

Games for Learning

Managing the Clubface

The Problem

Your ball flight has too much curve (slices / hooks).



Assuming you are making contact reasonably close to the sweetspot, this means that your clubface is looking too far right / left of your club Path when it hits the ball.

The Lesson

There is a small amount of rotation that occurs at the clubface as we swing the club around our body.

In my experience, the overwhelming majority of golfers are not aware of this, and even fewer think to train behaviours that would help to return the clubface to a suitable position at impact, in order to gain some control over their ball flight.

They work with the flawed assumption that the face will be in the same position when it hits the ball, as it was when they setup to the ball (and so did I, for a long time – you don't know what you don't know, do you?).

Of the jobs that your golf swing is supposed to be delivering for you, hitting the sweetspot onto the ball, and having that sweetspot (clubface) looking in the appropriate direction are 2 of the most important. And both of those are heavily influenced by your forearms, wrists and hands. Let's educate them.

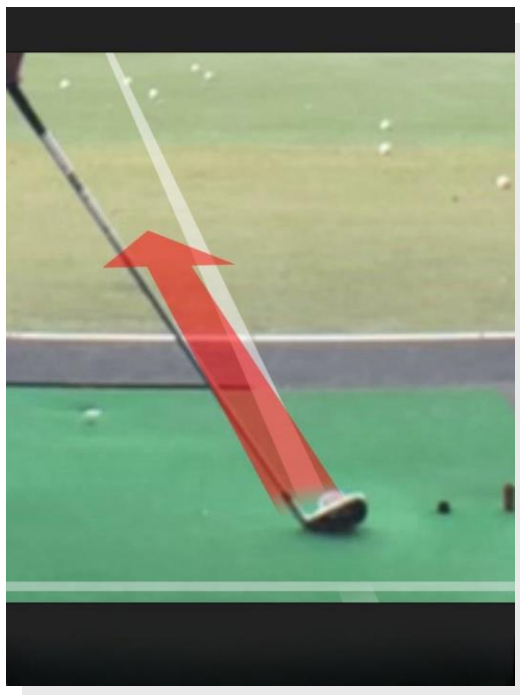


The Game

You will need :

- a middle iron (7i or 8i will be fine)
- 60 balls (6 sets of 10 balls)
- 45-60 minutes

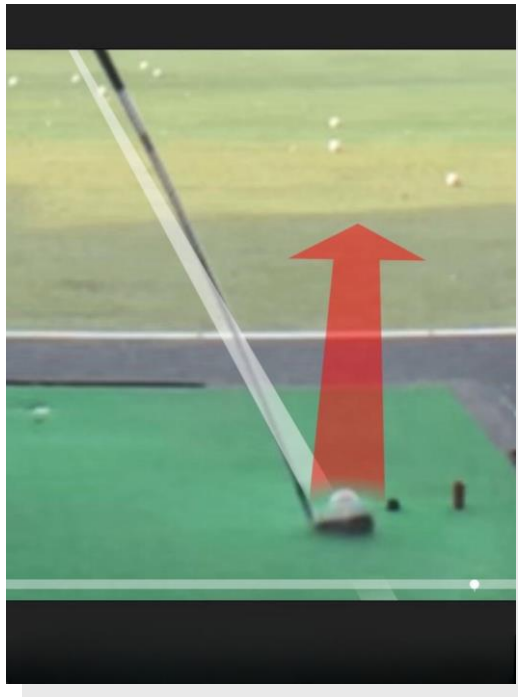
You are going to play 10 shots, where you are trying to hit the ball (deliberately) to the **left** of where your body is aiming.



The exercise is to help you understand, and adjust, how you bring the clubface into impact. You cannot aim your body left, or swing the club to the left, you must start in a neutral position, aiming straight, swinging the club straight, but change where the clubface is aiming when it hits the ball.

See how many points you score out of 10.

Repeat the challenge, but this time hitting to the **right** side on purpose - make the clubface aim right when it hits the ball.



Finally, repeat the challenge but this time hitting **towards your target** - make the clubface aim straight when it hits the ball.

See how many points you score out of 10.

NB : Swing gently, **the goal is clubface position**, not distance.

Once you start scoring 8 or 9 or 10 out of 10s, see if you can put a bit more power into the shot and still achieve the desired outcome ... go up in what feels like 10% increments, **don't try to go from small swings to full power in one step, you won't do it properly, and you almost certainly won't be able to feel what's going on.**

Things to help your discovery process

I'm not suggesting you do every single step listed below – they are ideas for you to explore / places to put your attention. Use them as you see fit.

Start by making a tiny practice swing (about the length of a putting stroke) against a tee with no golf ball on it, and watch the clubface as it hits the tee :

- Was it in the position you wanted (looking left / right / square) 30cm before impact?
- What do your forearms / hands / wrists need to do to get that clubface in position before the clubhead hit the tee?
- Did you “roll” your wrists?
- Did your right hand twist like it would if you were using a screwdriver? Did your left?
- Maybe your left arm dominated the movement?
- What did **you** do to keep the clubhead moving parallel to your body alignment but rotating the face left before it got back to impact?

Have as many rehearsals as you need to move the club correctly at least 3 times in a row, and then do the same thing with a ball there.

Don't worry about "how" you will do this just yet – focus on "what" the clubhead has to do, and learn what the feels are based on that. **Practice the movement and learn the feels, then hit a ball.**

Direct your attention to what happens as you finish the backswing and start the forwardswing movement :

- Did your grip pressure change?
- On a scale of 1-10, what were the tension levels in your shoulders, arms and hands as you finished the backswing and started the downswing? Do you need to calm that tension down?

Then pay attention to what is happening through impact :

- Could you predict where the clubface was looking based on where you felt the back of your left hand / palm of your right hand was looking at the point of contact?
- Can you quantify it? Zero = square clubface, -1 = slightly left, -2 = medium left, -3 = severely left or vice versa for clubface right, 1 = slightly right, 2 = medium right or 3 = severely right.

Repeat the drill – clubface left, then right, then as straight as possible.

What did you learn?

Write down your findings, the notes app on your phone is perfect for this.

How is this supposed to help me on the golf course?

Well, if you can deliver the clubface to the ball in a way that results in a more predictable, consistently better ball flight then you can plan your shots with more certainty;

When the shape of the golf hole fits your shot shape, you can swing with more confidence, knowing there is every likelihood your ball is going to follow the fairway;

If you find yourself in a situation where you need to bend the shot on purpose (to avoid an obstacle for example) you will be able to do it because you have trained it on the driving range already;

If the fade turns into a slice you have a "calibration tool" to calm it back down again – do some practice swings that have the ingredients of a draw in them to get the clubface back to the ball in a more suitable position for your fade, closer to square / less aimed to the right (or vice-versa if your draw has become a hook – clubface closer to square / less left);

