

Tip #1: Attack Every Putt

Amateur golfers should putt more boldly than the pros. In fact, I think you should never lag a putt - you should try to sink every putt you face.

There are several reasons for this. There are only four ways to miss a putt - long, short, left and right. If you always get the ball to the hole, you eliminate one way. Besides, research has proven that the putt that has the best chance of going in is the one that is struck with sufficient force to carry it 18 inches past the hole.

Along with this goes the psychological side. Think about the last time you missed several putts in a round by hitting them dead in the jaws of the hole but just short. Pretty frustrating, isn't it? Such chronic shortness can get to you, but hitting the ball consistently past the cup is rarely as unsettling.

And remember that if you hit the ball a bit too hard, you can watch the way it rolls as it passes the hole and get an immediate read on the return putt. If you leave it short, however, you deprive yourself of that information. On short putts a bold, firm stroke is best, as it tends to take the guesswork out of the break of the putt.

Furthermore, a bold stroke is a confident stroke, one with built-in acceleration through impact. That type of stroke works on any putting surface, fast or slow, bent or Bermuda. Aggressiveness on the green is also an asset in match play. On Tour, if we sink a long putt it means saving one stroke out of 72 holes. In your weekend nassau, however, a long putt will invariably win you one of those 18 holes, while having a jarring effect on your opponent.



"You should try to sink every putt you face."

Finally, and perhaps most important, amateur players can recover from a short drive with a good approach, or from a short approach with a good pitch. But there is no recovery on the putting green. A putt left short is a stroke lost. So don't cheat yourself in an area where you have every capability to be proficient and every reason to be aggressive. Putt boldly.

Tip #2: Hit Off the Deck

There are a few par 5s that only a long hitter can reach in two, and even then that long hitter has to crush two shots back to back. In such situations, I love to hit my driver off the deck -- or off the turf -- for my second shot.

It's not as tough a shot as it seems, particularly with today's generation of low-profile metal woods. But before you consider this shot, take a hard look at your lie. The ball doesn't have to be in the fairway. In fact, if you have a tight lie, you might not want to pull out the driver. What you want is for the ball to be sitting up, in either the fairway or in light rough, so that at least part of it is higher than the top of your clubface. If so, you have an opportunity to go for it.

Control is extra-important on this shot since there isn't a lot of margin for error. Grip down just a bit to help ensure against a fat shot. On the other hand, you don't want to swing above the ball and top it, so put a bit of extra flex in your knees.

The most important element of this swing is a smooth, long takeaway in which you keep the clubhead close to the ground. If you can take the club back this way, you'll have a good chance of returning it smack into the back of the ball for a clean, strong hit.

To help do this, widen your stance a bit by moving your right foot back but leaving the ball in its usual position in your stance. As you widen your stance in this way, you'll tend to add a bit more weight to your right side so that instead of 50-50 distribution it will be 60-40 in favor of the right. This adjustment will set you up for that long, low takeaway.



"[Hitting off the deck] is not as tough as it seems."

Don't worry about any other adjustments. Simply trust your swing, trust your lie and trust your driver to do the work. Remember that you have a powerful club in your hands, and clean contact is all you want -- you don't need to try to kill the ball. Quite the contrary, on the downswing you should feel as if your upper body is hanging back as your legs drive through impact.

If you can stay behind the ball you'll have the best chance of pushing it forward.

Tip #3: Spin it Out of the Sand

Here's a shot that will stun your friends and opponents. It's also a great alternative when you're faced with one of the game's toughest assignments -- the long bunker shot.

When most golfers are called upon to hit a greenside sand shot of 30 yards or more, they resort to sort of a power blast, taking a huge swing while also trying to minimize the distance they hit behind the ball. For obvious reasons, this is a tricky shot. To pull it off, you need a lot of talent and a lot of guts.

As an alternative, I've developed a sort of secret weapon -- the slicing 8-iron. You can't hit this shot when you have a high lip to clear, but in all other situations I think it's a better shot than the big explosion.

Basically, the idea is to make a big shallow cut across the ball and slice it to the green, where it will spin to the right. You begin by setting up an extremely open stance, while also allowing for the slice by aiming a bit left. As a result, your body will be aligned further to the left than for any other shot in the game. The 8-iron will be wide open and laid back, with the ball positioned off your left instep. Figure on opening the leading edge of the clubface about 45 degrees from square.

Grip the club at its full length and don't be afraid to make a full swing at the ball. Just be sure that you strike the sand about an inch behind the ball. Don't worry about digging too deeply into the sand - your ball position and open clubface will prevent that. If you hit this shot properly the ball will take off well left of the target and fade slightly before it hits the green. Then watch what happens. It will take one bounce, after which the sandpaper sidespin you've applied to the ball will take effect. The ball will spin to the right faster than any other shot. The first time you pull this off you'll amaze yourself. After that you'll amaze everyone else.



Try hitting the a slicing 8-iron instead of the big explosion shot.

- Greg Norman

Tip #4: Swing a Knockout Punch

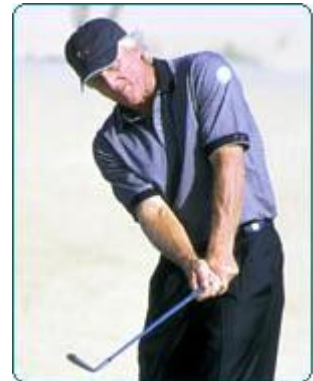
The punch shot is not really a shot at all. It's nothing but a long, hard chip. It may be hit with anything from a 6- or 7-iron to a pitching wedge, depending on the length of the shot and whether you want it to run a long way or stop quickly.

The punch is a wise shot to play on holes where you have a wide expanse of firm fairway leading to an open green, as is often the case on the British and Irish courses. But it's probably most useful in a heavy wind, as its low, boring trajectory is less buffeted by the breeze.

The address position is almost the same as for a chip shot. You grip down on the shaft of the club and play the ball back near the center of your stance, so that your hands are well forward and about two thirds of your weight is on your left side. However, this is one short shot that you may play from a square stance -- there's no need to open up your body for a more vital hit, since your object is to hit the ball with a relatively shallow angle of attack.

Another aspect of the punch shot is that it is played with a relatively fast swing, like a boxing jab. It's a quick back-and-through motion with some snap to it. Keep your wrists out of it, and try to keep the club as low to the ground as possible throughout the swing. The follow-through is very short -- your hands shouldn't move much past your left knee.

Practice this one on the course a few times if you can, to get a feel for the distance the ball goes. Yardage is virtually irrelevant on the punch shot -- you can punch a wedge 100 yards but you can punch a 6-iron the same distance -- so get a feel for the way this shot behaves when hit with each of your clubs.



The punch can be a very wise shot to play.

- Greg Norman

Tip #5: Hitting it High

One of the hardest things for many amateur players to do is to hit the ball high into the air. One reason is the contrary nature of golf -- if you try to hit up on the ball, you'll usually top it.

So do yourself a favor and make no changes in your swing. Just make two minor adjustments in your stance.

First, play the ball slightly forward of its normal position. If you usually position it off your left instep, move it about a ball-width forward, just inside your left instep. Assuming that your normal ball position allows you to hit the ball at the bottom of your downswing, the forward position will ensure that you'll catch it at the beginning of your upswing. Second, redistribute your weight at address, so that you feel a bit more weight on your right side. This will shift your center of gravity -- and your swing center -- behind the ball a bit, which is where it needs to be at impact if you want to achieve a high trajectory.

Then just make a normal swing, the goal of which should be to finish with your hands high. Don't feel as if you have to chase after the ball because it's forward in your stance, and above all, don't try to hit up on it. With the changes you've made at address, you'll do that naturally.

- Greg Norman



Make changes to your address to hit the ball high - naturally.

Tip #6: Get a Handle on Flyer Lies

Most lies in the rough are known as "flyers" because of their tendency to produce shots that fly a lot farther than you intended them to.

I wasn't a professional long before I learned the danger of the dreaded "flyer lie." During the 1980 Australian Open, I had a one-shot lead when I drove my tee shot into the rough on the 17th hole, a par five. I had 260 yards to the green and a downhill lie, so I elected to lay up in front of the green with a 5-iron. As so often happens, in trying to put an extra-smooth swing on the ball, I nailed it dead flush. It jumped out of the rough and flew forever -- not landing short of the green, not landing on the green, but in fact sailing clear over the green and leaving me a full wedge back to the pin. In all, that 5-iron traveled more than 300 yards.

I hung on to win that Open by a stroke, but that shot taught me a valuable lesson -- expect the unexpected in the rough.

So what is it about a flyer lie that creates such distance? It is caused by blades of grass that get between your clubface and ball at impact, which inhibits normal friction and backspin. The ball shoots out of the lie like a high-speed knuckleball. It flies higher and farther than a crisp fairway shot, and with no backspin it hits the ground running.

Virtually every time your ball nestles into light, dry rough, you have a flyer lie. The first thing to remember is to use less club than you would for a fairway shot of the same distance. If from 170 yards you'd normally hit a 5-iron fairway approach, go down to a 6-iron and maybe even a 7-iron from the rough. Today's square-grooved irons minimize the flyer effect somewhat, particularly for stronger players, but you should still take an extra club from flyer lies.

Your technique on this shot 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.

This single change in ball position is all you need to handle a flyer. Just make your normal swing as if you were in the fairway. There's no need to swing any harder or softer or to make any special movements or maneuvers. Just trust your golf swing and apply it confidently to the ball. If you make reasonable contact with this shot, it will fly far and straight.

- Greg Norman

Tip #7: Get Inside Their Head

One of the subtler aspects of aggressive driving involves the gamesmanship that goes on at the tee. When you're in a match, the tee-shot is the opening gambit and sets the stage for the rest of the battle on the hole.

Since I'm a long hitter, I like to have some fun with my opponents. Sometimes on an extremely long hole, if I'm hitting second, I'll take out an iron and lean on it as my opponent gets ready to play his shot. Occasionally I can actually see him thinking, "This hole is 450 yards and Norman's teeing off with a 1-iron. My God, he must be even longer than I thought." If I can get those types of thoughts going through my opponent's mind, he might do anything. Then when my turn comes, I put the iron back and take out my driver.

I do the opposite too. On a tight hole where I know everyone's debating about club selection, I'll quickly take out my driver and waggle it a bit for everyone to see. The other guys then may make the mistake of selecting too much club for the shot. After they hit, I'll put the driver, which I had no intention of hitting, back in the bag and select a more intelligent club.

I like to talk it up on the tee too, especially when I'm playing against a fellow who I know is something of a gamesman himself. I've stepped up to short par-fours and said loudly to my caddie, "Can we get it to the green today?" He'll then say something like, "No problem," both of us knowing full well that we have no intention of trying such a shot. It's all an act for the benefit of the shorter-hitting opponent, just something to get his brainwaves stirring as he prepares for his own tee shot.

