid is sort of an iron and sort of a fairway wood. It's a fairly recent entry — a forgiving club that gets the ball airborne in a hurry. You can even use it for chipping, as Todd Hamilton did on a shot that clinched the 2004 British Open. Hybrid clubs, which come in different lofts, are getting more popular every day. You should swing a few and consider carrying a hybrid instead of that 7-wood, 5-wood or maybe even your 4-iron.

Figure 2-1 shows the clubs that Gary has in his bag.

Figure 2-1: What's wrong with this picture? From left to right: Gary's putter, lob wedge, sand wedge, pitching wedge, 9-iron, 8-iron, 7-iron, 6-iron, 5-iron, 4-iron, 3-iron, 19-degree Hybrid Rescue, 3-wood, 5-wood and driver. That's 15 clubs! Depending on the course and weather, Gary leaves one out when he plays — probably the 3-iron or 5-wood.

When to Use Each Club

Table 2-1 shows how far the average golfer generally hits with each club when he makes solid contact. When you start to play this game, you probably won't attain these distances. As you practise, you'll get closer to these numbers.

You should know your average. The best way to find out is to hit, oh, 50 balls with each club. Eliminate the longest five and the shortest five and then pace off to the middle of the remaining group. That's your average distance. Use your average distance to gauge which club to use on each shot.

Table 2-1 Which Club Should You Use?

Club	*Men's Average Distance*	*Women's Average Distance*
Driver	210 metres	180 metres
3-wood	190 metres	165 metres
2-iron	175 metres	Not recommended; 4-wood or hybrid = 155 metres
3-iron	165 metres	Not recommended; 5-wood or hybrid = 145 metres
4-iron	155 metres	137 metres (consider a hybrid instead)
5-iron	145 metres	130 metres
6-iron	137 metres	120 metres
7-iron	130 metres	110 metres
8-iron	120 metres	100 metres
9-iron	110 metres	90 metres
Pitching wedge	100 metres	80 metres
Sand wedge	80 metres	75 metres
Lob wedge	60 metres	55 metres

Tradition Versus Technology: High-tech Tweaks

Technology is the guiding light of fundamental change that is inherent to a capitalistic society in search of a more expensive way to hit the #$&!?*@ ball farther.*

Quote on the bathroom wall of the Wayward Soul Driving Range in Temecula, California

Is technology threatening the game? Is the ball too hot? Are big-headed titanium drivers giving the golf ball too much rebound? Is Phil Mickelson left-handed? We think that most players would answer these questions in the affirmative. Should golfers take a stance in the battle between tradition and technology? 'Probably not' would be the answer if all were polled.

To see where golf is today, you have to examine its past; then you can try to predict the game's future. This section helps you gaze into Gary's crystal golf ball to focus on the future.

Clubs made of titanium and other composite metals allegedly act like a spring that segments of the golfing populace believe propels the ball — also enhanced by state-of-the-art materials and designs — distances it was never meant to travel. This phenomenon is called the *trampoline effect*, which some folks may mistake for a post-round activity for reducing stress. In fact, this effect is the product of modern, thin-faced metal clubs.

This phenomenon has fuelled a debate pitting the forces of technology (golf's Dr Frankensteins) against those of tradition (gents in tweed jackets and tam-o-shanter hats). Equipment that makes the game easier for the masses helps the game grow, the techno-wizards say. Traditionalists fret that classic courses are becoming obsolete, the need for new super-long courses may make the game cost more in both time and money, and golf may become too easy for elite players. Regardless of which side you're on (you may, indeed, back both camps), one fact is undeniable: Golf equipment has been improving ever since the game began.

People have been developing the golf ball and clubs for centuries. In the past 100 years, however, science has played an increasing role in golf-club development, with a strong influence coming from research into new metals, synthetic materials and composites. Other developments worth noting:

- The introduction of the casting method of manufacturing clubheads in 1963.
- The introduction of graphite for use in shafts in 1973.
- The manufacture of metal woods in 1979 (first undertaken by TaylorMade). This last creation rendered persimmon woods obsolete, although a small number are still crafted.

Titanium clubheads raised the bar in technological development (yet again). Lighter than previous materials yet stronger than steel, titanium allows club makers to create larger clubheads with bigger sweet spots that push the legal limit of 460 cubic centimetres. Such clubs provide high-handicap golfers a huge margin for error — there's nothing quite like the feel of a mis-hit ball travelling 200 metres! But it's golf balls flying in excess of 300 metres that raise suspicions that these new clubs are making the ball too 'excitable'.

Golf balls have been under scrutiny for much longer, probably because each new generation of ball has had an ever-greater impact on the game.

Modern balls tout varied dimple patterns, multiple layers and other features that attempt to impart a certain trajectory, spin, greater accuracy and better feel, as well as the ever-popular maximum distance allowed under the rules of golf established by the R&A and USGA. A recent change in the rules added more than 20 metres to the old maximum of 271.4 metres. But even way back in 1998, John Daly averaged 273.8 metres on his measured drives on the PGA Tour. By 2004 the leader averaged 287 and in 2010 the best average poke was up 2 more metres.

The rest of the 21st century likely won't come close to rivalling the recent era for technological impact or dramatic innovation. Why? For one thing, scientists are running out of new stuff they can use to make clubheads — at least stuff that isn't edible. An expedition to Saturn may yield possibilities. Metallurgists are going to be challenged, although so far they're staying ahead of the game. New entries in the substance category include beta titanium, maraging steel, graphite in clubheads and liquid metal, all purportedly better than current club materials.

Dick Rugge, Senior Technical Director for the USGA, is one of the prominent people standing in the way of radical equipment enhancement. His job is to regulate the distance a golf ball should travel, yet he doesn't want to stifle technology altogether. The goal is to give the average golfer an advantage (whether it comes from the equipment itself or the joy of having better equipment) while keeping the game a challenge for the top players. This approach was seen in 2010, when the R&A and USGA banned the U-shaped grooves (often called 'square grooves') on clubfaces that helped pros make their approach shots stop and back up on the greens. Those grooves were banned for the pros only — amateurs who like the clubs they've got can keep using them until at least 2024!

Still, manufacturers will keep trying to build a better mousetrap. And while everyone thinks about distance and spin, we think the most revolutionary innovations will come in putter designs.

On average, the USGA approves more than one new putter every day and many of the new ones look like something out of the *Transformers* movies. But no one has yet invented a yip-proof blade that makes every putting stroke silky smooth (see Chapter 8 for more about the yips). When somebody does, that genius is going to make a fortune.

We may also see changes in the ball — although, again, dramatic alterations in ball design are unlikely. Customising may become more commonplace. You may also see more layering of golf-ball materials to help performance. After the Penta, can an octoball be far behind?

Not to be discounted are improvements in turf technology — an overlooked area boasting significant breakthroughs in the past 20 years. For example, in 1977, the average Stimpmeter reading for greens (the Stimpmeter measures the speed of a putting surface — or any surface on a course) was 6.6. This means that a ball rolled from a set slope travelled 6½ feet (2 metres). Today, the average is closer to 9 feet (2.7 metres).

But the biggest breakthroughs will probably come from humans. Physiological improvement and psychological refinement may be the surest paths to more distance and lower scoring. So hit the gym, take up Pilates, hit your sports psychologist's couch, get in touch with your inner self, eat bran and all the protein bars you can stand, drink green tea and take a stab at self-hypnotism if you have to.

Weapons of our fore! fathers

The earliest players carved their own clubs and balls from wood. Long-nosed wooden clubs are the oldest-known designed clubs — and the most enduring equipment ever conceived, remaining in use from the 15th century until the late 19th century. Long-noses were made from pear, apple, beech or holly trees and were used to help achieve maximum distance with the feathery golf ball, which dates all the way back to 1618.

Later, other parts of the golf set developed: *play clubs,* which included a range of spoons with varying lofts; *niblicks,* a kin of the modern 9-iron or wedge that was ideal for short shots; and a *putting cleek* — a club that has undergone (and is still undergoing) perhaps the most rigorous experimentation. Gary knows that his putters have undergone severe tests of stamina and stress. You're probably familiar with the 'I'm-going-to-throw-this-thing-into-orbit-and-let-Zeus-see-if-he-can-putt-with-it test', as well as the ever-popular 'break-it-over-my-knee-so-it-can't-harm-anyone-again' test. These tests should be conducted only by professionals.

The gutta-percha ball, much harder than a feathery, forced club makers to become truly revolutionary. Some tried using leather, among other materials, in their clubs in an attempt to increase compression and, therefore, distance (obviously, a recurring theme throughout the ages). Others implanted metal and bone fragments in the clubface. In 1826, Scottish club makers began using hickory imported from the United States to manufacture shafts and hickory was quickly adopted as the wood of choice.

It's probably a good thing that the fore! fathers never saw the orange ball Jerry Pate used to win the 1982 Players Championship, or the pink one favoured by Paula Creamer, the 2010 US Women's Open champion.

If all that fails to add 10 metres off the tee, then you can try a different ball. Ain't innovation grand?

Clothes: How to Dress Like a Pro

The easiest way to date an old picture of a golfer, at least approximately, is by the clothes he or she is wearing. Sartorially, the game has changed enormously since the Scots tottered around the old links wearing a jacket, shirt and tie.

Back at St Andrews, the restraint of the clothing affected the golf swing. Those jackets were tight! In fact, we believe that was the single biggest influence on the early golf swings. A golfer had to sway off the ball and then let his left arm bend on the backswing to get full motion. Also, he had to let go with the last three fingers of his left hand at the top of the swing. It was the only way to get the shaft behind his head. Put on a tweed jacket that's a little too small and try to swing. You'll see what the early golfers had to go through.

Fabrics have changed from those days of heavy wool and restricted swings. Light cotton is what the splendidly smart golfer wears today — if he or she hasn't switched to one of the new, high-tech fabrics that whisk perspiration away from the body. (We always said golf was no sweat.) Styles have changed, too. When we came on tour in the early 1970s, polyester was the fabric of choice. Bell-bottoms and bright plaids filled golf courses with ghastly ridicule. We've evolved to better fabrics — and a softer, more humane existence on the course. Some guys on tour now wear expensive pants with more expensive belts. And a few, like Rickie Fowler and Ian Poulter, are more colourful than we were in the 1970s! (Though Gary can't recall seeing any diamond-encrusted skull belt buckles like Rory Sabbatini's back in the day.) But most players wear off-the-rack clothes provided by clothing manufacturers.

Women have undergone an enormous fashion transformation on the course, too. Years ago, they played in full-length skirts, hats and blouses buttoned up to the neck. All very restricting, we imagine. Now, of course, they're out there in shorts and pants.

First of all, dress within your budget. This game can get expensive enough; there's no need to out-dress your playing partners. Our general rule is to aim to dress better than the starter at the course. (The *starter* is the person in charge of getting everyone off the first tee, but they are rare at Australian

golf clubs.) The starter's style is usually a reflection of the dress standards at that particular golf course. If you're unsure about the style at a particular course, give the pro shop a call to find out the dress code.

The bottom line is to dress comfortably and look good. If you dress well, you may appear as if you can actually play this game with a certain amount of distinction. People can be fooled. You never know!

Golf shoes are the final aspect of a golfer's ensemble. Shoes can be a fashion statement — crocodile or ostrich. They can be comfortable — tennis shoes or sandals with spikes. They can take on the lore of the Wild West in the form of cowboy boots with spikes or, as my mentor Fairway Louie used to highlight his golf attire, they can even be military combat boots.

What's on the bottom of the shoe is all the rage now. Except for a few top tour pros who swing so hard they need to stay anchored to the ground, everyone plays in *soft spikes*. Soft spikes reduce spike marks and wear and tear on the greens. They're also easier on the feet. If the style of shoes is worthy, you can even go directly from the golf course to the nearest restaurant without changing shoes. The golf world is becoming a simpler place to live.

Accessories: The Goods to Get

When it comes to accessories, there's a whole subculture out there. By accessories, we mean things like

- Covers for your irons
- Plastic tubes that you put in your bag to keep your shafts from clanging together
- Tripod tees to use when the ground is hard, or 'brush' tees to aid your drive's aerodynamics
- Telescoping ball retrievers to pick your lost ball from a water hazard
- Rubber suction cups that allow you to lift your ball from the hole without bending down

We've even seen a plastic clip that fits to the side of your bag so that you can 'find' your putter quickly. You know the sort of things. Most accessories appear to be good ideas, but then you often use them only once.

The place to find this sort of stuff is in the back of golf magazines. But take our advice: Don't bother. Real golfers — and you want to look and behave like one — don't go in for that stuff. Accessories are very uncool. The best golf bags are Spartan affairs and contain only the bare essentials:

- About six balls
- A few wooden tees
- A couple of gloves
- A rain suit
- A pitch-mark repair tool to help repair ball impact marks on the green
- A few small coins (preferably foreign) for markers
- Two or three pencils
- A little bag (leather is cool) for your wallet, money clip, loose change, car keys, rings, mobile phone (turned off!), and so on

Your bag should also have a towel (a real, full-size one) hanging from the strap. Use your towel to dry off and clean your clubheads. Keep a spare towel in your bag. If it rains, you can't have too many towels.

Keep headcovers only on your woods or metal woods. Golfers have a wide range to choose from. You have your cuddly-animal devotees. Other players like to be identified with a particular golf club, university, or sports team. Some are content merely to advertise the manufacturer of the club they're using.

Bottom line? I recommend that you get headcovers with which you readily identify. Create your own persona. For example, tour veteran Craig 'The Walrus' Stadler always liked walrus headcovers. Tiger Woods has — surprise! — a tiger. (The tiger with that plush job even has a name: Frank.) South Africa's Ernie Els uses a lion. Graeme McDowell of Northern Ireland won the 2010 US Open with a fuzzy dragon on his driver. And Australian Steve Elkington uses no headcovers at all.

As for your golf bag, you don't need a large tour-sized monstrosity with your name on the side. Gary has one because he plays professionally and someone pays him to use their equipment. But you should go the understated route. Especially if you're going to be carrying your bag, go small and get a stand bag — the kind with legs that fold down automatically to support the bag. That way your bag stays on its feet, even on hot summer days when you feel like collapsing.

Chapter 3

Do I Need Lessons?

In This Chapter

- Learning your strengths and weaknesses
- Knowing where to go for lessons
- Getting the most for your golf lesson money
- Finding help from other sources

You've just started to play golf. Your friends took you over to the driving range at lunch, you launched a couple of balls into the sunshine and thought you might want to learn the game. What next?

- **You can learn from friends.** Most of us start out this way, which is why we develop so many swing faults. Friends' intentions are good, but their teaching abilities may not be.
- **You can learn by hitting balls.** Gary learned to play this way. He would go to the driving range and hit balls day and night. The pure act of swinging a golf club in a certain way made the ball fly in different trajectories and curves. This process is a very slow one because you have to learn by trial and error.
- **You can learn from books.** Many books have been written on golf instruction that can lead you through the fundamentals of the game. But you can go only so far by teaching yourself from a book.
- **You can take lessons from a PGA professional.** This is the most expensive and most efficient way to learn the game. Lessons can cost as little as $10 an hour for group lessons and as much as $300 or more on your own with a top-rated coach. The expensive guys are the ones you read about in *Australian Golf Digest*, *Golf Australia* and *Australian Golf Magazine* and see on TV. But any golf professional can help you with the basics of the game. Most club pros in Australia charge about $50 to $100 per lesson, but will advise you to take several lessons in order to improve. A cheaper yet equally efficient option is participating in a group clinic where beginners can learn together.

Eleven things your teaching pro should have

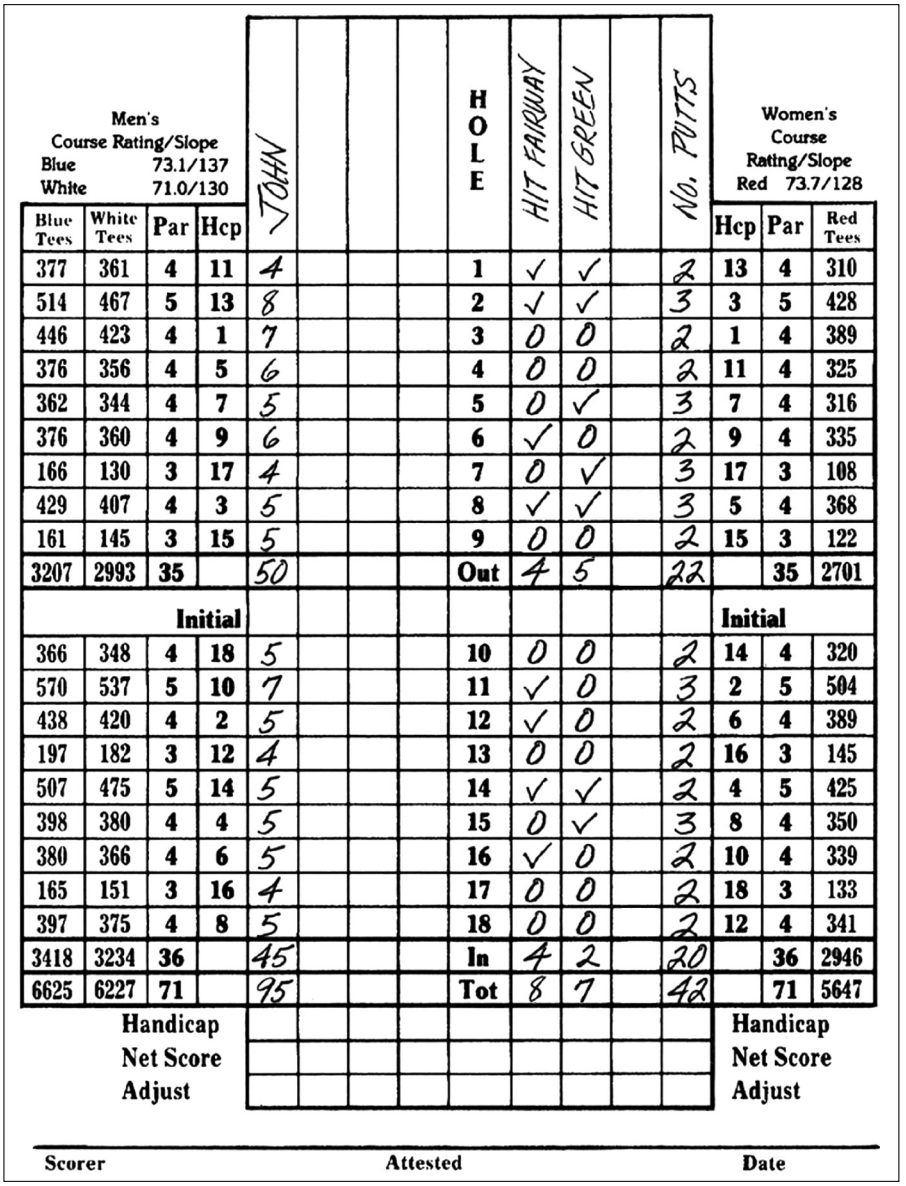
- Plenty of golf balls
- Plenty of sunscreen
- Plenty of patience
- A sense of humour
- Enthusiasm
- An ability to teach players at all levels
- An ability to explain the same thing in ten different ways
- An upbeat manner
- A method of teaching that he or she believes in
- An ability to adapt that method to your needs
- More golf balls

What Kind of Golfer Are You?

Keep a record of how you've played for a few weeks before your first lesson. This information will be invaluable to your pro. And don't just track your scores. Keep accurate counts of:

- How often you hit your drive into the fairway
- How often you reach the green in regulation; that is, two shots less than that hole's par (it won't be many, at least at first)
- How many putts you average
- How many strokes it usually takes you to get the ball into the hole from a greenside bunker

Tracking so many things may seem like overkill, but it will help a pro quickly detect tendencies or weaknesses in your game. Then the pro knows how to help you improve. Figure 3-1 shows how to keep track of all those numbers on your scorecard.



Men's Course Rating/Slope
Blue 73.1/137
White 71.0/130

Blue Tees	White Tees	Par	Hcp	JOHN				HOLE	HIT FAIRWAY	HIT GREEN		No. PUTTS	Hcp	Par	Red Tees
377	361	4	11	4				1	✓	✓		2	13	4	310
514	467	5	13	8				2	✓	✓		3	3	5	428
446	423	4	1	7				3	0	0		2	1	4	389
376	356	4	5	6				4	0	0		2	11	4	325
362	344	4	7	5				5	0	✓		3	7	4	316
376	360	4	9	6				6	✓	0		2	9	4	335
166	130	3	17	4				7	0	✓		3	17	3	108
429	407	4	3	5				8	✓	✓		3	5	4	368
161	145	3	15	5				9	0	0		2	15	3	122
3207	2993	35		50				Out	4	5		22		35	2701
			Initial										Initial		
366	348	4	18	5				10	0	0		2	14	4	320
570	537	5	10	7				11	✓	0		3	2	5	504
438	420	4	2	5				12	✓	0		2	6	4	389
197	182	3	12	4				13	0	0		2	16	3	145
507	475	5	14	5				14	✓	✓		2	4	5	425
398	380	4	4	5				15	0	✓		3	8	4	350
380	366	4	6	5				16	✓	0		2	10	4	339
165	151	3	16	4				17	0	0		2	18	3	133
397	375	4	8	5				18	0	0		2	12	4	341
3418	3234	36		45				In	4	2		20		36	2946
6625	6227	71		95				Tot	8	7		42		71	5647
			Handicap										Handicap		
			Net Score										Net Score		
			Adjust										Adjust		

Women's Course Rating/Slope
Red 73.7/128

Scorer Attested Date

Figure 3-1: Keep a record of how many fairways and greens you hit and how many putts you hit. Your teacher can use this information to identify problem areas.

Where to Go for Lessons

Golf lessons are available almost anywhere balls are hit and golf is played: Driving ranges, public courses, resorts, private clubs. The price usually increases in that order — driving-range pros usually charge the least. As for quality, if the pro is PGA-qualified — look for the term *PGA professional* posted in the pro shop or on his or her business card — you can be reasonably sure you'll get top-notch instruction.

A qualified PGA teaching professional may charge as little as $25 or as much as $200 or more per session, which can range from 30 minutes to an hour. A professional has a good sense of how much to tell you and at what rate of speed; not all lessons require a specific amount of time.

When checking out places that offer golf lessons, ask whether they have video-analysis capabilities. When you're able to watch yourself on video, you and your coach can pinpoint problem areas for improvement. If nothing else, a video record is a great way to track and monitor your progress as you build your fundamental skills.

Golf schools

No matter where you live, a golf school should be fairly close by. Golf schools serve all levels of players — and many are designed for those just learning the game. Searching online or in the Yellow Pages will help you find a golf school nearby.

Golf schools are great for beginners. You'll find yourself in a group — from 3 to 20 strong, which is perfect for you. There's safety in numbers, and it's reassuring. You'll find that you're not the only beginner. And you never know: Watching others struggle with their own problems may help you with *your* game.

Most of the better golf schools advertise in golf magazines. Be warned, though — these schools tend to be expensive. They did very well in the 1980s and early 1990s when the economy was perceived to be strong and people had more disposable income. Since then, however, golf schools have been less successful. Golf-school lessons are luxury items, which makes them among the first things people omit from their yearly budgets.

Many people still attend golf schools. Why? Because they work. On average you get three days of intensive coaching on all aspects of the game from a good teacher. Because groups are usually small, you get lots of one-on-one attention, too. And you can learn a lot by listening to what your fellow students are being told.

Don't feel you have to be hitting shots all the time. Take regular breaks — especially if you're not used to hitting a lot of balls — and use the time to learn. Try to analyse other players' swings. Soak up all the information you can. Besides, regular breaks are the best way we know to avoid those blisters you see on the hands of golf-school students!

Driving ranges

Gary used to work at a driving range in Riverside, California. He spent hours picking up golf balls on the range and hitting those same balls when he was off work. The range was bare dirt, the balls were old and the floodlights had lost their luminescence. But it was a great spot to learn the game.

Driving ranges have changed a lot since then. Many are very sophisticated, with two or three tiers and balls that pop out of the floor already teed up. Some offer putting greens; some have miniature golf courses attached to them. Quite a few talented (and a few not-so-talented) coaches work at these facilities. Most of them can show you the basics of the swing and get you off on the right foot.

Be sure to ask whether the pro at your local driving range is a PGA golf professional. If so, you can be assured that he or she is fully qualified to guide you through golf's lesson book. If not, he or she may still know a lot about the game, but proceed with caution.

Local clubs

Even if you're not a member, it's usually possible to take a lesson from the local club pro. The club pro will likely charge more than a driving-range pro, but the facilities will be better. Certainly, the golf balls will be. And chances are, you'll have access to a putting green and a practice bunker, so you can get short-game help, too.

Gary's favourite Australasian teachers

Many famous teachers will teach absolutely anybody who wants to be taught — male or female, young or old. They're expensive — $100 to $400 an hour and more. Some teach at schools and some (like my CBS TV colleague Peter Kostis) are multimedia phenomena. Here are some of the best in Australia and New Zealand:

- **Steve Bann and Dale Lynch:** Bann Lynch Golf, Fairfield, Melbourne, VIC (phone: 03 9481 7874; website: www.bannlynchgolf.com)
- **Gary Barter:** The Australian Golf Club, Sydney, NSW (phone: 02 9663 2515; website: www.australiangolfclub.com)
- **Gary Edwin:** Gary Edwin Golf, Glades Golf & Spa, Gold Coast, QLD (phone: 07 5569 1950; website: www.garyedwingolf.com.au)
- **Trevor Flakemore:** Waverley Golf Club, Rowville, Melbourne, VIC (phone: 03 9764 4559; website: www.millbrook.co.nz)
- **Ben Gallie:** Millbrook Resort, Queenstown, New Zealand (phone: 03 441 7010)
- **Dennise Hutton:** Dennise Hutton Golf Success, Sydney, NSW (phone: 0410 611 792; website: www.dennisehutton.com)
- **Gareth Jones:** Adelaide Shores Golf Academy, Adelaide, SA (phone: 08 8356 4811; website: www.adelaideshores.com.au)
- **Jason Laws:** Jason Laws Golf Academy, Newcastle Golf Club, Newcastle, NSW (phone: 02 4928 1984; website: www.jasonlawsgolf.com)
- **Glenn McCully:** Glenn McCully's Golf School, Golfers Resort Yarrawonga, Murray River, VIC (phone: 03 5744 1994; website: www.golfersresort.com.au)
- **David Milne:** David Milne Golf Academy, Joondalup, Perth, WA (phone: 08 9301 2599; website: www.davidmilnegolfacademy.com.au)
- **Mal Tongue:** Manor Park Golf Club, Wellington, New Zealand (phone: 04 563 8794)
- **Ian Triggs:** Ian Triggs Golf Academy, Gold Coast Country Club, Helensvale, Gold Coast, QLD (phone: 0401 694 050; website: www.iantriggsgolf.com)

What's a playing lesson?

A *playing lesson* is just what it sounds like. You hire a professional to play any number of holes with you. This theme has three main variations:

- **You do all the playing.** The professional walks along, observing your strategy, swing and style, and makes suggestions as you go. We recommend this approach if you're the type of person who likes one-on-one direction.

- **You both play.** That way, you get instruction as well as the chance to observe an expert player in action. If you typically learn more by watching and copying what you see, this type of lesson is the way to go. Pay particular attention to the rhythm of the pro's swing, the way he manages his game and how you can incorporate both into your own game.
- **The pro creates typical on-course situations for you to deal with.** For example, the pro may place your ball behind a tree, point out your options, and then ask you to choose one. Your choice and subsequent advice from the pro help make you a better player. Imagine that you have two escape routes — one easy, one hard. All the easy one involves is a simple chip shot back to the fairway. Trouble is, you may feel like you're wasting a shot. The difficult shot — through a narrow gap in the branches — is tempting because the reward will be much greater. But failure will be disastrous. Hit the tree and you could take nine or ten shots on the hole. Decisions, decisions! *Remember:* There's more to golf than just hitting the ball.

Getting the Most from Your Lessons

Much has been written about the relationship between Nick Faldo and his former teacher, David Leadbetter. Under Leadbetter's guidance, Faldo turned himself from a pretty good player into a great one. In the process, Leadbetter — quite rightly — received a lot of praise and attention. More recently, Tiger Woods switched teachers and retooled his game. After Woods won the 2005 Masters and British Open, his teacher Hank Haney got some of the credit. Five years later, he and Haney split as Woods struggled with personal and professional setbacks. After a brief period working without a coach, Woods linked with Canadian teacher Sean Foley in August 2010.

Ultimately, the teacher is only as good as the pupil. Faldo, with his extraordinary dedication and total belief in what he was told, may have been the best pupil in the history of golf. Tiger at his best is nothing less than the best — and most focused — golfer of our time.

Which leads us to the most important question of all: What kind of golf student are you?

When you take lessons, you need to keep the faith. There's no point in sticking with someone you don't believe in. If you find yourself doubting your teacher, you're wasting everybody's time. Change coaches if that happens — that is, if your coach doesn't tell you where to go first.

Be honest

Okay, now you're on the lesson tee with your pro. The first thing you need to be is *completely* honest. Tell your coach your problems (your *golf* problems, that is), your goals, the shots you find difficult. Tell him or her what style of learning — visual, auditory or kinaesthetic — you find easiest. For example, do you like to be shown how to do something and then copy it (if so, you're a visual learner)? Do you prefer to have that same something explained (making you an auditory learner)? Or do you prefer to repeat the motion until it feels natural (which makes you a kinaesthetic learner)?

No matter which technique you prefer, the coach needs to know what it is. How else can he or she be effective in teaching you? The bottom line is that the pro needs to know anything that helps create an accurate picture of you and your game. Don't be shy or embarrassed. Believe me, there's nothing you can say that your coach hasn't heard before!

Listen up

Once you've done some talking, let your teacher reciprocate. Listen to what the pro has to say. After the pro has evaluated you and your swing, he or she will be able to give you feedback on where you should go from there. Feedback is part of every good lesson. So keep listening. Take notes if you have to.

Don't rate the success or failure of a session on how many balls you hit. You can hit very few shots and have a great lesson. It depends on what you need to work on. A coach may have you repeat a certain swing in an attempt to develop a *swing thought*, or feel. You'll notice when the suggested change becomes part of your swing.

Too many golfers swing or hit while the pro is talking. Don't do it! Instead, imagine that you're a smart chicken crossing the road: Stop, look and listen!

Drop your doubts

Take it from me: Five minutes into every lesson, you're going to have doubts. The pro will change something in your swing, grip or stance and you'll feel weird. Well, think about this: You *should* feel weird. What you've been doing wrong has become so ingrained that it feels comfortable. Change what's wrong for the better and of course it'll feel strange at first. That's normal. Embrace the change!

Golf-lesson do's and don'ts

- Find a good teacher and stick with that person.
- Follow a timetable. Discipline yourself to work on what you've been told.
- Don't let your mind wander. *Concentrate!*
- Learn from your mistakes. You'll make them, so you may as well make them work for you.
- Don't tense up. Relax, and you'll learn and play better.
- Practise the shots you find most difficult.
- Set goals. *Remember:* Golf is all about shooting for targets.
- Stay positive. Golf is hard enough. A bad attitude only hurts you.
- Don't keep practising if you're tired. That's when sloppy habits begin.
- Evaluate yourself after each lesson: Are you making progress?

Don't panic. You'll probably get worse before you get better. You're changing things to improve them, not just for the heck of it. So give what you're told to do a proper chance. Changes rarely work in five short minutes. Give them at least a couple of weeks to take effect. More than two weeks is too long; go back for another lesson.

Ask questions

The pro is an expert and you're paying good money, so take advantage of the pro's knowledge while he or she belongs to you. Don't worry about sounding stupid. Again, your question won't be anything the pro hasn't heard a million times before. Besides, what's the point of spending good money on something you don't *get*?

The professional is trained to teach, so knows any number of ways to say the same thing. One of those ways will push your particular button. But if you don't share your impressions, the pro won't know if the message is getting through. So speak up!

Keep your cool

Finally, stay calm. Anxious people make lousy pupils. Look on the lesson as the learning experience it is and don't get too wrapped up in where the balls are going. Again, the pro will be aware of your nervousness. Ask for tips on

swinging smoothly. Nervous golfers tend to swing too quickly, so keep your swing smooth. What's important at this stage is that you make the proper moves in the correct sequence. Get those moves right and understand the order, and the good shots will come.

Other Ways to Get Help

There's little doubt that the golf swing is the most analysed move in all of sports. As such, more has been written — and continues to be written — about the swing than just about any other athletic move. Take a look in any bookstore under 'Golf' and you'll see what we mean. Maybe you have, because you're reading this book. (Nice choice!)

Gary's favourite golf-instruction books

An amazing number of books have been written on golf. Historians have tried to track every hook and slice throughout golf's existence. Many have tracked the footsteps of the great players throughout their careers.

But instruction is the main vein nowadays. There are books on every method of golf instruction, from using household tools used as teaching aids to employing data compiled by aliens on the planet Blothar. (Okay, maybe that's a stretch.)

Anyhow, here are ten great golf-instruction books, listed alphabetically by author. I've tried to help by reducing the list to my ten favourites, but there are many more that could be included. The material is inexhaustible, so take your time and peruse this golf library with an open mind.

- *How to Play Your Best Golf All the Time* by Tommy Armour (Simon & Schuster, 1953)
- *On Learning Golf* by Percy Boomer (Knopf, 1992)
- *Search for the Perfect Golf Swing* by A. J. Cochran and John Stobbs (Triumph, 2005)
- *Natural Golf* by John Duncan Dunn (Putnam's, 1931)
- *The Mystery of Golf* by Arnold Haultain (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1908; Nabu Press, 2010 — recently reissued in paperback after 102 years!)
- *Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf* by Ben Hogan (Barnes, 1957)
- *Swing the Clubhead* by Ernest Jones (Dodd, Mead, 1952)
- *The Physics of Golf* by Theodore P. Jorgensen (Springer, 1999)
- *Golf My Way* by Jack Nicklaus (Simon & Schuster, 1974)
- *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book* by Harvey Penick (Simon & Schuster, 1992)

Golf books that are as good as this one (well, almost)

So where should you go for written advice? Some of the golf books out there are quite good. But most, sad to say, are the same old stuff regurgitated over and over. *Remember:* This game was centuries old in the 18th century!

Here's another secret: Don't expect too much from books 'written' by the top players. There's nothing inherently wrong with the information they impart, but if you think you're going to get some stunning insight into how your favourite tour star plays, think again. In all likelihood, the author has had little to do with the text. Exceptions exist, of course, but the 'name' player's input is often minimal. Some of our most famous athletes have actually claimed they've been misquoted *in their own books*.

And another thing: The world's greatest golfers aren't necessarily the best teachers. In fact, some of them have no idea how hard the game can be.

Golf magazines

The monthly magazines *Australian Golf Digest*, *Australian Golf Magazine* and *Golf Australia* owe most of their popularity to their expertise in the instructional field. Indeed, most people buy these magazines because they think the articles will help them play better. They all do a good job of covering each aspect of the game every month. If you're putting badly, for example, every month you'll find a new tip you can try — or two or three. Best of all, these magazines use only the best players and teachers to author their stories. *Australian Golf Digest* has an elite crew it calls '50 Greatest Teachers', while *Australian Golf Magazine* boasts of its 'Top 100 Teachers'. Either way, the information you receive is second to none.

But is the information in golf magazines the best? *Sometimes.* The key is to sift what you read and subsequently take to the course. The great teacher Bob Toski once said, 'You cannot learn how to play golf from the pages of a magazine'. And he was right. Use these publications as backups to your lessons — nothing more. Be selective. Don't try everything in every issue, or you'll finish up hopelessly confused.

Don't get the idea that we don't like these magazines. Gary's authored a few *Australian Golf Digest* pieces over the years. But, by definition, these articles are general in nature. They aren't aimed specifically at *your* game. Of course, some of them may happen to work for you. But most won't. You have to be able to filter out those that don't.

Gary's top instructional DVDs

A bountiful supply of golf DVDs ranges from Tim Conway's hilarious *Dorf on Golf* to sophisticated features on the do's and don'ts of your golf swing. Here are some of my favourites:

- ***Hank Haney's Essentials:*** A four-disc set from a modern master
- **David Leadbetter's *Interactive:*** Four instructional CDs plus one with software that can analyse your swing and offer drills
- **David Leadbetter's *$10,000 Lesson:*** And the DVD costs only $19.99!
- **Gary McCord's *Golf For Dummies DVD:*** How could we resist? The same solid, fun instruction as in this book, plus you get to see me move!
- ***Phil Mickelson: Secrets of the Short Game:*** He even shows you how to hit his patented flop shot
- ***Harvey Penick's Little Red Video:*** Still available only on VHS, at least until someone puts this classic on DVD
- ***Women's Golf Instruction, with Donna White and Friends:*** Simple, easy to follow

DVDs: Feel the pixels

Instructional DVDs convey movement and rhythm so much better than their print counterparts, they're perfect for visual learners. Indeed, watching a top teacher or tour professional hitting balls before you leave for the course isn't a bad idea. The smoothness and timing in an expert's swing has a way of rubbing off on you.

You can buy instructional DVDs at thousands of outlets, including video stores and golf shops, and you can order many of them online or from your favourite golf magazines.

Instructional gadgets

A look at the back of any golf magazine or the home page of many websites will prove that there's no shortage of instructional doodads out there. Most aren't very good. Some are okay. And a few can work wonders. We outline our favourites for you in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 Our Favourite Instructional Gadgets

Gadget	*Function*	*Where to Get It*
A 2-x-4 board	Lies on the ground to aid your alignment.	Hardware store or timber yard
Alignment sticks	Flexible fibreglass sticks, usually orange or yellow, you can poke into the ground or lie flat to aid alignment. An improvement on the old 2-x-4.	Hardware stores or online
Camcorder	Probably the best instructional gizmo of all. Have a friend record your swing, then make sure your swing looks like the photos in this book.	Department store, electronics store or online
Chalk line	A builder's tool that can help your putting stroke. The line is caked in chalk. You snap it to indicate the line you want to the hole. Many tour pros swear by this technique.	Hardware store or online
Flammer	A harness across your chest with an attachment for a shaft in the middle. When you turn as if to swing, your arms and body move together as a telescopic rod connects the club to your chest.	A few sites online
Perfect swing trainer	A large, circular ring that helps keep your swing on plane.	www.theperfectswingtrainer.com
Putting Professor	An inclined panel to use on the practice green — it keeps your stroke consistent.	Several sites online
Swing straps	Hook them to your body to keep your arms close to your sides during the swing.	Online or most golf shops
The Tour Striker	A modified club that teaches ordinary golfers to make contact with the shaft leaning forward, like the pros do.	www.tourstriker.com

Apps ahoy: Golf wisdom in the palm of your hand

The latest form of golf instruction may one day be the best — apps for your iPhone or other interactive gizmo. (Note to Gary's fellow greybeards: 'App', of course, is short for web application, a bit of software that runs on a personal electronic device.)

Many golf DVDs are already available as apps and others soon will be. But it's still early in the evolution of this fairly new medium. There are still some rotten apps in the orchard and more than a few tasty ones that have a few grubs in them.

Chapter 4

Getting in Golf Shape

In This Chapter

- Examining why new golfers give up
- Understanding golf-specific physical fitness
- Testing for how much physical conditioning you need
- Finding a fitness training program that works for you

Both hands on the club, my body tense in anticipation of flush contact. Eyes preoccupied with a distant stare of the uncertainty of the golf ball's destination. I realize that the swing sequence has begun, and I put all available resources into sending the ball on a wanton mission of distance collection. I sense the fluid nature of Fred Couples's swing, the mass chaos of John Daly's hips as they rotate through the hitting area, the silent stare of Daly's gallery as they try to interpret what they just saw. I'm awakened from my trance by the dull thud of contact: It hurts, it's sickly, and I hear voices from nearby, questioning my masculinity. Impact has all the compression of a gnat flying into a wall of warm butter. My body is vibrating like a marked-down, used Ford Escort, and I nearly pass out from the physical exertion.

Once I get back on my feet to review the moment and wait for the laughter to die down, I realize that the instrument swinging this club has been totally neglected and is in a state of sad disrepair. My 'exercise regimen' up to this point has been to get in a bathtub filled with lukewarm water, pull the drain cord, and then fight the current. It's time to end this madness. I'm going to exercise!

Fairway Louie, circa 1987, after hitting his opening tee shot in the La Fiesta Restaurant's annual Dos Gringos Alternate (Tequila) Shot Tournament

My expertise in regard to exercise is minimal at best and the area of physical therapy is beyond my scope of knowledge. So let me introduce you to a friend of mine: Dr Paul Callaway, a licensed physical therapist with a PhD in golf-specific sports physiology. I met Paul in 1984 when he was the first Director of Physical Therapy for the US PGA Tour.

The PGA and senior tours feature large vans that accommodate physical conditioning apparatuses supervised by physical therapists. This program was started for the betterment of physical conditioning on the tour. Paul is a guy I go to frequently when my senior-tour body heads out of bounds.

Paul created Body Balance for Performance, a complete golf health and fitness training program, and is now the Director of Golf Fitness at the Cantigny Golf Academy in Wheaton, Illinois. Overall, Paul's golf fitness concepts have helped more than 7,000 amateur and professional golfers reach their performance potential while preventing injuries.

Why So Many New Golfers Give Up

More than 1.2 million Australians are now screwing up their lives by playing this game. And you thought insanity was rare. But then again, you have to rent shoes to go ten-pin bowling, tennis is too hard if you're more than 17 years old and we still don't understand squash, so golf seems like the thing to do if you've got the rest of your life in which to do it.

This game is very hard and if you take it too seriously, it frustrates you enough that you'll start wearing your shoes backward. Believe us, we know . . . Also, any pain you have while playing hurts your chances of playing well and sends you to the snack bar to pick up an adult beverage more often than you should. There's a lot of attrition in golf, for two main reasons, as we see it:

- Frustration from lack of improvement
- Injury

If you're going to have fun playing this game, you have to get your body ready to play golf for a lifetime. So let's get physical.

The purpose of this chapter is to embarrass you into getting into shape so that you can hit a little white ball around 60 hectares of green grass without falling down. How tough can that be? We identify five essential elements of golf performance and elaborate on the physical requirements for playing your best while reducing your risk of getting hurt. The motivation here is to get you out of the chair where you watch golf on Fox Sports and into a program that helps you feel better, hit the ball farther and run circles around your kids in front of their friends. Well, the last one may be a stretch, but the rest of our little spiel's the real golf gospel.

Five Essential Elements

Here's a list of five things vital to good performance in anything you do (yes, anything!):

- **A customised and sport-specific physical training program**
- **Professional instruction:** Gary personally has an après-ski instructor.
- **Proper mental skills:** Enough said.
- **Training equipment:** Please, no Speedos.
- **Talent to enjoy the sport**

When those five elements are part of your plan, that's called *integrated performance enhancement.*

To play at the highest level, you need some combination of talent, physical conditioning, mental awareness, instruction and good ol' perseverance. Simply going out and buying new drivers that are touted to hit the ball 50 metres farther is not going to cut it. ***Note:*** You need mental as well as physical skills. Promise me you'll use them.

Today's golfers are in far better shape than the roundbellies Gary grew up with. Gary Player was the first guy on the tour who Gary saw preaching the benefits of being in good shape. Even as he approached 75 years of age, a milestone he reached in November 2010, Gary Player could do most things the kids on tour can do, short of catching some big air on a snowboard.

Tiger Woods and other top pros are into rigorous physical exercise programs that will keep them strong into the later stages of the tour schedule, when other players tire from so much wear and tear. His work ethic in the weight room used to be unusual; now it's the norm for tour pros under 40. These days you'll often see more players on the 50-and-over Champions Tour in the gym than in the bar. That's quite a change from the old days when some pros shot par through rain, wind and raging hangovers.

The Keys to Golf Fitness

Now that we've defined the elements of integrated performance enhancement, take a look at three concepts that are crucial to any good training program.

Structure governs function

This heading, simply put, translates to: Your physique affects the way you play this game. If your range of motion is like the Tin Man's, your golf swing won't look very athletic and could actually rust. Oil those muscles with physical conditioning. It's that simple, so get off your wallet and act now!

Here are five areas to address:

- Balance
- Control
- Flexibility
- Posture
- Strength

If you're deficient in any of these areas, you may develop bad habits in your golf swing to compensate. Not only will your golf game suffer, but your body may break down from bad swing mechanics. Fix it now or fix it later; it's your choice.

Several factors can cause structural imbalances. They include inherited body characteristics and the natural ageing process. Imbalance can increase over time due to consistent thumping of the golf ball.

No matter what causes your imbalances, the connective tissue system in your body, called the *fascial system*, can develop restrictions that compress and/or pull on muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, bones, everything. Left uncorrected, these imbalances in your fascial system will leave you in a mangled mess and adversely affect your performance.

You'll start to compensate for these restrictions in your golf swing and pretty soon your golf game will stink. So go see a health and performance expert who is trained to work with golfers and cut out the middleman: Bad golf.

Physical training improves structure

How can you improve your structure to play better, safer golf? Start with a quick physiology lesson.

In the previous section, we talked about fascia. More specifically, your body's fascial system contributes to your flexibility, mobility, posture and function. Fascia, or connective tissue, is everywhere; it is the net that holds your body together.

Fascia's main job is to retain your body's normal shape, providing resistance to various stresses. In order to change your body structure and improve your ability to play golf, you benefit most by following a specific sequence of physical training, called 'Release, Re-educate and Rebuild', or 'The Story of Gary McCord's Career':

- **Release:** First, you must release your connective tissue restrictions. Specially designed flexibility exercises reduce tension in the inelastic portion of the fascial system that resists lengthening. You must perform these stretching exercises at low intensity but for a prolonged duration. Many people with fascial tightness need to sustain a single flexibility exercise for a minimum of three to five minutes before the layers of fascia begin to relax. Gentle, sustained stretching is more effective than a quick, intense stretch because it more effectively and permanently lengthens the tough connective tissue of the body.
- **Re-educate:** As the fascial restrictions decrease, you need to re-educate your structure with specialised exercises aimed at improving posture, balance, stability and control. These re-education exercises help you capitalise on your improved flexibility by teaching you how to feel the positions in which your body moves most efficiently. The goal for each golfer should be to develop a new postural identity: Good posture at address, plus swing mechanics that are safe, efficient, reproducible and highly effective.
- **Rebuild:** Last comes a program of rebuilding exercises designed to solidify and then reinforce your physical structure and dynamic swing motion. These exercises can also improve your swing speed for added distance, as well as improving muscular endurance for better swing control and performance towards the end of a round and/or during longer practice sessions.

This is a must for you prospective golfers: Enhance your structure and improve your game!

Exercise programs must be golf specific and, ideally, customised

For an exercise program to be most helpful, it must be golf specific. Warming up by throwing a javelin won't help your golf game. Fitness programs for other sports aren't designed around the specific muscles, movement patterns and physical performance factors that support the golf swing.

Of equal importance to golf-specific training is customised fitness training. If you start an exercise program that isn't designed around your own physical weaknesses, isn't tailored to the special demands of golf and isn't designed to accomplish your personal performance goals, you're wasting your time.

Find a specialist to work with, then ask what sort of initial physical performance evaluation will be performed. The specialist will design your program from the findings. The elements of any evaluation should include at least the following:

- Health history, pain problems, injuries related to golf, and so on
- Tests to identify postural, structural or biomechanical imbalances that may interfere with your ability to swing
- Balance assessment
- Muscle and joint flexibility testing
- Muscle strength, endurance and control testing
- Biomechanical video analysis of the golf swing
- Golf skills evaluation (measurement of current swing and scoring performance potential, including elements of the swing such as clubhead speed, swing path and launch angle as well as driving distance, greens and fairways in regulation, handicap, and so on)
- Goals assessment (evaluation of performance goals, reasons for playing golf and deadlines for reaching goals)

We're already proud of you! Following these steps will help you and your specific golf muscles perform better and it beats watching Oprah and Ellen DeGeneres all day. Your physical abilities and conditioning will merge and you'll become a force to be reckoned with out on the golf course. Enjoy your new, improved golf game!

Tests and Exercises

We're going to give you a sample test before the initial performance tests you'll be consulting a specialist for. These tests will tell you how much serious conditioning you need.

Please remember, if you're unable to perform any portion of these simple tests or recommended corrective exercises easily and comfortably, you're not alone. Gary seized up during most of them! Go slowly and if you can't perform one or the other, stop and turn on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show.* Just don't dance along with Ellen until you loosen up.

Test 1: Club behind the spine

This is a helpful evaluation tool because it can identify several areas of physical weakness and/or imbalance. First, having adequate rotation flexibility in the spine is one of the most essential requirements for a good golf swing. The area of the spine that should rotate the most is the middle section, the *thoracic spine.* To have maximal flexibility to turn during the swing, you need the physical potential to achieve a straighter thoracic spine at address, which is the way you set up to the ball. (See Figure 4-1(a).) A bent thoracic spine at address blocks your ability to turn (see Figure 4-1(b)). Therefore, one purpose of this test is to determine your ability to achieve and maintain the ideal, straighter thoracic spine angle at address through chest and middle-spine flexibility.

In addition, this test measures (to a degree) the muscle strength of your lower abdominals, hips, thighs, middle and upper back, and shoulderblades — all essential to achieving and maintaining proper posture at address. Furthermore, this test can identify tightness in the *hamstring muscles* in the backs of your legs.

Figure 4-1: (a) A straight thoracic spine gives you flexibility. **(b)** A bent thoracic spine hinders your ability to turn.

To perform the club-behind-the-spine test:

1. **Stand upright while holding a golf club behind your back.**
2. **In one hand, hold the head of the club flat against your tailbone. In your other hand, hold the grip of the club against the back of your head. (See Figure 4-2(a).)**
3. **Bend your hips and knees slightly (10 to 15 degrees) and contract your lower abdominal muscles enough to press the small of your back into the shaft of the club.**
4. **While keeping your lower back in contact with the shaft, straighten the middle and upper portions of your spine and neck.**

   The goal is to make complete contact between the shaft and the entire length of your spine and back of your head. (See Figure 4-2(b).)

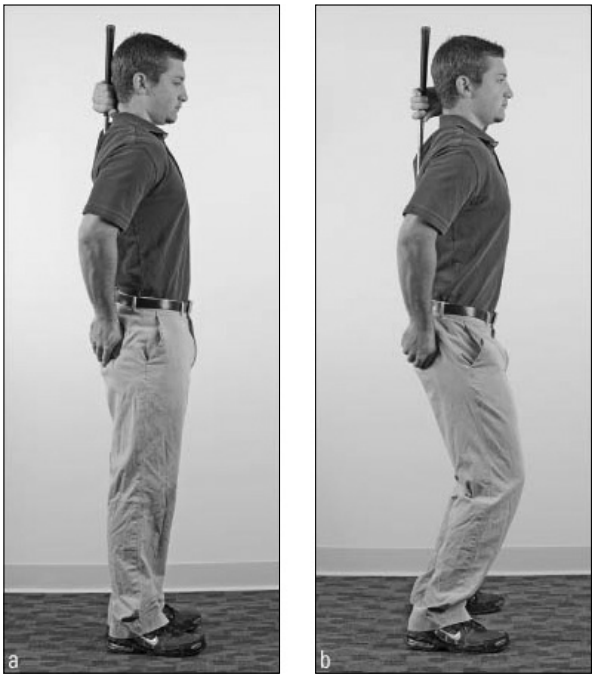


Figure 4-2: (a) The beginning position of the club-behind-the-spine test. **(b)** Keep as much of your spine and back of your head in contact with the shaft as possible.

5. **Try to bend forward from your hips and proportionately from your knees while maintaining club contact with your spine and head. Keep bending until you're able to comfortably see a spot on the ground in front of you where the golf ball would normally be at address. (See Figure 4-3.)**

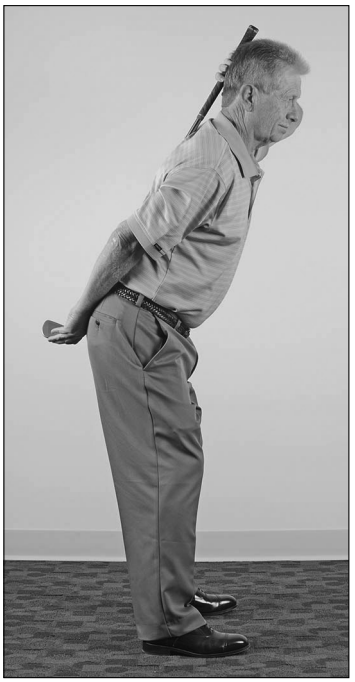


Figure 4-3: Look for the spot on the ground where the ball would be at address.

6. **Remove the club from behind your back and grip it with both hands in your normal address position, trying to maintain all the spine, hip and knee angles that you just created. (See Figure 4-4.)**

If properly executed, the club-behind-the-spine test positions you so that you feel comfortably balanced over the ball with muscle activity felt in your lower abdominals, thighs, hips, upper back and shoulderblades. You achieve a straighter, more efficient thoracic-spine angle and a neutral, more powerful pelvic position with proper degrees of hip and knee bend. In other words, you achieve a posture at address with the most potential for producing a safe, highly effective golf swing.

If you're unable to achieve the positions of this test easily and comfortably, the next three simple exercises might help. Nevertheless, please consult your doctor before trying these or any of the other exercises suggested in this chapter. These exercises are generally safe for most people; however, if you notice *any* discomfort while performing them, stop and consult your doctor *immediately* before continuing.

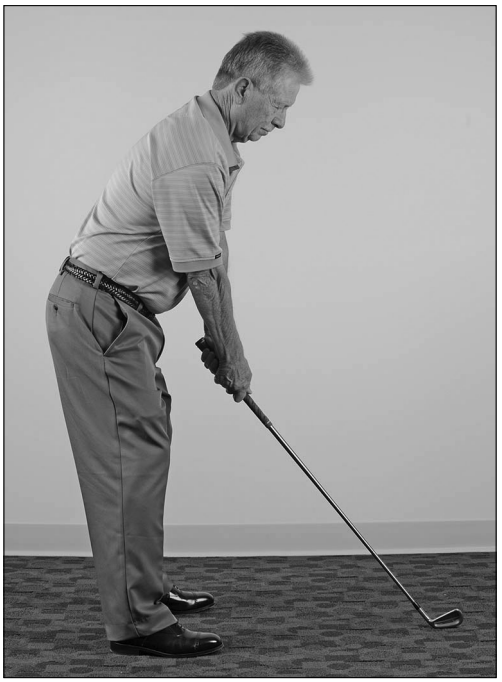


Figure 4-4: The ideal address position.

Exercise 1: Recumbent chest-and-spine stretch

The recumbent chest-and-spine stretch can help golfers perform a vital function within the initial phase of any proper exercise progression, called the *releasing phase.* This exercise releases the tightness in your chest, in the front of your shoulders and in your lower back. After you've mastered it, you should have flexibility to perform the club-behind-the-spine test and, therefore, much better posture at address.

To perform this releasing exercise:

1. **Lie on a firm, flat surface with your hips and knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Rest your lower legs on a chair, couch or bed, as shown in Figure 4-5(a).**

   Depending on the degree of tightness in your chest, spine and shoulders, you may need to begin this exercise on a softer surface (an exercise mat, blankets on the floor, or your bed) and place a small pillow or rolled-up towel under your head and neck to support them in a comfortable, neutral position. You may also need to place a small towel roll under the small of your back.

2. **As shown in Figure 4-5(b), bend your elbows to approximately 90 degrees and position your arms 60 to 80 degrees away from the sides of your body so that you begin to feel a comfortable stretch in the front of your chest and shoulders.**

   This arm position looks like a waiter's arms when he carries a tray in each hand.

   If you feel any pinching in your shoulders, try elevating your arms and resting them on a stack of towels or a small pillow so that your elbows are higher than your shoulders.

3. **Relax into this comfortable stretch position for at least three to five minutes or until you experience a *complete* release of the tightness in your chest, front of your shoulders and lower back.**

   You're trying to get your back, spine and shoulders completely flat on the floor.

Repeat this exercise daily for five to ten days until you can do it easily, with no lingering tightness in your body.

Figure 4-5: (a) The beginning position for the recumbent chest-and-spine stretch. **(b)** Place your arms so that you feel a comfortable stretch.

You may want to increase the degree of stretch in your body by removing any support or padding from under your body and/or arms — or by adding a small towel roll under the middle portion of your spine (at shoulderblade level) in a position perpendicular to your spine (see Figure 4-6). Remember *always* to keep the degree of stretch comfortable and to support your head, neck, spine and arms so that you don't put excessive stress on those structures while you perform this exercise.

Figure 4-6: Place a small, rolled-up towel under the middle of your spine to increase the stretch.

Exercise 2: Recumbent abdominal-and-shoulderblade squeeze

The recumbent abdominal-and-shoulderblade squeeze is designed to help re-educate your golf posture and begin rebuilding two key areas of muscle strength necessary for great posture at address: Your lower abs and shoulderblade muscles.

Perform this re-education and rebuilding exercise as follows:

1. **Assume the same starting position as for the recumbent chest-and-spine stretch (refer to Figure 4-7).**
2. **Contract the muscles of your lower abdominals and middle and lower shoulderblade regions so that you feel the entire length of your spine, neck and shoulders flattening firmly to the floor.**

   If you're performing this exercise properly, you should feel a comfortable degree of muscle contraction while you maintain a normal, relaxed breathing pattern.

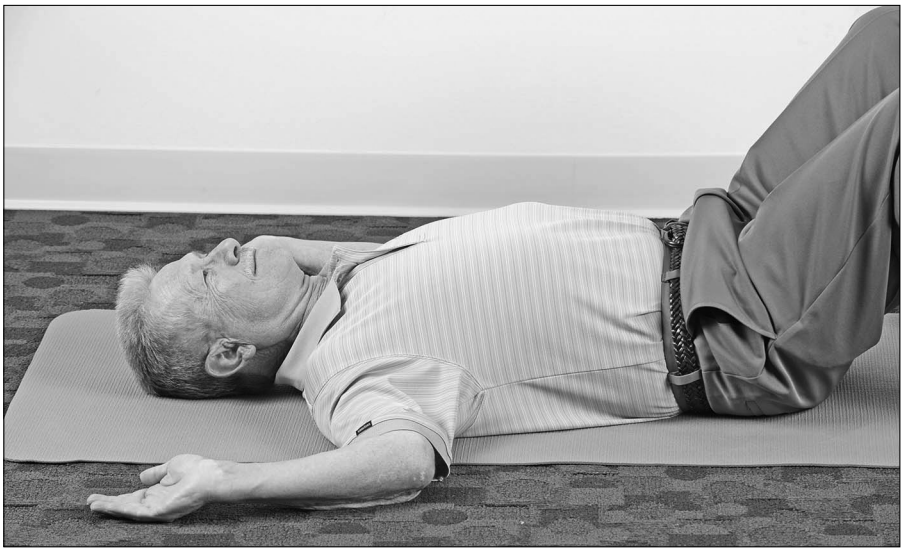


Figure 4-7: Make sure you feel a comfortable degree of stretch and can breathe normally.

3. **Hold this contraction for three to five breaths, relax, then repeat the exercise.**

Perform this exercise at least once every other day for two to three weeks, starting with one set of 10 repetitions and building up gradually to one set of 50 repetitions.

Exercise 3: Prone torso lift

You can further challenge your abdominal, spine and shoulderblade muscles with the prone torso lift. This exercise provides the same golf-specific benefits as the preceding exercise but to a more advanced degree.

Perform this exercise as follows:

1. **Turn over on your stomach, place several large pillows under your body and place your arms in the double 'tray position' with your forehead resting on a towel roll, as shown in Figure 4-8.**
2. **Perform a pelvic tilt by squeezing your lower abdominal muscles and rotate your pelvis forward.**

Figure 4-8: Lie on your stomach with your forehead on a towel roll.

3. **Place your arms in the double 'tray position', keeping your neck long and your chin tucked, and lift just your upper torso comfortably off the pillows (see Figure 4-9).**

   Be sure to keep your neck tucked in and your lower back flat by contracting your lower abdominal muscles. Remember to breathe comfortably.

Figure 4-9: Lift your upper torso.

4. **Hold the lift for three to five breaths, then slowly relax and repeat.**

Do this exercise at least every other day for 1 to 2 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions, and for about two to three weeks or until it becomes easy.

Test 2: Standing balance sway

After posture, the golf swing's next most important physical characteristic is balance. The purpose of the standing balance-sway test is to help you identify muscle and connective tissue tightness that may be pulling you out of ideal standing posture and balance, thus interfering with your posture and balance at address and during your swing.

To perform the standing balance-sway test:

1. **Remove your shoes and stand on a level surface with your arms hanging relaxed by your sides.**

   If you've been prescribed customised *orthotics* (arch supports) for your shoes, repeat this test with your orthotics in place and your shoes on.

2. **Close your eyes and relax your body. Try to feel which direction your body would tend to drift, tip or sway if you let it.**
3. **After five to ten seconds, open your eyes and identify the predominant direction of sway.**
4. **Repeat the test several times to determine whether you have a consistent direction of sway.**

Much like a tent's centre pole leaning towards a support wire that has been staked into the ground too tightly, your first and/or strongest direction of sway is probably caused by connective tissue and muscle tightness pulling your body in that direction. If left uncorrected, this tightness will pull you out of posture and balance at address, as well as during your swing. Any attempts to correct your swing motion without first reducing the physical causes of your posture and balance dysfunction can lead to inconsistent performance and/or injury.

Exercise 4: Single-leg balance drill

Many exercises can improve your standing balance as a golfer. Here's a simple balance re-education drill.

To perform this balance re-education exercise:

1. **Stand on a firm, flat surface in your bare or stocking feet.**

   If you have been prescribed customised *orthotics* (arch supports) for your shoes, repeat this exercise with your orthotics in place and your shoes on.

2. **Place a club behind your spine as though you were trying to perform the club-behind-the-spine test (refer to Figure 4-2).**
3. **With your eyes open, try to stand and balance on your right leg by lifting your left knee to approximately 90 degrees so that your left thigh is parallel to the floor. In this position, do your best to maintain your balance for 10 to 15 seconds.**
4. **Repeat the exercise with your left leg down, lifting your right knee to 90 degrees (see Figure 4-10).**

Figure 4-10: Try to balance for 10 to 15 seconds.

Perform this exercise 10 to 20 times with each leg at least once each day for two to three weeks or until you do it without losing your balance on one foot for 15 seconds.

To increase the difficulty of this exercise and improve your golf balance even more, try the exercise with your *eyes closed*! You can imagine how much more balanced you'll feel at address and during your full swing when you can master this exercise with your eyes open and then with your eyes closed.

Test 3: Seated trunk rotation

Rotation flexibility in the spine and hips is essential for optimal and safe golf. Without it, you can't make a complete, well-balanced swing. Furthermore, compensations that you'll most certainly make as a result will force biomechanical swing flaws such as reverse pivots, lateral sways and coming over the top. Compensations from a lack of spine and hip rotation flexibility can also stress other body parts that aren't designed to rotate. If left uncorrected, this physical limitation can eventually spell disaster.

The next two tests can help you evaluate your rotation flexibility in the spine and hips.

The first test is called the seated trunk-rotation test. To perform this test:

1. **Sit forward in a chair so that your spine isn't touching the back of the chair.**
2. **Place a golf club across the front of your chest and shoulders (at the collarbone level) and hold the club securely by crossing both hands in front of you (see Figure 4-11(a)).**
3. **Sit as tall as possible in the chair, with your feet flat on the floor, both knees pointing straight ahead and turn your upper torso as far as comfortably possible to the right (see Figure 4-11(b)).**

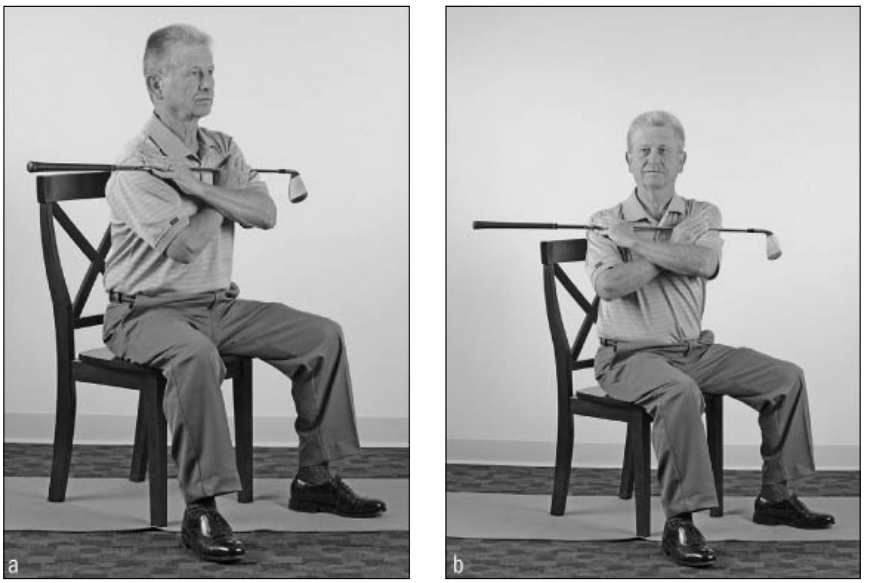


Figure 4-11: **(a)** Hold a club to your chest and shoulders. **(b)** Turn as far to the right as you can while remaining comfortable.

4. **When you've turned completely, look over your right shoulder and see where the end of the club is pointing. Mentally mark the spot on the wall and estimate the number of degrees of rotation that you've turned to the right.**
5. **Slowly return to the neutral starting position and then repeat the trunk-rotation test to the left.**

Repeat this test in both directions three to five times to get a good estimate of the amount of trunk rotation in each direction — and which direction you can rotate farther and/or easier.

Exercise 5: Supine trunk-rotation stretch

The supine trunk-rotation stretch can help improve your ability to complete a stress-free backswing and follow-through. If the seated trunk-rotation test (Test 3) identified limitations in one or both directions, this exercise can help you gain flexibility in the proper region of your spine and enable a better turn.

To perform this releasing exercise:

1. **Lie on your back with your hips and knees bent so that your feet are flat on the floor and your arms rest comfortably away from your sides in the double 'tray position' (see Figure 4-12).**

Figure 4-12: Lie on your back with knees bent and arms in the double 'tray position'.

2. **Gently squeeze your shoulderblades and flatten your neck to the floor while you slowly and gently rotate your legs to the left.**
3. **Continue to slowly twist, keeping your right shoulderblade and forearm flat to the floor until you begin to feel a comfortable stretch in your spine and possibly in your right hip and the front of your right shoulder (see Figure 4-13).**
4. **Hold this position for three to five minutes or until you feel a *complete* release of the gentle stretch in your body.**

   You can enhance the stretch in this position by bringing your left hand down from the 'tray position' and gently pressing down on your right thigh, as shown in Figure 4-13.

Figure 4-13: Twist your legs to the left until you feel a comfortable stretch.

5. **Slowly return to the neutral starting position, then repeat the stretch, this time rotating your legs to the right.**

Practise this exercise at least once a day for two to three weeks until you can stretch equally well in both directions. If your spine was stiffer when turning to your right during the seated trunk-rotation test, spend more time initially rotating your legs to the left. Likewise, if your trunk-rotation flexibility was more limited when turning to your left, then initially rotate your legs to the right in this exercise. Your goal is *balanced* rotation in both directions.

Test 4: Seated hip rotation

The seated hip-rotation test is designed to measure the relative degree of rotation flexibility in your hips. It can show whether you have significant tightness in one or both hips that may be interfering with your ability to rotate your hips during your swing. Poor hip rotation is one of the prime causes of lower-back pain for golfers and can cause poor full-swing performance.

To perform the seated hip-rotation test:

1. **Sit forward in a chair so that your spine is not touching the back of the chair.**
2. **Sit as tall as possible with your spine straight. Cross your right leg over your left knee so that the outer part of your right ankle rests on the top of your left knee (see Figure 4-14(a)).**
3. **Without losing your sitting posture, take both hands and gently apply downward pressure to the top of your right knee until you cannot comfortably push your shin any closer to a position parallel to the floor (see Figure 4-14(b)).**

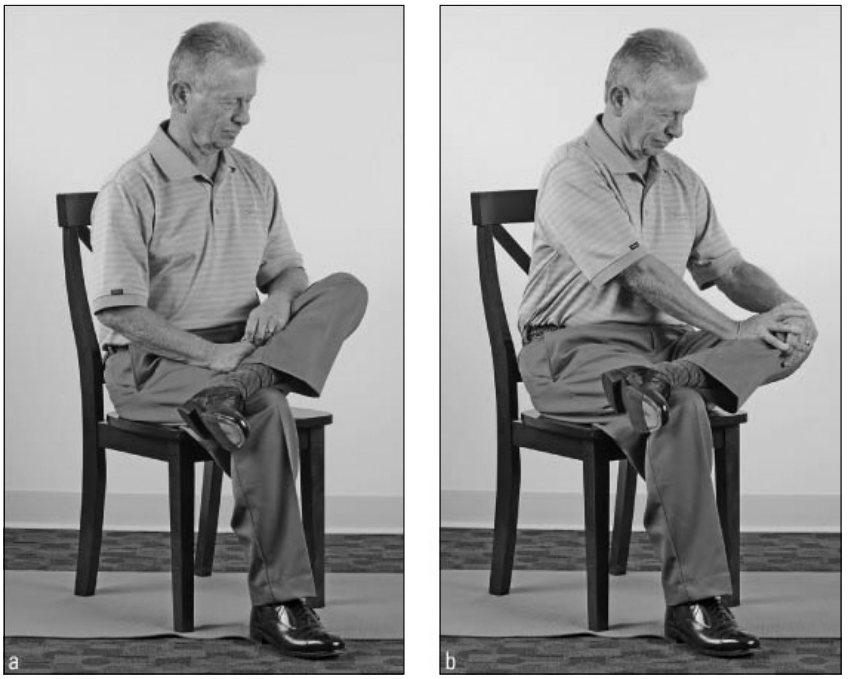


Figure 4-14: **(a)** Rest the outer part of your right ankle on your left knee. **(b)** Gently push your knee towards the floor.

4. **When you've reached the limit of stretch for your right hip, observe your relative difficulty in achieving this position, the location and degree of tightness in your body, and the relative angle of your right shin to the floor.**
5. **Slowly release your right knee and repeat the test with your left ankle resting on your right knee.**
6. **Compare the results of testing both hips and determine whether one or both hips have rotation-flexibility limitations.**

Exercise 6: Supine hip-rotation stretch

The supine hip-rotation stretch can help you reduce hip-rotation tightness and, therefore, improve your ability to make a full turn around your hips during a full golf swing.

To perform this releasing exercise:

1. **Lie on your back near a wall. Place both feet on the wall so that your hips and knees are bent about 90 degrees. (See Figure 4-15(a).)**
2. **Cross your right foot over your left knee and rest both hands on your right knee.**

3. **Gently apply pressure to your right knee with your hands in a direction down and away from your right shoulder (see Figure 4-15(b)) until you feel a light, comfortable stretch in the outer part of your right hip and/or groin.**

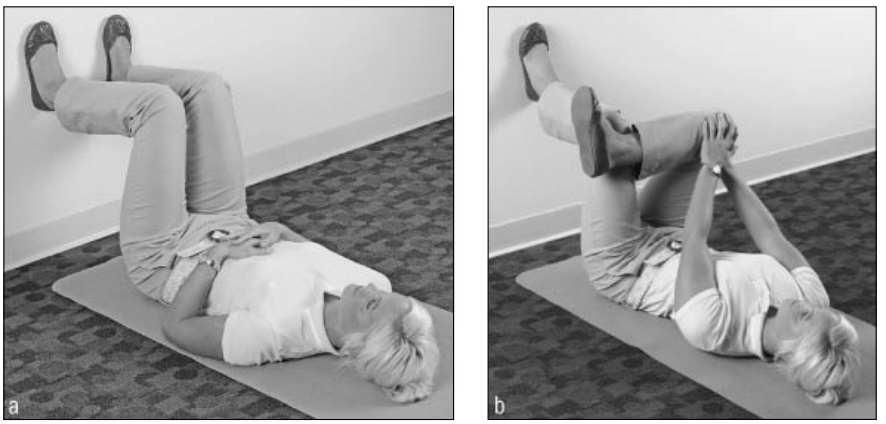


Figure 4-15: (a) Put your feet against a wall with your knees bent. **(b)** Put gentle pressure on your knee until you feel a light stretch.

4. **Hold this stretch for three to five minutes or until you feel a complete release of the original stretch in your right hip.**
5. **After the stretch is complete, slowly release the pressure on your right knee and repeat the stretch on your left hip.**

Practise this releasing exercise at least once a day for two to three weeks or until you can stretch equally well in both hips. If you found one hip to be tighter than the other, then spend more time stretching the tighter hip. Your ultimate goal is *balanced rotation* for both hips. Only by achieving complete and balanced hip rotation can you achieve a full backswing and follow-through with each and every swing.

After you're balanced, you can advance this stretch by moving your body closer to the wall at the start. This allows your hips and knees to bend at an angle greater than 90 degrees, for more stretch in your hips.

Core Exercises

The world's top golfers now understand that the large muscles of the torso — the *core* — are the key to increasing power while reducing the risk of lower-back injury. This is the most important advance in golf fitness of the past 50 years. As Tiger Woods and every other strong young golfer has proved, a full, powerful rotation of the core muscles is the ultimate key to the power and precision that make great golf possible.

Here are six core exercises that may complement and enhance the other exercises in this chapter, adding core strength and stability to the posture, hip and spine flexibility you've already developed (we hope!).

Core exercise 1: Downward belly burners

Downward belly burners can improve your core muscle strength, promote your ability to achieve and maintain an optimal spine angle at address and throughout your full golf swing, and provide significant increases in swing speed that translate into increased power.

