

## **Golf Shots & Techniques**

### **DRIVING THE BALL**

While driving the golf ball might seem like a simple process, it really isn't. Some seasoned golfers just look at driving the ball as a simple process. "Grip it and rip it" is a common phrase you can hear on many tee boxes. However, there are some things you can do to get more distance on your drives.

First and foremost, you need to be relaxed when you begin addressing the ball. You must be loose before pulling back the club. Do not tighten up over the golf ball. It is important to waggle the club back and forth a few times in order to create some flow to start the golf swing. This action will promote proper rhythm and tempo.

Teeing the ball higher will aid in hitting the ball farther. By teeing the ball higher, it will help achieve better launch angle and reduce backspin at impact. This will allow the ball to be hit on the up-swing - producing more carry and distance.

One of the most valuable pieces of advice this recreational golfer ever received was to look at the back of the ball. It's easy to take your gaze off of that little white orb, but if you are not looking at the ball before you hit it, you will be more likely to miss it.

You will want to have a wider stance in order to gain more stability in your backswing. Approximately sixty percent of your body weight on the left side to gain a more powerful coil. If you're right handed, point your left toe more inline to the target. You'll need to swing harder and put more of your right hand into hitting the ball, and take advantage of all of the elements – especially the wind, if there is any.

When you're at the top of your backswing, be sure to turn your shoulders a full 90 degrees. Your back should actually be facing the target. Look at John Daly when he drives the golf ball. He has a massive shoulder turn. Many players ask him all the time how he does it. He says it's due to having a sound technique and a wide swing arc. He always has a rhythm to his golf swing and is never out of sync on his swing.

After you reach the top of your backswing, you're ready to begin the downswing. Do not rush your downswing. If you do, you'll have an increased chance of swinging straight down on the ball and eliminating any power you had going. You will also most likely chili dip and miss hit the golf ball. Look at Fred Couples and his downswing. It's nearly flawless.

Make sure to keep your left arm straight during your transition. When you keep your arm straight it enables the club head to remain square and hit the ball properly. Don't have a herky-jerky swing. Keep your golf swing smooth. Picture yourself hitting through the ball, not just to it. Hit hard with your right hand.

Be sure to take advantage of the playing elements to help give you more distance; especially using the wind to your advantage. When you have

the wind at your back, you should tee the golf ball higher than normal. This gives you a higher ball flight with more carry in the air. That means greater distance. When you're playing into the wind you want the opposite. Tee the ball down a little more than usual.

As mentioned before, you will want to look at the ball before hitting it. Some players find this difficult as it makes them lose focus as they concentrate too much on the ball. An easy answer to this problem is to turn your chin to the right and point it about two or three inches behind the ball. Keep it there until impact and then watch the ball sail through the air.

Believe it or not, the pressure you use to grip the club is important in driving the ball longer. Even though you may think that gripping harder and swinging harder produces results that is absolutely incorrect and is probably why you don't get consistent distance.

The great players indicated that the grip pressure should resemble one holding a bird without crushing it but also not letting it go. The tighter you hold the club, the less it will release through the ball creating severe pulls and big ballooning slices. Swinging hard is ok but the hands must be tension free.

Your driving wood should stay along the ground for a least the first 20 to 25 percent of your swing. If your club is lifting up, you will pop the ball up and not get that long boring drive that you see the pros hit regularly when the ball takes off like a missile and slowly climbs to a beautiful height and tracks down the fairway.

Keep the angle on your leading hand. Many amateurs tend to flip the hands forward in an effort to get the ball in the air, but this only retards the effort of having good equipment. The leading hand (left hand for most players, right hand southpaws) should be angled down towards the ball on the downswing.

It's like you are hitting the ball with the back of left hand. If your left hand is flipping up on the downswing, your contact will not be solid and you will get consistent misses with your wood. This tip also starts the ball low and lets it climb on its own through your generated power.

Finish towards the target. Pick a spot on the ground that lines up with your target and from your address stretch your wood towards it. If done correctly, your arms should form a V shape with both arms fully extended. Finish the swing over your left shoulder.

Do you have a tendency to bend your left arm early? That also will retard distance; keep your V as long as possible before it bends at the finish of your swing and you will find yourself getting much more distance.