But you don't have to be a power-hitter to be able to use gamesmanship. If you hit the ball straight, you can be just as effective. When you're the second to play on a tight hole, you can take out an iron. If your longer-hitting opponent sees you, he may back off his driver. Then, after he hits, you can put the iron back and hit it past him with your driver. You can also talk it up on the tee and put wayward thoughts in a slugger's mind. Try a line such as "That O-B on the right sneaks up fast, doesn't it?" or "Thickest rough on the golf course is on this hole." Believe me, it works.

Of course the most common form of gamesmanship takes place on the tees of par-three holes. I'll never forget the time I used it on a fellow British Open champion. He and I were both in contention in a major Australian event when we got to a par-three hole. The shot was between an 8-iron and a 7-iron. I knew my opponent was debating his choice, and I also knew he had a tendency to be a bag watcher. So, hitting first, I took a 7-iron and gave it a swing which was big and long but was actually quite soft and slow -all arms and no hand action. The ball landed on the front half of the green. He then chose a 7-iron, hit it way over the back of the green, and took four.

Such gamesmanship may seem to stretch the limits of sportsmanship, but the fact is, everyone does it. It's part of the game on Tour. And the top players know how to use it best of all. During the 1986 U.S. Open Lee Trevino got me good. At the 10th hole one day, each of us had a tricky downhill birdie putt. Trevino hit first, and when his putt finished a foot or so past the hole he said to his caddie (for my benefit), "Herman, that is the fastest putt I've seen all year long."

It worked -- I left my approach putt five feet short and then missed the next one.



Expect the unexpected when hitting from the rough.



Lee Trevino's gamesmanship in the 1986 U.S. Open led to a Norman three-putt.

Tip #8: Learn to Love the Sand

Sand play was one of the last aspects of golf I took seriously. It was not until after I started playing the U.S. Tour regularly that I really began to work on my bunker game. Oh, I had a grasp of the basics, but I had no real finesse, no sharpness. I guess I was so cocky in those days that I figured I'd rarely have to dirty my spikes in the sand.

Boy, was I naive. After a couple of years of watching guys like Gary Player and Seve Ballesteros I realized I'd never be a complete player -- or a consistent winner -- without a strong bunker game. So I worked on the refinements, using the bunker as my laboratory and experimenting with all sorts of nuances of stance and swing.

I learned a couple of important things. First I saw that there is more room for artistry and creativity in a bunker than in any other corner of the course. You have so many options, so many ways of playing a shot. And the more of these options you know, the more confident and aggressive you can be.

Second, I saw that bunker finesse is far easier to develop than putting feel or a soft touch around the green. Why? The sand acts as a buffer, a margin for error. And therein is another source of confidence, another reason to play bunkers the only way they can be played -- aggressively. Until you can make firm, confident swings and actually try to sink that ball out of the sand, you won't be going at these shots with the proper attitude.

The best way to learn sand play is to teach yourself, by relating different setups and swings to the corresponding ball flights and rolls. In this way, you'll develop your own sixth sense in bunkers. What you'll learn, more than anything else, is the way to vary the length and trajectory of your shots. There is a greater variety of opinion on this subject than on almost any aspect of golf instruction.



Consistent swing motion and speed will result in more solidly struck shots.

Some teachers and players advocate that to increase the length of a sand shot, you simply increase the length and force of the swing. Others say it's merely a matter of increasing or decreasing the distance you hit behind the ball. And still others key on ball position and weight distribution.

My own practice sessions have put me in the "vary the amount of sand" camp. I've spent hours hitting balls, thousands of sand shots -- hundreds of those swinging with my left hand only, to get a feel for the way the club reacts with the bunker -- and I know that one thing is not arguable: the more sand you take in back of the ball, the less backspin you'll apply, the lower the ball will fly, and the longer it will run. Conversely, the less sand you take, the more backspin you'll apply, the higher the ball will fly, and the faster it will stop.

Related to that law of the desert is another law: The more open your sand wedge at impact, the less sand you'll explode and the more height and backspin you'll put on the shot; the less open the face, the more the club will dig down into the sand, and the less height and backspin you'll get.

Combining these two laws will help you to play virtually any shot you'll encounter. For instance, if you want maximum height and bite, the idea is to turn the clubface as open as possible and take as little sand as possible by hitting right next to the ball. Indeed, if you can make impact so that just a few grains of sand intervene between your club and ball, you'll have the ultimate in friction and backspin. In a sense this is like hitting the ball with a sandpaper-faced club -- as you can imagine, it produces maximum backspin and bite. When you see me or other Tour players make the ball suck back from sand, this is what we've done -- we've played a wide-open-faced shot and we've taken just a thin veil of sand with the ball.

Looking at it another way, this is the reason that a ball always runs a long way when it's hit from a buried lie. When the ball is buried, you have to go down after it. To get down after it, you have to dig into the sand, which means a square face. Digging down deep means that you'll be taking a lot of sand with the shot, which produces a low ball that runs a mile.

The suck-back shot and the buried lie are two extremes. More often, you encounter a situation that's somewhere in between, and naturally that calls for a compromise in your technique. Let's say, for example, that your ball is semi-buried but you don't have the luxury of hitting a hot-running explosion, because you're near the front lip of the trap and the pin is fairly close to you.

It was for situations such as this that I developed the stab shot -- an open face combined with a hard downward dig into the sand. The open face gives me the height and bite, the downward dig gets the ball out.

Other players have developed other solutions. Creative guys like Ballesteros and Chi Chi Rodriguez have dozens of different sand shots, but Jack Nicklaus played superbly for years with just two basic shots he called the explosion and the splash. As I said, the best way to solve the mysteries of the sand is to take the basics with you into a bunker, learn how the physics of earthmoving affect ball flight, and develop the shots that fit the course you play most often, and fit your overall game.

Knowing the basics of sand play takes away your fear; knowing the subtleties will actually lead you to enjoy playing from bunkers. Once you have a feel for these things, you can pursue some of the finer points of bunker play, adapting your technique to different types of sands and the challenges of uneven lies.

Tip #9: Hit it Deep

There are tee-shots, and there are big tee shots. After all, nothing feels better -- or does more for your confidence -- than hitting the ball on the screws, watching it jump off your clubhead, soar forever, and roll to a point beyond the balls of your playing partners, beyond your own previous career drive.

I know when I pull out the stops and do everything just right, I can hit it over 350 yards -- and believe me, that's one of the greatest kicks in the world.

Now, I'll also admit I don't try to hit this shot off every tee. It's foolish to swing all-out all the time because you sacrifice accuracy. The only golfers who should go for maximum distance on every tee shot are youngsters just learning the game. For them, it's important to learn distance first, and let the techniques of accuracy come later.

I save my biggest tee shots, ironically, for the shortest holes. On short par-fours, such as the aforementioned third at Sunningdale and 18th at St. Andrews, a big blow will get me to the green and eliminate the second shot. The same goes for the shortish fives where a good drive will enable me to get home in two and make my third shot a putt.

So lesson No. 1 is to pick your spots intelligently. Lesson No. 2 is don't try too hard. In golf, trying fails you just get in the way of yourself. Don't try to hit the ball 275 yards if you've never hit it 250. Don't try to hit it harder or longer than you ever have. Your goal should be to hit it more solidly than ever.

You can preprogram the key aspects of this swing as you take your address. For maximum distance, the ideal launch angle for any projectile is 45 degrees. But since the average driver has only 11 or 12 degrees of loft on it, you need to be sure of catching the ball just slightly on the upswing. So tee the ball a bit higher than normal.



Hitting it deep: pick your spots intelligently and don't try too hard.

As you take your grip, give some thought to your grip pressure. There's a misconception that when you want to hit the ball a long way you should firm up your hold on the club. Actually, just the opposite is true. You want to make a free-flowing swing, so don't strangle the club-that will only tighten up your armswing. Instead, caress it, hold it a bit less firmly than you would for a normal drive. (Incidentally, this is also a good idea when you're in a tense situation-the tighter the situation, the looser the grip.)

The next key is to widen your stance a bit, in order to set up a wider, more powerful arc. Do this by moving your right foot a bit to the right of its usual position-no more than an inch or two. As for the left foot, flare out the toe a bit more than usual. This will help you to uncoil powerfully into your downswing. The last pre-swing adjustment relates to ball position-move it forward to a point between your left instep and toe. This will have the same effect as the high tee, to help you approximate that 45-degree launch angle.

The wider stance will lower your center of gravity and will help you to make what is probably the most important move when it comes to long-distance driving-an extra low, extra long takeaway. When I take the club back for a big drive, I try to glide back from the ball for as long as possible. It's important to feel as though you're stretching your arms out to their maximum as you make this crucial first move. Since the right foot is farther back than usual, this stretch won't be as taxing as it would with a stance of normal width.

Unfortunately, that same wide stance-and the flared left toe-will make it more difficult for you to make a full backswing turn. The coil will not come naturally, so you have to work on it a bit. Since this is a conscious action, I've found it useful to have a key "power-swing thought" on long drives: When I step up to the ball, I say to myself, "R.P.B., Greg." R.P.B. stands for "right pocket back." Through practice, I've found that when I key on making my right-front trouser pocket turn around to the back as far as possible, I'll virtually ensure my maximum hip turn. And when the hips turn, the back and shoulders turn. Once that coil is maximized, the big gun is loaded. Actually the swing is exactly like a slingshot-the farther you can pull it back, the more forcefully it will snap through, and the longer your shot will go.

I hit upon this R.P.B. key on the practice tee one day when I was trying to determine which type of move would best enable me to maximize my distance. "Right pocket back" works for me because I know that most of my power comes from my legs.

If your main power source is your legs, I suggest you give this a try. If, however, you get most of your distance from another source, it's important that you develop a key that better fits you. If, for instance, you have relatively "quiet" leg action and have more of an upper-body swing, as does Arnold Palmer, you should develop a power key that makes you turn your back and shoulders. If hand action is your strength, as it is with David Graham, find a thought that will ensure a fast, powerful whip-through of the club in the hitting area. If you're extremely flexible and have an upright swing, as do young players such as Tiger Woods and David Duval, you might want to concentrate on getting your hands high for maximum height of your arc.

Whatever your main power source is, develop a swing key that will help you maximize it. Then go hit your longest tee shots.

- Greg Norman

Tip #10: Make Your Practice Meaningful

Obviously, the key to mastering both the basics and subtleties of shotmaking is practice.

At some tournaments, people will come by and watch me practice, and I'll look to them like a complete hacker. First I'll hit a big slice, then, with the very next ball, a big hook. Then I'll hit one way up in the air, and without changing clubs I'll hit a low screamer. I'm simply practicing my shotmaking.

To my mind, this is the most enjoyable practice of all. And one of the nicest things is it's good training for your visualization and mental discipline as well. What I like to do is pretend I'm playing a particular golf course, and using one club, such as a 4-iron, I try to hit the shots that the course calls for.

If the first hole is a dogleg left, I'll try to hit a draw. If the hole normally plays into the wind, I'll try to hit a low second shot. Then I'll play the second hole, hitting a high downwind drive. I'll pretend that the flagstick on that hole is on the back left of the green, and I'll play a draw that will seek out the pin. I'll hit each of these shots with the 4-iron, hitting to a wide-open practice range. It's the ultimate test of your ability both to imagine shots and to play them.