To perform the downward belly burner exercise:

1. **Kneel on a padded surface and rest both forearms on a Swiss ball. Keep your back straight enough that a golf club can touch your lower back, upper back and the back of your head (see Figure 4-16(a)).**
2. **Perform a neutral pelvic tilt, exhale and slowly roll the ball forward, extending your hips and shoulders equally, as far as possible, until you feel a strong but comfortable abdominal, chest and shoulder muscle contraction while maintaining a straight spine (see Figure 4-16(b)).**

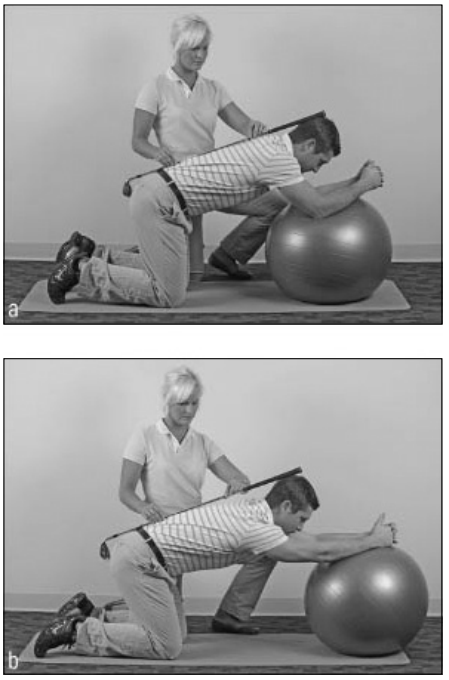


Figure 4-16: **(a)** Lean on a Swiss ball, keeping your back straight. **(b)** Roll the ball forward, extending hips and shoulders.

3. **Inhale as you slowly roll the ball and pull your body back to the starting position.**

Repeat this exercise by doing 1 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions, one to three times per day.

Core exercise 2: Superman

The Superman drill improves your core strength, posture and balance control, and strengthens your upper back and shoulders. It also improves your ability to maintain a proper spine angle, to stay stable over the ball and make a consistent full swing.

To perform the Superman exercise:

1. **Lie face down over the Swiss ball. Perform a neutral pelvic tilt and hold a club in the double 'tray position' (see Figure 4-17(a)).**
2. **Maintain the pelvic tilt, then retract your shoulderblades together and reach your arms over your head with your elbows as straight as possible (see Figure 4-17(b)). Hold this position for one breath, then bring your arms back to the double 'tray position'.**

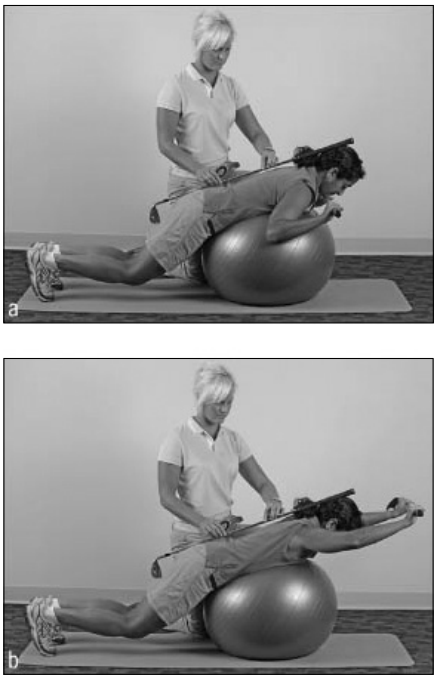


Figure 4-17: (a) Perform a neutral pelvic tilt with the club in the double 'tray position'. **(b)** Retract your shoulder-blades, keeping your elbows straight.

Perform this exercise 10 to 30 times, one to three times per day. When you have mastered it, increase the difficulty by holding hand weights.

Core exercise 3: Russian twists

The Russian twist improves your upper and oblique abdominal muscle strength. It also promotes your ability to perform a full shoulder turn while maintaining a stable lower body, leading to further increases in swing speed that translates into power and distance off the tee.

To perform the Russian twist exercise:

1. **Lie on your back over a Swiss ball with a soccer ball, volleyball or kickball between your knees. Hold a weighted medicine ball in your hands with your arms straight in front of your chest, pointed towards the ceiling.**
2. **As you exhale, slowly rotate your upper torso as far as possible in one direction, keeping your arms in front of your chest. Then slowly rotate your upper torso as far as possible in the opposite direction (see Figure 4-18).**

Perform 1 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions, one to three times per day. When you're ready to advance, increase the weight of the medicine ball and/or the speed of your upper body rolls.

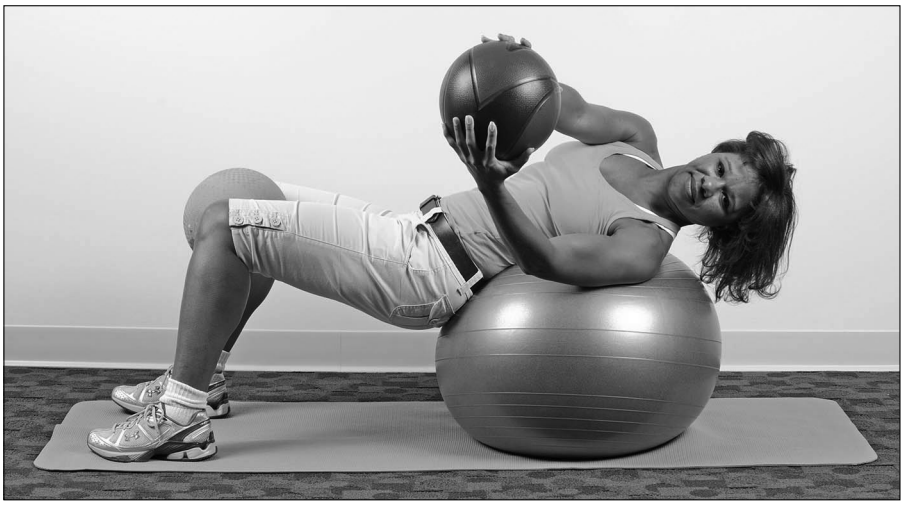


Figure 4-18: Rotate as far as possible in one direction, then the other.

Core exercise 4: Seated torso rotations

Seated torso rotations may improve your posture, balance and core muscle strength. They can help you make a more complete shoulder turn in your full swing, and improve your ability to maintain arm and club connection in front of your body throughout the full swing. Equally important, they can reduce stress and injury potential to your neck, shoulders, arms and lower back when you play golf.

To perform the seated torso rotation exercise:

1. **Attach fitness tubing with handles around a fixed pole (or in a closed door). Position your Swiss ball so that the tubing is at chest height as you sit on the ball, with no slack in the tubing. The tubing should be angled approximately 30–45 degrees to your left. (*Note:* Your Swiss ball must be inflated so that your hips and knees are bent to 90 degrees when you sit on the ball.) Position a ball between your knees.**
2. **Hold both handles of the tubing with your arms pulled to the centre of your chest. (See Figure 4-19(a).)**

Figure 4-19: **(a)** Position yourself as shown, with your arms tight to your chest. **(b)** Squeeze your shoulder-blades, then rotate slowly to the right.

3. **Sit tall, then perform a neutral pelvic tilt, squeezing your shoulderblades together and, as you exhale, slowly rotating your upper torso as far as possible to the right (see Figure 4-19(b)). (*Note:* Be sure to keep your shoulderblades squeezed together, your hands connected to the front of your chest and your legs stable as you rotate.)**
4. **Hold this rotated position for one breath, then inhale as you relax your upper torso back to the starting position.**

Perform 1 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions in both directions, one to three times per day. When you are ready to do more, simply move further from the tubing attachment to add stretch resistance to the tubing, or buy tubing with greater resistance.

As you gain flexibility, you can advance this exercise by extending your arms in front of your chest at the end of your full shoulder turn. You can also perform the exercise while standing.

Core exercise 5: Bow-and-arrow twister

The bow-and-arrow twister can improve the strength of your core, hips, chest, shoulders, arms, hands and spine-rotation muscles, as well as aiding your ability to maintain a proper spine angle during your swing. It can help you make a more powerful shoulder turn during your backswing and follow-through, while reducing muscle stress and the risk of injury.

To perform the bow-and-arrow exercise:

1. **Attach fitness tubing with handles in a low position around a fixed pole (or in a closed door). Stand in your golf 'address' position with your hands in front of your body so the tubing angles up approximately 45–60 degrees from its fixed position, with no slack in the tubing. (See Figure 4-20(a).)**
2. **Slowly pull one hand towards your body, rotating your spine and shoulders as far as possible while keeping your hips and legs stable (see Figure 4-20(b)). (*Note:* You should feel like you're pulling the string back on a bow to shoot an arrow.) Hold this position for one breath, then inhale as you relax back to your starting position.**

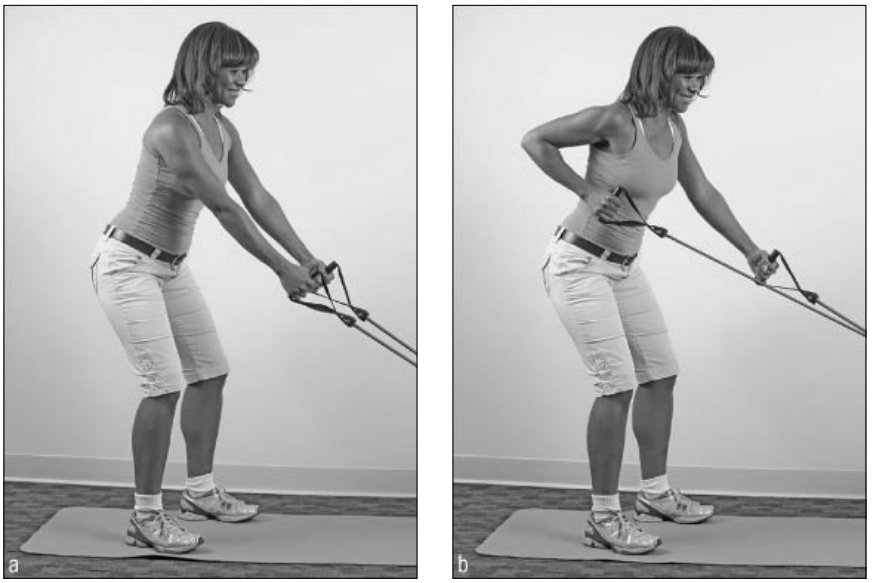


Figure 4-20: (a) In your 'address' position, grip the tubing at a 45–60 degree angle. **(b)** Pull one hand back, like an archer pulling a bowstring. Repeat with the other hand.

Perform 1 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions in *both directions*, one to three times per day.

When you're ready to advance the exercise, move farther away from the tubing attachment to add stretch resistance to the tubing, or buy tubing with greater resistance.

Core exercise 6: Medicine ball twists

Medicine ball twists may improve your core and spinal-rotation strength as well as your posture and balance control. They can also strengthen your arms, shoulders, hips and legs, and improve your ability to maintain a proper spine angle for greater stability over the ball and a more consistent swing path. They can even help you add clubhead speed for more distance.

To perform the medicine ball twist exercise:

1. **Holding a weighted medicine ball, assume your normal posture at address. Perform a neutral pelvic tilt and shoulderblade squeeze.**
2. **Maintain the pelvic tilt and shoulderblade squeeze while slowly rotating your spine and torso to the right, keeping the medicine ball in front of your chest throughout the full turn. (See Figure 4-21.)**

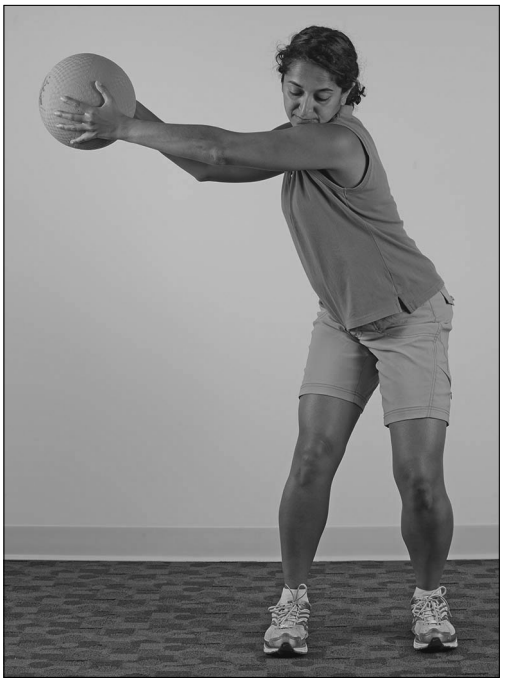


Figure 4-21: Rotate while keeping the medicine ball in front of your chest.

3. **Hold this fully rotated position for one breath, then slowly rotate as far as you can to the left.**

Perform 10 to 30 repetitions, one to three times per day.

When you're ready to do more, gradually increase the weight of the medicine ball. Other ways to advance this exercise are:

- Increasing the speed of your torso rotations.
- Standing on half-foam rolls or any other unstable base — but be sure you maintain a stable lower body.

Chapter 5

Where to Play and How to Fit In

In This Chapter

- Practising at driving ranges
- Playing on public courses
- Getting a deal on memberships or green fees
- Fitting in at golf clubs and golf resorts
- Joining a golf foursome
- Surviving a round with a jerk

Golfers play in three main settings: At public facilities, private clubs and on resort courses. In this chapter, we tell you the basics about all three, from the skuzziest driving range to the fanciest private club. We also share tips on how to fit in wherever you play — how to walk, talk, dress and accessorise like a *real* golfer. We even tell you how to make the best of a round with a jerk. There aren't many jerks in this game — most golfers are great company — but you've gotta be ready for anything.

We'll start with the basics: Where in the world can you play golf?

Some courses have only 9 holes, while a few resorts offer half a dozen 18-hole courses, or even more. At the famous Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina, you'll find eight great 18-hole layouts, including Pinehurst No. 2, one of the finest in the world. In Australia, the National Golf Club on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula has three courses (the club once investigated adding two more) and is Australia's biggest golf club in terms of the number of courses. China's gigantic Mission Hills Golf Club, the world's largest, features a dozen courses — that's 216 chances to drive yourself nuts!

You can also hit balls at driving ranges, which is how you should start. If you rush to the nearest course for your first try at golf, tee off and then spend most of the next few hours missing the ball, you won't be very popular with your fellow golfers. Believe us, they'd rather enjoy a cool beverage in the clubhouse than watch you move large clumps of earth with every swing.

Driving Ranges

Driving ranges are fun. You can make all the mistakes you want. You can miss the ball, slice it, duff it, top it — do anything. The only people who'll know are the ones next to you and they're probably making the same mistakes.

Driving ranges are basically large fields, stretching as far as 500 metres in length — which means, of course, that even Tiger Woods or long-drive king Jamie Sadlowski could 'let the shaft out' and swing for the fences. But you don't have to hit your driver. Any good driving range has signs marking off 50 metres, 100 metres, 150 metres and so on. You can practise hitting to these targets with any club.

Many driving ranges will lend or hire you clubs, though some expect you to bring your own. As for balls, you purchase bucketfuls for a few dollars — how *many* dollars depends on where you are. In some parts of Australia and New Zealand, you can still hit a bucket of balls for a few dollars. But on weekends at busy city driving ranges the cost is up to ten times as much.

Public Courses

As you'd expect from their name, public courses are open to anyone who can afford the green fee. They tend to be busy, especially on weekends and holidays. At premier public courses like New York's Bethpage Black, the site of the 2002 and 2009 US Opens, some golfers sleep in their cars overnight so they'll be first in line for a tee time the next morning. Sleeping in a car may not sound like much fun, but we're told it's a great bonding experience.

The 21st century is proving to be a great time for public courses. In America, Chambers Bay, a spectacular new facility in Washington state, will host the 2015 US Open, joining Bethpage Black and another famous municipal course, San Diego's venerable Torrey Pines, in the Open rotation. The best public courses can be hard to get on and they aren't cheap — green fees (which you pay when you play 18 holes) at Chambers Bay, for example, range from $89 to $175. But most players will tell you they're worth the effort and expense. The majority of new Australian golf courses are open for public play at least some of the time and aren't nearly as expensive to play as the American courses.

Tee-time policies

Each course has its own tee-time rules. Many let you book a time up to a month in advance. Some follow a strange rule: You must show up at a designated time midweek to sign up for weekend play. And some courses you can't book at all. You just show up and take your chance (hence, the overnight gang sleeping in their cars). Our advice is simple: Phone ahead and find out the policy at the course you want to play. Many club websites will also give you an idea of their policy. You may even be able to book online there and then.

Okay, we'll assume that you've jumped through whatever hoops are necessary and you know when you're supposed to play. So you pull into the car park about an hour before your tee time. What next? Most courses feature a clubhouse. You may want to stop inside to change clothes and maybe buy something to eat or drink.

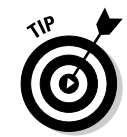
By all means, make use of the clubhouse, but don't change your shoes in there. If you're already dressed to hit the greens, put on your golf shoes in the car park. Then throw your street shoes into the boot. Don't worry about looking odd as you lace those spikes with your foot on the car bumper. It's a golf tradition — and it's one of those little idiosyncrasies in golf that separates public-course play from private clubs.

I'm here! Now what?

The first thing to do at the clubhouse is to find the pro shop. Confirm your time with the pro or starter, then pay for your round. The pro is sure to be in one of two places: Teaching on the practice range or hanging out in the pro shop. If the pro doesn't collect your money, a starter adjacent to the first tee usually will. As for cost, the price depends on the course and its location. Some humble rural courses charge as little as $10 — and you pay on the honour system, dropping your money into a box! Upscale public facilities, even those with no hope of ever hosting a national championship, routinely charge $100 and up. At gorgeous Pebble Beach Golf Links in California, where the green fee way back in the 1950s was a bargain at $5, it's now $495! At least they give you free tees.

After the financial formalities are out of the way, hit some balls on the driving range to warm up those creaky joints of yours.

Your practice sessions may not be as long as mine, but then you're not trying to figure out how to beat Fred Couples on the Champions Tour! Here's what I do when I'm playing in a pro event: I get to the course one hour before my starting time. I go to the putting green and practice short shots — chip shots and short pitches. (Chapter 9 covers these shots in detail.) This gives me an idea of how fast the greens are and loosens me up for full-swing shots.



Make sure that you're allowed to play pitch and chip shots to the practice green on your course — some courses prohibit it.

Then I wander over to the practice tee and loosen up with some of the exercises that I describe in Part II. Start with the wedges and work your way up to the driver. Next, I hit my 3-wood (some players call this titanium club the *3-metal* — a more accurate term, but it clangs in my ears). Then I proceed to bomb the driver. (If 'Boom Boom' Couples is next to me, I quietly wait for him to finish, *then* I hit my driver.) Immediately after hitting practice drives — ten balls at most — I hit some short sand-wedge shots to slow down my metabolism. I visit the putting green next, usually 15 minutes before I tee off. (See Chapter 8 for more about putting.) I start with simple 2- to 3-foot putts straight up a hill, to build my confidence. Then I proceed to very long putts — aiming not for the hole, but for the far fringe of the green. I do this because I don't want to become target-conscious on long putts. Putting the ball to the fringe lets me work on speed. It's the last thing I do before going to the tee. (Well, if it's a big tournament and my knees are shaking, I might make a detour to the bathroom.)

Private Clubs

In your early days as a golfer, you probably won't play much at private clubs. But if you *do* play at a private club, it can be intimidating! But don't panic. You're still playing golf; it's just that the 'goal posts' have been shifted slightly.

To avoid committing any social faux pas, remember a few formalities:

- **Before you leave home, make sure you're wearing the right clothes.** A T-shirt announcing you as an avid follower of the Collingwood Magpies or those cool (in your mind, anyway) cut-off jeans won't work in this environment. Wear a shirt with a collar and, if shorts are allowed, go for the tailored variety that stop just short of your knees. Short shorts are a no-no at most private clubs. In the autumn and winter, slacks are acceptable for women. In the summer, shorts cut just above the knees are fine.
- **Get good directions to your destination.** It won't do your heart rate or your golf game any good to have a stressful journey full of wrong turns.
- **Time your arrival so that you have just an hour to spare before you tee off.** A good host will already be there to meet you in the clubhouse.
- **When you arrive at the club, park in the visitors' car park.** Most private clubs have separate sections for members and visitors. But don't park in the club president or captain's space. Believe me, there's nothing guaranteed to get you run out of the place faster, so look out for the signs — they're usually in the best parking spots.
- **When you're inside the clubhouse, head for the locker room.** Leave your street shoes in the visitors' locker room, then ask for directions to the bar or to wherever your host is waiting. Don't offer to buy your host a drink. First, he or she is the host. And second, you probably won't be able to buy anything anyway. Your host will most likely sign the tab and be billed at the end of the month. (The only place where your cash/plastic will be accepted is the pro shop. The pro will sell you anything, but take our advice: Skip the purchase of that neat-looking shirt with the club logo on it. Every time you wear it, people will assume you're a member there. The questions will soon get old.)
- **On the course, be yourself.** And don't worry about shooting the best round of golf you've ever played. Your host won't expect that. Even if you happen to play badly, he won't be too bothered as long as you look as if you're having fun and keep trying. Just don't complain or make excuses. Nobody likes a whinger.
- **Post-round practices vary from private club to private club.** Changing your shoes in the car park is frowned upon at many elite clubs so make use of the locker rooms — that's what they're there for. Most private clubs don't allow golf shoes in the main bar. There may be a 'spike bar' where you're allowed, so check with your host where you're meeting for that post-round beverage. Some clubs also have a dress code for the clubhouse where shorts and even golf shirts are not allowed after certain hours. If in doubt, phone the club before you play so you know to take a jacket and tie if necessary. If you're staying for a meal, take a change of smart clothes. Aren't private clubs grand?

Resort Courses

You're on holiday and you're dying to play golf. Where to go? To a resort course, of course. Most resort courses in Australia are found in Queensland, such as Sanctuary Cove and Links Hope Island on the Gold Coast, and Hyatt Regency Coolum, Pelican Waters and Twin Waters on the Sunshine Coast, but there are plenty of others scattered across the country. New Zealand offers several on the North Island, while on the South Island there's Clearwater Resort in Christchurch and a couple of terrific new courses in Queenstown.

The great thing about resort courses is that you don't have to be a member or even have one in tow. The only problem arises when you aren't staying in the right place. Some courses are for certain hotel guests only. And again, prices vary, depending on the course and its location. Generally, though, resort courses cost a good deal more than public courses, partly because of the service provided.

Phone ahead of time to find out when you can play.

When you drive your car towards the clubhouse, don't make the simple mistake of turning sharply into the car park. Go right up to the clubhouse. Look for any sign that reads 'bag drop' as a person may be waiting to greet you. Acknowledge the cheery hello as if this is something you do every day. Then pop the boot, so the bag drop attendant can remove your clubs, and you can park your car and stroll into the clubhouse. Don't worry about your clubs. They will be loaded onto a cart for you.

Resort courses are a lot like public courses, but some have bag handlers and other employees who may expect a tip.

You'll probably have to hire a cart, too. Carts are mandatory at most resort golf courses. So enjoy the ride! You'll drive to your drive, then hop back behind the wheel and putt-putt to your putt.

How to Get a Deal on Memberships or Green Fees

Back in the go-go 1990s, hardly anyone thought to ask, 'Could I get a discount on that private-club membership?' That would be like asking for a free air-freshener in a new Lamborghini. But times change and when the economy slows down, the prices of upscale items like club memberships and resort-course green fees sometimes come down, too. That can work to the advantage of you, the smart golfer.

Time to make the club scene?

The game's most elite clubs never seem to suffer. You don't see members complaining about the cost of belonging to Augusta National, where the pros play the Masters every spring, or Royal Melbourne or Royal Sydney golf clubs, where if you have to ask the joining fee you almost certainly can't afford it.

But at other clubs, including some terrific ones, tougher times bring opportunity. Several years ago the beautiful Newport Beach Country Club in Southern California (where yours truly won the 1999 Toshiba Senior Classic) cut its initiation fee from $42,000 to $5,000 for players between 21 and 37 years old. The club wanted to attract younger members who'd keep coming back for decades and it worked.

Many Australian golf clubs have reduced their joining fees by half or even to nothing. That's right — you can join for free, as long as you pay your annual or monthly fees.

You see, private clubs rely on much more than upfront fees. They need to sell clubs, balls and shirts in the pro shop, burgers in the snack bar and drinks in the bar.

And this is one area in which golf, which is often seen as the preserve of old white men, may be changing for the better. Many clubs are more eager than ever to welcome women and younger players and will offer financial incentives to do so.

So if you're thinking of joining a private club, shop around. Don't be afraid to ask if joining fees might be waived, reduced or at the very least paid in instalments. Tough economic times affect almost everybody — they might just smile and say, 'Join the club'.

Saving at resorts and public courses

The same belt-tightening that squeezes private clubs hits golf resorts and high-end public courses, too. So when you call to arrange a tee time, don't hesitate to haggle. You might say, 'I'm bringing two foursomes. Can you give us a discount?' Or, 'I'd love to play there, but your green fees are a little high for me'.

It never hurts to ask (politely). Even if the answer is no, you can ask, 'Can you steer me to a nice course that's a little more affordable?' You might discover a hidden gem.

Finally, most public facilities and resorts offer twilight rates. You tee off in the late afternoon, paying half to two-thirds the usual green fee. Even if you don't finish before dark, you'll experience a course you may want to play again.

How to Fit In on the Course

It all starts at the first tee. We cover the gambling aspect of this initial get-together in Chapter 15, but you should know some other things as well.

If you're playing with friends, you don't need any help from us. You know them and they know you. You should be able to come up with a game by yourselves. And you'll be able to say anything to them, with no risk of offending anyone.

That's not the case if you show up looking for a game. Say you're at a public course and you've asked the pro to squeeze you in. Tell the pro your skill level and be honest. If you're a beginner, you don't want to be thrown in with three low-handicap players.

Forget all that talk about how golf's handicap system allows anyone to play with anyone. That propaganda doesn't take human nature into account.

Golf, like life, has its share of snobs. And some of the worst are single-digit handicappers. Most of them have no interest in playing with a mere beginner. They might say they do, but they're lying. They see 18 holes with someone who can't break 100 as four to five hours of torture. The same is true on the professional tours. Some pros, such as Mark O'Meara, genuinely enjoy the Wednesday pro-ams, when each professional is teamed with three or four amateurs, but many would gladly skip them if they could. (They can't, because the tour *requires* pros to show up for pro-ams.) Now that may seem like a rotten attitude, but it's a fact of golfing life. No one will actually *say* anything to you (golf pros are generally much too polite), but the attitude is there. Get used to it.

Maybe we're being a little harsh, but it's a fact that golfers are more comfortable playing with their 'own kind'. Watch a few groups play off the first tee and you'll soon spot a trend. Almost every foursome consists of

four players of relatively equal ability. There's a reason for that. Make that two reasons: No-one wants to be the weak link in the chain. And no-one wants to play with 'hackers who can't keep up'.

So let's say you're paired with Gary, Jack and Arnold. Introduce yourself calmly but quickly. Tell them what you normally shoot, if and when they ask, and make it clear that you're a relatively new golfer. This fact is impossible to conceal, so don't try. But don't volunteer any further information. Save that for during the round. Besides, you'll find that most golfers are selfish — they really don't care about your game. They'll make polite noises after your shots, but that's the extent of their interest. You'll soon be that way, too.

There is nothing — *nothing* — more boring than listening to tales about someone else's round or game. Of course, boring your friends that way is part of the social order of this game. Golf stories are endless and most are embellished, but they promote the bonding done over beers in the clubhouse bar, which is also called the *19th hole*.

Beginners sometimes do things that mark them as misfits on the course. Avoid these blunders at all costs:

- **Don't carry one of those telescoping ball retrievers in your bag.** It suggests that you're planning to hit balls in the water.
- **Don't wear your golf cap backward.** Ever. No exceptions.
- **Don't do stretching exercises on the first tee.** Find a place a few metres away, where it won't look like you're auditioning for *The Biggest Loser*.
- **When it's your turn to hit, be ready!**

When You're the Worst in Your Group

Early in your golfing existence, almost everyone is better than you. So you'll probably spend some rounds as the worst player in your foursome. What do you do? This section gives you some survival tips.

Pick it up!

The worst thing you can do is delay your playing partners. After you've hit the ball, oh, nine times on a given hole, pick it up and quit that hole as a courtesy to your playing partners. There's always the next hole.

When you're actually scoring a game, you may be required to finish out every hole — that is, you must post a score for each hole. But beginners should feel free to skip that technicality. While you're learning, don't worry about scores.

Find your own ball

This comes under the 'don't delay' heading. If you happen to hit a shot into the highest spinach patch on the course, don't let your companions help you look for it. Tell them to play on and you'll catch up after a 'quick look'. They'll see you as someone who, though having a bad day, would be worth playing with again. (If you don't find the ball within a couple of minutes, declare it lost — put an X on your scorecard for that hole.)

Never moan, never analyse

Don't be a pain in the you-know-what. Most golfers gripe and moan when they're playing poorly. That's bad — and boring for the other players, who don't want to hear about your woes. All they care about is that you're slowing things, so grit your teeth and keep moving.

Analysing your swing is another common crime: You hit a few bad shots — okay, more than a few. Then you say, 'Maybe if I just turn a little more through the ball . . .' This is the *last* thing your playing partners want to hear. We repeat: *They don't care about your game.* So don't analyse and don't ask them for swing tips. If one is offered, try it, but keep it quiet.

When You're Not the Worst

Then there's the other side of the coin. How do you behave when another golfer in your group can't get the ball above shin height? Here are some pointers:

- **Zip that lip.** Whatever you do, don't try to encourage your friends as their game implodes. After a while, you'll run out of things to say. And your friends will be annoyed with you.

- **Never give advice or swing tips to the other player.** You'll only be blamed for the next bad shot he or she hits.
- **Talk about other stuff.** The last thing you should discuss is your friend's awful game. Find some common interest and chat about that. Try football, movies or the stock market. Even politics and religion are safer topics than that 20-metre drive your friend just dribbled off the tee.

Beware: You May Be Paired With a Jerk

Most golfers are princes or princesses — tall, smart and good looking. The game not only *tests* character, it *builds* character. We're willing to bet there are fewer louts and scoundrels in golf than in any other major sport. But with more than 1.2 million Australian golfers out there, you're bound to encounter a few bad apples. Here's how to avoid a rotten day when it happens.

Who not to play with

As we mention earlier, most foursomes are made up of players of roughly equal ability. That's what you want. In fact, the best scenario is to find three golfers who are just a little bit better than you. By trying to keep up with them, you'll probably improve your usual game.

Those are the sorts of people you *should* be playing with. The people you *shouldn't* be playing with are those who play a 'different game'. That means anyone who shoots more than 20 shots less than you on an average day. All someone like that will do is depress you and your slower, less-expert play may irritate him or her. Such a situation can bring out the jerk in both of you. So stay away from the best golfers at your course — at least for now. When you get better, playing with them will help you improve.

How to endure

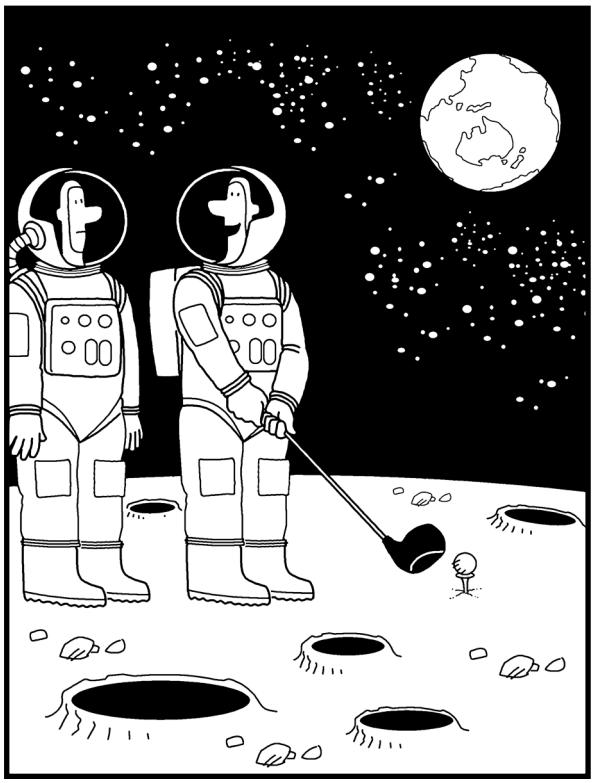
Sometimes you can't help it — you're stuck with a loud, cursing lunkhead who talks during your swing, jabbers on his or her mobile phone and gives everyone unsolicited advice. How to deal?

- **At first, ignore the jerk.** It's a beautiful day and you're out on the course playing the best game in the world. Play your game and be glad you'll only be spending a few hours with Golfzilla. If the jerk's behaviour annoys the other members of your group, let them be first to make the call.

- **If the jerk keeps it up, speak up.** Say, 'You walked on my putting line — please don't'. Or, 'You're distracting me by talking on your mobile phone'. Being firm but polite often works with jerks.
- **Treat the jerk as a hazard.** If all else fails, think of Golfzilla the way you think of a strong wind or a lousy lie in a bunker. Golf is all about dealing with adversity. If you can keep your wits and make a good swing despite the jerk, you'll be a tougher, better golfer next time out.

Part II

Getting Into the Swing



'Between you and me, this is really why I became an astronaut. Moon gravity adds 500 metres to my tee shot.'

In this part . . .

How can something that takes a little over one second to perform — the golf swing — be so complicated to learn? Do you need to go back to school and study theoretical physics? No. Just enrol here and we'll make it easy for you.

This part shows you how to swing a golf club the simple, effective way. We show you how to build your swing and then how to do everything from knocking your drive off the opening tee to hitting bunker shots (they're easier than they look) to brushing that metre-long putt into the 18th hole for your par.

Chapter 6

Swing Basics

In This Chapter

- Understanding the importance of balance
- Learning about different sorts of swings
- Getting into the right position
- Building a swing of your own
- Making a full, effective swing

What is a golf swing? That's a very good question, one that has different answers for different people. For most of us, a golf swing means 'body parts moving in an undignified manner'.

In simple terms, though, a golf swing is a (hopefully) coordinated, balanced movement of the whole body around a fixed pivot point. If done correctly, this motion swings an implement of destruction (the club) up, around and down so that it strikes the ball with an accelerating blow on the centre of the clubface.

We're starting to feel dizzy. How about you?

It's a Balancing Act

Balance is the key to this whole swing thing. You can't play golf with consistency if at any time during your swing, you fall over. In contrast, when your swing consists of a simple pivot around a fixed point, the clubhead strikes the ball on the same downward path and somewhere near the centre of the clubface every time. Bingo!

You're probably wondering where this fixed point in your body is. Well, it isn't your head. It's a myth that you must keep your head perfectly still throughout the swing. We don't advise you to try, unless you've got a chiropractor on retainer.

The fixed point in your golf swing should be in the middle of your chest, about 7 or 8 centimetres below the spot where your collarbones meet, as shown in Figure 6-1. Your swing rotates around that point. If you get that pivot point correct, your head will swivel a little bit as you turn back and then through on your shots. If your head moves like Linda Blair's did in *The Exorcist,* you may have a career in the circus, but not in golf.

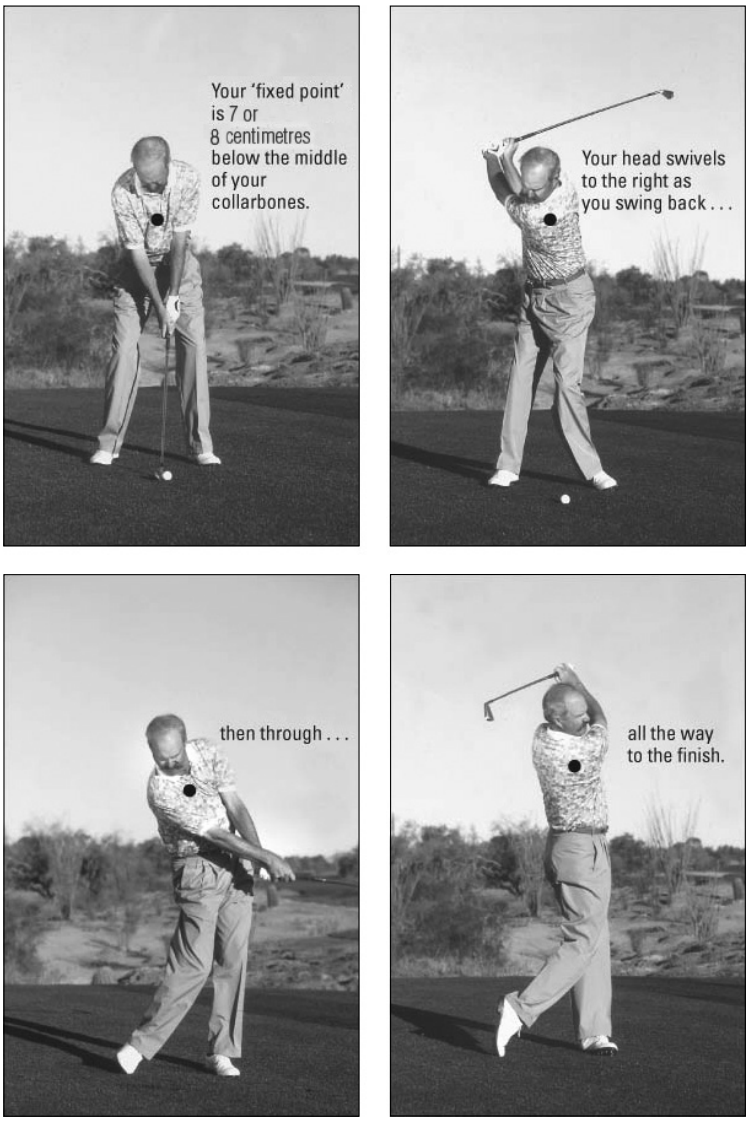


Figure 6-1: What *doesn't* move in your golf swing.

Different Strokes

You can swing the club effectively in many ways. For example, there are long swings and short swings. Imagine that you backed into a giant clock. Your head is just below the centre of the clock. If at the top of your swing your hands are at 9 o'clock and the clubhead is at 3 o'clock, you're in the standard position. The shaft is parallel to the ground.

At the top of Jamie Sadlowski's long swing, his hands are at 12 o'clock and the clubhead is approaching 5 o'clock. Other swings have a shorter arc. John Cook succeeded on the US PGA Tour with a short swing. His hands only go to 8 o'clock and the clubhead goes to 1 o'clock. Adam Scott stops short of parallel because he feels that his swing gets loose if he goes farther. Physical constraints dictate the fullness and length of your swing; the distance the club travels is unimportant.

Golf swings differ in other ways, too.

- Some players swing the club more around their bodies — the way you'd swing a baseball bat.
- Others rely more on their hands and arms to generate clubhead speed.
- Still others emphasise twisting and untwisting the body.

Physique and flexibility play a major role in how you swing a golf club. If you're short, you'll have a flatter swing — more around your body — because your back is closer to perpendicular at *address* (the motionless position as you stand ready to hit the ball). If you're tall, you'll either use longer clubs or bend more from the waist at address. Most tall players develop upright swings.

The left arm always swings about 90 degrees to the angle of the spine. Stand straight up and put your left arm straight out, away from your body. Now start bending at the waist. See how your arm lowers? It's staying 90 degrees to your back as you bend downward. We wish we'd studied more geometry in school!

Flight School

Although you can swing a golf club in many ways, all good swings have a few common denominators. But before we get to that, we want to break down the factors of flight:

- First, you want to hit the ball.
- Second, you want to get the ball up in the air and moving forward.

- Third, you want to hit the ball a long way.
- Fourth, you want to hit the ball a long way while your friends are watching.
- And last, you become obsessed, just like the rest of us.

Hitting the ball

You would think hitting the ball would be easy. But golf isn't tennis or baseball, where you can react to a moving ball. In golf, the ball just sits there and waits, beckoning you to make it go somewhere.

Here's your first thought: 'I won't turn my body too much; I'll just hit the thing with my hands'. That's natural — and wrong. You're worried about losing sight of the ball in your backswing and hitting nothing but air. You're not alone. We've all been through this sweat-drenched nightmare of flailing failure. But don't worry. You will evolve! You will make contact!

Getting the ball airborne

Okay, after a few fairly fruitless attempts, you're finally hitting more ball than air. Now you need a lesson in the aerodynamics of the game. The only time you want the golf ball to be on the ground is when you're close to the hole. To have any kind of fun the rest of the time, you want air under the ball; you need the ball to fly! Then you can stare with horrified fascination at the ridiculous places the ball goes, which is the essence of the game.

One of my *Golf For Dummies* secrets is that the only time you should lift something is when you rearrange your living-room furniture. *Never* try to lift a golf ball with your club. You should *hit down* with every club except the driver and the putter, as shown in Figure 6-2. And when you do hit down, don't duck or lunge at the ball; hit *down* but keep your head *up*.

If the club in your hands is a fairway wood or an iron, hit down.

Figure 6-2: *Hit down* to make the ball go up.

When you use your driver, the ball is set on a tee about 2.5 centimetres above the ground; if you hit down, the ball will fly off the top part of the club and the shot will be high and short — the dreaded pop-up! With the driver, you want the clubhead moving into the ball on a horizontal path, slightly upward at impact.

When you putt, you don't want the ball airborne. A putter is designed to roll the ball along the ground, so you need a more horizontal hit with that club. (See Chapter 8 for information on putting.)

Generating power

As soon as the ball is in the air, your ego kicks in. Power with a capital *P* becomes your concern. Power intoxicates your mind. Power makes legends out of mere mortals. Power makes you want to get a tattoo. Power also sends the ball to bad corners of your little green world if you don't harness it.

Some professional golfers can create as much as 4½ horsepower in their swings. That's some kind of giddy-up. The ball leaves their drivers at speeds of more than 240 kilometres an hour. This power comes from a blending of the body twisting around a slightly moving pivot point with a swinging of the arms and hands up and around on the backswing, and then down and around in the forward swing. All of which occurs in the space of about a second!

To optimise power, try to turn your back to the target on your backswing (see Figure 6-3). This move involves another *Golf For Dummies* must-do: On the backswing, turn your left shoulder under your chin until it is above your right foot. Make sure to turn your shoulders far enough. Don't just raise your arms. Turning your shoulders ensures that you have power for the forward move. *Turn for power.* The unwinding of the hips and the shoulders on the downswing creates a power surge.

The same swing principles apply for women. However, to build momentum and swing speed, ladies generally rely less on muscle and more on a longer backswing. A long backswing allows full rotation in the left shoulder, which allows the left arm to extend and cocks the wrist to help release power.

Figure 6-3: On the backswing, turn your left shoulder over your right foot.

More power for women!

We've seen plenty of female golfers with tremendous power — women from Mickey Wright to Laura Davies to Michelle Wie. But for the most part, female golfers struggle to generate power. The average woman simply doesn't have the same upper-body, forearm and wrist strength as a man. Much to her dismay, she finds it physically impossible to drive the ball 300 metres.

But with a few simple exercises (see Chapter 4), female golfers — or golfers at any level — can strengthen and condition their upper bodies, wrists and forearms enough to boost the power in their swings.

Here's one simple exercise that improves wrist strength — and you can do it almost anywhere. Take a tennis ball in your hand and squeeze until it hurts. Then switch hands and do the same thing. You don't have to give yourself carpal tunnel syndrome — just repeat this exercise for at least five minutes with each hand. You'll notice gradual improvement in your wrist and forearm strength, which will help you avoid wrist injury and arm fatigue — and will add precious metres to your drives.

Building Your Swing

To become a golfer, you must master the building blocks of your swing. How do you hold the club so that you can give the ball a good whack? After you have a good grip, how do you align yourself to the target so that the ball goes somewhere near where you aimed? What should your posture look like? How much knee flex should you have and where in the world should the ball be placed in your stance? Should you look at the ball or somewhere near the sun? This section has the answers.

For natural left-handers, perfecting the golf swing can be tricky. In the past, not many clubs were designed for lefties and most course designs put left-handed golfers at a disadvantage. As a result, many lefties were taught to play right-handed. Today, however, technology has advanced to the point where left-handers have little trouble finding clubs.

Whether you swing left-handed or right-handed, it basically all comes down to which side has the stronger, most natural-feeling swing. To find out what works best for you, try swinging the club like a baseball bat from each side (keeping a safe distance from all breakable objects and small children). The muscles used in swinging a bat are similar to those used in a golf swing. Which reminds Gary of what Sam Snead said when a baseball slugger told him that hitting a baseball was harder than playing golf.

'Maybe', said Sam, 'but I have to play my foul balls'.

Of course, you may have trouble hitting straight shots on the golf course. If so, you can always blame the equipment. That's what Gary does.

The grip

Although the grip is one of the most important parts of the game, it's also one of the most boring. Few golfers who've played for any length of time pay much attention to hand placement. For one thing, your grip is hard to change after you get used to the way your hands feel on the club. For another, hand placement simply doesn't seem as important as the swing itself. That kind of neglect and laziness is why you see so many bad grips — particularly among bad players.

Get your grip correct and close to orthodox at the beginning of your golfing career. You can fake just about anything, but a bad grip follows you to the grave.

Women tend to have smaller hands than men, so it's important to have the right grip size on the club. Another tip for ladies is to use the closed-face grip position, which can help square the clubface during the swing.

Here's how to sleep well in eternity with the correct grip. Standing upright, let your arms hang naturally by your side. Get someone to place a club in your left hand. All you do now is grab the club and — *voilà!* — you've got your left-hand grip. Well, almost. The grip has three checkpoints:

1. **Place your left thumb and left index finger on the shaft.**

   We like to see a gap of about 1.5 centimetres between the thumb and index finger. To get that gap, extend your thumb down the shaft a little. If extending your thumb proves too uncomfortable, pull your thumb in towards your hand. One and a half centimetres is only a guide, so you have some leeway. But remember: The further your thumb extends down the shaft, the longer your swing. And the opposite is also true. Short thumb means short swing. (See Figure 6-4.)

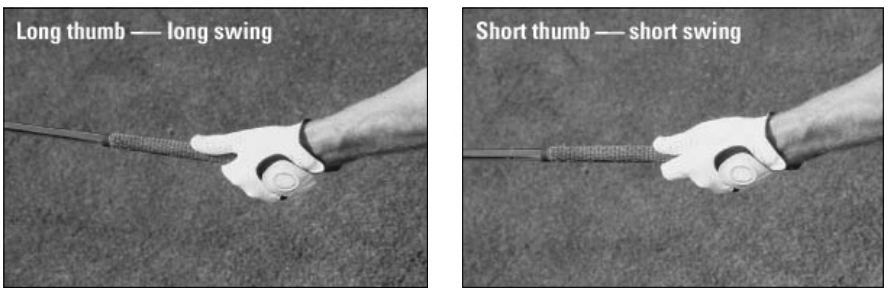


Figure 6-4: Long thumb, short thumb.

2. **Make sure the grip crosses the base of your last three fingers and the middle of your index finger, as shown in Figure 6-5.**

   This is vital. If you grip the club too much in the palm, you hinder your ability to hinge your wrist and use your hands effectively in the swing. More of a finger grip makes it easy to cock the wrist on the backswing, hit the ball, then recock the wrist on the follow-through. Just be sure that the *V* formed between your thumb and forefinger points towards your right ear.

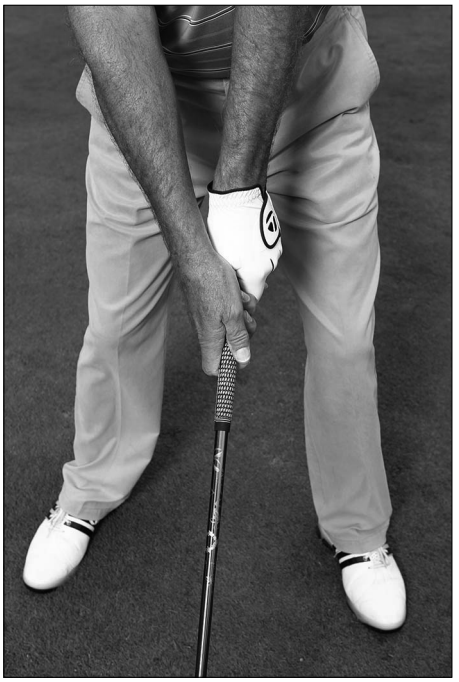


Figure 6-5: Grip more in the fingers of the left hand than in the palm.

3. **Complete your grip by placing your right hand on the club.**

   You can fit the right hand to the left in one of three ways: The overlapping (or Vardon) grip, the interlocking grip, or the ten-finger grip. We cover each of these in the following sections.

Vardon grip

The Vardon grip is the most popular grip, certainly among better players. The great British player Harry Vardon, who still holds the record for British Open wins — six — popularised the grip around the turn of the 20th century. Old Harry was the first to place the little finger of his right hand over the gap between the index and next finger of the left as a prelude to completing his grip, as shown in Figure 6-6. Harry was also the first to put his left thumb on top of the shaft. Before this grip became popular, players kept their left thumbs wrapped around the grip as if they were holding a baseball bat.

Try the Vardon grip. Close your right hand over the front of the shaft so that the *V* formed between your thumb and forefinger points to your right ear. The fleshy pad at the base of your right thumb should fit snugly over your left thumb. The result should be a feeling of togetherness, your hands working as a unit.

This grip is very cool — probably 90 per cent of tour players use the Vardon grip.

Figure 6-6: In the Vardon grip, the right pinkie overlaps the left index finger.

Interlocking grip

The interlocking grip is really a variation on the Vardon grip. The difference is that the little finger of your left hand and the index finger of the right actually hook together (see Figure 6-7). Everything else is the same. You may find this grip more comfortable if you have small hands. Jack Nicklaus, possibly the game's greatest player ever, uses this grip for that reason. Many top female players use this grip, too.

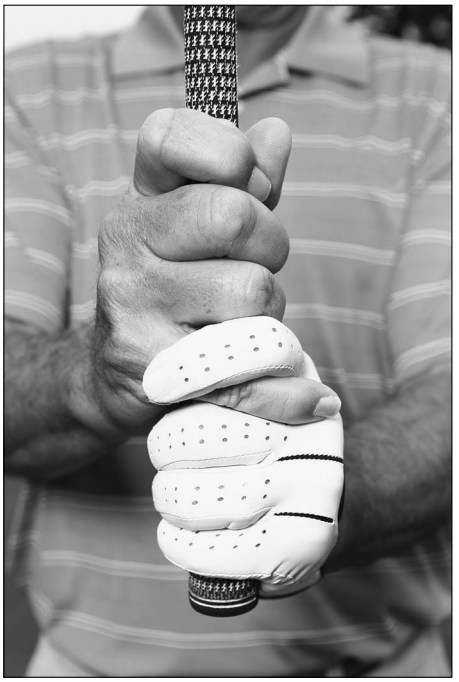


Figure 6-7: An alternative is to interlock the right pinkie and left index finger.

Ten-finger grip

The ten-finger grip used to be more common and you still see it occasionally. Bob Estes has used it on the US PGA Tour. Dave Barr — one of the best players ever from Canada — also uses this grip. The ten-finger grip is what the name tells you it is. You have all ten fingers on the club, like a baseball player gripping a bat. No overlapping or interlocking occurs; the little finger of the left hand and the index finger of the right barely touch (see Figure 6-8). If you have trouble generating enough clubhead speed to hit the ball as far as you want, or if you're fighting a slice, give this grip a try. Keep in mind that controlling the clubhead is more difficult with this grip because more 'cocking' of the hands occurs.

Figure 6-8: You can place all ten fingers on the club in a 'baseball grip'.

Completing your grip

Put your right hand on the club, with the palm directly opposite your left hand. Slide your right hand down the shaft until you can complete whatever grip you prefer. Your right shoulder, right hip and head lean to the right to accommodate the lowering of the right hand. Your right earlobe moves closer to your right shoulder.

Your grip pressure should never be tight. Your grip should be light — no clenching. You should exert only as much pressure as you would when picking up an egg from a spotted owl. Lightly now! Spotted owls are becoming extinct!

Aiming

Gary's played pro golf for more than 30 years, which means taking part in a lot of pro-ams. (In a pro-am, each professional is teamed with three or four amateurs.) And in every single one of those rounds, he saw someone misaligned at address. Sometimes that someone was him! Aiming properly is that difficult.

Generally speaking, right-handed golfers tend to aim too far right of the target. We don't see many of them aiming left — even slicers, whose shots commonly start left and finish right. Invariably, people tend to aim right and swing over the top on the way down to get the ball started left. (For information on fixing common faults, see Chapter 11.)

What makes aiming so difficult? Human nature is part of it. Getting sloppy with your aim is easy when your mind is on other things. That's why discipline is important. Taking the time and trouble to get comfortable and confident in his alignment is one reason Jack Nicklaus was as great as he was. He worked his way through the same aiming routine before every shot. And we emphasise *routine*. First, he'd look at the target from behind the ball. Then he picked out a spot a few feet ahead of his ball on a line with that target. That spot was his intermediate target. Then he walked to the ball and set the clubface behind it so that he was aiming at the intermediate point. Aligning the club with something a metre away is much easier than aiming at something 150 metres away.

How Nicklaus aimed is exactly how you should work on your aim. Think of a railroad track. On one rail is the ball and in the distance, the target. On the other rail are your toes. Thus, your body is aligned parallel with — but left of — the target line. If you take nothing else away from this section on aiming, remember that phrase. Cut out Figure 6-9 and tape it onto the ceiling over your bed. Stare at it before you go to sleep.

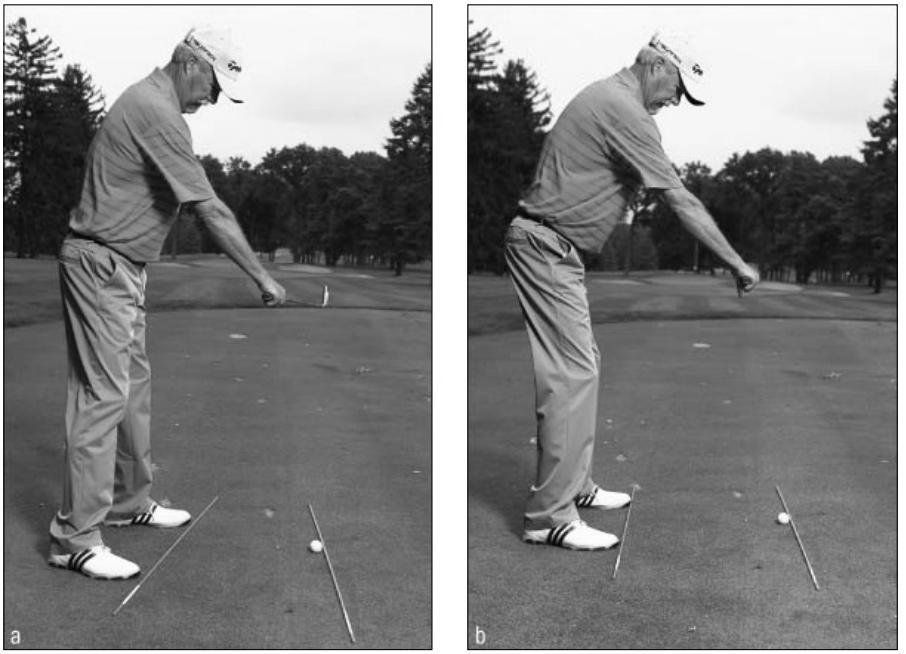


Figure 6-9: Alignment: Your feet should be *parallel* to the target line (right), not aimed at the target (left).

Don't make the mistake that Gary sees countless golfers making: Aiming their feet at the target. Gary's friends all do this, but think about it: If you aim your feet at the target, where is the clubface aligned? To the right of where you want the ball to go! (See the right-hand photo in Figure 6-9.) I'm hammering away on this point because misalignment is one of the most common errors in golf. So save yourself a lot of heartache and get your feet aligned a little to the left of the target line, *parallel* to it.

The stance

Okay, you're aimed correctly. But your feet aren't finished yet. Right now, you're just standing there. All the books tell you to turn your left toe out about 30 degrees. But what's 30 degrees? If you're like me, you have no clue what 30 degrees looks like or — more important — feels like, so think of it this way:

You know what a clock looks like. If you can read a clock, you can build a stance. Your left foot should be pointed to 10 o'clock and your right foot should be at 1 o'clock. However, this doesn't work during daylight saving time. You're on your own then.

Figure 6-10 demonstrates this stance. Keep it simple and always be on time.

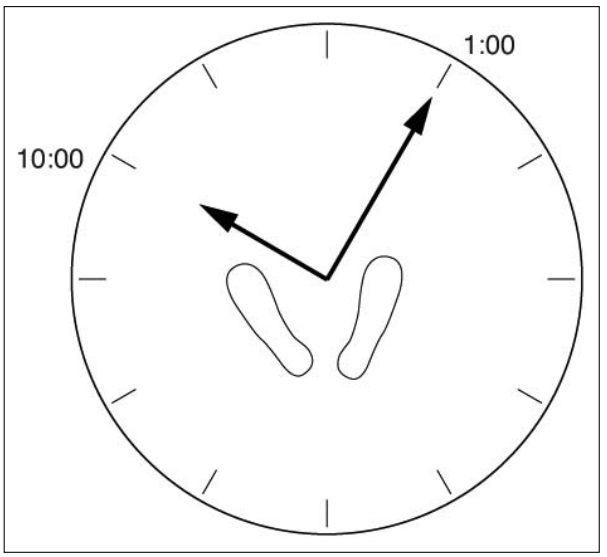


Figure 6-10: A standing start.

Width of stance is easy, too. Your heels should be shoulder-width apart, as shown in Figure 6-11. Not 35 centimetres, or 45 centimetres. Shoulder-width. Let the shape of your body dictate what's right for you.

Figure 6-11: Your knees should be as far apart as your shoulders.

Knee flex

Moving on up, our next stop is at your knees. Again, you can read all sorts of books that tell you the precise angle at which your knees should flex at address. But that won't do you much good when you're standing on the range without a protractor. What you need is a *feel*.

Think of knee flex as a 'ready' position. You've got to set yourself so that movement is easy. So, from an upright start, flex your knees and bend forward until your arms are hanging vertically, as shown in Figure 6-12. That's where you want to be. Just like a halfback waiting for a scrum. Or a soccer goalkeeper facing a shot. Or a slips fielder ready for a sharp catch. You're ready to move. Left. Right. Back. Forward. Whatever. You're ready. And remember, maintaining balance is the key.

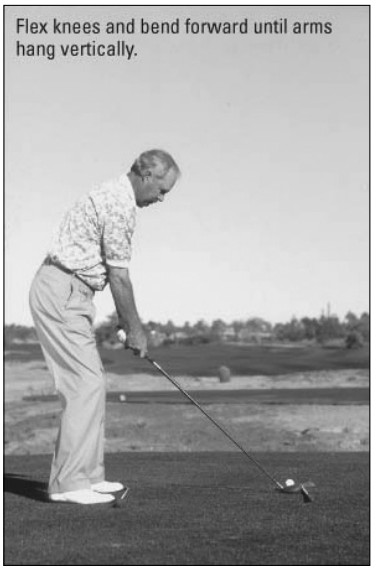


Figure 6-12: Get 'ready'.

Ball position

Where is the ball positioned between your feet? It should be opposite your left armpit with a driver, which also should be opposite your left heel. For other clubs, the ball should be steadily moved back with each club until you get to the middle of your stance with a wedge (see Figure 6-13).

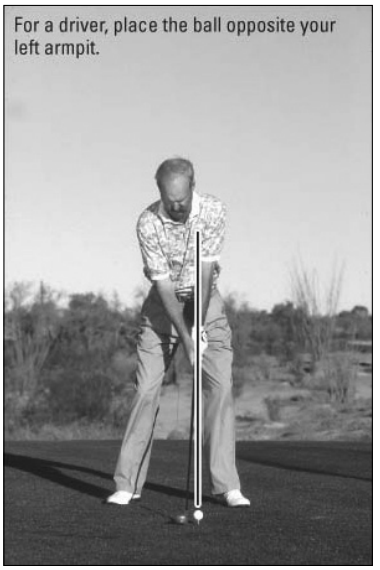


Figure 6-13: Ball position.

You want to hit up on the ball with your driver — that's why the ball is forward in your stance (towards the target). You want to hit down with all other clubs, which is why you move the ball back in your stance (away from the target) as the loft of your clubs increases. When the ball is played back in your stance, hitting down is much easier.

The bottom of the swing

The bottom of the swing is an important, often-neglected aspect of golf. After all, that's usually where the ball is! The arc of the swing has to have a low point; hopefully, that low point is precisely where your golf ball will be as you swing an iron. (***Note:*** The driver must be hit on the upswing.) If you don't know where the bottom of your swing is, how do you know where to put the ball in your stance? You can make the best swing in the world, but if the ball is too far back, you'll hit the top half of it. Too far forward is just as bad — you'll hit the ground before the ball.

Fear not; such shots are not going to be part of your repertoire. Why? Because you're always going to know where the bottom of your swing is: Directly below your head.

Think about it. We've discussed how the ball is positioned opposite the left armpit for the driver. That position automatically puts your head 'behind' the ball whenever you swing your driver. In other words, the ball is nearer the target than your head is. Which means that you'll strike the ball a slightly upward blow. The bottom of the swing is behind the ball, so the clubhead will be moving up as it hits the ball, as shown in Figure 6-14. That's all right because the ball is perched on a tee. The only way to make solid contact (and maximise your distance) is to hit drives 'on the up'.

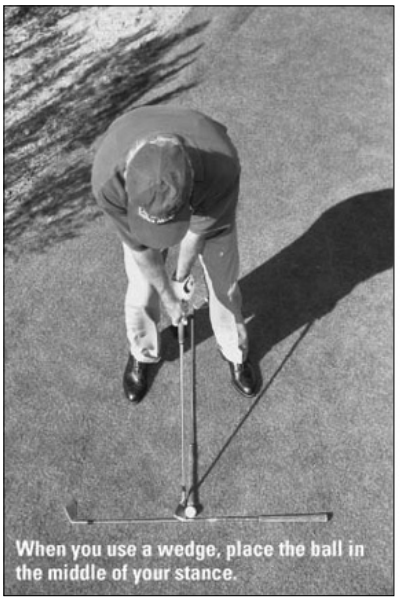
Figure 6-14: Tee the ball about 3 centimetres high for an upward strike with the driver.

The situation for an iron shot from the fairway differs from that of the driver. Now the ball is sitting on the ground. Plus, the club you're using has more loft and is designed to give best results when the ball is struck just before the ground. So now your head should be over the ball at address and impact. In other words, something has to move.

That something is the ball. Start from the middle of your stance, which is where the ball should be when you're hitting a wedge, one of the shortest and most lofted clubs in your bag. Move the ball steadily forward — all the way to opposite your left armpit for the driver — as the club in your hands gets longer. (See Figure 6-15.)

For Gary, the distance between his left armpit and chin is about 15 centimetres. With the driver, the ball is opposite his left armpit and with the shorter irons, it's opposite his chin (that is, where his head is). In Gary's case, the ball moves about 15 centimetres. Most golf courses are about 6,300 metres, so 15 centimetres shouldn't have much significance. Practise this part early in your development and you'll have more success with the other 6,300 metres.

You may be a little confused by all of that. It may sound weird that the more lofted clubs (which hit the highest shots) are back in your stance so that you can hit down on the ball more. But the explanation is a simple one: The more the clubface is angled back from vertical, the higher the shot will fly. Thus, the only way to move a ball from the ground into the air is by exerting downward pressure.



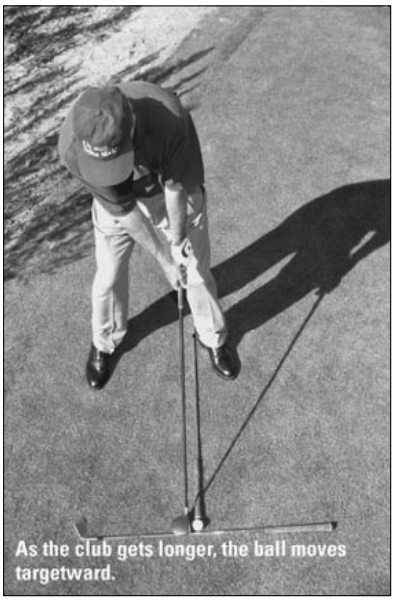


Figure 6-15: The ball moves!

Eyes on the ball

We see too many players address the ball with their chins on their chests. Or, if they've been told not to do that, they hold their heads so high they can barely see the ball. Neither, of course, is exactly conducive to good play.

So how should you position your head? The answer is in your eyes. Look down at the ball, which is in what optometrists call your *gaze centre.* Your gaze centre is about the size of a Frisbee. Everything outside your gaze centre is in your peripheral vision. Now lift or drop your head slightly. As your head moves, so do your eyes and so does the ball — into your peripheral vision. Suddenly you can't see the ball so well. But if you hold your head steady enough to keep the ball inside that Frisbee-shaped circle, you can't go too far wrong (see Figure 6-16).

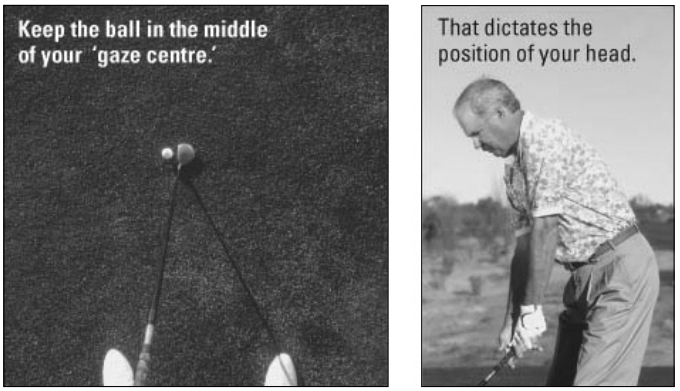


Figure 6-16: Stay focused.

One hand away

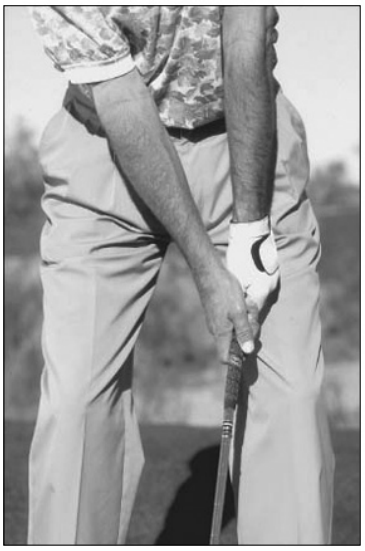
One last thing about your address position: Let your arms hang so that the butt end of the club is one hand from the inside of your left thigh, as shown in Figure 6-17. You should use this position for every club in the bag except for your putter.

The butt end of the club is a useful guide to check the relationship between your hands and the clubhead. With a wedge, for example, the butt end of the club should be in line with the middle of your left thigh. For a driver, it should be opposite your zipper. As before, every other club is between those parameters.

Well, we've covered a lot of stuff and we haven't even taken a cut at the ball yet. That's how important these pre-swing routines are. Once you get yourself in position to move the club away from the ball, you'll be able to forget your address position and concentrate on your swing.

The club should be one hand from your body.

The shaft of a wedge should point at the crease in your left pant leg (or the middle of your thigh).



A driver should point at your zipper.

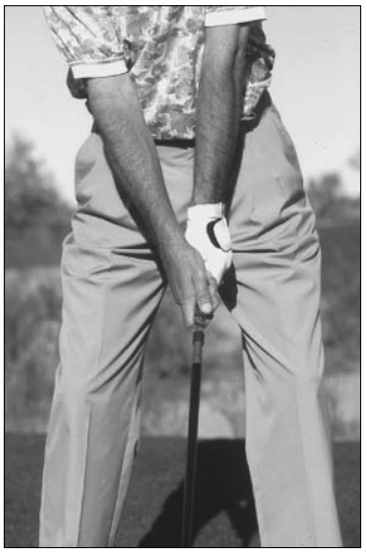


Figure 6-17: Your hands and the club.

It's time to do what you've been wanting to do: Create some turbulence. Now we'll get on with the swing.

Unleashing Your Swing

Many people think the most effective way to develop a consistent swing is to stand on the range whacking balls until you get it right. But the best way to develop a consistent swing is actually to break the swing down into pieces. Only after you have the first piece mastered should you move on to the next one. We start with *miniswings*.

Miniswings: Hands and arms

Position yourself in front of the ball as we describe earlier in this chapter. Now, without moving anything but your hands, wrists and forearms, rotate the club back until the shaft is horizontal to the ground and the toe of the club is pointing up. The key to this movement is the left hand, which must stay in the space that it's now occupying, in its address position (see Figure 6-18). The left hand is the fulcrum around which the 'swing' rotates. The feeling you should have is of the butt of the club staying in about the same position while your hands lift the clubhead.

After you get the hang of that little drill, try hitting shots with your miniswing. Let the club travel through 180 degrees, with the shaft parallel to the ground on the backswing and then back to parallel on the through-swing; your follow-through should be a mirror image of your backswing. The ball obviously doesn't go far with this drill, but your hands and arms are doing exactly what you want them to do on a full swing: Cock the wrists, hit the ball, recock the wrists.

After you have this move down, it's time to turn on the horsepower and get your body involved.

From address, push down with your left hand as you pull up with your right.

Rotate the club back until the shaft is horizontal, the toe pointing up.

Figure 6-18: Push down, pull up.

Test your rhythm

One of the most effective ways for your brain to master something like the golf swing is to set the motion to music. We all learned our ABCs by putting the letters to song. I've played some of my best golf while humming Hootie and the Blowfish tunes. Music plays a valuable role in the learning process.

When you start to move the club and your body into the swing, think of a melody. Make the song real music. Rap, with its staccato rhythm, is no good. It suggests too much independent movement. The golf swing should be a smooth motion, so your song should reflect that smoothness. Think of Tony Bennett, not Eminem.

Anyway, here's the first step towards adding body movement to the hands-and-arms motion described above.

Stand as if at address, with your arms crossed over your chest so that your right hand is on your left shoulder and your left hand is on your right shoulder. Hold a club against your chest with both hands, as shown in Figure 6-19.

Now turn as if you're making a backswing. Turn so that the shaft turns through 90 degrees, to the point where the shaft is perpendicular to a line formed by the tips of your toes. As you do so, let your left knee move inward so that it points to the golf ball. The butt of the club also points at the ball.

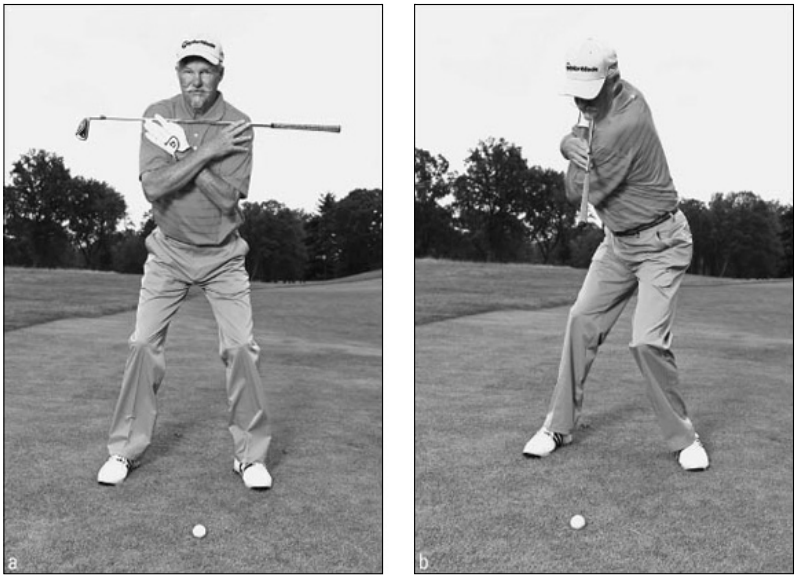


Figure 6-19: Turn your body.

The real key here is keeping your right leg flexed as it was at address. Retain that flex and the only way to get the shaft into position is by turning your body. You can't sway or slide to the right and still create that 90-degree angle.

Your backswing should feel as if you're turning around the inside of your right leg until your back faces the target. That's the perfect top-of-the-backswing position.

Unwinding

From the top, you must let your body unwind back to the ball in the proper sequence. (***Note***: Your spine angle must stay the same from address to the top of the backswing.)

Uncoiling starts from the ground up. The first thing to move is your left knee. That knee must shift towards the target until your kneecap is over the middle of your left foot, where it stops. Any more shifting of the knee and your legs will start to slide past the ball. An alignment stick poked into the ground just outside your left foot is a good check that your knee shift hasn't gone too far. (See Figure 6-20.) If your left knee touches the stick, stop and try again.

Next, your left hip slides targetward until it is over your knee and foot. Again, a stick in the ground provides a good test — a deterrent to keep your hip from going too far.

Pay special attention to the shaft across your chest in this phase of the swing (work in front of a mirror if you can). The shaft should always be parallel to the slope of your shoulders as you work your body back to the ball.

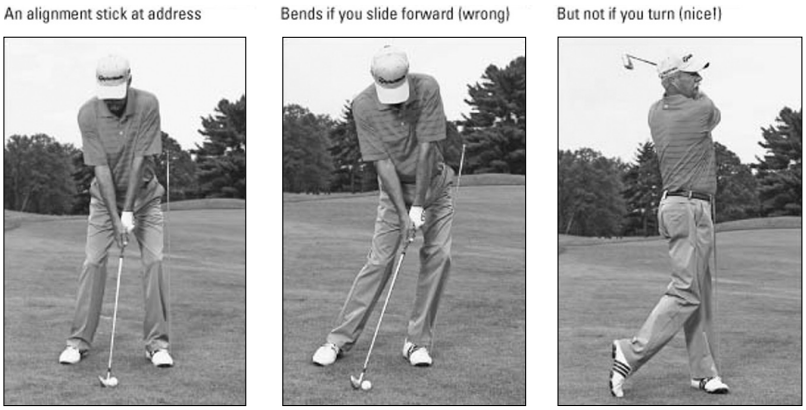


Figure 6-20: *Turn,* don't slide.

Finishing: Go ahead and pose

'Swing' through the impact area all the way to the finish. Keep your left leg straight and let your right knee touch your left knee, as shown in Figure 6-20. Hold this position until the ball hits the ground — that way, you'll prove beyond doubt that you've swung in balance.

Get yourself together

Practise these exercises. After you put them together, you'll have the basis of a pretty sound golf swing, one that combines hands/arms and body motion.

- Practise your miniswing.
- Hum a mellow tune.
- Turn your shoulders so that your back is towards the target.
- Turn, don't slide.
- At the finish, keep your left leg straight, with your right knee touching your left knee.

Coordinating the parts into a golf swing takes time. The action of the parts will soon become the whole and you'll develop a feel for your swing. But knowledge, in this case, does not come from reading a book. Only repetition — hitting enough balls to turn this information into muscle memory — will help you go from novice to real golfer. So get out there and start taking some turf!