Speed can be increased by setting the wrists into a cocked position early, and on the downswing keeping the wrists cocked for as late as possible, and then swishing through the ball. This is similar to flicking your wrists when using a badminton, squash, or tennis racket.

Golfers who are inclined to hit at the ball with their hands rather than swinging through the ball find that they lose a lot of power, and hence distance. Your power comes from your body, not from your hands. If you

want to drive the ball further, don't hit the ball with your hands – let the club do the work it was designed to do.

Of course, you will want to choose the right club for the distance of the hole. Obviously, you will want to choose a driver for the longer holes to get maximum distance, but for shorter holes like Par 3s, you will likely want to choose a smaller club like an iron. You will want to try and get as close to the hole as possible, but you also don't want to overshoot the green either.

The best way to know how far you can hit specific clubs is to get on the driving range. Because golf isn't an exact science, there are a lot of variables that come into play with the golf swing. But if you practice a lot, your chances of hitting the ball consistently are much higher. Plus, you will know which club is your hundred yard club and which one is your 50 yard club.

After you have driven the ball, you'll (hopefully) be in the fairway.

## **FAIRWAY SHOTS**

Once you have driven off the tee box, you will probably be faced with a second shot, hopefully from the fairway. Of course, we hope that you've been able to make it to the green, but on longer par 5 holes, that's just not realistic for most golfers.

The lie of the ball in a fairway shot will dictate how you hit your next shot. In some friendly games, your opponents may allow you to put the ball up on some grass. This will emulate, in a way, a tee since you cannot use a

tee with a fairway shot. In tournaments or serious money games, you will probably have to play the ball as it lies, so it's a good idea to know how to hit an effective fairway shot.

Many inexperienced golfers are intimidated by the fairway shot. They will often baby their swing and not hit the ball fully. This is a huge mistake. Golf clubs are designed to work with a full golf swing and do a specific job, so choose a club that matches your distance from the hole and then take a full swing. Don't be afraid that you'll overshoot the hole. If you've picked the right club, you'll get to the green.

Aim your left shoulder (the right one if you're a southpaw) at your target – the flag. Your hands should be in front of the ball at impact. Keep the same swing motions as if you are driving the ball. To help square your clubface, try to touch your left forearm with your right forearm at impact.

If you are in deep grass, the main idea is to get the ball up in the air. That means you will want a club that has a lot of loft. That means an 8 or 9 iron ideally. However, remember that you will most likely not get a lot of distance with these smaller clubs.

When you swing, be sure and follow through after impact. The laws of physics dictate that when you strike the ball, it will be carried through and into the air as your arms bring the club back up.

Your technique on deep grass shots should be geared toward minimizing the intervention of the grass. In other words, you want to hit the ball as cleanly as possible. To do that, you need to move the ball back in your stance.

If, for instance, on a 5-iron shot from the fairway you position the ball off your left heel, move it back to a spot an inch to the right of your heel for a shot from the rough. This ball position should leave your hands slightly ahead of the clubface at address. From that setup you'll tend to swing the club up a bit more vertically on the backswing and return it a bit more steeply to the ball. With this steeper attack the clubface will come down on the ball rather than brush through the grass.

For really deep grass, again, the idea is to minimize the presence of the grass and how it will affect your shot. Once again, play the ball back in your stance, but this time, play it two inches back instead of one, because you're going to have to go down after the ball.

To further increase the steepness of the swing, open your stance a few degrees so that your feet, knees, hips and shoulders align to the left. Your club head should align square to the target line. It's the same basic alignment as for a slice, but when playing a short iron from the rough 1 you won't have to worry about any sideward spin.

Since the grass will grab at your club and close the face: at impact, you'll want an extra-firm grip in your left hand. Alternatively, you can aim the clubface a bit right of your target at address, thereby allowing the grass to turn the face into a square position at impact.

The swing should be an aggressive, forceful one. If you get a kick out of swinging hard, this is the place to enjoy yourself. It's a powerful, steep chop that must go down and through the thick stuff. Be sure to keep the club accelerating through impact; otherwise you'll risk moving the ball only a few