Another great way to practice your shotmaking is to take a bag of golf balls and toss them into some of the worst places possible-into fairway bunkers, behind trees, onto difficult lies. Then try to get the balls out of those positions in at least two different ways.

If, for instance, you're blocked by a tree, try to hit a high shot over it as well as a draw or fade around it. This type of practice is, after all, the real thing. It also forces you to develop your imagination.

Knowing how to hit these shots is of comparatively little value if you can't recognize the opportunities to play them. So get used to your talent at bending the ball, and test the limits of that talent.

Once you know what you can and can't do from various lies, you'll "see" shots you've never seen before. It's the combination of that talent and vision that will enable you to play aggressively from almost any lie.

- Greg Norman

Tip #11: Don't be a Sucker

Chances are, each green on your home golf course has a minimum of three or four pin positions, and at least one of those is a killer. Occasionally, I'll be preparing to play a shot, and either my caddie, Tony, or I will take a look at the green and say, "That's a sucker pin."

Sucker pins coax the golfer into an overly bold approach with little margin for error. When the flag is cut extremely close to a bunker or water or heavy rough, or when it's in a spur of the green or on the ledge of a two-tiered green, it's a sucker position.

If you usually fade the ball, a sucker pin is anything on the left side of the green. If you hit a draw, the sucker pin's on the right. It may look inviting from the fairway, but you're a sucker if you try to shoot at it, because if you miss the shot, even a little, you'll put yourself in trouble. The risks far outweigh the rewards.

Make note of the sucker pins on your course, and when you come to one, play smart and give it a wide berth. Don't fool with it, even if that means laying up.

The par-4 11th hole at the Augusta National Golf Club has a fast green with a pond hard by its left side. Years ago, when Ben Hogan came to that hole and the pin was on the left, he would purposely miss the green with his approach, taking his chances on a pitch and a one-putt par. "If you see me on that green with my second shot, you'll know I missed the shot," he said. Here he was, the most accurate shotmaker of his time, perhaps of all time, and Hogan opted not to fool with a treacherous pin.

There are a couple of other holes I can think of where, if I don't hit a good drive, I may not want to go for the green. One is the 17th hole at St. Andrews and another is the 18th at Bay Hill in Florida. On each of them, if the second shot misses the green it can be the beginning of a big score. And believe it or not, I've actually layed up on a par-3.

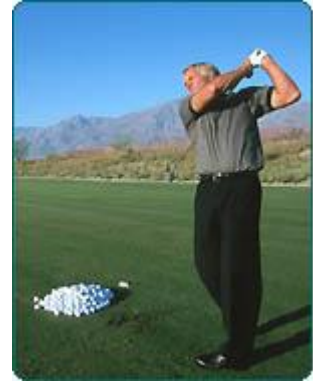
During the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am one year, when I got to the 16th hole at Cypress Point the wind was blowing a gale. Since that hole plays 233 yards over water, I didn't even think of trying for the green. I took a 3-iron and bailed out to the left, then wedged on and took my bogey four.

But the last thing I, a teacher of aggressive golf, want to leave you with is the impression that all holes should be played cautiously. There are easy placements too. On the Tour, we usually see them during pro-am days. You'll see them in big golf outings, when the object is for everyone to have a good time, and for play to proceed as quickly as possible.

What's an easy placement? Anything in the center or "fat part" of the green, away from trouble: a pin on the bottom tier of a two-tiered green; a pin in a swale or punchbowl. These placements allow for different ways to get to the hole. You can hit past the pin and suck back, hit short and bounce up, maybe even miss to the left or right and drift toward the hole. Most important, there's no threat of disaster if you miss the pin by a bit.

When you look at these positions and you have a good lie in the fairway, go ahead and gun for the flag. You should also attack when the pin position fits the type of shot you play most often. If you're a fader and the flag is positioned on the right side of the green, go for it, letting your shot drift across the green and toward the hole. Players who draw the ball should gun for the pin when it's cut on the back-left of the green.

- Greg Norman



The key to mastering both the basics and subtleties of shotmaking is practice.



Sucker pins entice you to hit a bold approach, but even a slight miss can lead to a big number.

Tip #12: You Can Spin the Ball Back

There's an old story about the budding golfer who asks the old pro how he can get more backspin on his five-iron shots.

"How far do you hit your five-iron?" asks the pro.

"About 110 yards," says the pupil, to which the pro replies, "Then why do you want to make it come back?"

The fact is, if you hit your five-iron only 110 yards, you do not have the strength or ability to make your iron shots spin back. If, however, you can hit a five-iron at least 160 yards, then that suck-back shot you've seen me and other pros hit on television or at tournaments is definitely within your capability.

It's a wonderful shot to have, particularly when you're playing hard greens, or when you need to get close to a pin that's positioned just beyond the lip of a front bunker. And the way I see it, if I can spin the ball back and they can't, I have a big advantage on my opponents—they can only make the ball go in from the front of the hole, while I can use either the front door or the back!

The gallery loves to watch these shots, and I admit that I do too. One of my favorites came in the Italian Open many years ago. They were offering a Lamborghini Countach that year for the first player who could make a hole in one on any of the par-threes. When I teed off for my second round, no one had done the deed.

At the second hole I hit an eight-iron that landed 15 feet past the pin, took one hop, and sucked back straight into the hole. Boy, was I excited. Fast cars are one of my greatest loves, and at the time I had never driven a Lamborghini.

Well, when I got to the clubhouse, I was informed that a young Italian club pro had aced one of the other par-threes 10 minutes before I had made mine. That \$100,000 car had pulled out of my pocket just as quickly as it had parked. And what did I get for making the second ace? A leather carry-all!

But I still have the memory of that hole in one, and of countless other shots that I've been able to hit into or near the hole because of an ability to apply extra backspin.

To play the shot, you need to have a combination of factors working in your favor, only one of which is your swing. First, it's absolutely vital that you have a firm, clean lie. The ball can be sitting on tightly clipped fairway, on hardpan, even a good lie in a bunker, but that's about it. Don't even think about making the ball back up from the rough.

Second, the shot should not be a long one. Since you need a fair amount of loft, don't try this shot with any club longer than a 7-iron. Third, the green should be firm -- not hard like a sidewalk, but firm. If it's hard, you'll be lucky to keep any shot on it. If it's wet, the ball will just plug. What you want is a green that is soft enough to accept the shot yet firm enough to let the spin take effect. It also helps if the green slopes toward you. If it slopes away, you'll have no chance of backing the ball uphill.

Wind conditions also play a part. The shot is much easier when played into a wind. A headwind will increase your backspin. But don't try it in a tailwind, which will propel the ball forward.

Finally, be aware that certain balls enhance your ability to apply backspin. Any wound golf ball or any two-piece ball with a cover designed to give maximum backspin is better than any solid-center or hard-covered ball.

So if you have the ideal equipment working for you, you have a clean lie, and you're hitting upwind at a firm green that leans in your favor, your chances of backing up your shot are very good. Now all you have to do is hit it.

That, I'm afraid, is easier said than done. Basically, backspin comes from hand speed through impact. The harder and more crisply you can apply the club to the ball, the faster you'll make the ball spin back.

It's also important to hit slightly down on the ball. One of the reasons I'm able to apply so much spin is that I have a fairly upright swing which enables me to hit down rather steeply on the ball. When I want to, I'm able to make impact with the top-back quadrant of the ball. I actually squeeze the ball down against the turf, applying enormous friction and backspin. I don't take much of a divot; it's more like a crease in the turf or a slackening down of the grass.

To get this sort of impact, you have to play the ball a bit back in your stance. But not a lot. Some people think you should position the ball well back, as you would for a punch or low shot. That, however, just produces another low shot that may skid and stop; it won't suck back. Instead, you have to play it just a bit farther back than normal, so that you can pinch the ball rather than crashing down on it. My best advice is to experiment with your ball position. When that pinch begins to be a smother, you've got the ball too far back.

You must grip the club more firmly for this shot, because although it demands fast hand speed, it doesn't require a lot of wrist action. The swing must be aggressive with the entire body. Keeping the wrists firm, swing forward forcefully with your arms, and lead through impact with your legs and lower body moving toward the target. Strive for that pinching impact, with as little divot as possible.

After a while you'll know by the feel of the hit whether you've put "juice" on the ball. It's a great feeling and a great sight to see the ball land past the pin and come back close to the hole.



Don't try to spin the ball back with any club longer than a 7-iron.

One other tip on this shot, something I learned on the final hole of the 1986 PGA Championship. Bob Tway and I were tied when we came to that hole. After he put his second shot in the right-hand bunker, I saw a chance to birdie the hole for victory. From a good lie in the fairway, I hit a wedge shot that landed next to the hole but had so much backspin it sucked right off the front of the green and into the collar of rough. Bob went on to hole that miraculous bunker shot for a birdie of his own, and with my ball in the thick grass I had almost no chance of tying him.

So take a tip from someone who has learned the hard way. When you have all the conditions going for you, take enough club to land your ball past the pin.

- Greg Norman

Tip #13: Hit the Right Club

Two decades of playing in pro-ams has convinced me that the No. 1 fault among amateurs is not in the setup or swing -- it's club selection. To put it bluntly, everyone underclubs. Nine out of 10 golfers leave their approach shots short of the green, where most of the fiercest perils lurk.

The reason, I think, is that we're all victims of our best shots. If on one day you hit the 5-iron 185 yards, you tend to think that 185 is your 5-iron distance. But it's not; that's only the distance of your best effort with a 5-iron. Your actual distance may be closer to 165. Heck, I've hit 5-irons 250 yards on occasion, but when I'm 250 yards from a green, I normally select a 3-wood.

The only way to get an accurate idea of your distance with each club is to take an hour or so of practice time and learn the truth. Get a pencil and a sheet of paper, list the clubs in your bag down one column, and take that sheet with you off to a serious practice session. Go to a practice range or a large, flat, open area of any kind at a time when no one else is there, so you'll be able to hit shots and then pace them off. Before you go, determine the length of your average "pace" by stepping off 10 paces, measuring that distance, and then dividing it by 10. For most men, a normal pace is almost exactly a yard, but yours may be shorter or longer. If it is, I'd suggest that for the purpose of stepping off your shots you alter your stride so that it approximates a yard.

Also, be sure to do this little experiment under controlled conditions. First, you'll need a dry, windless day. Secondly, you'll need to hit your shots from a surface that closely approximates the fairways from which you normally play your approaches. Hardpan, driving-range mats or lush grass won't work. Third, you'll want to be sure that your landing area is flat.

Don't worry if it's a field of long grass -- that's better than a hard-baked area -- because what you want to measure is the carrying distance of your shots, not the carry-and-roll distance. (After all, your ball can roll 10 yards or 50 depending upon conditions.) If your practice shots hit and sit in the thick grass, that's perfect. Otherwise, you should deduct the roll yardage from whatever total distance the ball travels.

Once you've warmed up, start with the sand wedge and hit at least a dozen balls with it. Two or three dozen would be better. Then pace them off. Disregard the ridiculously fat shots and skulled shots, but include all the others, and then work out the average distance those balls flew. Write that number next to the sand-wedge line on your sheet of paper and imprint it on your mind. This, whether you like it or not, is your distance for the sand wedge.