Key on the rhythm of your swing. There comes a point in every golfer's life when you just have to 'let it go'. You can work on mechanics as much as you want, but then the moment to actually hit a ball comes. And when that moment comes, you can't be thinking about anything except, perhaps, one simple swing key, or swing thought. That's why top golfers spend most of their time trying to get into a focused, wordless, wonderful place they call the *zone*.

The *zone* is a state of uncluttered thought, where good things happen without any conscious effort from you. You know the feeling: The rolled-up ball of paper you throw at the rubbish bin goes in if you just toss it without thinking. The car rounds the corner perfectly if you're lost in your thoughts. In golf, getting into the zone means clearing your mind so that your body can do its job. The mind is a powerful asset, but it can hurt. Negative thoughts about where your ball might go won't help you make your best swing.

Of course, getting into the zone is easier said than done.

So how do you get there? Perhaps the best way is to focus on the rhythm of your swing. By *rhythm*, we don't mean speed. We've seen fast swings and slow swings and a lot in between, and all can have good rhythm. For example, three-time major winner Nick Price has a fast swing. Blink and you miss it. In contrast, 1987 Masters champ Larry Mize has an extremely slow motion. Governments work faster. Yet Price and Mize both have perfect rhythm. You can still see it on the Champions Tour. And their rhythm is the key.

The rhythm of your swing should fit your personality. If you're a fairly high-strung, nervous individual, your swing is probably faster than most. If your swing is slower, you may be more laid back and easygoing. But the potential for great rhythm is within every golfer.

Swing triggers: What's a waggle?

Good rhythm doesn't just happen. Only on those days when you're in the zone can you swing on autopilot. The rest of the time, you'll need to set the tone for your swing with your waggle. A *waggle* is a motion with the wrists in which the hands stay fairly steady over the ball and the clubhead moves back a foot or two, as if starting the swing (see Figure 6-21). In fact, a waggle is a bit like the miniswing drill we describe in the section 'Miniswings: Hands and arms', earlier in this chapter.

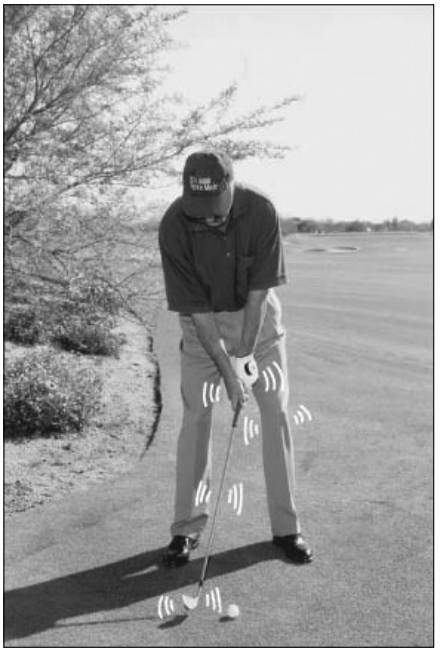


Figure 6-21: Get in motion.

Waggling the club serves two main purposes.

- **Waggling is a rehearsal of the crucial opening segment of the backswing.**
- **Waggling can set the tone for the pace of the swing.** In other words, if you have a short, fast swing, make short, fast waggles. If your swing is of the long and slow variety, make long, slow waggles. Be true to your species.
- **Make that *three* main purposes: In golf, you don't want to start from a static position.** You need a running start to keep your swing from getting off to an abrupt, jerky beginning. Waggling the clubhead eases tension and introduces movement into your setup.

But the waggle is only the second-to-last thing you do before the backswing begins. The *last* thing is your swing trigger. A swing trigger can be any kind of move. For example, 1989 British Open champion Mark Calcavecchia shuffles his feet. Gary Player, winner of nine major championships, always kicked his right knee in towards the ball. A slight turning of the head to the right was Jack Nicklaus's cue to start his swing. Your swing trigger is up to you. Do whatever frees you up to get the club away from the ball. Create the flow!

Kevin Costner's rehearsal

When I worked with Kevin Costner on his golf game for the movie *Tin Cup,* one of the first things we talked about was a pre-shot routine. We had to get him to look like a real touring pro and every pro has his own routine.

Kevin picked up the pre-shot routine really fast. He would get about 2 metres behind the ball and look first at the ball, then at the target (seeing the target line in his mind's eye). He would then walk up and put his clubface right behind the ball and his feet on a parallel line to his target line, establishing the correct alignment. He would look at the target once, give the club a little waggle, and then — *whack!* — off the ball went. By the time the golf sequences were shot for the movie, Kevin had the look of a well-seasoned touring pro. In fact, as we were walking down the second hole together in the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic, I asked Kevin where he got all his mannerisms — tugging on his shirt, always stretching his glove by pulling on it and pulling his pants by the right-front pocket. He looked at me and said, 'I've been watching you for the past three months'. I had no idea I was doing all those things in my pre-shot routine! So I'm living proof that your mannerisms become automatic if you do them enough.

By the way, my pre-shot routine looks a lot better when Kevin Costner does it!

Visualising shots

As you practise your swing and hit more and more shots, patterns — good and bad — emerge. The natural shape of your shots becomes apparent. Few people hit the ball dead-straight; you'll either *fade* most of your shots (the ball flies from left to right, as shown in Figure 6-22) or *draw* them (the ball moves from right to left in the air).

If either tendency gets too severe and develops into a full-blooded slice or hook (a *slice* is a worse fade and a *hook* is a worse draw), you should stop playing. Go get a lesson. One session with your local pro should get you back on track.

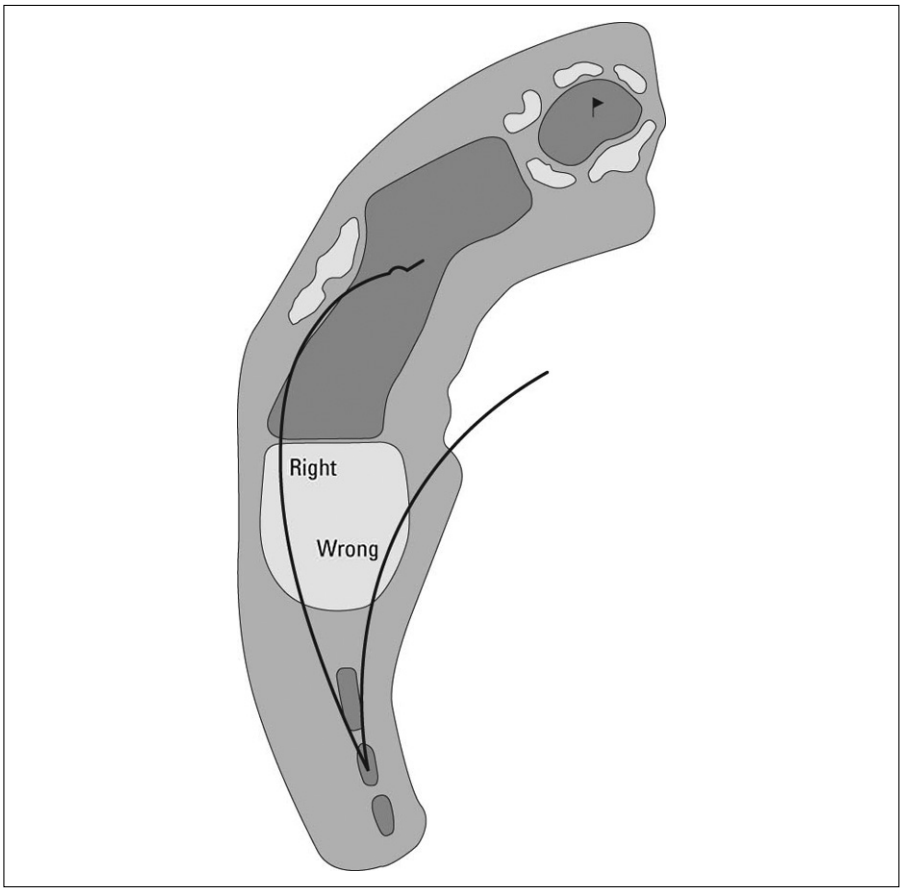


Figure 6-22: If you hit a ball that curves from left to right, aim far enough left to allow the curve of your ball to match the curve of the hole.

Lessons are important. Faults left to fester and boil soon become ingrained into your method. When that happens, curing them can become a lengthy, expensive process. The old adage comes to mind: 'Pay me now, or pay me later'. Pay your pro early, when your woes are easier to fix. (Chapter 3 offers valuable information on golf lessons. For a list of golf schools, see Appendix B.)

Anyway, after you've developed a consistent shot shape, you can start to visualise how that shape fits the hole you're playing. Then, of course, you'll know exactly where to aim, whether the hole is a *dogleg right* (turns right), *dogleg left* (turns left) or straightaway. You're a real golfer.

A near-perfect swing — Hey, that's me!

When you put together all the connected parts we discuss in this chapter, they should flow into a swing. The first time you see yourself swinging in a series of photos, a camcorder video, or a DVD, you'll swear that that person is not you. What your swing feels like versus what really occurs can be deceiving.

The golf swing is tempo and rhythm filtered through your personality. People who rush through life swing fast; those who go slowly swing like molasses. ***Note:*** Your swing should suit your personality.

If you can master the basic mechanics described in this book and apply them to your own personality, your swing should bloom into something unique. Work hard to understand your swing and watch how other people swing. The great Ben Hogan told Gary how he watched other golfers: If he liked something they did, he would go to the practice tee and incorporate that particular move into his swing to see if it worked. What finally came out was a mix of many swings blended to his needs and personality. A champion works hard.

Gary's golf swing is not the one that got him to the US PGA Tour. In 1986, at the age of 38, he started working with Mac O'Grady to revamp his entire swing. Mac gave Gary a model that he blended with his existing swing, shown in the nine photos of Figure 6-23. What came out is a pretty good-looking golf swing, if Gary does say so himself. Gary's thankful to Mac for at least making him look good!

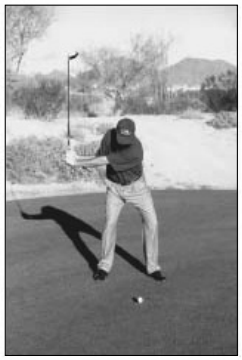
Address: The calm before the chaos. All systems are go and flight is imminent.

Monitor your swing speed at this time. Checking to see if my seatbelts are fastened.

Turn and stay balanced over your feet. Feel the sun and breeze on your face.

I've reached the top. I'm in attack mode, my swing is growing teeth.

The start down is a slooooooow accumulation of speed. At this time, I've forgotten the sun and wind on my face.



I've organised my chaos. Liftoff is precise. My soul feels the ball.

The hit is relayed up from the shaft to my hands, through my arms into my command centre. Post-impact, I feel I've been here forever.

My first glimpse at the sphere that is targetbound. The anxieties of flight and destination consume my brain.

Who cares where it went? I look good enough to be on the top of a golf trophy.

Figure 6-23: Not a bad-looking golf swing!

Chapter 7

Improve Your Move

In This Chapter

- Defining your golf persona
- Finding your swing plane
- Learning from the greats

This chapter comes with the golf equivalent of a health warning: The information on the next few pages isn't for everyone. That's not to say anything you'll read here is wrong; it isn't. But for many people — especially those at an early stage of development as golfers — it may be a lot to assimilate. Little puffs of smoke will be coming from your ears.

So follow the wise man's advice: Golfer, know thyself. Are you the type who brings a new HDTV home and starts hooking this cable to that port, plugging this into that without looking at the manual? Do you start punching buttons without taking the manual out of its wrapper? If so, skip this chapter. You already know all you need to know about the golf swing — at least for now.

But if you're the type who goes from page 1 to the end of the manual as you piece components together, you'll need to know more about the swing before you can unleash your swing with confidence.

If that's you, then read on, brave explorer.

You Used to Be a Beginner

Gary's friend, the renowned teacher Peter Kostis, breaks golfers into four personas. Now that you know the basics of the game, you'll probably recognise yourself as one of them:

- **Analytics** are organised. You can always spot their desks in the office — they're spotless.

- **Drivers,** as you'd expect, are driven to *get it done*. They won't stop until they've reached their goal.
- **Amiables** are easy to deal with. They'll accept any advice you offer without questioning it.
- **Expressives** go with the flow; rather than rein in their feelings, they adjust to whatever comes their way.

In recent golf history, an analytic is someone like Nick Faldo or Bernhard Langer. Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and Annika Sorenstam are drivers. Tiger Woods is a little of both. Correction — make that *a lot* of both. Nancy Lopez, Fred Couples, Ernie Els and Ben Crenshaw are amiables. And Phil Mickelson and Lee Trevino are classic expressives.

Drivers and analytics don't play like amiables and expressives. For a driver or analytic to score well, he needs confidence in his mechanics. An amiable or expressive doesn't — if he feels like he's playing okay, then his swing must be okay, too.

Suppose four of history's greatest golfers played an exhibition. Lee Trevino, Ben Crenshaw, Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo are scheduled to tee off at Running Rut Golf Course at precisely 11 am. Because of a mix-up with the courtesy cars that pick up the players and deliver them to the golf course (Jack and Nick don't like the colour of their car; Lee and Ben couldn't care less), the players are late getting to Running Rut.

When they arrive, with only ten minutes to tee off, the analytic (Faldo) and the driver (Nicklaus) hurry to the driving range. Faldo has to swing to gain confidence and Nicklaus has to hit balls because he likes to work at his game.

The other two guys are in the locker room putting on their golf shoes. Trevino is deep in conversation with the locker-room attendant about the virtues of not having to tune up his car for 160,000 kilometres due to the advances in modern car servicing technology. Crenshaw is puffing a cigarette, telling a club member that he was flabbergasted yesterday when three long putts lipped out on him. The expressive (Trevino) and the amiable (Crenshaw) don't have to hit balls to get ready. They wake up ready and go from there.

By the way, the match never happens. Faldo and Nicklaus refuse to come to the tee because Nick wants to keep hitting balls on the practice tee and Jack ends up redesigning the practice range. We hear the locker-room attendant bought Trevino's old car.

At this stage of your development, it's best to be an amiable or an expressive. As a new golfer, you've got an enormous amount of information to absorb. Anything that limits confusion is a plus.

Having said that, this chapter is for all you analytics and drivers out there. Amiables and expressives — I'll see you in Chapter 8.

Establishing Your Swing Plane

The *swing plane,* at its most basic, is the path the club's shaft follows when you swing. Many factors affect your swing plane, including your height, your weight, your posture, your flexibility, the thickness of your torso and maybe even the magnetic field of your wristwatch. Swing plane can get complicated — especially if you want to cover all the possible variations in the plane from address to the end of the follow-through.

At this point, for all you amiables and expressives who kept reading (we warned you!), let me expound on the idea of thinking less about swing *plane* than swing *shape*. Two of the best players in the game when Gary was on tour — Greg Norman and Bruce Lietzke — had totally different planes to their swings. Why? Because the golf swing consists of different planes that shift during the course of any swing. Greg shifted the plane of his swing a little to the outside on the backswing, then shifted to the inside on the downswing to achieve his particular curve of the ball, a *draw.* Bruce shifted the plane of his swing a little to the inside on the backswing, then shifted to the outside on the downswing to get his particular curve of the ball, a *fade.*

The plane of your swing is dictated to a large extent by the shaft's angle at address. The swing you make with a wedge in your hands is naturally more upright — or should be — than the swing you make with a driver. The driver has a longer shaft than the wedge and a flatter *lie* (the angle at which the shaft emerges from the clubhead), so you have to stand farther away from the ball.

In this book, we're assuming that you maintain the plane you establish at address throughout your swing. This isn't always the case: If a player's favoured shot bends a great deal in the air, the swing plane will tilt to the right or left to compensate for the ball's flight. But if you're trying to hit straight shots — as most amateurs should — one consistent plane is the way for you.

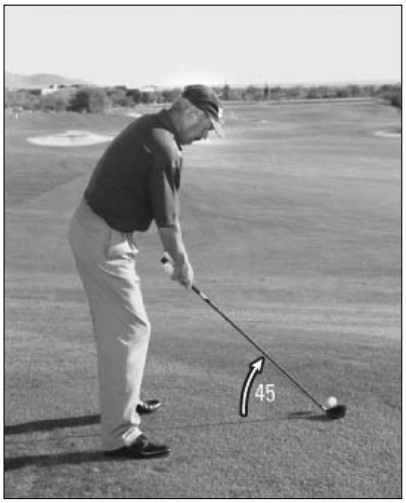
Mastering checkpoints

The simplest way to keep your swing on plane is to use a series of checkpoints, as shown in Figure 7-1. For purposes of illustration, we're assuming that you're swinging a driver and that you're right-handed. Here are the checkpoints:

- **Checkpoint #1:** At address, the shaft starts at a 45-degree angle to the ground.
- **Checkpoint #2:** Now swing the club back until your left arm is horizontal. At this point, the club's *butt end* (the end of the grip) points directly along the target line. (The *target line* is the line between the target and the ball. That line continues forward past the target and behind the ball in the opposite direction. What I'm talking about in this case is *one long, straight line*.) If the end of the grip is pointing along the target line, you're *on plane.* If the club's butt end points above the target line, your swing is too flat, or *horizontal*; if the butt end is below the target line, your swing is too upright, or *vertical.*

- **Checkpoint #3:** At the top of your backswing, the club should be parallel with a line drawn along your heels. That's on plane. If the club points to the right of that line, you've crossed the line and will probably hook the shot. A club pointing to the left of that line is said to be *laid off.* In that case, expect a slice.
- **Checkpoint #4:** Halfway down, at the point where your left arm is again horizontal, the butt end should again point at the target line. This position and the one described in Checkpoint #2 are, in effect, identical in swing-plane terms.
- **Checkpoint #5:** *Impact* is the most important point in the swing. If the clubface is square when it strikes the ball, what you do anywhere else doesn't really matter. But if you want to be consistent, try to visualise impact as being about the same as your address position, except that your hips are aimed more to the left of the target than at address and your weight is shifting to your left side.

To analyse your swing, use a camcorder, a series of still photos, or a mirror — or have someone watch you.



Start with the shaft at 45 degrees to the ground.

At the top, the shaft should be parallel with a line along your heels.

Impact should look a lot like address, except that the hips are opening to the target.

Figure 7-1: The swing plane.

Remember that these checkpoints show a perfect-world situation. Your size, flexibility and swing shape will probably produce different results. Don't be alarmed if you don't fit this model perfectly; no more than a dozen players on tour do. As with anything else, there's room for deviation. Different folks make different strokes.

Take it from the top

Take a closer look at the top of the backswing. If you can get the club on plane at the top, you'll probably hit a good shot.

Look for four things in your backswing:

- **Your left arm and your shoulders must be on the same slope.** In other words, your arm and shoulders are parallel.
- **The top of your swing is controlled by your right arm, which forms a right angle at the top of the swing (see Figure 7-2).** Your right elbow is about a $5 note's length away from your rib cage.
- **Your shoulders are at 90 degrees to the target line.**
- **The clubface is parallel to your left arm and your shoulders.** Your left wrist controls this position. Ideally, your wrist angle remains unchanged from address to the top. That way, the relationship between the clubface and your left arm is constant. If your wrist angle does change, the clubface and your left arm will be on different planes — and that's a problem.

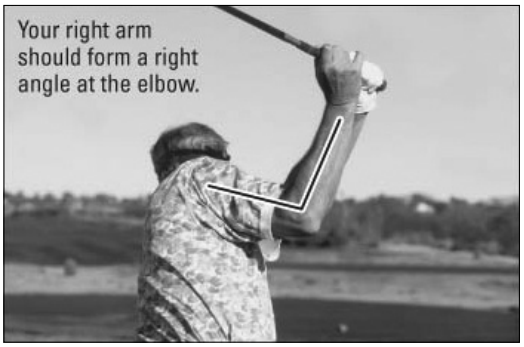


Figure 7-2: Checkpoint — get this angle right.

If your wrist angle changes, it's either bowed or cupped (see Figure 7-3). A *bowed* (bent-forward) left wrist at the top makes the clubface 'look' skyward in what is called a *closed* position. From that position, a hook is likely. A *cupped* (bent-backward) wrist makes the clubface more visible to someone looking you in the face. A cupped wrist leads to an open position, which will probably result in a slice.

You *can* play good golf from an open or closed position at the top of the backswing. But it's not easy. To compensate, your swing must feature some kind of repeatable mechanism that squares the clubface at impact. And compensations take a lot of practice. Only if you have the time to hit hundreds of balls a week can you hope to play well with an inherently flawed swing. Even then, that compensated swing is going to be tough to reproduce under pressure. For classic examples, watch Corey Pavin (open) and Lee Trevino (closed).

Slow-motion swing sequences tend to show three very different methods. The legendary Sam Snead crossed the line at the top and came over every shot to make the ball go straight. Annika Sorenstam was the opposite: She laid the club off at the top. And 1995 US PGA champion, Australia's Steve Elkington, stayed on plane. Make a swing like that your model and you won't go too far wrong.

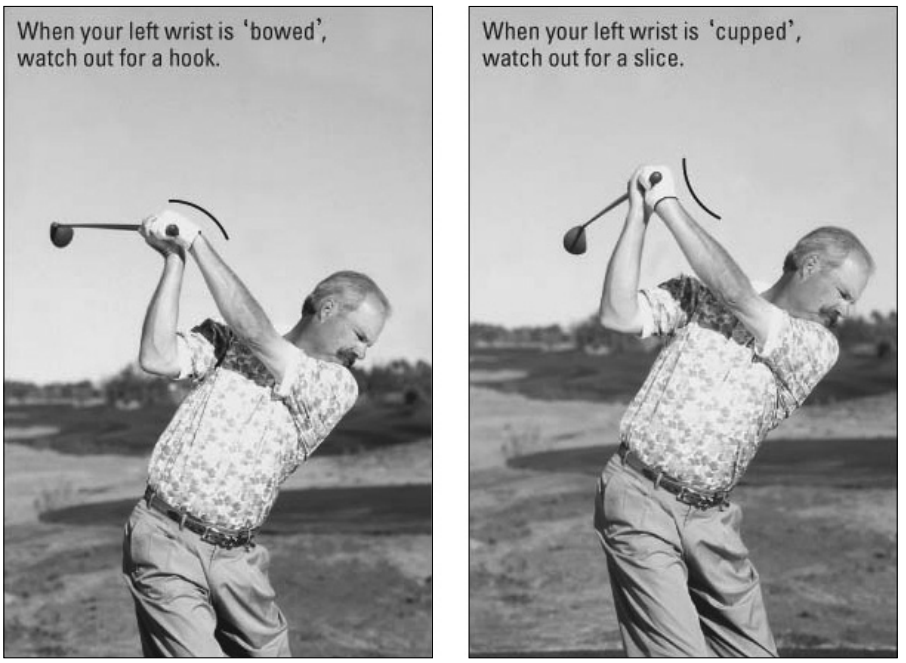


Figure 7-3: Wristy business.

Keep swinging, seniors

After 28 winless years as a touring pro, I finally broke through by winning the 1999 Toshiba Senior Classic. So when I address all you members of the seniors swing set, I know what I'm talking about!

And as I ponder the pitfalls of my maturing body and mind, I'm determined to enjoy this game right down to the last, desperate 200-metre drive. I'm not moving to an alpine region where the ball goes screaming for mercy through the thin air. No, I'm using all my cunning (and lots of technology) to keep up with the kids right here at sea level.

I have brewed in my golf kitchen a recipe to keep my fellow seniors in contention in the club championships or their clubs' monthly medals . . . from the back tees!

And so, Gramps and Grannies, my two-stage plan to keep launching the long ball:

1. As we get older and less flexible, we tend to swat the ball with our hands, rather than turning the body. Resist! Start by narrowing your stance, so you can turn your torso without straining.

   1a. Next, turn your left foot in (if you're right-handed; reverse all this if you're a lefty). This helps you make a bigger turn with your shoulders and hips.

   1b. Turn your left knee *behind* the ball, to ensure a bigger turn on the backswing.

   1c. Don't be afraid to lift your front heel off the ground on the backswing. Jack Nicklaus did it — he won the Masters at age 46 and played great golf into his sixties.

   1d. Get the club parallel to the ground at the top of your backswing — even if you have to bend your left arm. This adds to the clubhead speed you'll need to hit it a senior-citizen mile!

Okay, now that my pacemaker's smoking, here's the easy stuff: High-tech help for great senior moments.

2. As we get older, our egos can get in the way of good golf. Resist! Start by getting the lightest possible shafts for your clubs. Manufacturers now make lighter shafts. Get a low flex point, to help you get the ball into the air. The lower the flex point, the higher the launch angle. That's golf talk!

   2a. Go to the longest shaft on your driver that you can control. (I use a 46 inch, 1,550 gram driver shaft on the Champions Tour.) Add the lightest grip and the lightest clubhead you can find. You'll strike fear in your foes with this fast-moving, lightweight beast!

   2b. Irons are easy. Some manufacturers are making them with 'stronger' lofts — rather than starting with a 48-degree wedge and dropping 4 degrees per iron, they'll start with a 43-degree wedge and go down from there. That makes you one club longer and stronger without doing anything. Add light shafts and today's superior golf balls and bingo — Grandad's revenge!

Boldly Going Where Others Have Gone Before: Mirroring Great Swings

Some of the latest sports science suggests that watching someone perform an action can be almost as helpful as doing it yourself. It activates 'mirror neurons' in the brain that can help you imitate the action. When he was a toddler, Tiger Woods spent many hours watching his father hit golf balls — and when Tiger took his first whacks with a cut-down club, he already had a pretty good swing.

Phil Mickelson may be an even better example. A natural right-hander who was 18 months old when he began imitating his father, Phil literally mirrored what he saw — by swinging lefty!

No matter what your skill level, you can improve by observing good players, particularly those with some of the same characteristics that you have. Look for similarities in body size, pace and shape of swing. You can also learn from the mistakes others make under pressure — just don't mirror those!

Start by identifying your goals. Do you want to emulate the game's big bombers, guys like Adam Scott, Bubba Watson and Dustin Johnson, who regularly blast drives beyond 300 and even 320 metres? Or do you want to follow the short-game experts, such as all-time great Walter Hagen and tour maestro Aaron Baddeley? Phil Mickelson is long off the tee and has a great lob wedge. Tiger Woods, at his best, does everything well.

If you want to follow some really fine putting, keep your eyes peeled for Gary's Champions Tour colleague Loren Roberts, who putts so well his nickname is 'Boss of the Moss'. Some of the best putters in the world today are Baddeley, Brad Faxon, Jim Furyk and Steve Stricker. Nancy Lopez was another great putter in her heyday, as were British Open champions Kel Nagle, Sir Bob Charles and Ian Baker-Finch.

Maybe swing speed is your demon. Are you trying too hard to copy someone you admire, or is the pace you use as natural for you as tour golfers' swings are for them? Down through the years, Ben Crenshaw, Nancy Lopez and Jay Haas have displayed slow-paced swings. Larry Mize's swing was so slow it looked like slo-mo. Jack Nicklaus, Sam Snead and Annika Sorenstam all won with medium-paced swings. Ernie Els has a syrup-smooth motion. Ben Hogan, Lanny Wadkins, Greg Norman and Tom Watson swung fast. One of the quickest swingers of all is Nick Price. And those players have all had great careers.

Hand size can affect grip; grip can affect your swing. Billy Casper was an all-time great putter who used his wrists to create momentum in the clubhead during his putting stroke. Fred Couples uses the cross-handed grip for putting. Jack Nicklaus used the interlocking grip for his swing. Tom Kite used the interlocking grip for full swings and the cross-handed grip for putting. Chris DiMarco, who was once such a poor putter he almost quit the tour, made it big with a grip called 'the claw', a style now copied by Robert Allenby and several other players.

Maybe you want to keep tabs on golfers who have modified their games to see how a pro adapts his or her game, either to combat the yips, like Bernhard Langer, who invented his own grip and Sam Snead, who putted sidesaddle, or to accommodate a new tool, like the long putter Peter Senior switched to and made famous. Vijay Singh used a *belly putter* — longer than a standard flatstick, shorter than a long putter — until he switched back to a standard model and played better than ever!

Notice how the attitudes of famous players affect not only how they play but also how much they enjoy the game. Arnold Palmer was a master of special shots, a bold golfer. Other daring players include Mickelson and Ireland's Rory McIlroy, who are as fun and expressive as Lee Trevino in his prime. Fred Funk is a Champions Tour fan favourite whose love for the game is infectious. On the other end of the attitude spectrum, you'll find Hall of Famer Jackie Burke, who created intense drills for himself so that he knew all about pressure: His motivation was to win. Ben Hogan was another steely competitor, a perfectionist who surrendered finally not to any other player but to the yips. (See Chapter 8 for more on the yips.) Other perfectionists include Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Annika Sorenstam and many of the Asian players doing so well on today's LPGA tour — hard workers like Jiyai Shin and Song-Hee Kim of South Korea, and Japan's Ai Miyazato.

Whoever you choose to emulate, remember that golf is an individualist's game. You can mix and match facets of great players' styles, or develop your own — whatever works for *you*.

Chapter 8

Putting: The Game Within the Game

In This Chapter

- Finding your own putting style
- Visualising putts
- Choosing the right putter
- Hitting good long and short putts
- Overcoming the yips
- Trying a 'weird' putting style

The chapters in this book are all our babies — we love 'em, each and every one. But this chapter might be the most important. Statistically, putting is 68 per cent of the game of golf, so you may want to take notes. You'd be smart to keep a 'reminder book' of putting tips from this chapter, because you can't score well if you can't putt — it's that simple. If you want proof, look at the top professionals on tour who average about 28 putts per round. In other words, these professionals are one-putting at least 8 of the 18 greens in a round of golf. The average score on tour isn't 8 under par, so even these stars are missing their fair share of greens. And where are they making up for their mistakes? That's right: On the greens.

Golfers often say they're *rolling the rock* on the green, rather than rolling the ball. Don't ask us why. We suspect it has to do with the difficulty of rolling a hard, irregular object that can hurt you. Or maybe *rock* and *roll* just go together.

No other part of golf induces as much heartache as putting. Many fine strikers of the ball have literally been driven from the sport because they couldn't finish holes as well as they started them. Why? Because putting messes with your internal organs. Every putt has only two possibilities: You either hole it or miss it. Accept that and you won't have nightmares about the ones that 'should' have gone in.

You Gotta Be You

Putting is the most individual part of this individual game. You can putt — and putt successfully — in myriad ways. You can break all the rules with a putter in your hands as long as the ball goes in the hole. Believe us, you can get the job done by using any number of methods. You can make long, flowing strokes like Phil Mickelson and Ben Crenshaw. Or shorter, firmer, 'pop' strokes like Corey Pavin, Kel Nagle and Gary Player. Or you can create the necessary momentum in the clubhead with your wrists — the great Billy Casper proved how well that can work. Or if none of these styles appeal to you, you can switch to a 'belly putter' — tour stars and major winners Stewart Cink, Vijay Singh, Jim Furyk and Retief Goosen have tried that — or go to a long, 'witch's broom-handle' putter. Pros including Peter Senior, Bernhard Langer and Carl Pettersson have had success with long putters, and Tim Clark won the 2010 Players Championship wielding a long wand.

Putting is more about those ghostly intangibles — feel, touch and nerve — than about mechanics. That's why we think getting too caught up in putting mechanics is a mistake. You can have the most technically perfect stroke in the world and still be like an orangutan kicking a football on the greens — if you don't have the touch, that is. Even more than the rhythm and tempo of your full swing, your putting stroke should reflect your own personality. Your hands probably shouldn't be 'behind' the ball at impact, but other than that, your style is up to you.

If any aspect of this often-infuriating game is going to drive you crazy, it's likely to be putting. Putting may look simple — and sometimes it is — but on some days you just *know* that little ball will never fall into the hole. You know it, your playing partners know it, your shrink knows it, everyone knows it. Putting is mystical; it comes and goes like the tide.

Putting is golf's great equaliser. Smaller players and women who can't drive the ball out of sight should focus on refining their short-game skills, such as chipping, pitching and putting. ***Note:*** A putt counts the same on the scorecard as a 300-metre drive.

Mind Games

In putting, visualisation is everything. You can visualise the hole in two ways: Either you see it as a pinpoint, or as a crater so big any fool could drop the ball in. The former, of course, is infinitely more hazardous to your mental health. When you picture a small hole, the ball doesn't seem to

fit into it. You can keep telling yourself that the ball is 4.27 centimetres in diameter and the hole 10.8 centimetres across, but the fact remains that the ball is too big. We know; we've been there. It just won't fit!

And on other days, happily, the hole is so big that putting is like stroking a marble into a wine barrel. Simply hit the ball and boom, it goes in. When this happens to you, savour it. Drink in the feeling and bathe in it so that you don't forget it — because you may not take another bath like that for a *long* time.

The crazy thing is that these two scenarios can occur on consecutive days, sometimes even in consecutive rounds. I've even experienced both feelings on consecutive holes! Why? I have no idea. The answer is way beyond my feeble intellect. Try not to think too deeply about putting.

The Most Important Club in the Bag

Because putting is such a crucial part of golf, it follows that your putter is the most important weapon you've got. Club makers seem to have noticed: In recent years they've brought out a dizzying array of high-tech putters. Some are as sleek as a sports car, while others look more like anvils or spaceships. One new model has been likened to 'a fire hydrant on a stick'. How can you choose the putter that's best for your game? It's not as tricky as you might think.

Your stroke shape tells which putter you need

Although you have many putters to choose from, you can eliminate most of them by knowing the type of putter you are. In other words, the shape of your stroke is the main factor in choosing a putter. Figure 8-1 shows two types of putters.

Gary's good friend and noted teaching professional Peter Kostis explains that almost all putting strokes fall into one of two shapes. They either move 'straight back and straight through' with the blade staying square, or 'inside to inside', the blade doing a mini-version of the rotation in a full swing. Conveniently, most putters are designed to suit one of those stroke shapes. Two main types are available: (1) face-balanced, centre-shafted putters and (2) those that are not face-balanced, such as heel-shafted blades.

Figure 8-1: Which kind of putter?

If keeping the blade square throughout the putting stroke is your style, get a face-balanced, centre-shafted model. You can test to see if a putter is face-balanced by resting the shaft on your finger. If the putterface stays parallel to the ground, it's face-balanced.

The inside-to-inside stroke is easier to make on a consistent basis with a heel-shafted putter. It will hang toe-down while resting on your finger.

Be warned, though. Some putters hang at an angle of 45 degrees. They're equally good — or bad! — for either stroke.

How to pick a putter: From MOI to you

Don't be confused by all the high-tech (and high-priced) new putters on the market. Figure 8-2 shows several of them. Although they appear as colourful and as different as new cars, most offer only one or two features — features that may seem confusing at first.

Figure 8-2: Wands of wonder: A few new-millennium putters.

One term that puzzles most beginners is *MOI*, which is short for *moment of inertia*. It sounds scientific and in fact there's a lot of science behind MOI putters, but don't worry about that. All you need to know is that MOI putters resist twisting on off-centre hits. That means your bad putts turn out better than they would otherwise. How much better? That's hard to say, but a study cited in *Golf Digest* suggested that an MOI putter might make a metre of difference on a 7-metre putt. That's a massive difference — almost as massive as some of these putters.

Many modern putters also feature alignment aids, like the white circles behind the face of Odyssey's putters. Other manufacturers put bold lines or arrows on their weapons to help golfers start the ball on the target line. (For more on alignment, see the section 'The Art of Aiming', later in this chapter.) Another new wrinkle is adding an insert to the face of the putter — often a panel of urethane, the same stuff golf balls are made of — for a softer feel when the putter strikes the ball.

As with other technological fixes, from titanium drivers to graphite shafts to super-comfy golf shoes, such features have their benefits, especially if you *believe* they'll help your game. Because, as you know by now, this game is as mental as anything.

Still, the best feature of all is sound fundamentals. Without them, all the tech support in the world won't do you much good.

Long putters? Belly putters? It's a lo-o-ng story

Some golfers swear by extra-long putters. Others swear *at* them, saying the long putter ought to be illegal. There is even talk of banning long putters. But if you're struggling to make putts, you may want to give one a try.

The terminology can be confusing: What's the difference between a long putter and a belly putter? It's simple if you know the crucial difference: Both are longer than a standard model, but a long putter is really *lo-o-onnng*. Its handle tucks under the golfer's chin, while the handle of a belly putter is anchored to the golfer's navel. Both are used almost exclusively by players who've struggled to make putts the usual way.

Long putters

The long putter is the final refuge of the neurologically impaired. If you watch any Champions Tour event on TV, you'll see more than a few long putters. And now they're making inroads on the regular tours.

Long putters range from 46 inches in length to 50 and up. They remove all wrist action from your putting stroke because your left hand anchors the club to your chest. Your left hand holds the club at the butt end of the shaft, while your fingers wrap around the grip so that the back of your left hand faces the ball. Your right hand is basically along for the ride. In fact, it should barely touch the club. Its only role is to pull the putter back and follow it through on a straight line towards the hole.

Long putters are easy on the nerves, which is why they enjoy such popularity on the Champions Tour. But senior players are not alone. No fewer than three members of the European Ryder Cup team back in 1995 used long putters. All three won their singles matches on the final afternoon, perhaps the most pressure-packed day in all of golf. So long putters definitely have something going for them. You've got nothing to lose by trying one.

Belly putters

A variation on the long putter is the midlength belly putter. You anchor it to your midsection, so that it looks like the club is stabbing you in the navel. Belly putters are 40 to 45 inches long. Like long putters, they're designed to minimise wrist action in the stroke. Vijay Singh, Fred Couples, Stewart Cink, Retief Goosen and other pros have fought putting woes with these midlength mallets, though many putted better when they went back to a standard model.

If you're struggling with jumpy wrists on the greens, you may want to try the belly method. (Keep in mind that it takes practice and patience.) But remember: Like the long putter, the belly putter is generally seen as a last resort. If you can make putts with a standard-length putter, that's what you should use.

Building Your Stroke

You can putt well using any number of methods or clubs. But we're going to ignore that for now. At this stage, you should putt in as orthodox a manner as possible. That way, when something goes wrong — which it will — the fault is easier to fix. The trouble with being unorthodox is that it's hard to find order in chaos.

The putting grip

The putting grip isn't like the full-swing grip. The full-swing grip is more in the fingers, which encourages your wrists to hinge and unhinge. Your putting grip's purpose is exactly the opposite. Grip the putter more in the palm of your hands to reduce the amount of movement your hands make. Although you may putt well with a lot of wrist action in your stroke, we prefer that you take the wrists out of play as much as possible. Unless you have incredible touch, your wrists are not very reliable when you need to hit the ball short distances. You're far better off relying on the rocking of your shoulders to create momentum in the putterhead.

Not all putting grips are the same — not even those grips where you place your right hand below the left in conventional fashion. But what all putting grips have in common is that the palms of both hands face each other so your hands can work together. The last thing you want is your hands fighting one another. Too much of either hand and your ball has a bad experience. If your left hand dominates, your right hand sues for non-support. Both hands need to work together.

Your hands can work together in one of two ways, as shown in Figure 8-3. Start by placing the palms of your hands on either side of the club's grip. Slide your right hand down a little so that you can place both hands on the club. You should feel like you're going to adopt the ten-finger grip (see Chapter 6). Then do one of the following, depending on which grip you prefer:

- Place your left index finger over the little finger of your right hand. Known as the *reverse overlap,* this is probably the most popular putting grip on all the pro tours, men's and women's.

- Extend your left index finger past the fingers of your right hand until the tip touches your right index finger. We call this grip the *extended reverse overlap*. The left index finger, when extended, provides stability to the putting stroke.

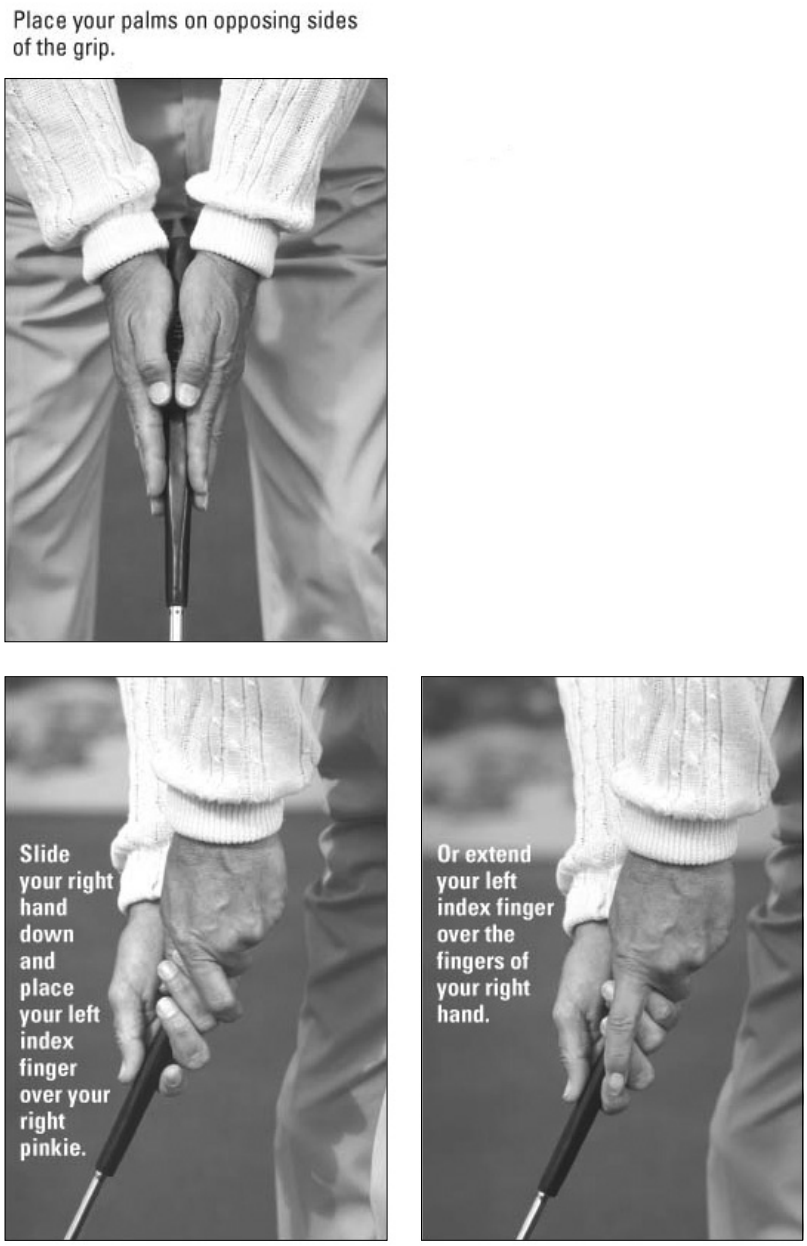


Figure 8-3: A gripping start.

Go with the grip that feels most comfortable. We describe other methods of gripping the putter in the following sections.

Left hand low

This method is commonly referred to as *cross-handed.* The left hand hangs below the right with the putter (or vice versa if you're a lefty). Many players use this method today because it helps keep the lead hand (the left, in this case) from bending at the wrist as you hit the ball. (See Figure 8-4.)

One of the biggest causes of missed putts is the breakdown of the left wrist through impact. When the left wrist bends, the putter blade twists. This twisting causes the ball to wobble off-line, even if you've got an MOI putter. That's why you should maintain the bend of your left wrist from the address position all the way through the stroke.

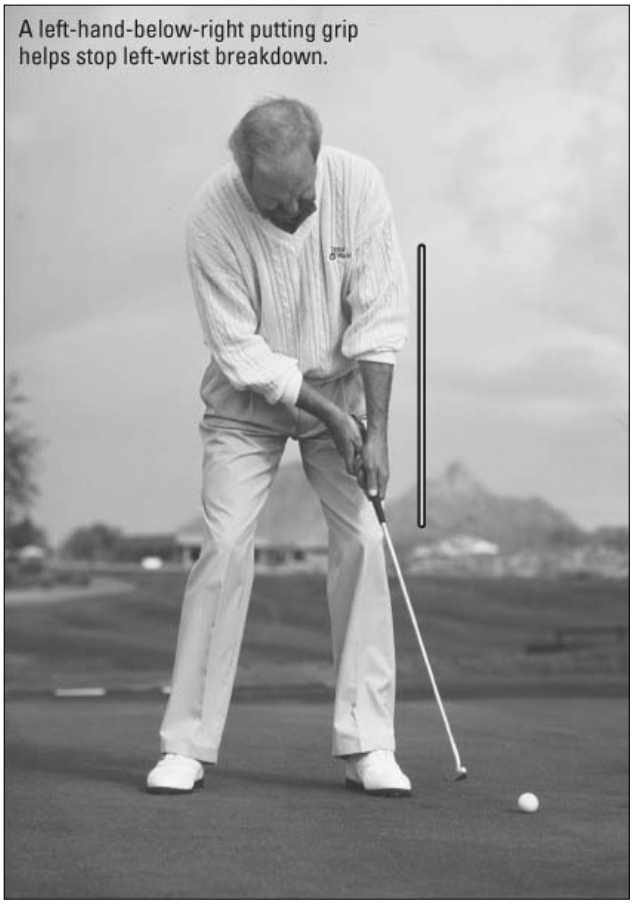


Figure 8-4: Keep that left wrist firm.

The cross-handed grip can make it easier to maintain that wrist position. Tour stars — including Furyk and Stuart Appleby — have won with this type of grip.

The few times I've tried the cross-handed grip, pulling with the left wrist seemed to be easier. It seems that pulling with the lead hand makes it harder to break down with the wrist.

Another reason you see many of today's pros using a cross-handed grip is that, with the left arm lower on the shaft, you pull the left shoulder more square to your target line. Pulling your left shoulder happens automatically with this grip. Gary tends to open his shoulders (aim to the left) with his putter. As soon as he tried a cross-handed grip, his left shoulder moved towards the target line and he was squarer to his line.

I think the left-hand-low method's best asset is that you swing the left arm back and forth during the stroke. The trailing hand (right) goes along for the ride, which is a great way to stroke your golf ball. I suggest that you try putting with your left hand low. You might stick with this method forever.

The 'claw'

This weird-looking grip got a boost at the 2005 Masters, where claw-gripper Chris DiMarco took eventual winner Tiger Woods into a thrilling playoff. DiMarco had gone through a spell of such terrible putting that he nearly gave up hope; with this grip he rejuvenated his career and clawed his way to the top.

To try the claw, start with a standard putting grip. Turn your right palm towards you and bring it to the putter's handle so that the handle touches the spot between your thumb and index finger. Now bring your index and middle fingers to the shaft, leaving your ring finger and pinkie off, as shown in Figure 8-5.

Putting posture: Stand and deliver

As you crouch over the ball to putt, your knees should flex slightly. If your knees are locked, you're straining your back too much. Don't bend those knees too much, though, or you may start to look like a golf geek!

Bend from your waist so that your arms hang straight down. This allows your arms to swing in a pendulum motion, back and forth from a fixed point. Hold your arms straight out from your body. Bend down with those arms outstretched from the waist until your arms are pointing to the ground. Now flex your knees a little and you're in the correct putting posture.

Figure 8-5: The claw grip — another option.

You can break a lot of rules in how you stand to hit a putt (see Figure 8-6). Ben Crenshaw, one of the best putters ever, always stood open to the target line, his left foot drawn back. Gary Player did the opposite: He set up closed, his right foot further from the target line than his left. But that's their style; we keep things simple with a square stance so that we don't need to make many in-stroke adjustments to compensate.

Toeing the line

As in a full swing, the line of your toes is the key. Regardless of which stance you choose, your toe line should always be parallel to your target line. Be aware that the target line isn't always a straight line from the ball to the hole — if only putting were that simple! Few greens are flat, so putts break or bend from right to left or from left to right. (See 'Reading the break' later in this chapter.) So sometimes you'll be aiming, say, 15 centimetres to the right of the hole and other times maybe 30 centimetres to the left (see Figure 8-7). Whatever you decide, your toe line must be parallel to your target line.

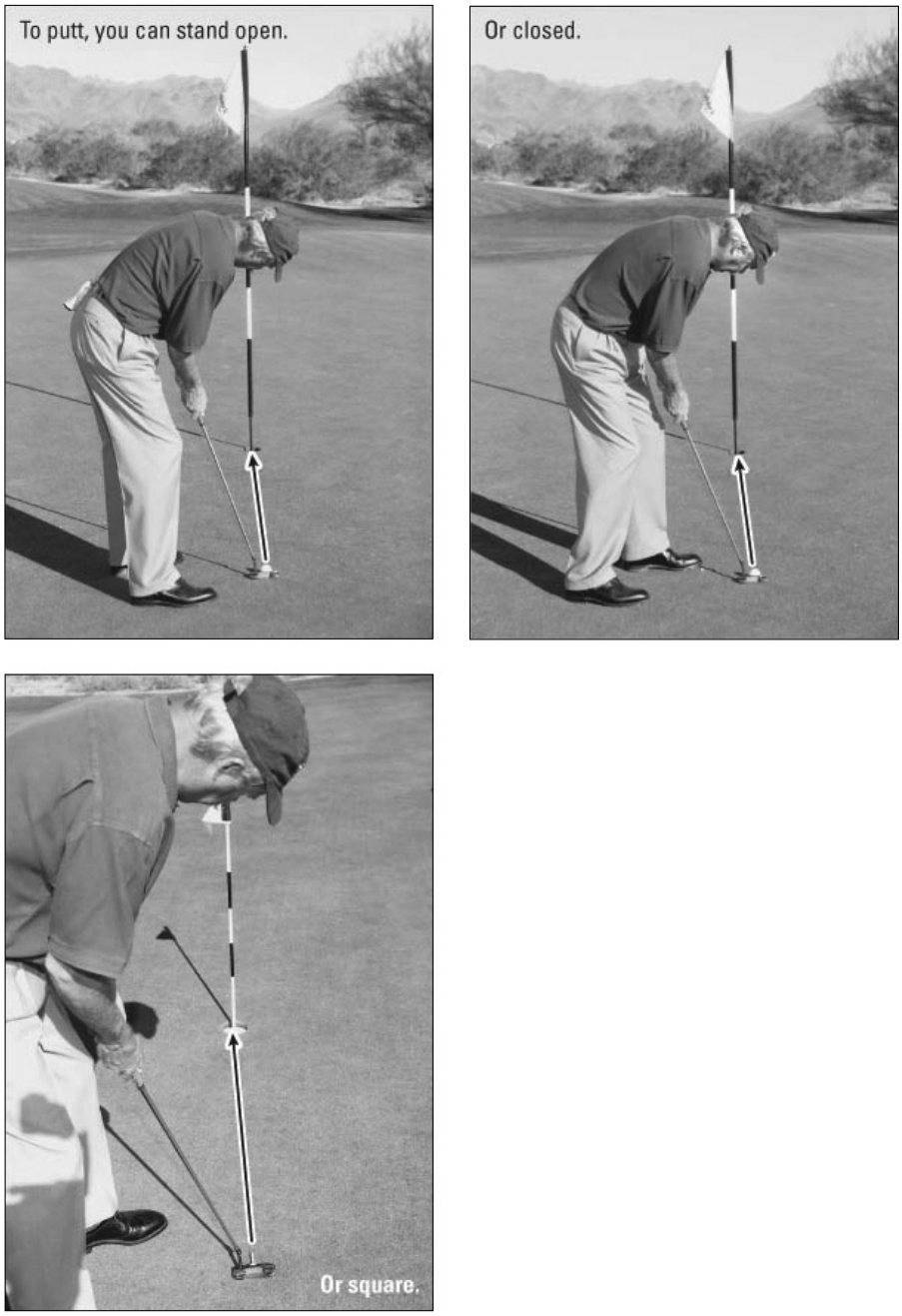


Figure 8-6: Putting stances vary.

Figure 8-7: Playing the break.

Being parallel to your target line is vital. In effect, you make every putt straight. Applying a curve to your putts is way too complicated and affects your stroke. Imagine how you'd have to adjust if you aimed at the hole and then tried to push the ball out to the right because of a slope on the green. You'd have no way to be consistent. So keep putting simple. On breaking putts, aim your feet parallel to the line you've chosen, not towards the hole (see Figure 8-8).

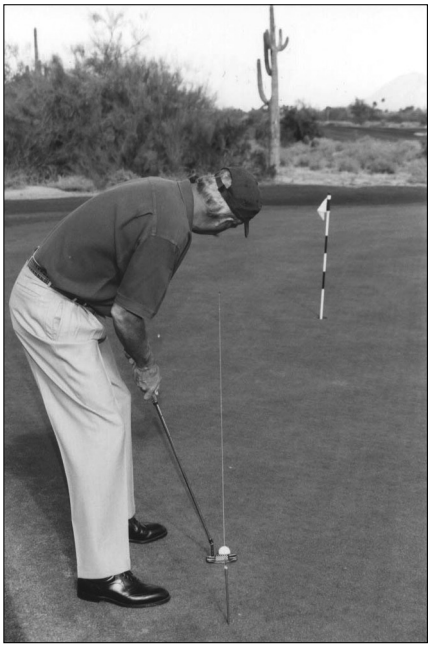


Figure 8-8: Feet parallel to your putting line.

Standing just right

Okay, now what about width of stance? Again, you have margin for error, but your heels need to be about shoulder-width apart at address, as shown in Figure 8-9.

Figure 8-9: Heels and shoulders are the same width.

You have to bend over to place the putter behind the ball. How far should you bend? Just far enough to get your eye line (a much-neglected part of putting) directly over the ball. To find that position, place a ball on your forehead between your eyes, bend over and let the ball drop, as shown in Figure 8-10. Where does the ball hit the ground? That's where the ball should be in relation to your body. It shouldn't be to the inside, the outside, behind, or in front of that point. It should be right there, dead centre. This alignment places your eyes not just over the ball but also over the line that you want the ball to ride.

Getting up to speed

In his decades in pro golf, Gary's seen players with a lot of different putting methods. The good putters came in all shapes and sizes, too. Some

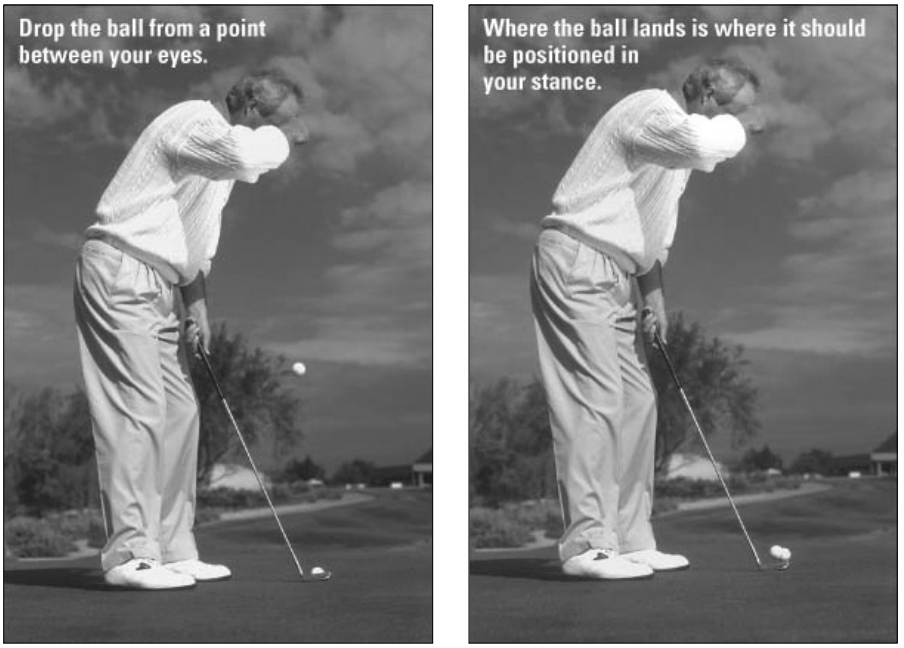


Figure 8-10: Your eyes should be over the ball.

putted in what could be termed mysterious ways and others were totally conventional. So analysing different putting methods is no help. The best way to look at putting is to break it down to its simplest level. The hole. The ball. The ball fits into the hole. Now get the ball into the hole in the fewest possible strokes.

You want to get the ball rolling at the right speed. That means hitting a putt so that if the ball misses the cup, it'll finish about 40 centimetres past the hole, as shown in Figure 8-11. This distance is true no matter the length of the putt. One metre or 20 metres, your aim must be to hit the ball at a pace that will see it finish 40 centimetres beyond the hole. If it doesn't go in, that is.

You're probably wondering why your ball needs the right speed. Well, the right speed gives the ball the greatest chance of going into the hole. Think about it: If the ball rolls towards the middle of the cup, you don't want it moving so fast that it rolls right over the hole. If it touches either side of the cup, it may drop in. Your goal is to give the ball every chance to drop in, from any angle — front, back or side. We don't know about you, but we want that hole to seem as big as possible.

Figure 8-11: Just past: Here's how hard to hit your putts.

The only putts that *never* drop are the ones you leave short of the hole. If you've played golf for any length of time, you've heard the phrase 'never up, never in'. The cliché is annoying but true. As the Irish say, 'Ninety-nine per cent of all putts that come up short don't go in and the other 1 per cent never get there'. Remember that saying! Also remember that you should try to sink every putt from 3 metres or closer. We *hope* to make every putt from 3 to 6 metres and we try to get every putt close from 6 metres and beyond.

Reading the break

After you have the distance control that a consistent pace brings, you can work on the second half of the putting equation: Reading the break. The *break* is the amount a putt moves from right to left, or left to right. Slope, topographical features such as water and mountains, the grain of the grass, and, perhaps most important, how hard you hit the ball dictate the break. For example, if you're an aggressive player who routinely hits putts 1.5 metres past the cup, you're not going to play as much break as others do. (***Note:*** You should hit your putts only 40 centimetres past the cup.)

The firmer you hit a putt, the less the ball breaks on even the steepest gradient. So don't be fooled into thinking that there's only one way a putt can be holed. On, say, a 6-metre putt, you probably have about five possibilities. How hard you hit the ball is one factor.

The key, of course, is consistency. Being a bold putter is not a bad thing (if you're willing to put up with the occasional knee-knocking return putt), as long as you putt that way all the time — and are still in your teens.

The first thing I do when I arrive at a golf course is to find the natural slope of the terrain. If there are mountains nearby, finding the natural slope is easy. Say the mountains are off to your right on the first hole. Any slope will run from right to left on that hole. In fact, the slope on every green is going to be 'from' the mountain (unless, of course, a particularly humourless architect has decided to bank some holes towards the mountain). So I take that into account on every putt I hit.

If the course is relatively flat, go find the pro or course superintendent. Ask about nearby reservoirs or, failing that, the area's lowest point. This point can be 5 kilometres away or 20 — it doesn't matter. Find out where that point is and take advantage of gravity. Gravity is a wonderful concept. Every putt breaks down a hill — high point to low point — unless you're in a zero-gravity environment. But that's another book.

After you know the lowest point, look at each green in detail. If you're on an older course, the greens probably slope from back to front to aid drainage. Greens nowadays have more humps and undulations than ever and are surrounded by more bunkers. And the sand tells a tale: Most courses are designed so that water runs past a bunker and not into it. Take that insight into account when you line up a putt.

And don't forget the barometric pressure and dew point — just kidding! (For entertaining information about sand play, see Chapter 10.)

Reading the grain

Golf is played on different grasses (ideally, not on the same course). Climate usually dictates the kind of grass you find on a course. Grasses in hot, tropical areas have to be more resilient, so they typically have thick blades. *Bermuda grass* is the most common. Its blades tend to follow the sun from

morning to afternoon — in other words, from east to west. Because the blade is so strong, Bermuda grass can carry a golf ball according to the direction in which it's lying. Putts 'down grain' go faster than putts 'into' the grain. All that, of course, has an effect on your putt.

Look at the cup to find out which way the grass is growing. Especially in the afternoon, you may see a ragged half and a smooth, or sharp, half on the lip of the cup — that shows the direction in which the grass is growing. The ragged look is caused by the grass's tendency to grow and fray. If you can't tell either way, go to the *fringe* (the edge of the green). The grass on the fringe is longer, so you can usually see the direction of the grain right away. The grain of the fringe will be the same as on the green.

Another common type of grass is *bent grass.* Bent grass has a thinner blade than Bermuda grass, but it doesn't stand up to excessive heat as well.

Bent grass is used by many golf-course builders because it allows them to make the greens fast and the recent trend for greens is to combine slope with speed. Try getting on the roof of your car, putting a ball down to the bonnet and making it stop. That's how slippery greens with bent grass can feel.

I don't concern myself much with grain on bent greens. I just worry about the slope and the 47 things on my checklist before I putt. Putting could be so much fun if I didn't have a brain.

If you get the chance to play golf in Japan, you'll play on grass called *korai.* This wiry grass can be a menace on the greens because it's stronger than AstroTurf and can really affect the way the ball rolls on the green. If the blades are growing towards you, you have to hit the ball with a violent pop.

Isao Aoki, a great Japanese player, developed a unique putting stroke in which he kept the toe of the putter way off the ground and then gave the ball a pop with his wrist to get it going — an effective way of dealing with the korai grass he grew up on.

When dealing with grasses, architects try to use the thinnest possible blade, given the climate, then try to get that grass to grow straight up to eliminate grain. Bent is better than Bermuda when it comes to growing straight, so grain is rarely a factor on bent greens.

Long Putts: Lags

Long putts are a test of your feel for pace. The last thing we want you thinking about over, say, a 15-metre putt is how far back to take the putter or what path the putter will follow. Instead, focus on smoothness, rhythm and timing — all the things that foster control over the distance a ball travels. Or, as Chevy Chase said in the cult golf movie *Caddyshack,* 'Be the ball'.

Here's how I practise my long putting: First, I don't aim for a hole. I'm thinking distance, not direction. I figure that hitting a putt 3 metres short is a lot more likely than hitting it 3 metres wide, so distance is the key. I throw a bunch of balls down on the practice green and putt to the far fringe (see Figure 8-12). I want to see how close I can get to the edge without going over. I don't care about where I hit the putt, just how far. If you practise like this, you'll be amazed at how adept you become.

One basic rule for a beginning golfer is to match the length of your golf swing to your putting stroke. That is, if you have a *short swing* (your left arm, if you're right-handed, doesn't get too far up in the air on your backswing), make sure that your putting stroke is a short one, too. If your full swing is *long*, make your putting stroke long. This way, you're not contradicting yourself.

Figure 8-12: Think pace, not direction.

Look at two of the greatest putters in history, Ben Crenshaw and Phil Mickelson. Both have long, slow swings and their putting strokes are — you guessed it — long and slow. On the other hand, major champions Nick Price and Lanny Wadkins have quick swings and quick putting strokes.

Your swing tells a lot about your personality. If your golf swing is long and slow, you're probably an easygoing person. If your swing is short and fast, you're probably the type who walks around with his hair on fire.

I believe that a putting stroke that contradicts your full swing leads to problems. Sam Snead had a great long putting stroke that went with his beautiful swing, but as the years came on the golf course, the swing stayed long and the stroke got shorter. The yips took over (see 'Shh! Nobody Mentions … the Yips' later in this chapter). Johnny Miller had a big swing with his golf clubs and a putting stroke that was so fast you could hardly see it. There was a contradiction and he had to go to the TV tower because he couldn't roll 'em in any more. The change wasn't all bad; Johnny brings great insight to the game from his seat in the announcing booth.

Keep your two swings — the golf swing and the putting stroke — similar. You don't want contradictions between the two.

Another exercise to foster your feel for distance is what I call the ladder drill. Place a ball on the green about 3 metres from the green's edge. From at least 10 metres away, try to putt another ball between the first ball and the fringe. Then try to get a third ball between the second ball and the fringe, and so on. See how many balls you can putt before you run out of room or putting gets too difficult. Obviously, the closer you get each ball to the preceding one, the more successful you are.

Short Putts: Knee-Knockers

Every day Jackie went to the practice putting green with 100 balls. She stuck her putterhead in the cup and let the club fall to the green. Where the butt end of the putter hit the ground, she put a ball. Then she went over to the caddie shed and grabbed a caddie. Jackie handed the guy a $100 note and told him to sit behind the cup. Jackie then putted 100 balls from that distance. If she made all 100, Jackie kept the money. If she missed even one, the caddie pocketed the cash.

Jackie followed this routine every day. Suddenly, every short putt she hit meant something. All short putts counted. And when she got to the golf course and was faced with a short putt, she knew that she had already made 100 of them under a lot of pressure.

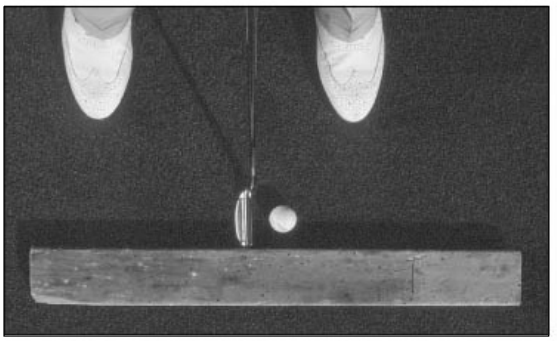
Pressure is the key word. You must create a situation in which missing hurts. It doesn't have to hurt you financially. Any kind of suffering is fine. But you have to care about the result of every putt. If all you have to do after missing is pull another ball over and try again, you're never going to get better. You don't care enough.

So put yourself under pressure, even if you only make yourself stay on the green until you can make 25 putts in a row. You'll be amazed at how difficult the last putt is after you've made 24 in a row. It's the same putt in physical terms. But you're feeling nervous, knowing that missing means that you've wasted your time over the previous 24 shots. In other words, you'll have created tournament conditions on the practice green. And trust us — you'll improve.

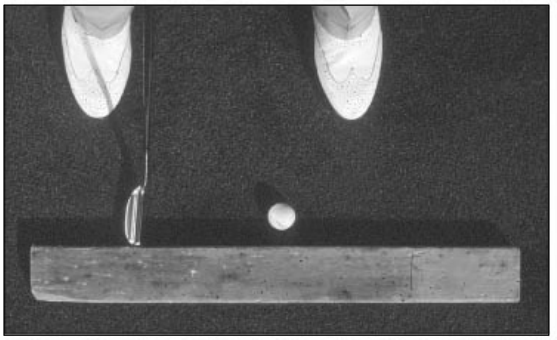
Because you don't want the ball to travel far, the stroke should be equally short, which doesn't give the putterhead much of an arc to swing on. But the lack of arc is okay. On a short putt, you don't want the putterhead to move inside or outside the target line (at least on the way back). So think 'straight back, straight through'. If you can keep the putterface directly towards the hole throughout the stroke and you're set up squarely, you're sure to make more knee-knockers than you miss.

Our instructions sound easy, but as with everything else in golf, knowing how short putting feels helps. Place a piece of two-by-four on the ground. Put the toe of your putter against the board. Hit putts while keeping the toe against the board until after impact, as shown in Figure 8-13. Keep the putterhead at 90 degrees to the board so that the putter moves on the straight-back-and-straight-through path that you want. Practise this drill until you can repeat the sensation on real putts. And remember one of our *Golf For Dummies* secrets: Never allow the wrist on your lead hand to bend when putting. If you do, you'll end up in putting hell.

Keep the toe of your putter touching the board …



when you move the putter back …



and through.

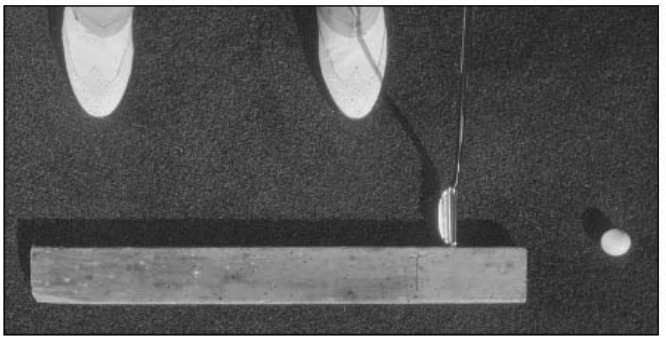


Figure 8-13: 'Wood' that it could be this easy.

Shh! Nobody Mentions . . . the Yips

'I've got the yips' might be the most feared phrase in golf. Any professional golfer with the yips may as well be setting fire to $5 notes. Make that $100 notes. Simply put, *yips* is a nervous condition that prevents the afflicted from making a smooth putting stroke. Instead, the yipper makes jerky little snatches at the ball, the putterhead seemingly possessing a mind all its own.

Some of the best players in history have had their careers — at least at the top level — cut short by the yips. Ben Hogan, perhaps the steeliest competitor ever, was one victim. (He was the one who famously called putting 'the game within the game'.) Hogan's great rival Sam Snead was another golf immortal who suffered from the yips. Arnold Palmer has a mild case. Bobby Jones, winner of the Grand Slam in 1930, had them, too. So did Tommy Armour, a brave soldier who lost an eye fighting in the trenches during World War I and later won a British Open and a US PGA Championship, but whose playing career was finished by his inability to hole short putts. Peter Alliss, a colourful TV commentator, found that he couldn't even move the putter away from the ball towards the end of his career.

Two-time Masters winner Bernhard Langer has had the yips not once, not twice, but three times. To Langer's eternal credit, he has overcome them each time. First he came up with a rather unique, homemade style where he seemed to be taking his own pulse while over a putt. Later he resorted to using a long putter and was the Champions Tour's Player of the Year in 2008, 2009 and again in 2010.

Langer is the exception rather than the rule. As Henry Longhurst, the late, great writer and commentator, said about the yips, 'Once you've had 'em, you've got 'em'.

Longhurst, himself a yipper, once wrote a highly entertaining column on the yips, which opened with the following sentence: 'There can be no more ludicrous sight than that of a grown man, a captain of industry, perhaps, and a pillar of his own community, convulsively jerking a piece of ironmongery to and fro in his efforts to hole a 3-foot putt.' Longhurst is right, too. Pray that you don't get the yips.

So what causes the yips? Mostly, I think it's fear of missing. Fear of embarrassment. Fear of who knows what. Whatever, it starts in the head. It can't be physical. After all, we're only talking about hitting the ball a short distance. What could be easier?

The yips spread insidiously through your body, like a virus. When the yips reach your hands and arms, you're doomed. Your only recourse is a complete revamping of your method. Sam Snead started putting sidesaddle, facing the hole, holding his putter with a sort of split-handed grip, the ball

to the right of his feet. (We describe a variation of Sam's method later in this chapter, in 'Face-on Putting: Works Like Magic?') Other players have tried the left-hand-low putting style, the claw grip and/or switching putters every time they blink.

When Mac O'Grady did a study on the yips, he posted 1,500 questionnaires to golfers everywhere. When doctors at the University of California, Los Angeles's Department of Neurology looked over the results, they decided that the only way to 'fool' the yips is to stay ahead of them. When you do something long enough, like bending over to putt a certain way, your body is in what the doctors call a *length tension curve.* The brain recognises this posture and after you've missed putts for a long period of time, the subconscious takes over and starts directing muscles to help get the ball into the hole. Your conscious and subconscious are fighting. Now your right hand twitches, or your left forearm has spasms trying to help you get the ball into the hole. You're in full *focal dystonia* (involuntary spasms) and that's no fun.

The remedy the scientists suggested was changing the length tension curve, or simply changing the way a yipper stands over a putt. The long putter surely makes you stand up to the ball differently and maybe that's why golfers almost always putt better immediately after trying a long putter.

So if you get the yips, which usually come with age, simply change something drastic in the way you set up the ball, try a different grip, or go bowling.

The real secret, however, is getting over the notion that using any of those methods identifies you as a yipper, someone who is psychologically impaired. Don't be afraid to look different. The best golfers all share one trait: They do *whatever works*.

Face-on Putting: Works Like Magic?

Here's another alternative that's starting to surface in the wonderful world of golf. It's called face-on or sidesaddle putting. If you've been struggling with your putter, this might be the cure.

It starts with common sense. Now, that may not be the first quality people associate with Gary — he's hoping charm and virility are up there, too — but it comes into play when he asks golfers to putt without a putter.

'How?' they ask.

Gary tosses them a golf ball. 'Just roll it to the hole.'

At this point everyone, from Ben Crenshaw to the greenest golf novice, faces the hole and rolls the ball underhand. *Nobody* turns sideways first. Why? Because it's more natural to face your target. Impractical for full swings, but perfectly practical for putting, if you know how to do it.

If you adopt the face-on method shown in Figure 8-14, you'll need a putter designed for it. (They're becoming more common, but can still be hard to find. For information on ordering putters and other equipment from websites, see Chapter 19.) You can get a feel for it with a regular long putter, but remember: To do it right, you'll need a face-on putter.

- Use the same posture as if you were rolling a ball by hand. Face the target, knees flexed, with the ball slightly to your right, just ahead of your right foot.
- Place your left hand at the top of your putter's grip; it will act as the fulcrum for your putting stroke. Keep the face of your putter square to the line of your putt.
- With your eyes on the ball, bring the putter straight back with your right hand, then straight through along your putting line.
- Let your head come up naturally as you follow the ball on its merry way into the hole.

For more on face-on putting, check out `www.puttmagic.com`.

Figure 8-14: Face-on putting.

The Art of Aiming

The golf swing is an assortment of trajectories flung around in time and space. Manifestations of your binocular acuity are the key to your pilgrimage. Are you in alignment with the parallel universe of focal obedience?

Gary McCord, circa 1998, just after eating a lungfish tart

Golf is played with an assortment of physical skills and techniques. It is also played with the mind, which makes the final decisions and tells your motor system where and when things will happen, hopefully in some sort of harmony. It all starts with alignment.

Some golfers aim at a spot about one metre in front of the ball. When they place their putters behind the ball, they aim the face of the putter or the lines on the putter at that spot. Aligning to a spot 30 centimetres or so in front of the ball is easier than aligning to the hole, which may be much further away.

Ten-pin bowlers use this same kind of alignment strategy. If you've ever bowled, you know about the dots a few paces in front of you on the lane. You look at the dots and then pick a line to roll the ball over. You can use other strategies to help with alignment, such as taking the logo on the golf ball and setting it along the line that you want the putt to follow. (Some players, like Tiger Woods, take a Sharpie pen and make a line a few centimetres in length on the ball; see Figure 8-15). You can use these tricks to achieve a better visual reference for directing the ball down the intended path. When you stand over the putt, the ball is already aimed.

Or make a line on the ball with a Sharpie pen.

