

GET DOWN TO BASICS



by Derek James, professional at Southbroom Golf Club, who was voted top PGA teaching pro in 2007

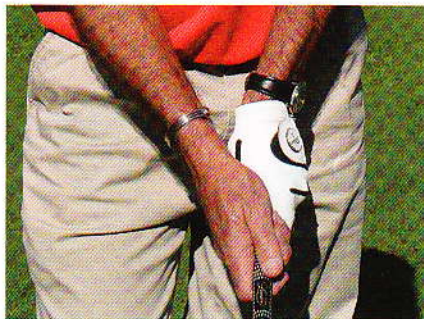
1. Grip and how to use your hands

THE GRIP..

For a right-handed golfer, make sure that the 'V' created by your thumbs and index fingers of both hands face your right shoulder. It is always better to feel that the grip is more in the fingers than the palms, which will then allow you to hold lightly and the wrists will be able to hinge without losing control.

As Jack Nicklaus says 'The back of the left hand should face squarely toward your target and check that the palm of your right hand is aimed in the same direction as the back of the left hand.'

If the two don't match, your hands will work in opposition to each other. The best advice I can give you is that you keep checking your grip with your local PGA professional because a good grip and the correct pressure will transform your game.



My right hand V points at my right shoulder.

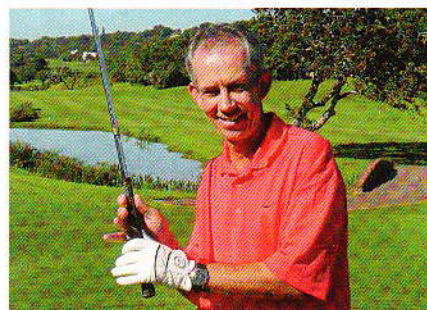
...AND THE HANDS

How to use your hands? Firstly, grip pressure is vital. Grip a cricket ball as hard as you can and try to throw it. You will have no chance, as nothing will work naturally!

My advice here is to hit some small shots and don't try to use your wrists,

or prevent them from working.

Some of the worst advice that I have seen and heard is that of saying your wrists should be firm. The only way that most amateurs keep their wrists firm is by gripping tighter! Lighten up and they should work and a really good, soft grip will help you square the clubface.



This is how lightly I want you to feel the club. It is a wand, not a sledge hammer!

2. How to aim

It is incredible how many amateurs (and even some pros) aim badly. If you aim badly, you cannot possibly hit consistent golf shots. The amateur's biggest curse is coming over the top, which is primarily caused by the feet aiming to the right of the target.

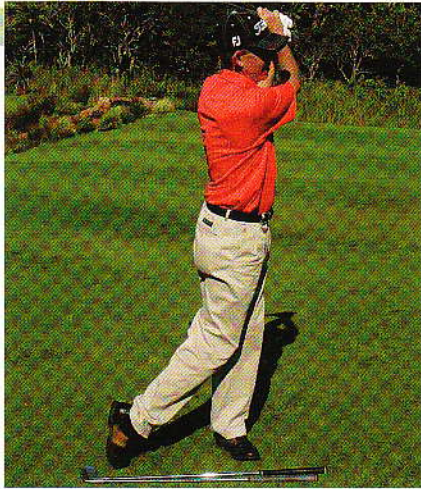
I cannot stress enough that if you lay a golf club along the line of your toes, pointing right of your target, you are in trouble!

When practising, always lie a stick or shaft on the ground halfway between your feet and the ball, pointing slightly left of your target. Then aim your clubface at the target. In other words, your feet are slightly open in the direction of your target. From this position, it is easy to clear your left side, which in turn creates power, accuracy and enables you to transfer your weight.



This close-up shows my feet aiming left and the clubface aiming along the outside shaft at the target. The feeling is 'feet left and hit right.'

3. Transfer your Weight



All the weight has moved to my left foot, with right heel off the ground.

I would like to suggest to the amateur golfers 'Make sure that you never hit a golf shot (other than putting) without your right heel coming off the ground, as you move from contact with the ball to the finish'.

(Here I also go back to aiming because, if you aim, your feet to the right of the target, it is far more difficult to get across onto your left side on the follow through.)

After your grip and aim, the third most important detail to pay attention to is your transfer

of weight. One cannot play the game with just hands and arms. As in throwing a ball, you first have weight on your right side that moves across to your left side in order to generate power. As long as your weight stays on the inside of your right foot while going back, you will not sway. Without a proper transfer of weight, you cannot keep your balance.

Even on short shots, like chipping from just off the green, your weight still shifts forward as you hit, with the right knee moving towards the target.

4. A practice drill

Lastly, the best practice drill that you will ever do, especially for the short game, is to hit balls with your right hand only, if you play right-handed, and with the left hand only, if you

are left-handed. Remember, booking a tune-up lesson with your PGA professional is far less expensive and more beneficial than any new equipment! 🕒



Here, I am casually letting the weight of the club dictate the swing and not manipulating it myself.