Walk back to the tee and go through the same procedure for the pitching wedge, the 9-iron, the 8-iron, and all the rest of your clubs. This will take an hour or so, but believe me, it will be the best practice time you'll ever spend. And at the end of it you'll have some very valuable numbers.

- Greg Norman

Tip #14: Put Horsepower in Your Swing

I've always found it helpful to think of the golf swing as a horse race among the various body parts. It's an unusual horse race in that every "horse" leaves the starting gate at the same time in a unified takeaway, and everyone hits the finish line simultaneously in a mass photo finish, but in between the field spreads out a bit.

The first horses to reach the top of the backswing are the knees and hips, followed by the shoulders which have had to rotate twice as far. After the shoulders complete their rotation, the arms go a bit farther and then stop before the wrists complete their cocking as the weight of the clubhead gives a final downward tug.

It's the same leaders on the way down to impact. Even as the wrists are completing their part of the turn, the lower body has moved into the backstretch of the race. The left knee moves laterally into the downswing and pulls on the left hip which in turn pulls the left arm downward. At the same time, the right knee begins to drive toward the target, taking with it the shoulders, arms, and hands.

At the last split-second before impact the race tightens again, as the swiftly moving arms catch up with the bigger muscles in the shoulders, hips, and legs. When you execute the swing properly, the leadership of the legs creates a lag of the hands and clubhead, resulting in what's commonly called a delayed release. In this position, just prior to impact, the wrists have not yet uncocked and there is a tremendous amount of clubhead speed ready to be unleashed. That's what happens in the final millisecond-the club whips through and catches the rest of the body parts, all of which have achieved their roles at impact at the same moment. In a good swing, your position at impact is almost identical to your final position at address.

If you've executed the swing correctly, the club will move straight along the line for about a foot on either side of the ball. One good way of encouraging this action is to imagine a second ball about a foot and a half past your actual ball, and



The vast majority of amateurs leave their approaches short, so it's important to know the average distance you hit each club.



In the ideal swing, your position at impact mirrors your final position at address.

then striving to hit that ball in addition to the real one.

- Greg Norman

Tip #15: Hit it Through the Wind

In nearly three decades of playing golf all over the world, I've never met a tougher opponent than Mother Nature. I'll never forget the experience I had as an assistant professional at the La Paruse Golf Club in Australia. The wind must have been blowing 50 miles per hour when I got to the tee of the fifth hole, a par-five that plays over the top of a huge hill, and on that day played straight into the teeth of the wind. After a drive to the base of the hill, I took a 5-iron to play over the top.

I hit it well and the ball sailed skyward, climbing with the slope of the hill. But when it got to the top, it just kept climbing, straight up, and then, incredibly, it began to blow backward. I just stood there gaping as that ball blew all the way back, landing behind me!

I reckon I hit that ball 340 yards -- 160 yards forward and 180 yards back! Unless you're very unlucky, you'll never experience that type of distance loss in the wind, but you should be prepared to sacrifice some yardage.

Hitting a tee-shot into a headwind is one of the most difficult assignments in the game. Traditional advice claims that you should tee the ball lower to hit a more boring shot. I agree with that only for the type of player who sweeps the ball. For a downward-hitting player, the lower tee only encourages an even steeper attack, which will result in a high shot that will be battered by the wind. So this player should tee the ball as usual and try to make a long, low, sweeping takeaway.

With a tailwind, of course, you'll get extra distance. Sweeping swingers should tee it a bit higher to get it up in the wind, and downward hitters should position the ball a bit more forward in the stance. No matter which swing you have, however, you should resist the temptation to wallop the ball. Just swing smoothly -- the tailwind will wallop it for you.

On approach shots, I try to keep the ball low in both headwinds and tailwinds, to maximize control of the shot. I widen my stance a bit, play the ball back an inch or so, and make a slightly slower, more compact swing. That's the general strategy I think everyone should follow.

With crosswinds, you should gear your strategy to your level of skill. If you're basically a straight hitter of the ball, with no drift to your shots, playing a crosswind is as simple as aiming to the right or left to allow for the pull of the breeze. If you're a habitual fader/slicer, you'll want to "ride" the left-to-right winds for maximum distance and "fight" the right-to-left winds for maximum accuracy. The opposites are true for someone who usually hits a draw or hook. Of course, if you are sufficiently accomplished that you can work the ball with confidence in either direction, then you ride the crosswinds on your tee-shots and fight them on your approaches.



Hitting a tee-shot into a headwind is one of the most difficult assignments in the game

- Greg Norman

Tip #16: Finish Your Swing Strong

Once past impact there's nothing you can do to influence the flight of the ball, but since a good follow-through is the result of a sound swing, it pays to know what the proper finish position looks like.

Basically, you're facing the target. About 80 percent of your weight has transferred back to your left side. In fact, after impact that weight is for the first time on the outside of your feet, as you roll onto the side of your left foot while balancing on the toe of your right. Your hands, which have been pulled almost violently through impact, now begin to come back inside and upward, into a final position over your left shoulder. Most important, you're in balance: not tilting back or forward, left or right, but totally stable.

A couple of years ago, one of the trademarks of my swing was a pronounced slide of my right foot toward my left foot just after impact. That happened because I transferred so much of my weight onto my right side on the backswing, then returned so much of it to my left side on the downswing. A swing computer once measured the pros on the U.S. PGA Tour and found that I made the most pronounced weight shift of anyone. Over 90 percent of my weight was going back and forth during the swing. That 170 pounds of pull simply brought my right foot along with it.

These days, I set up with a slightly wider stance than I used to. In this way, I start with a bit more weight on my right side at address, and therefore I don't have to shift as much during the swing. This minute change has virtually eliminated the slide. It's also had the benefit of counteracting a tendency to hit the occasional errant shot to the right.

The one aspect of the swing I haven't said much about is tempo. That's because I feel it's largely an individual matter and should be matched to your overall temperament and the speed with which you generally do things. If you walk and talk quickly, you should probably swing quickly (although not too quickly). If you do things in a more deliberate fashion, then by all means, adopt a more leisurely pace of swing.



A balanced finish is the result of smooth tempo where the backswing and downswing work together.

Just be sure you keep to your tempo throughout the round. One problem that all of us have is a tendency to speed things up a bit when the pressure is on. I know I do. Back at Tumberry in 1986, when I let a couple of shots get away from me and bogeyed the fifth hole of the final round, my caddie said to me, "Slow down -- you're swinging fast, you're even walking faster than normal. I'm going to walk a bit more slowly, and you just keep pace with me." That put me right back on my natural tempo, and I had no problems from there to the finish.

With regard to your rhythm -- the way the backswing and downswing work together -- the downswing clearly must be faster paced than the backswing. But that doesn't mean you should consciously speed up on the way to the ball. Good rhythm and tempo can't really be taught, they must be absorbed. My best advice is for you to go to a Tour event, sit by the practice tee for a while, and watch the pros. Seve Ballesteros is a particularly good model. His marvelous rhythm and tempo never vary, no matter what club he has in his hands.

- Greg Norman

Tip #17: Should You Swing the Same?

Here's one of the most difficult questions in golf: "Should you swing any differently on a 5-iron than on a driver?" It's difficult because the answer is both yes and no. Yes, the swing for the 5-iron -- in fact, for each of the irons -- is different than for the driver. And no, you should not try to swing any differently.

When you stand to the ball with a shorter club in your hand, several aspects of your address position automatically change, and these pre-swing adaptations immediately alter the nature of your swing.

First, you have to bend over more, to lower your hands down to the shorter shaft. The shorter the club, the more you have to bend from the waist and counterbalance that tilt by sticking out your rump.

With the shorter clubs, you'll also be standing closer to the ball. It will be only a foot or so in front of your toes, as opposed to nearly three feet on the driver. This will result in your hands being closer to your body. See for yourself. Without even taking a club, pretend you're addressing first a driver, then a wedge, and notice how on the driver your arms extend out toward the ball much more than on the wedge, where they hang down near your thighs.

Along with these natural changes in address position, you should make one intentional change. As you address shorter and shorter irons, you should gradually decrease the width of your stance, bringing your right foot progressively closer to your left while keeping your ball position constant.

All of these address adaptations have the same effect. They set you up for the more vertical, U-shaped swing that shorter clubs require. On the fairway woods and long irons, the differences from the driver are minor. These clubs, after all, are nearly as long as the driver. The resulting swings are therefore similar to the big, wide sweep for a tee-shot.

As the shaft shortens for the middle irons, however, both the nature of the shot and the nature of the setup and swing change visibly. On these clubs, you don't want to maximize your distance, you want to control it just as surely as you want to control the direction the ball flies. The narrowed stance will help you do this, by reducing your leg action and encouraging more of an arm-and-shoulder swing. And even that armswing will be a bit less powerful because, with a shorter club, you'll have less centrifugal force at work.

As you move down to the short irons and wedges, where the stance should also open up a couple of degrees, your narrow, more crouched setup will pre-program a markedly more vertical swing that will produce a down-and-through impact that is in vivid contrast to the horizontal sweep of the driver.

Having made that point, let me say that you should never intentionally try to swing the club in a horizontal or vertical way. Never try to fit your swing to the club in your hand. After all, it's tough enough to master one golf swing without having to manipulate a dozen of them. Just remember to narrow your stance. The clubs themselves will cause you to do the rest.

Once I'm in the address position, I make no conscious swing changes whatsoever. In fact, I disagree strongly with teachers who suggest that you should use a shorter or less purposeful swing on the fairway woods and irons than on the driver. I take my club back to a position at or near parallel at the top of the swing, whether that club is a driver, a 3-wood, a 3-iron, a 7-iron, or a wedge. And except when I'm trying to play some sort of specialty shot, I maintain the same swing tempo and rhythm for every club in the bag.

With a shorter club in your hand, you will automatically have less clubhead speed, so there's no need to throttle-down your swing. Besides that, swing-shortening is a very mechanical way to play golf and it tends to undermine your rhythm. The minute you start trying to calibrate your swing length, you introduce unnecessary, unnatural wrinkles to an already complex movement.

If, for instance, on a 5-iron shot you try to take six inches off the length of your backswing, your muscles sense this forced stopping of the club. At the top, you subconsciously doubt that you've stored the correct amount of power in your swing; as a result you may jerk the club down, you may decelerate, or who knows what. You undermine your rhythm and your overall confidence.

I've been told that when my game is on, my swing has an automatic "swish-click" look on every shot. If I had to attribute that to anything, I'd say it's the consistency of my swing length and rhythm from club to club.

- Greg Norman

Tip #18: Playing in the Rain

I guess the worst weather conditions I've ever seen were during the AT&T Pebble beach Pro-Am many years ago. With three holes to go in the second round I was leading or within one of the lead in the tournament, and believe it or not, I missed the cut. Facing the 16th, 17th, and 18th holes at Cypress Point, and playing in a howling, soaking gale, I finished triple-bogey six, quintuple-bogey nine, double-bogey six.