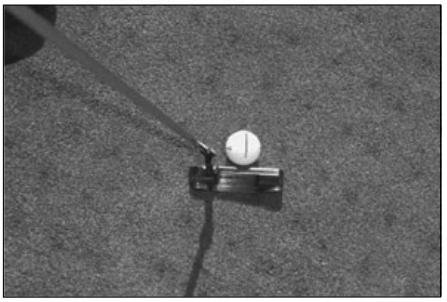


Figure 8-15: Aim the logo of the ball towards the target.

Instant pre-play

I remember one telecast when I commented on a putt we caught on camera: 'That putt must have taken 11 seconds.' It was a long one that went over a hill and then down a severe slope to the hole. The player had to visualise the ball's path in order to hit it with the proper speed; he had to visually rehearse the roll of the ball over all that terrain until it looked like an instant replay of the putt he was about to make.

The eyes like lines

Players say they putt better when they see the line of the putt. Some days when we play, the line seems so visible that we can't miss. Unfortunately, this happens about as often as Halley's Comet comes around. Most of the time, we have to concentrate to 'see' the line.

Another set of lines that can help your optics are the lines of your feet, knees and shoulders. By keeping them *square* (at a right angle) to the target line, you help your eyes appreciate what is straight — and keep your stroke on line.

To help you keep the clubface square to your target line, use tape or a measuring stick on the floor. Aim the tape at a distant target, like a baby grand piano at the far end of your ballroom. Now set up at the end of the tape as if you were going to hit an imaginary ball straight down the tape line. You're practising visual alignment (which is easier than practising a 3-wood out of a fairway bunker with a large lip for three hours in a hailstorm). Give this drill a chance — it can really help your perception of straight lines.

When I'm having problems aligning, I take some of the gum that I've been chewing for the past three days and attach a tee to the putter with the fat end flush to the face, as shown in Figure 8-16. Then I aim that tee at the hole from about a metre away. (It's amazing how strong gum is after a three-day chew; in fact, I used it as mortar on my new brick mobile home.)

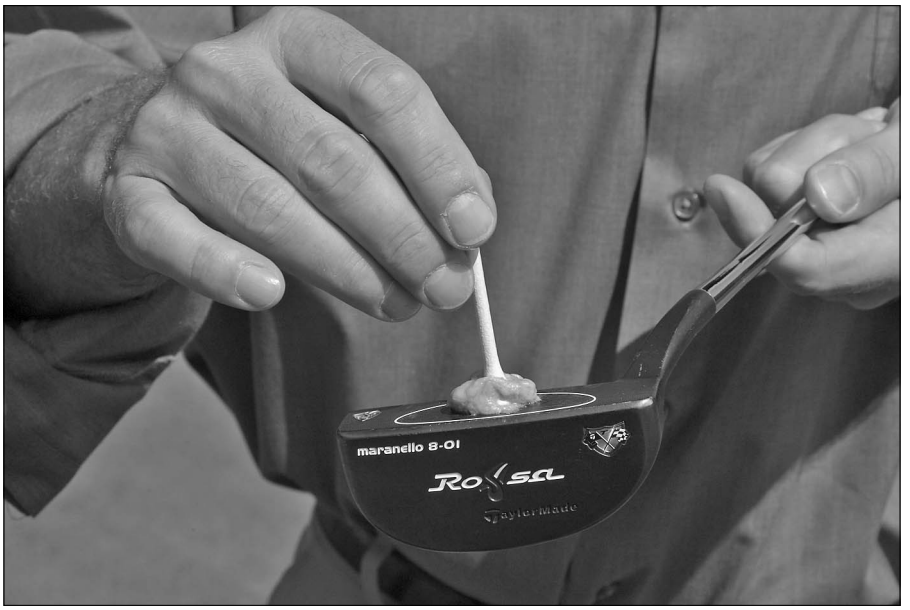


Figure 8-16: Stick a tee to the face of your putter to help align with your target.

Your job is to visually process what a square clubface looks like as you look down the attached tee to the hole. Spend a couple of minutes appreciating this perspective. If it looks okay to you on your first try, you're in line for your Bachelor of Alignment degree. If not, repeat this drill daily until it looks okay the first time you place the club down. This drill will train your eyes to square the clubface.

The need for speed

One of the best ways to develop a touch for the speed at which putts should roll is to imagine things happening before they really do.

You must optically preview the putt's roll from its stationary point to a resting place near the hole — a tap-in is really nice. This optical preview activates the motor system to respond with the right amount of energy to hit the putt. You'd do the same thing if we told you to throw a ball over a bush and make it land no more than 2 metres beyond the bush. You'd decide at what arc and speed to toss the ball and your mind's eye would relay this information to your muscles.

View a putt from a point off to the side of the target line, midway between the ball and the hole, as shown in Figure 8-17. This technique can give you a better feel for the distance. Some professionals swear they can visualise the proper speed of a putt twice as well from the side.

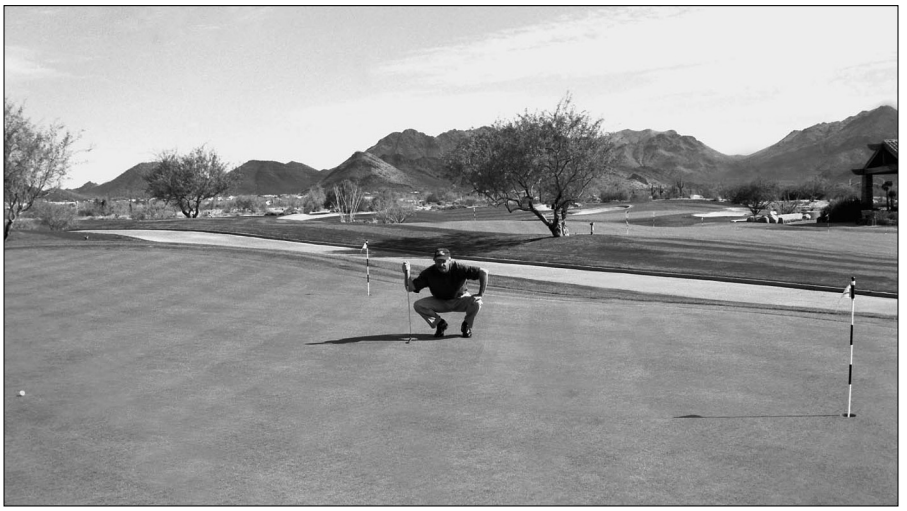


Figure 8-17: Viewing a putt from the side can help you judge distance and speed.

A good rule of thumb: Don't change your mind while you're over a putt. For one thing, putts look different from above than from the side! For another, the ground you stand on may not be sloped the same as it is near the hole. And unless the putt is all downhill, the ball will do most of its curving during the last third of the putt. (That's another reason to stand to the side of the putt — assessing the last third of the putt is easier from there.)

Some quick tips you may want to scrawl in your reminder book:

- **Fast greens break more, so don't hit the ball too hard.** But keep in mind that hitting the ball softly means that the slope will affect it more.
- **Downhill putts act like fast greens, because the slope affects the roll of the ball for *more* than the last few feet.**
- **Slow greens break less, so you have to hit the ball harder.** That initial burst of speed will keep the ball from breaking as much.
- **Uphill putts act like putts on slow greens.** Your challenge is to figure out how much uphill slope you're dealing with and adjust your putt accordingly — the steeper the slope, the more power it takes. Try imagining that the hole's further away than it really is.

Points of the roll

We give you information on some complicated stuff, so here are some key points:

- **Keep your alignment parallel to the target line.** All the following parts of you stay parallel to that line:
  - Feet
  - Knees
  - Shoulders
  - Eye line
- **Know what your putter blade looks like when it's square to the line.**
- **Use the ball's logo or a line marked on the ball to help you align putts.**
- **Follow the line of your intended putt with your eyes at the speed that you think the ball will roll.**
- **Stare at the line of your putt longer than you look at the golf ball.**

Good putting takes practice. And then more practice. The boys at the club practise their putting less than anything else, then wonder why they lose bets!

More than half the strokes you make in this silly game may be putts. Create games on the putting green to make putting practice more fun. Your scorecard will thank you.

Chapter 9

Short-Game Secrets

In This Chapter

- Understanding the short game
- Making pinpoint pitch shots
- Chipping your way to great scores

Five-time US PGA champion Walter Hagen had the right approach. As he stood on the first tee, the great Haig knew that he'd probably hit at least six terrible shots that day. So when he did hit one sideways, he didn't blow his top. Hagen simply relied on his superior *short game* (every shot within 80 metres of the hole) to get out of trouble. That combination of attitude and dexterity made him a feared match player. His apparent nonchalance — 'Always take time to smell the flowers along the way', he used to say — and his ability to get up and down 'from the garbage' put pressure on his opponents. As he kept escaping trouble, his opponents got depressed, annoyed and eventually downhearted. Hagen proved that golf is more than hitting the ball well — it's a game of managing your misses.

Golf's Ups and Downs

The short game is every shot hit within 80 metres of the hole. That includes sand play (Chapter 10) and putting (Chapter 8). So what's left? Pitching and chipping — two versions of short shots to the green. The *chip* is a low shot, while the *pitch* is a higher flier.

Hang around golfers for a while and you inevitably hear one say something like, 'I missed the third green but got up and down for my par'. At this stage, you're probably wondering what in the world 'up and down' means. Well, the 'up' part is the subject of this chapter — chipping or pitching the ball to the hole. The 'down' half of the equation, of course, is holing the putt after

your chip or pitch (see Chapter 8). Thus, a golfer with a good short game is one who gets 'up and down' a high percentage of the time (anywhere above 50 per cent).

Now here's the weird thing: Although a good short game can erase your mistakes and keep a good round going, many amateurs tend to look down on golfers blessed with a delicate touch around the greens. They hate to lose to someone who beats them with good chipping and putting.

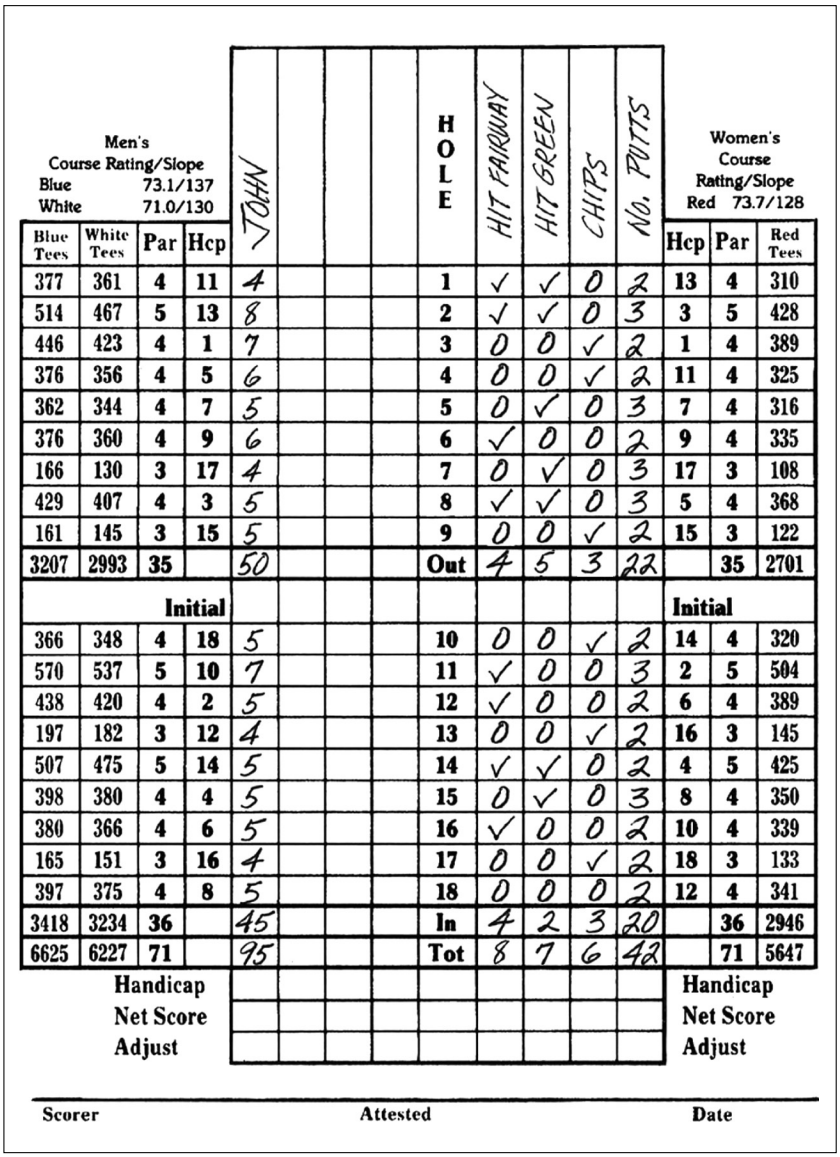
Somehow a strong short game isn't perceived as 'macho golf' — not in the same league as smashing drives 300 metres and hitting low, raking, iron shots to greens. Good ball strikers tend to look down on players with better short games. This attitude is more than a snobbery thing — it's also a missing-the-point thing.

In golf, you want to move the ball around the course in the fewest possible strokes. How you get that job done is up to you. No rule says that you have to look pretty when you play golf. Your scorecard won't be hung in an art gallery. As someone once said, 'Three of them and one of those makes four'. Remember that saying. You can make up for a lot of bad play with one good putt.

You don't hear professionals downplaying the importance of a good short game. We know that the short game is where we make our money. Here's proof: If you put a *scratch* (zero-handicap) amateur and a tournament pro on the tee with drivers in their hands, their drives won't look all that different. Sure, you can tell who is the better player, but the amateur at least *looks* competitive.

The gap in quality grows on the approach shots, again on wedge play and then again in the short game. In fact, the closer the players get to the green, the more obvious the difference in level of play will become. And the green is where a mediocre score gets turned into a good score, or where a good score gets turned into a great one. (Take a look at the sample scorecard in Figure 9-1. It wouldn't hurt to keep that kind of record for yourself once in a while.)

Okay, we've convinced you of the importance of the short game in the overall scheme of things. Before you go further, you need to know the difference between a pitch and a chip. A *chip* is a short shot that's mostly on the ground. A *pitch*, in contrast, is generally a longer shot that's mostly airborne.



Men's Course Rating/Slope Blue 73.1/137 White 71.0/130				JOHN				HOLE	HIT FAIRWAY	HIT GREEN	CHIPS	NO. PUTTS	Women's Course Rating/Slope Red 73.7/128		
Blue Tees	White Tees	Par	Hcp										Hcp	Par	Red Tees
377	361	4	11	4				1	✓	✓	0	2	13	4	310
514	467	5	13	8				2	✓	✓	0	3	3	5	428
446	423	4	1	7				3	0	0	✓	2	1	4	389
376	356	4	5	6				4	0	0	✓	2	11	4	325
362	344	4	7	5				5	0	✓	0	3	7	4	316
376	360	4	9	6				6	✓	0	0	2	9	4	335
166	130	3	17	4				7	0	✓	0	3	17	3	108
429	407	4	3	5				8	✓	✓	0	3	5	4	368
161	145	3	15	5				9	0	0	✓	2	15	3	122
3207	2993	35		50				Out	4	5	3	22		35	2701
		Initial											Initial		
366	348	4	18	5				10	0	0	✓	2	14	4	320
570	537	5	10	7				11	✓	0	0	3	2	5	504
438	420	4	2	5				12	✓	0	0	2	6	4	389
197	182	3	12	4				13	0	0	✓	2	16	3	145
507	475	5	14	5				14	✓	✓	0	2	4	5	425
398	380	4	4	5				15	0	✓	0	3	8	4	350
380	366	4	6	5				16	✓	0	0	2	10	4	339
165	151	3	16	4				17	0	0	✓	2	18	3	133
397	375	4	8	5				18	0	0	0	2	12	4	341
3418	3234	36		45				In	4	2	3	20		36	2946
6625	6227	71		95				Tot	8	7	6	42		71	5647
		Handicap											Handicap		
		Net Score											Net Score		
		Adjust											Adjust		

Scorer Attested Date

Figure 9-1: A scorecard with putts and chips highlighted.

Make Your Pitch

Pitch shots, which you play with only your wedges and 9-iron, are generally longer than chips. That introduces wrist action into the equation, which introduces the problem of how long your swing should be and how fast. In other words, pitch shots need some serious feel.

Even the best players try to avoid pitch shots. They're 'in-between' shots. You can't just make your normal, everyday, full swing — that would send the ball way too far. You're stuck making a partial swing — which is never easy, especially when you're under pressure.

Anyway, here's how to build your pitching swing.

First, you want your stance to be narrow: About 30 centimetres from heel to heel, and open, with your left foot back from the target line. Your shoulders should be open to the target, with your hands ahead of the ball. Stand so that the ball is about 5 centimetres to the left of your right big toe, as shown in Figure 9-2.

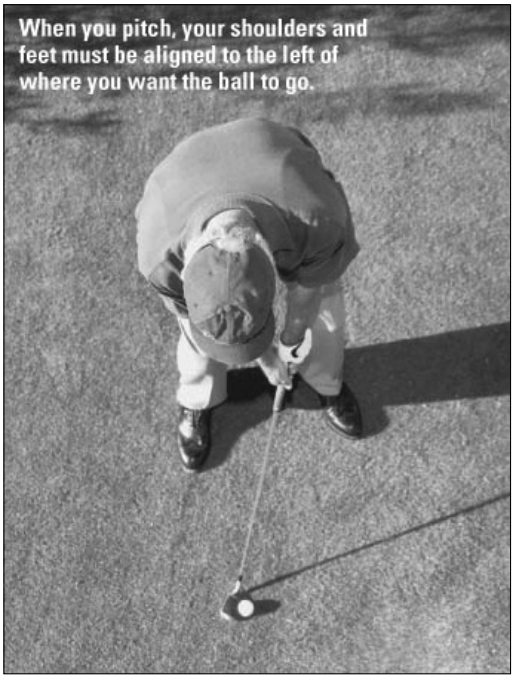


Figure 9-2: Set up to pitch.

Now make a miniswing (which we describe in Chapter 6). Without moving the butt end of the club too far in your backswing, hinge your wrists so that the shaft is horizontal. Now swing through the shot. Watch how far the ball goes. That distance is your point of reference.

Do you want to hit the next pitch 10 metres further? Then make your swing a little bit longer (see Figure 9-3). Shorter? Your swing follows suit. That way, your rhythm never changes. You want the clubhead accelerating smoothly through the ball. And that acceleration is best achieved if the momentum is built up gradually from address.

Poor pitchers of the ball do one of two things: Either they start their swings too slowly and then speed up too much at impact, or they jerk the club away from the ball and have to decelerate later. Both swings lead to what golf columnist Peter Dobereiner christened 'sickening knee-high fizzers' — low, thin shots that hurtle uncontrollably over the green — or complete duffs that travel only a few steps. Not a pretty sight. The most common cause of both is tension. So relax!

Imagine that you're swinging with a potato chip — the thin, crisp kind — between your teeth. Focus on *not* biting down on it. That'll keep you relaxed.

Here's a game Gary and his friends play at the back of the range at their facility at Grayhawk Golf Club in Scottsdale, Arizona. They get five empty buckets and place them in a straight line at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 metres. They then have one hour to hit one ball into each bucket, starting at 5 metres. The winner gets the keys to the other guy's car. They're still driving their own cars — they usually get frustrated and quit before the one-hour time limit expires, or go to lunch. But at least they get some good pitching practice.

In golf, you get better by doing; *not* by doing nothing.

Last pitching thought: Although pitch shots fly higher than chips, you still want to get the ball back to the ground ASAP. Pick out your landing area and let the ball roll the rest of the way. See the shot in your mind's eye before you hit the ball and remember your *Golf For Dummies* secret: To make the ball go up, hit down — don't try to lift it.

Chips Ahoy!

Chip shots are shorter than pitches and easier. At least they should be easier. With the proper technique, you can chip the ball close enough to the hole to tap the ball in . . . unless of course you sink that chip!

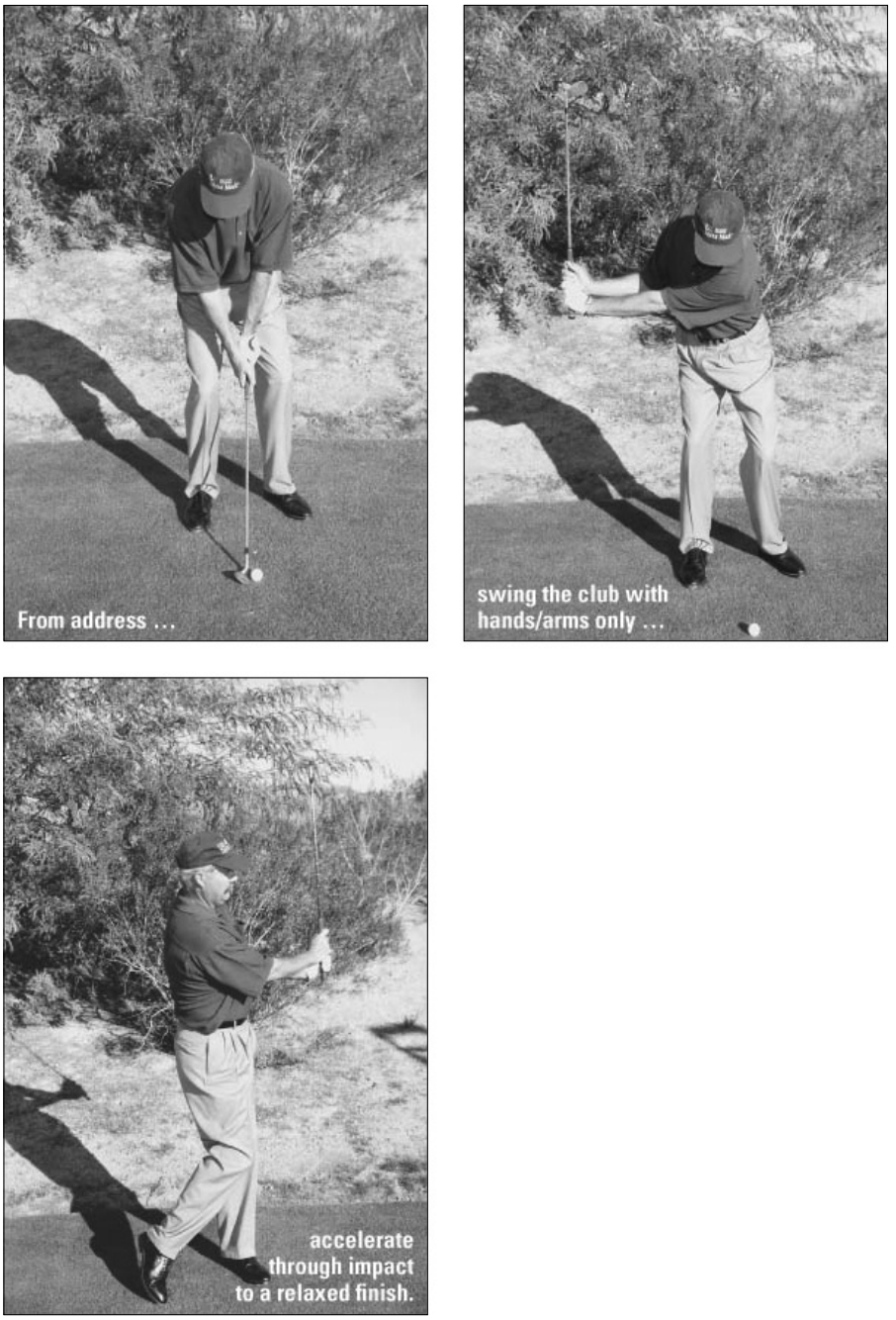


Figure 9-3: Think 'tempo'.

Chips are played with anything from a 5-iron to a wedge. The basic idea is to get the ball on the green and rolling as soon as you can. If you get the ball running like a putt, it'll be easier to judge how far it will go.

Pick your spot

Your first point of reference is the spot where you want the ball to land. If at all possible, you want that spot to be on the putting surface. The turf there is generally flatter and better prepared, which makes the all-important first bounce more predictable. You want to avoid landing chips on rough, uneven or sloping ground.

Pick a spot about a metre onto the green (see Figure 9-4). From that spot, we like to visualise the ball rolling the rest of the way to the hole. Visualisation is a big part of chipping. Try to picture the shot before you hit the ball. Then be as exact as you can with your target. Don't aim for an area. Try to hit a blade of grass! You can't be too precise.

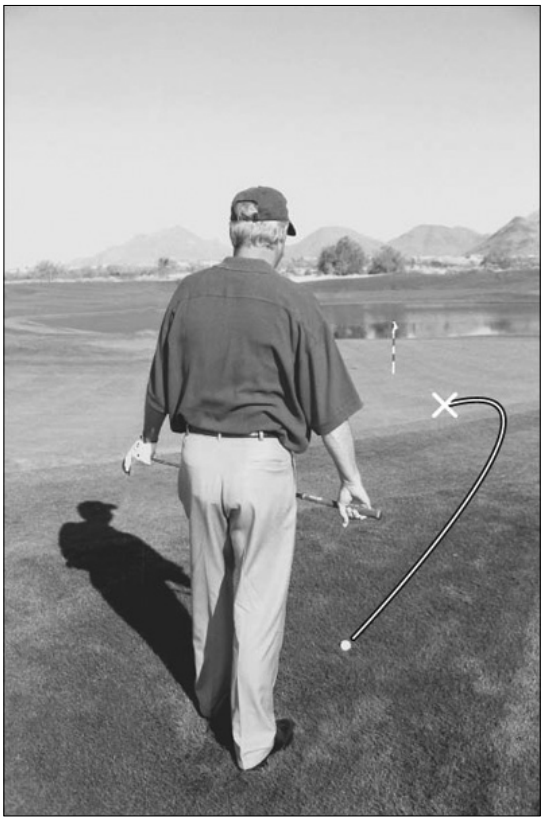


Figure 9-4: Pick a spot on the putting surface.

Choose the right club

Your choice of club depends on how much room you have between your landing point and the hole. If you have only 5 metres, you need a more *lofted* club (one with a face that is severely angled back from vertical), like a sand wedge or even a lob wedge, so that the ball doesn't run too far.

If you watch golf on TV, you've probably seen Phil Mickelson or Tiger Woods use a full swing to hit the ball straight up in the air and cover only a short distance on the ground. Phil can do another thing that's really astounding: You stand about 2 metres away from Phil and turn your back to him. You then cup your hands and hold them straight out from your chest. Phil takes a full swing with his wedge and lofts the ball over your head and into your sweaty, waiting hands — all from only 2 metres away. Now that's a lob!

If that gap is bigger — say, 20 metres — then a straighter-faced club, like a 7-iron, is more practical. Figure 9-5 illustrates this concept.

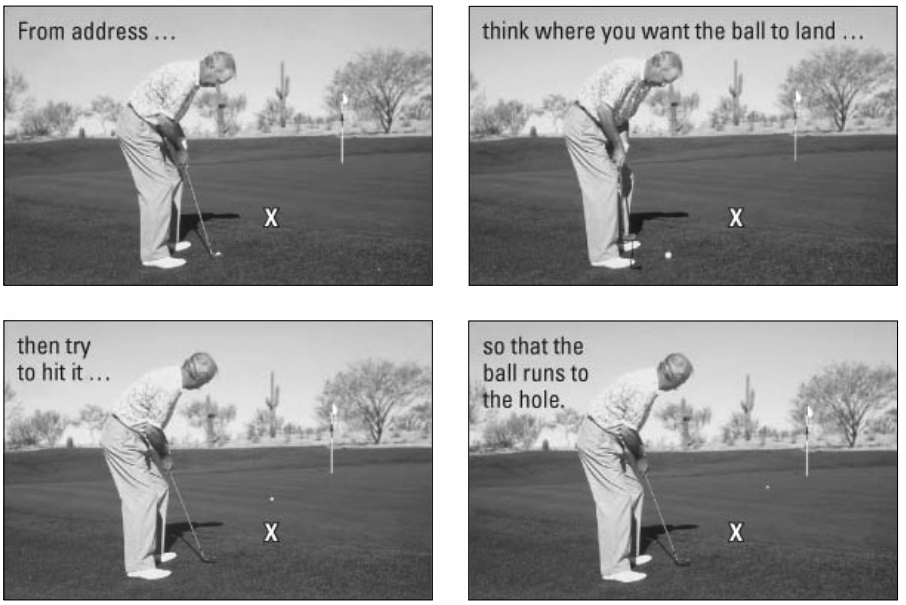


Figure 9-5: Get the ball rolling.

Lies and secrets

Next comes the problem of how your ball is lying on the ground. If it's in longer grass, you need to use a more lofted club and make a longer swing, no matter where the hole is. (***Note:*** Longer grass means a longer swing.) You need to get the ball high enough to escape the longer rough. If the ball is lying 'down' in a depression and you can't get it out with a straighter-faced club, you have to go to more loft and move the ball back a little in your stance — closer to your right foot — to make the shot work (see Chapter 12 for more on low shots). This part of the game calls for creativity.

Use the philosophy I've outlined as a starting point, not as holy writ that must be followed to the letter. Let your own creativity take over. Go with your instincts when you need to choose the right club or shot. The more you practise this part of your game, the easier it gets.

Practice, and only practice, makes you better. Try all sorts of clubs for these shots. Sooner or later, you'll develop a feel for the short game. We can't stress this enough: Use as many clubs as possible when practising! Learning how different clubs perform in different situations is one of the secrets of a successful short game.

Now chip away!

Short game guru Phil Rodgers taught Gary his chipping technique, which is basically the same one Gary employs for putting. He uses a putting stroke, but with a lofted club — and he wants you to do the same. Take your putting grip and stroke, and go hit a few chip shots. Right now — unless you're operating heavy machinery.

You'll find that one key to chipping is your setup. Creating the right positions at address is essential.

Your stance should be similar to the one you use on pitch shots: Narrow, with about 30 centimetres from heel to heel, and open — with your left foot back from the target line. Your shoulders should be open to the target as well. Now place about 80 per cent of your weight on your left side. By moving your hands ahead of the ball, you encourage the downward strike that you need to make solid contact with the ball. The ball should be about 5 centimetres to the left of your right big toe (see Figure 9-6).

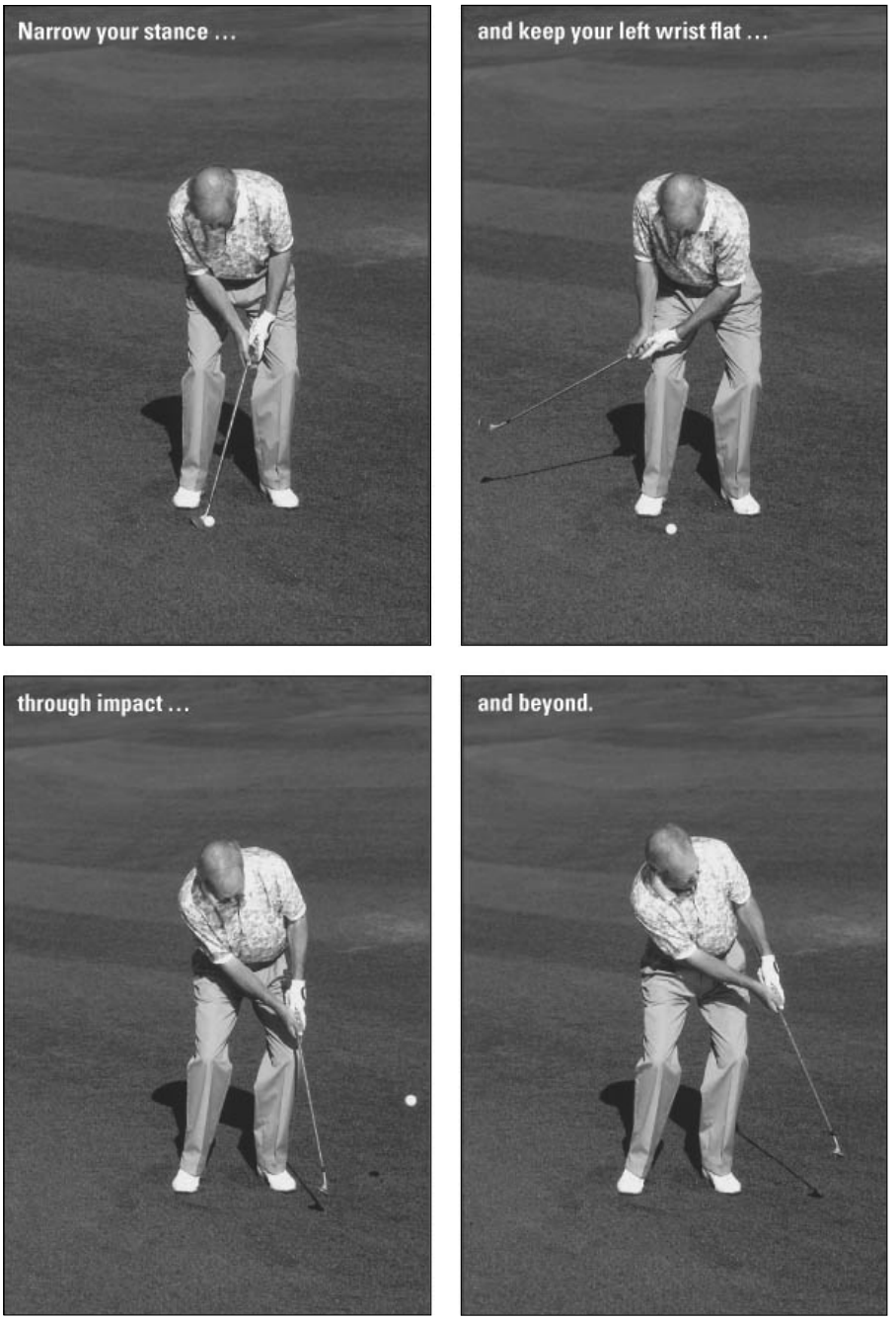


Figure 9-6: Chip with your weight on your left side, hands ahead of the ball.

During your stroke, focus on the back of your left wrist. That wrist must stay flat and firm, as in putting (see Figure 9-7). To keep your left wrist flat, tape an ice-cream stick to the back of that wrist (slipping the stick under your watchband works almost as well). You'll feel any breakdowns right away. Now go hit some putts and chips.

When I play a tour event, one of the first things I do is go to the putting green, where I hit putts and chips to get an idea of the speed of the greens. I find a flat spot on the green and drop some balls about 2 metres from the putting surface. Then I put a coin on the green a metre from the *fringe* (the collar of grass around the green — it's longer than the grass on the green but shorter than the grass on the fairway). Then I take an 8-iron, 9-iron and wedge, and chip balls onto the green, trying to bounce each ball off the coin so that it runs to the hole. This gives me a good idea of how fast the greens are that week — and when you miss as many greens as I do, the practice comes in handy.

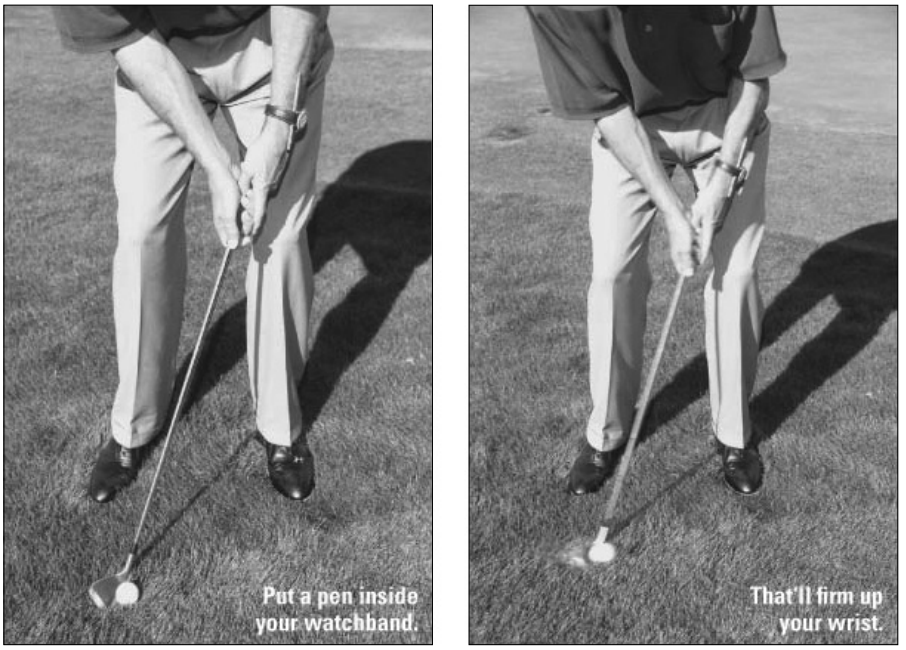


Figure 9-7: No wrist break.

Chapter 10

Bunker Play: It's Easy (Really!)

In This Chapter

- What is a bunker?
- Understanding sand play
- Making sand shots easy
- Getting the ball onto the putting surface
- Dealing with a less-than-perfect lie

We've read countless articles and books on sand play and they all say the same thing: Because you don't even have to hit the ball, playing from the sand is the easiest part of golf. Well, we say, bull trap! If sand play was so easy, all those articles and books would never be written in the first place. Everyone would be blasting the ball onto the putting surface with nary a care in the world. And that, take it from us, is certainly not the case.

In this chapter, we explain the equipment and techniques you need to get out of the sand. We tell how and why your sand wedge is different from any other club in your bag. At the end of the chapter, we even tell you how to hit a successful bunker shot from a terrible lie. Do *that* your next time out and your friends will be amazed.

Bunkers: Don't Call 'Em Traps!

Bunkers, or sand traps (as Gary's told *not* to call them on TV), provoke an extraordinary amount of 'sand angst' among golfers. But sometimes, *aiming* for a bunker actually makes sense — on a long, difficult approach shot, for example. The pros know that the 'up and down' from sand can actually be easier than from the surrounding (usually gnarly) grass.

Bunkers began as dips in the ground on the windswept Scottish linksland. Because such areas were sheltered from cold breezes, sheep would take refuge in them. Thus, the dips expanded and got deeper. When the land came to be used for golf, the locals took advantage of what God and the sheep left behind and fashioned sand-filled bunkers. (No word on what the sheep thought of all this.)

On these old courses, the greens were sited to maximise the bunkers' threat to golfers' shots, which is why they came to be named *hazards* in the rules of golf. Later, course architects placed these insidious 'traps' to penalise wayward shots. That's why you generally don't see bunkers in the middle of fairways — they're mostly to the sides.

We don't know too many amateurs who have ever aimed at a bunker. Mired in sand is the last place they want to be. Typifying the way amateur golfers look at bunkers is the saga the late American politician Tip O'Neill endured years ago during the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic, a pro-am tournament. The former Speaker of the House, admittedly not the strongest golfer (even among celebrities), found himself in a very deep bunker. He then spent the next few hours (okay, it just *seemed* that long) trying to extricate first the ball, then his hefty honourable self, from the trap — all on national television. You could almost hear millions of viewers muttering, 'Been there, done that'.

Why do bunkers scare most amateurs to death? Just what is it about sand play that they find so tough? Well, after much research, some of it in a laboratory, we've come to the conclusion that the answer is simple. (If it wasn't simple, we would never have discovered it.) It all comes down to lack of technique and/or a lack of understanding.

Faced with a bunker shot, many golfers are beaten before they start. You can tell by their constipated looks, sweaty foreheads and hesitant body language. Their reaction when they fail is also interesting. After a couple of shots finish up back in the bunker, most players don't focus on technique. They merely try to hit the shot harder, making more and more violent swings. Wrong! Swinging harder only makes them angrier and then the ball sure isn't going to come out. They wind up digging a nice big trench, perfect for burying a small animal but not much good for anything else.

Part of the reason for this all-too-human reaction is that long stretches of failure resign you to your fate. In your mind, you've tried everything and you *still* can't get the damn thing out. So you trudge into the bunker expecting the worst and that's what you usually get.

Bunker mentality

Escaping the sand can be easy once you get a feel for it. I knew at an early age that my scoring depended on getting up and down out of bunkers with a certain regularity, so I practised bunker shots with a vengeance. As a result, I can get a ball out of a bunker with everything from a sand wedge to a putter.

One day I was playing in the Kemper Open in Charlotte, North Carolina, when I saw another pro, a notoriously bad bunker player, practising hard on his sand play. After a few moments of idle conversation and general harassing, a bet transpired: He would hit ten balls with his sand wedge; I would hit five with a putter. If I got my ball closer than his ball, he would have to go in the locker room and announce to everyone that I beat him with a putter out of a bunker. If he won, I would take him to dinner and then not bother him for the rest of the year.

Ten minutes later, laughter from the locker room echoed throughout the clubhouse and his reputation as the worst bunker player on tour was safe. I cannot divulge his name because he's playing the Champions Tour now (and doing well!). He got much better getting out of the sand after some much-needed practice — about 20 years' worth.

The Trouble with Sand

Most golfers address the ball in a way that makes it all but impossible to create the correct angles in their golf swings. Golf, and especially bunker play, is mainly the creation of the proper angle that the clubhead must take into the ball. (The *clubhead* is the part that, when you hold the club in front of your face, hangs below the leading edge.) Ball position is the root of many duffs, hacks, slashes and other misbegotten shots. If you have the ball positioned way back towards your right foot, as so many people seem to do, you won't ever get it out of the trap. You can't hit the ball high enough, for one thing. For another, the clubhead enters the sand at too steep an angle. In other words, the clubhead digs into the sand instead of sliding through it. When that happens, the ball usually stays in the bunker, sucking sand.

Poor bunker players suffer from a lack of understanding. They get into the sand and start 'digging' as if there was buried treasure down there. Sometimes we feel like throwing poor bunker players a metal detector. Then at least they might turn up an old doubloon or two.

How to Be Handy from Sand

To be a competent sand player, you must take advantage of the way your sand wedge is designed. The bottom of the club is wider than the top (see Figure 10-1). The *bounce* is the bottom of the clubhead. Believe me, if you can make the best use of the bounce, bunker play will be off your list of phobias.

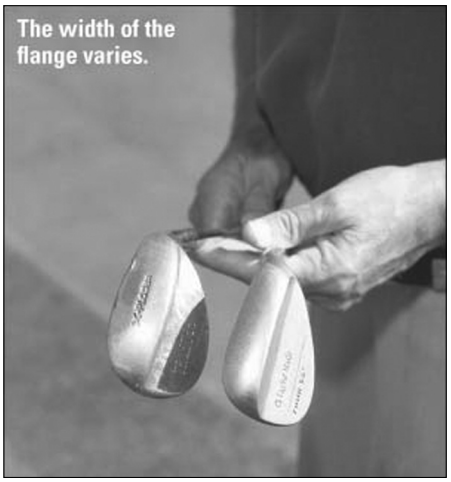


Figure 10-1: Sand wedges are different.

The bounce is the part of the clubhead that should contact the sand first. This encourages the sliding motion that's so crucial to good bunker play. Think about it: The sand is going to slow the club as you swing down and through, which is okay. But you want to keep the slowdown to a minimum. If the club digs in too much, the ball probably won't leave the bunker. So *slide* the clubhead; don't use it to dig. Take note, however, that not every sand wedge has the same amount of bounce. The width of the sole and the amount that it hangs below the leading edge varies. The lower the trailing edge hangs below the leading edge, the more bounce your sand wedge has. This, of course, begs another question: How do you know how much bounce your sand wedge *needs*? The determining factor is the type of sand you play from. The bigger the bounce or the wider the sole on your sand wedge, the less it will dig into the sand.

If the sand at your home course is typically pretty firm underfoot, you need a sand wedge with very little bounce. A club with a lot of bounce does just that — bounce. And hard (or wet) sand only accentuates that tendency. So using that club will leave you hitting a lot of shots thin, as the clubhead skids off the sand and strikes the ball's equator. Either you hit the ball into the face of the bunker and don't get out at all, or the ball misses the face and zooms over the green. Neither result is socially acceptable. The first is hazardous to your mental health, the second to your playing partners.

'Hoe Hoe Hoe!'

In 1995 I received an urgent phone call from movie director Ron Shelton, who was shooting the movie *Tin Cup.* He said, 'Gary, we forgot to ask you this, but how do you hit a gardening hoe out of a bunker?'

'Gee, Ron', I said, 'I haven't done that in a while; let me think.'

What I was thinking was, '*Are you nuts? What do you mean, how do you hit a gardening hoe out of a bunker?!!*'

Ron told me that a scene had to be shot the next day with Kevin Costner hitting a ball out of a bunker, with a hoe and that the ball had to land no more than a metre from the hole. Sure. Right.

I went to the practice green at Singletree Golf Course in Vail, Colorado, with my practice bag full of balls and a hoe. It was pouring rain. It took me 40 minutes to get a single ball out of the bunker and I *bladed* (hit the centre of the ball with the leading edge) that one to get it out. I finally decided that the bottom edge of the hoe was too sharp and I needed some bounce to make it perform better in the sand. So I bent the hoe on the bottom and immediately started to get the ball up and out.

I called the movie set and gave directions on how to bend the hoe. They shot the scene and Kevin Costner hit the first ball out of the bunker, with the hoe, next to the hole. That's a take; wrap it up, as they say.

So if the bounce can work with a garden hoe, imagine what you can do with your sand wedge.

At the other end of the scale is soft, deep sand. For that sort of stuff, you need plenty of bounce. In fact, because the clubhead digs so easily when the sand is soft, you can't have enough bounce.

But enough of this preamble. Take a look at how a sound sand technique is properly — and easily — achieved.

Splash Landings

Okay, you're in a greenside bunker (a bunker next to the green). You want to get the ball onto the putting surface. Here's what to do: Open your stance by pulling your left foot back. Pull that foot back until you start to feel vaguely ridiculous. Your left foot's position must feel funny to you. If it doesn't, pull your foot back even more! Next, open (turn to the right) your sand wedge to the point where the face points almost straight up at the sky, as shown in Figure 10-2. The ball should be positioned forward in your stance towards your left heel. (Do this even more if you're unlucky enough to be very close to the face of the bunker.) You should feel like the club will slide right

under the ball when you swing at it — and this should feel just as weird as your wide-open stance. Again, if it doesn't, open the face of your sand wedge even more.

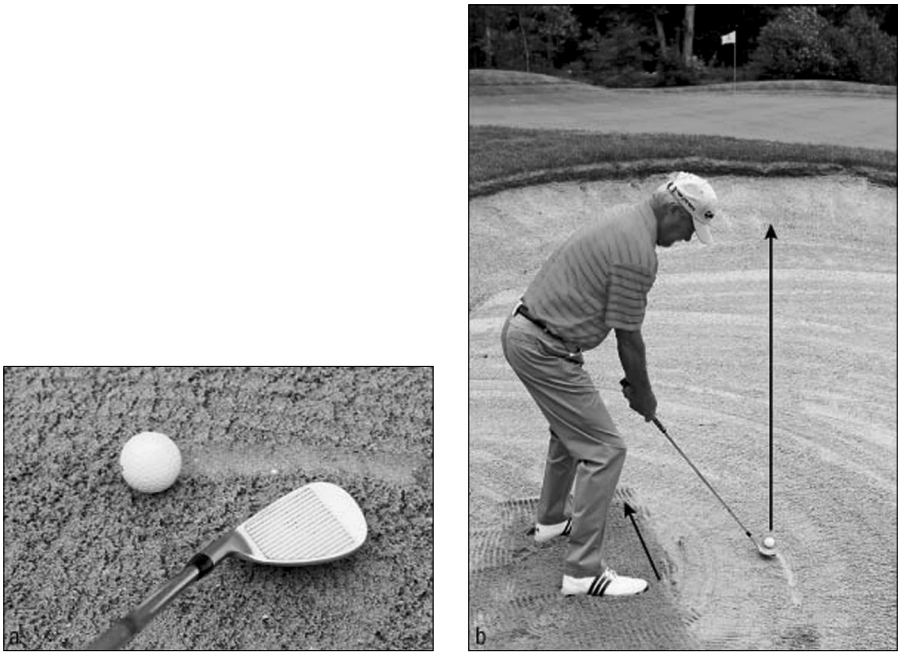


Figure 10-2: Open your stance until it feels ridiculous.

Most amateurs Gary plays with don't do either of those things. They stand too square and don't open the clubface nearly enough. In effect, they don't take advantage of their sand wedges. This club works best when the face is wide open (turned clockwise). Sand wedges are designed that way: The open face sends the ball *up* when you slide it into the sand.

Here's one other thing you should know. When I go home to play, I notice that nobody practises bunker shots, not even my pal Sand Wedge Sam. (He got his nickname after demonstrating uncommon prowess in the much underestimated and neglected art of sand-wedge tossing.) Don't fall into that trap! (I love bad puns.) Instead, get into a bunker and *practise.*

Finally, remember that your club must not touch the sand before you hit the ball. That's *grounding* the club — illegal in a hazard.

Okay, you're standing over the shot, perfectly positioned. Now what? You want to know where to hit the sand, right?

Aim about a credit-card length behind the ball. Swing at about 80 per cent of full speed. Think of it as a sliding motion. Don't hit down. Let the clubhead throw a 'scoop' of sand onto the green, as shown in Figure 10-3. Focusing on a full, uninhibited follow-through will help (see Figure 10-4). Forget the ball — all you're trying to do is throw sand out of the bunker. (The more sand you throw, the shorter the shot will be. So if you need to hit the shot a fair distance, hit maybe only 5 centimetres behind the ball.) If you can throw sand, the ball gets carried along for the ride. And that's why better players say that bunker play is easy — the clubhead never actually contacts the ball. Now go get some sunscreen and spend some time practising in the sand.

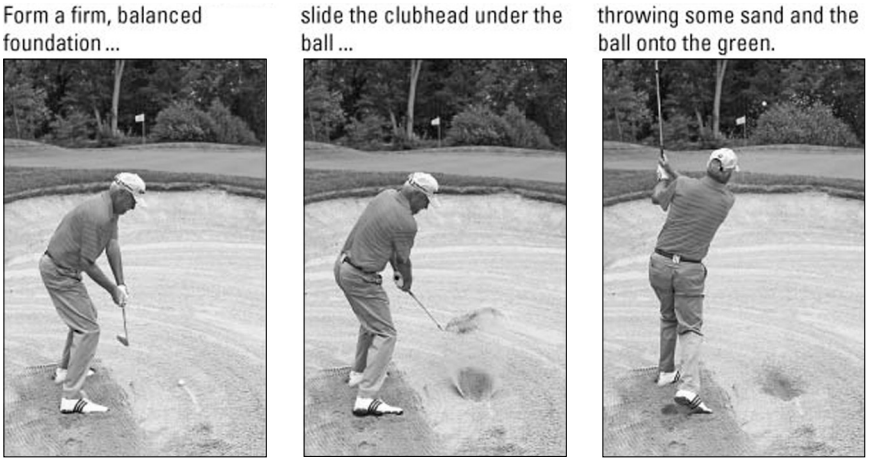


Figure 10-3: No digging allowed.

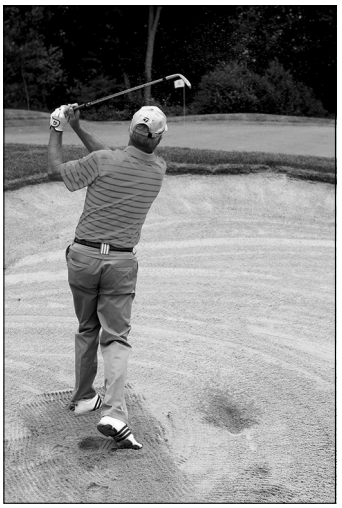
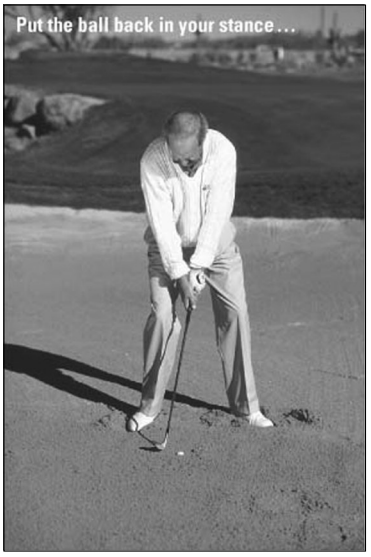


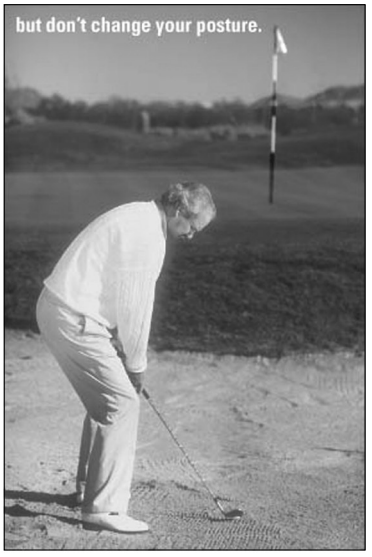
Figure 10-4: Keep going!

Buried Alive!

Unfortunately, not every lie (where the ball is sitting) in a bunker is perfect. Sometimes the ball *plugs* (embeds itself in the sand so that only part of it is visible). You'll hear other golfers call this lie a *fried egg.* When that happens to you, and after you've finished cursing your luck, try a different technique.

To exhume your ball from a buried lie, you still need to open your stance. But this time don't open the clubface. Keep it a little *hooded.* In other words, align the clubface to the *left* of your target. Shift nearly all your weight to your left side, which puts you 'ahead' of the shot (see Figure 10-5). And play the ball back in your stance. This is the one time you want the leading edge of the club to *dig.* The ball, after all, is below the surface of the sand.





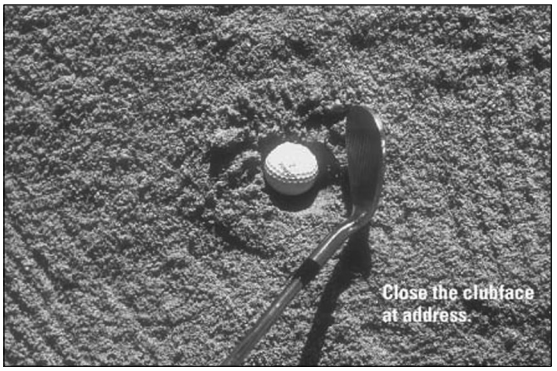


Figure 10-5: A buried lie in a bunker: Can you dig it?

Now you're ready. Swing the club up and down, and we mean *up* and *down* like you're chopping wood with a dull axe. Hit *straight down* on the sand about 5 centimetres behind the ball (see Figure 10-6). A follow-through isn't needed. Just hit down. Hard. The ball should pop up and then run to the hole. With little or no backspin, that sneaky little escapee will run like it just stole something. So allow for extra roll.

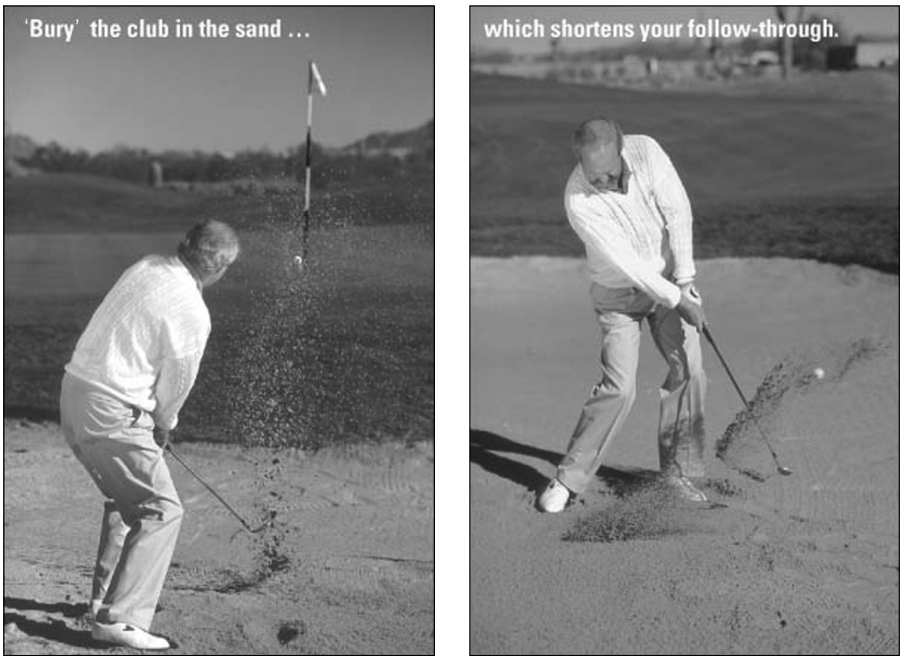


Figure 10-6: Hit down hard!

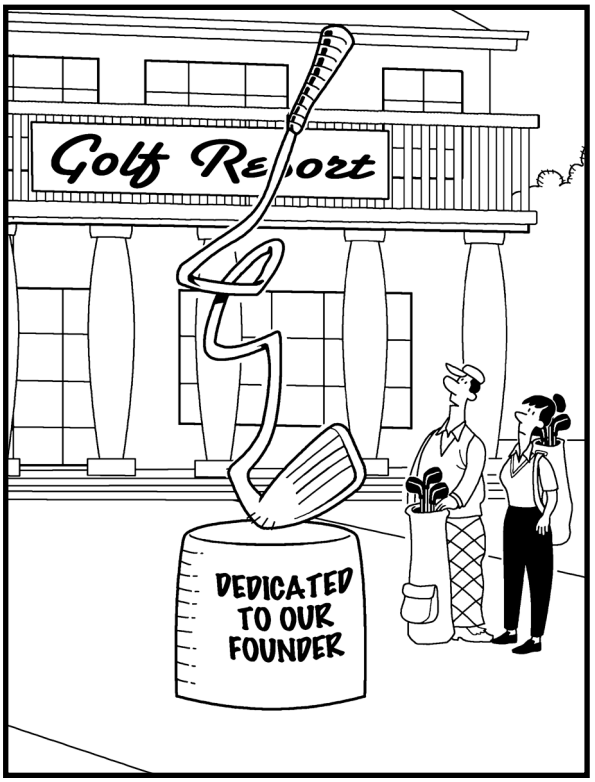
Just how hard you should hit down is hard for me to say — it depends on the texture and depth of the sand and on how deep the ball is buried. That old standby, practice, tells you what you need to know.

Second-to-last point: Practise with clubs of various lofts, then use whatever works for you. Gary will often use his pitching wedge (which has less bounce and a sharper leading edge than a sand wedge and therefore digs more) for buried-lie escapes.

Last point: Always smooth out your footprints when leaving a bunker. If there's no rake nearby, use your feet. Or if you're like Gary's friend Steamroller Ron, just roll around in the bunker until it's really smooth. Golfers used to gather to watch Ron smooth out the sand. We had very few rakes at the public course we played and the Steamroller was the next-best thing. Gary misses Steamroller; he sold his gravel business and moved to Saudi Arabia.

Part III

Common Faults and Easy Fixes



'He was a generous benefactor . . . just not very good at golf.'

In this part . . .

This part is about the many maladies that can afflict your golf game — and how to cure them. Have you ever had one of those days when nothing goes right? You'll hit one ball fat, the next one thin and when you *do* hit the thing solidly, it slices into the carpark!

We've got remedies for your maladies. In this part, we also tell you how to play in all sorts of weather and how to deal with the bad breaks you're sure to encounter. We even give you tips on playing through the winter — in case you're not teeing it up in Darwin or Port Douglas.

Chapter 11

Hits and Misses

In This Chapter

- Understanding common swing flaws
- Slicing the ball
- Hooking the ball
- Remedying directional flaws
- Missing too many putts
- Dealing with the scary shank

It's true in golf, as in life: Nobody's perfect. In golf, nobody's even close. Even the best players have some little hitch in their methods that bedevils them, especially under pressure. Greg Norman once tended to hit the ball well to the right of the target on the closing holes of big tournaments. Phil Mickelson and Tiger Woods have gone through periods when they drove the ball crooked at the worst possible times. Watch your playing companions when they get a little nervous; you can see all sorts of unfortunate events. Putts are left short. Even simple shots take longer to play. Conversation all but stops. Any flaws in their swings are cruelly exposed.

You're going to develop faults of your own. They're a given, no matter how far you progress. The trick is catching your faults before they get worse. Faults left unattended often turn into major problems and ruin your game.

For Better Golf, Use Your Head

The cause of most faults is your head position. Your cranium's position relative to the ball as you strike it dictates where the bottom of your swing is. The bottom of your swing always depends on where your head is positioned. If you don't believe us, try this: Shift your weight and your head towards the target onto your left side, while leaving the ball in its regular position. Now make your normal swing with, say, a 6-iron. The divot made by the club will be more in front of the ball. The bottom of your swing moved towards the target along with your head.

The opposite is also true. Shift your weight and head to the right, and the bottom of your swing moves that way.

The bottom line: If your head moves too much during the swing, you have little chance to correct things before impact and the result is usually some form of poor shot. Don't get the idea that excessive head movement is responsible for absolutely every bad shot. Other poor plays can stem from improper use of your hands, arms or body. But try to keep your head as steady as possible.

Anyway, that's the big picture. Now we'll get more specific. What follows is a discussion of the most common faults you're likely to develop, with cures for each fault. After you figure out what you tend todo wrong, you can refer to this chapter regularly to get help.

Common Swing Faults

Most bad shots result from a handful of common errors. Fortunately, they're fixable. Here's how to beat back the gremlins that can creep into your game.

Slicing and hooking

Most golfers *slice* the ball, which for right-handers means that it starts moving towards the left of the target and finishes well to the right. We think slicing stems from the fact that most players tend to aim to the right of their target. When they do so, their swings have to compensate so that the resulting shots can finish close to the target.

In most cases, that compensation starts when your brain realises that if you swing along your aim, the ball will fly way to the right. The resulting flurry of arms and legs isn't pretty — and invariably, neither is the shot. Soon this weak, left-to-right ball flight makes your life a slicing hell. Slices don't go very far. They're horrible, weak shots that affect your DNA for generations to come.

In general, slicers use too much body action and not enough hand action in their swings. Golfers who hook have the opposite tendency — too much hand action, not enough body.

Fear not, hapless hackers: Two variations of the same drill offer solutions.

If you're a slicer, you need to get your hands working in the swing. Here's how:

1. **Address a ball as you normally do.**
2. **Turn your whole body until your butt is towards the target and your feet are perpendicular to the target line.**
3. **Twist your upper body to the left so that you can again place the clubhead behind the ball.**

   Don't move your feet, however. From this position, you have, in effect, made it impossible for your body to turn to your left on the through-swing (see Figure 11-1).

   Try it. Should we call a chiropractor yet? The only way you can swing the club through the ball is by using your hands and arms.
4. **Hit a few balls.**

   Focus on letting the toe of the clubhead pass your heel through impact. Quite a change in your ball flight, eh? Because your hands and arms are doing so much of the rotating work in your new swing, the clubhead is doing the same. The clubhead is now closing as it swings through the impact area. The spin imparted on the ball now causes a slight right-to-left flight — something we bet you thought you'd never see.

After you've hit about 20 shots by using this drill, switch to your normal stance and try to reproduce the feel you had standing in that strange but correct way. You'll soon be hitting hard, raking *draws* (slight hooks) far up the fairway.

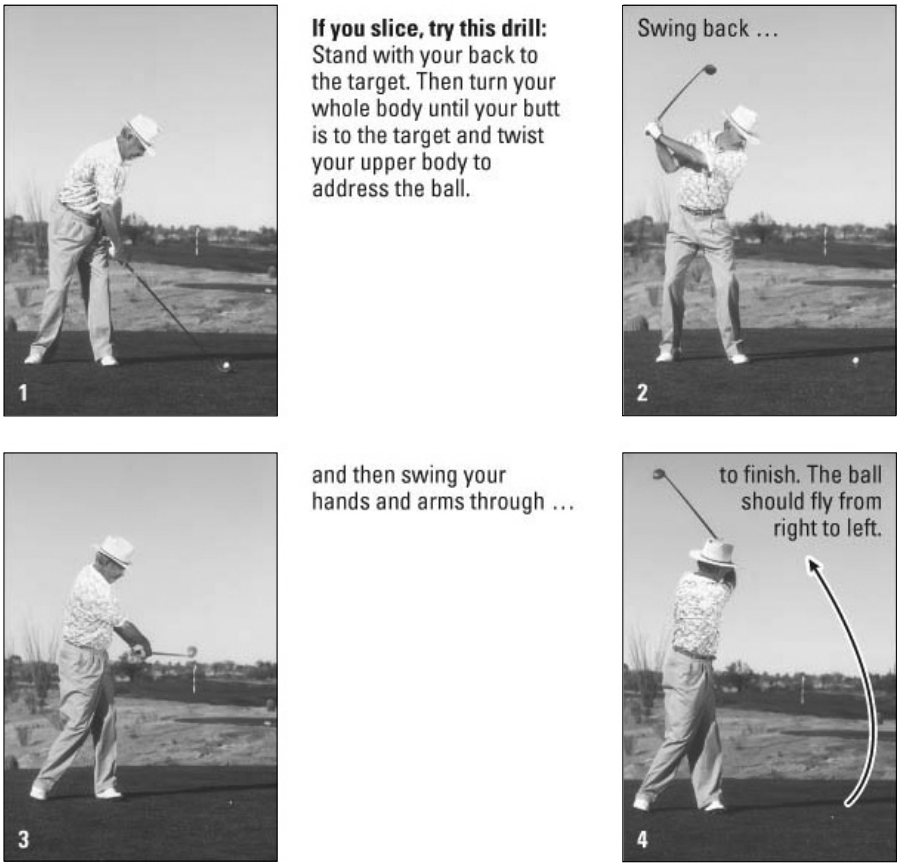


Figure 11-1: Extra hand action cures the slice.

Golfers prone to *hooks* (shots that start right and finish left) have the opposite problem — too much hand action and not enough body. Here's a drill if you tend to hook the ball:

1. **Adopt your regular stance.**
2. **Turn your whole body until you're looking directly at the target.**
3. **Twist your upper body to the right — don't move your feet — until you can set the clubhead behind the ball (see Figure 11-2).**
4. **Hit some shots.**

   You'll find solid contact easiest to achieve when you turn your body hard to the left, which prevents your hands from becoming overactive. Your ball flight will soon be a gentle *fade* (slight slice).

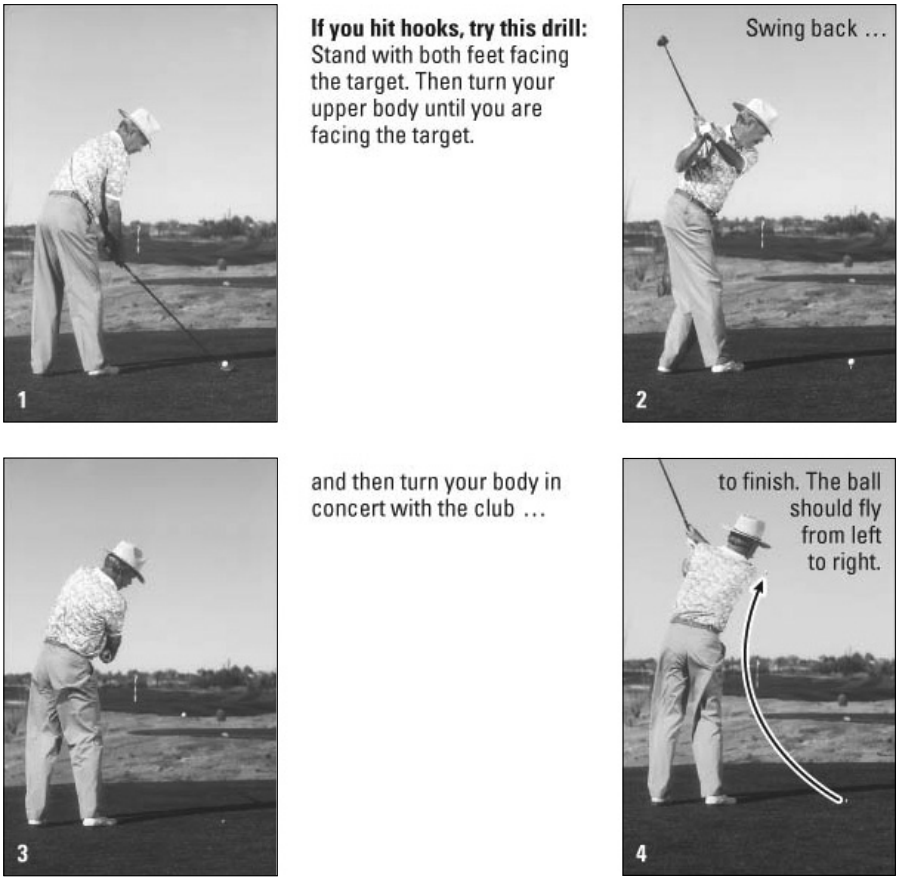


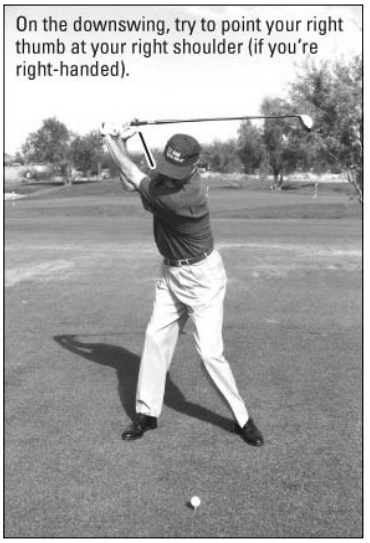
Figure 11-2: Extra body action straightens your hook.

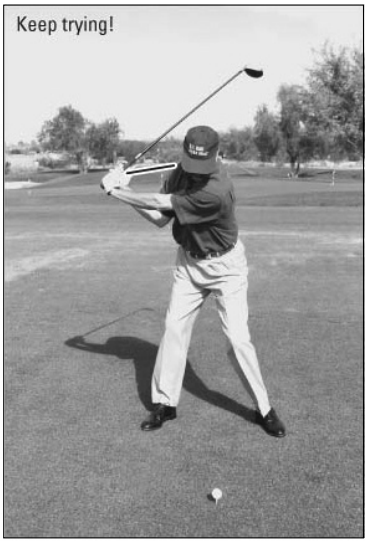
After about 20 shots, hit some balls from your normal stance, practising the technique we just described. Reproduce the feel of this drill and you'll be on your way.

Hitting from the top

When you cock your wrist in your golf swing, the thumb of your right hand (if you're a right-handed golfer) points at your right shoulder on the backswing. That's good! When you start the downswing, keep that thumb pointing at your right shoulder for as long as you can, thus maintaining the *angle*. That's golf speak for keeping the shaft of the club as close to the left arm on the downswing as possible. If your right thumb starts pointing away from your right shoulder on the downswing, that's known as *hitting from the top*. In essence, you're uncocking the wrist on the downswing.

To stop hitting from the top, reduce your grip pressure. Too much tension in your hands will make you throw the clubhead towards the ball, causing you to hit from the top. After you've relaxed your grip pressure, place an alignment stick on the side of the ball away from you, parallel to the target line. The ball should be about 5 centimetres from the stick. If you keep pointing your right thumb at your right shoulder on the downswing, you won't hit the stick with your club. If you point your thumb away from your shoulder on the downswing, you might chop that stick in half! (See Figure 11-3.)





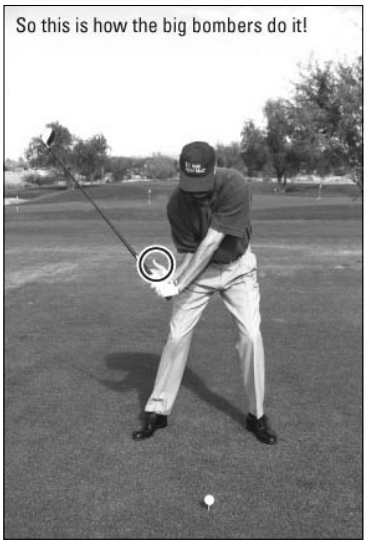


Figure 11-3: Don't hit from the top!

The reverse pivot

A *reverse pivot* occurs when you put all your weight on your left foot on the backswing (shown in Figure 11-4) and all your weight on your right foot during the downswing. That is the opposite of what you want to do! Picture a baseball pitcher. Pitchers have all their weight on the right foot at the top of the windup, the left foot is in the air (for a right-hander) and on the follow-through, all the weight goes to the left foot. (The right foot is now in the air.) That's the weight transfer you need.

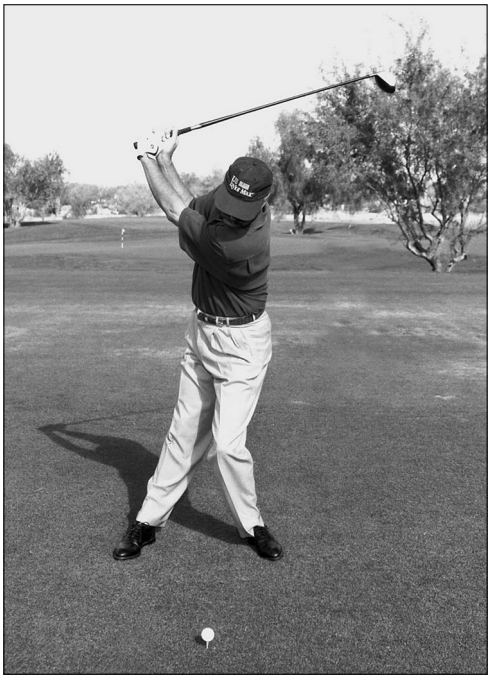


Figure 11-4: The dreaded reverse pivot.

Here's how you can achieve it:

1. **Start your backswing, and when you get to the top of your swing, lift your left foot off the ground.**

   Now you can't put any weight on that foot! You'll feel your whole body resist placing your weight over your right foot.

2. **Take your time and let your weight transfer to your right foot.**

3. **Start the downswing by placing your left foot back where it was and then transfer all your weight over during the swing.**

4. **When you've made contact with the ball (hopefully), put all your weight on your left foot and lift your right foot off the ground.**
5. **Stand there for a short time, feeling the balance.**

This rocking-chair transfer drill lets you feel the proper weight shift in the golf swing. Take it easy at first. Practise short shots until you get the feel, then work your way up to your driver.

Swaying off the ball

In a *sway*, your hips and shoulders don't turn on the backswing, but simply slide back in a straight line, as shown in Figure 11-5.

