

Games for Learning

Manage Where the Clubhead Touches the Ground

The Problem

You get too many shots where you hit the ground first (or no ground contact at all).

The Lesson

In my experience, the overwhelming majority of golfers are too preoccupied with controlling body parts and not aware enough of what the club is doing / needs to be doing as they swing, especially when it passes through impact.

Whilst it helps to understand how body parts move, and the feels associated with those movements, don't lose sight of the fact that those movements are supposed to be getting the clubface delivered to the ball in a very specific way. There has to be a point to those movements, and that should be related to impact. It has to be functional.

The Game

You will need :

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

Lay the towel down behind the ball, leaving a gap no bigger than the width of your hand between the edge of the towel and the back of the ball.

Play 10 shots, swinging to hit the ball but not the towel.



This exercise is to help you understand, and adjust, how you bring the clubface into impact. You cannot alter your ball position or change your starting positions in any way. Start in neutral positions, ball left of centre in your stance, and then swing the club so that you avoid the towel but sweep / brush the floor starting at the point where the ball is sitting.

How many out of 10 did you score?

NB : Swing gently, **the goal is ground contact at a specific point**, 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) and watch the clubface as it sweeps the floor after the towel :

- What do your arms / hands / wrists need to do to get that end of the club to touch the ground further up than you normally do?
- Where did you have the handle of the club compared to the clubhead when it swept the floor - ahead of it, in line with it or behind it?

Focus specifically on ***what happens as you finish the backswing and start the downswing***, and ***then what happens through impact*** :

- Did your grip pressure change?
- What were the tension levels in your shoulders, arms and hands as you did the swing?
- Do you have more weight on your left or right foot?
- If you delay the unhinging of the wrists does that make a difference?
- Did one arm / hand have more of an influence as you brought the club forward? How so?
- What did ***you*** do to keep the clubhead moving parallel to your body alignment but sweep the floor after the towel?

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. **Practice the movement and learn the feels, then hit a ball.**

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.

How many shots out of the 10 did you do things properly? What did you learn?

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



Alternatives for this game

Option 1

Let's welcome back our old friend "Batiste" (we started with Dr Scholl's Footspray but it gets a little costly when you're using it so frequently. After plenty of testing we settled on the Batiste range of dry shampoos – they dry quickly, they don't make a mess and as an added bonus they make the area smell nice too!).

Sorry Dr Scholl ... if anyone from Batiste ever reads this and wants to send us some product or remunerate us for the endorsement, the product placement and the referrals please get in touch ;-)

Spray a strip on the mat with dry shampoo and place your golf ball at the front (target side) of it.



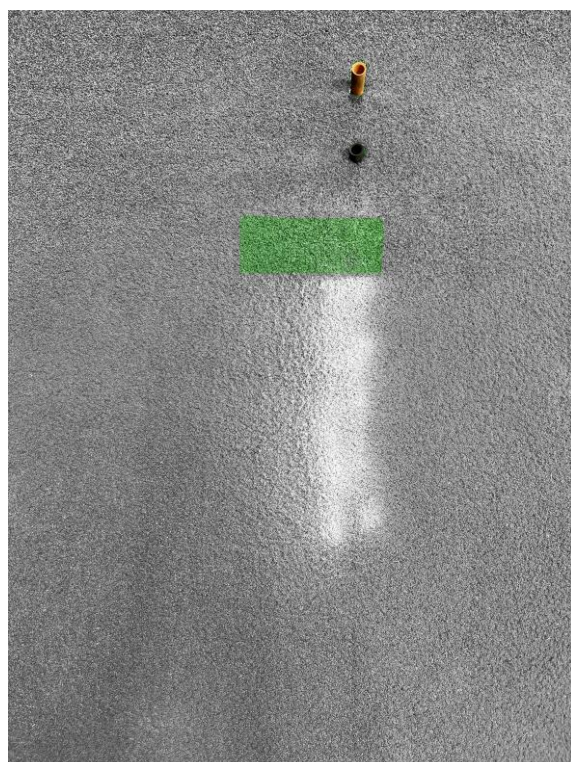
Run through the drill again but this time you are trying to hit the ball and **not** remove any of the powder from the dry shampoo.

Option 2

Spray a strip on the mat with dry shampoo and place your golf ball at the back (non target side) of it.



Run through the drill again but this time you are trying to hit the ball **and remove** some of the powder from the dry shampoo.



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

Controlling where the club makes first contact with the floor is a critical component of quality ball striking and leads to good distance and predictable ball flight. All things we want to be able to do more of.

Most shots will require a “brushing” or “sweeping” action through the ball, but whilst that is particularly effective on tee and fairway shots, you may need to get the club working in more of a “digging” fashion when you are in thick rough / trying to avoid tree roots / ball plugged in a bunker. Knowing how to use the club in these ways, and where you want it to hit the ground is super important.

Effective bunker play and certain finesse shots around the green also require great skill in controlling where the club strikes the floor first - we generally think of “ball first, ground second” contact as the ultimate goal on every shot but that is not always the case.