Address adaptations set you up for the more vertical, U-shaped swing that shorter clubs require

That day, my only objective was to get to the clubhouse alive. In most rainy conditions, however, the aim is more simple - keep yourself and your equipment as dry as possible. We professionals have an edge in this regard. With huge golf bags and caddies to carry them for us, we can load up with all sorts of apparel and equipment to shelter us from the wet stuff. On a rainy tournament day, I'll take an umbrella, a complete rainsuit, five or six towels, plus at least 10 gloves.

And on some days I've used all 10 of those gloves. Indeed if there's one part of your body to keep dry it's your hands. Once you lose your grip, you lose everything, so keep your hands in your pockets except to play. Also, be sure to keep the top of your golf bag covered so that rain doesn't drip down the shafts and get your grips wet. If all else fails you can improve your hold on the club by wrapping a handkerchief around the grip. (Yes, it's within the Rules.)

Since the club always slips in wet weather, your main swing key is to hold on tight. Other than that, be sure to give yourself good footing, particularly on the tee shot. Because of your tight grip, you'll have less of a free-flowing swing, so you can expect less distance on your drives. The same will be true on the second shots where the soggy turf swallows up your club and impedes solid impact. So allow yourself at least one club more on approaches.

One advantage of playing in wet weather is that the greens will be soft, so you'll be able to fire your shots right at the flag. And if the greens should begin to form puddles, you should hit your short irons and pitches right at the puddles that are close to the hole, because they'll stop the ball dead. You may then drop to the nearest spot that affords you a dry line to the cup. And be sure to give your putts an extra measure of firmness, because a wet green is always a slow one.

But the biggest factor to consider when the clouds roll in has nothing to do with your game. It has to do with your life. If you see lightning or hear a warning siren, head for the clubhouse right away. Too many golfers are killed by lightning every year, and a friendly round of golf isn't worth losing your life over.

- Greg Norman

Tip #19: Learn the Basics of Sand Play

Sand play is elementary physics. I was never a science whiz in school, but I learned enough to know that if you push the sand in the correct manner, it will transfer your energy and lift the ball in the way you want it to fly. It's basic earthmoving.

Let me give an example using an area where I am comfortable -- in the water. Think about splashing around in a pool. When you want to splash someone away on the other side of the pool, you whisk your palm across the top of the water with a flat, skimming motion, creating a long, low splash. When you want to douse someone right next to you, you slap downward on a sharp angle into the water, for a high, cresting splash.

Picture a golf ball riding the tops of those splashes, and you'll have a good idea of the basic forces at work in bunker play. Instead of water, your ball rides out on sand. Instead of using your hand, you use the club.

The Right Sand Wedge

The type of club you use is important. I'm constantly surprised at the number of amateurs I encounter who carry no sand wedge at all -- they simply play bunker shots with a pitching wedge. Unless you're a very talented golfer, this is like trying to eat soup with a fork.

The pitching wedge, like all the other irons, has a thin leading edge that digs down into the sand. The sand wedge looks sort of like a pregnant pitching wedge because the back-bottom of the blade bulges out in the form of a flange. This flange is often referred to as "bounce," because that is what it makes the club do on impact with the sand.

Just as the hull of a speedboat bounces along the top of the water, so the flange of the sand wedge bounces off the undersurface of a bunker. As it does, it creates that wave of sand which lifts the ball out of the trap. So be sure that you get a sand wedge that has adequate bounce. You don't want a huge flange that could cause you to bounce up so quickly that you belly into the side of the ball. On the other hand, you don't want a thin-flanged wedge because it will dig in just as surely as a pitching wedge. If you're in doubt as to the precise amount of bounce you should have, talk to your PGA professional.

Four "Musts" on Bunker Shots

Once you're adequately armed with a sand wedge, be aware of a few things that need to be done when you address virtually any bunker shot.

- 1) Get good footing: Grind your feet firmly into the sand. This will help promote a solid stance and good balance. It's also a way of doing some detective work, to determine the texture and consistency of the sand. Since the Rules prohibit you from grounding your club in a bunker, you should try to learn as much as possible about the lie as you take your stance.
- 2) Choke up about an inch on the club: When you grind your feet down into the bunker, you bring your hands closer to the ball, so you need to slide them down the grip. Otherwise, you'll tend to hit well behind the ball and dig too deeply into the sand.
- 3) Open your stance: Most bunker shots require a steep downward attack on the ball; an open alignment, with the feet, knees, hips, and shoulders pointed well left of the target, will facilitate this type of impact. You'll need to open up various degrees for the different shots, but it's safe to say that 90 percent of bunker shots are played from the open stance.



Once you lose your grip you lose everything, so keep your hands in your pockets except to play.



Norman's four basics to solid bunker play: good footing, a shortened grip, an open stance and an eye on the sand.

4) Don't keep your eye on the ball: Instead, watch a spot about an inch to an inch and a half behind the ball, because that's where your impact should be. Since you don't need to hit the ball on this shot, there's no reason to look at it. Again, the precise spot will vary, but suffice it to say that the spot is never on the top of the ball.

With those four basics -- good footing, a shortened grip, an opened stance, and your eye on the sand -- you'll have a tremendous start at solid bunker play. The rest comes with practice.

- Greg Norman

Tip #20: Perfect Your Alignment

Of all the things you do before you play a golf shot, setting your alignment is the most important. And certainly, it requires the closest attention.

After all, for 99 percent of the shots you play, your grip, posture, and overall stance will fall into place. Once you've mastered these things, you don't really have to concentrate on them. But for each and every shot you play you will have a different target requiring careful and precise aim. Good alignment takes work.

Unfortunately, many players fail to realize this. They may think about alignment once or twice during a round, but more often they simply swagger into position and swing.

Consider what can happen when you're inattentive to your alignment. Remember, you're trying to hit a 1.68-inch diameter ball a distance of 250 yards or more into a 4.25-inch diameter hole, with a clubface moving at a speed of 90 miles an hour or so. On a tee-shot, an error in alignment of five degrees can usually mean a ball in the rough rather than the fairway. An error of 10 degrees may mean a hazard, a lost ball, or out-of-bounds.

Alignment is my No. 1 priority when I begin to play a golf shot. And because accurate alignment is a demanding and sometimes elusive quality, I try to simplify the aiming process as much as possible. I focus everything on my clubface.

Once I've decided upon the type of shot I want to play, the first move I make is to set my club position behind the ball, so that it's facing squarely at the target. Holding the club in my right hand only, I approach the ball from behind, sighting up and down that imaginary line that extends from the ball to my target. I then assume a wide-open stance, half facing the target, still tracking that line from the target to the ball. At this point, I set my club down behind the ball and swivel the clubface minutely back and forth until it's in exact position, facing dead at the target. Only after this is set do I proceed with the other elements of the grip and address.

I think this clubface method keeps alignment simple. After all, it's far easier to orient yourself to something right next to you than to try to aim at something two or three hundred yards away.

Another way I keep things simple is to play virtually all of my shots from a square stance. Once I have my clubface aligned squarely to the target, I simply set my body so that my feet, knees, hips, and shoulders all align exactly parallel to that imaginary line that extends from my clubface to the target. Note that I do not align my body at the target because of the fact that I am standing to the side of the ball. I must therefore aim at a point just inside the target. This is why I align my body parallel to that clubface-to-target line.

The old image of the railroad tracks is a good one, where the outside track is the clubface-to-target line, and the inside track is the line along which you align your body. Combine this square alignment with a square grip, and you'll make life easy for yourself. You'll eliminate a slew of bad tendencies while giving yourself the best chance of hitting the ball consistently solid and straight.

A closed stance can lead to hooks, pushed, and fat shots, an open stance to slices, pulls, and topped shots. Any time you deviate from a square alignment, you create what Ken Venturi calls "angles" and you introduce extra wrinkles and complications in a game that is already sufficiently difficult. The only time to play a full shot with a closed or open stance is when you're in some sort of trouble or are trying to maneuver the ball in some way.

It's a good idea to have a friend or, better yet, a PGA professional check your alignment from time to time. Often your stance can look and feel square to you but your hips and shoulders will be several degrees off line. Traditional instruction suggests you set a club down along your toe line to check alignment. But I don't agree with that for the simple reason that I flare out my left toe slightly at address. This brings the toe back slightly from that parallel alignment. If I were to lay a club down on my toe line, it would appear that I was aimed left when in reality I'm square. So to avoid such confusion, I feel it's wiser to lay the club down along the heels.



On a tee shot, an error in alignment of five degrees can usually mean a ball in the rough rather than the fairway.

- Greg Norman

Tip #21: Countdown To Takeoff

The proper "countdown" involves both mental and physical steps, and for me it begins about 10 feet behind the ball.

1. Having inspected my lie, decided on the shot I want to play, and selected my club, I stand back and have a good look at what's ahead of me. At this moment, I visualize the precise shot I want to play. I see the ball leaving my clubface, arching into the sky, and coming down next to the target.

If it's a tee-shot, I may see the ball rolling after impact; if it's an iron, I may see it checking up or spinning back, depending on the nature of my lie. But quite frankly, these final frames of my mental movie are comparatively unimportant. Contrary to what most people do-visualize the ball coming to rest near their ultimate target-I prefer to focus on the apex of the shot in flight.

I prefer this method for a couple of reasons. First, except on two-foot putts, I don't actually hit the ball straight to the target. I'm always playing the break, or allowing for the wind, or expecting some fade or draw or bounce or roll. If my mind is on the target, I'm not giving proper attention to those factors.

Indeed, if I become target-fixated, I might tend to start my shot straight at the flag, only to see it blow or drift off course. What I want to do is make my ball reach the very height of its ideal flight, or in the case of a draw or fade, the farthest right or left point of its curve. This after all is as much as I can do -- I can't bring it to earth.

If I hit the shot with the proper trajectory and shape, gravity and ballistics will do the rest. So I try to get a vivid picture of the spot in the sky where the ball will ultimately reach. I do this even on putts. I "see" the ball at the very crest of its break; then I try to hit it there.

2. With the ideal picture in mind, I walk to the ball and, holding the club with my right hand only, I set the clubhead down on the ground behind the ball. This is where I take careful aim. Standing well open so that I can see the route to the target clearly, I adjust the orientation of the clubface until I've got it set straight toward where I want the shot to go.

3. Now that my aim is set, I begin to align my body and take my grip. I do this by moving my left foot into position, simultaneously setting my left-hand grip on the club. For the next couple of seconds, I get comfortable, shifting my feet and hands until I know my grip is square and secure and my body alignment is in sync with the clubface.

At this point also, I lift the clubhead off the ground, and I keep it off the ground through the rest of my address. You've probably noticed that Jack Nicklaus does the same thing. In fact, it was by reading his book that I adopted this technique.

It has a couple of benefits over the alternative, grounding the club. First, it establishes the proper grip pressure. The weight of the clubhead forces you to hold the club with a certain amount of tension. It also makes you arch your wrists slightly, a nice way of guarding against letting your hands take over the swing.