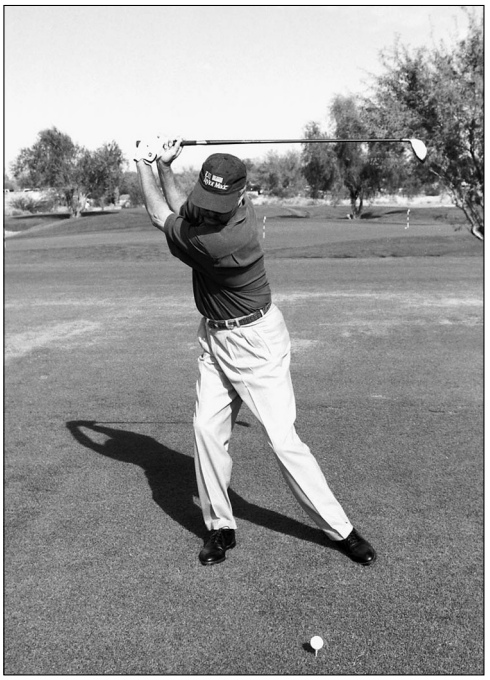


Figure 11-5: The sway ain't the way.

Here's a good drill to help you stop swaying:

1. **Find a bare wall.**
2. **Using a 5-iron, place the club on the ground with the clubhead touching the wall and the shaft extending straight into the room.**

3. **Place your right foot against the end of the shaft with the little toe of your right shoe hitting the end of the club.**

   Now you're standing exactly one club length from the wall.

4. **Put your left foot in the normal address position for the 5-iron and, without moving your feet, bend over and pick up the club.**

5. **Take a backswing.**

   If you sway your hips even just a centimetre or two to the right on your backswing, you'll notice that you hit the wall immediately with the club.

Practise this until you can do it without hitting the wall. Gary put so many marks and holes in a motel room doing this drill, he could watch the TV in the next room!

We suggest practising this drill in your garage at first to save the walls at home. You may want to use an old club, too.

The belly-button twist

Another common fault is doing the belly-button twist: Sliding your hips too far towards the target at the start of the downswing. How far should your hips slide before they start turning left? They must slide until your left hip and left knee are over your left foot. Then those hips turn left in a hurry!

Here's how to improve your hip position at the downswing:

1. **Get a broken club that has just a shaft and a grip on it.**

   You can find broken clubs in lost-and-found barrels, or just ask somebody at a driving range. Your golf pro can also help you find one.

2. **Stick the broken club into the ground just outside your left foot; the top of the grip should be no higher than your hip.**

3. **Now hit a few shots.**

   When you swing, your left hip should not hit the club stuck in the ground. It should turn to the left of the shaft. The key here is to straighten the left leg in your follow-through.

A swing that's too short

In most cases, a short swing comes from too little shoulder turn. Turn your left shoulder over your right foot at the top of your backswing. If you can't, lift your left heel off the ground until you can. Many players we see with short swings also keep their right elbows against their rib cages at the top of the swing. The right elbow should be away from the rib cage (15 centimetres) to allow some freedom in the swing and get the needed length to your swing arc.

A swing that's too long

If your swing is too long and sloppy (going beyond parallel to the ground at the top of the swing), here are two positions to work on:

- The right arm in the backswing (for a right-handed golfer) must not bend more than 90 degrees. It must stay at a right angle (refer to Figure 11-6).
- The right elbow must not get more than a twenty-dollar note's length (15 centimetres) away from your rib cage at the top of the backswing.

If you can maintain these two simple positions at the top of your swing, you won't overswing.

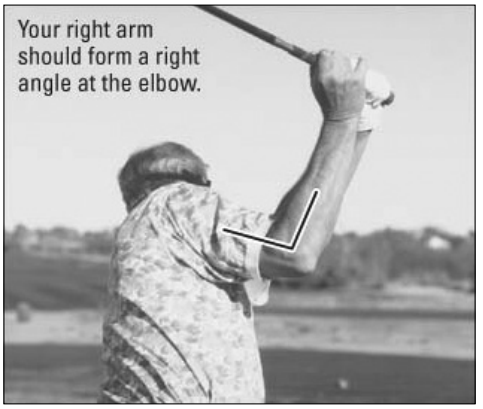


Figure 11-6: Do the right (angle) thing in your backswing.

Trouble off the Tee

What's worse than starting a hole with a duffed shot or a screamer into uncharted lands? That's trouble with a capital tee!

To get well off the tee, you need to avoid these common blunders.

Popping up your tee shots

One of the most common sights we see on the first tee of a pro-am or club tournament is the 'skied' tee shot — the ball goes higher than it goes forward. It's usually hit on the top part of the driver, causing an ugly mark to appear, which is one reason a tour player never lets an amateur use his driver. If the amateur hits a fountain ball (as Gary's wife likes to call it, because she says that a skied tee shot has the same trajectory as one of those fountains in Italy), he'll have a lot of apologising to do.

At the public course where I nurtured my game, we had a few special rules. One was that if you could catch your drive off the tee, you could play it over again with no penalty. We had so many guys wearing tennis shoes for speed that it looked like an athletics carnival.

If you're hitting the ball on the top side of your driver, you're swinging the club on too much of a downward arc. What's that mean, you ask? It means that your head is too far in front of the ball (towards the target side of the ball) and your left shoulder is too low at impact.

Here's what to do:

1. **Find an upslope.**
2. **Stand so that your left foot (if you're right-handed) is higher than your right.**
3. **Tee the ball up and hit drivers or 3-woods until you get the feeling of staying back and under the shot.**

   The uphill lie promotes this feeling.

Here's a secret: People who hit down on their drivers want to kill the stupid ball in front of their buddies. These golfers have a tremendous shift of weight to the left side on the downswing. If you hit balls from an upslope, you can't get your weight to the left side as quickly. Consequently, you keep your head behind the ball and your left shoulder goes up at impact. Practise

on an upslope until you get a feel and then proceed to level ground. You'll turn your pop-ups into booming drives.

Power outage

Everyone in the world would like more distance. Tiger Woods and Michelle Wie would like more distance. We'd like more distance and we're sure you would too. Here's how to make it happen:

- **Turn your shoulders on the backswing.** The more you turn your shoulders on the backswing, the better chance you have to hit the ball longer. So stretch that torso on the backswing — try to put your left shoulder over your right foot at the top of your swing.

  If you're having difficulty moving your shoulders enough on the backswing, try turning your left knee clockwise until it's pointing behind the ball during your backswing. This frees up your hips to turn and subsequently your shoulders. A big turn starts from the ground up.

- **Get the tension out of your grip.** Hold the club loosely; you should grip it with the pressure of holding a rare bird's egg. If there's too much tension in your hands, your forearms and chest will 'tighten up' and you'll lose that valuable flexibility that helps with the speed of your arms and hands.

Turning your hips to the left on the downswing and extending your right arm on the through-swing are trademarks of the longer hitters. Here's a drill to help you accomplish this feat of daring:

1. **Tee up your driver in the normal position.**
2. **Place the ball off your left heel and/or opposite your left armpit.**
3. **Now reach down, not moving your stance and move the ball towards the target the length of the grip.**
4. **Tee up the ball there; it should be about 30 centimetres closer to the hole.**
5. **Address the ball where the normal position was and swing at the ball that is now teed up.**

   To hit that ball, you'll have to move your hips to the left so your arms can 'reach the ball', thereby causing you to extend your right arm.

Practise this drill 20 times. Then put the ball back in the normal position. You should feel faster with the hips and feel a tremendous extension of your right arm.

Direction, Please

Why won't the ball go where you aim it? Maybe it *wants* to, but like a busted GPS, you're giving it bad directions. Here are three common directional maladies, with remedies.

Pushing

The *push* is a shot that starts right of the target and just keeps going. It's not like a slice, which curves to the right; the push just goes right. This shot happens when the body does not rotate through to the left on the downswing and the arms hopelessly swing to the right, 'pushing' the ball in that direction.

Hitting a push is like standing at the end of the cricket pitch, aiming at the bowler, then swinging your arms at the mid-off fieldsman. If this sounds like you, here's how to hit one up the middle: Place an alignment stick (or a wooden two-by-four) parallel to the target line and about 5 centimetres beyond the golf ball. You push the ball because your body stops rotating left on the downswing and your arms go off to the right. If your arms go off to the right now, splinters are going to fly. Naturally, you don't want to hit the stick, so you will — we hope! — swing your hips left on the downswing, which pulls your arms left and cures the push.

Pulling

The *pull* is a shot that starts left and stays left, unlike a hook, which curves to the left. The pull is caused when the club comes from outside the target line on the downswing and you pull across your body.

Hitting a pull is like standing at the end of the cricket pitch and aiming at the bowler, but swinging the club towards the mid-on fieldsman, which is where the ball would go. This swing malady is a little more complicated and it's more difficult to pick out one exercise to cure it, so bear with us.

Pulls are caused when your shoulders 'open' too fast in the downswing. For the proper sequence, your shoulders should remain as close to parallel to the target line as possible at impact. Here's a checklist that will help you cure your pull:

- **Check your alignment.** If you're aimed too far to the right, your body will slow down on the downswing and allow your shoulders to open at impact to bring the club back to the target.
- **Check your weight shift.** If you don't shift your weight to your left side on the downswing, you'll spin your hips out of the way too fast, causing your shoulders to open up too quickly and hit a putrid pull. So shift those hips towards the target on the downswing until your weight is on your left side after impact.
- **Check your grip pressure.** Too tight a grip on the club will cause you to tense up on the downswing and come over the top for a pull.
- **Check your distance from the ball.** Too close and you'll instinctively pull inward on your forward swing — which means pulling to the left.

Spraying the ball

If your shots take off in more directions than the compass has to offer, check your alignment and ball position. Choose the direction you're going and then put your feet, knees and shoulders on a line parallel to the target line. Be very specific with your alignment.

Ball position can play a major part in poor direction. If the ball is too far forward, it's easy to push it to the right. If the ball is too far back in your stance, it's easy to hit pushes and pulls. The driver is played opposite your left armpit. (As the club gets shorter, the ball should move back towards the middle of your stance.)

To check your ball position, here's what you can do: Get into your stance — with the driver, for example — and then undo your shoelaces. Step out of your shoes, leaving them right where they were at address. Now take a look: Is the ball where it's supposed to be in your stance? Two suggestions: If it's a wet day, don't try this. And if your socks have holes in them, make sure nobody is watching.

Contact! Do Yourself a Solid

Less-than-solid contact is the payoff you get for a bad day's work on fundamentals. It happens to all of us. The cure is to review — and apply — a few reliable swing basics.

Topping the ball

Topping isn't much fun. Plus, it's a lot of effort for very little return. *Topping* is when you make a full-blooded, nostrils-flaring swipe at the ball, only to nick the top and send the ball a few feeble metres.

Topping occurs because your head is moving up and down during your swing. A rising head during your downswing pulls your shoulders, arms, hands and the clubhead up with it. Whoops!

To stop topping, you must keep your head from lifting. The best way to do that is to establish a reference for your eyes before you start lifting the club back. Stick an umbrella in the ground just beyond the golf ball, as shown in Figure 11-7. Focus your eyes on the umbrella throughout your swing. As long as you stay focused on the umbrella, your head and upper torso cannot lift, which ends topped shots.

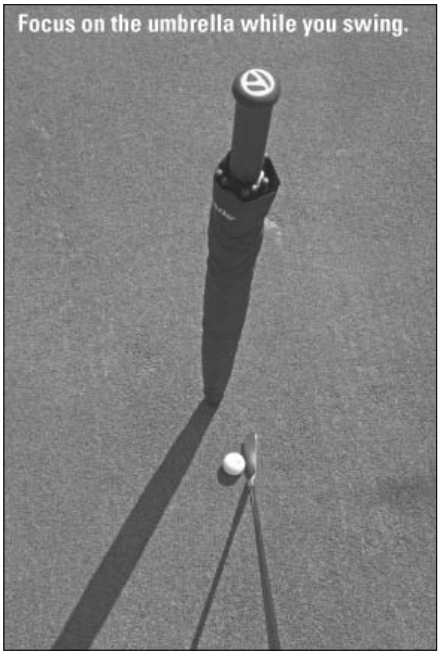


Figure 11-7: The umbrella drill can help you avoid topped shots.

The 'worm burner'

Does your drive look like a scared cat skittering along the ground? Do worms fear your dreaded 'worm-burner' drives? If you're having this problem with your driver, make sure that your head stays behind the ball

at address and at impact. Moving your head back and forth along with your driver can cause too low a shot. Also, drivers come in different lofts. If you're hitting the ball too low, try a driver that has 11 to 12 degrees of loft.

If you're having a problem with low iron shots, you're probably trying to lift those golf balls into the air instead of hitting down. ***Note:*** With irons, you have to hit *down* to get the ball *up*.

Duffing and thinning chip shots

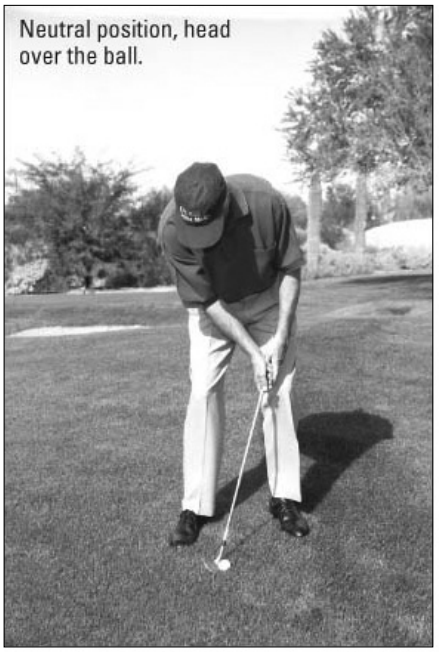
Duffing and thinning are exact opposites, yet, like the slice and the hook, they have their roots in a single swing flaw (see Figure 11-8).

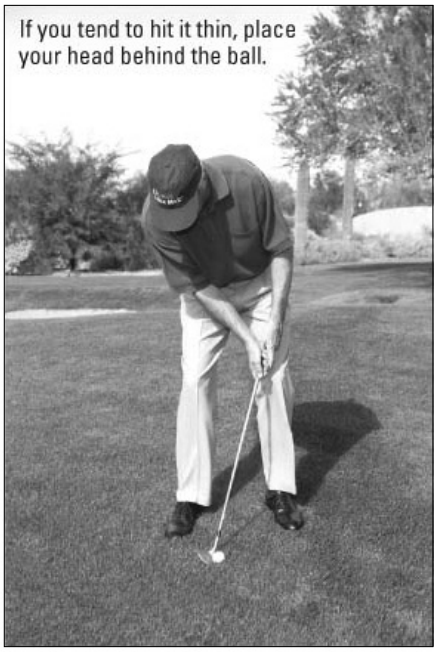
When you *duff* a chip, your swing is bottoming out behind the ball. You're hitting too much ground and not enough ball (also called hitting it *fat*), which means that the shot falls painfully short of the target and your playing partners laugh outrageously. Duffing a chip is the one shot in golf that can get you so mad that you can't spell your mother's name.

One shot that is rare to actually witness is the *double-hit chip*, where you hit the chip fat, causing the clubhead to hit the ball twice — once while it's in the air. You could never do this if you tried, but sometime, somewhere, you'll see it performed and will gasp in amazement.

Gary was playing a tournament when one of the amateurs, standing near the houses surrounding the course, hit a chip shot. He had to loft the ball gently over a bunker and then have it land on the green like a beanbag on a mattress. He hit the shot a little fat, the ball went up in the air slowly and his club accelerated and hit the ball again about eye level. The ball went over his head, out of bounds and into a swimming pool. The rule says that you may have only four penalty strokes per swing maximum, but Gary thinks the amateur beat that by a lot with that double-hit chip shot. When Gary saw him last, he was still trying to retrieve his ball with the homeowner's pool net.

Thinned chips (or *skulls*, as they call it on tour) are the opposite of duffs. You aren't hitting enough ground. In fact, you don't hit the ground at all. The club strikes the ball above the equator, sending the shot speeding on its merry way, past the hole into all sorts of evil places. You need to hit the ground slightly so that the ball hits the clubface and not the front end of the club.





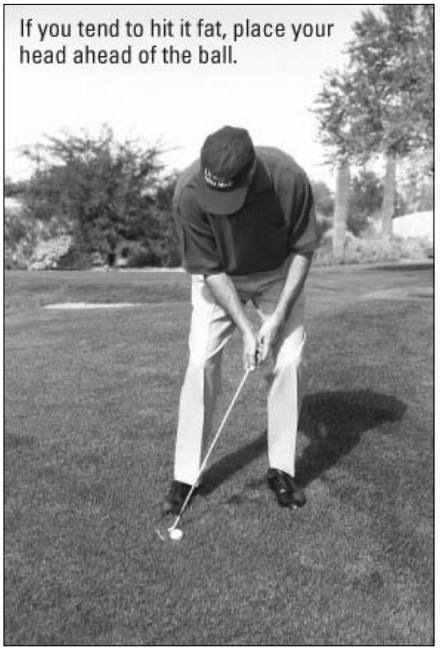


Figure 11-8: The cure for chipping nightmares.

Start by sticking an alignment stick (or an old club shaft) in the ground beyond the ball.

If you continually hit duffs, get your nose to the left of the stick, which moves the bottom of your swing forward. Doing so allows you to hit down on the ball from the right position. Make sure that your head stays forward in this shot. Most people who hit an occasional duff move their heads backward as they start their downswings, which means that they hit behind the ball.

If you're prone to hit an occasional thin shot, set up with your nose behind or to the right of the ball, which moves the bottom of your swing back. When you find the right spot, you'll hit the ball and the ground at the same time, which is good. I've found that most people who hit their shots thin have a tendency to raise their entire bodies up immediately before impact. Concentrate on keeping your upper torso bent the same way throughout the swing.

Not enough backspin

How can you back up the ball like the pros on the tour? People ask us this question all the time. The answer: The more steeply you hit down on the ball and the faster you swing, the more spin you generate. People who play golf for a living hit short irons with a very steep angle of descent into the ball, which creates a lot of spin. Our swings get the clubhead moving fast, creating force that adds more spin. We also tend to play three-piece golf balls with relatively soft covers — balls that spin more than the two-piece ball most people play. (Chapter 2 explains the different types of golf balls.)

We also play on grass that's manicured and very short so that we can get a clean hit with the club off these fairways. All this helps when you're trying to spin the ball. The bottom line is that we're trying to control the distance a ball goes.

The good news is: You don't *need* to spin the ball like the pros. All you need is a consistent swing that hits the ball predictable distances. It doesn't matter if the ball backs up to get to the target, or rolls forward.

So there: Do you like how we made that 'swing fault' disappear?

Consistency is knowing how far you can hit each club in your bag. Don't worry about how much spin you get; worry about how far you hit the ball with each club.

Shanks and Point-Blankety-Blanks

They're two of the most feared mishaps in the game: The missed short putt and the shank. Shanks can strike when you least expect, sending the ball squirting sideways while you shake your fist at the golf gods. Short, point-blank putts that somehow miss the hole can be just as aggravating — or *more aggravating*, if you just lost a match by missing one.

But don't despair! There are simple fixes to these vexing visitations.

Shanking

Bet the man who has the shanks and your plate will be full.

Gary McCord

Flash back a few centuries: Alone with his sheep in a quiet moment of reflection, a shepherd swings his carved crook at a rather round rock, towards a distant half-dead, low-growing vine. The rock peels off the old crook and instead of lurching forward towards the vine, it careens off at an angle 90 degrees to the right of the target. 'Zounds! What was that?!' cries the shocked shepherd. 'That was a shank, you idiot!' cries a sheep. 'Now release the toe of that stick or this game will never get off the ground!'

This story has been fabricated to help with the tension of a despicable disease. The *shanks* are a virus that attacks the very soul of a golfer. They come unannounced and invade the decorum of a well-played round. They leave with equal haste and lurk in the mind of the golfer, dwelling until the brain reaches critical mass. Then you have meltdown. This sounds like one of those diseases that they're making movies about. And to a golfer, no other word strikes terror and dread like *shank*.

As a junior golfer, Gary was visiting the Tournament of Champions in 1970 when a bunch of the guys were watching the tournament winners hit balls on the driving range. He was completely mesmerised by Frank Beard as he hit shank after shank on the practice tee. Gary's friends went to watch Nicklaus, but being something of a masochist, he told them that he'd follow Frank the Shank around and meet them afterward. Gary witnessed one of the greatest rounds he's ever seen. Frank shot 64 and never missed a shot. How could a man who was so severely stricken by this disease on the practice tee rally and unleash a round of golf like he played? That is the mystery of this affliction.

Can it be cured? Yes!

Shanking occurs when the ball strikes the hosel of the club and goes 90 degrees to the right of your intended target. (The *hosel* is the neck of the club, where the shaft attaches to the clubhead.) Shankers almost always set up too close to the ball, with their weight back on their heels. As they shift forward during the swing, their weight comes off their heels, moving the club even closer to the ball, so that the hosel hits the ball.

A shank is sometimes called a *socket*, a *Chinese hook*, *El Hosel*, a *scud*, or a *snake killer* — you get the idea. When you shank, the *heel* of your club (the closest part of the clubhead to you) continues towards the target and ends up right of the target.

To eliminate shanks, you need the toe of the club to go towards the target and end up left of the target.

Here's an easy exercise that helps cure the shanks (see Figure 11-9):

1. **Get a two-by-four board and align it along your target line.**

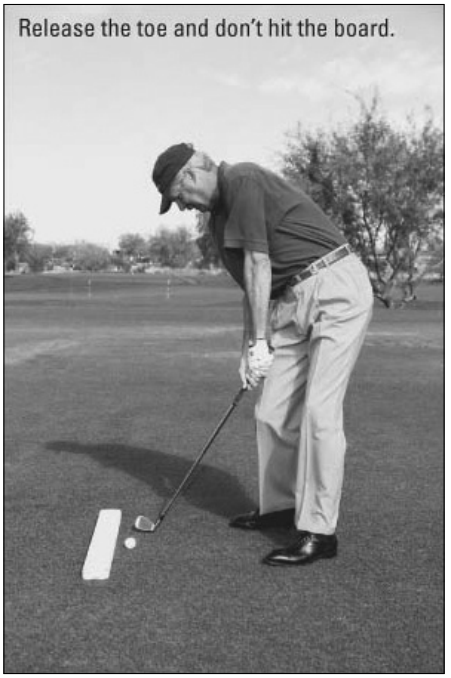


Figure 11-9: Just say, 'No shanks!'

2. **Put the ball 5 centimetres from the near edge of the board and try to hit the ball.**

   If you have the shanks, your club will want to hit the board. If you swing properly, the club will come from the inside and hit the ball. Then the toe of the club will go left of the target, the ball will go straight and your woes will be over.

In a world full of new, emerging viruses, we have the technology to lash back at this golf disease and eliminate it altogether from our DNA. Stay calm and get a two-by-four, practise the drill and banish the shanks forever.

Missing too many short putts

Some people argue that putting is more mental than physical. But before you resort to séances with your local psychic, check your alignment. You can often trace missed putts to poor aim.

Gary's colleague Peter Kostis invented a device called the Putting Professor to help straighten out troubled putters. It's similar to an old, tried-and-true putting aid, the string between two rods, which helped golfers keep the putter going straight back and straight through impact towards the hole. Straight as a string, get it? But Peter had a better idea. The Putting Professor features a Plexiglas panel and a metal bar that attaches to your putter (see Figure 11-10). Keep the bar in contact with the Plexiglas as you practise and you'll groove a smooth stroke that keeps the face of your putter square to the target. This is particularly important on those knee-knocking short putts.

Figure 11-10: The Putting Professor keeps a putter's face square to the target.

Of course, you can't use such a device during a round of golf. But once you develop the right stroke on the practice green, you'll repeat it on the course — and watch those putts roll straight and true.

An important lesson you can learn with devices like this is the crucial relationship between the putter's face and the target line. Putting takes imagination: If you can picture the line and keep the face of your putter square to it, you'll find it easy to stroke the ball along that line to the hole.

Chapter 12

Beating Bad Breaks and Bad Weather

In This Chapter

- Staying positive
- Making shots that save your day
- Coping with Mother Nature's moods
- Becoming a golfer for all seasons

If you break golf down into its primal form, it's simple. All you have to do is hit a ball from a flat piece of ground (you even get to tee the ball up) to, say, a 30- to 40-metre-wide fairway. You find the ball and hit it onto a carefully prepared putting surface. Then the golf gods allow you to hit not one, but two putts. And even after all that stuff, you still get to call your score par.

However — you knew there had to be a catch, didn't you? — golf isn't often so straightforward. For one thing, you're going to make mistakes. We all do. Usually the same ones over and over. That won't change, by the way. Even the best players in the world have glitches in their swings that give them fits. Everyone has a bad shot that he or she tends to hit when things go wrong. You may not hit that fairway with your drive or that green with your approach shot, or you may miss both. You may take three putts to get the ball into the hole now and again. And golf doesn't often take place on a level playing field. Very seldom is the ball lying enticingly on a perfectly flat carpet of grass. (Unless you're the guy at our course who we call 'The Foot'. He never has a bad lie.) Sometimes you'll play three or four holes into the teeth of a howling gale and reach a hole going the other way — just in time for the wind to change direction. And then it starts to rain.

Here's how to cope when golf gets tough. And as Figure 12-1 shows, sometimes the going is pretty tough!

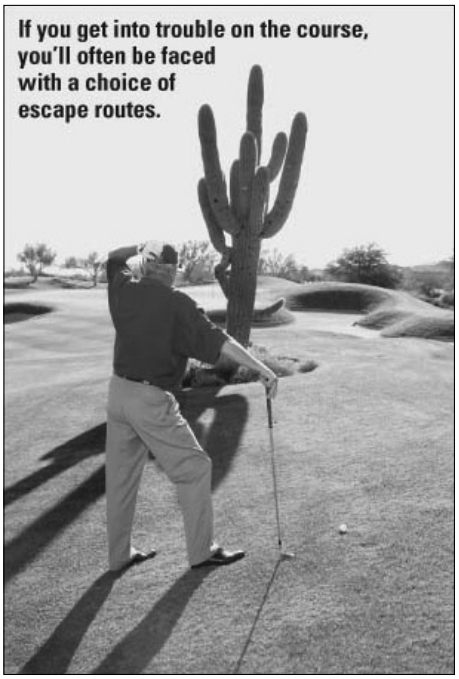


Figure 12-1: What nut designed *this* hole?

The Mental Game

A wise man once said, 'Golf is the art of forgetting your last lousy shot'. Okay, maybe it wasn't such a wise man. It was Gary. But it's true: So many things can go wrong in this game that it's easy to start thinking this way:

- 'How will I mess up this *next* shot?'
- 'This is embarrassing!'
- 'This course is unfair.'
- 'I'll just hit it and hope for the best.'

Gary's been there, bogeyed that. After 40 years as a golf pro he still sometimes feels like the great sportswriter George Plimpton, who took so many lessons he began picturing himself as a giant robot with a control room in his head where an admiral barked orders to his limbs. A crazy, drunken admiral. No wonder George hit so many balls sideways.

But we've all had that feeling. Even the world's best players have days when the club feels like an implement 'singularly ill-designed for the purpose', to quote a real wise man named Winston Churchill.

Fortunately, more than 500 years of golf history have given us some tried-and-true ways to cope.

Fear can be your friend

Many golfers feel fear on the course. But you can make fear work for you by turning it into something less scary: Caution.

You'll often hear risk-taking golfers described as fearless. Arnold Palmer played that way. So did Gary's favourite fictional golfer, Roy McAvoy of *Tin Cup*. And so did Phil Mickelson — especially early in his career. But Mickelson didn't win so much early in his career, when he often tried to pull off low-percentage miracle shots. He was bold, he was dashing. He was also famous as the 'best player never to have won a major championship'. Because fearlessness can get you in as much trouble as playing scared.

But Phil changed. He was still bold, still willing to go for a miracle when that was the only way to win, but as he got a little older he took fewer foolish chances. Mickelson finally bagged his major, the 2004 Masters, at the age of 33. Now he's got four majors and he's not finished yet.

Phil didn't suddenly start playing scared. He started playing smarter. Rather than go for broke, he sometimes *laid up* — hit his ball short of trouble, in good position for the next shot.

If you're facing a scary shot, stop and think: Is there a safer way to get to the green? Even if it takes an extra shot, that's better than wasting two or three strokes.

And if you've got no choice but to go for broke, channel Arnie and Roy and *fire away!* There's no shame in hitting a bad shot if you give it your all.

Proving yourself to yourself

Self-doubt can turn the best golf swing into a mess of flying knees and elbows. How can you beat it? Practise.

That may sound obvious, but too many golfers rely on hope to keep them out of trouble. They'll say, 'I hope this works' and flail away, trying to hook a shot between trees, over a lake to a postage-stamp green.

But if you've never hooked a ball on purpose before, what hope have you got?

Your chances will be far better if you can say these magic words: 'I've hit this shot before'. That means working on the techniques we show you in this chapter — not just a couple of times but until they feel familiar. That way you won't be guessing and hoping out there. You'll be trying to repeat past successes.

Positivity

Before every swing, picture a great result. This is more than optimism; it's science! Sports psychologists teach visualisation for one simple reason: It works. Just as negative thoughts can derail your swing, positive thoughts — and images — can and will help you hit the ball better.

So make picturing a great shot part of your pre-swing routine. Then you'll have less trouble with the trouble shots we describe below.

Getting Out of Trouble

If Gary's mum knew that he was going to end up playing the PGA Tour and Champions Tour with a crooked driver, she probably wouldn't have told him, 'Eat your roughage!' Since then Gary's chewed up a lot of rough going from tee to green, but he thinks it's made him a better person.

Fear no roughage!

Rough is the grass on the golf course that looks like it should be mowed. It's usually 5–7 centimetres long and lurks everywhere but the tees, fairways and greens. Gary grew up on a public golf course where the grass was short everywhere because the only thing they watered down was the whisky.

When you try to hit a ball out of long grass, the grass gets between the clubface and the ball. The ball then has no backspin and flies off like a bat out of heck, and direction can be a concern. But the real problem is that,

with no backspin, the ball can take a longer voyage than you expected. The lack of backspin means less drag occurs while the ball is in the air. When that happens, you've hit a *flyer*. That's never been a problem with the driver off the tee, but it's a concern when you're trying to hit the ball a certain distance.

My philosophy is that if the lie is bad enough, just get the ball back into the fairway. If you can hit the ball, the technique for this shot is much the same as the shot out of a divot: Play the ball back in your stance and put your hands forward. A chopping-down motion allows the club to come up in the backswing and avoid the long grass; then you can hit down on the ball. Swing hard, because if you don't, the grass will wrap around the club and twist it, giving the ball an unpredictable trajectory.

The more you play this game, the more you'll hit these shots and the more you'll understand how to play them. Keep your sense of humour and a firm grip on the club, and enjoy your roughage — Mother was right!

Tree trouble

A walk in the woods can be a serene, soul-enhancing, mystical journey, blending one's spirit and body into nature and all her beauty. But when Gary is walking into the trees to find his golf ball, he feels like he's in a house of mirrors with branches and leaves. The trees seem to be laughing at his predicament and he ends up talking to them in less-than-flattering dialogue. You've got the picture by now.

The trees are playing games with me. And so, to extract my ball from this boundless maze of bark, I play a game with the trees. Usually, one lone tree is in my way as I try to exit this forest. All I do is take dead aim at that tree and try to knock it over with the ball. The key here is to not be too close to the tree in case you score a direct hit. You don't want to wear that Titleist 3 as a permanent smile. My reasoning is that I got into these trees with something less than a straight shot. So if I now try to hit something that is 30 metres away from me and only 30 centimetres in diameter, what's the chance that I'll hit it? If I do hit it, what a great shot it was! I can congratulate myself for that, turning a negative into a positive. I'm still in the trees, but now I'm proud of my accuracy. Now you probably know why I'm on TV and not on the regular tour any more.

Special shots

Because golf is a game of mistake management, you're going to get into trouble at least a few times in every round. How you cope with those moments and shots determines your score for the day and, ultimately, your ability to play well. Never forget that even the greatest rounds have moments of crisis. Stay calm when your heart tries to eject through the top of your head.

Trouble lurks everywhere on a golf course. You have to know how to hit shots from the rough and others that go around, between or over trees. Long shots, short shots and, perhaps most important, in-between shots. You may be faced with a shot from 200 metres where a clump of trees blocks your path to the hole. Or you may be only 50 metres from the hole and have to keep the ball under branches and yet still get it over a bunker. Whatever the situation, the key is applying the magic word — time out for a drum roll — *imagination.*

Visualisation strikes again: If you can picture the way a shot has to curve in the air in order to land safely, you're halfway to success. All you have to do is hit the ball. And the best way to accomplish both things is through practice — practice on the course, that is. You can't re-create on the range most shots that you encounter out on the course. The range is flat; the course isn't. The wind constantly blows the same way on the range. On the course, the only constant about the wind is that it changes direction. That's golf — a wheel of bad fortune.

The best way to practise these weird and wonderful shots is to challenge yourself. See how low you can hit a shot. Or how high. Practise hitting from bad lies and see how the ball reacts. Play from slopes, long grass and all the rest. Or play games with your friends. The first player to hit over that tree, for example, gets $5. The trick is to make practice competitive and fun — and also beat your friends out of five bucks.

Wait a minute, though. Hang on. We're getting a little ahead of ourselves. Many of the trouble shots hit by the pros are not only very low-percentage plays but also way, way out of most people's reach. Even the pros miss the tough shots now and again. And when they do miss, the result can be a triple bogey (a score of 3 over par for one hole — for example, a 7 on a par-4) or worse. So admire the pros who go for broke like the old, even bolder Phil Mickelson. But never, ever try to copy them — if you've got a choice.

The good news is that at this stage of your development, all you really need is a couple of basic shots. Leave the fancy stuff for another time, another book. All you need to know to score well is how to hit the ball low or high back onto the fairway. That's enough to cover 99 per cent of the situations that you'll encounter. Better to give up one shot than risk three more on a shot that you couldn't pull off more than once in 20 tries.

Altitude adjustment

Because golf isn't played in a bubble, you're going to come across situations where a higher or lower shot is required. For example, when you have a strong wind in your face, a lower shot is going to go farther and hold its line better. The great thing is that you make all your adjustments before you begin. Then after you start your backswing, you can make your regular swing. You don't have to worry about adding anything else. Figure 12-2 illustrates the following shots.

Hitting the ball lower

Hitting the ball low is easy. All you have to do is subtract from the effective loft of the club. The best way to do that is to adjust your address position. Play the ball back in your stance, towards your right foot. Move your hands towards the target until they're over your left leg.

Now take your usual swing, focusing on re-creating the positional relationship between your hands and the clubface as the ball is struck. In other words, your hands should be 'ahead' of the clubface at impact, thus ensuring that the ball flies lower than normal.

This sort of technique is commonly employed when playing in exposed, windy places, where golf swings get a little shorter and the divots get a little longer. When you play the ball back in your stance with your hands ahead, you come down into the ground with a more abrupt angle that takes more turf.

Gary remembers one good story about a low shot. It happened years ago during the Bing Crosby Tournament on the 7th hole at Pebble Beach (a downhill par-3 of 100 metres). From an elevated tee, you can just about throw the ball to the green. On this particular day, the wind was howling from the coast (the green sits on the ocean) and the 7th hole was impossible. Water was erupting from the rocks; wind was blowing water everywhere; seals were hiding and seagulls were walking. Definitely a bad day for windblown golf balls.

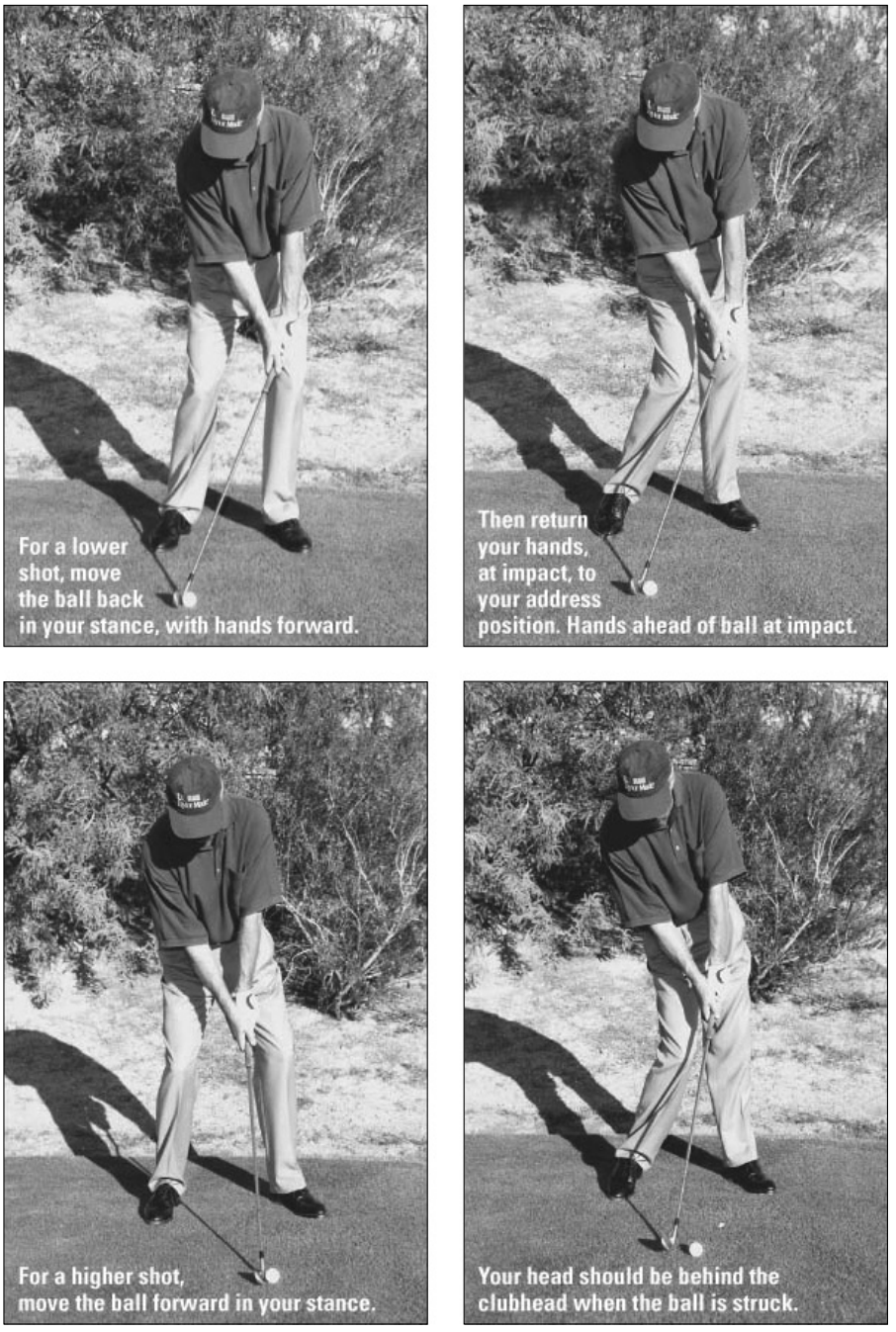


Figure 12-2: The downs and ups of golf.

Billy Casper arrived on the tee and surveyed the situation. Many players were using long irons (irons that go 200 metres) because the wind was so fierce. Billy went to his bag and got his *putter*! He putted the ball down a cart path into the front bunker. From there he got the ball down in two for his par-3. Now that's keeping it low into the wind and using your imagination!

Hitting the ball higher

As you'd expect, hitting the ball higher than normal involves making the opposite adjustments at address. Adjust your stance so that the ball is forward, towards your left foot. Then move your hands back, away from the target. Again, hitting the ball is that simple. All you have to do is reproduce that look at impact and the ball takes off on a steeper trajectory.

Sidehill lies

No golf course is totally flat. So every now and again, you need to hit a shot off a slope. The ball may be below or above your feet. Both positions are *sidehill lies.* Or you may be halfway up or down a slope.

When you're faced with these situations, you need to make an adjustment. And again, if you can make most of your changes before starting your swing, things get easier. The common factor in all these shots is the relationship between your shoulders and the slope. On a flat lie, you're bent over the ball in a certain posture. You should stand about 90 degrees to the ground.

In other words, if the ball is above your feet, you have to lean a little into the hill to keep your balance. If you stood at your normal posture to the upslope of the hill, you might fall backward. You're close to the ball because of the lean and you need to choke up on the club.

The reverse is also true. With the ball below your feet, lean back more to retain your balance on the downslope. Because you're leaning back, you're a little farther away from the ball; grip the club all the way to the end and use the whole length of the shaft.

The main idea for sidehill lies is to stay balanced. We don't want you falling down any hills.

For uphill and downhill lies, it's a little different. Imagine that your ball is halfway up a staircase and you have to hit the next shot to the top. Because your left leg is higher than your right, your weight naturally shifts to your right leg. Let that weight shift happen so that your shoulders stay parallel to the banister. On a downslope, your weight shifts in the opposite direction, onto your left leg. Again, let that weight shift happen. Keep your shoulders and the banister parallel, as shown in Figure 12-3.

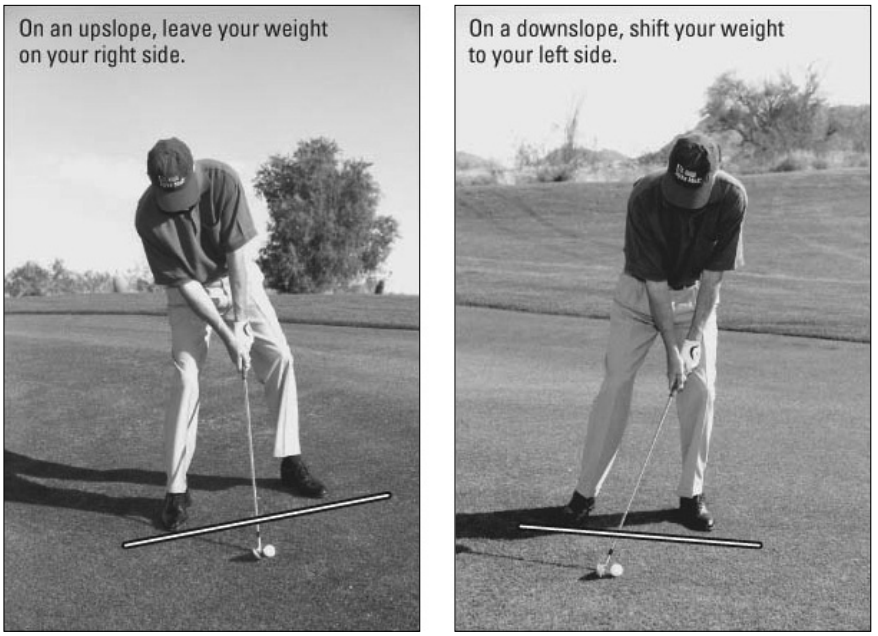


Figure 12-3: Keep shoulders and slope parallel.

Finally, follow these three rules:

- **Adjust your aim when you're on a slope.** Off a downslope or when the ball is below your feet, aim to the left of where you want the ball to finish. Off an upslope or when the ball is above your feet, aim right.
- **Play the ball back towards the middle of your stance if you're on a downhill lie, or forward, off your left big toe, from an uphill lie.**
- **Take *more club* (a club with less loft) if you're on an uphill lie because the ball tends to fly higher. Use *less club* (a club with more loft) from a downhill lie because the ball has a lower trajectory in this situation.** For example, if the shot calls for a 7-iron, take your 8-iron instead. ***Note:*** From these lies, swing about 75 per cent of your normal swing speed to keep your balance. Practise with different clubs from different lies to get a feel for these shots.

Digging out of divots

Unfortunately for your blood pressure, your ball occasionally finishes in a hole made by someone who previously hit a shot from the same spot and forgot to replace the grass. These holes are known as *divots.* Don't panic. To get the ball out, first set up with the ball farther back in your stance to encourage a steeper attack at impact. Push your hands forward a little. You

need to feel as if you're really hitting *down* on this shot. A quicker cocking of the wrists on the backswing helps, too. We like to swing a little more upright on the backswing with the club (take the arms away from the body going back). This allows a steeper path down to the ball. (See Figure 12-4.)

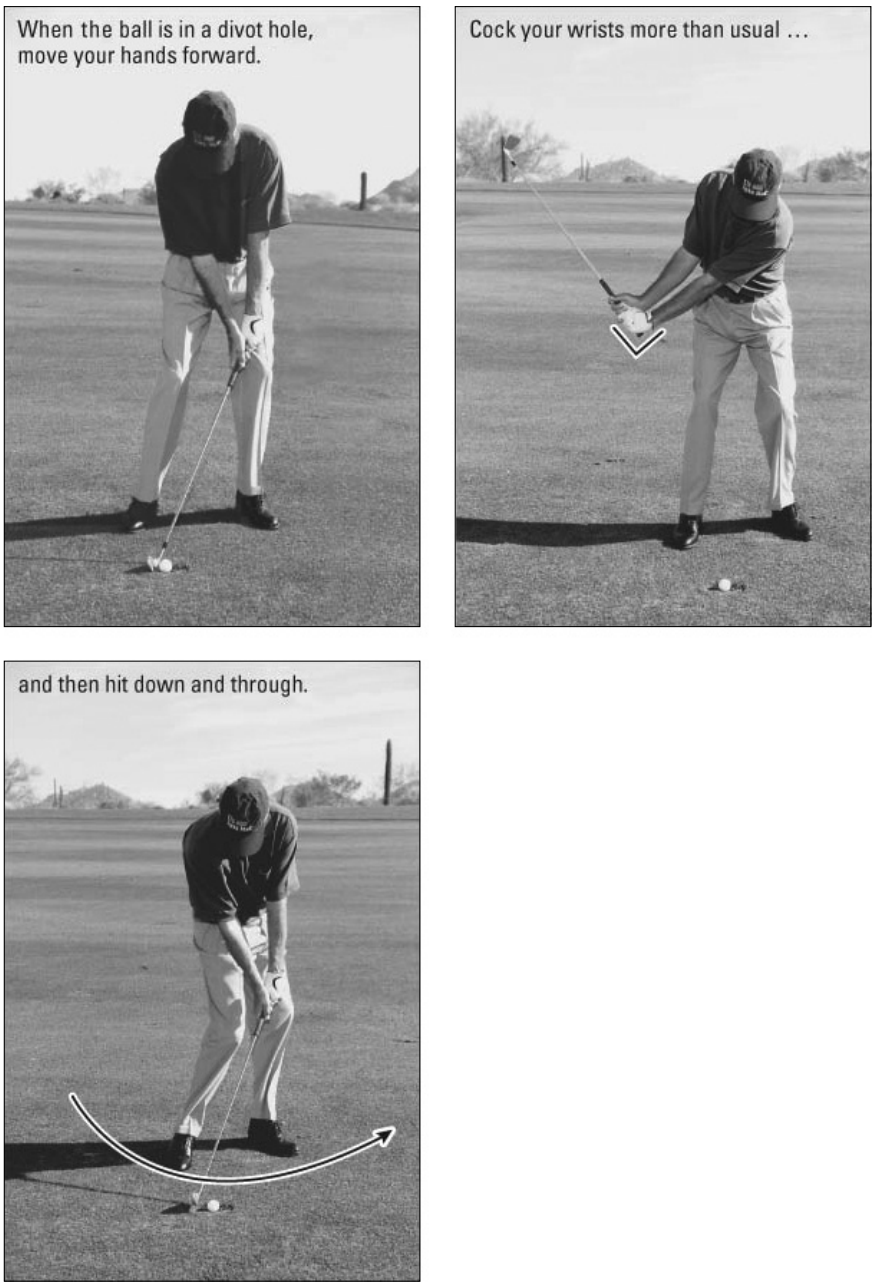


Figure 12-4: Escaping a divot.

Depending on the severity and depth of the divot, take a club with more loft than you'd normally use. Extra loft counteracts the ball being below ground level. Don't worry — the ball will come out lower because your hands are ahead of it. That makes up for the distance lost by using less club.

Remember that a shot from a divot will come out a lot lower and run along the ground more than a normal shot. Aim accordingly.

On the downswing of your shot from a divot, there will be little or no follow-through. Because the ball is back in your stance and your hands are forward, your blow should be a descending blow that chops the ball towards the green.

The best swing thought for this situation is, *Don't swing too hard.* If you swing hard your head tends to move — you won't hit the ball squarely. And when the ball is lying below the ground, you *must* hit it squarely. So take a smooth, downward swing.

High Winds: Hang Onto Your Hat

When conditions are rough because of wind or rain, scores go up. Adjust your goals. Don't panic if you start off badly or have a couple of poor holes. Be patient and realise that sometimes conditions make golf even harder. And remember that bad weather is equally tough on all the other players.

I've played professional golf for 40 years and I've played in some bad conditions. Because I'm not a patient person, my scores in bad weather have been high. If I got a few strokes over par early in my round, I would take too many chances, trying to make birdies. I'd then boil as I watched my score rise with my blood pressure. A calm head and good management skills are just as important as hitting the ball solidly when you're trying to get through tough days in the wind and rain.

Gary remembers playing the TPC Championship at Sawgrass in the late 1980s on one of the windiest days he'd ever seen. J. C. Snead hit a beautiful downwind approach to an elevated green. Somehow the ball stopped on the green with the wind blowing upwards of 80 kilometres per hour. J. C. was walking towards the green when his Panama hat blew off. He chased it, only to watch the hat blow onto the green and hit his golf ball! That's a 2-shot penalty and rotten luck.

If the wind is blowing hard, try these tips:

- **Widen your stance to lower your centre of gravity.** This automatically makes your swing shorter (for control) because turning your body is more difficult when your feet are set wider apart. (See Figure 12-5.)
- **Swing easier.** We always take a less-lofted club than normal and swing easier. This way, we have a better chance of hitting the ball squarely. Hitting the ball squarely minimises the wind's effects.
- **Use the wind — don't fight it.** Let the ball go where the wind wants it to go. If the wind is blowing left-to-right at 50 kph, aim left and let the wind bring your ball back. Don't aim right and try to hook it back into the wind. Leave that to the airline pilots and the guys on tour!

Figure 12-5: Windy means wider.

- **Choke down on the club.** You don't have to keep your left hand (for right-handed golfers) all the way at the end of the grip. Move it down a few centimetres. This gives you more control. Keeping your left hand about 2 or 3 centimetres from the top of the grip gives you more control over the club and the direction of the shot it hit. But more control comes with a cost: The ball doesn't go as far as it would if you used the full length of the shaft.
- **Allow for more run downwind and shorter flight against the wind.** This part of the game has to be experienced to be understood. The more you play in windy conditions, the more comfortable you'll be.

Swingin' in the Rain

Gary's from Southern California. He never saw much rain, let alone played in it all the time. The rain that would make Californians stay inside and play Yahtzee would be nothing for his friends from the Pacific Northwest, who knew how to swing in the rain.

The right equipment: Smooth sailing or choppy seas

The best advice we can give you for playing in the rain is to make like a Boy Scout: *Be prepared*. For starters, pack the right all-weather gear:

- **An umbrella:** Pack one of those big golf umbrellas. And never open it downwind, or you'll end up like Mary Poppins and the umbrella will end up looking like modern art.
- **Rain gear:** That means jackets, pants and headwear designed to be worn in the rain. If you play in wet weather all the time, get yourself some good stuff that will last a long time, not a garbage bag with holes cut out for your head and arms. Good rain gear can cost between $100 and $700, but if you're on a budget you can get good gear for less.
- **Dry gloves:** If you wear gloves, keep a few in plastic bags in your golf bag. They'll stay dry even if the rain comes pouring in.
- **Towels:** Keep several dry towels in your bag, because the one you have outside will get wet sooner or later. On the Champions Tour, Gary keeps one dry towel hanging from the rib on the underside of his umbrella and another inside his side pocket. When it gets really wet, Gary wipes his club off on the closest caddie.

- **Dry grips:** This is one of the most important things to have in wet-weather golf. Gary once had a club slip out of his hands on the driving range and fly through a snack-shop window. Gary blamed it on an alien spacecraft.
- **Waterproof shoes:** Keep an extra pair of socks in your bag, too, in case the advertiser lied about those 'waterproof' shoes.

Wet course conditions

A golf course changes significantly in the rain. You need to adjust your game accordingly:

- On a rainy day, the greens will be slow. Hit your putts harder and remember that the ball won't curve as much.
- If you hit a ball into a bunker, remember that wet sand is firmer than dry sand. You won't have to swing as hard to get the ball out.
- The golf course will play longer because it's soft. The good news here is that the fairways and greens become, in effect, wider and bigger, because your shots don't bounce into trouble as much as they would on a dry day. That means you can afford to take more club — and more chances.
- Try not to let the conditions affect your normal routines. The best rain players always take their time and stay patient.

- Playing in the rain is one thing — playing in lightning is another thing altogether. Here's our tip on that: *Don't.* When lightning strikes, your metallic golf club (along with the fact that you tend to be the highest point on the golf course, unless there's a tree nearby) can make you a target.

  So when you see lightning, don't take chances. Take cover.

A Game for All Seasons: Weathering the Elements

If you live in Queensland, you only notice the change of seasons when 40 bazillion golfers from colder climes flood the area trying to get the seven starting times that are still available. If you live in an all-season climate and prefer to enjoy the changing weather without giving up your golf game, this section offers some tips.

Swing into spring

Golfers anticipate spring like no other season. At last the milder, warmer weather has arrived and the really hot weather is a few months away. You've read every book pertaining to your golf game, watched endless hours of golf on TV and ingested everything announcers like Gary have told you not to do. It's spring — time to bloom!

One of the first things you need to do is decide your goals for the upcoming year. Is your goal to be a better putter? Or do you want to become a longer driver? Or do you simply want to get the ball off the ground with more regularity?

Establish what you want to do with your game, then set out to accomplish that feat.

More springtime advice:

- **Practise all phases of your game.** Don't neglect weak areas of your game, but stay on top of your strengths, too. Spring is a time of blossoming — let your game do the same.
- **Map out an exercise program.** Did you neglect exercise during the winter? Spring is a good time to map out a game plan for your physical needs. Are you strong enough in your legs? Does your rotator cuff need strength? Does your cardiovascular system short out later in a round? Chapter 4 tells you how to develop a golf-specific fitness program.
- **Dress for the weather.** Spring is the cruellest time of year to figure out what to wear. It can be hot. It can be cold. It can rain. It can be blowing 60 kph. It can be doing all these things in the first three holes. If you're carrying your bag, it can get heavy with all the extra gear in it. Take along your rain gear. Take along a light jacket. Bring hand warmers and your umbrella. Put an extra towel in your bag. Take along some antihistamines — it's spring and the pollen is everywhere.
- **Learn about yourself and your golf game.** ***Note:*** Spring is the time of year to be enlightened.

To be surprised, to wonder, is to begin to understand.

Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset

Hot summer swings

We hope you've been practising hard on your game, working towards those goals you set forth in the spring. But there's a big difference between practising and playing. The more you practise, the easier you should find it to play the game well. Summer is the time to find out whether your game has improved.

These tips will help you make the most of your days in the sun:

- **Work on course management.** How can you best play this particular golf course? Sometimes, for one reason or another, you can't play a certain hole. Figure out a plan to avoid the trouble you're having on that hole. Do you have the discipline to carry out your plan? That's why summer is great for playing the game and understanding yourself. You can go out after work and play 18 holes before it gets dark.
- **Maintain your equipment.** During the summer, we get new grips on our clubs. The grips are called *half cord* because they have some cord blended into the underside of the grip. New grips provide a better hold on the club during sweaty summers. We also use a driver with a little more loft to take advantage of summer's hotter (and in some places drier) air, which makes the ball fly further.
- **Practise competing by playing in club competitions.** You play a different game when your score counts and is published in the local paper.
- **Dress for fun in the sun.** Take along sunscreen of at least SPF 30, and put it on twice a day. And wear a hat that covers your ears. Gary's burn off in the summer.
- **Play in the morning.** Afternoons are often too hot.
- **Drink plenty of fluids during those hot days.** You don't want to dehydrate and shrivel up like a prune, so keep your liquid intake constant. We try to drink water on every tee during the heat of summer. One hint: Alcoholic beverages will knock you on your backside if you drink them outdoors on a hot day. Stick with water and save the adult beverages for the 19th hole.

Have a ball in autumn

Without a doubt, autumn is the best time of year to play golf: The golf courses are in good shape, the weather is delightful, and all sorts of sports are on TV. Both you and your game should be raring to go.

If you have the time and the money, make travel plans to play somewhere you've never played golf before. The colours are astounding in many parts of Australia and New Zealand between March and May. Some holiday planners specialise in golf trips. Get a group of friends together and start planning one now.

Here are three autumn golf tips:

- **Dress for autumn much like you do for the spring.** Take a lot of stuff with you because the weather can change faster than you can swing.
- **Assess everything you did with your game during the past year.** Did your techniques work? If not, were your goals unrealistic? Was your coach helpful? Take a long, hard look and start to devise a game plan for the winter and next spring.
- **Look at new equipment as your game progresses.** Autumn is a great time to buy equipment, because all the new stuff comes out in spring and leading up to Christmas. By autumn, prices are lower for last year's clubs. Gary loves a good buy, though he hasn't had to buy clubs since he bought a putter eight years ago.

Winterise your game

Get out there and work on your game — you won't have to mow the grass until September!

Prepare for brisk weather

If you're brave enough to venture onto a golf course in the peak of winter, we have three musts for you:

- **Take a jumbo Thermos with something warm to drink.** You may think that bourbon chasers will make the day much more fun, but alcohol makes you feel colder. Coffee or hot chocolate works better.
- **Dress warmly.** Gary's used silk long johns on cold days and they work well. Women's seamless long johns work best, but if you're a guy, the salesperson looks at you funny when you ask for a women's size 14. That kind of request might lead to the wrong conclusions.
  - **Wear waterproof golf shoes and thick socks.** Gary also wears wool pants over his silk long johns and then uses his rain pants as the top layer when it's really cold. A turtleneck with a light, tightly knit jumper works wonders under a rain or wind jacket made of Gore-Tex or one of those other miracle-fibre, space-age fabrics like Under Armour. A knit ski cap or beanie tops off this cosy ensemble.

- **Among the great inventions of all time are those little hand warmers that come in plastic pouches.** You shake them and they stay warm for eight hours. We put them *everywhere* on cold days. Let your imagination run wild. Hand warmers can keep you toasty on a cold winter's day when you're three down to your worst enemy.
- **Keep your hands warm by using cart gloves.** These oversize fingerless gloves have a soft, warm lining and fit right over your hand, even if you're already wearing a glove. We put a hand warmer in each one.

- **Your attitude is the best weapon for a harsh winter day.** ***Note:*** You're out on the course for the exercise — walk instead of taking a cart. Besides, you really feel cold when your fresh face collides with a blast of winter air. If you must take a cart, make sure that it has a windshield.

Adjust your swing for a cold day

When you swing a club with all these clothes on, you probably won't have as long a swing as normal. The clothes restrict your motion. Gary usually takes off his jacket to swing the club, then puts it right back on. Because of the restriction of winter clothes, Gary makes his swing a little slower than normal, which puts his swing in a slow rhythm on a cold day. Join Gary — and take one extra club to offset your slower swing. If you usually hit an 8-iron for the 125-metre shot you're facing, take a 7-iron instead.

Here are a couple more points to keep in mind when you're playing winter golf:

- **Lower your expectations.** When you're dressed for the ski fields, don't think that you can pull off the same shots that you normally do. Good short-game skills and game management are the most important aspects of winter golf.
- **If you usually play in extreme conditions — colder than 2 degrees — seek professional help.** Golf may be too much of a priority in your life. You may be crazy — or you might be the perfect host for a new golf reality TV show.

Indoor golf: Practise at home

Winter is the time to fix all those faults you've accumulated. Here's how:

1. **Place a large mirror behind you.**
2. **Pretend that you're hitting away from the mirror and check your swing when your shaft is parallel to the ground in your backswing.**

   Is your shaft on a line that's parallel to the line made by your toes? If it is, that's good.

3. **Continue to swing and go to the top.**

   Is your shaft on a line that's parallel to the line made by your heels? If it is, that's good.

These two positions are crucial to the golf swing. Repeat this exercise until you can do it in your sleep.

Winter is a great time to become one with your swing. (Say what?) Here's how: Have someone videotape your golf swing. Play the tape over and over until you have a really good picture of what it looks like. *Feel* your own swing. Then work on those areas that you need to improve — a coach can help (see Chapter 3 for more on working with a teaching pro).

Next, make your changes and make another tape of your swing. Not only should you be able to see the changes, but you should feel them as well. Visualisation strikes yet again: Seeing your swing can help you understand your movements and get your body and brain on the same page — ready to turn to the next page.

Part IV

Taking Your Game Public

'I think it's time you took your game to the public.'

In this part . . .

You've got a handle on the basics of the game. In this part, we show you how to warm up, how to play 'smart golf' and how to impress your new friends. In case the idea of betting strikes your fancy, Chapter 15 gives you some ideas.

And Chapter 16 tells you how to step your game up from the beginner's level to something even better.

Chapter 13

Step Right Up and Play!

In This Chapter

- Warming up your mind and body
- Arriving early to prepare
- Developing your plan of attack
- Beating the first-tee jitters

Now you know the basics of the game. You've got the right equipment, you can access instruction from various sources and you know your way around different sorts of courses. You've developed a swing that suits your body and soul. You're armed with simple fixes for common problems and you know how to play in all sorts of weather. At this point, you could probably hit a terrific bunker shot from a buried lie during a cyclone!

Well, maybe during a blustery day. We'll save cyclone play for a future edition of this book. The point is, you're ready to get out there and put all your learning to the test.

Warming Up Your Body

Once you've prepared your mind, you need to do the same for your body. Warm-ups are important. A few simple exercises not only loosen your muscles and help your swing, they also help you psychologically. Gary likes to step onto the first tee knowing that he's as ready as he can be. Besides, golfers, along with just about everyone else, are a lot more aware of physical fitness and diet today than in days gone by. Lee Trevino, a two-time US Open, British Open and US PGA champion and later one of the top players on the senior tour, started calling the PGA Tour players 'flat-bellies'. Which they are, compared to some of the more rotund 'round-bellies' on the senior tour. Gary thinks this is called progress!

Johnny Bench, the great Cincinnati Reds catcher, showed Gary the following stretches. He used them when he played baseball and he's in the Hall of Fame — so who is Gary to argue?

Holding a club by the head, place the grip end in your armpit so that the shaft runs the length of your arm (use a club that is the same length as your arm for this one, as shown in Figure 13-1). This stretches your arm and shoulders. Now bend forward until your arm is horizontal. The forward movement stretches your lower back, one of the most important areas in your body when it comes to playing golf. If your back is stiff, you'll have a hard time making a full turn on the backswing. Hold this position for a few seconds; then switch arms and repeat. Repeat this stretch until you feel loose enough to swing.

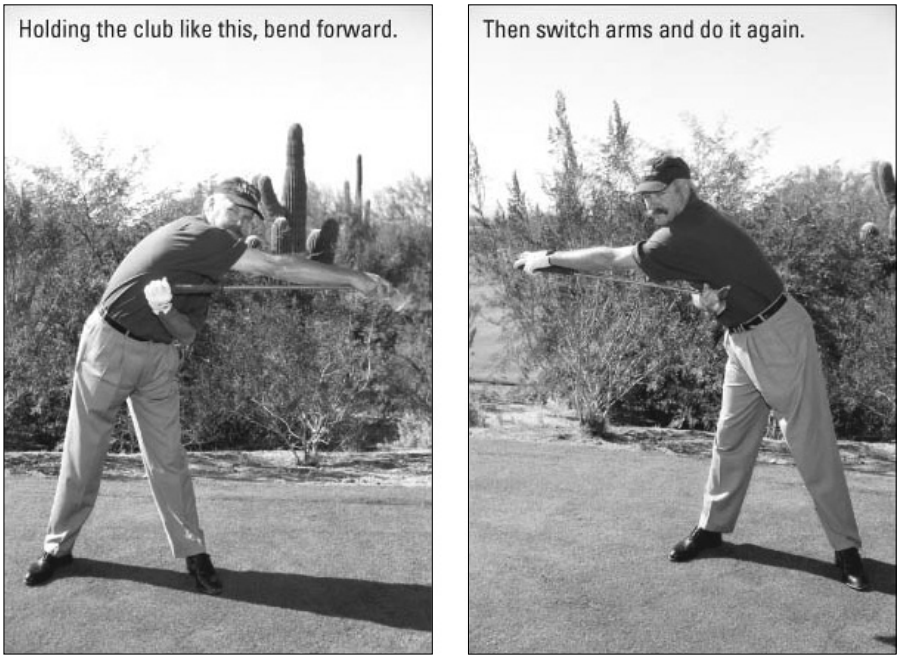


Figure 13-1: Stretch before you swing.

Another method of loosening up is more traditional. Instead of practising your swing with one club in your hands, double the load (see Figure 13-2) by swinging two clubs. Go slowly, trying to make as full a back-and-through swing as you can. The extra weight soon stretches away any tightness.

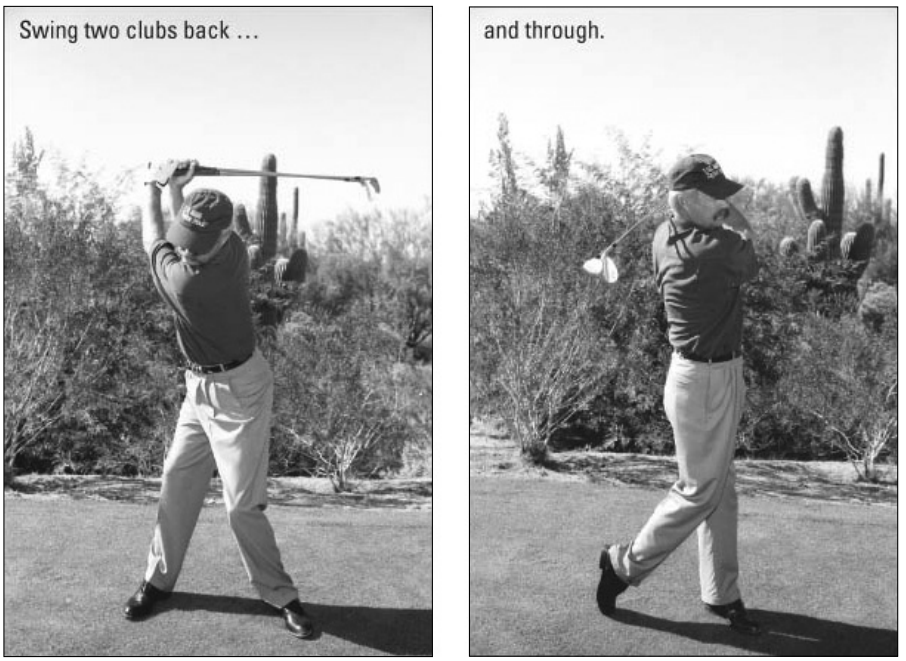


Figure 13-2: Double up for a smooth practice swing.

This next exercise is one that you'll see many players use on the first tee. Place a club across your back and hold it steady with your hands or elbows. Then turn back and through as if making a golf swing, as shown in Figure 13-3. Again, this action really stretches your back muscles.

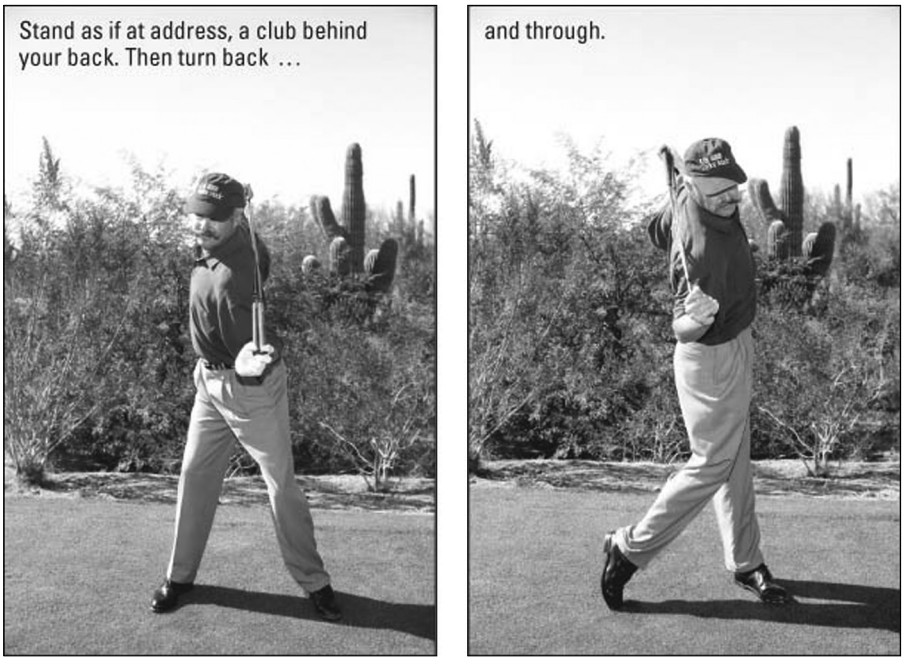


Figure 13-3: Watch your back!

Warming Up Your Swing

Go to any pro tournament and you'll see that most players show up on the practice range about an hour before they're due to tee off. Showing up early leaves them time to tune their swings and strokes before the action starts for real.

Gary's one of those players who like to schedule about an hour for pre-round practice. But half that time is probably enough for you. You really only need to hit enough balls to build a feel and a rhythm for the upcoming round. Don't make any last-minute changes to your swing.

Start your warm-up by hitting a few short wedge shots (see Figure 13-4). Don't go straight to your driver and start blasting away. That's asking for trouble. You can easily pull a muscle if you swing too hard too soon. Plus, it's unlikely that you'll immediately begin to hit long, straight drives if you don't warm up first. More than likely, you'll hit short, crooked shots. And those are hazardous to the golfer's mental health.

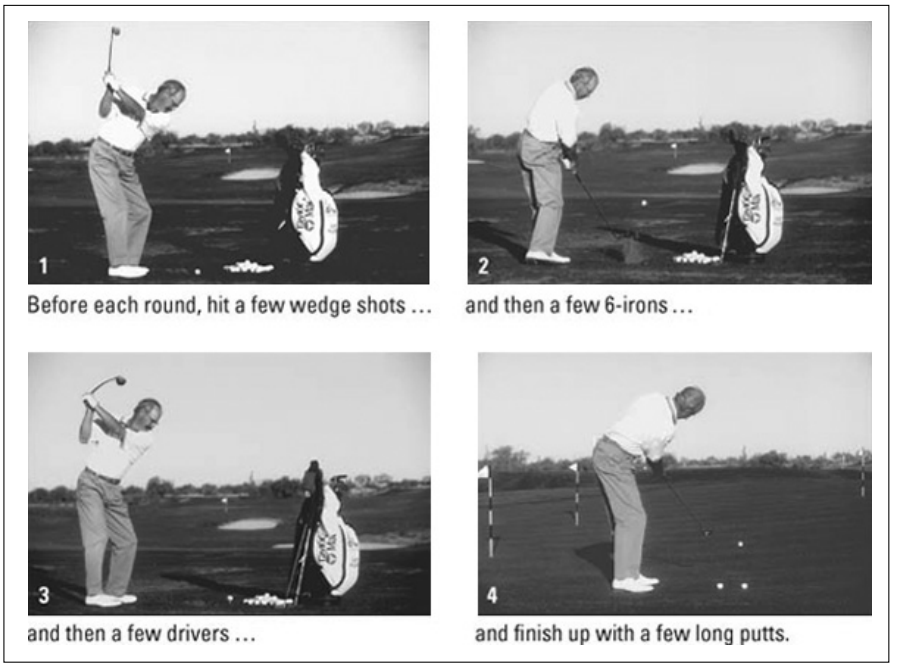


Figure 13-4: A sensible warm-up.

Here's how:

1. **Start with the wedge.**

   Focus on making solid contact. Nothing else. Try to turn your shoulders a little more with each shot. Hit about 20 balls without worrying about where they're going. Just swing smoothly.

2. **Move to your midirons.**

   Gary likes to hit his 6-iron at this point. He's just about warmed up and the 6-iron has just enough loft that he doesn't have to work too hard to get the ball flying forward. Again, hit about 20 balls.

3. **Hit the big stick.**

   Gary recommends that you hit no more than a dozen drives. Getting carried away with this club is easy. And when you go overboard, your swing can get a little quick. ***Note:*** You're only warming up. Focus on rhythm and timing — not on the ball.

4. **Before you leave the range, hit a few more balls with your wedge.**

   You're not looking for distance with this club, only smoothness. That's a good thought to leave with.

5. **Finally, spend about ten minutes on the practice putting green.**

   You need to get a feel for the pace of the greens. Start with short uphill putts of about a metre. Get your confidence and then proceed to longer putts of 7–10 metres. After that, practise putting to opposite fringes to get the feeling of speed. Focus on pace rather than direction. You're ready now — head for the first tee!

Keep your cool on the course

When you show up at the course, it's okay to be a little late. If you've got a 9.00 am tee time, get there about 8.30 am. Your partners may be starting to panic a bit about where you are. If you always use a carry bag, get one of those stand bags with prongs that keep it upright when you put it down. Very cool.

Never tie your shoelaces until you reach the tee. On the tee, bend down to tie them while complaining about all the things that hurt. Bursitis in your right shoulder. That pesky tendonitis in your left knee. The sore elbow you sustained while carrying an old lady's groceries. Whatever. Elicit sympathy from your companions. Get up very slowly. Adjust yourself. Grab your back. Then get into stroke negotiations . . .

What's also very cool is having your own turn-of-golf phrase. Make up your own language. Don't say stuff like 'wow' or 'great shot'. Keep your talk underground. Use stuff that no one else can understand. For example, Fairway Louie refers to the local denizens of our golf course as 'herds of grazing hack' because they're always looking for balls in the rough. If you come up with something memorable, others will start using your language. It's a domino effect.

At first, though, we'd recommend that you do more listening than talking. It's like when you go to a foreign country. You have to listen before you start spouting off. Listen to how golfers express themselves during moments of elation, anger and solitude. After you pick up the lingo, you can add your own touches. There's no right or wrong as long as you respect your fellow golfers and the game.

First-Tee Tactics

The best players start each round with a plan for how they'll play the course. They know which holes they can attack and which holes are best to play safely. So should you.

Many people say golf is 90 per cent mental. You'll find a lot of truth in that statement. The fewer mental errors you make, the lower your score will be. And the *great* thing about bad thinking is that everyone at every level of play can work on eliminating it.

Think of golf as a game of chess. You have to plan two or three moves in advance. Over every shot, you should be thinking, 'Where do I need to put this ball in order to make my next shot as easy as possible?'

We could write a whole book on the countless situations you can find yourself in on the course. Trouble is, we don't have the space for that in this book and you don't need all that information yet. So what follows is a brief overview of *tactical golf*. We've selected three common situations; you'll come across each one at least once in almost every round you play. You can apply your approach to each one to many other problems that you encounter. So don't get too wrapped up in the specifics of each scenario — think 'big picture'.

Tactic 1: Don't be a sucker

You're playing a 150-metre par-3 hole (see Figure 13-5). As you can see, the hole is cut towards the left side of the green, behind a large bunker. If your first inclination is to fire straight at the flag, think again. Ask yourself:

- What are my chances of pulling off such a difficult shot?
- What happens if I miss?
- Is the shot too risky?

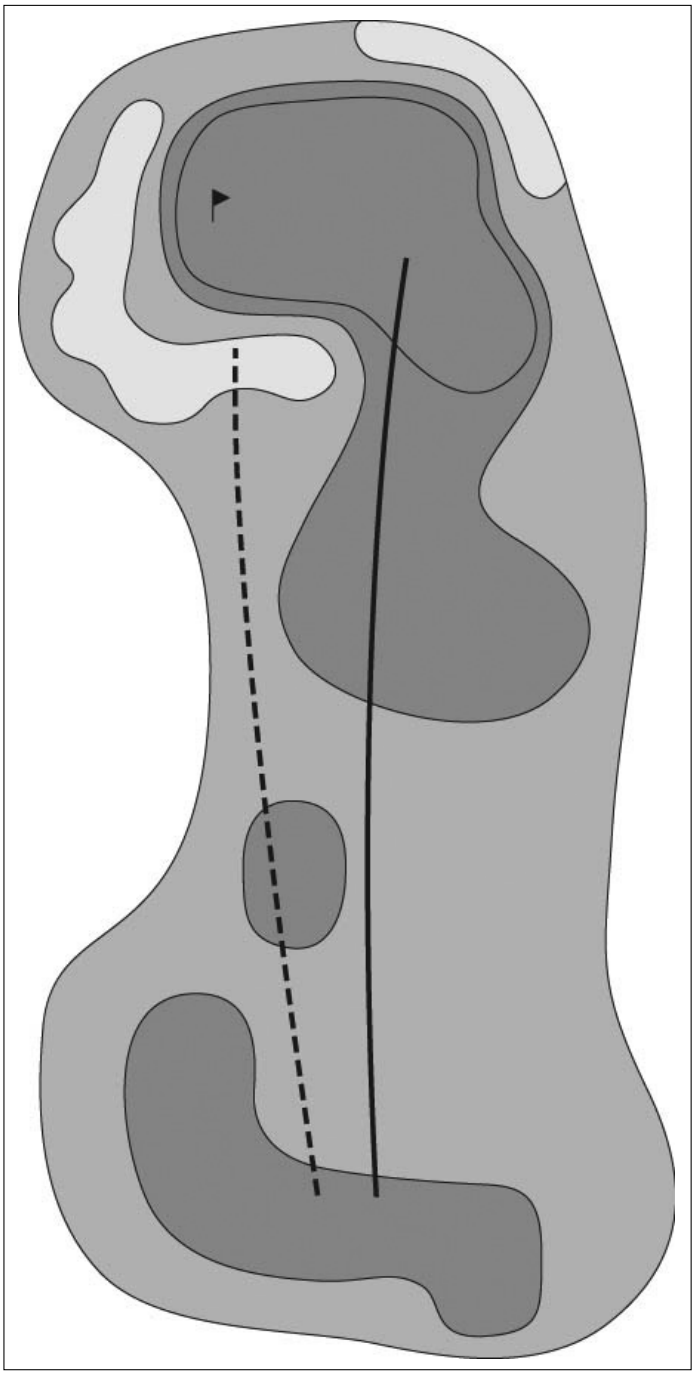


Figure 13-5: Don't be a sucker and aim for the flag (dotted line); the safer path is farther to the right.

If the answers are (a) less than 50 per cent, (b) you might take 5 to get down from the bunker, or (c) yes, then play towards the safe part of the green.

Only if you happen to be an exceptional bunker player should you go for the flag.

Think of it this way: Golf is a game of numbers. If you shoot at the pin here, you bring the number 2 into play. If you hit a great shot, you have a great opportunity for a deuce. That's the upside. The downside is that missing the green makes the numbers 5, 6 and maybe even 7 possibilities, especially if you aren't too strong from sand or if you're unlucky enough to get a really bad lie.

If, on the other hand, you play for the middle of the green, your range of likely results is narrower. Say you hit the putting surface with your first shot. In all likelihood, the most you'll take for the hole is 4 and that's only if you 3-putt. You'll get a lot of 3s from that position and once in a while you'll hole the long putt — so a 2 isn't impossible.

Even if you miss the green on that side, you'll probably be left with a relatively simple chip or pitch. So unless you mess up terribly, 4 is again your worst score for the hole. We like those numbers better, don't you?

You should follow this policy more often than not. If you decide to be a middle-of-the-green shooter, practise your long-putting a lot. You're going to have a lot of 10–15-metre putts, so be ready for them. In the long run, you'll come out ahead.

Tactic 2: Think before you drive

You're on a par-4 hole of just over 360 metres (see Figure 13-6). But the actual distance isn't that important. The key to this hole is the narrowing of the fairway at the point where your drive is most likely to finish. When this situation comes up, tee off with your 3-wood, 5-wood, or whatever club you can hit safely into the wide part of the fairway. Even if you can't quite reach the green in two shots, that's the best strategy. Again, it's a question of numbers. If you risk hitting your driver and miss the fairway, you'll probably waste at least one shot getting the ball back into play — maybe more than one if you get a bad lie. Then you *still* have a longish shot to the green.

Now follow a better scenario: You hit your 3-wood from the tee safely down the fairway. Then you hit your 5-wood, leaving the ball about 20 metres from the green. All you have left is a simple chip or pitch. Most times, you'll make no more than 5 on the hole. Indeed, you'll nearly always have a putt for a 4. Most golfers don't do this, but it makes sense, doesn't it?

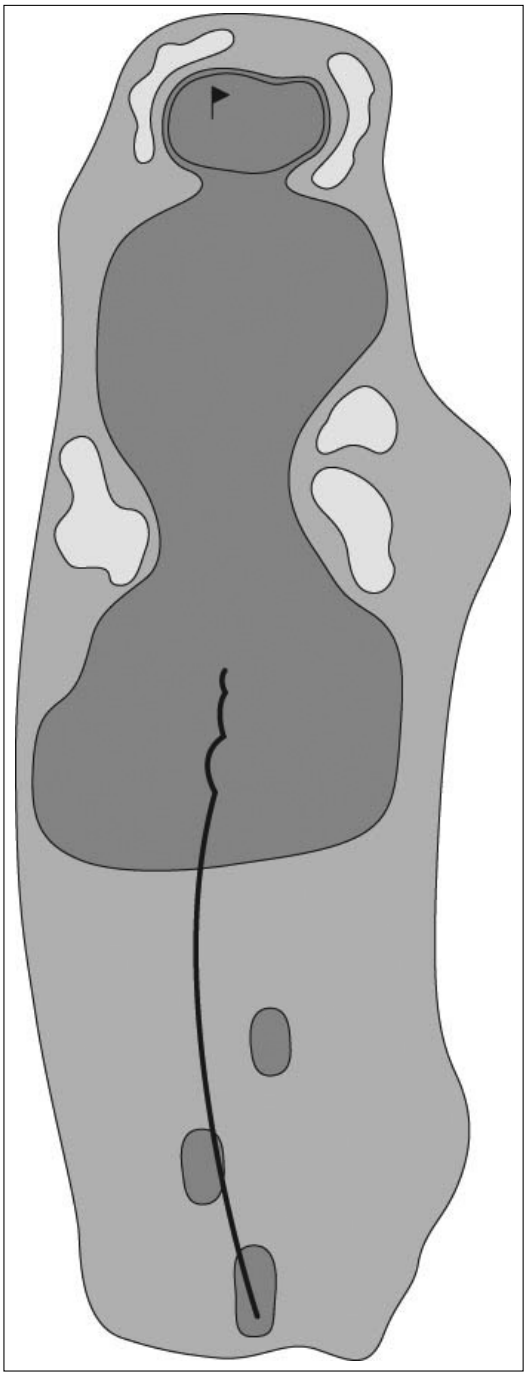


Figure 13-6: Safety first: Go for the wide part of the fairway.

All you have to do is pay attention to the layout of the hole and plan accordingly.

Tactic 3: It's easy as one, two, three

This par-5 hole is long, just over 500 metres (see Figure 13-7). Your first inclination is again to reach for your driver. Most of the time, that's probably the correct play — but not always.

Look at the hole: You can break it down into three relatively easy shots with a single club! Say you hit your 4-iron 170 metres. Three of those 4-irons can put you on the green. To us, that's easier for the beginning player than trying to squeeze every possible metre out of the driver and getting into trouble. (Disclaimer: We know you gorillas out there won't consider this. You'd rather flail away. But flailing often leads to failing.)

No law says that you must use your driver from the tee. If you don't feel comfortable with your driver, go with your 3-wood. If your 3-wood doesn't feel right, go to the 5-wood. And if you still aren't happy, try your 3-iron or a hybrid club. Don't swing until you're confident that you can hit the ball into the fairway with the club that's in your hands.

We'd rather be 200 metres from the tee and in the fairway than 250 metres out in the rough. If you don't believe us, try this test. Every time you miss a fairway from the tee, pick your ball up and drop it 15 metres further back — but in the middle of the fairway. Then play from there. Bet you'll shoot anywhere from 5 to 10 shots fewer than normal for 18 holes. It's better to be in a spot where you can hit the ball cleanly than in a tough spot — even if the clean shot is longer.

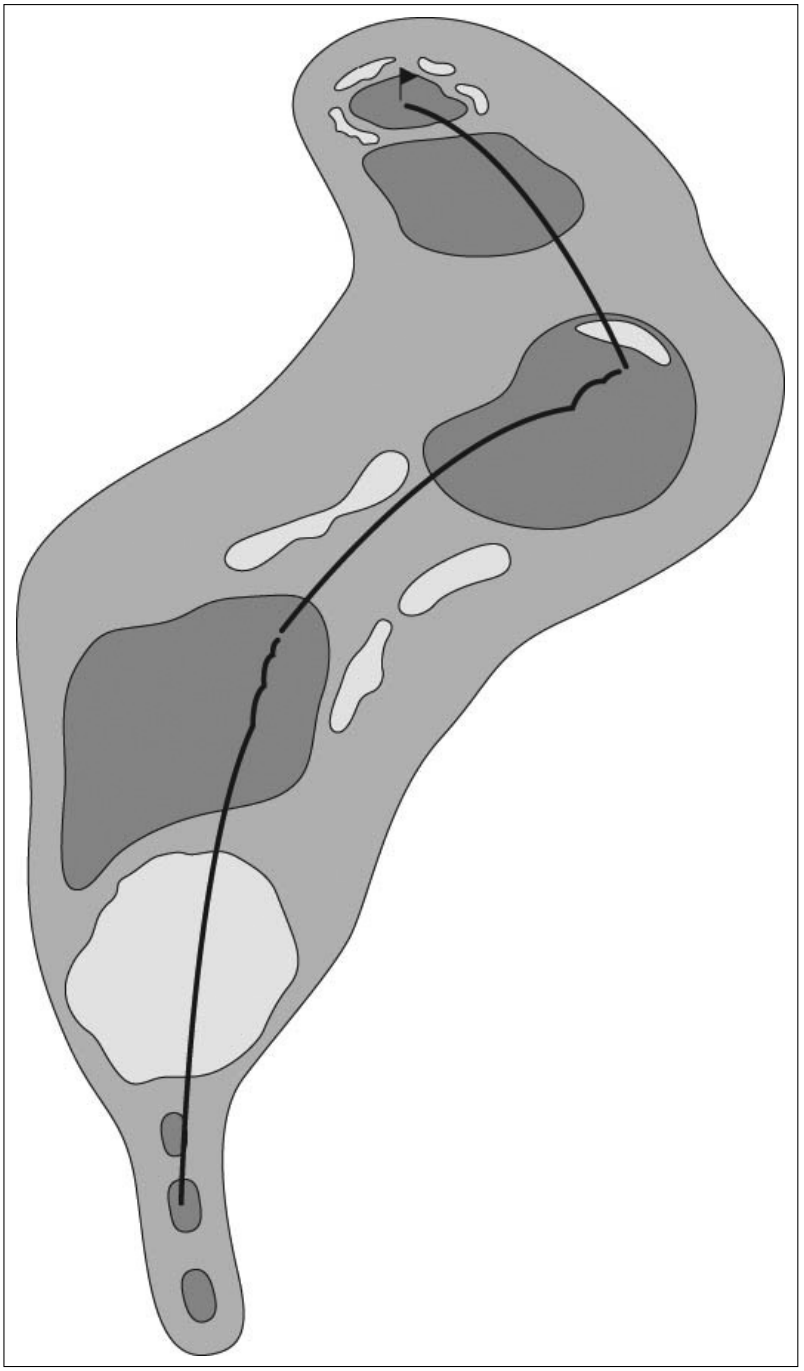


Figure 13-7: Three easy shots can tame a long hole.

Know your strengths and weaknesses

To really employ good strategy, you have to know your tendencies. For example, on the par-4 hole described earlier in this chapter (see 'Tactic 2: Think before you drive'), a really accurate driver of the ball could take the chance and try to hit the ball into the narrow gap. She's playing to her strength.

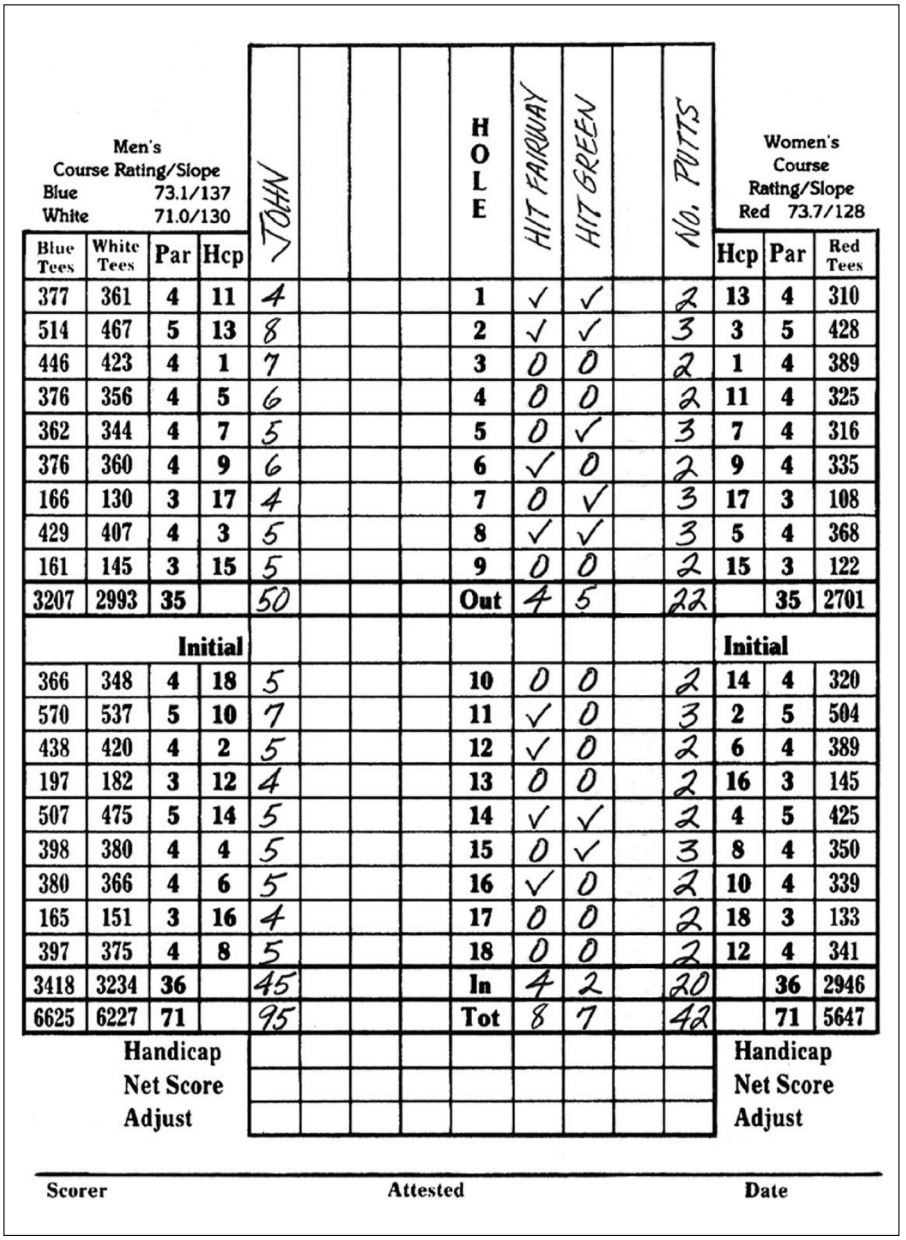
But how do you know what your pluses and minuses are? Simple. All you have to do is keep a close record of your rounds over a period of time. By a close record, we don't simply mean your score on each hole. You have to break down the numbers a bit more than that.

Look at the scorecard in Figure 13-8, where John has marked his score in detail. You can see how many fairways he hit. How many times he hit the green. And how many putts he took on each green.

If John tracks these things over, say, ten rounds, trends soon appear. Assume that this round is typical for John. Clearly, he isn't a very good putter. Forty-two putts for 18 holes is poor by any standard, especially when he isn't hitting that many greens — only one in three. If John were hitting 12 or 13 greens, you'd expect more putts because he'd often be near the edge of the green. But this card tells another story. John's missing a lot of greens and taking a lot of putts. So either his chipping and pitching are very bad, or his putting is letting him down. Probably the latter.

On the other hand, John isn't a bad driver, at least in terms of accuracy. He's hitting almost half the fairways. So, at least in the short term, John needs to work on his short game and putting.

Keep a record of your scores that details various aspects of your game. That record will tell you which parts of your game you should work on.



Men's Course Rating/Slope
Blue 73.1/137
White 71.0/130

Women's Course Rating/Slope
Red 73.7/128

Blue Tees	White Tees	Par	Hcp	JOHN				HOLE	HIT FAIRWAY	HIT GREEN		No. PUTTS	Hcp	Par	Red Tees
377	361	4	11	4				1	✓	✓		2	13	4	310
514	467	5	13	8				2	✓	✓		3	3	5	428
446	423	4	1	7				3	0	0		2	1	4	389
376	356	4	5	6				4	0	0		2	11	4	325
362	344	4	7	5				5	0	✓		3	7	4	316
376	360	4	9	6				6	✓	0		2	9	4	335
166	130	3	17	4				7	0	✓		3	17	3	108
429	407	4	3	5				8	✓	✓		3	5	4	368
161	145	3	15	5				9	0	0		2	15	3	122
3207	2993	35		50				Out	4	5		22		35	2701
			Initial										Initial		
366	348	4	18	5				10	0	0		2	14	4	320
570	537	5	10	7				11	✓	0		3	2	5	504
438	420	4	2	5				12	✓	0		2	6	4	389
197	182	3	12	4				13	0	0		2	16	3	145
507	475	5	14	5				14	✓	✓		2	4	5	425
398	380	4	4	5				15	0	✓		3	8	4	350
380	366	4	6	5				16	✓	0		2	10	4	339
165	151	3	16	4				17	0	0		2	18	3	133
397	375	4	8	5				18	0	0		2	12	4	341
3418	3234	36		45				In	4	2		20		36	2946
6625	6227	71		95				Tot	8	7		42		71	5647
		Handicap											Handicap		
		Net Score											Net Score		
		Adjust											Adjust		

Scorer Attested Date

Figure 13-8: Keep track of more than your score.

Beating the first-tee jitters

The opening shot of any round is often the most stressful. You're not into your round yet. Even the practice shots that you may have hit aren't the real thing. And people are nearly always nearby, watching, when you hit that first shot. If you're like most golfers, you're intimidated by even the thought of striking a ball in full view of the public.

How a player reacts to first-tee jitters is an individual thing. You just have to get out there and do it and see what happens. Common symptoms: Blurred vision. A desire to get this over and done with as soon as possible. Loss of reason.

The most common mistake, however, is doing everything twice as fast as you normally would. By *everything*, we mean looking down the fairway, standing up to the ball, swinging — the lot. Your increased pace is due to the misguided notion that if you get this swing over with really quickly, no one will see it. It's the hit-it-and-go syndrome and you should avoid it.

I remember when my golf swing wasn't where I wanted it to be. I had a bad grip, a bad takeaway, a bad position at the top. I wasn't comfortable with myself, so how could I be comfortable with others watching? I'd get up there, hit the ball as soon as I could and get out of the way. After I understood the mechanics of my swing, that dread went away. Suddenly I stood over the ball as long as I wanted to. I thought about what I was doing, not about what others were thinking. I *wanted* people to watch, to revel in the positions in my golf swing, because they were good positions. I didn't mind showing off.

Being too concerned about your audience is really a social problem. Rather than taking refuge in your pre-shot routine and whatever swing thought you might favour, you're thinking about what others may be thinking. The secret to overcoming this problem is to immerse yourself in your routine. Say, 'Okay, I'm going to start behind the ball. Then I'm going to look at my line, take five steps to the ball, swing the club away to the inside and turn my shoulders.' Whatever you say to yourself, just remember to focus internally. Focus on *you* and forget about *them*.

The power of positive excuse-making

Okay, you're ready to hit the links. The first thing you need to be sure of is that you're at the right course. The second thing is that you know where each hole goes. Both may seem obvious, but things can go wrong. I know. I've been there. Listen to this tale of woe.

I was trying to qualify for the US Open. The sectional qualifying course I was assigned to was Carlton Oaks in Southern California. No problem. I'd played there many times and knew the course well. I'd have a great chance to qualify on this course!

Or so I thought.

I got to the 13th hole and still had a shot at the US Open. But I needed a good finish. The 13th is a dogleg to the left, par-4, some 360-plus metres: a testing hole. But I needed a birdie, so I decided to hit my drive down the 12th fairway, the hole I had just played. That would leave me a better angle for my second shot to the 13th green and cut more than 40 metres from the hole. The only snag was that my ball would have to fly over some trees.

I drove the ball perfectly and then hit a long iron to the green over the trees, a good one, too. The only thing I recall thinking is that the hole was longer than I remembered; I had to hit a 4-iron to the green when I expected a 7-iron to be enough. Still, I hit it solidly, so all was well.

When I got to the green, I was alone. So I waited for the rest of my group. And waited. And waited. Eventually I lost patience, putted out and then started to look for the others, thinking, 'Where *are* those knuckleheads?' Well, they were waving to me from a green about 100 metres away. I had played to the wrong green! There was only one thing left to do. Two, actually. I fired my caddie and walked to the clubhouse. Luckily, I found the right clubhouse.

Firing my caddie may seem petty, but the caddie is actually an important part of being a professional golfer. Even if you aren't a pro, no matter what goes wrong on the course, it is never — I repeat, *never* — your fault. You must always find someone or something else to blame for any misfortune. In other words, be creative in the excuse department.

There have been some great excuses over the years. My favourite came from Greg Norman. A few years ago, he blamed a miscued shot on a worm popping up out of the ground next to his ball as he swung. Poor Greg was so distracted that he couldn't hit the shot properly! Then there was Jack Nicklaus at the 1995 British Open at St Andrews. In the first round, Jack hit his second shot on the 14th hole, a long par-5, into what is known as Hell Bunker. It's well named, being basically a bottomless sand-filled crater. Anyway, seeing his ball down there came as a bit of a surprise to Jack. He apparently felt that his shot should have flown comfortably over said bunker. And his excuse? His ball must have been deflected by seed heads!

These two examples are extreme, of course. But you should apply the same principle to your game. You can often tell a good player from his reaction to misfortune. He'll blame his equipment, the wind, whatever. On the other hand, less-secure golfers take all responsibility for bad shots. Whatever they do is awful. In fact, they really stink at this stupid game. That's what they tell themselves — usually to the point that it ruins their next shot. And the next. And the next. Whatever they perceive themselves to be, they become.

So be sure that you err in the former way rather than the latter. To play this game well, you gotta believe — in yourself!

Which Format Should You Play?

The best format I know of for the beginning golfer is an *ambrose* or *scramble.* In that format, you're usually part of a team of four. Everyone tees off. Then you pick the best of the four shots. Then everyone plays another shot from where that best shot lies. And so on. An ambrose is great for beginners because you have less pressure to hit every shot well. You can lean on your partners a bit. Plus, you get to watch better players up close. And you get to experience some of the game's camaraderie. Ambroses are typically full of cheering and high-fives. In short, they're fun.

You can also play in games where the format is *stableford.* In this game, the scoring is by points rather than strokes. You get one point for a *bogey* (score of one over par) on each hole; two for a par; three for a *birdie* (one under par); and four for an *eagle* (two under par). Thus, a round in which you par every hole reaps you 36 points. The great thing is that in a stableford, you don't have to complete every hole. You can take your 9s and 10s without irreparably damaging your score. You simply don't get any points for a hole in which you take more than a bogey. That's with your handicap strokes deducted, of course. (For more on golf handicapping, see Chapter 14.)

You'll probably find that you play most of your golf with three companions. That's known as a *four-ball* (a *foursome* in the United States). The format is simple. You split into two teams of two and play what is known as a *best-ball* game. That is, the best score on each team on each hole counts as the score for that team. For example, you make a 5 on the first hole and your partner makes a 4, then your team scores a 4 for the hole.

Keeping Score

Don't get too wrapped up in how many shots you're taking to play a round, at least at first. For many golfers, the score doesn't mean that much anyway. Most of the guys Gary grew up with never kept score. That's because they were always playing a match against another player or team. In a match like that, all that matters is how you compare with your opponents. It's never 'me against the course'. It's always 'me against you'. So if Gary's having a really bad hole, he simply concedes it to you and then moves on to the next one.

That's a totally different game from the one that you see the pros playing on TV every week. For them, every shot is vital — the difference between making the cut or not, or finishing in or out of the big money. That's why the pro game is better left to the pros.

Practice Makes Better

It's amazing, but nearly half of high-handicap golfers don't practise. Are you one of them? You can't expect to improve if you don't put some time in. Now, we can already hear you griping, 'I don't have time!' Well, stop whining, because we made it easy for you. We put together a sample practice schedule that you can easily work into your weekly routine. You may want to tone it down at the office — it looks bad if your boss walks in while you're practising your putting — although you may be able to multitask during those long conference calls.

Here's a sample practice schedule:

- **Monday:** Gym workout (1 hour); putt on rug (15 minutes)
- **Tuesday:** Swing a club in front of a mirror or window (30 minutes)
- **Wednesday:** Gym workout (1 hour); read a golf magazine or golf book or watch a golf DVD (30 minutes)
- **Thursday:** Swing a club or chip (1 hour)
- **Friday:** Gym workout (1 hour); practice range, including golf drills (1 hour)
- **Saturday:** Practice range (1 hour); play 18 holes
- **Sunday:** Watch golf on TV; practice range (30 minutes); play 9 holes

Practice can be fun. If you don't want to take strokes off your game, skip this part, but if you're a weekend warrior who wants to improve, here's a shortcut to success:

- **Practise your swing whenever possible.** You can practise most of the suggestions in Part II in your living room or backyard. Place old clubs in various locations around your house so that it's convenient to swing when the spirit (or schedule) moves you.
- **Make imaginary swings in front of a mirror or window** with your arms and hands in the proper position (see Part II). If you don't have a club handy, that's okay. Visualise and feel the correct position.
- **Grip a club when you watch television —** you're not doing anything else! Try swinging a club during ad breaks.
- **Build a practice area in your house or office where you can work on your short game.** Use those plastic practice balls. Set up a small obstacle course on your lawn. (Your kids can help you with this part.)
- **Where and when possible, hit a bucket of balls during lunch.** If it's a hot day, you may want to have a shower before you head back to the office.

Getting older — and better

On the Champions Tour for golfers 50 and over, Gary tees it up with some of the same guys who used to beat the pants off him on the main tour. Gary still loves to play, but as he's aged, his game has changed. He can deal with it. We all have to. If you've become a senior golfer since the last edition of this book came out, or if you're taking up the game for the first time, you need to know some things to keep your game young.

As you may know already (or will find out soon enough), you just don't hit the ball as far as you used to. There are four basic reasons for this:

- **Poor posture:** Bad posture can stop you from turning properly. Be careful how you hold your head — keep it off your chest. Maintain good posture by standing in front of a full-length mirror and holding a club out in front of you. Keep looking in the mirror as you lower the club into the hitting position. Don't let your head tilt or move forward. When you master this technique, you'll be able to make that turn and swing your arms.
- **Lack of rotation on your backswing:** You probably aren't turning your hips and shoulders enough on the backswing. You can increase your range of motion by increasing your flexibility. See Chapter 4 for stretching exercises. They can be a huge help! Then review the elements of the swing in Chapters 6 and 7, get out to the driving range and work out those kinks.
- **Losing strength:** As you grow older, you lose strength in your hands and forearms, which makes it harder to keep your wrists in the proper position on the downswing. This weakness reduces clubhead speed, so the ball doesn't go as far. Simple drills to combat loss of strength include squeezing a tennis ball, doing forearm curls with light barbells and Harvey Penick's drill: Swing a club back and forth like a scythe 20 or 30 times a day. I don't recommend doing this one anywhere near your priceless new HD TV.
- **Lack of rotation in the follow-through:** You may be so intent on hitting the ball that you're not finishing your swing. This causes the club to stop a metre or so beyond the ball and the arms to stop somewhere around your chest, with your belt buckle pointing to the right of your target. As you can imagine, this results in an unsightly shot. The ball will fly to the right and be, well, weak. To correct such a problem, repeat this drill each day until it feels natural: While looking in a full-length mirror, go to the top of your backswing (see Chapter 6) and then mirror-image that position on the follow-through, with your belt buckle facing to the left of your target. To make this happen, you must transfer 90 per cent of your weight from your right foot to your left foot.

We can't stress this enough: If you don't exercise, start (see Chapter 4). Consult your local golf pro for suggestions, too. A good program coupled with a stretching routine will improve your flexibility and strength as well as your golf game. And your life.

Chapter 14

Rules, Etiquette and Keeping Score

In This Chapter

- Knowing the rules
- Respecting other golfers
- Keeping score
- Surviving penalty shots

Golf is a beautifully structured game, rife with rules of play, etiquette and scoring that evolved through its long history. You don't have to memorise all 182 pages of the R&A's latest *Rules of Golf*, but you must know the essentials.

Beware of Dog — and Watery Filth!

The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers devised the original 13 Rules of Golf in 1744, over a *wee dram* (whisky) or 12, no doubt. Anyway, those rules are worth recounting (original spelling included), to show you how little — and how much — things have changed over the centuries.

1. You must tee your ball within a club's length of the hole.
2. Your tee must be upon the ground.
3. You are not to change the ball which you strike off the tee.
4. You are not to remove any stones, bones, or any break club, for the sake of playing your ball. Except upon the fair green and that's only within a club's length of your ball.
5. If your ball comes among watter, or any watery filth, you are at liberty to take out your ball and bringing it behind the hazard and teeing it, you may play it with any club and allow your adversary a stroke, for so getting out your ball.

6. If your balls be found anywhere touching one another you are to lift the first ball, till you play the last.
7. At holling, you are to play honestly for the hole, and not to play upon your adversary's ball, not lying in your way to the hole.
8. If you should lose your ball, by its being taken up, or any other way you are to go back to the spot, where you struck last, and drop another ball, and allow your adversary a stroke for the misfortune.
9. No man at holling his ball, is to be allowed, to mark his way to the hole with his club or any thing else.
10. If a ball be stopp'd by any person, horse, dog, or any thing else, the ball so stopp'd must be played where it lyes.
11. If you draw your club, in order to strike and proceed so far in the stroke, as to be bringing down your club; if then, your club shall break, in any way, it is to be counted a stroke.
12. He whose ball lyes farthest from the hole is obliged to play first.
13. Neither trench, ditch or dyke, made for the preservation of the links, nor the scholar's holes or the soldier's lines, shall be counted a hazard. But the ball is to be taken out, teed and play'd with any iron club.

As you can tell from the language and terms used in 1744, these rules were designed for match play (see 'Match play', later in this chapter). Gary's particular favourite is Rule 6. It wasn't that long before the rule was redefined from 'touching' to 'within 6 inches' — which in turn led to the *stymie rule.* The stymie has long since passed into legend, but it was a lot of fun. Basically, *stymie* meant that if your opponent's ball lay between your ball and the hole, you couldn't ask him to mark it. You had to make do. Usually, that meant chipping over his ball, which is great fun, especially if you're close to the hole.

Another rule Gary loves is the one stating that you could leave your opponent's ball where it lay if it was near the edge of the hole. As of the late 1960s, you could use such a situation to your advantage, with the other ball acting as a backstop of sorts. Nothing could hack off your opponent more than your putt bouncing off his ball into the cup! Happy days!

The Rules Today

Take a look at a rulebook today (you can pick one up from almost any professional's shop, or order one directly from the Golf Australia or New Zealand Golf organisations) and you'll find a seemingly endless list of clauses and subclauses — all of which make the game sound very difficult and complicated.

In our opinion, the rules are too complex. For a smart, enjoyable look at them, pick up a copy of *Golf Rules & Etiquette For Dummies,* by John Steinbreder. There's also an excellent book by Jeffrey S. Kuhn and Bryan A. Garner, *The Rules of Golf in Plain English*.

Even if you're too busy to track down those two fine tomes, you can get by with about a dozen simple rules. Common sense can help, too. You won't go too far wrong on the course if you:

- Play the course as you find it.
- Play the ball as it lies.
- If you can't do either of those things, do what's fair.

To demonstrate just how crazy the rules of golf can get and how easy it is to commit an infraction, look at the cases of Craig Stadler and Paul Azinger.

Stadler was playing the 14th hole at Torrey Pines in San Diego during a US PGA Tour event. Because his ball was under a tree, he knelt on a towel as he hit the ball because he didn't want to get his pants dirty.

Think that sounds harmless? Think again. Some smart guy out there in TV land was watching all this (the next day, no less) and thought he was part of a new game show: *You Make the Ruling.* He called the tour and said that Stadler was guilty of 'building a stance'. By kneeling on top of something, even a towel, Stadler was technically changing his shot, breaking rule 13-3 (*a player is entitled to place his feet firmly in taking his stance, but he shall not build his stance*).

The officials had to agree, so Craig was disqualified for signing the wrong scorecard — 24 hours after the fact. Technically, an event isn't over until the competitors have completed 72 holes. At the time the rules infraction came to light, Stadler had played only 54 holes. Madness! He clearly had no intent to gain advantage. But it was adios, Craig.

The same sort of thing happened with Paul Azinger. At Doral's famed 'Blue Monster' in 1991, Azinger played a shot from the edge of the lake on the final hole. Just before he started his swing, he flicked a rock out of the way while taking his stance. Cue the rules police. Another phone call got Azinger thrown out for 'moving loose impediments in a hazard'. Common sense and the rules parted company again.

Another incident occurred at the LPGA's Samsung World Championship in 2005, when Michelle Wie took a drop several centimetres closer to the hole than allowed. A *Sports Illustrated* writer noticed the infraction and Michelle was disqualified — in her first event as a professional!

Ten rules you need to know

By Mike Shea, US PGA Tour Rules Official

Rule 1: You must play the same ball from the teeing ground into the hole. Change only when the rules allow.

Rule 3-2: You must hole out on each hole. If you don't, you don't have a score and are thus disqualified.

Rule 6-5: You are responsible for playing your own ball. Put an identification mark on it.

Rule 13: You must play the ball as it lies.

Rule 13-4: When your ball is in a hazard, whether a bunker or a water hazard, you cannot touch the ground or water in the hazard with your club before impact.

Rule 16: You cannot improve the line of a putt before your stroke by repairing marks made by the spikes on players' shoes.

Rule 24: Obstructions are anything artificial. Some are moveable. Others are not, so you must drop your ball within one club length of your nearest point of relief — no penalty.

Rule 26: If your ball is lost in a water hazard, you can drop another behind the hazard, keeping the point where the ball last crossed the hazard between you and the hole — with a one-stroke penalty.

Rule 27: If you lose your ball anywhere other than in a hazard, return to where you hit your previous shot and hit another — with a one-stroke penalty.

Rule 28: If your ball is unplayable, you have three options (each carries a one-stroke penalty):

- Play from where you hit your last shot.
- Drop within two club lengths of where your ball is now, no closer to the hole.
- Keep the point where the ball is between you and the hole and drop your ball on that line. You can go back as far as you want.

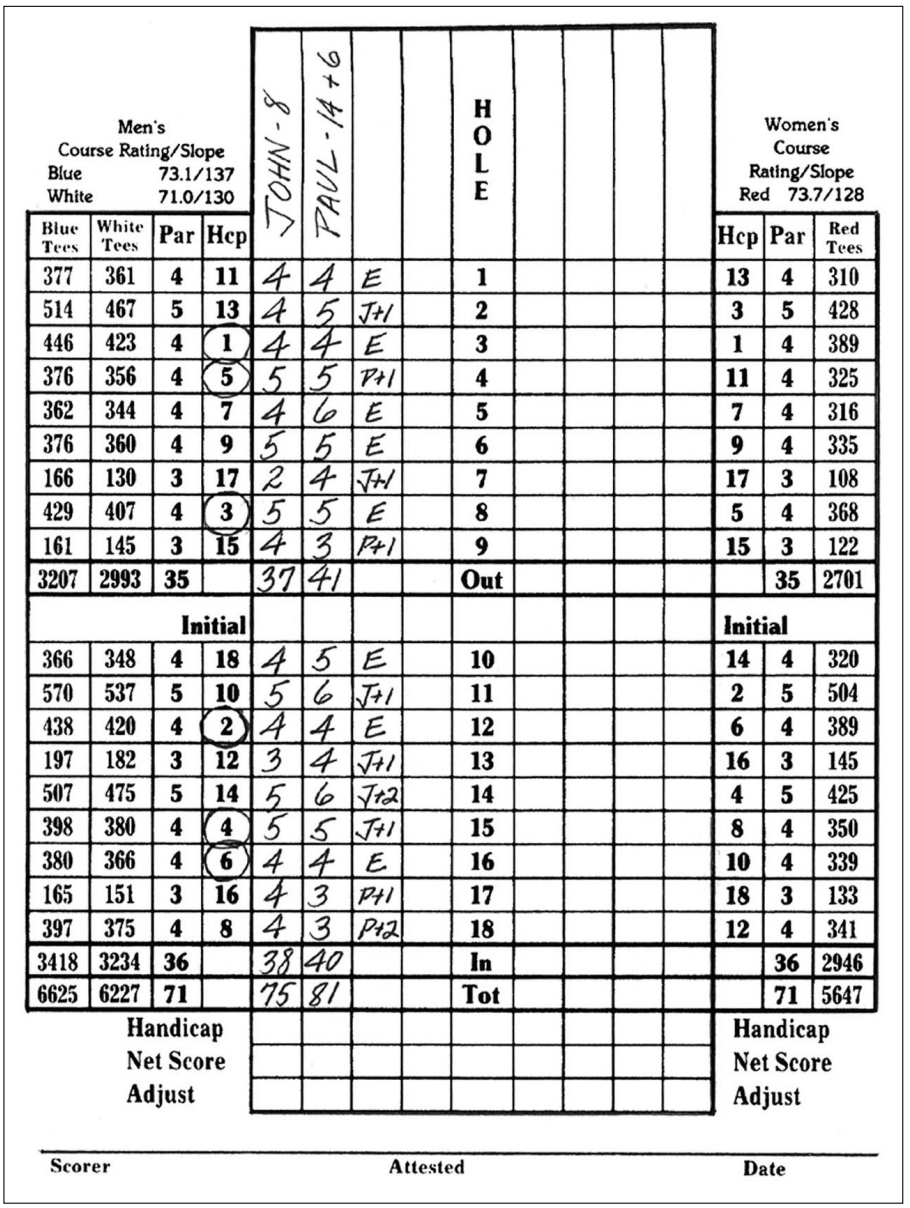
Source: The Rules of Golf as approved by the United States Golf Association (USGA) and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, Scotland

In each case, the rules of golf were violated. But the players were not cheating; they broke the rules accidentally. And what got them thrown out of those tournaments were not the original infractions, but signing incorrect scorecards. In all three cases, tour officials did what they felt they had to do. We still think it was cruel and unusual punishment.

The point is that although the rules of golf are designed to help you, they can be a minefield. Watch where you step!

Marking a scorecard

Scorecards can be a little daunting when you first look at them (see Figure 14-1). All those numbers and little boxes. But fear not — keeping score is actually simpler than it looks.



Men's Course Rating/Slope Blue 73.1/137 White 71.0/130				JOHN - 8	PAUL - 14 + 6			HOLE					Women's Course Rating/Slope Red 73.7/128		
Blue Tees	White Tees	Par	Hcp										Hcp	Par	Red Tees
377	361	4	11	4	4	E		1					13	4	310
514	467	5	13	4	5	J+1		2					3	5	428
446	423	4	1	4	4	E		3					1	4	389
376	356	4	5	5	5	P+1		4					11	4	325
362	344	4	7	4	6	E		5					7	4	316
376	360	4	9	5	5	E		6					9	4	335
166	130	3	17	2	4	J+1		7					17	3	108
429	407	4	3	5	5	E		8					5	4	368
161	145	3	15	4	3	P+1		9					15	3	122
3207	2993	35		37	41			Out						35	2701
			Initial										Initial		
366	348	4	18	4	5	E		10					14	4	320
570	537	5	10	5	6	J+1		11					2	5	504
438	420	4	2	4	4	E		12					6	4	389
197	182	3	12	3	4	J+1		13					16	3	145
507	475	5	14	5	6	J+2		14					4	5	425
398	380	4	4	5	5	J+1		15					8	4	350
380	366	4	6	4	4	E		16					10	4	339
165	151	3	16	4	3	P+1		17					18	3	133
397	375	4	8	4	3	P+2		18					12	4	341
3418	3234	36		38	40			In						36	2946
6625	6227	71		75	81			Tot						71	5647
			Handicap										Handicap		
			Net Score										Net Score		
			Adjust										Adjust		

Scorer Attested Date

Figure 14-1: Marking your card.

Say your handicap is 9 and Gary's is 14. That means you're going to give Gary 5 strokes over the course of the round. Gary gets those strokes at the holes rated the most difficult. That's logical. Equally logical is the fact that these holes are handicapped 1 through 5. So mark those 'stroke holes' before you begin. (We explain scoring and handicaps later in this chapter.)

After the match begins, keep track of the score with simple pluses or minuses in a spare row of boxes.

In *stroke play*, you're expected to keep and score your playing companion's card. His name will be at the top of the card, his handicap in a box next to it. All you have to do is record his score for each hole in the box provided. You don't even have to add it up, although it makes sense to do so.

Tee time

You must tee up between the markers, not in front of them and no more than two club lengths behind them (see Figure 14-2). If you tee off outside this area — also called the tee box — you get a two-shot penalty in stroke play and in match play, you may be asked by your opponent to replay your shot from the teeing area. (See the 'Match play' and 'Stroke play' sections later in this chapter for more differences between the two.)

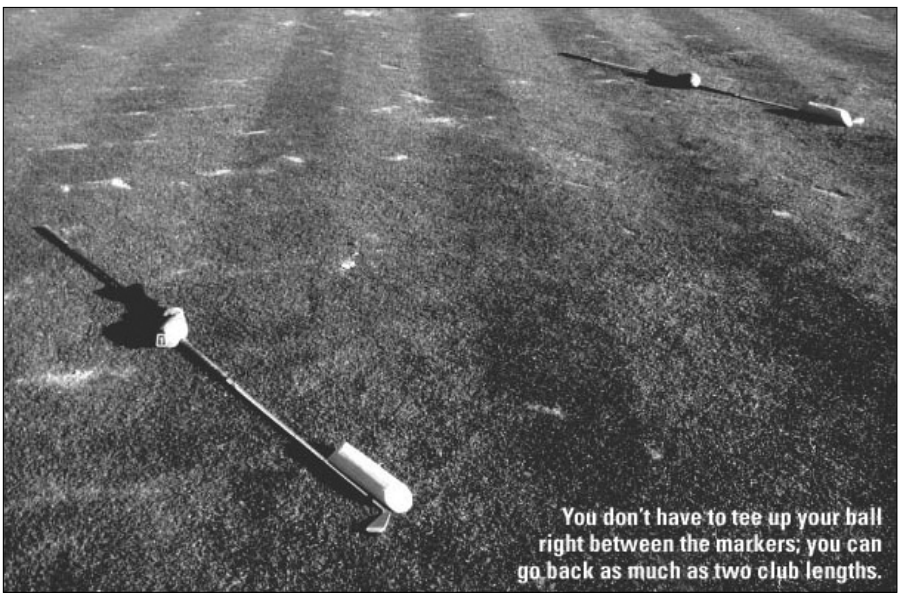


Figure 14-2: The tee box is bigger than you think.

You don't have to stand within the teeing area; your feet can be outside it. This is helpful when the only piece of level ground is outside the teeing area or if the hole is a sharp dogleg. You can give yourself a better angle by *teeing up wide* (standing outside the teeing area).

Lost — the sequel

At this stage of your golf life, you're going to hit your share of errant shots. Some will finish in spots where it might be easier to find a snake, kangaroo or emu than a golf ball. And sometimes you won't find the ball at all.

If you can't find the ball in the five minutes you're allowed, you must return to the tee or to the point where you last hit the ball and play another ball. With penalty, stroke and distance, you'll be hitting 3 off the tee. One way to avoid having to walk back to the tee after failing to find your ball is to hit a provisional ball if you think the first one may be hard to find. If the first ball can't be found, you play the second. Be sure, however, to announce to your playing partners that you're playing a provisional ball. If you don't, you must play the second ball — *with* the penalty — even if you find the first ball.

Ain't this game full of surprises?

How can you keep lost balls to a minimum? First, when your ball is in midair, watch it like a hawk. That sounds pretty obvious, but not watching the shot is perhaps the number-one reason (after bad technique) why balls get lost. Temper gets the better of too many players. They're too busy slamming the club into the ground to watch the ball. Don't make that mistake.

Pay attention when the ball lands, too. Give yourself a reference point, such as a tree, near the landing area. You should also put an identifying mark on your ball before you begin play so you can be sure that the ball you find is the one you hit.

Looking for a ball is a much-neglected art form. We see people wandering aimlessly, going over the same spot time after time. Be systematic! Walk back and forth without retracing your steps. That's how search parties work. You'll double or triple your chances of finding the ball.

Remember, you have five minutes to look for your ball from the moment you start to search. Time yourself. The game's often too slow as it is — don't take a second longer than your allotted time hunting for a lost ball.

Taking a drop

There will be times when you have to pick up your ball and drop it. Every golf course has places that allow you to take a free drop. A cart path is one — you can move your ball away from the path with no penalty. Casual water (such as a puddle) is another. Here's how to do it:

1. **Lift and clean your ball.**
2. **Find the nearest spot where you have complete relief from the problem and mark that spot with a tee.**

   You not only have to get the ball away from the obstruction, but your feet as well. So find a spot where your feet are clear of the obstruction, then determine where the clubhead would be if you hit from there. This is the spot you want to mark. The spot you choose cannot be closer to the hole.
3. **Measure one club length from that mark.**
4. **Drop the ball.**

   Stand tall, holding the ball at shoulder height and at arm's length, as shown in Figure 14-3. Let the ball drop vertically. You aren't allowed to 'spin' the ball into a more favourable spot. Make sure the ball doesn't end up nearer the hole than it was when you picked it up. If it does, you have to pick up the ball and drop it again.

How you drop the ball makes no difference; however, you always have to stand upright when dropping. I once had to drop my ball in a bunker where the sand was wet. The ball was obviously going to *plug* when it landed (that is, get buried in the sand), so I asked whether I could lie down to drop it. A clever idea, I thought. The rules official agreed — if you replace the word 'clever' with 'totally wrong'. Oh, well . . .

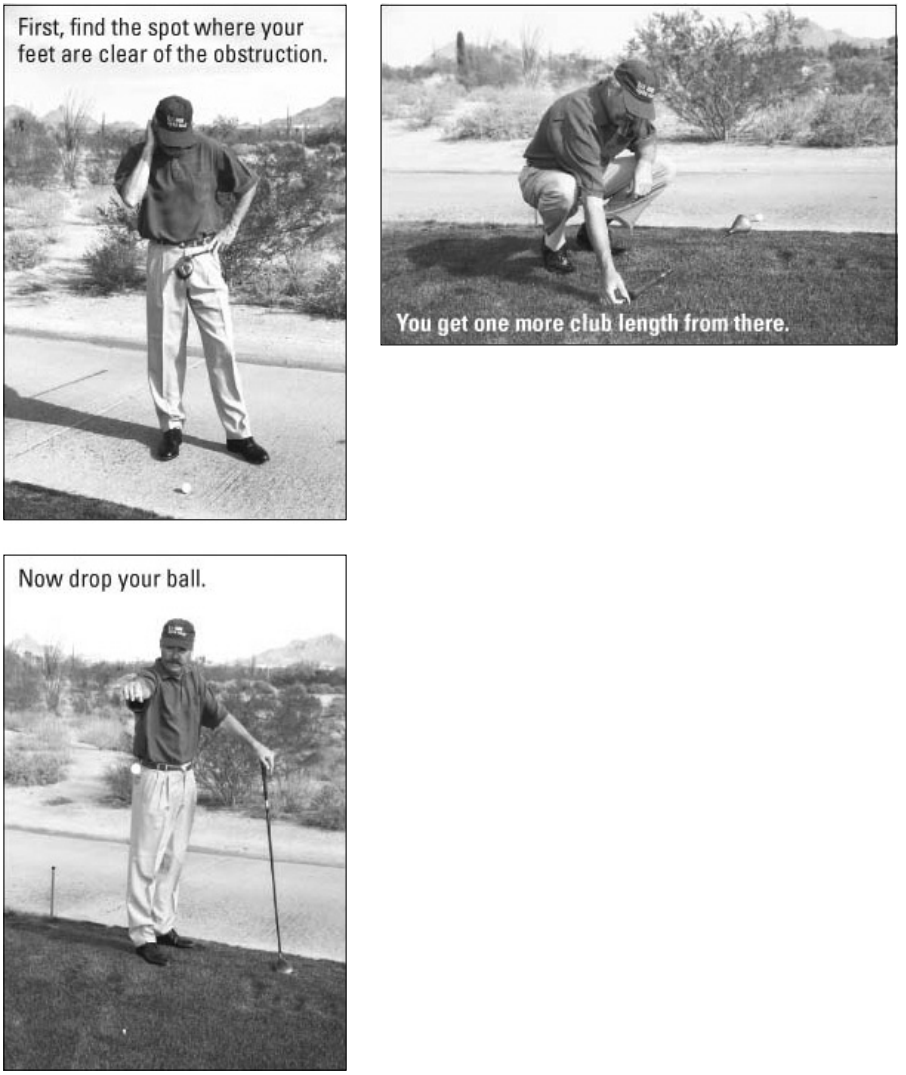


Figure 14-3: Dropping your ball.

Advice and consent

Advice has two sides. First, you cannot give or receive advice from anyone but your caddie. That means you can't ask your playing companions what club they hit. Neither can you say anything that may help in the playing of the next stroke.

This rule is a toughie and even the best have been caught breaking it. In the 1971 Ryder Cup matches in St Louis, Arnold Palmer was playing Bernard Gallacher of Scotland. Palmer hit a lovely shot onto a par-3, whereupon Gallacher's caddie said, 'Great shot, Arnie. What club did you hit?' Arnold, being Arnold, told him. Gallacher never heard the exchange, but the referee heard it. Palmer, despite his own protestations, was awarded the hole. That was in match play; in stroke play, it's a 2-shot penalty. So take care!

Second, you're going to find yourself playing with people, *lots* of people, who think of themselves as experts on every aspect of the golf swing. These know-it-alls may mean well, but they're dangerous to your golf health. Ignore them. Or, if that proves too difficult, listen, smile politely and then go about your business as if they'd been speaking Martian.

Etiquette: The Right Way to Play

Golf, unlike the trash-talking sports you see on TV, still prizes sportsmanship. Golf is an easy game to cheat at, so every player is on his or her honour. But there's more to it than that. Golf has its own code of etiquette: Semi-official 'rules' of courtesy that every player is expected to follow. Here are the main ones:

- **Don't talk while someone is playing a stroke.** Give your partners time and silence while they're analysing the situation, making their practice swings and then making their swings for real. Don't stand near them or move about, either, especially on the greens. Stay out of their peripheral vision while they're putting. Don't stand near the hole or walk between your partner's ball and the hole. Even be mindful of your shadow. The *line* of a putt — the path it must follow to the hole — is holy ground.

  Easygoing types may not mind if you chat away while they're choosing a club, but that isn't true for everyone. When in doubt, stand still and shut up. If you're a problem more than once, you'll be told about it.

- **Be ready when it's your turn — when your ball lies farthest from the hole.** Make your decisions while you're walking to your ball or while waiting for others to hit. And when it's your turn, don't delay. You don't have to rush; just get on with it.

- **The *honour* (that is, the first shot) on a given tee goes to the player with the lowest score on the previous hole.** If that hole was tied, the player with the lowest score on the hole before that retains the honour. In other words, you have the honour until you lose it.

- **Make sure everyone in your foursome is behind you when you hit.** You won't hit every shot where you're aiming it. When in doubt, wait for your playing partners to get out of your line of play. The same is

true for the group in front; wait until they're well out of range before you hit. Even if it would take a career shot for you to reach them, hold your fire. Lawyers love golfers who ignore this rule of thumb.

- **Pay attention to the group behind you, too.** Are they waiting for you on every shot? Is there a gap between you and the group ahead of you? If the answer to either or both is yes, step aside and invite the group behind you to play through. This is no reflection on your ability. All it means is that the group behind plays faster than you do.

  The best place to let a group behind play through is at a par-3 (it's the shortest hole and, therefore, the quickest way of playing through). After hitting your ball onto the green, mark it and wave to them to play. Stand off to the side of the green as they hit. After they've all hit, replace your ball and putt out. Then wait for them to finish and let them go to the next tee ahead of you. Simple, isn't it?

  Sadly, you'll see this piece of basic good manners abused time and again by players who don't know any better. Do what's right: Let a faster group play through.

- **Help the greenkeeper.** A busy course takes a lot of pounding — all those balls landing on greens, feet walking through bunkers and divots of earth flying through the air. Do your bit for the golf course. Repair any pitch marks you see on the greens — indentations made by the ball landing on the soft surface. (You can use your tee or a special tool called a pitch-mark repairer, which costs about a dollar in the pro shop.)

  Here's how to repair pitch marks: Stick the repair tool in the green around the perimeter of the indentation. Start at the rear. Gently pull the compacted dirt back in place. Replace any loose pieces of grass or turf in the centre of the hole. Then take your putter and tap down the raised turf until it's level again (see Figure 14-4). Now you're a good golf citizen.

Figure 14-4: Take care of the green.

Finally, smooth out or rake any footprints in bunkers, as shown in Figure 14-5 (but only after you play out of the sand). And replace any divots you find on fairways and tees.

Figure 14-5: Be rakish.

- **If you must play in a golf cart (take my advice and walk if you can), park it well away from greens, tees and bunkers.** To speed up play, park on the side of the green nearest the next tee. The same is true if you're carrying your bag: Don't put the bag down near any of the aforementioned; leave it in a spot on the way to the next tee.
- **Leave the green as soon as everyone has finished putting.** You'll see this a lot: You're ready to play your approach shot to the green and the people in front are crowding around the hole marking their cards. That's poor etiquette on two counts: It delays play and the last thing the greenkeeper wants is a lot of footprints around the cup. Mark your card on the way to the next tee!

Nine perfect excuses for a bad shot

- 'I only had an hour to loosen up.'
- 'I looked up and the sun got in my eyes.'
- 'I just had a lesson and the pro screwed me up.'
- 'I borrowed these clubs.'
- 'These new shoes are killing my feet.'
- 'This new glove cut off my circulation. I have the hand of a mummy.'
- 'I kept expecting your mobile phone to go off.'
- 'I can't play well when the temperature's higher than 30. Or less than 29.'
- 'I'm Gary McCord.'

The Handicap System

If you, as a beginner, are completing 18-hole rounds in less than 80 shots, you're either a cheat or the next Jack Nicklaus. In all probability, your scores are considerably higher than par. Enter the handicap system.

Golf Australia and New Zealand Golf employ the handicap system to level the playing field for everyone. These organisations have an esoteric system of 'course rating' and something called 'slope' to help compute exactly how many strokes everyone should get. In all our years in golf, we have yet to meet anyone who either understands or can explain how course rating and slope are computed, so we're not going to try. Be like everyone else — accept both and go with the flow.

The handicap system is one reason I think that golf is the best of all games. Handicapping allows any two players, whatever their level of play, to have an enjoyable — and competitive — game together. Try to compete on, say, a tennis court. I can't go out with Rafael Nadal and have any fun. Ditto for poor, bored Nadal, who might at least get the excitement of doing CPR on me. The disparity in our ability makes competitive play impossible.

But in golf, if you play a little better than usual, your handicap could help you beat Phil and Tiger.

Getting a handicap

You probably don't have a handicap yet. No worries — you've got plenty of time. When you can consistently hit the ball at least 150 metres with a driver, you're ready to play a full 18-hole round of golf.

When you reach the stage where you can hit the ball a decent distance on the range, you're ready to do the same on a real course. You want to test yourself and give your progress a number. Make that two numbers: Your score and your handicap.

The first thing to do is keep score. Get a golfer friend to accompany you for 18 holes. This person must keep score and sign your card at the end of the round. To be valid, a card needs two signatures — your own and that of the person you're playing with. That way, all scores are clearly valid and nobody fudges his or her total.

You need to play at least three and up to five rounds before you're eligible for a handicap. Don't ask why; those are the rules. After these rounds in a pre-handicap cocoon, you emerge as a beautiful, fully fledged, handicap golfer.

At first, your handicap will probably drop quite quickly. Most new golfers improve by leaps and bounds initially. After that, the real work starts.

Of course, the handicap system is easy to abuse and some people do. Interestingly, most abuse occurs when players want their handicaps to be higher. They either fabricate high scores, or they don't record their better rounds so that their handicaps rise. Thus, they get more strokes from other players in betting matches. A few golfers go the other way; they want a lower 'vanity' handicap to make people think they're 'championship-level' golfers. Find these vanity handicappers and gamble with them for everything they own!

Don't get too cynical, though. Any abuse of the system is confined to a tiny minority of players. That's another reason why golf is such a great game: Golfers can generally be trusted. The few cheats are soon identified and ostracised.

Calculating your handicap

Okay, you're wondering how you get a handicap. It's easy: All you do is report your scores at the course where you normally play. Then you're off and running. Your handicap at any one time is the average of the best ten

of your previous 20 scores (see Figure 14-6). Technically it's 96 per cent of that number — another wacky golf quirk — but we'll let the maths whizzes handle that wrinkle.

Figure 14-6: Your handicap card.

Most golf clubs and public courses make things easy for you. They have computers into which you feed your scores. The program does all the work and updates your handicap.

Suppose your ten scores average out at exactly 100. In other words, for your first ten rounds of golf, you hit 1,000 shots. If par for the 18-hole course you played is 72, your average score is 28 over par. That figure, 28, is your handicap.

In Australia at this time, once your handicap is established it will only change when you play in competition rounds. (In the next few years the handicapping system will change to allow all rounds to influence your handicap.) Every time you play competitively from then on, your handicap adjusts to account for your most recent score. Suppose your 11th round is a 96. That's only 24 over the par of 72. So your net score — your actual score minus your handicap — is 68, 4 under that magic number of 72. Nice round! When you feed that 96 into the handicap computer, you'll probably find that your handicap drops.

What your handicap means

The lower your handicap is, the better golfer you are. Thus, if your handicap is 6 and your opponent's is 10, you're a better player. On average, four strokes better, to be exact.

Assume that par for the 18-hole course you're going to play is 72. You, as someone with a handicap of 6, would be expected to play 18 holes in a total of 78 strokes, 6 more than par. Your opponent, on the other hand, being a 10-handicapper, would on a normal day hit the ball 82 times, 10 more than par. Thus, your handicap is the number of strokes over par you should take to play an 18-hole course.

When you're just starting out, you don't want to team up with three low-handicap players. Play with golfers of your own ability at first. After you get the hang of the game, start playing with people who are better than you so that you can learn from them.

How to Keep Score

Scoring is another unique part of golf. You can easily see how you're doing because your score is in black and white on the scorecard. Every course has a scorecard. The scorecard tells you each hole's length, its par and its rating relative to the other holes (see Figure 14-7), often called an index.

The relationship of the holes is important when you're playing a head-to-head match. Say your opponent has to give you 11 shots over 18 holes. In other words, on 11 holes during your round, you get to subtract one shot from your score. The obvious question is, 'Which holes?' The card answers that question. You get your shots on the holes rated 1 through 11. These holes, in the opinion of the club committee, are the hardest 11 holes on the course. The number-one-rated hole is the toughest and the number-18-rated hole is the easiest.

Match play

Match play and stroke play have slightly different rules. In match play, you don't have to write down any score. The only thing that matters is the state of the game between you and your opponent.

Men's Course Rating/Slope
Blue 73.1/137
White 71.0/130

Women's Course Rating/Slope
Red 73.7/128

Blue Tees	White Tees	Par	Hcp	PAUL	JOHN	NICK	JERRY	HOLE					Hcp	Par	Red Tees
377	361	4	11	5	4	6	3	1					13	4	310
514	467	5	13	4	7	6	5	2					3	5	428
446	423	4	1	5	5	5	5	3					1	4	389
376	356	4	5	4	5	5	4	4					11	4	325
362	344	4	7	5	4	4	3	5					7	4	316
376	360	4	9	4	6	5	5	6					9	4	335
166	130	3	17	4	2	3	3	7					17	3	108
429	407	4	3	4	5	6	5	8					5	4	368
161	145	3	15	3	4	4	4	9					15	3	122
3207	2993	35		38	42	44	37	Out						35	2701
			Initial										Initial		
366	348	4	18	4	4	5	4	10					14	4	320
570	537	5	10	6	5	5	7	11					2	5	504
438	420	4	2	5	4	6	4	12					6	4	389
197	182	3	12	4	4	5	4	13					16	3	145
507	475	5	14	5	5	4	5	14					4	5	425
398	380	4	4	6	5	4	6	15					8	4	350
380	366	4	6	4	4	5	4	16					10	4	339
165	151	3	16	3	3	4	3	17					18	3	133
397	375	4	8	3	4	6	5	18					12	4	341
3418	3234	36		40	38	44	42	In						36	2946
6625	6227	71		78	80	88	79	Tot						71	5647
		Handicap		14	15	18	11						Handicap		
		Net Score		64	65	70	68						Net Score		
		Adjust											Adjust		

Paul Sipp — Scorer
Jerry Tuttle — Attested
8-9-10 — Date

Figure 14-7: Keeping score.

In match play, the score is recorded as holes up or holes down. Let's say your opponent's score on the first hole was 4 and your score was 5 and you received no strokes on that hole. Your opponent is now one up. Because each hole is a separate entity, you don't need to write down your actual score; you simply count the number of holes you've won or lost. In fact, if you're having a particularly bad time on a given hole, you can even pick up your ball and concede the hole. All you lose is that hole. Everything starts fresh on the next tee. Such a head-to-head match ends when one player is more holes up than the number of holes remaining. Thus, matches can be won by scores of 'four and three'. All that means is that one player was four holes ahead with only three left, the match finishing on the 15th green.

Stroke play

Stroke play is different. It's strictly card-and-pencil stuff. Now you're playing against everyone else in the field — or against that elusive standard, par — not just your playing companion. All you do is count one stroke each time you swing at the ball. If it takes you five strokes to play the first hole, you write 5 on your card for that hole. You don't record your own score, though. The card in your pocket has your playing companion's name on it. You keep her score and she keeps yours. (You may keep your own score as well, but your playing partner keeps your official score.) At the end of the round, she signs her name to your card and gives it to you; you do the same with her card. After you've checked your score for each hole, you also sign your card. Then, if you're in an official tournament, you hand your card to the scorers. If you're playing a club competition round, you record your score on the computer.

Take care when checking your card. One rules of golf quirk is that you're responsible for the accuracy of the score recorded under your name for each hole — your companion isn't. Any mistakes are deemed to have been made by you, not your companion. And you can't change a mistake later, even if you have witnesses. Take the case of Roberto DeVicenzo at the 1968 Masters. Millions of spectators and TV viewers saw him make a birdie 3 on the 17th hole in the final round. But the man marking his card, Tommy Aaron, mistakenly marked a 4. Checking his score after the round, DeVicenzo failed to notice the error and signed his card. The mistake cost him the chance to win in a playoff with Bob Goalby. DeVicenzo had to accept a score one higher than he actually shot and lost by that one stroke. Tragic. After realising his mistake, poor DeVicenzo said, 'What a stupid I am!'

DeVicenzo's misfortune shows what can happen when the score on your card is higher than the one you actually made on the hole. You're stuck with that score. If the opposite is the case and the score on the card is *lower* than it should be, the result is even worse: You're disqualified.

One last thing: Don't worry about the addition on your card. You aren't responsible for that part. As long as the numbers opposite each hole are correct, you're in the clear. However, you'll raise the ire of club committee members if you leave them to do all the addition work!

Penalty Shots

Penalty shots are an unfortunate part of every golfer's life. Sooner or later, you're going to incur a penalty shot or shots. We can't cover all the possible penalty situations in this book, but in the following sections we run you through the most common.

Out-of-bounds

Out-of-bounds is the term used when you hit your ball to a spot outside the confines of the golf course — over a boundary fence, for example. Out-of-bounds areas are usually marked with white stakes with black tops that are about 30 metres apart. If you're outside that line, you're out-of-bounds (often abbreviated with the dreaded initials 'O.B.').

Okay, so it's happened; you've gone out-of-bounds. What are your options? Limited, we're afraid. First, you're penalised stroke and distance. That means you must drop another ball (or tee up if the shot you hit out-of-bounds was from a tee) as close as possible to the spot you just played from. Say that shot was your first on that hole. Your next shot will count as your third on that hole. Count 'em:

- The shot you hit
- The stroke penalty
- The distance

So now you're 'playing three' from the original spot.

Unplayable lies

Inevitably, you're going to hit a ball into a spot from which further progress is impossible. In a bush. Against a wall. Even buried in a bunker.

When the unplayable lie happens (and you are the sole judge of whether you can hit the ball), you have three escape routes.

- You can pick up the ball and drop it — no nearer the hole — within two club lengths (take your driver and place it end-to-end on the ground twice) of the original spot under penalty of one shot.
- You can pick up the ball, walk back as far as you want, keeping that original point between you and the hole, and then drop the ball. Again, it's a one-stroke penalty.
- You can return to the point where you hit the original shot. This option is the last resort because you lose distance, as well as adding the penalty shot. Believe me, there's nothing worse than a long walk burdened with a penalty stroke!

Water hazards

Water hazards are intimidating when you have to hit across one. 'Watery graves' the English TV commentator Henry Longhurst used to call them.

Whenever you see yellow stakes, you know the pond/creek/lake in question is a water hazard. If you hit into a water hazard, you may play the ball as it lies (no penalty), or if the ball is unplayable, choose from these options:

- Hit another ball from the spot you just hit from.
- Take the point where your ball crossed into the water hazard and drop another ball (you can go back as far as you want, keeping that point between you and the hole).

Either way, it's a one-shot penalty.

Lateral water hazards

If you're playing by the coast, the beach is often termed a *lateral water hazard.* Red stakes mean lateral. Your options are to play the ball as it lies (no penalty, but risky), or as follows, with a one-stroke penalty:

- Drop a ball at the point where the ball last crossed the boundary of the hazard — within two club lengths, no nearer the hole.
- Drop a ball as close as possible to the spot on the opposite margin of the water hazard, the same distance from the hole.
- Hit another ball from within two club lengths of the spot you just hit from.
- Take the point where the ball crossed the water hazard and drop another ball as far back as you want, keeping that point between you and the hole.

Strike one! The dreaded airswing

It's the beginner's nightmare: You make a mighty swing and miss the ball. The penalty? None, actually. But you must count that swing as a stroke.

If you swing at a ball with intent to hit it, that's a shot regardless of whether you make contact. You can't say, 'That was a practice swing.' If you meant to hit the ball, your swing counts as a stroke.

Airswings can be highly embarrassing, but they're part of the journey of golf.

Follow the iRules

The R&A and USGA recently introduced the first 'rules of golf' app for the iPhone and other mobile devices. Now, we're the first to discourage more mobile use on the golf course, but this app (and a few similar ones you can find) is pretty cool. To find out more, go to `randa.org` ... or tweet your favourite techie.

Chapter 15

Gamesmanship and Sportsmanship

In This Chapter

- Betting on golf
- Doing the right thing on the course
- Avoiding hustles
- Playing with the pros

Gambling can be a touchy subject. Being the type of game that it is — easy to handicap, played at a leisurely pace — golf lends itself to betting. So it probably won't be long before you find yourself playing for money. At first the money won't be much — if you have any sense, that is. But money games can get out of hand if you're not careful.

Fortunately, there are rules of thumb for gambling on the course — and for handling other tricky situations that golfers encounter. But we bet you can handle them all.

Wanna Bet?

In my experience, golfers come in two types: Those who want an even match and those who want to give you an evil beating. I recommend playing with the first group, at least in your early days. Those players won't take advantage of your inexperience. They want a good, close match, so they'll give you the shots you need to make a good showing. The winner will be the one who plays his or her best that day. Nothing wrong with that, of course. If someone is to win, there has to be a loser — sometimes that loser will be you.

Unfortunately, the nice people Gary just described sometimes seem as rare as four-leaf clovers. That second group constitutes the majority of gambling golfers. They don't play for the sunshine. They don't play for the exercise (unless getting in and out of a cart qualifies as exercise). And they sure don't play for relaxation. Most of them need clinical psychologists and straitjackets. They play golf for one reason: To bet and win.

The first tee

It's said that most golf bets are won on the first tee — the arena of negotiation, I call it. It's here that bets are fought over and agreed upon. The key is the number of strokes you'll give or receive over the course of a round.

Initially, you'll be playing with people whose handicaps are lower than yours. So you're going to get strokes from them. Say your handicap is 30 and your opponent's is 18. That's 12 strokes to you, right? Not if Mr Cutthroat has his way. He'll argue that his wife just left him. Or that he hasn't played in weeks because of his workload at the office. Or that his old football injury is acting up again. Or that he's worried sick about the value of the euro. In any case, he'll try to cut your strokes down by at least three. That, he figures, is the edge he needs to beat you.

It goes without saying that you either (a) nod sympathetically; or (b) spin more tall tales than he just did. What you do *not* do is give up even a single stroke. Not one.

If you must give strokes to a player with a higher handicap, never *net* the strokes so that you're playing with zero. For example, if your handicap is 12 and your opponent's is 18, netting gives you 0 strokes and your opponent 6. Take all your strokes, because they'll be on the toughest holes.

Never play for more than you can afford to lose. Keep the bets small when you're a new golfer learning the ropes. Golf is a great game to bet on, but if you lose so much money that it starts to hurt, the game's no fun. Be careful and bet at your own risk.

There's a famous quote about pressure from Lee Trevino, in his early days one of golf's great hustlers. 'Pressure', he said, 'is $5 on the front nine, $5 on the back, and $5 for the 18 when you've got $2 in your pocket.'

Nassaus, junk and bingo bango bongo

A *nassau* is a three-part bet (like the one Trevino was talking about): A given amount is wagered on the front nine, the back nine and the total score. The bet was named for New York's Nassau Country Club, where it's said to have originated. It often leads to a *press*. That's when you're so far behind you concede the bet and double it for the holes that remain. There's even an *aloha press*, in which you press everything on the last hole.

Another popular format is *skins*: Each golfer puts up a certain fee per hole ($1 to $5 is common) that goes to the winner, but if two tie, all tie; the fee rolls over until somebody wins a hole outright.

Many golfers add bets for *greenies* (anyone hitting the green in one shot wins a predetermined sum from everyone else) or *sandies* (ditto for anyone who gets from a bunker into the hole in two shots). Such wagers are sometimes called *junk*, but everyone agrees they're fun. You can add *barkies* — you win if you hit a tree and still make par or better on a hole — or even bets of your own invention. Years ago, an Arnold Palmer fan invented a bet to honour his hero's talent for saving par from under trees, behind snack bars, etc. — you win if you make par on a hole without ever hitting the fairway. That's called an *Arnie*.

If you think all those wagers make golf betting seem dizzying, you're not alone. I've seen scorecards so marked up with bets and presses that they looked like modernist paintings. Fortunately, modern technology can help. New apps like Golf Moolah for the iPhone will keep track of all your bets and side bets — all you have to do is hit the ball.

Conceding putts: 'That one's good'

The green is one place where a little tactical planning can pay dividends. It's a fact of golf that no one, from a first-time beginner to the most famous pros, likes short putts, especially when they mean something. That's why they're called knee-knockers. For this reason alone, you shouldn't be too generous in conceding short putts to your opponents in match play. Always ask yourself if you would fancy hitting the same putt. If the answer is 'no' or even 'not really', say nothing and watch.

That's the hard-nosed approach. If you're playing a friendly round or you're with your boss, you can be a bit more generous. The demarcation line has long been that anything 'inside the leather' is 'good'. That means any putt closer than the length of the grip on your putter (or in some places, between the grip and the clubhead) is deemed to be a 'gimme' or unmissable. Such a policy is still applicable today, although those long putters some players use have equally long grips — so watch out!