Second, when you keep the club off the ground there is no chance that you'll get it caught in heavy grass as you swing it away from the ball. You guarantee yourself a smooth, unbroken takeaway.

Finally, you lessen the risk of accidentally moving the ball, or of grounding your club in a hazard. Either of these Rules violations would cost you a one-stroke penalty.

4. Once my grip and stance are set, I could immediately swing, but each of us needs a certain amount of time to get comfortable. It's at this point that I take a couple of waggles, quick back-and-forth flexes of the club, to get loose, get the feel of the clubhead and hone in one last time on the type of shot I want to play. At some point during the wagging I'll take one last look at the target. Then I'm ready to go.

5. Of course, each of us needs some way in which to pull the trigger. For Gary Player, it's a forward kicking-in of his right knee. For Jack Nicklaus it's the swiveling of his head to the right. It's their way of igniting the swing.

My method is unique; at least I've never seen anyone else use it. Throughout the final stages of the address sequence, I hover the club just inside the ball. In a sense, I address the ball only with the toe of the clubhead.

Many people know that this is the way I address my putts, but the fact is I use the same method on every other shot as well. Just before I begin my swing, however, I slide the clubhead away from me slightly so that it's squarely behind the ball. Fuzzy Zoeller makes the same move, only he starts the club outside the ball and slides it toward him.

Each player has a different swing trigger. Indeed, everyone has a different address countdown suited to the pace with which they do things. Fast players such as Tom Watson and Lanny Wadkins take very little time in playing their shots. A more deliberate player such as Nicklaus will spend more time over the ball.

Personally, I'm a firm believer in making the address countdown as brief as possible. For one thing, it's good etiquette and moves the game along a bit faster. But more important, a brisk pace helps breed confidence.

One fault many players get into is the incessant fiddling and fidgeting during the address. It seems to me that they're second-guessing themselves at a time when they should be absolutely confident and ready to swing.

U.S. Open and PGA Champion Hubert Green went through a period when he pumped his grip up to 20 times before finally taking the club back-and that was when he played some of his worst golf. After he cut his address routine in half, he doubled his productivity as a player. It doesn't take long to get comfortably aligned. Lee Trevino, one of the game's most accurate players, is also one of the game's fastest players.

No matter what the duration of your pre-swing routine, the most important point is that you stick with that routine and use it on every shot. Don't let outside interferences interrupt your countdown either.



Club selection comes after inspecting the lie and deciding what shot you want to play.

If a car horn honks while you're setting your stance, step back. Step all the way back. On occasion, I've gone as far as to put the club back into the bag and then take it out again-the same club -- just so I could "take it from the top" and regain my rhythm and confidence.

After you've developed your routine, you'll be surprised at how dependent on it you'll become. I'll never forget the strange feeling I had during the third round of the British Open at Turnberry. A howling rainstorm hit when I was in the middle of the 17th fairway. I mean, that rain was coming horizontally!

The difficulty, however, was not so much in swinging in this rain as it was in getting ready to swing. I simply couldn't use my normal routine. I'd get out there, holding the club in my right hand only and trying to align the face, and the rain would soak the grip, so that by the time I tried to grip the club, the leather was too slippery to hold.

After trying two or three times to keep the routine, I gave up and improvised, taking my grip under my umbrella, then walking to the ball, wagging a couple of times, and hitting. Fortunately, I got through the storm relatively unscathed. But it was the discomfort of being without my routine that bothered me more than the rain.

Thank goodness, such conditions are rare. So learn these basics and put them all together in a brisk, efficient countdown, and you'll have the solid foundation to play your aggressive best.

- Greg Norman

Tip #22: Learn to Work Your Shots

Instructional advice abounds when it comes to playing intentional fades and draws. Many teachers advocate a stronger grip, with the hands rotated to the right on the club. Others recommend finagling with your weight distribution or swing speed. Still others recommend stiff-armed swings for a slice, wristier methods for a hook.

I avoid these methods completely. For one thing, they're complicated. Golf should be kept as simple as possible. For a second thing, it's folly to believe you can regulate the curve of a golf ball by regulating your wrist cock or weight shift. Finally, I distrust such methods because they don't relate to the root causes of sidespin.

To my mind, there's only one good way to play intentional fades and draws, and that's by pre-setting them with your alignment at address. The alterations I make are minor, and once I set them, I'm through. My grip and swing remain the same, without any manipulation or conscious change of any kind.

For a left-to-right shot, I begin my address as usual, by setting my club behind the ball and aiming the clubface straight down the target line. Then I make a change. Instead of aligning my body parallel to the direction in which I've aimed the clubface, I set up in an open stance, with my feet, knees, hips, and shoulders aligned several degrees to the left of the target line.

This setup will cause me to take the club back on a line that is outside that of a straight-back takeaway. That will result in a swing that returns the club to the ball along that same outside path. At impact, the clubface will be aimed straight down the target line but will be swinging across that target line, thus imparting clockwise spin.

The ball will start out to the left of the target (the line on which the swing directed it) and then, as the spin takes over, it will drift back toward the target (the point at which the clubface was aimed). It's as simple as that. The more drift I want, the more open I stand while keeping the clubface aimed straight down the target line.

For the draw, it's naturally just the opposite. I set the clubface straight at the ball, then align my body several degrees to the right. This promotes a takeaway that will be more to the inside than usual, resulting in an impact that is from inside to out and imparts counterclockwise spin. The ball starts out to the right, then draws back in toward the target at which I aimed my clubface. The more curve I want, the more I aim myself to the right.

It's that easy. Just set up correctly and then trust your swing. In fact, if there's one key to the swing, it's a mental one. Forget about where you want the ball to finish, and concentrate instead on where you want it to start.

Go back to the idea of visualizing the apex of your shot, and in this case think of hitting the ball to the farthest sideward point of the fade or draw. If you set up properly and direct your ball to that crest of the arc, it will turn on its path from that point to the target.



A small adjustment to your alignment at address is an easy way to play draws and fades.

- Greg Norman

Tip #23: Know When to Pick Your Shots

It's one thing to know how to hit the shot you need. But it's equally important to know where -- and where not -- to play them. For instance, under some conditions, a fade is impossible to play; under others a fade is the only shot to play. This is true for the draw and high and low shots as well. Knowing how to recognize these conditions is a skill that every aggressive golfer must develop.

I like to think of these influences as red lights, yellow lights, and green lights, since they tell you just how aggressive or cautious you should be. A red light says don't try the shot, a yellow light tells you to be careful, and a green light says go for it. Let's take a look at the fade, draw, low shot, and high shot, and at the conditions that favor and discourage each.

For a fade, the best type of lie is a bare one. This allows you to put the whole clubface on the ball and impart maximum spin. A short-trimmed Bermuda grass fairway is also good for a fade, as is a clean lie in a fairway bunker. Shaggy lies, including almost any lie in the rough, are no good for fading or slicing, since the blades of grass intervene between your clubface and the ball and inhibit your ability to apply spin. A similar phenomenon occurs when you play in wet conditions, where water gets between the club and ball and lessens the friction. For this reason, it's much easier to maneuver the ball from a dry fairway than from a wet or dew-coated one.

A downhill lie will encourage a fade, since you'll tend to shift your weight down that hill on the downswing. When that happens, your body will get out in front and the clubface will tend to be open at impact. The best lie is a sidehill lie with the ball below your feet, since that promotes a more upright swing than normal. From this lie, you'll almost always fade, so there's no need to open your stance. Conversely, the red lights as far as hilly lies are concerned would be a lie with the ball above your feet and an uphill lie.

Certain types of wind can also be helpful. If you want to play a straight shot, fade the ball against a right-to-left wind. A left-to-right wind will obviously amplify your fade, so unless you have plenty of room to work with, don't try to ride this wind. A tailwind will tend to straighten out the shot, and a headwind will exaggerate any bend you put on the ball.

Finally, keep in mind that some clubs are easier to fade and slice than others. Generally speaking, the straighter-faced irons and woods are easiest because they have less loft. The less backspin you put on the ball, the more powerful your sidespin will be. It's easy to fade -- or slice -- a driver or 2-iron, but much tougher to slice a 7-wood or a 9-iron. If you habitually slice your long shots but pull your short irons dead left, that is the reason.

Most of all, keep in mind that a fade or slice will fly a shorter distance and come down more steeply than a straight shot hit with the same club. Therefore, when playing an intentional fade you should take at least one club longer than normal. On an intentional slice, take at least two clubs longer.

A draw or hook is also hard to hit with the short irons. However, it's relatively easy to move the 6-, 5-, and 4-iron from right to left, and although the long irons and woods are easier to fade than draw, they certainly may be played both ways.

You can draw the ball from any good fairway lie, but a ball that's sitting up on the grass will be a help rather than a hindrance. At impact, the swing path for a draw/hook is more an across-and-outward move, and when the ball is slightly perched, it's easier to make this happen. Conversely, it's not always easy to go right to left from hardpan, fairway bunkers, or any sort of tight lie.

You'll put extra curve on any hook or draw hit with a right-to-left wind, and you'll get basically a straight ball into a left-to-right wind. As with the fade/slice, be aware that a tailwind will straighten your shot and a headwind will increase its bend.

Don't try anything fancy from the rough or wet grass unless you're also in one of the hilly lies that favors a draw. These are the sidehill lies with the ball above your feet and the uphill lie.

Finally, remember that right-to-left shots tend to be "hot." They bounce and roll much more actively than straight shots. So allow for this by taking at least one club less when playing a draw, at least two clubs less on an intentional hook.

The red and green lights on the low shot are obvious. Stay with the low-lofted clubs such as the 2-, 3-, and 4-iron. Beyond the fact that these clubs have less loft built into them, they're smart choices, even for shots in the 150-yard range, because they force you to make a controlled swing. In general terms, the more softly you hit the ball, the less actively the ball will spin. And since you usually don't want backspin on the low shot, it's wise to take plenty of club and keep your swing quiet.

The low shot is a great weapon in the wind because both a tailwind and a headwind will knock it down still more. A tight lie is a good place from which to hit a low shot, but a fluffy lie or a nest in the rough is not. Don't expect to be able to keep the ball down when you're standing uphill, but do expect a low shot from a downhill lie.

High shots are very difficult to play from hardpan, tight lies, and fairway bunkers, but relatively easy from perched lies in the fairway or from light rough. A strong headwind will tend to increase the backspin and height on a high shot, sending it almost straight up, whereas a strong tail-wind can have a flattening effect. Finally, just as a downhill lie encourages a low shot, an uphill lie will naturally help you to get height, as you catch the ball more on an upswing than normal.

- Greg Norman



Recognizing when certain shots are impossible is a skill that every golfer should develop.

Tip #24: Become a Sand Expert

In the course of my yearly tournament schedule I see a half dozen different varieties of sand, each with a different degree of coarseness, compaction, and depth. Each of them calls for a slightly different attack.

Call it chauvinism if you want, but I've always felt that the finest bunker sand in the world is in Australia. Maybe I'm just used to it. After all, for a decade or so before I became a golfer, I spent a lot of time on the Australian beaches.