Common bets and how to win them

- NASSAU: Players bet a certain amount on the front nine, the same on the back nine and the same on their overall score. So if you play a $5 nassau and win every hole, you pocket $15. The tricky part comes when players press, conceding the bet and doubling it for the rest of the round. By pressing, you can lose the first 17 holes and still come out ahead by winning the 18th.
- SKINS: Players bet a certain amount each hole — a 'skin' — but if two tie, all tie and the money is added to the pot for the next hole. If a foursome plays skins and no golfer beats the other three on any hole, you can wind up with five or six or even more skins riding on a later hole. To win at skins, relax early in the round and focus on playing your best when the chips, or skins, are down. And don't be afraid to take risks. Remember, you have to win the hole outright to claim the skins.
- WOLF: Golfers take turn being the wolf, who takes on everyone else in the group. For a set price each hole, the wolf can either choose one of the others as her partner (before anyone tees off) or 'go wolf' and try to win the hole herself. If a wolf partners up and her team wins, she and her partner split the money on that hole. If she goes wolf and wins, she gets it all for herself, but if she loses, she has to pay everyone else. In this game it's smarter to partner up if you're a consistent player and smarter to be the lone wolf if you're the type who can make a pressure putt.
- SNAKE: A fun side bet that makes putting more pressure-packed than ever. The first player who three-putts a green gets a snake that sticks with him until somebody else three-putts. If the snake is worth $5 and no one three putts for five holes, he owes each other player $25. To win snakes, remember that most players leave their first 'lag' putts short. Hit your lag putts hard enough to reach the hole and you'll dodge more snakes.
- SIXES: A best-ball match with a twist — golfers switch teams every six holes. That means that a foursome will feature three different best-ball battles in an 18-hole round. In sixes, every member of the foursome plays six holes with every other member. Try to play the first six with your group's best golfer as your partner. That way you can establish momentum — and relaxation — that can last all day.
- BINGO BANGO BONGO: Three points are up for grabs on each hole. One goes to the first golfer on the green (bingo), one to the golfer closest to the hole once everybody's on the green (bango) and one to the first to hole out (bongo). If a point's worth $5, you can win $15 on a good hole. Or steal a bango on a bad hole by chipping your sixth shot close.

So far we've looked at the two extremes in conceding — or not conceding — short putts. But there's a middle ground also. The great Walter Hagen was the master of this, or so the story goes. 'The Haig' was the best match player of his day. In the 1920s, when the US PGA Championship was a match-play event, he won it four times in a row. So Hagen had to know a thing or two about psychology. One of his ploys was to concede a few shortish putts early in the match. That way, two things happened: His opponent got used to being given putts and, perhaps more important, the opponent was deprived of the 'practice' of knocking a few in. Then, later in the round, old Walter wasn't so generous. The opponent would suddenly be faced with a knee-knocker, the sort of putt he hadn't hit all day.

I don't really recommend Walter's strategy. You can lose friends in a hurry if they miss that short one on the 17th. And your strategy may not work. ***Note:*** A short putt missed on the 3rd green counts the same as one on the 17th or 18th.

Choosing Sides

As with betting, picking partners for a round of golf can be as cutthroat or as casual as you like. If you're just playing for fun or for a few dollars, who your partners are doesn't really matter. If you play with the same guys every time, everything will pretty much even out in the end, anyway.

But if things are a little more serious, you need to put some thought into your partners. Here are the rules Gary tries to follow in 'money' games:

- His partner always has a permanent tan and callused, leathery hands.
- He has more than 37 tags hanging from his bag — preferably from famous, difficult courses.
- Members at the course treat him like royalty.
- He has used the same putter since he was five years old.
- If he tells Gary about his marital problems on the practice range, he's gone!

Match-Play Smarts

As you've probably guessed by now, match play — in which each hole is a separate contest — generally involves more strategy than stroke play. Stroke play has a simple premise: Score the best you can over 18 holes. Match play is equally simple: Win more holes than the other golfer. But match play calls for more thinking. Here are my match-play tips:

- **Don't be too bold too soon.** Handing a couple of early holes to your opponent only hurts your confidence and boosts his. So don't risk making a big number. Play conservatively on the first few holes.
- **Never lose your temper.** Nothing gives your opponent more heart than watching and listening as you blow a gasket.
- **Pay attention to where your opponent's ball is at all times.** Your opponent's situation dictates your tactics on any given shot. For example, if he's deep in the trees, you may want to play it safe.
- **Figure that your opponent will hole every putt he looks at.** Then you won't be disappointed if he does make it. If he misses, you get a boost.
- **Watch your opponent.** Watch how fast he walks, for example. If he's slow, go fast; if he's fast, slow down. Anything to break his natural rhythm.
- **Try never to hit two bad shots in a row.** Easier said than done, of course! But it's tempting to try to hit a great shot to make up for a bad one. Instead, try to hit a *decent* shot — you'll avoid more train wrecks (golf talk for disasters) that way. Sometimes mediocrity pays.
- **Never second-guess yourself.** If you're playing it safe, don't suddenly get aggressive halfway into your downswing. And if you're going for it, don't hold back. Even if you miss, you'll feel better because you *tried*! Take it from me — someone who played pro golf for 28 years before he won a tournament!
- **Only concede a hole when the situation is hopeless.** Make your opponent win the hole. The more shots he has to hit under pressure, the more likely he is to make a mistake.

Be a Grinder

In the 1972 British Open at Muirfield, Lee Trevino and Tony Jacklin were tied standing on the 17th tee in the final round. Distracted by a spectator, Trevino hooked his drive on the par-5 into a deep bunker. Jacklin drove perfectly. After splashing out only a few metres, Lee then hooked his third shot into heavy rough to the left and short of the green. Jacklin hit his fairway wood into the perfect spot, about 50 metres from the hole.

How to spot a golf hustler

As a relatively new golfer, you're going to be a prime target for hustlers. They'll figure you're not talented or savvy enough to beat them. And they'll be right — at least until you've played a while. So avoid them. Here's what to look for:

- **Does he have a 2-iron in his bag? If so, don't play him.** Only good players can hit those things. (And in these days when even expert players have swapped long irons for hybrid clubs, you might wonder about anyone with a 3-iron, too.)
- **Never bet serious money with a stranger.**
- **If you do bet, make it a straightforward nassau (front, back, 18 bet).** Don't get bamboozled with lots of side bets.
- **If he uses a ball that isn't new, say goodbye.** Bad players don't have old balls; they lose them too quickly.
- **As legendary teacher Harvey Penick used to say, 'Beware of the golfer with a bad grip'.** Why? Because he's found a way to make it work.
- **Another thing about the grip — look at your opponent's left hand.** If he has calluses, he's either played or practised a lot. *Adios*.
- **If that left hand is less tanned than the right, the same applies.** He's spent a lot of time wearing a golf glove.

At that point, Trevino gave up. He quit. He told Jacklin that the championship was all his and did everything but shake his hand right there. Trevino's fourth shot flew right over the green halfway up a grass bank. Jacklin hit a so-so pitch to about 5 metres.

Barely glancing at the shot, Trevino then hit a lazy, give-up chip that rolled right into the cup! Par! Jacklin then 3-putted for a 6. Trevino won.

This story is so unusual — quitters never win. Don't be a quitter. Be a *grinder* — that's what golfers call a player who gives her all on every single shot of every round.

Playing with Your Boss

When playing with your boss (or with anybody, really), you want to do your best. If you're just starting to play golf, you don't have to worry about beating the boss and feeling bad. He or she has probably played a lot longer than you have and just wants to get to know you on the course. The golf course is a great place to find out a person's true personality. The game leaves you psychologically naked in front of your peers.

When golf is all business

Sure, golf is a game, but sometimes it's serious business, too. Corporate golf days have become an industry in themselves. And for every official company event, countless informal foursomes are schmoozing outside the office.

If you play golf, sooner or later a business round is bound to happen to you. Maybe the chance to do a little networking is why you took up golf in the first place. So you need to know some basic rules when you mix business banter with the back nine.

- **Don't show off.** Golf is business — an extension of the workplace. You wouldn't yell and punch the air, showing up your boss and co-workers in the office, so don't do it on the fairway either. By all means play your best, but save the showboating for casual rounds with friends.
- **Watch the raunchy humour.** Sure, you want everyone to have a good time. But unless you know your partners' attitudes and outlooks well, you risk not only offending them but losing their business, too.
- **Don't try to squeeze profit out of every minute.** At the very least, keep up the pretence that you're all out for good fun and good company — even if your companions couldn't sink a putt to save their mother's mortgage.
- **Let your group get settled into its game before talking business.** Never talk about business before the 5th hole — or better yet, the back nine.
- **Be prepared to stop talking business.** No matter how seriously businesspeople take their work, they may be even more fanatical about their game of golf — especially on that one difficult shot. Let your sense of the other person dictate when to lay off business conversation.
- **Watch the bets.** You may choose to bet in the interest of being a good sport, but raising the stakes is probably unwise. If you lose a bet, do it gracefully — and pay up pronto. If you win, stay humble: 'That was a lucky shot I hit'.
- **Never, *ever* cheat or fudge your score in any way.** However tempting cheating may be, it sends the wrong message. Do you want potential business partners to see you as dishonest — a corner-cutter or worse? Don't cheat even if no one else could possibly know — because you'd know.

Hitting the links on a sunny day beats working in an office and it's a great way to get to know the people in your industry — and sometimes that means some high-level types, not just the ones you run into at the water cooler. Believe me, I've been to enough corporate outings to know what a major business schmoozefest the links can be. (Just to give you an idea, Gary's smiling face appeared at 41 corporate golf outings last year. Whew!) The bottom line is, golf can do your career good. Just remember what you're there for: A good, honest, friendly game.

As your game develops and you become a better player, your boss may recognise your golf game as an asset to the company. Millions of dollars in business deals have been negotiated on the golf course.

Play your best at all times and be helpful to people who don't play as well as you do. You'll reap the benefits for many years to come.

Surviving a Pro-Am

I was sent off to war, a young man still slobbering from the fright. There were going to be people wearing camouflaged plaid, shooting at me, toward whom I had no ill will; would I be man enough to fight back? I was going to learn a lesson about life; the cruel nature of this odyssey was upon me. I was going to play in my first pro-am.

Gary McCord, circa 1974, as he embarked without hesitation towards the first tee and certain death

There is a tradition in pro golf called a *pro-am.* If you're armed with a sizable amount of cash (usually a few thousand dollars), you can tee it up with Adam Scott, Geoff Ogilvy or Robert Allenby and tell your friends for the next 300 business lunches how you enthralled these guys with your prowess on the links and your witty banter between shots. In no other sport can a layman go on the playing field and get this close to the action — except by streaking at a nationally televised game. The shortcomings of the latter, in most cases, are obvious.

Pro-ams are normally played on the Wednesday of tournament week. Each team consists of three amateurs and a pro. Corporations pay handsomely for the opportunity to put their names on tournaments and entertain their clients. This setup is unique in sports, and it is the pros' duty to see that corporate clients have a good time and want to come back for more.

Much has been written about the attitudes of the tour players in Wednesday pro-ams. As I know from experience, the difficulties of concentrating on the day before a tournament while playing with nervous amateurs are many. However, no one seems to offer the quivering victims any advice. I always try to imagine what it would be like for me if I were plucked out of my comfort zone and thrust into the spotlight — say, on the cricket pitch with Ricky Ponting or in the boardroom with Bill Gates — and told not to make an idiot of myself. The truth is that neither Ricky nor Bill would expect me to be any good. I, on the other hand, would still like to give a decent account of myself, or at least limit the damage.

The first thing to keep in mind is that your pro requires one thing from you: Enjoy yourself. The reason we play for so much money these days is that you do enjoy the game, you do buy the equipment that you don't need and you do love to watch us on TV. So don't be overawed: Chances are you do something for a living that we would be completely useless at doing. Good pros will do their best to put you at ease on the 1st tee, so when you make your first swing that makes contact with the planet 20 centimetres behind the ball and induces significant seismographic readings, you can at least have a laugh at it, too.

Here are Gary's 'Eight Steps to Pro-Am Heaven' — for pros and amateurs alike. A few do's and don'ts of playing with a pro — a road map through the purgatory of the pro-am. We hope that these guidelines help both you and your pro enjoy the day.

Get a caddie

Having a caddie is the only way to play the pro-am game. You can walk free of hindrance and have clubs handed to you clean and dry. If possible, get one of the tour caddies whose player isn't in the pro-am. For $50 to $100, you can hire someone who is used to being screamed at and blamed for the weather, the rate of inflation and some of those hard-to-explain skin rashes.

Mind you, the caddie won't be able to give you club-selection advice at first because you don't know which part of the clubface the ball is about to bounce off. But as your round progresses, your caddie will catch on, and help you more and more. Your caddie will also regale you with bizarre stories of 'looper legends' in their quest for immortality on the fairways of life. These tales are worth the price of admission and parental guidance is suggested.

Be ready to hit

You need to be ready to go, even if it isn't your turn. Discuss with your partners the concept of *ready golf* before you tee off. This means forgetting whose turn it is — if you're ready, hit the ball. Pro-ams can be hideously slow and your pro will really appreciate it if you keep things going.

Forget your mobile phone

At the very least, turn it off. The surgical removal of a mobile phone from certain regions of the anatomy is painful and, to the best of our knowledge, is not covered under most health-insurance plans.

Get a distance guide

Contribute to your pro's mental health by being the first 'ammy' in the history of pro-am not to ask the question: 'How far have I got from here?' There are only a certain number of times in your adult life that you can be asked this question before your spleen bursts. Gary has been spleenless for decades.

If you're out of the hole, pick up!

If you're laying seven, pick it up, ball in pocket. Rest the ammo. Holster that bad boy. And be sure to tell your pro that you've done so. Not only will you contribute to the pace of play, but you'll also avoid the awkward situation of having the pro wait, expecting you to hit, while you rummage around in your bag looking for the source of that smell that has been emanating from there since you let the kids play with your rain gear.

This tip doesn't contradict the one earlier in this chapter, telling you never to give up. You should *not* pick up your ball if there's any chance to help your team. But the moment that chance disappears, pocket that ball. In a pro-am, the only thing worse than waiting around for no apparent reason is waiting around for a very bad apparent reason — for example, somebody who's holing out for a 9, net 8.

Don't worry about your score

And don't be upset if your pro doesn't know how your team stands. ***Note:*** It's a Wednesday. He probably doesn't even know his own score and, quite honestly, after the 26th pro-am of the year, he may not remember what his gender is.

Watch your step

I know, you're wearing soft spikes and it shouldn't matter, but stepping on somebody's putting line, regardless of what's on the bottom of your soles, is an invitation to a hissy fit. Be very, very mindful of the line of your pro's putt. Look at TV coverage of a golf tournament and see how respectful the pros are of each other's lines. Stepping on another pro's line is close to stepping on the Australian flag. I've pulled a groin muscle trying to mark my ball without stepping on the sacred line. But I think that, in my career, I've excelled at acrobatic markings of the ball because I was exceptional at the game Twister during my formative years.

Simply ask the pro where his line is and he'll show you. If Gary's ball is not in another player's line, he'll leave it right next to the coin the entire time he's on the green so that his amateur partners know where his line is and (he hopes) avoid stepping on it.

Don't coach the pro

Finally, if you're still interested in playing in a pro-am ever again, do *not* give the pro any advice on how to play the course, even if your family has owned the property since the planet started to warm and you can wander it in the dark without bumping into anything. Trust me, the pro thinks he knows more about it than you do just because he has his name on his bag.

Let the pro's caddie advise him. Even giving the occasional line off the tee ('Aim for the church steeple') can be dangerous, since you don't normally play two club lengths from the back edge of the back tee. Gary can't tell you how many times he's heard, 'Oops, I could have *sworn* you'd carry that bunker!'

Chapter 16

Stepping Up Your Game

In This Chapter

- Challenging yourself to play better
- Saving strokes by thinking ahead
- Learning from the game's greats

You're no longer terrified about playing in public. You have a good sense of what kind of golfer you are. You know your strengths and weaknesses, and whether you tend to fade the ball from left to right (assuming you're right-handed) or draw it from right to left. You've gotten to the point where you can usually keep the ball in play, with more fours, fives and sixes on your scorecard than eights, nines and Xs. You know the rules, golf etiquette and even a few betting games.

You're ready to take the next step.

From Novice to Golf Greatness... Okay, Goodness

Golf is hard. Few master the game and nobody perfects it. But one of the great things about the game is that it rewards *a little* effort almost as much as a lot of blood, sweat and blisters. Once you get over the hump — the initial period when the club feels weird in your hands and everything is new — your improvement can be rapid. Some beginners can go from shooting 120, 130 or more for 18 holes to about 100 in a matter of months.

Of course, the better you get, the harder it's going to be to whittle away the next ten strokes.

Did we say ten strokes? How about one, or even less than one? Touring pros would gladly work like maniacs to save half a stroke per round. Matt Kuchar led the US PGA Tour in 2010 with an average score of 69.59, while Charlie Wi tied for 12th with an average of 70.09, exactly half a stroke worse. Kuchar raked in $4.9 million while Wi earned $1.5 million, or less than a third as much! That's an extreme example — Kuchar played more rounds and played his best at the right moments, winning $1.35 million for a single tournament victory. But it goes to show you how valuable each stroke can be at the game's highest level.

You don't have to *break 70* like Kuchar — that is, shoot 69 or better — to have a breakthrough on the course. You don't have to break 80 or 90 or even the great dividing line that separates hundred-shooters from those who break 100. Depending on your experience and physical abilities, breaking 120 could be the achievement of a lifetime.

What matters more than the number is setting goals. If you set out to make par on every hole, you're pretty much guaranteed to spend the day grumbling. The great Annika Sorenstam had an approach she (and coaches Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott) called Vision 54. The idea was to birdie every hole. Since most courses have a par of 72, that would give her a 'perfect' round of 54. Annika got within five shots of that number, firing a historic 59 in a tournament in 2001. But I don't recommend shooting for perfection, at least until you're playing in front of thousands of fans.

Give yourself a goal that's challenging, but reachable:

- 'I'm going to break 110 (or 100) this year.'
- 'I'm going to play a whole round without 3-putting.'
- 'I'm going to shoot my best score yet.'
- 'I'm going to keep the ball in play and finish a round with the same ball I teed off with.'

Gary knows one player who was so focused on improving that he taped the words **BREAK 100 — AND CELEBRATE** on his golf bag. He was 13 years old and it took him all summer to do it. One day he finished a round of 98, tore the message off his bag and set a match to it. He's enjoyed the game for 40 years since then, but still calls that his favourite day on the course.

Strategic Stroke-Savers

If your dream is to progress from beginner to intermediate golfer, remember one word above all: *Practise*. May I reiterate the most important tip any golfer ever got? *PRACTISE!* Thank you. I feel better now.

And if you promise to heed that crucial bit of advice, following the methods outlined in this book, we'll offer some tips that can help you get to the next level.

Minimise trouble

Picture a hole with danger on the right: Dense rainforest, with volcanoes, swooping pterodactyls, machine-gun nests and probably vampires. That's an exaggeration, but you get the picture. And on the left, clean green fairway as far as the eye can see.

Now watch your typical amateur set up to hit his drive. Does he adjust? Noooo, he aims right down the middle, as if this were just like any other hole. And two times out of three, he'll slice his drive into the vampires.

When danger lurks, shirk it. On a hole where all or most of the trouble is on one side, change your aim. You should choose a target that keeps your shot safe.

The same is true for shots with your irons. If there's a pond or bunker in front of the green but no trouble behind it, shift your target. Take more club and try to hit the ball to the back part of the green. You'll be surprised how often you come up a little short — and the shot turns out to be perfect! You may even begin to notice how course architects often bank the back of such a green to favour the smart shot.

If you tend to leave sand shots short, like most players do, stop trying to land the ball short of the hole. Visualise a longer shot, with the ball landing beyond the flagstick. You'll double your margin for error and wind up escaping more bunkers. (Once you get more proficient, of course, you can do less and less of this.)

There's danger on the putting surface, too. If the hole is cut near a drop-off in the green, the greenkeeper may be inviting you to 3-putt. Outsmart him by leaving your lag putt a few rolls shorter than usual, for a safe tap-in.

The safer side of the hole is almost always the side below the hole. You'd much rather have an uphill metre-long putt than a downhill slider of the same length.

Know when to be a hero

Golf is a game of risk and reward. It usually rewards those who limit risk, playing 'within themselves'. As Socrates once said (or was it Snead?), the race doesn't always go to the swift, or the golf match to the smart player, but that's the way to bet.

That said, there are times when the smart golfer embraces risk. And those can be some of the most exciting, *fun* times of all.

Suppose you're playing a best-ball match and your partner's ball is safely on the green. Or you're in an ambrose and one or more of your three partners has struck a good shot. (For information on various team formats, see Chapter 13.) You've got a next-to-impossible shot over water, trees and a barn to a green the size of a Post-It note. Or maybe it's only a tricky flip from rough to a slippery green, as in Figure 16-1. Now's the time to go for it! If you splash the shot or even duff it, it's no loss. But if you succeed, you're a hero to your partners and yourself. What's more, you'll gain confidence for the next time you face such a shot.

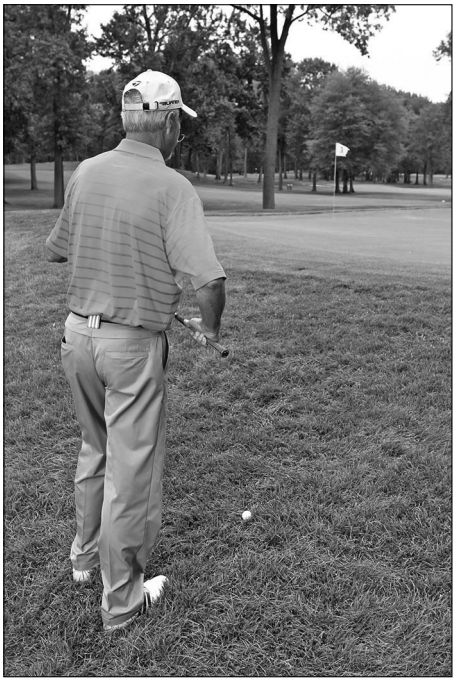


Figure 16-1: Hero time? It depends!

The same goes for a less glorious situation. In match play, if you're down by two holes with two to play, for example, and you're opponent is safely on the green, you can't just match his or her score on the hole. You've got to win it. So hitch up your courage and fire at the flag.

On the putting green, you'll encounter the occasional must-make putt. Whether it's a metre long or 7 metres like the one in Figure 16-2, there's one cardinal rule here: *Don't leave it short!*

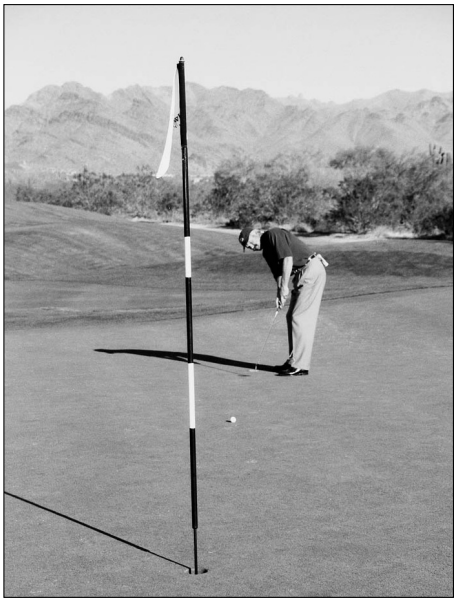


Figure 16-2: If it's a do-or-die putt, it's absolutely, positively gotta reach the hole.

Take one more club

We've said it before and you'll hear it again: Do yourself a favour and *take more clubs*.

Pro golfers are pessimists, or at least realists. That's because it's a humbling game. We know how easily things can go wrong on the course, so we guard against disaster — or even bogey — and usually aim for the wide side of the fairway, or the fat part of the green.

Your typical amateur's the exact opposite. Once she bombs a 250-metre drive, the longest of her life, she's convinced they're *all* going to go that far. Once she hits a 6-iron to a green 140 metres away, she reaches for the same club every time she's got a 140-metre shot.

The reds, whites and blues

Just as you start to feel ready to advance in this game, it often grabs you and drags you, kicking and screaming, back to where you were last month — or last year.

So don't get ahead of yourself. Too many golfers hit a few good shots in a row, or shoot a career round and believe they've reached a new level of play. They're often the ones you see at your local course, playing from the blue tees . . . and dribbling worm-burners that never reach the fairway.

I mention the various tees in Chapter 1. Closest to the green are the junior and/or women's tees. They're often red. Next come the regulation tees, often called the men's tees. They're usually white. Then come the blue tees, for better players. Still further back you'll find the championship tees, often reserved for tournament play, black or gold in colour. They're often called *the tips*, as in 'I shot 66 from the tips today'.

It's the blues that are widely abused. And believe me, you don't want to be the drive-dribbling impostor in the blue-man group. You'll be unpopular with others in your foursome as well as those in groups behind you, since you're the one holding up the pace of play. The *marshal*, whose job it is at some busy courses to keep each group moving at a reasonable pace, might even ask you to pick your ball up.

So unless your handicap is about 10, which means you consistently shoot in the low 80s, stick to the white tees. It'll be healthier for your score, your psyche and the pace of play.

May we be diplomatic here? All right, please attend to these words of wisdom:

Don't be an idiot!

Smart golf is more about typical shots than career shots. That's why the pros spend so much time determining precisely how far they *usually* hit a particular club. It's why you should pay more attention to your average shot than to the laser beam you blasted over the dogleg at the 15th.

Let's say you're *between clubs* — a little closer to the target than you'd like for a shot with one of the clubs in your bag, a little farther than you'd like for a shot with a different club. Example: Many players hit an 8-iron about 125 metres and a 7-iron about 135. What should they hit from 130?

You're way ahead of us here. As a general rule, *hit the longer club*.

You'll come out ahead in the long run. In fact, most amateur golfers score better when they try a simple test: Each time they'd usually hit a 7-iron, they

hit a 6 and each time they'd usually hit a 6-iron, they hit a 5. Try it yourself and you'll see what we mean.

Just don't get discouraged if you catch one pure and knock it over the green. Enjoy the feeling of solid contact; store it in your muscle-memory bank. And remind yourself:

This game's all about typical shots.

Seek professional help

The time when you're setting new goals may be the perfect time for a lesson. A PGA professional can spot flaws that may have crept into your swing and offer tips that will help you reach your next level. A pro can also provide invaluable advice on your equipment. You'll want answers to these questions:

- Can I keep improving without major swing changes?
- Is my practice routine appropriate to my current game — and to the level I want to reach?
- Are my clubs appropriate to my current game — and to the level I want to reach?

As golf's glorious road leads you to lower scores, you may seek more technological assistance through launch monitors and high-tech swing analysis. It's all part of the never-ending pursuit of happiness . . . or at least a half-stroke improvement.

Channelling the Champs

If you're a weekend soccer player, it might not do your own game much good to watch Tim Cahill slot one in the back of the net. As hard as we might try, we couldn't match that feat without a ladder or a jetpack. Or in Gary's case, both.

We can't smash boundaries like Ricky Ponting. We'll never crush an overhead smash like Serena Williams. And we'll never play a full round of golf like Tiger Woods or Phil Mickelson, either, but we can apply aspects of great golfers' games to our own.

If you're looking to step up towards the promised land where drives soar out of sight and putts disappear, emulate these exemplary players:

- **Ernie Els** has been swinging like syrup for more than 20 years on tour. Despite some recent physical woes, he has one of the smoothest moves the game has ever seen. And under the most intense pressure, with the world watching, he seems to relax even more. There's competitive fire under that calm exterior and — who knows? — probably at least some of the same terrors that beset us all. But the Big Easy doesn't show it and that helps keep his swing nice and easy when it counts.

  Before your next really important shot, step back. Take a deep breath and picture Ernie's smooth, unhurried swing.

- **Tiger Woods** went through a personal and professional crisis in 2010. We expect him to come back in a big way, winning more majors as he chases Jack Nicklaus's record of 18. That's due in part to his track record. Unlike most great athletes, Woods wasn't satisfied with being the best. Earlier in the decade, already the top-ranked golfer in the world, he decided he had to improve. So he rebuilt his swing and played even better. At his best, he is both the game's best player and its greatest *grinder* — a golfer who gives his absolute all on every shot, whether he's tied for the lead or 10 strokes behind.

  During your occasional bad rounds, grind out a bogey that could have been a double or triple-bogey. Even if your score that day is terrible, you'll have something to be proud of.

- **Phil Mickelson** was the modern Arnold Palmer, always taking chances, never laying up. Until he realised he wasn't going to win majors that way. By banking his fires a little and choosing discretion over valour, he took a step to the very forefront of the game. Phil can still hit the heroic miracle shot when he has to; he just doesn't feel he always has to.

  Play a practice round with two balls. Play it safe with one ball and go for broke with the other. Compare your scores. And whatever happens with your 'hero' ball, enjoy giving it a ride.

- **Christina Kim** is an LPGA star who wears her emotions on her colourful sleeves. A sharp dresser and fan favourite, she treats golf as a joy, not a job. Through 2010 she had two tour victories — no majors yet, but keep an eye on Christina and keep an ear out for her next highly quotable quip.

  Try playing a round as if you didn't have a care in the world — as if just hitting the shot were the whole point, regardless of the outcome. You'll probably have a blast out there and you may even play better.

- **Jim Furyk** had a weird swing when he was a kid. He still does. Gary's colleague David Feherty describes it as 'like an octopus falling out of a tree'. And Jim still has that unique swing because he and his father, Mike, resisted every attempt to change it when Jim was growing up. Jim actually delivers the club to the ball in near-perfect, classic fashion — that's why his swing works — and he plays with a belief in himself that owes a lot to the way he and his dad stuck to their guns.

  When you play with golfers whose swings are prettier than yours, remind yourself that it's *how many* that counts in golf, not *how*. Picture Furyk, 40, in September 2010, playing with all those guys with picture-perfect swings. All he did was win the season-ending Tour Championship and its first prize of US$1.35 million. Plus a little bonus for claiming the FedEx Cup: Another US$10 million.

- **Jack Nicklaus** was a master at minimising danger. A master at just about everything, really, with six US Masters championships among his all-time-record 18 major titles, but particularly brilliant at course management — moving the ball around the course in a way that optimised his chances. The Golden Bear faded the ball with great consistency, so he seldom had to worry about trouble on the left. And while the weakest part of his game was wedge play ('weak' only compared to the rest of his genius game), that didn't matter much: Jack would bomb the ball all the way to the green, or lay up so that he had a 9-iron.

  Strategise like Jack by laying up once in awhile, leaving yourself a full shot to the green.

- **Erik Compton**, an American pro, has spent much of his career on the minor-league Nationwide Tour, one rung below the PGA Tour. Not bad for a former college star who has endured not one, but two heart transplants. Compton's health and strength are always a worry, but he doesn't complain, saying he's lucky to be playing the game he loves. Few people in any walk of life have shown more heart than Erik.

Step up, swing hard and smile. Isn't it great to be alive?

Part V

How to Be a Smart Golf Consumer

'He says when he's fully conscious would you mind signing the ball.'

In this part . . .

Gary has been a touring pro since 1974. In this part of the book, he uses his expertise to show you how to watch golf in person, which events to attend and how to get the most out of your day as a spectator. This part also explores some of the wonders of golf on TV, the best golf sites the internet has to offer — all our favourite cyber-haunts — and the latest golf video games.

Chapter 17

Watching Golf in Person

In This Chapter

- Choosing which events to attend
- Maximising your day as a fan
- Interacting with pro golfers

Some golf-lovers spend years, even their whole lifetimes, without ever attending a live golf event. This is madness, we say! Of course we can understand wanting to play the game rather than watch others play. And when you find yourself in a spectating mood, it can be easier to tune into a TV broadcast than trek to the event itself.

Every golfer and golf fan should try to see live competition at least once a year. It doesn't have to be an Australasian Tour or ALPG Tour event. It doesn't have to be a professional tournament of any kind. You'll find exciting golf action in your neck of the woods — if you know where to look.

Where to See Live Golf

The short answer: It doesn't matter. You can have a great day on the course and glean important information by witnessing golf at any level. Just pay close attention. You'll learn more that way and you'll be able to duck any dimpled missiles that could be coming your way.

Pennant golf

Pennant golf is fun, dramatic and accessible. Your local club's pennant team tees it up at other courses in your area, the best seven or eight amateur golfers from each club playing a series of matches each weekend against other clubs. If you go to watch you'll be part of a very small gallery, along

with a few parents, friends and girlfriends or boyfriends, with no gallery ropes to keep you away from the action. You'll be close enough to see the terror and excitement in the players' eyes — and their appreciation if you clap politely after an excellent shot.

Ask at your home course to see if local teams play there — the professional will know. You can also check your state golf association's website to find out when and where the pennant season is held. Be sure to ask the pro whether you can come out and watch. He or she will probably be delighted to hear that you're interested. Explain that you're learning the game and ask if there's a player whose swing you could learn from (or if there are any you *shouldn't* follow, since some club golfers get unnerved by spectators).

Amateur events

From pennant golf to elite amateur competition is a big step. We bet you'll be surprised by how well — and how far — top amateurs hit the ball. But don't just gape at their power. Study how precise they are around the greens. How *deliberate*. This should drive home the crucial importance of the short game. With rare exceptions, the best players will be the ones who chip and putt better than the others.

National, state and junior golf association websites generally post calendars listing tournaments for individual events and those involving their men's, women's and junior golf teams. At team events, pairings will be posted in or near the clubhouse. Galleries won't be much larger than at pennant matches, so don't sneeze at the wrong time! Pick a calm moment to introduce yourself to the team coach (invariably a focused-looking person wearing a cap with the state logo). Praise one of the coach's players and you'll make a new friend.

National tournaments

Each year Golf Australia and New Zealand Golf stage the prestigious Australian Open and New Zealand Open, respectively. These bodies also run championships for women, seniors, amateurs, public-course players and juniors. See `golfaustralia.org.au` and `golf.co.nz` for details.

Galleries are larger than at pennant and state events, but except for premier tournaments such as the national opens, women's open, national amateur and national senior opens, you can still get up-close and personal with the golfers.

Here's a great chance to test your eye for the golf swing. What makes the typical player at a national amateur event better than a good state golfer? Size, strength, power? Maybe. Maturity — the ability to forget a bad bounce or bad hole and instantly refocus? Probably.

Consistency? Certainly! Consistency is the essential difference between good golfers and expert golfers. Watch closely and you'll notice that competitors in national tournament play hit fewer bad shots than club and state players, and the bad ones they hit don't miss by as much.

Professional tours

In Australia, the pro-am circuit and second-tier tournaments (the state opens and PGA championships, plus a few other events) travel across more parts of the country than you may think. You can see professionals trying to make a living the hard way. These tournaments offer limited schedules and don't pay much compared to the riches on the main tour, with many golfers struggling to make expenses. That's why these circuits are also called *developmental tours* — the players are developing their games under intense pressure.

The women's tour is the ALPG Tour, which plays a series of events through the summer months. The south coast of New South Wales in particular is home to a terrific collection of one- and two-day tournaments that Australia's best female golfers — and the odd overseas star or two — compete in each year. These events lead up to the premier women's tournaments, the Women's Australian Open, Australian Ladies Masters and New Zealand Women's Open.

Then there's the Legends Tour, for players 50 and over, that tours the east coast of Australia, plus New Zealand and parts of the South Pacific. What can you learn from following greying veteran golfers? Everything! We still drive the ball farther than 99.9 per cent of the golf population, but more importantly, we know our limitations. Follow a group of senior pros and you'll see plenty of strategy: Drives on the favourable side of the fairway, lay-up shots that stay out of trouble. (See Chapter 12 for more on course management.) We also stage our share of thrilling finishes, though we may not celebrate them quite as vigorously as the young pros do. You can throw your back out that way!

But as good as we seniors are when we bring our A games — A for ageless — we're not the main event.

The PGA Tour of Australasia

The country's — and some of the world's — best golfers. The most beautiful courses. Golf's most dramatic moments. The PGA Tour of Australasia can be more expensive to watch — count on up to $80 a day for a ticket, parking and refreshments (kids usually get in free with a paying adult) — but what you'll see is priceless. When the 'big' tour comes to a venue near you, you get to feast your eyes on Adam Scott, Geoff Ogilvy and the rest of the country's finest as they make a cruelly difficult game look easy. At least the old game jumps up and bites them, of course. And then you get to enjoy the world's finest trouble shots!

Sadly, the local tournament circuit doesn't have nearly as many top-tier events as it did, say, ten years ago but the calibre of golf today is as good as ever.

Ten ways to maximise your day at a tour event

You'd be surprised how many spectators are unprepared for their sojourn at a tour venue — particularly rookie spectators. Take these tips and you'll be a superfan.

1. Don't leave home without sunscreen, a hat, a portable chair and binoculars.
2. If you want to work inside the ropes, contact the tournament committee and offer to volunteer. The best volunteer jobs are walking scorer (keeping track of players' scores) and standard-bearer (carrying the sign that shows the scores). Either way, you'll be almost as close to the pros as their caddies.
3. If you're going as a fan, head along early in the week and watch the players' practice rounds.
4. Spend some time at the practice range, watching good swings.
5. The best day for autographs is Wednesday, during the pro-am, when the pros will sign between holes. Remember to bring your own marker pen!
6. On tournament days — usually Thursday to Sunday — arrive early. Pick up a map of the course (there's usually one on the pairing sheets you get free at the gate, as well as in souvenir programs). Choose a spot where there's sure to be plenty of action, like a green guarded by water, and set up your portable chair right behind the gallery rope.
7. Many tournaments now offer tour radios for rent — they're a must for keeping track of what's going on.
8. If you choose to walk along with a particular group, stay one shot ahead of the players — that way you can see their shots land.
9. DON'T yell 'You're the man!' or 'Go in the hole!' The pros can't stand gallery loudmouths.
10. Be a proud host: Wear something that represents your city or state.

Check out pga.org.au for the current year's schedule or main tournaments, second-tier events and pro-ams (you may be surprised to learn how far and wide the PGA of Australia stages golf tournaments). Then pack up the car and get ready for a day you'll never forget. You may not get close enough to hear the players breathe at a tour event, but at least once or twice the level of play will leave you breathless.

Practice Rounds or Last-Day Drama?

Since most fans do their spectating at tour events, we'll focus mostly on them. Before you make plans to spend a great day at the course, in the festive atmosphere that attends any tour stop, decide what you want to get out of your day. Do you want to learn more about the game? Do you want to get close to the players? Or do you want to feel the unfolding drama of a top-tier sporting event?

If you're after a learning experience, take in a Tuesday practice round. You'll save on your ticket and avoid the big weekend crowds. You can also take your camera and camcorder on practice days — a definite no-no during tournament rounds. Go to the range, watch players warm up, get a feel for how focused and disciplined they are. To see even tighter focus, stop by the practice putting green. Watch for a putting drill or two that you may try yourself.

On the course, film a few swings. When you get home, compare your own swing to the pros' swings. Not to make you feel inadequate, but to see where you can improve!

Wednesdays are pro-am days — generally best avoided. Play often slows to a crawl and the pros are itchy for the next day's action to start.

Once the tournament begins, Thursdays and Fridays offer better sightlines because the crowds are smaller. You can also be sure to see your favourite player (assuming he or she entered the tournament), since the cut isn't made until the first two rounds are complete.

The cut removes about half the players from the tournament after two rounds of play. They're considered too far behind to contend on the weekend and they earn $0 for their efforts that week. Players who make the cut get a pay cheque, those who don't, don't.

For those who survive the cut, Saturday is often called *moving day*, since a good round can move you into position to win on Sunday.

Whatever day you choose, be sure to spend some time watching the top players in the field. They're fearless!

We can advise you all day about the importance of strategy and caution on the course. Never forget it! But sometimes seeing today's youngsters going full-throttle, firing at flags, playing like their hair's on fire is good. They prove that even at the highest level, golf's supposed to be FUN!

How to Interact with Players

Professional golfers love their jobs and who makes pro golf possible? That's right — golf fans! Most professionals recognise this crucial truth and we try our best to be courteous to the thousands of gallery members we meet in the course of our job.

Want to have a great moment with a tour pro? It's as easy as one, two, three:

1. **Choose your moment.** Between holes during a Tuesday practice round — that can be a good time to say hello. Or in the designated autograph area, which is usually behind the 18th green, after a tournament round. Players expect to meet fans and sign autographs at these times and places.
2. **Remember your manners.** You wouldn't shout 'You da cop!' at a police officer, would you? You wouldn't *demand* a movie star's autograph, shoving a cap or program at her face. Fortunately, most golf fans would never do that stuff, either, but a few bad apples can spoil a great day for players and fans alike. Ask nicely and you'll probably get that autograph you want.
3. **Make a connection.** It's easy. All you have to do is say something the pro hasn't already heard 100 times. Maybe you saw him or her pull off a great shot: 'That was a beauty from the rough at 16'. Maybe you read about him online, in a golf magazine or in the newspaper: 'I hope your wrist's feeling better'. Or maybe you just want to share the moment: 'I like the way you play and just want to shake your hand'.

What do pro golfers *really* think of the fans — at least the polite fans who approach us the right way? We think of them as friends.

What Fans Should Never Do

Interfering with a ball in play is a capital crime at any tournament. (But I know you'd never do that.) Getting *struck* by one is just a pain. Sometimes — especially at tour events where fans are packed like toothpicks along fairways and around greens — a shot gets away and a fan gets plunked.

This can leave the fan with a bump or bruise, as well as a few potential benefits, like a moment on national TV, a handshake from the embarrassed pro who hit the ball, and an autographed cap and ball from the embarrassed pro.

Just remember: The pros are playing for their livelihoods out there. Don't ask the tour player whose ball hit you — or the one you spot in the carpark or near the practice green — to shake hands with all your friends and wave to your cousins watching at home.

A few more reminders:

- **Don't ask for autographs before or during a tournament round.** During tournament play — usually Thursday to Sunday — tour players will sign only after their rounds.
- **Don't forget to set your mobile phone to silent mode.** You don't want to be caught out as the fan whose phone rings in the middle of a player's backswing.
- **Don't get dehydrated.** Following the pros can entail a lot of walking in heat and blazing sun. Drink plenty of water!

Now that you know the ropes, you're set for a great day outside the ropes. Enjoy!

Chapter 18

Golf on TV

In This Chapter

- Becoming a talking head
- Understanding TV golf
- Checking out the top players
- Learning by watching televised golf

Golf is a sport that's played all year long, from the first week in January through to the third week in December. Golf on the tube has grown proportionately, from a few shows in the 1950s to almost non-stop golf on TV today.

The growth in golf's popularity over the past 40 years has been reflected in the amount of coverage the game gets on television. Back in 1986 nobody dreamed there'd be a 24/7 golf channel, as there is in America. Television has embraced golf to the extent that the top players today are as well known as their counterparts in cricket and the various football codes. In this chapter, we show you why.

Why Golf Makes Great TV

The places that TV takes you during the golf year are a holiday maker's dream. Thanks to Fox Sports' worldwide coverage of golf, every Thursday to Monday you can do the couch thing and watch the various tours play from every corner of the globe. The golf is good, but the pictures are stunning.

In America, the viewing audience and the US PGA Tour start to prepare themselves in the Florida swing for the first major of the year in early April, when Augusta and the Masters Tournament are in full bloom. Then the US Tour settles into normalcy for a while, as players start to prepare for the heat and the long rough of the US Open in mid-June. The month of July is

for the British Open and its storied past; plenty of plaid and windblown golf balls decorate the landscape. The last of the four majors, the US PGA Championship, comes in August. And now the majors are followed by the FedEx Cup, a series that culminates at the season-ending Tour Championship.

Each northern autumn also brings a great team event: The Ryder Cup, pitting the US against a European team, in even-numbered years, and the Presidents Cup — America versus the rest of the world — in odd-numbered years. If you like team play, both cups are as good as golf gets.

At the end of the year the Australasian Tour starts up, with the Australian Open, Masters and PGA Championship wrapping up a long, long season of golf around the globe.

During the first part of the year, many celebrities play in the AT&T Tournament at Pebble Beach and the Bob Hope Classic. If viewing the stars is your thing, you can see these would-be golfers hacking away inhibitions during these pro-am tournaments. Justin Timberlake, Kenny G, Tea Leoni and Mark Wahlberg might never make a living playing golf, but they can play a little!

If Hollywood stars aren't your idea of role models, maybe professional golfers can fill the void. You don't see much sledging or foul play on the golf course. In fact, golf may be the only game in which the players police themselves. Almost weekly, there's an example of a player on a tour penalising him or herself for some inadvertent rules transgression.

Sports and TV have become inextricably linked through the years. Remember that television is still a relatively new medium and golf certainly presented unique challenges to television coverage. Aside from playing on 60 hectares of land, there was constant, ongoing action with many athletes competing independently at any given moment. What's a broadcaster to do?

Keep it simple — and they did. The first broadcast of a golf event was the Tam O'Shanter Classic from Chicago on Sunday, 22 August 1953. There was one camera, fixed on the 18th hole. Perhaps as an indication of the excitement that golf would eventually bring to the tube, the moment for this particular coverage was opportune. Lew Worsham, a modestly successful pro, approached the 18th, a hole not unlike many finishing holes that year, but this time Worsham produced a singular result: A hole-in-one. The unbridled charisma of one man turned the nation's attention to the sport of captains and kings. Arnold Palmer, of the hitch-and-smile, go-for-broke style

and unwavering charm, turned the viewing world on its ear and kept viewers glued to their sets. In 1960, Palmer began carrying an industry on his back as golf and television developed together to provide a foundation for a sport that would reap immense rewards in the great sports and television-rights fee pot of gold.

How Gary Got Into TV

The year was 1986 and Gary's career was in need of a makeover. 'Limited success' was a nice way of describing his playing years. The tour was a vast, empty wasteland of setbacks and spent money. Gary was serving out the rest of his sentence with no chance of parole. Golf sucks.

As he boarded a plane for Columbus, Ohio, nothing was on Gary's mind other than the two fat vacuum-cleaner salesmen he was going to be sitting between in economy class. Gary was in his customary haze when he was jarred by harsh criticism from the first-class section. It was the CBS crew that does golf, already enjoying the amenities of first class (although in a plastic cup) before takeoff.

Frank Chirkinian, the executive producer and director for CBS at the time, Pat Summerall, Ben Wright: All of them were basking in the knowledge that Gary was to be wedged in the economy section between two obese and slightly pungent salesmen. They said he could come up and use their bathroom if he could peel himself from between the two guys. Gary hoped that the front of the aeroplane would fall off.

They were all going to Jack Nicklaus's golf tournament, the Memorial, in Ohio. They had just left Fort Worth, Texas, where Gary had played and CBS had televised the Colonial Invitational. Gary had just been elected to the policy board of the US PGA Tour — the players elect three members of the tour, and along with three officers of the PGA of America and three independent business leaders, they make up the tour policy board, which basically runs the tour. It's a very important job for an idiot like Gary to have, but the players thought that his life wasn't miserable enough, so they elected him.

Gary was not going to Columbus to play in Nicklaus's tournament — it was an *invitational*, the sort of event to which only select players are invited and he was about as popular as the flu. He'd be attending policy-board meetings for the first three days of the week. They were closed-door meetings in which Gary could catch up on his sleep.

Gary was fighting for position on the armrest of seat 28B when the flight attendant presented him with a bottle of champagne, compliments of the royal family in first class. Those guys really knew how to have a good time when the bubbly was free.

Gary started hesitantly towards the front of the plane to thank his benefactors and get away from the sumo-sized bookends he was seated between. As he scurried to first class, Gary fell on an idea that could help solve his problem of having nowhere to go after the policy-board meetings ended on Wednesday. After some quick banter, Gary told Frank that he had nothing to do from Thursday to Sunday and because he was on the policy board making decisions about TV contracts, he should watch how a televised event is produced. 'Show up Friday for rehearsal at 11 and check into the Stouffer's on Thursday; we'll have a room for you', Frank said. 'Now get back to the screaming kids in coach before I have you thrown off the plane for being up here.' He had the bedside manner of Attila the Hun sporting a bad case of haemorrhoids, but at that moment Gary loved him.

Gary showed up promptly at 11 am, well fed from gorging on room service and weary-eyed from the menu of movies that he signed to the room. Gary was a pig and he enjoyed the wallow.

Gary opened the door to Frank's office and he bellowed from the confines of his trailer for Gary to go out to the 16th hole. Frank didn't sound like he wanted to engage in light conversation, so Gary broke into a trot towards the 16th. He couldn't help but wonder why he wasn't going to sit in the truck with Frank to gain some insight into how a telecast is produced, every once in a while getting Frank some snacks. Why was he going to the 16th hole?

As Gary arrived, a voice came serenading down from high atop a tower, beckoning him to come up. It was Verne Lundquist, the veteran announcer. Gary managed to make his way up the tower. Verne then handed Gary a headset and told him to grab a chair. Gary asked what the headset was for and Verne said, 'Didn't Frank tell you that he wanted to try you as an announcer this week?' As Gary weighed the decision between wasting time with caddies who missed the cut and being on national television, the conversation with himself was, as usual, very short.

'Where do I sit, Verne, and what do I do?' Gary asked.

It looks like this in the tower: A little enclosure is surrounded with clear plastic, much like the front seat of a car, with the windshield surrounding the front and you looking out at the green. Two monitors in front of the announcer show the action taking place and a current leader board. The *spotter* is next to you, giving you the scores and the clubs the players are

hitting. In this case, spotter Carl took up most of the room. Carl, who weighs 175 kilograms, looks like he just ate a sumo wrestler. There was not much room left in the front seat of this car.

Gary's seat was next to the cameraman. Looking down at the action for the first time was really interesting. Golf looks incredibly easy from way up there. How can those guys screw up so many shots?!? Gary was above the tension, up in the clouds. My, how this view changes your perspective on the game.

But there were voices everywhere. The voice in his left ear was the director, Frank and the other voices were all the announcers from their towers. Occasionally, Gary would hear a rogue voice and had no idea who it was. He found out later that a guy operating a CB unit in the neighbourhood had come through on their headsets. Welcome to network TV.

The rehearsal went pretty smoothly. Gary found out two things:

- **Your conversation must be short.** The action jumps all over the place and you can't get stuck in the middle of a story.
- **Never answer anything Frank says directly.** The viewers can't hear the director, so 'What are you raving about, Frank?' will mean nothing to them.

The next day, Gary's first on national television, was going smoothly. Verne and he were clicking like a Geiger counter. Verne would ask a question; Gary would answer. He was rolling.

Due to a starter's time that spreads the field, there was a large gap between the group that had just walked off the 16th green and the next group that was approaching the 14th green. Gary had some free time, so he kicked back in the chair and read interesting tidbits on the personal lives of the golf pros.

Gary was awakened from his near-catatonic state by a combination of Frank throwing the action to Verne and Verne asking him what this putt was going to do. Gary looked down really fast and saw nobody on the 16th green. The next group was walking up the 15th fairway. What was going on?

Verne had a look of desperation as he asked Gary again and Frank was saying, 'Answer him, you culturally lost golf derelict!' Gary looked down at the green again and there still wasn't anybody there. Were they seeing ghosts, or was this just a ruse to excite the poor rookie? After several more verbal barbs from Frank and the look of a desperate sheepdog on the face of Verne, Gary decided to play along. He said, 'Verne, this putt should be

fairly fast, because it's going down the hill towards the water.' Verne met his response by saying, 'Boy, you were right, Gary; that putt cruised by the hole and, if he'd hit it a little harder, it would have gone in the water.'

Wait a minute!

The only water near the 16th green at Muirfield Village Golf Course is in the bubbler on the tee. Gary made the water stuff up because the boys were trying to get the rookie and he was trying to throw them a curve. It was a wild pitch.

Gary heard Frank say, 'Throw it to 18, Verne'. Then Verne looked at Gary with those beseeching Scandinavian eyes and asked if he could respond a little quicker next time. Frank hit his button and began to blast Gary for his 'funereal response', which he took as his TV obituary.

At this point, Gary realised they weren't kidding. Oh, no! 'Verne,' he said, 'could you help me in my moment of conjecture and look down on the 16th green and tell me if you see anybody? Or do I have to call a ghostbuster?'

'Of course there's nobody there,' said Verne. Now Gary really was confused. 'Verne, if there's nobody there, why did you say the ball rolled 7 feet by the hole when I made up the thing about the water being there in the first place?' he asked, dumbfounded. 'There's no water on the 16th hole.'

'I know that, you idiot, but we were doing the 12th hole!'

'Wait a minute, we're doing the 12th hole too? I was told to go out to the 16th hole with you.'

What had happened was that, during rehearsal, they hadn't used a camera for their *other* hole, the 12th, because the camera was broken. Gary had no way of knowing that he was supposed to be looking at the 12th hole as well as the 16th, unless he had called the Psychic Friends Hotline. Confusing business, huh?

As life weaves its reckless mysteries, the par-3 12th hole at Muirfield Village has water surrounding the green. The putt had come from the top tier really fast towards the water and gone 2 metres past the hole. Gary totally made something up and it happened to be a perfect call in this less-than-perfect business.

This is Gary's legacy; he is bound by its structure. He cannot deny its existence. It has made him rich. Gary hopes he can bring you insight on how this medium works so that you understand their chaos. Although, you have to admit, he looks pretty relaxed in Figure 18-1!

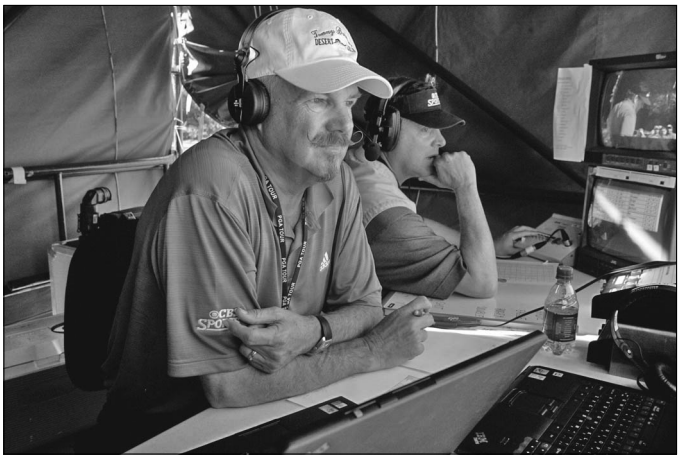


Figure 18-1 In the CBS booth, Gary gets a bird's-eye view on the game. *How could he miss that shot?*

Behind the screens

Many insiders will tell you that golf is the hardest sport to cover. Think about it: The playing field is a park, a wide open expanse covering hectares of competitive challenges. There are no half-time breaks and no clock. Play begins at ten-minute intervals and players embark upon the playing field for their bid at the colour red. (For the uninitiated, scores below par are noted on the scoreboard with red numbers.) At any one time, 100 or more competitors may be playing on the same course, all on different holes. So how does it get covered?

First, golf courses have to be technically prepped. That's just a fancy way of saying that you must run cable, kilometres of it, in order to broadcast signals from the golf course to the television truck. A small army of engineers and cable-pullers invades on the Sunday or Monday preceding broadcast week. Semi-trailers filled with several million dollars worth of cameras and technical equipment are deployed. The average telecast requires two dozen or more cameras mobilised in a variety of ways, videotape machines, digital recorders, character generators, spotters, high-tech graphics gizmos (for those great images of super-slow-mo swings, golf balls squished against clubfaces at impact and towering arcs showing shot trajectories), and a control room staffed with producers and directors.

The staff is divided into two groups, known as *above the line* and *below the line.* Those with above-the-line duties are the people who make production and story-line decisions. We'll start at the top:

- **Producer:** The producer is responsible for creating the story line of the event. Remember how different golf is from cricket, hockey, football

and most other sports. The better producers must be intimately conversant with the game itself and know all the key players. Although the story line is dictated by who is playing well, a dozen or more contestants may be newsworthy. The producer's task is to capture the players' shot-making efforts and to make a complicated drama coherent to the viewer.

- **Director:** The director is responsible for placing cameras at strategic spots around the course to capture the best possible angles of coverage. He or she communicates with the camera personnel, audio crew and other technical people to provide insightful coverage of the action on the course. While the producer may say, 'Let's go to Adam Scott on the ninth green,' the director is responsible for readying those cameras and operators and for framing the shots that will most dramatically capture Adam's next shot. The director also oversees a complex array of audio tracks, graphics and special effects.
- **Associate directors:** One associate director (AD) supports the producer and director. Although titles may change from network to network, standard coverage usually involves an 'iso' truck in which an associate director records coverage of shots that are central to the story line but not shown live. You might hear an announcer say, 'Moments ago . . .'. Taped coverage assures that viewers see as many shots as possible in a sensible sequence. Some producers favour using more taped shots than others.

  A second associate director is known as the *sundial*, or timer. ('Sundial' is an inside joke, a nickname for one AD whose countdowns in and out of commercials were less than accurate.) Frequently in a telecast, the network breaks for at least 2 minutes of commercials or promotional announcements. The second AD gives a count out of the program action into the commercial time to make the transition appear seamless to the viewer. The same is true coming out of a commercial back to the centre of activity, the remote truck.
- **Talent:** The remaining critical element of the above-the-line team is the talent. That's us, the talking heads you hear on the air. The producers and directors provide the blueprint of the telecast, but we deliver it. The Australian Football League might employ up to four announcers per broadcast and cricket even more, but the multiple broadcast booths in a golf telecast necessitate a team of announcers in this decidedly individual sport. Networks use up to eight on-air personalities to recite the golf action. Chemistry is key. Do you love Johnny Miller and Roger Maltbie? Jim Nantz and Nick Faldo? Ian Baker-Finch and Wayne Grady? Mike Tirico? David Feherty? Maybe even Gary? Each network's team has a unique personality.

The 18th tower is the focal point where the host and key analyst hold forth. From there, networks differ. Some choose the analyst-per-green format á la CBS, erecting towers adjacent to the final few greens on the course. From these vantage points, the announcers have birds'-eye views and can call the action of a particular hole or report on a neighbouring hole within view of the tower. ABC America uses a secondary studio in which the talent view the monitor and report each shot played. All networks employ on-course personnel who walk with designated players and report on the action from the ground.

- **Technical personnel:** The below-the-line folks are the technical people — camera and audio operators, engineers and tech gurus. Of course, everyone involved in this tightly knit, interlocking puzzle is important, but one key individual brings it all together: The technical director, who presses the buttons that effectively determine which pictures and sounds go on the air. If you ever notice a glitch in moving from one shot to another or a graphic appearing and then disappearing hastily, chances are that the technical director made a mistake or got some bad information from the field.

All in all, when you add up all the above-the-line and below-the-line folks, the spotters, the runners and the *craft-services personnel* (a fancy, entertainment-industry way of saying *caterers*), a network may roll into town with a production crew of more than 100 people — not to mention the satellite truck that beams signals from the remote broadcast site off a satellite, to the studio and eventually to your TV set.

Deal or no deal?

Of course, none of this would happen if there wasn't a demand for golf telecasts. The game remains popular for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the steadfast support of the corporate sector. Why? Well, first by golf's very position in the world as a game played by the captains of industry. It's a game of tradition, honour and integrity. The image of the game presented by the players is essential to the sponsors and magnified in importance by what has become an increasingly cluttered world of athletes whose mugs — and sometimes mug shots — are apt to be found on the front page of the newspaper rather than in the back. Yes, Tiger Woods's tabloid travails in 2009 and 2010 hurt the image of the world's top golfer, but the game's image remains strong.

Golf forged its way to prominence as a major player in television sports in its own way. It began meekly in an effort to gain exposure on TV. Time buys, rights and production deals were (and are) the principal forces that drive network coverage.

Time buys

A network places an hourly value on airtime — like a supermarket stocking shelves. Each hour of airtime represents a quantifiable asset for the network. In this case, a program buyer negotiates a date and airtime for a program. The buyer purchases time from a network, arranges to sell the time to advertisers and keeps the advertising revenue.

Here's an example: The McCord Challenge buys two hours of time from the Thrills Channel. McCord pays the network, say, about $1 million. Network rules allow the producer to sell 18 commercial units per hour. So, for its million dollars, the McCord group gets 36 commercial units (18 times 2) to allocate to its list of sponsors or to sell.

The formula is fairly basic and not inexpensive because the packager bears the production costs, which can reach $1 million for reasonable golf coverage. With professional talent added, there's well beyond a $1.5-million investment from the outset. That's before the cost of a tournament purse and onsite event amenities from range balls to security to biscuits in the players' locker room.

Infomercials work the same way, but instead of ad revenue, the buyer reaps revenue by selling the latest golf gizmo.

Rights and production

Here's where networks take a risk. The escalation in sports rights fees in recent decades resulted in big-dollar TV contracts for several sports, including golf. Network executives decide that they're willing to pay an upfront fee to the rights holders and provide production in exchange for the chance to maximise their investment in the advertising marketplace.

Golf, through its growing popularity and the valuable image it provides for sponsors — the quality and virtually unmatched demographics delivered — has taken its place among the major TV sports. In America, the television side of pro golf is enormously important financially. The US PGA Tour signed a contract worth nearly $1 billion with the three broadcast networks plus ESPN, USA and the Golf Channel for 2003 to 2006. The money kept growing in the tour's TV deal for 2007 to 2012, but the next deal may not be so lucrative. As 2012 approaches the game faces a double whammy: The economy is struggling and so is Tiger Woods, the game's marquee player.

Can golf retain its TV audience? We're about to find out.

Ten things golf announcers should *never* do

- **Never talk to your director on the air.** No one else can hear the director; you don't want viewers to think you have an imaginary friend.
- **Don't get the sound guy mad at you.** He'll cut you off when you're making a witty comment and keep you on the air while you're mumbling.
- **Never tell the TV audience how good a player you used to be.**
- **Never say a shot is impossible.** You'll quickly be proven wrong.
- **Never talk down to the audience.** Viewers are smarter than a lot of TV-talkers think.
- **Don't get into long stories.** You'll get cut off as the director switches to another hole.
- **Never use clichés.** It shows that you're lazy.
- **Never tell the audience what viewers can clearly see on the TV screen.**
- **Never assume that your audience is hard-core golf fans.** Millions of TV viewers might not know Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson from the lead character in *Neighbours*.
- **Never, ever assume that what you do for a living has any role in the elevation of humankind.**

What to Watch for on TV

By all means, enjoy the physical beauty of golf on television. But pay attention to the players, too. You can learn a lot from watching not only their swings but also their whole demeanour on the course. Listen to the language, the jargon, the parlance being used. If you read this book — or any golf book — I'm sure that you'll notice the complexity of the game's terms. This is especially true when a commentator analyses a player's swing: He'll use terminology that you need to understand to become part of the golf world. (See Appendix A for more help with golf terminology.)

Watch the players carefully. Pay attention to the rhythm of their swings. Pay attention to their mannerisms — the way they waggle the club, the triggers that set their swings in motion, the way they putt, the way they set their feet in the sand before they play from bunkers, the way they stand on uphill and downhill lies. In other words, watch everything! Soak it all in. Immerse yourself in the atmosphere and ambience of golf. You'll soon be walking the walk and talking the talk. Don't discount the importance of osmosis: You can improve your own game just by watching great golf swings.

That's the big picture. That's what everyone should watch. But what about you, specifically?

Watching Robert Allenby or Karrie Webb on TV is a good idea for every golfer. But there's a limit to what most people can learn from most players. Pay particular attention to someone like Robert if you happen to be tall and slim. But if you happen to be shorter and more heavyset, you need to look elsewhere. Find someone whose body type approximates your own.

Then watch how that person stands to the ball at address. See how her arms hang. See how much she flexes her knees. Golfers who are taller have much more flex in their knees than their shorter counterparts.

Watch how 'your pro' swings the club. Do his arms move away from his body as the club moves back? How much does she turn her shoulders? How good is his balance? Does she have a lot of wrist action in her swing? Or does he unwind his torso for explosive power? Watch the pros every chance you get. Emulating their swings and the way they conduct themselves will help your game.

What Most Viewers Miss

The average viewer just wants to see who wins. You, of course, will get more out of your TV-golf experience.

You won't be surprised to see that the players who get the most airtime are the leaders and the stars. No telecast is going to waste valuable minutes on someone who's 20 strokes out of the lead. (Unless, of course, it's Tiger or Phil or Karrie.) Viewers want to watch the tournament being won and lost, so those players shooting the lowest scores are the ones you'll see most on TV. As a sidelight, you'll see the game's big names even if they're struggling.

Here's what to look for in some of the stars you'll see on TV.

- **Tiger Woods:** Look at his virtuosity in every aspect of the game. He has left no stone unturned in his pursuit of perfection. His stalking of Jack Nicklaus's record of 18 major wins is his driving force, providing his will to succeed. In 2010, personal strife and swing changes gave him new motivation.
- **Phil Mickelson:** With four major victories under his belt (as of this writing), look for Phil to take advantage of his precise short game and really focus on the majors for the rest of his career.

- **Ernie Els:** Now in his forties, the Big Easy has a golf swing that still brings glimpses of the legendary Sam Snead, with a demeanour made for greatness. Burn that smooth swing into your memory banks the next time you see it on TV.
- **Geoff Ogilvy:** A mercurial player, but magnificent in the way he studies a golf course and devises a strategy. Formerly a temperamental golfer prone to being too hard on himself, the more mature version of Geoff is a model modern tour player.
- **Karrie Webb:** Australia's finest ever female golfer and, in the eyes of many, Australia's best of all time, male or female. Webb's best years may be behind her, but she remains one of the icons on the LPGA Tour and is still as capable as any player on tour of snaring another major championship or a bagful more of tournament victories.
- **Katherine Hull:** Of the generation of golfers inspired by Webb's heroics in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Hull has taken the furthest strides forward. A former top amateur player (Hull was part of Australia's victorious World Amateur Teams Championship side in 2002), she took a few years to find her feet on the LPGA Tour, but these days is among the circuit's best and brightest.
- **Dustin Johnson:** Longer than a Queensland summer, this young star came within a whisker of winning the 2010 US Open and US PGA Championship. Keep an eye on him — particularly super-slow-mo replays that show how he generates power.
- **Fred Couples:** The Champions Tour's 'young' star still has the easy motion that made 'Boom Boom' Couples the model of effortless power. Watch him walk down the fairway after a drive as if he doesn't have a care in the world. Fred has had his share of troubles through the years, including a bad back that might have ended other careers, but he's still smiling . . . and winning.
- **Rory McIlroy:** Here's a Hollywood story for you: Young Rory, born in 1989 in Holywood, Northern Ireland, might be the most exciting young player since Tiger. As of this writing he hadn't won a major yet, but it is only a matter of time. He swings hard, believes every putt's going in and radiates pleasure in playing the game.
- **Michelle Wie:** This young lady, who turned 21 in 2010, has the potential to dominate the LPGA. Michelle turned pro late in 2005, fought injuries and great expectations, and struggled. But she has more talent than anyone we've seen come up in a long time. Winless until 2009, Michelle had two LPGA victories going into 2011 . . . two and counting, with many more to come.

Take Your Punishment

You can learn the most from the players on TV by watching how they handle disaster. Professional players make most of their decisions with their heads, not their hearts. So pay close attention to the times when a player has to manufacture a weird and wonderful shot to extricate the ball from trouble. And don't forget to watch the more frequent occasions when he accepts that a mistake has been made, takes the punishment and moves on. That's when you know you're watching a real golfer, one who understands that everyone makes mistakes, and that he just made one and now has to make the most of the rest of his round.

That last point reminds me of a time when I let my heart — or my ego — rule my decision-making process. I was playing in Memphis, I think. Anyway, I had to birdie the last three holes during my second round in order to make the cut. After my drive at the 16th, I had 203 metres to the hole, which was cut dangerously close to a large lake. I chose a 4-iron, convinced that I had enough club. I didn't. Splash!

I turned to my caddie and told him to give me another ball. He did. I hit the next shot perfectly. Splash!

'Give me another ball.' Splash!

'Give me another ball.' Splash!

'Give me another ball.' Splash!

By this time, I knew that I was using the wrong club. I knew it. My caddie knew it. Google Earth knew it. But I wasn't going to give up. This was my manhood we were testing here.

Eventually, my caddie handed me another ball with a 3-iron, one more club. I asked, 'What's this?' He told me that I had only one ball left. So I took the 3-iron and hit my last ball onto the green. I holed the putt for, I think, a 15.

The moral of the story? If you do stuff this stupid, they might make a movie of it. In this case they did — the movie was *Tin Cup* and Kevin Costner re-enacted my disaster. Somehow he looked better doing it.

The Masters and me

The entire CBS production crew was dining at the Tournament Players Championship two weeks before the 1987 Masters. The conversation turned quickly to who would be assigned to which holes during the telecast in Augusta. Everyone had his assignments except for me. I was left holding air.

I'd been working with CBS on a part-time basis for only a few months, but the announcing crew was excited that I would be going to Augusta. When producer Frank Chirkinian excluded me from the fracas, anarchy prevailed. Pat Summerall led the charge for my inclusion and the others followed, but to no avail. It was late on Saturday when Frank, between commercial breaks, announced to everyone that I was going to the hallowed grounds of Augusta National after all.

I was told to be at Augusta by Tuesday for a meeting with Hord Hardin, the tournament director. Frank was waiting for me when I arrived. We proceeded to Hardin's office; I felt like I was going to the principal's office. There was a look of concern on Frank's face as we went into the catacombs of the clubhouse at Augusta.

Jim Nantz joined us as we walked the narrow corridor towards the door at the end of the hall. I was dressed rather spectacularly in white Calvin Klein jeans and a bulky DKNY sweater ablaze in yellow, the whole outfit topped with a Panama straw hat. I was a walking rebuke to tradition.

As we approached the darkened door at the end of the hall, it creaked open as if willed by a higher power. A shadowy figure appeared, backlit against a ray of sun filtered through the lone window. Hord Hardin greeted us like Lurch of *The Addams Family.* Frank and Jim sat in the corner and I proceeded to take residence on the big couch in front of Hardin's desk. I was the subject of discussion.

After introductions and small talk, Hardin proceeded to make a passionate speech about the flavour of this tournament. 'We must maintain tradition; it is the cornerstone of the tournament,' he said with conviction. The speech was beautiful and actually kept my attention, which is hard to do. But I couldn't help looking around and seeing the dimly lit pictures of Bobby Jones and the 13th hole that filled the room. It dawned on me that this was Augusta National, home of the Masters and that *this was a big deal*. At moments like these, when I'm truly moved, I do stupid things. I think I do them because it relieves tension. I waited until Hardin had made his closing remarks, and then abruptly stood up and asked him if he thought the clown outfit I had planned to wear on Saturday was out of the question. Frank immediately put his head in his hands and Jim started to whistle.

Hardin looked at Frank, who wasn't about to look up and then addressed me. 'Probably not a good idea', he said.

'Darn, I'm gonna lose the deposit', I said.

As Hardin closed the oaken door of his office behind us, Frank grabbed the back of my neck and applied a pressure hold that would have choked a Burmese python. 'Don't you ever just shut up and listen, you moron?' he asked. I couldn't respond because of the restriction of air in my oesophagus, as Jim said, 'Maybe it was a bad idea, bringing him here'. Frank affirmed the notion with more pressure on my neck.

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My stint at Augusta didn't last long. In 1994, while trying to be articulate about a shot to the 17th green, I explained that Jose Maria Olazabal had better not hit it over the green because there were 'body bags' down there and no one ever recovers. That was the first strike against me. I paddled on down the River Styx and described a putt by Tom Lehman, also on the 17th green, as being so fast that I didn't think they mowed those greens, 'I think they bikini wax 'em'. Strike two, three, four — and I was off the Masters broadcast team forevermore.

The rest is history, which is what my colourful Masters commentary became: History!

Chapter 19

Golf Online

In This Chapter

- How to find the coolest golf websites
- 'Touring' great courses from your home or office
- How to buy golf gear online
- Finding the best golf blogs

You'd be amazed at the ways you can explore the world of golf without leaving your favourite chair. Or maybe you won't. But we come from an age when there were three or four TV channels, not three or four hundred. We navigated the old swimmin' hole with inner tubes, not cyberspace with the internet.

You get our cyberdrift — we're dinosaurs who couldn't write a line of code if our Linux depended on it. But we know our way around cybergolf. Let us be your guides.

Cool Golf Sites

The internet offers a nearly infinite array of golf stuff. Google the word *golf* and you get 646 million hits. That's more hits than former Test cricketer Merv Hughes had in his last round. But if you surf the Web aimlessly, you'll only drown in a digital deluge. So here's a quick look at some of our favourite golf sites. Together, they'll offer 99 per cent of what you need. You can thank us later.

PGATour.com

Millions of golf fans rely on the US PGA Tour's site for news, stats, player profiles and, perhaps most important of all, up-to-the-minute tournament coverage. At pgatour.com, you can follow your favourite players as they compete, analyse their stats and even look at their scorecards. You can check out audio and video clips, too. And to the delight of hardcore fans, there's now ShotLink (shotlink.com), an interactive feature that crunches stats and allows users to get an inside look at every shot by every player only nanoseconds after it happens.

You can do more than just follow Tiger, Phil and friends at this site. This is also the home site of the Champions Tour — the one Gary plays on — and the Nationwide Tour, golf's highest 'reserve grade', where you'll find the stars of tomorrow.

There's fantasy here, too. PGATour.com is home to the Tour's official fantasy golf game, in which you get to assemble a dream team of PGA Tour stars who'll play for *you* every week. It's free to play and you can win golf goodies. Check out pgatour.com/fantasy.

LPGA.com

The official site of the women's tour is similar to pgatour.com, if not nearly as lavish. You'll find stats, profiles and live tournament updates from the Ladies Professional Golf Association. Want to follow Karrie Webb, Se Ri Pak and Juli Inkster make still more LPGA history, or see stars like Yani Tseng and Cristie Kerr make some history of their own? Or read a blog by one of the young players who are making women's golf so popular worldwide? Or maybe you just want to follow Paula Creamer as she knocks her pink golf ball into the cup. Here's your chance — it's all at lpga.com.

GOLF.com

Golf.com has become the industry leader by developing a potent mix of tour coverage, equipment reviews, travel features and commentary from some of the game's best-known writers and personalities — including Gary's fellow CBS golf commentator David Feherty, one of the funniest writers around. There's also loads of instruction and a new club-fitting feature called See-Try-Buy. With some of the best text and multimedia capabilities online, Golf.com has found the sweet spot at the intersection of two of humankind's greatest inventions: Golf and the Web.