The Aussie sand is rather granular and firmly packed, and the bunkers at most courses are shallow-based and constructed so that the ball rarely plugs, even in the front lip. Instead, it just rolls back down the face.

The same type of sand is prevalent at many of the British courses, certainly at the seaside links where beach sand is smoothed and compacted by constant wind. (Consequently, buried lies are relatively rare in the British Open.)

In general, this type of sand is easy to play from because you can judge more easily the chain reaction from club to sand to ball. You can also impart plenty of spin from these firm bunkers because you tend to get a lot of bounce. For that reason, you should generally attack such shots with a less open clubface than you would use in most bunkers. It's also wise to play the ball back in your stance a bit more than usual. This will encourage more of a digging action and guard against a belly-bounce.

In deep, powdery bunkers such as those at the Augusta National and Oakmont, the wedge will tend to dig and bury. So it's wise to play from these bunkers with a well-open sand wedge and to position the ball a bit more forward in your stance than usual. The loose consistency also requires a relatively firm swing. If you play most of your golf on a course with this type of sand, you should be sure to get yourself a wedge with plenty of flange.



The wedge tends to dig and bury in powdery bunkers, so it's wise to play with an open clubface and the ball forward in your stance.

The trickiest kind of bunkers may be those with loose sand over a firm crust. When Bob Tway holed his explosion to beat me at Inverness, he played from this type of bunker. In hard-bottomed bunkers such as this, the ball rarely buries, but you have to be careful nonetheless. Generally, your club will glide smoothly through the sand and ball, unless you dig a bit too deeply and cut into the crust. When that happens the club can slow down, causing you to leave the ball in the sand. It's safest to attack these bunkers with a heavy-flanged wedge, to allow the club to bounce off the subsurface.

One of the reasons I like to play out of the British bunkers is that the sand is often wet. This really makes it pack together densely, providing a uniform cushion under the ball so that the wedge slides smoothly underneath and bounces up and through rather than digging deep.

In wet sand, you usually have a clean, unburied lie, and this tempts many players to try to play out with a chip shot. As far as I'm concerned, that's absolutely the worst idea in the world. As aggressive and confident a player as I am, I never try to play chip shots from the sand. The possibilities for error are simply too great. In fact, I'll take out a putter and roll the ball out of a bunker before I'll chip it.

Another reason never to chip from wet sand is the fact that a blast is so simple. You actually have a couple of options on how to handle it. If you need distance, you can address this ball with a square face, since from wet sand you don't have to worry about digging too deeply. And since the wet, compacted cushion will transfer your energy quickly, you don't need to swing very forcefully to get plenty of fly and roll. Just take the usual open stance and make a smooth pass at the ball, hitting an inch and a half behind it.

If on the other hand you need to play a short shot to a tight pin, this is your chance to show off, maybe even make the ball suck back into the hole. Open the face of the wedge wide and lay it back, position the ball just back of center in your open stance, and make a very quick, nipping swing-short back, short through, but with plenty of acceleration-taking only an inch of sand behind the ball. Most important, go at this shot with the confidence it deserves. When you hit it properly, you can really make the ball dance.

- Greg Norman

Tip #25: Overhaul Your Game

Setting goals for your game is an art. The trick is in setting them at the right level -- neither too low nor too high. A good goal should be lofty enough to inspire hard work, yet realistic enough to provide solid hope of attainment.

If, for instance, you're a 15-handicapper at the start of the season, there's not much point in setting a year-end goal of a 5-handicap. Unless you're possessed of unusual time and talent, 10 strokes is far too tall an order for one year.

Nor would aspiring to a 14-handicap make sense. That would be like going on a diet to lose one pound. A good compromise would be to shoot for a handicap of nine -- the allure of a single digit next to your name, yet within reasonable reach of your present level.

Basically, every golfer, assuming he is physically able, has two choices: He can make the best of his current game or he can try to overhaul it. Of the two, the first is far less taxing but offers a smaller reward. The second demands much more but yields much more.

Our friend the 15-handicapper could choose the first path and might be able to lower his handicap to nine without making any major changes in his swing and without undue time and trouble. But he wouldn't get much better than a nine.

Alternatively, assuming he were to choose the over-haul route, he might have a chance to get down to a 5-handicap, perhaps even lower, but only after a lot of hard work.

The first option generally requires major attention to the aspects of golf that most influence scoring -- the short game, sand play, putting and trouble shots, plus practice or play at least once a week.



Norman realized years ago that chipping was his Achilles heel, so he spent hours and hours refining the rough spots

The second option entails thorough study of all aspects of the game, possibly reinforced with lessons from a competent PGA professional, and it certainly involves thousands of practice balls, plus on-course practice or play two or more times per week.

So ask yourself how much desire you really have. Then set your general strategy -- choose one of the two routes -- and begin to set some specific interim goals as part of that strategy.

Set easy ones first. Let's say you chose the first route, to make the best of your current method, and let's say you're that 15-handicapper in search of a nine. Clearly, you'll have to begin working on your short game and putting, but before you do, set yourself an interim handicap target of 12.

If on your home course you usually shoot about 87, reorient yourself to an average score of 84. And if par for your course is 72, or 70 or whatever, forget it. Stop thinking about the course's par and instead focus on your own personal par -- now set at 84.

You can do this by going through the course, hole by hole, and deciding on which holes you should make pars and where you should expect bogeys. This is far more reasonable and motivational than trying to play against 18 pars. A personal par of 84 gives you a reachable goal, say six pars and 12 bogeys. That's something you can pursue with confidence and aggressiveness.

In determining your par and bogey holes, go back to your analysis. If your favorite club is the 7-iron, and if one of the par-three holes calls for a 7-iron tee-shot, surely you'll want to plan for a par on that hole.

If you habitually play a draw, you'll probably want to plan for pars on the right-to-left holes and bogeys on the left-to-rights. If you hit a high ball, you might feel it reasonable to plan a bogey on the into-the-wind holes.

You probably will never shoot your goal score for each of the 18 holes in a single round, but these 18 mini-goals will give you room for compensation and aspiration. A double-bogey six won't get you disgusted, since one of your par-fours may turn out to be a birdie.

It probably won't take you long to start shooting that new par-84. Once you have a couple of 84s or better under your belt, set the second goal -- your new par-- 81. Readjust your scores for the individual holes so that you have 18 comfortably attainable targets totaling 81, and then go to it again. Don't be surprised if it's even easier this second time -- you may even dip down into the 70s.

Now let's say your goal is not tied to your handicap. Let's say you simply want to become a more consistent player. Once again, take a look at your self-analysis. This time, see which areas of your game are the weakest.

If chipping is your Achilles' heel, practice it with a bold "think-sink" attitude. This is, in fact, exactly what I did. A few years back chipping was clearly the worst part of my game. So I marched myself to a practice green and spent hours and hours refining the rough spots.

If that sounds arduous and dull, put some fun into it by charting your progress. Take 20 balls and begin by practicing routine 20-foot chip shots. See how many of the 20 you can knock into the hole. Chances are you won't make any at first, but you should set yourself a goal of sinking at least one.

Once you can sink one out of 20 consistently, try to sink an average of two out of 20, then three, then four. When you can sink four out of 20 from 20 feet, you'll find that chipping is no longer the weakest part of your game!

Or let's take another goal -- you want to win your flight of the club championship. Again, go through your game analysis, and match it to your course. Determine the spots where you want to play aggressively and where you want to play safe. Don't be afraid about consciously avoiding situations where you'd have to play your less-than-favorite shots.

For instance, if you're very accurate with a full pitching wedge but not very good with partial wedge shots, then on holes where you have to lay up short of the green, there's no point in trying to slug your ball up close where you'll have to hit that partial shot. Instead, you should be sure to leave yourself enough room so that you can play that full wedge into the green.

The pros do this all the time, and Johnny Miller was one of the best at it. He knew that he was as precise as anyone in the world at hitting a golf ball 110 yards -- exactly 110 yards. He figures that from that distance he can put his shot within six feet of the pin more often than not.

So, on long par-5s, when Johnny knew after his drive he couldn't get home in two, he simply asked his caddie, "What's the yardage to the 110 point?" Then he'd hit whatever club he needed to get to that distance. He may have hit as little as a 6- or 7-iron, secure in the confidence that the next shot would give him a short birdie putt.

That's aggressive golf -- using your strongest tools as often and as effectively as possible.

- Greg Norman

Tip #26: Think Your Way Out of Trouble

Before you can become a good trouble player you have to become a good trouble thinker. That requires three qualities.

The first is patience. When your golf ball plops into deep rough or sails into the center of the woods, take a deep breath. Then forget that shot and start concentrating on the next one. I get angry sometimes too, but I've learned that in golf you can't channel such anger toward anything positive. I've also seen lots of players turn their anger into all sorts of negatives.

Some get despondent. They act as if they've been victimized and there's nothing they can do about it. So they give up. When they reach the ball, they take no time or care, they just swipe at it once -- sometimes twice or three times. If they don't get it back into play, they close the book on that hole. Sometimes such a predicament will ruin these people for the rest of the day.

Others get angry. They suddenly start to see the golf course as a mortal enemy. They no longer want to hit the ball, they want to hurt it. When this type of player knocks his drive out-of-bounds or plops it into water and has to play a second ball, he usually hits that second ball into trouble too. Anger blurs his ability to concentrate sharply and swing smoothly.

And still others get overly ambitious. They sense that after their bad shot they've lost a certain amount of ground, and they become determined to regain all of that ground on the next shot. From a thick lie in the center of a dense forest, this player will take out his 3-wood and go for the flag. That's usually the beginning of a very big number.

If you can keep your cool after hitting a ball into trouble, you'll have a big advantage over all these other types of players (three groups which, from my observation, encompass about 90 percent of amateur golfers). So whatever it takes, cool yourself down, put the bad shot behind you, and repeat to yourself, "Patience, patience." Later on, you'll be glad you did.

The second quality, which goes hand in hand with patience, is realism. It's important to be able to accept your fate and deal with it. Walter Hagen, the man who won four consecutive PGA Championships, once said that in a given round of golf he expected to miss at least five shots. That way, when his ball rolled into trouble, he was mentally prepared to deal with it. Hagen, incidentally, was probably the greatest trouble player of all time.

Be realistic about your next shot as well. Take a businesslike approach to the problem. You hit the ball in there, and you now have to hit it out. Your assignment is to evaluate the various options and choose the shot where reward most outweighs risk. When your ball is 200 yards from a water-guarded green and sitting in eight-inch rough, the shot with the biggest reward may be a 5-wood, but from a poor lie, you'll risk smothering or pulling that shot, or hitting it into the drink. The risks are greater than the reward. An 8-iron layup won't reward you to the same degree, but the risks will be minimal.

The final quality for good trouble play is imagination. You have to be able to "see" all the shots, all the options available to you. Sometimes this is just a matter of keeping your wits about you and scanning the area for escape routes. Trouble makes me stretch my shotmaking skills, and a good portion of those skills are mental, not physical.

I suspect this is true of most touring professional golfers. When we're in a difficult spot, we work harder, concentrate harder. And more often than not, we pull off the shot.