GolfObserver.com

One of the sport's most addictive sites features an amazing amount of information and opinion every day, updated faster than you can say 'Fore!' At GolfObserver.com you'll find headlines, stats, smart columnists, tournament previews and reviews, and the invaluable Golf Notebook. We check this site all the time to make sure we haven't missed anything.

ESPN.com/golf

Here you can check out schedules, statistics and player rankings for the US PGA, LPGA, Champions, Nationwide and European tours, along with the game's top headlines. And if that's not enough to keep you occupied, you'll find extras like contests, polls and columnists — like sharp, funny Rick Reilly — that make this one of the hottest golf sites on the Web.

Golfaustralia.org.au

The governing body for golf in Australia has a site loaded with details about upcoming championships, rules and handicapping information, and news from state and amateur squads and their tournaments. It's a site that's especially useful when the Australian Open — both men's and women's — is held.

Golf.co.nz

New Zealand's all-encompassing golf website is similar to its Australian counterpart. It also allows you to book tee times at New Zealand's best courses, whether you're a local or a keen golfer lucky enough to tour the finest courses in the Land of the Long White Cloud.

Alpg.com.au

The growing legion of fine female professionals calls alpg.com.au their online 'home'. Read where in Australia or New Zealand the women are playing next, where to find an ALPG teacher for a lesson and profiles of ALPG members.

Thegolfchannel.com

The only TV network devoted to golf 24/7 has changed its name to Golf Channel — no 'the' anymore — but its site's the same as ever. Only better. Check live leader boards, Golf Channel schedules, photo galleries and video after video; play trivia games; and read up-to-date features from Golf Channel personalities. You can email questions and opinions, and get tweets from *Golf Channel News*. With these great free features, there's almost no need to pay for lessons!

PGA.org.au

The official site of the Professional Golfer's Association of Australia features the headlines and industry news, as well as current Australian tour schedules and standings. Plan your golf holiday to coincide with where the pros are playing, or check out other PGA-recommended golf links. This is definitely the place to be during the swing of Australian tournaments each summer.

While we're at it, this is the place to mention four other sites you'll want to visit during the majors. There's great coverage of the Masters every April at `Masters.org` and wall-to-wall US Open stuff at the United States Golf Association's website, `usga.org`. And you can follow each year's British Open at two related sites, `opengolf.com` and `randa.org`. (The latter is worth a visit any time of year — it's the home cyber-sod of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, golf's home.) Then in August, log on to `pga.com` for complete coverage of the US PGA Championship.

Golfdigest.com

In collaboration with its weekly sister publication, *Golf World*, golf's premier magazine has created one of the best sites on the web. `GolfDigest.com` is chock-full of insightful commentary, interesting stories and professional instruction. You'll find inside stuff, opinions from notable writers and reports from the tours. You can also find an equipment hotline, view swing sequences of great players, search for specific tips, browse back issues of the magazine and sign up for instant instruction with a new feature, Golf Digest On Demand.

Twitter.com

You won't find in-depth instruction or analysis at Twitter.com, just tweets — the chip shots of online communication. Pro golfers including Stewart Cink and Ian Poulter tweet their fans constantly, and more and more players are joining in. To see what all the fuss is about, check out Twitter.com/Golf_Tweets.

Online Course Guides

As you can see, there's a whole virtual world out there, just waiting for you. Don't be shy. Now's the time for a virtual tour of roughly one zillion golf courses.

If you don't have the time or money to play all the world's great courses, don't fret. The web can take you to them for free. Websites carry descriptions, layouts and scorecards for countless courses around the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

For example, from the home page of golf's oldest and greatest course, The Old Course at St Andrews, Scotland (standrews.org.uk), you can view historical information about the course, feast your eyes on a wonderful photo gallery, make hotel and tee-time reservations, and even play a virtual round.

Similar sites cover other famous courses and resorts — often with gorgeous photos — from Pebble Beach (pebblebeach.com) to PGA West (pgawest.com) to Barnbougle Dunes (barnbougledunes.com.au).

Many of the sites we discuss earlier, in the 'Cool Golf Sites' section, also feature golf courses. You'll also find sites that specialise in giving golfers an up-close-and-virtual look at courses worldwide. Here's a look at some of the best.

About.com: The course-guide helper

This handy site provides links to several prominent websites devoted to courses. Start by visiting the golf page of About.com. Click on *Find a Golf Course*. From there, you can make your way to just about any tee or green on Earth.

Worldgolf.com

Whenever we feel like exploring the wide world of golf, we tootle over to Worldgolf.com, an international golf and travel guide. It features numerous links that let you bounce easily from one continent to another. You can make reservations at St Andrews in Scotland and then view pictures of famous Sandbelt courses in Melbourne. Easy to navigate, with dozens of departments, Worldgolf.com lets you check worldwide weather and tap into links to a slew of local golf-course guides.

Planetgolf.com.au

A complete reference tool for golf courses worldwide — with a distinctly Australian influence thanks to noted Australian golf-course critic Darius Oliver — planetgolf.com.au is a great site to visit and search for information and critiques of golf courses across Australia and around the world.

Golf.com's Courses and Travel Page

Rankings, a course-finder, travel blogs, satellite photos and more, all presided over by globetrotting guru Travellin' Joe Passov — that's what you'll find at one of the most popular golf-travel pages. Go to Golf.com, click on the *Courses & Travel* tab and you're on your way.

Travelandleisure.com

The late, lamented magazine *Travel & Leisure Golf* is no more, but its spirit lives on at a site that boasts a unique blend of top-notch travel and discount deals. It's not the easiest page to find from the Travel & Leisure homepage, so go straight to travelandleisure.com/ideas/golf.

Golflink.com.au

Getting tee times just got a lot easier. The old information superhighway has an on-ramp. To get there, go to golflink.com.au/teetimes. This Australia-wide reservation system provides you with direct access to hundreds of courses at the click of a button. Just choose a state and a list of courses

appears. Double-click the course you're interested in and — voila! — you're on your way. We can almost smell the fresh-cut grass.

Golfclubatlas.com

You won't find course discounts or a tee-time locator here — just the smartest, most passionate discussion of the merits of the world's golf courses you're likely to find anywhere. The brainchild of founder Ran Morrissett, GolfClubAtlas.com is dedicated to all things having to do with golf-course design. Learn about famous architects and their work, see photos of noteworthy holes and spend hours online, kicking opinions around with some highly knowledgeable folks — including some of the architects themselves. But be warned: When you click on 'Discussion Group', you may find it addictive.

Virtual Pro Shops: Buying Golf Gear Online

We can't finish our tour of the Web without trying to sell you something. In addition to golf hangouts and course guides, cyberspace offers a plethora of great pro shops. Every major manufacturer (and even some unusual minor ones) has a presence on the web, so don't hesitate to check out such sites as CallawayGolf.com, NikeGolf.com, Ping.com, TaylorMadeGolf.com and Titleist.com.au. Many of the cyber-hangouts listed earlier in this chapter offer links to their own pro shops as well.

One caveat before you jump online with credit card in hand: These days, the fitting process for golf clubs is so advanced and so beneficial for even weekend golfers that you would be mad not to be correctly fitted for clubs before you buy a set. While it is possible to find bargains on the internet, you take a risk that the clubs you buy aren't suited to your swing or your game. You'll almost certainly be better off in the long run to restrict your online buying to golf accessories only and make all your club purchases at a reputable golf store or from your local PGA professional.

The following sites specialise in bringing you good prices on brand-name new and used products.

eBay

The giant web marketplace has become one of the hubs of equipment sales. At eBay's golf section (shop.ebay.com/Golf), you'll find not only tonnes of golf balls and clubs, often at great prices, but also clothing, carts, games and memorabilia, not to mention golf-themed humidors, candles, hip flasks and plenty of other stuff you never knew existed. But act fast: The last time we looked, there were only 6 hours and 17 minutes left to buy that Betty Boop putter cover we found . . . on page 1 of 5,907 pages of golf stuff.

GolfDiscount.com

With a homepage so busy it might give you eyestrain, GolfDiscount.com practically shouts VALUE! For more than 30 years this online bazaar has helped golfers buy equipment at low, low prices. The site even dedicates a blog page to feedback from satisfied customers. With great prices on all the top brands and an online golf expert for recommendations, questions and prices, GolfDiscount.com is hard to beat.

Nevada Bob's Golf

With more than 100 stores worldwide, Nevada Bob's is a colossus of golf equipment. A no-frills site (Nevadabobs.com) directs you to stores in your area, where you'll find all the leading brands plus products designed by major vendors exclusively for Nevada Bob's. There's also a terrific program for junior players: When juniors purchase a set of clubs, Nevada Bob's gives them half the money back when they grow out of those clubs and buy a new set.

Golf Blogs: Welcome to the Golfosphere

Lately it seems everybody's talking golf. Mainly online, where every tournament, every shot and every golfer's quote is met by a thousand comments in the blogosphere. How can you filter the wisdom from the blablabla.com? Let us be your guide.

Iseekgolf.com

One of the richest sources of blogorhhoea (and we mean that in a good way), Iseekgolf.com is a popular source of instant opinion, jokes, games, course reviews and just about everything else a golf fan could want. Founded in Australia by Australians, it's fast becoming a national golf treasure.

Thegolfblog.com

Topical and opinionated, if a little heavy on the golf-hotties videos, this is one of the heavy hitters in a fast-changing e-landscape. If you like it, make sure you hit the Twitter icon for a steady stream of golfblog tweets.

GeoffShackelford.com

Shackelford has been called 'the Herbert Warren Wind of golf bloggers' by no less than *Sports Illustrated*, the magazine that employed legendary golf writer Wind. He isn't a bells-and-whistles blogger, but a thinker, an expert at filtering out the noise of golf news and presenting the stuff that counts. Shackelford's particularly sharp about golf-course design . . . and pretty much everything else. If only he'd put a 'Search' box on his homepage!

A Walk in the Park

Jay Flemma didn't start out as a golf writer. An entertainment lawyer, Flemma was a passionate golfer dying to write about the game. Which he does at Jayflemma.thegolfspace.com, with unparalleled panache. In addition to being a keen observer of golf trends and one of the better course-design critics out there, he may be the game's best poet. If you don't believe us, Google 'St Padraig and the Monster'.

Part VI
The Part of Tens

'Too much backswing . . . and you should tighten your grip a smidgen.'

In this part . . .

In this section of the book we asked Australian golf legend Brett Ogle to give you the lowdown on some of his favourite male and female golfers. He also tells us about his favourite golf courses in Australia and New Zealand, as well as in other parts of the world.

Brett turned professional in 1985 and quickly found success with 13 professional tour wins, including two on the biggest circuit of all: USPGA Tour. His insights into the best players and courses are interesting and informative.

Chapter 20

Brett Ogle's Ten Favourite Courses in Australia and New Zealand

In This Chapter

- The Australian
- Barnbougle Dunes
- Cape Kidnappers
- Gulf Harbour
- Lake Karrinyup
- Magenta Shores
- Metropolitan
- Paraparaumu
- Royal Adelaide
- Royal Melbourne

When I was asked to choose my ten favourite Australasian courses I thought, boy, there are 50 that I could rattle off! Every state in Australia and through the North and South Islands of New Zealand has a handful of top-quality tracks. The courses I have chosen I either have fond memories of or thoroughly enjoyed playing over the years. Some of these are private courses, so you can't just walk off the street for a game, but knowing a member will certainly help. The others are public courses so getting on won't be a problem. Either way I know the memory of playing on these courses will last you a lifetime, as it has done with me.

The Australian (Kensington, New South Wales)

I have always rated The Australian Golf Club in the heart of Sydney as one of the three toughest courses in Australia. Kerry Packer brought in Jack Nicklaus to redesign the Kensington course in the mid-1970s and what a test it provides. From the time you step onto the first tee to completing the 18th you have used every club in your bag and as is the case with all Jack Nicklaus designed courses, the course makes you think about which side of the fairway you need to attack the flag from. Once you have negotiated that, you still have to deal with rather small undulating greens that can be quite speedy at times. If you play to your handicap around here you know you have played some really good golf.

Barnbougle Dunes (Bridport, Tasmania)

Built in 2004, Barnbougle Dunes is on the north-east coast of Tasmania. This superb links-style course has it all. From the awesome onsite accommodation to the tranquil and serene surroundings, it is like heaven on earth. Based on the wild rugged coastline of Scotland and Ireland, Barnbougle Dunes is without a doubt worth the trip to tee up. Voted as Australia's number one public course and inside the top 35 courses in the world, Barnbougle Dunes has certainly earned its reputation. The new course, the Lost Farm, opened at the end of 2010, so there are now 36 top-quality holes to choose from.

Cape Kidnappers (North Island, New Zealand)

It wouldn't be a top ten if we didn't have one of the top golf course architects of the last ten years, Tom Doak, in there. His Cape Kidnappers course in New Zealand is something to behold. The course sits high above cliff tops and every hole has magnificent views of the Pacific Ocean. Finished in 2004, this spectacular course has already been voted in the top 50 courses in the world by *Golf Magazine*. Being right on the ocean, the wind is a major factor, so being able to control your ball is a must. The property also has some superb accommodation, with a luxury lodge and stunning suites which make for the perfect getaway.

Gulf Harbour (North Island, New Zealand)

When choosing my top ten I couldn't go past the Robert Trent Jones Jr-designed Gulf Harbour, which is just a hop, skip and a jump north of Auckland. It measures just 6,400 metres from the back tips, which by today's standard isn't that long, but the beauty of the course is it has four different selections of tees for the golfer to choose from. One of the many intriguing features of Gulf Harbour is the risk and reward type holes that it has, with none better than the 300 metre, par 4 seventh. Since the course was completed in 1997 many golfers have made comparisons to the famed Pebble Beach Golf Links.

Lake Karrinyup (Perth, Western Australia)

Lake Karrinyup is one of the most beautiful golf courses that I have ever seen. It is widely regarded as Western Australia's premier course and consistently ranks among the top 20 in Australia. The magnificent bushland setting is so peaceful and serene it makes you feel like you're playing on another planet. Quite often kangaroos lie around the edge of the fairways and seem so friendly you could walk up and pat them. The superb couch fairways and bent grass greens are some of the best you will find. Lake Karrinyup's not one of the longest courses around, but you must be deadly accurate on the tight tree-lined fairways.

Magenta Shores (Central Coast, New South Wales)

One of the new courses that have bobbed up in the past ten years is the Scottish-links-style Magenta Shores Country Club. Just an hour and a half drive from Sydney, this spectacular course boasts two nines that are very different. The front nine holes run along the coastal dunes with stunning views of the Pacific Ocean on most of the holes, while the back nine continue through the rolling landscape, with four of the holes cut into the adjoining national park. The thinking golfer will really enjoy this course as it calls for imagination in your shot making, as well as having to use every club in your bag.

Metropolitan (Oakleigh, Victoria)

Every year I rate Metropolitan my number one course in Australia. Its beautiful couch fairways and fast but fair bent grass greens make this course a treat to play. I usually put courses at the top of my list when you use every club in the bag and 'Metro' does just that. It has been host to many tournaments over the years, including Australian opens with the likes of Gene Sarazen, Peter Thomson, Greg Norman, Jack Newton and Lee Westwood all hoisting the coveted trophy. In 1997 Greg Norman said the fairways at Metropolitan were the best he had ever played. All in all it's a tough challenge, but if you get the chance to play grab it and run.

Paraparaumu (North Island, New Zealand)

One of the oldest golf courses in New Zealand, Paraparaumu was designed in 1949 by Alex Russell, one-time partner of renowned golf course architect Dr Alister MacKenzie. Over the years it has hosted a dozen New Zealand Open Championships. I played a couple of those championships and I, like many, regard Paraparaumu as one of the best links courses in the southern hemisphere. Just 30 minutes outside New Zealand's capital, Wellington, it sits right on the beach and is prone to windy conditions, which makes it a great test. This is one course not to be missed!

Royal Adelaide (Seaton, South Australia)

I have always rated Royal Adelaide as one of my three favourite golf courses in Australasia, probably because I was lucky enough to win back-to-back South Australian Opens there in the 1990s and also won the Asia–Pacific Amateur in 1985. Legendary golf course architect Dr Alister MacKenzie helped design this beauty in 1926 and although the layout has been slightly revamped over the years, the natural feel of a links course still prevails. Royal Adelaide has a wonderful array of holes ranging from the 266 metre, par 4 third hole, to the 205 metre, par 3 12th hole which has a green no bigger than the bonnet of a car. The course is always in great condition but if the wind blows, look out: There aren't many trees so there's nowhere to hide.

Royal Melbourne (Black Rock, Victoria)

The Melbourne sandbelt is a vein of sandy loam subsoil in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs where you will find some of the world's finest courses, including Kingston Heath, Commonwealth, Yarra Yarra and Victoria, but the standout is Royal Melbourne Golf Club. Featuring the East and West courses, it has 36 holes of beautiful rolling landscape. The composite course, which is used for tournament play and is made up of 12 holes from the West and six from the East, is voted in the top ten courses in the world each year. It is renowned for hosting many tournaments including Australian opens. Royal Melbourne hosted the President's Cup in 1998 and again in 2011.

Chapter 21

Brett Ogle's Ten Favourite Courses Worldwide

In This Chapter

- Augusta National
- Ballybunion
- Mission Hills
- Pebble Beach
- Portmarnock
- Royal Birkdale
- St Andrews
- Shinnecock Hills
- Spyglass Hill
- Sunningdale

I often think how lucky I am to play golf for a living and travel the world seeing the best courses week in and week out. I've chosen some of the best courses that I've played. Most of them are public courses so getting on won't be a problem.

Narrowing the list to ten courses was tough. If you get a chance to play any of these golf courses good luck, I'm sure you'll enjoy them.

Augusta National (Augusta, Georgia)

I know what you're thinking: How do we get on there? Well if you know one of the rich members (200 of them) you have a chance, but if you don't, then tune in every April like me and watch the US Masters on TV. I was lucky enough to play two Masters in the mid-1990s and boy, what a place! You don't get to see how hilly this place is on TV but it's like playing on the side of a cliff. With greens that seem to have elephants buried in them and are faster than lino, Augusta tests your nerve.

Ballybunion (County Kerry, Ireland)

There are so many great courses throughout Ireland but Ballybunion is definitely the pick of them. Right on the Atlantic Ocean this course looks like it was there before humans evolved. The great Tom Watson said of Ballybunion 'It is a course on which many golf architects should live and play before they build a golf course'. I agree that this course is a genuine masterpiece.

Mission Hills (Shenzhen, China)

I first travelled to Mission Hills in 1995 when Robert Allenby and I were selected to represent Australia at the World Cup of Golf (we finished runners-up to Davis Love III and Fred Couples). It was the first time that China had hosted this tournament. Back then there was just one course, which was the Jack Nicklaus designed layout. Since then another 11 courses have been built, including designs by Annika Sorenstam, Greg Norman and Nick Faldo. It has now become a mini city with superb accommodation and fine dining. This place should definitely be on your list of golfing travels.

Pebble Beach (Monterey, California)

Well, what can you say about this place! As a professional there are three courses in the world of golf that you want to win on: St Andrews (Old Course), Augusta and Pebble Beach. I was fortunate enough to win the 1993 AT&T National Pebble Beach Pro-Am and I don't think there is a prettier place on the planet than the Monterey coastline. Make sure you stop in and play this classic, it won't disappoint.

Portmarnock (County Dublin, Ireland)

I played three Irish Opens at Portmarnock Golf Club in the late 1980s and each time I teed up I wanted to play more. It's not one of these boring seaside courses that runs up and down; the holes seemingly go in different directions which makes it special. Portmarnock has one of the best stretches of finishing holes I've ever played, starting with the 170 metre, par 3 15th. This stunning hole sits right on the edge of the beach so anything right is out of bounds, while if you miss it left a devilish pitch shot is needed. Walking off this hole with a par is a real bonus.

Royal Birkdale (Southport, England)

Royal Birkdale is consistently ranked the number one course in England. It's hosted numerous open championships over the years including the 1991 Open which I played. I fired a 4 under par 66 in the third round and it felt like 60 anywhere else. It has five par 4s that measure more than 400 metres and if the wind blows off the Irish Sea, hang on to your hat.

St Andrews Old Course (St Andrews, Scotland)

I played two British opens on the Old Course, in 1990 and again in 1995. My first practice round was in calm conditions; I breezed around in 64 and thought, 'This is pretty easy'. Well I never played the course again in calm conditions and only broke par once. Little pot bunkers that are strategically placed and no bigger than the average bathroom, and greens the size of a football field make this an intriguing place. And when the wind blows and the R&A start putting the flags behind the bunkers it changes the whole golf course. Still, St Andrews is a lot of fun to play and the memory will last a lifetime.

Shinnecock Hills (Southampton, New York)

The first time I saw Shinnecock Hills Golf Club was when I pre-qualified and made it through to play in the US Open in 1995. All the way out on Long Island, this masterpiece is a true Scottish-links-style course and after I played my first 18 there I walked off and thought, 'How good is this, a real ball striker's golf course'. Shinnecock Hills has magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean and if the wind blows, just breaking 80 is a feat.

Spyglass Hill (Monterey, California)

Always ranked inside the top five best public courses in the US, Spyglass Hill is a course that you must play. On the rotation for the AT&T National Pebble Beach Pro-Am on the USPGA Tour, this par 72 has a stroke rating of 75.5. The views are stunning, with the first five holes looking straight at the Pacific Ocean while the final 13 holes are all cut into the forest. In 1993 when I won the Pebble Beach tournament I shot 68 around here and played my absolute socks off. Bring your game, it's a great test!

Sunningdale (Berkshire, England)

When I played the European tour and lived in England I used to practise quite a bit at Sunningdale. It has two courses to choose from but the Old Course is a special treat and has hosted many of Europe's big events such as European Opens, which I played. Most of the holes are flanked by massive pine, birch and oak trees so you rarely see another hole while you're playing your own. The course is always ranked inside the top 30 in the world and deservedly so.

Chapter 22

Brett Ogle's Ten Favourite Male Players

In This Chapter

- Seve Ballesteros
- Ernie Els
- Nick Faldo
- Bobby Jones
- Phil Mickelson
- Jack Nicklaus
- Arnold Palmer
- Gary Player
- Tom Watson
- Tiger Woods

It was a tough choice putting together my top ten male players of all time. I thought long and hard about who to put in and who to leave out. Most of these players have done so much for the great game of golf; all golfers owe them a big thank you.

Seve Ballesteros

The flamboyant Spaniard was my idol when I was just starting out in the mid-1970s. As a 19 year old he burst onto the scene when he was runner-up to Johnny Miller at the Open Championship. His erratic game was very similar to the way I played so I tried to model myself on him. He was the master of the short game and one thing that has stood out in my mind was that he learned the game with just a three iron. He went on to win five major championships, three opens and two US Masters, with his victory at Augusta in 1980 being the first by a European player. He was also instrumental in stopping the domination of the Americans at the Ryder Cup in the 1980s.

Ernie Els

I came through at pretty much the same time as Ernie. I remember the first time I heard of him: I was paired with the South African at the Australian Masters in the early 1990s for the first 36 holes. The word was to look out for this guy — he's 6 foot 5 inches, crushes it and has a silky putting stroke to die for. Since then Ernie has proven that he's one of the world's best players, with three majors to his credit. He has continually travelled and supported world golf and 'The Big Easy' is also a top bloke to go with it.

Nick Faldo

Another guy I played alongside and I think is the ultimate professional is Nick Faldo. From 1987 to 1997 Faldo was duelling with Greg Norman as the world's best golfer. Although Norman won more tournaments overall in his career, there is no doubting when it came to the majors Nick Faldo was the one to beat. The Englishman won three US Masters and three Open Championships, with his 1987 victory at Muirfield being typical Faldo. He had 18 pars on the final day to defeat Paul Azinger by a stroke. If there was someone I wanted to rely on to get the job done coming down the stretch of a tournament it would be Faldo 100 per cent.

Bobby Jones

The late, great Bobby Jones gets a run in my top ten because he was the best amateur golfer ever to play the game. The American was never to turn professional, but in many eyes was good enough. During the 1930s he consistently beat the leading professionals such as Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen and Tommy Armour. He is most famous for winning the Grand Slam of his era, which consisted of the US and British Amateur Championships plus the US and British Opens. With Dr Alister MacKenzie, Jones also designed the Augusta National Golf Club course and then went on to be co-founder of the US Masters, which began in 1934.

Phil Mickelson

I put Lefty in my list because quite frankly I have never seen a guy with a better short game than Phil. I've played quite a bit with him over the years and some of the miraculous shots that he plays are simply unbelievable. In a time when it just seemed to be all Tiger, Phil has stood tall, compiling 38 PGA Tour victories on American soil, including four majors.

Jack Nicklaus

Jack Nicklaus turned professional in 1961 and immediately made an impact on the world scene, winning his first major the following year at the US Open. From there Nicklaus won a further 17 majors and dominated golf over a 20-year span, also claiming 73 PGA Tour victories. In my mind, nobody has had a bigger impact on the game of golf than The Golden Bear. One of his most memorable wins was the 1986 US Masters. I remember the press saying that week that Nicklaus was washed up and too old at 46 years of age to win again. Well, he proved them wrong in a big way, sizzling around the back nine at Augusta to claim his 18th and final major championship.

Arnold Palmer

Arnold Palmer was probably the first player to change professional golf to what it is today. Back in the 1950s when golf was starting to be televised, Arnie was at the height of his game and showed the viewer that golf could be exciting to watch. He was hero to many, showing charisma, flare and the uncanny ability when looking down and out in a tournament to find something special when it counted. His loyal legion of fans, 'Arnie's Army', followed his every move. I first met Arnold when I was looking for a property in Orlando back in 1992 and I couldn't believe what a normal type of guy he really was. Now I understand why he is simply known as The King.

Gary Player

Even if it was a top three list you still have to put in one of the all-time greats of the game, Gary Player. The South African is one of only five players to achieve the grand slam. For three decades he was part of the Big Three alongside Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer. Gary has so far won nine majors and more than 160 tournaments worldwide and was really the first international professional to travel the world making a living at golf. He gave all international kids like me the belief that they can mix it on the tough US tour and was also the first to make fitness a way of life, which is a big part of today's professionals' preparation.

Tom Watson

Another player who burst onto the scene in the mid-1970s that I always enjoyed watching was American Tom Watson. He had a swing to die for and a silky putting stroke to go with it. Watson has eight major championships, five of them being British opens. I remember being riveted to my television watching the 1977 Open Championship which was simply known as the 'duel in the sun'. It was one of the best championships of all time, with Watson and Nicklaus going shot for shot over the final 36 holes and Watson finally outlasting Nicklaus by one stroke. It was the turning of the guard as Watson became the player to beat along with Ballesteros.

Tiger Woods

I've been lucky enough in my lifetime to not only play alongside Tiger Woods but watch this talented individual demolish the best players of the modern era. Nobody since Jack Nicklaus some 30 years ago has dominated the game of golf like Tiger. He arrived on the scene in the mid-1990s after a stellar amateur career and I don't think anyone would have predicted what he has done since then. At the end of 2010 he had 71 USPGA Tour victories and 14 major championships to his name and he surely has Jack's record of 18 majors firmly in his sights.

Chapter 23

Brett Ogle's Ten Favourite Female Players

In This Chapter

- Laura Davies
- Juli Inkster
- Se Ri Pak
- Annika Sorenstam
- Jan Stephenson
- Yani Tseng
- Karrie Webb
- Kathy Whitworth
- Mickey Wright
- Babe Didrikson Zaharias

Once again it was a tough choice to narrow it down to my ten favourites. There is one thing in common with all of these ladies though and that is they have done something to change the way that golf is viewed.

Laura Davies

Laura and I turned pro in 1985 so I have seen this wonderful ambassador for the game succeed from one side of the planet to the other. At the end of 2010 Laura had 81 victories worldwide and four majors, and at the age of 47 there are no signs of her letting up just yet.

Juli Inkster

I've always loved watching Juli Inkster play golf and she is one of my favourite players of all time. Turning pro in 1984, it took Juli only five starts on the LPGA Tour to get her first win and the following year she won two of her seven majors. She is still on tour at the age of 50 and I take my hat off to someone that age still giving it to the younger brigade. Go Juli!

Se Ri Pak

I've been lucky enough throughout my career to watch Se Ri Pak duel with both Karrie Webb and Annika Sorenstam. These three were equivalent to Arnie, Jack and Gary in their era. The three women racked up 133 LPGA victories and 22 majors in a short space of time, an incredible achievement considering the depth of the fields. Se Ri was instrumental in starting the influx of South Koreans who have made their way to America.

Annika Sorenstam

Annika Sorenstam was playing at pretty much the same time I was playing. When Annika first burst onto the scene she claimed the US Women's Open as her first LPGA Tour win. Since that time she has added a further nine majors and 72 LPGA Tour victories. One of the funniest things I have ever heard in the world of golf was one of the top players at the time supposedly saying after Annika won eight events in 2001, 'I will eat my hat if she wins that many tournaments in a year again'. Well, the following year the Swede won 11 times. But without a doubt I reckon her biggest thrill was breaking 60 and becoming the first woman to do so in competition.

Jan Stephenson

I've come to know Jan quite well over the years and she certainly changed the way people looked at the LPGA Tour when she was around and playing in the 1970s and 1980s. She took the LPGA Tour to a new level with her glamour and sexy approach. Jan was my female idol growing up and showed all the young Aussies that anyone could mix it and win in America. Jan also had the game to back it up, winning three major championships and more than 25 victories worldwide.

Yani Tseng

I've put the Taiwanese superstar in my list basically because I think she will be the next Annika. At just 22 years of age in 2011 Yani has already earned plenty of respect from her peers, winning three major championships and in just three years on the LPGA Tour has already accumulated five victories. There is no doubt in my mind that Yani will rack up plenty of victories in her career.

Karrie Webb

Karrie is without a doubt the most successful Australian golfer of all time. So far she has racked up seven major championships and more than 50 wins worldwide. She was deservedly inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2005 and was then the youngest at age 30. The Queenslander is also one of only six players who have won the career grand slam, which is winning all the major championships at least once, an awesome feat!

Kathy Whitworth

In my mind this lady was right up there with Annika as the best player of the modern era. She was incredible, winning 82 LPGA Tour events including six majors. One of the amazing things is that from the late 1960s to the end of the 1970s there were only two majors a year, so imagine how many she could have won if there were four a year, as happens today. Another amazing statistic is that Kathy won at least one event every year for 17 years straight, making her an unbelievable talent.

Mickey Wright

Mickey Wright came along long before I started playing golf, but every time the LPGA Tour is mentioned her name comes up. She joined the tour in 1955 and her record speaks for itself. Mickey claimed 82 LPGA Tour victories, including 13 majors and she is the only LPGA Tour player to hold all four majors at the same time, an awesome achievement!

Babe Didrikson Zaharias

Only a handful of people on the planet have really impressed me and one of them is Babe Didrikson Zaharias. She won track and field gold medals at the 1932 Olympic Games and then in a six-year period won 41 golf tournaments, including 10 majors. Female golfers today have Babe to thank for helping to start the LPGA Tour.

Chapter 24

Brett Ogle's Top Ten Golf Tips

In This Chapter

- Perfecting your putt
- Developing hand and club speed
- Better bunker play

I've been around golf courses long enough to know the mistakes that players commonly make. With practice and time these tips will help make you a much more consistent player.

Putting With Your Eyes Closed

Do you always have trouble with judging the speed of putts? Touch and feel are the key ingredients for consistent putting, so here is a great tip to develop these senses. Drop three balls on the green at whatever distance you're struggling with. Now putt to the hole with your eyes closed — it's as easy as that. I guarantee your touch and feel will improve.

Targeting Your Alignment

Amateurs have a hard time lining up their shots before they hit them because they align their bodies to the target first, which is completely wrong. Before taking your stance train yourself to set the clubface to the target first, then take your stance last. Watch the professionals; they do it this way.

Developing Hand Speed

This great tip, which I still use to this day, develops great clubhead speed and faster hands through impact. When practising, put your feet together and hit shots with a short iron. This will also keep your legs from swaying and is great for balance as well.

Releasing the Club

Another great tip for developing clubhead speed through impact is to grip the club with just your right hand (if you're a right-handed player; vice versa if you're a lefty) and hit golf balls. This teaches you to release the club.

Putting Practice

Putting practice should always be fun. A simple drill is to place five tees around the hole a putter length away. Going around the circle, try to make the three putts from one position. When you've achieved that, move to another tee and so on. Once you've done this move the tees back 30 centimetres and do the same again. Keep going back as far as you dare.

Correct Chipping

A common mistake in chipping is taking the club back to low with straight stiff wrists, which results in scooping the ball. Start by setting up with a slightly open stance and clubface, and your weight forward onto your front foot. To generate height you have to hinge your wrists.

Getting the Ball From the Bunker

Bunker play is almost identical to that of a high lofted chip shot. Your weight should be firmly on your front foot. The key to getting the ball out of the sand is cocking or hinging your wrist. If your takeaway is too low you will skinny the shot or hit it heavy.

Practise Before You Play

Many amateurs get straight into the driver when practising before they play. Hit a few shorter clubs before you begin play and stretch as well. That way your rhythm will be better before you tee it up.

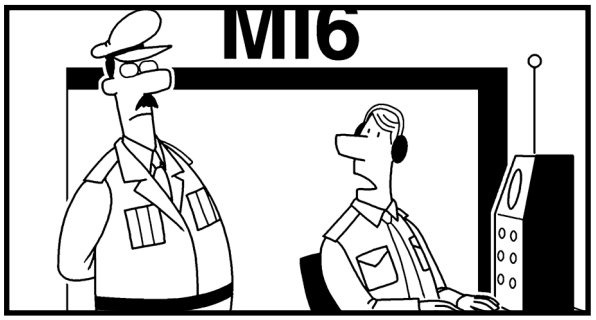
Rotating Your Body

The best baseball pitchers in the game use body rotation when throwing the ball; the worst use almost none. Golf is similar. If you freeze your body at impact you generally just throw the club at the ball which is no good. Turning your body through the shot keeps the club shallow and lets it get under the ball.

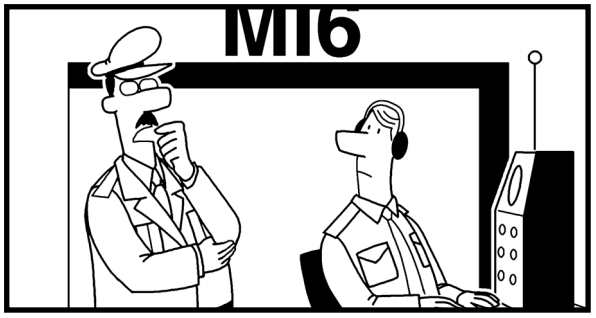
Hitting Into the Wind

Hitting into the wind is one of the toughest shots in golf. Firstly, widen your stance because a wider stance helps you with a shallower swing plane. A steep downward action will cause the ball to balloon. Secondly, shorten your swing. A shorter backswing will help you accelerate through the ball. Finally, take one more club than normal. How many times do you come up short?

Part VII
Appendixes



*'Bond's sending a message, sir . . .
He's let the big dog eat, sclaffed a
wormburner and now he's at the beach.
Should I fire missiles?'*



*'Actually, I think he's just playing
a round of golf.'*

In this part . . .

Golfers have a language all their own. Appendix A lists phrases, terms and slang you need to know as you learn the game. Appendix B lists some of the most popular golf organisations, plus selected golf schools and other resources.

Appendix A

Golf Talk

Five minutes of listening to the conversation in any clubhouse in the world will tell you that golf has a language all its own. Here are the phrases, terms and slang of that language. Hey, if you're going to be a real golfer, you need to sound like one.

These terms are written with right-handed golfers in mind. Lefties will have to think in reverse!

A

A-game: The best a golfer can play. Sometimes you can shoot a good score with your B- or even C-game, but you always hope to bring your A-game to the first tee.

ace: A hole-in-one. Buy a round of drinks for everyone in the clubhouse.

address: The positioning of your body in relation to the ball just before starting your swing.

airswing: Your swing missed the ball! Blame it on an alien's spacecraft radar.

albatross: Term for scoring three under par on one hole (Americans call them *double eagles*). Gary's only had one.

amateur: Someone who plays for fun, not money. Playing golf for fun? What a concept!

angle of approach: The degree at which the clubhead moves either downward or upward into the ball.

approach: Your shot to the green made from anywhere except the tee. Sounds dangerous; really isn't.

apron: The grass around the edge of a green, longer than the grass on the green but shorter than the grass on the fairway. Often called the 'fringe'.

attend: To hold and remove the flagstick as another player putts, usually from some distance.

away: Term used to describe the ball furthest from the hole and, thus, next to be played.

B

back door: The rear of the hole.

back lip: The edge of a bunker that's furthest from the green.

back nine: The second half of your round of golf; the first half is the front nine holes.

backspin: When the ball hits the green and spins back towards the player. Galleries love backspin.

backswing: The part of the swing from the point where the clubhead moves away from the ball to the point where it starts back down again. I hope your backswing is smooth and in balance.

baffy: Old name for a lofted wood; short for 'baffing spoon'.

bail out: You hit a safe shot, for example, well to the right to avoid trouble on the left.

balata: Sap from a tropical tree; the most popular cover for golf balls until high-tech plastics came along.

ball at rest: The ball isn't moving. A study in still life.

ball marker: Small, round object, such as a coin, used to indicate the ball's position on the green.

ball retriever: Long pole with a scoop on the end used to collect balls from water hazards and other undesirable spots. If the grip on your ball retriever is worn out, get some lessons immediately.

ball washer: Found on many tees; a device for cleaning balls.

banana ball: Shot that curves hugely from left to right. *See* slice.

barkie: Bet won by a player making par or better on a hole after hitting a tree.

baseball grip: To hold the club with all ten fingers on the grip.

best ball: A game in which two or more players form a team; the best net score for each team is recorded on the scorecard.

birdie: Score of one under par on a hole.

bisque: Handicap stroke given by one player to another. Receiver may choose which hole it is applied to.

bite (also vampire, bicuspid, overbite): A spin that makes the ball tend to stop rather than roll when it lands.

blade: Not pretty. The leading edge of the club, rather than the clubface, strikes the ball, resulting in a low shot that tends to travel way too far. Also a kind of putter or iron. *See* thin *or* skull.

blast: Aggressive shot from a bunker that displaces a lot of sand.

blind shot: You can't see the spot where you want the ball to land.

block: Shot that flies straight but to the right of the target. *See* push.

bogey: Score of one stroke over par on a hole.

borrow: The amount of curve you must allow for a putt on a sloping green. Or what you need to do if you play a hustler.

bounce: The bottom part of a sand wedge, designed to slide through sand; also what a ball does when it hits the ground — usually in the wrong direction.

boundary: Edge, of course; it confines the space/time continuum. Usually marked by black and white stakes.

brassie: Old name for a 2-wood.

break: *See* borrow.

British Open: Major championship run by Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews — known in Britain as 'the Open' because it was the first one.

bulge: The curve across the face of a driver or fairway wood (or fairway metal).

bump and run: *See* run-up.

bunker: Hazard filled with sand; should not be referred to as a *sand trap.*

burglar: *See* hustler. Avoid burglars at all costs.

buried ball/lie: Part of the ball below the surface of the sand in a bunker.

C

caddie: The person carrying your clubs during your round of golf. The person you fire when you play badly.

caddie master: Person in charge of caddies.

Calamity Jane: The great Bobby Jones's putter.

carry: The distance between a ball's takeoff and landing.

cart: Motorised vehicle used to transport lazy golfers around the course.

casual water: Water other than a water hazard on the course from which you can lift your ball without penalty.

centre-shafted: Putter in which the shaft is joined to the centre of the head.

character builder: Short, meaningful putt; only builds character if you make it.

charting the course: To pace each hole so that you always know how far you are from the hole.

chilli-dip: *See* chunk.

chip: Very short, low-flying shot to the green.

chip-in: A holed chip.

choke: To play poorly because of self-imposed pressure.

choke down: To hold the club lower on the grip. 'Choke up' means the same; don't ask me why.

chunk: A mis-hit chip shot, the clubhead hitting the ground well before it hits the ball.

claw: An innovative grip that takes wrist action out of the putting stroke.

cleat: Spike on the sole of a golf shoe.

cleek: Old term for a variety of iron clubs.

closed face: Clubface pointed to the left of your ultimate target at address or impact. Or clubface pointed skyward at the top of the backswing. Can lead to a shot that goes to the left of the target.

closed stance: Player sets up with the right foot pulled back, away from the ball.

club length: Distance from the end of the grip to the bottom of the clubhead.

clubhouse: Main building at a golf club.

collar: *See* apron.

come-backer: The putt after the preceding effort finished beyond the hole. Tends to get harder to make the older you get.

concede: To give an opponent a putt, hole or match.

core: The centre of a golf ball.

country club: Another name for a golf club, usually open only to members and their guests.

course rating: The difficulty of a course, measured with some silly formula by the Golf Australia organisation.

cross-handed: Grip with the left hand below the right.

crosswind: Breeze blowing from right to left or from left to right.

cup: Container in the hole that holds the flagstick in place.

cuppy lie: When the ball is in a cuplike depression.

cut: Score that eliminates a percentage of the field (or players) from a tournament. Usually made after 36 holes of a 72-hole event. Gary's missed a few in his time.

cut shot: Shot that curves from left to right.

D

dance floor: Slang for *green.*

dawn patrol: The players who tee off early in the day.

dead (body bags, cadaver, on the slab, perdition, jail, tag on his toe, wearing stripes, no pulse — you get the idea): No possible way to pull off this shot!

deep: High clubface from top to bottom.

deuce: A score of two on a given hole.

dimple: Depression on the cover of a golf ball.

divot: Turf displaced by the clubhead during a swing.

dogleg: Hole on which the fairway curves one way or the other.

dormant: Grass on the course is alive but not actively growing. Also Gary's hair.

dormie: In match play, being ahead by the same number of holes as there are holes left to play — for example, five up with only five holes left, or four up with four left.

double bogey: Score of two over par on a hole.

double eagle: *See* albatross.

down: Losing.

downhill lie: When your right foot is higher than your left when you address the ball.

downswing: The part of the swing where the clubhead is moving down, towards the ball.

DQ'd: Disqualified.

drain: To sink a putt.

draw: Shot that curves from right to left.

drive: Shot from teeing ground other than par-3 holes.

drive for show, putt for dough: Old saying implying that putting is more important than driving. It happens to be true.

drive the green: When your drive finishes on the putting surface. Can happen on a short par-4, or when the brakes go out on your cart.

driving range: Place where you can hit practice balls.

drop: Procedure by which you put a ball back into play after it's been lifted and/or replaced in accordance with a rule.

duck hook (shrimp, mallard, quacker): Shot curving severely from right to left.

duffer: Bad player.

dying putt: A putt that barely reaches the hole.

E

eagle: Score of two under par for a hole.

embedded ball: Portion of the ball is below ground.

erosion: Loss of land through water and wind damage — most common on the coasts.

etiquette: Code of conduct.

explode: To play a ball from a bunker moving a large amount of sand. Or what you do if the ball *doesn't* get out of the bunker.

extra holes: Played when a match finishes even (is tied).

F

face: The front of a club or bunker.

face-on: A style of putting that might cure the yips.

fade: Shot that curves gently from left to right.

fairway: The closely mowed turf running from tee to green.

fairway wood: Any wooden club that's not your driver. Nowadays, it's common to hear the term *fairway metal*.

fat: To strike the ground before the ball.

feather: To put a delicate fade on a shot — don't try it yet!

first cut: Strip of rough at the edge of a fairway.

first off: Golfers beginning their round before everyone else.

flag: Piece of cloth attached to the top of a flagstick.

flagstick: The stick with the flag on top, which indicates the location of the cup.

flange: Projecting piece of clubhead behind the sole.

flat: Swing that is less upright than normal and more around the body than up and down.

flatstick: Slang for a putter.

flex: The amount of bend in a shaft.

flier: Shot, usually hit from the rough, that travels way too far past the target.

flub: To hit the ball only a few feet.

fly the green: To hit a shot that lands beyond the putting surface.

follow-through: The part of the swing after the ball has been struck.

fore: What to shout when your ball is headed towards another golfer.

forged irons: Clubs made one by one, without moulds.

forward press: Targetward shift of the hands and perhaps a right knee, just prior to takeaway.

foursome: Depends where you are. In the United States, a group of four playing together. Elsewhere, a pairs format with each player hitting one ball alternately.

free drop: Drop for which no penalty stroke is incurred, generally within one club length of where the ball was.

fried egg: When your ball is partially buried in the sand.

fringe: *See* apron.

frog hair: Slang for *apron*, *fringe* or *collar*.

front nine: The first half of your round of golf; the second half is the back nine.

full swing: Longest swing you make.

G

gallery: Spectators at a tournament.

gimme: A short putt that your opponent doesn't ask you to hit, assuming that you can't possibly miss the shot.

GIR: Slang for *greens in regulation* (greens hit in regulation number of strokes).

glove: Usually worn on the left hand by right-handed players. Helps maintain grip.

Golden Bear: Jack Nicklaus.

golf widow(er): Your significant other after you become addicted to the game!

go to school: Watching your partner's putt and learning from it the line and pace that your putt should have.

good-good: Reciprocal concession of short putts. *See* gimme.

grain: Tendency of grass to lie horizontally towards the sun.

Grand Slam: The four major championships: Masters, US Open, British Open and US PGA Championship.

graphite: Lightweight material used to make shafts and clubheads; the same stuff that's called 'lead' in pencils.

green: The shortest cut grass, where you do your putting.

green fee: The cost to play a round of golf.

green jacket: Prize awarded to the winner of the Masters Tournament in Augusta, Georgia.

greenies: Bet won by player whose first shot finishes closest to the hole on a par 3.

greenside: Close to the green.

greensome: Game in which both players on a team drive off. The better of the two is chosen; then they alternate shots from there.

grip: Piece of rubber/leather on the end of a club. Or your hold on the club.

grooves: *Scoring* (the set of shallow notches) on the clubface.

gross score: Actual score shot before a handicap is deducted.

ground the club: The process of placing the clubhead behind the ball at address, generally touching the bottom of the grass.

ground under repair: Area on the course being worked on by the superintendent, generally marked by white lines, from which you may drop your ball without penalty.

gutta percha: Material used to manufacture golf balls in the 19th century.

H

hacker: Poor player.

half: Tied hole.

half shot: Improvised shot with ordinarily too much club for the distance.

halve: To tie a hole.

ham-and-egging: When you and your partner play well on alternate holes, forming an effective team.

handicap: Number of strokes over par a golfer is expected to score for 18 holes. For example, a player whose handicap is 16 is expected to shoot 88 on a par-72 course, or 16 strokes over par.

hanging lie: Your ball is on a slope, lying either above or below your feet.

hardpan: Very firm turf.

hazard: Can be either sand or water. Don't ground your club in hazards — it's against the rules!

head cover: Protection for the clubhead, usually used on woods.

heel: End of the clubhead closest to the shaft.

hickory: Wood from which shafts used to be made.

high side: Area above the hole on a sloping green.

hole: Your ultimate 10.8 centimetre wide target.

hole-high: Level with the hole.

hole-in-one: *See* ace.

hole out: Complete play on hole.

home green: The green on the 18th hole.

honour: When you score lowest on a given hole, thus earning the right to tee up first on the next tee.

hood: Tilting the toe end of the club towards the hole. To hood a club lessens the loft and generally produces a right-to-left shot.

hook: Shot that curves severely from right to left.

horseshoe: When the ball goes around the edge of the cup and comes back towards you. Painful!

hosel: Curved area where the clubhead connects with the shaft.

hustler: An amateur golfer who plays for a living. Plays better than he claims to be. Usually leaves your wallet lighter.

hybrid: A club similar to a fairway wood, designed to get the ball airborne quickly; many players prefer hybrids to 2-, 3- and 4-irons.

I

impact: Moment when the club strikes the ball.

impediment: Loose debris that you can remove from around your ball as long as the ball doesn't move.

Impregnable Quadrilateral: The Grand Slam.

improve your lie: To move the ball to make a shot easier. Illegal unless local rules dictate otherwise.

in play: Within the confines of the course (not out-of-bounds).

in your pocket: After you've picked up the ball! (Generally after you finish a hole without holing out.)

inside: Area on your side of a line drawn from the ball to the target.

inside-out: Clubhead moves through the impact area on a line to the right of the target. Most tour players do this. *See* outside-in.

intended line: The path on which you imagine the ball flying from club to target.

interlocking: Type of grip where the little finger of the right hand is entwined with the index finger of the left.

investment cast: Clubs made from a mould.

J

jail: Slang for when you and your ball are in very deep trouble. In golf jail, the bars are often made of bark.

jigger: Old term for a 4-iron. Also a great little pub to the right of the 17th fairway at St Andrews.

jungle: Slang for heavy *rough* or an unprepared area of long grass.

junk: Enjoyable golf wagers on such things as hitting the green in one shot, getting up and down from a bunker, or making par after hitting a tree.

K

kick: Another term for *bounce.*

kickpoint: The spot on a club's shaft that twists the most during the swing.

kill: To hit a long shot.

L

ladies' day: Time when a course is reserved for golfers of the female persuasion.

lag: A long putt hit with the intent of leaving the ball close to the cup.

laid off: When the club points to the left of the target at the top of the backswing.

lateral hazard: Water hazard marked by red stakes and usually parallel to the fairway.

lay-up: Conservatively played shot to avoid possible trouble.

leader board: Place where the lowest scores in a tournament are posted. Gary doesn't stay on the leader board too long. In fact, when the scorers are putting up the *d* in *McCord,* they're usually taking down the *M.*

leak: Ball drifting to the right during flight.

lie: Where your ball is on the ground. Also, the angle at which the club shaft extends from the head.

lift: What you do before you drop.

line: The path of a shot to the hole.

line up: To stand behind a shot to take aim.

links: A seaside course. Don't expect trees.

lip: Edge of a cup or bunker.

lip-out: When the ball touches the edge of the cup but doesn't drop in.

lob: A short, high shot that lands softly.

local knowledge: What the members know and you don't.

local rules: Set of rules determined by the members, rules committee or course professional.

loft: The degree at which a clubface is angled upward.

long game: Shots hit with long irons and woods. Also could be John Daly's game.

loop: Slang for *to caddy.* Or a round of golf. Or a change in the path of the clubhead during the swing.

low handicapper: Good player.

low side: Area below the hole on a sloping green.

LPGA: Ladies Professional Golf Association.

M

make: Hole a shot.

makeable: Shot with a good chance of being holed.

mallet: Putter with a wide head.

mark: To indicate the position of the ball with a small, round, flat object, such as a coin, usually on the green.

marker: Small, round object, such as a coin, placed behind the ball to indicate its position when you lift it. Or the person keeping score.

marshal: Person controlling the crowd at a tournament.

mashie: Old term for a 5-iron.

mashie-niblick: Old term for a 7-iron.

Masters: First major tournament of each calendar year. Always played at Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia. The one tournament Gary can't go to.

match of cards: Comparing your scorecard to your opponent's to see who won.

match play: Game played between two sides. The side that wins the most holes wins the match.

matched set: Clubs designed to look and feel the same.

medal play: Game played between any number of players. The player with the lowest score wins (also called *stroke play*).

metal wood: Driver or fairway 'wood' made of metal.

miniature course: Putting course.

misclub: To use the wrong club for the distance.

misread: To take the wrong line on a putt.

miss the cut: To take too many strokes for the first 36 holes of a 72-hole event and be eliminated. Gary did this once or thrice.

mixed foursome: Two men, two women.

model swing: Perfect motion.

MOI: Abbreviation for *moment of inertia*; in clubs, it means resistance to twisting at impact.

mulligan: Second attempt at a shot, usually played on the first tee. This is illegal.

municipal course: A course owned by the local government and, thus, open to the public. Also known as *munis*, municipal courses generally have lower green fees than privately owned public courses.

N

nassau: Bet in which a round of 18 holes is divided into three — front nine, back nine and full 18.

net score: Score for a hole or round after handicap strokes are deducted.

never up, never in: Annoying saying coined for putts that finish short of the hole.

niblick: Old term for a 9-iron.

nine: Half of a course.

19th hole: The clubhouse bar.

O

OB: Out-of-bounds.

off-centre hit: A less than solid strike.

offset: Club with the head set farther behind the shaft than normal.

one-putt: To take only a single putt on a green.

one up: Being one hole ahead in match play.

open face: Clubface aligned to the right of the target at address, or to the right of its path at impact. Can lead to a shot veering to the right.

open stance: Player sets up with the left foot pulled back, away from the ball.

open up the hole: When your tee shot leaves the best possible angle for the next shot to the green.

order of play: Who plays when.

out-of-bounds: Area outside the boundaries of the course, usually marked with white posts with black tops. When a ball finishes OB the player must return to the original spot and play another ball under penalty of one stroke. He or she thus loses stroke and distance.

outside: Area on the far side of the ball.

outside-in: Swing path followed by the clubhead into the ball from outside the ball-target line. *See* inside-out.

over the green: Ball hit too far.

overclub: To use a club that will hit the ball too far.

overcooked: An approach shot that zooms onto — and over — the green.

overlapping: A type of grip where the little finger of the right hand lies over the index finger of the left hand.

P

pairings: Groups of two players.

par: The score a good player would expect to make on a hole or round.

partner: A player on your side.

penal: Difficult.

persimmon: A wood from which wooden clubs were made before the age of metal woods.

PGA: Professional Golfers' Association.

piccolo grip: A very loose hold on the club, especially at the top of the backswing.

pigeon: An opponent you should beat with ease.

pin: Another word for *flagstick*.

pin-high: *See* hole-high.

pin placement: The location of the hole on the green.

pitch: A short, high approach shot. Doesn't run much on landing.

pitch and putt: A short course. Or getting down in two strokes from off the green.

pitch and run: Varies from a pitch in that it flies lower and runs more.

pitching-niblick: Old term for an 8-iron.

pivot: The body turn during the swing.

plane: The arc of the swing.

play through: What you do when the group in front of you invites you to pass.

playoff: Two or more players play extra holes to break a tie.

plugged lie: When the ball finishes half-buried in the turf or a bunker.

plumb-bob: Lining up a putt with one eye closed and the putter held vertically in front of the face.

pop-up: High, short shot. Also called a sky ball.

pot bunker: Small, steeply faced bunker.

practice green: Place for working on your putting.

preferred lies: Temporary rule that allows you to move the ball to a more favourable position because of abnormally wet conditions.

press: You've lost your match, but you want your money back. This new bet takes place over any remaining holes.

private club: A club open to members and their guests only.

pro-am: A competition in which professional partners team with amateurs.

pro shop: A place where you sign up to start play and can buy balls, clubs and so on.

professional: A golfer who plays or teaches for his or her livelihood.

provisional ball: You think your ball may be lost. To save time, you play another from the same spot before searching for the first ball. If the first ball is lost, the second ball (the provisional ball) is in play.

public course: A golf course open to all.

pull: A straight shot that flies to the left of the target.

punch: A low shot hit with the ball back in the stance and a shorter-than-normal follow-through.

push: A straight shot that flies to the right of the target.

putter: A straight-faced club generally used on the greens.

Q

Q-school: An annual tournament in which aspiring players try to qualify for the tour. The ultimate grind — up to six rounds of fierce pressure.

quail high (stealth, skull, rat-high): Low.

quitting: Not hitting through a shot with conviction.

R

rabbit: A poor player.

rake: A device used to smooth the sand after you leave a bunker.

range: Practice area.

range ball: Generally, a low-quality ball used on a driving range. Range balls often have stripes painted on them; these are sometimes called *stripers*.

rap: To hit a putt firmly.

read the green: To assess the path on which a putt must travel to the hole.

regular: A shaft with normal flex.

regulation: The number of strokes needed to reach the green and have two putts left to make par.

release: The point in the downswing where the wrists uncock.

relief: Where you drop a ball that was in a hazard or affected by an obstruction.

reverse overlap: Putting grip in which the index finger of the left hand overlaps the little finger of the right hand.

rhythm: The tempo of your swing.

rifle a shot: To hit the ball hard, straight and far.

rim the cup: *See* lip-out.

ringer score: Your best-ever score at each hole on the course.

Road Hole: The 17th hole at St Andrews — the hardest hole in the world.

roll: The distance a shot travels after landing.

rough: Area of long grass on either side of the fairway or around the green.

round: Eighteen holes of golf.

Royal and Ancient Golf Club: The organisation that runs the British Open and administers the game for every country outside the USA and Mexico.

rub of the green: Luck.

run: The roll on the ball after landing. *See* roll.

run-up: A type of shot to play when the ground is firm. You bounce the ball onto the green and let it roll to the hole.

S

St Andrews: The home of golf, located in Fife, Scotland.

sand trap: A bunker.

sandbagger: A golfer who lies about his or her ability/handicap to gain an advantage. Also *burglar*.

sandy: Making par after being in a bunker.

scorecard: Where the length, par and rating of each hole is recorded. Also, your score.

scoring: The grooves on the clubface.

scramble: To play erratic golf but still score well. Or a game in which several players tee off and then pick the best shot; all then play their balls from that spot; play continues that way until the team holes the ball. Also called ambrose.

scratch play: No handicaps used in this type of game.

scratch player: A golfer with a 0 handicap.

second cut: Second level of rough, higher than first cut. Some courses have three cuts of rough.

semi-private: A course with members that is also open to the public.

setup: *See* address.

shaft: The part of the club that joins the grip to the head.

shallow: Narrow clubface. Or a flattish angle of attack into the ball.

shank: Shot struck from the club's hosel; flies far to the right of the intended target.

shooting the lights out: To play very well.

short cut: Cut of grass on the fairway or green.

short game: Shots played on and around the green.

shut: Clubface aligned left at address or impact; looking skyward at the top of the backswing. Results in a shot that goes to the left of the target.

sidehill lie: Ball either above or below your feet.

sidesaddle: Putting style where a player faces the hole while making the stroke. *See* face-on.

sink: To make a putt.

sit down (full flaps, pull a hamstring, develop a limp): A polite request for the ball to stop.

skins: Betting game where the lowest score on a hole wins the pot. If the hole is tied, the money carries over to the next hole.

skull: A low shot. *See* blade *or* thin.

sky: Ball flies off the top of the clubface — very high and short.

sleeve of balls: Box of three golf balls.

slice: Shot that curves sharply from left to right.

slope: A measure of the difficulty of a golf course.

smother: To hit the ball with a closed clubface, resulting in a horrible, low, hooky shot.

snake: Long putt.

snap hook: Severe hook.

sole: Bottom of the clubhead.

spade-mashie: Old term for a 6-iron.

spike mark: Mark on the green made by a golf shoe.

spin-out: Legs moving too fast in relation to the upper body on the downswing.

spoon: Old term for a 3-wood.

spot putting: Aiming for a point on the green over which the ball must run if it is to go in the hole.

square: Score of a match is even. Equivalent to 'all square'. Or the clubface and stance are aligned perfectly with the target.

square face: Clubface looking directly at the hole at address/impact.

square grooves: The R&A and USGA banned them from clubfaces.

stableford: Method of scoring by using points rather than strokes.

stance: Position of the feet before the swing.

starter: Person running the order of play from the first tee.

starting time: When you tee off at the first tee.

stick: The pin in the hole.

stiff: A shaft with reduced flex. Or a shot very close to the hole.

stimpmeter: Device used to measure the speed of greens.

stroke: Movement of club with the intent to hit the ball.

stroke hole: Hole at which a player either gives or receives a shot, according to his handicap.

stymie: Ball obstructing your route to the hole — now obsolete.

sudden death: Form of playoff in which the first player to win a hole wins the match or tournament.

superintendent: Person responsible for the upkeep of the course.

surlyn: Material from which golf-ball covers can be made.

swale: Depression or dip in terrain.

sway: To move excessively to the right on the backswing without turning the body.

sweet spot: Perfect point on the clubface with which to strike the ball.

swing plane: Angle at which the club shaft travels around the body during a swing.

swing weight: Measure of a club's head weight relative to its length.

T

takeaway: Early part of the backswing.

tap-in: Very short putt, considered unmissable.

tee: Wooden peg on which the ball is set for the first shot on a hole. Also, the area from which that initial shot is hit.

tee it up: To start play.

teeing ground: Area in which you must tee your ball, between the tee markers and neither in front of them nor more than two club lengths behind them.

tempo: The rhythm of your swing.

temporary green: An alternate putting surface used when the permanent green is being renovated, or used in winter to save wear and tear on the permanent green.

Texas wedge: Putter when used from off the green.

that'll play: A kind reference to a mediocre shot.

thin: To hit the ball around its equator — don't expect much height.

three-putt: Undesired number of strokes on a green.

through the green: The whole course except hazards, tees and greens.

Tiger tee: Slang for the back tee.

tight: Narrow fairway.

tight lie: The ball on bare ground or very short grass.

timing: The pace and sequence of movement in your swing.

titanium: Metal used in lightweight shafts, clubheads and even inside a few golf balls.

top: Ball is struck on or above the equator. *See* thin.

torque: Twisting of the shaft at impact.

tour: Series of tournaments for professionals.

tradesman's entrance: Ball goes in the hole from the rear of the cup.

trajectory: Flight of the ball.

trap: *See* bunker.

triple bogey: Three over par on one hole. Not good.

turn: To make your way to the back nine holes. Or the rotation of the upper body during the backswing and forward swing.

U

uncock: *See* release.

underclub: To take at least one club less than needed for distance.

unplayable lie: You can't hit the ball. A one-stroke penalty is your reward.

up: Ahead in the match. Or the person next to play. Or reaching the hole with a putt.

up and down: To get the ball into the hole in two strokes from off the green.

upright: To swing with a steep vertical plane.

urethane: Synthetic material used in making golf balls, including covers.

USGA: United States Golf Association. The ruling body for golf in the United States and Mexico only.

US Open: National men's golf championship of America.

US Women's Open: National women's golf championship of America.

V

Vardon grip: *See* overlapping.

W

waggle: Movement of the clubhead prior to the swing.

water hazard: Body of water that costs you a shot to escape.

wedge: Lofted club (iron) used for pitching.

whiff: *See* airswing.

whipping: The string that fixed the head of a wooden club to the shaft in the old days.

whippy: A shaft more flexible than normal.

wind-cheater: Low drive.

winter rules: *See* preferred lies.

wood: Material that long clubs used to be made of.

wormburner: Low mis-hit.

Y

yips: When a golfer misses short putts because of nerves, reducing the afflicted unfortunate to jerky little snatches at the ball, the putterhead seemingly possessing a mind of its own.

Appendix B

Golf Organisations

This appendix lists selected golf associations in Australia and New Zealand, covering professional golf, amateur golf, junior golf, course architects and superintendents, and more.

Associations

Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association
Suite 1, Monash Corporate Centre,
752 Blackburn Rd,
Clayton VIC 3168
(03) 9548 8600
www.agcsa.com.au

Australian Ladies Professional Golf
Suite 5, 37 Bundall Rd,
Bundall QLD 4217
(07) 5539 0913
www.alpg.com.au

Golf Australia
Level 3, 95 Coventry St,
South Melbourne VIC 3205
(03) 9626 5050
www.golfaustralia.org.au

Golf New South Wales
1a Duncan St,
Arncliffe NSW 2205
(02) 9505 9105
www.golfnsw.org

Golf Queensland
14 Walden Lane,
Bowen Hills QLD 4006
(07) 3252 8155
www.golfqueensland.org.au

Golf South Australia
249 Henley Beach Rd,
Torrensville SA 5031
(08) 8352 6899
www.golfsa.com.au

Golf Tasmania
2 Queen St,
Bellerive TAS 7018
(03) 6244 3600
www.golftasmania.org.au

Golf Victoria
Unit 1, 21 Howleys Rd,
Notting Hill VIC 3168
(03) 8545 6200
www.golfvic.org.au

Golf Western Australia
Suite 1/5, 49 Melville Pde,
South Perth WA 6151
(08) 9367 2490
www.wagolf.com.au

Graham Marsh Junior Golf Foundation
Suite 1–5, 49 Melville Pde,
South Perth WA 6151
(08) 9474 1005
www.gmjgf.com

The Greg Norman Golf Foundation
Unit 2, 14 Walden Lane,
Bowen Hills QLD 4006
(07) 3216 0552
www.gngf.org.au

Jack Newton Junior Golf
1a Duncan St,
Arncliffe NSW 2205
(02) 9567 7736
www.jnjg.com.au

New Zealand Golf
+64 4385 4330
www.nzga.co.nz

PGA of Australia
Sandhurst Club,
600 Thompson Rd,
Sandhurst VIC 3977
(03) 8320 1911
www.pga.org.au

PGA of New Zealand
Level 1, Quadrant House,
1 Pupuke Rd,
Takapuna, North Shore City 0622
+64 9488 6616
www.pga.org.nz

Society of Australian Golf Course Architects
C/- PO Box 5160,
Robina Town Centre QLD 4230
(07) 5530 3143
www.sagca.org.au

Stuart Appleby Junior Golf
Ground Floor,
Oakleigh Golf Course
Cnr Park Rd and Oakpark Drive,
Oakleigh VIC 3166
(03) 9577 7600
www.stuartappleby.com.au

Appendix C

Golf's Ten Commandments

In This Chapter

- Starting out with golf lessons
- Betting sensibly
- Taking lessons from a pro
- Teeing up the ball

Having been around golf for a while, we've noticed certain sins our friends commit on the course. Knowing not to repeat their errors will help you live a long and peaceful life on the links.

We've racked our feeble brains and jotted down ten tips to keep you from suffering the same cataclysms we see on golf courses all over the world.

Take Some Lessons

If you really want to have fun playing this game, start off with a few lessons to get you on the right track. And, of course, read this book in its entirety. It's amazing what you can do with a clear concept of how to make a golf swing.

Take Enough Club

Gary's constantly playing with amateurs who come up short with their approach shots to the green. For whatever reason, they always choose a club that would get their shot only to the front of the green — even if they were to hit the most solid shot of their lives. You can play smarter than they do: Take a club that you can swing at 80 per cent and still get to the hole. Conserve your energy; you have a long life ahead of you!

If You Can Putt the Ball, Do It

Don't always use a lofted club around the greens. Gary has a friend called 'Flop-Shot Fred' who is always playing high sand-wedge shots around the green, regardless of what the shot calls for. Gary thinks his friend's idol is Phil Mickelson, who can hit those shots straight up in the air. Leave this kind of shot to guys like Phil, who can handle them. Our best advice is to use a less-lofted club that gets the ball rolling as soon as possible. If you can putt the ball, do it.

Keep Your Head Fairly Steady

It's one of those bits of advice every golfer hears: 'Keep your head still!' But it's wrong. Your head should move a little during the swing, especially with the longer clubs. Just try not to move it too much. Moving your head too much leads to all sorts of serious swing flaws. Have someone watch you to see how much you move your head, or watch yourself in the mirror while you take practice swings. Your head should sway slightly back, then forward, along with the motion of your swing.

Be Kind to the Course

In fairways, replace your divot or fill it in with divot mix — the mixture of sand and grass seed you'll find in plastic jugs attached to golf carts. On the green, use a divot-repair tool to fix the mark your ball made when it landed. And for good measure, fix one other pitch mark, too. You'll be a hero to other golfers and to the course superintendent!

Bet Only What You Can Afford to Lose

You can lose friends by betting for more money than you have. Never bet what you can't afford to lose. Our theory is always to bet everything in our pockets except for $20 — enough to pay for the petrol we'd need to get home.

Keep the Ball Low in the Wind

When the wind starts to kick up, you need to adapt. Play the ball back in your stance, put your hands ahead of the ball and keep them ahead of the ball at impact. Keep the ball as low as you can and you'll manage your game much more efficiently. You probably won't lose as many golf balls, either.

Do Not Give Lessons to Your Spouse

Giving golf lessons to your spouse should be a criminal offence. Don't try it! Doing so can only lead to disaster. Invest some money in lessons from a pro instead. Get good instruction and reap the benefit: Peace of mind.

Always Tee It Up on the Tee

Whenever it's legal (in the teeing area), tee the ball up. This game is more fun when the ball's in the air. As Jack Nicklaus once said, 'Through years of experience I have learned that air offers less resistance than dirt.'

Keep Your Wits about You

Even if you've lost the match, lost your last golf ball and gotten lost in the woods, you can still keep one thing: Your sense of humour. Remember: This game is hard enough without blaming yourself for everything. Or for anything! Gary likes to blame his bad shots on magnetic fields from alien spacecraft. Which leads to one of golf's eternal questions: What's *your* excuse?

Appendix D

Ten Immortal Golf Moments

In This Chapter

- The first recorded hole-in-one
- Jack Nicklaus — still golden at age 46
- Annika Sorenstam makes history
- Phil Mickelson jumps for joy

Every year, this great old game generates unforgettable events. It's hard to pick only ten shining moments from the game's glittering history — almost as hard as keeping your head, heart and guts in perfect alignment for 18 holes in a round. Here's our best shot at pinning down the greatest of the great.

Young Tom Morris: It's in the Hole!

We'll start our immortal moments with something we all strive for on every par three hole . . . the hole in one. Who made the first one? Young Tom Morris, that's who.

The son of Old Tom Morris, one of the game's original greats, Young Tom became the youngest victor in a major when he won the 1868 Open Championship, also known as the British Open, at the age of 17. More than 140 years later he still holds that distinction. But Young Tom wasn't finished yet: Just to prove he was no flash in the pan he won the next three Opens to make it four in a row — another record that still stands. He also made 'the big shot' in 1869 at Prestwick's 152-metre 8th hole: The first hole-in-one ever recorded in tournament play!

Nice one, Tommy!

Bobby Jones Wins Golf's Grand Slam

The measure of any professional golfer is: How many majors have you won? That's why Tiger Woods is chasing Jack Nicklaus's record of 18 majors with such intensity. But to win all four in one year would be just about impossible. In 1930 the impossible happened when Bobby Jones completed the 'impregnable quadrilateral' consisting then of the British Amateur, British Open, US Open and finally the US Amateur, where he beat Eugene Homans 8&7 to win the four majors in one year. Jones is still the only person in history to accomplish this feat!

Sarazen's Shot Heard 'Round the World

In the final round of the 1935 Masters, Gene Sarazen hit what is arguably the greatest shot in golf history. Four shots back of Craig Wood, who had just finished his round, Sarazen hit his Turf Rider 4-wood from 200 metres over a pond on Augusta National's par-5 15th hole, and holed the shot for an albatross 2 in front of 25 people including tournament host Bobby Jones. The man they called 'The Squire' went on to defeat Wood in a playoff the next day. Said Sarazen, 'If I hadn't won, it would have been a double eagle [albatross] without feathers.'

Ben Hogan's Courageous Comeback

On a fog-shrouded bridge in Van Horn, Texas, in 1949, a Greyhound bus swerved into oncoming traffic and hit the car driven by professional golfer Ben Hogan. A split-second before the head-on crash, Ben dove across the passenger seat to protect his wife, Valerie. The Hogans survived, but Ben had a broken collarbone, broken ankle, broken ribs and a double fracture of his pelvis. Fifty-nine days later, he left the hospital in a wheelchair. Doctors told him he might never walk again.

Eleven months later, Hogan fought Sam Snead into a tie in the Los Angeles Open, only to lose in a playoff. Six months later he won the 1950 US Open at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, in a playoff against Lloyd Mangrum and George Fazio. Not bad for a guy whose career was supposed to be over!

Arnie's Charge at Cherry Hills

In 1960 they still played two 18-hole rounds on the last day — Saturday — for the US Open title. During lunch between rounds, Arnold Palmer cracked that if he could drive the first hole at Cherry Hills Country Club in Denver, a 316-metre par-4, that afternoon, he might make up a seven-shot deficit and win the tournament. Nobody thought he could do it. Palmer promptly drove the first green, made birdie, shot 65 and held off an ageing Ben Hogan and a youngster in the field, Jack Nicklaus, to claim his first and only US Open.

That day was immortal not only for the best of Palmer's trademark final-round charges, but because it was a confluence of golf greatness: Palmer charging, Hogan's last stand and Nicklaus's intro into professional golf's quest for major titles.

Watson and Nicklaus Duel in the Sun

On the 16th tee at Turnberry during the 1977 British Open, one of the combatants, Tom Watson, turned to the other, Jack Nicklaus, and said 'This is what it's all about, isn't it?' It surely was and when it was over both men had birdied the last hole, Watson shooting 65 to Nicklaus's 66, neither man giving an inch in one of the most dramatic finishes in golf history.

The 'Olden Bear' Prowls Augusta

Jack Nicklaus had already cemented his legend in the sport, winning 17 majors, before the 46-year-old Golden Bear (sometimes called the Olden Bear as he got older) tried to beat the kids at the 1986 Masters. A back-nine score of 30 left the entire field chasing the legend. Gary will never forget that final nine holes. It was his first Masters in the broadcast booth and in his perch near the 14th green he pulled his headset off one ear and listened to the roars that were engulfing the famed pines at Augusta National as Jack made his charge. He was carried to his 18th major victory that April Sunday by a fate that sealed his place at the head of the table in our sport's history.

Tiger Pounces at Pebble Beach

The site of the 100th anniversary of the United States Open: Pebble Beach. The gathering of talent: Unprecedented. The problem was that more than 100 of the world's best golfers were also-rans that week, as they witnessed the finest performance ever seen by a competitor. Tiger Woods, already the number-one player in the world, put on a performance of supergolfer proportions, obliterating the field by 15 shots. He drove the ball longer, hit his irons closer and putted better than anyone had ever seen, leaving the other pros wondering how they were going to compete with him in the future. This performance lasted longer, in the minds of his competitors, than just the four days it took Woods to win the 100th US Open Championship. More like forever.

Annika Sorenstam's Magic Number

The finest player of her generation jolted the golf world by shooting a 59 in the second round of the 2001 Standard Register Ping tournament in Phoenix. By doing so, Annika Sorenstam put the LPGA on her back and lifted it higher in public perception, becoming the first player ever to break 60 in an LPGA event. She ended her career in 2008 with 93 wins worldwide and 10 major championships!

Phil Mickelson's Breakthrough

Coming into Easter Sunday 2004, Phil Mickelson had won 22 US PGA Tour events. And no majors. Chasing that first major title was starting to take a toll on the genial Californian. And then, as if possessed by the certainty that this was his day, he scorched the back nine at Augusta National, until at last he faced a 6-metre putt to win the Masters. Now every golf fan in America seems to pull together, cheering for likeable Lefty to hole that career-making putt. It drops into the cup and Mickelson makes his famous spread-legged leap, to an estimated height of 10 centimetres off the turf, the weight of his burden now lifted with his first major win.

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