You may not have the physical skills of a pro, but there's no reason why you can't approach and evaluate trouble situations with the same mental acuity. In fact, to use these skills you need nothing more than a sophisticated version of your normal pre-shot routine.

I begin playing a trouble shot as I'm approaching the ball. Often you can see your situation better -- get a view of the big picture -- when you're 100 yards in back of it. You can see the actual height of the trees, the nature of the terrain the shot will have to cross, and sometimes you can get a better view of the pin position as well.

Once I'm at the ball, the first thing I do is inspect the lie. If it's in heavy grass, several shots are immediately made impossible. Likewise, if it's sitting on hardpan or some other tight lie, certain shots are eliminated. I also make note of whether the grass is wet or dry and whether it's growing with my shot or against it.

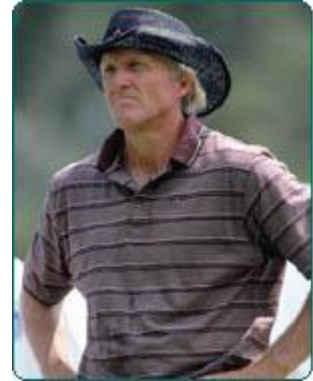
Next I take a look at what's in front of me. Let's say I'm in the rough, I have 150 yards to the green, and I have to hit the ball under the tree limb that's hanging about six feet off the ground. I begin to imagine what the ideal escape would look like -- some sort of punch that lands in the fairway and runs to the green. This is when I start asking myself questions: does my lie allow me to put the club on the ball for such a shot? (if the grass is very thick, the answer is no.) Can I find my way to the green with such a shot or does a bunker or water hazard block the way?

If the answers to the questions raise doubts about my first shot, I'll search for other options. This is when I look up into the trees for a possible high-road escape. I'll also consider whether a hook or slice shot would be possible from the situation. If no other option is available, I'll return to the question of the low shot and make my decision, either to go for the green or to lay up.

Once that choice is made, I'll match a club to the situation. In the case of the shot I've described, let's say I choose to go for the green. I'll next visualize the ideal shot once again, and that picture will automatically tell me the best club to choose, probably a 4- or 5-iron, which I would play back in my stance and hit with a short, crisp, punching swing.

If I make the more difficult decision -- to lay up -- I'll again imagine what the ideal shot would be. (This is something that amateurs often fail to do. Instead they take a careless, cavalier attitude toward safe shots, and often chip the ball too short or clear across the fairway into further trouble.) I'll decide the ideal point from which I'd like to play my next shot, then I'll visualize hitting my safe shot to that point. Finally, I'll choose the club that offers the best chance of executing that safe shot.

Adopt this type of routine and you'll be pleased with the results. You'll discover, just as the pros do, that the tighter the spot you're in, the tighter your focus of concentration will be, and the more impressive your shotmaking will be.



The tighter the spot, the tighter your focus will be, and the more impressive your shotmaking will be.

- Greg Norman

Tip #27: Blast it Out of the Water

Everyone thinks an explosion from water is the most daring shot in golf. The reality is, it's no more difficult than a sand blast. The trick is not in knowing how to play it, it's knowing when to play it.

I've practiced this shot a lot, and I can tell you that when any part of your ball protrudes above the surface of the water, you can safely give it a whack.

Many players and teachers will advise you to hit this shot with a pitching wedge, but I prefer a sand wedge, so I guess either will do.

Assuming you have good footing, just play it as you would an explosion from sand, with the ball well back in your open stance. However, be sure to keep your clubface square to the target to facilitate slicing through the water.

Figure on having to hit this shot about twice as hard as you would hit a fairway shot of the same distance.

Also figure on getting soaked.



If the ball is sitting up, a water blast is no more difficult than a bunker shot.

- Greg Norman

Tip #28: Get Hungry Around the Green

Two words will do you more good than anything else I can tell you about the short game.

Get hungry.

Get hungry for the bottom of the cup. Because that hunger, that aggressiveness, is what makes the difference between a player who wastes strokes around the green and one who consistently turns three shots into two.

If that's not your attitude, change it. Change it because there's no reason you shouldn't play your short shots with all the skill -- and confidence -- of a PGA Tour player. You may never hit your drives as long as I do or make your irons stop on the green the way mine do. But with a basic short-game knowledge and the refinements I'm about to discuss, there's no reason why you shouldn't be able to go chip shot for chip shot against me or any other pro in the game.

All you need is the right attitude -- the right focus. When I'm hitting a tee shot, my goal is a fairway 40 yards wide. When I'm playing an approach I'm hitting to an area the size of a swimming pool. But once I'm inside 100 yards, I have only one target in mind -- the bottom of that little round hole. Adopt this focus, and you'll take the first step to a sharp short game.

The second step goes back to the idea of teaching yourself touch. Once you have a good grasp of the basic short game shots -- the chip, pitch, and lob -- start experimenting a bit. Go out to a practice green with your pitching wedge and fiddle around with your setup. Not your swing -- your setup.

Experiment with different ball positions -- move it up in your stance, then back -- and note how those changes influence the flight and roll of your chips. Then vary the openness of your stance and see what that does. Play around with the clubface too -- open it as wide as you can get it and see how high you can pop the ball. Then close it down and hood it and watch what that does to your chips.

Then back off a few yards and see what happens when you introduce these variations in your pitch shots. Watch the way each shot flies, and how it rolls -- or stops -- after hitting the green. Open your clubface and stance as far as possible and see how high you can lob the ball. Then close them down and see how low you can punch it with the same club. Get to know how all these changes produce different results, and you will give yourself a postgraduate degree in the subtleties of the short game.

What that knowledge will give you is freedom -- freedom of choice. You'll be able to select your shots. One of the subtle things that separates people with touch from the rest of golfers is the fact that they always have two or three options. Players with only one or two greenside shots become victims of the golf course and have to stretch and force those shots to fit each challenge.

But players with several options can take charge. Since they know how to play different shots and they know exactly how those shots will behave when struck from various types of lies to various landing areas, they can look at a situation, evaluate the options and come up with the shotmaking choice that offers the best chance of success.

- Greg Norman

Tip #29: Get the Stiffest Shaft You Can Handle

When it comes to your driver, I'm an advocate of getting the stiffest shaft of club you can handle.



There's no reason you shouldn't play your short shots with all the skill and confidence of a tour player.

This is particularly true if you have a hooking problem. The stiffer shaft does not whip through and close the clubface as easily as a whippy shaft does, so in effect you can swing more aggressively.

Of course, there's such a thing as too stiff a shaft. When you hit all your tee-shots dead to the right, it usually means the shaft is too stiff for you to square up the club. In such a case, you should back off from that one level of stiffness. If that shaft is an X (for extra stiff), go down to an S (stiff); if it's an S, go to an R (regular).

The only golfers who should not seek the stiffest shaft possible are players in desperate need of distance. If this is the case with you -- if you're not getting your longest tee-shots much farther than 175 yards or so -- try a more flexible shaft in your driver. With an R or L (ladies') shaft you'll have an easier time "closing the door" of the clubface in the hitting area, and you'll likely develop a draw or hook which will give you a few extra yards of roll. Just be aware that these yards may come at the expense of accuracy.

You should also pay attention to what's called the face depth of the driver. The term should actually be "face height" because that's what it is, the distance from the bottom of the face of the driver to the top. In any case, the shallower the depth of the face, the lower the center of gravity of the club and the higher you'll hit the ball. The deeper (taller) the face, the higher the center of gravity and the lower you'll hit the ball.

Another thing to consider is the length of your shaft. I became a straighter, more solid driver the day I shortened the shaft of my club by three-quarters of an inch. If your driver is longer than 43 inches and you're currently erratic with it, consider having your pro cut it down an inch. My bet is that you'll be pleasantly surprised at the improved compactness and timing of your swing and at the better control your tee shots will have.

- Greg Norman

Tip #30: Dig it out of the Rough

When you find your ball nestled deep in thick rough, you don't have a flyer lie. In fact, the best you can hope for from this situation is sort of a floater. Dense grass will slow down your clubhead to the point that you'll be barely able to extricate the ball. Whereas the flyer takes off like a rocket, this floater ascends like a blimp.

Your club selection on this shot is restricted to the short irons -- 8, 9, and the wedges -- with the pitching wedge usually the best choice. Play the ball about two inches back in your stance 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 clubhead 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 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 feet. The faster you can get the club moving through the ball, the faster that ball will climb out of its nest and the farther it will go.



- Greg Norman

Thick rough will grab your club and close the face at impact, so you'll want an extra-firm grip in your left hand.

Tip #31: Learn to Read the Green

A good putting stroke is only half of what you need to become a good putter. The other side is artistic -- reading the green.

Good green reading comes with experience. After hitting enough putts over enough different types of terrain and grass, you develop a sixth sense of how the ball will roll. As you walk onto a green, whether you realize it or not, you take in all sorts of subtle information.



If the green appears light, you know you're putting against the grain; if it's dark you're downgrain. If the green is set on a high area of the course and you feel a breeze as you step onto it, you sense that the putt will be fast. Even if you don't look closely at the surrounding terrain, you are aware of any major slope in the land.

Never stroke a putt until you have a good vision of the path on which it will roll.

Without having to tell yourself, you know which is the low side of the green and which is the high. If the putting surface is hard and crusty under foot, you receive one message, if it's soft and spongy you get another. Experience with many, many putts allows you to run this data through your mind before you even mark your ball.

The most elusive aspect of green reading has to do with the grain. Grain refers to the direction in which the blades of grass grow. The light/dark appearance is one way to read it. Another method you can use is to take your putter blade and scrape it across a patch of fringe. If the blades of grass brush up, you're scraping against the grain. If they mat down, you're scraping with it. (Incidentally, be sure to do this scraping on the fringe. On the greens, it's against Rule 35.)

A third method is to take a look at the cup. Often, the blades of grass will grow over the edge of the cup in the direction in which the grain moves. Grain usually grows toward water, especially toward the ocean, and in the West it's apt to lean toward the mountains. If you're not near any such topography, figure on the grain growing in the direction of the setting sun.

Grain is strongest on bermuda grass, where short, crew-cut-like blades tend to push the ball strongly. Although each putt on each green is different, as a general rule you can figure on stroking the ball about 20 percent harder than usual on a putt that's dead into the grain and about 20 percent less on a downgrain putt.

When the ball breaks with the grain, read-in extra "borrow." When the slope is against the grain, play for less break. These effects are less marked on the long-stemmed bent and other strains of grass, but they are present nonetheless. The break of your putt will also be affected by the firmness of a green, the wetness/dryness, the amount of wind you're facing, and even the time of day. In general, any time you have to hit the ball hard, you play for less break.

Another way of reading the break on a green is to watch the way other players' putts behave. I'm all for "going to school," but with one caveat: Allow for any difference between your own playing style and those of your fellow players. If, for instance, your friend is a lagger and you're a charger, don't play as much break as he does.

Finally, if I have one hard and fast rule in putting, it's this: Never hit the ball until you have a good vision of the path on which it will roll. Sometimes we all know those golden moments -- the vision will come to you immediately. You'll "see" the perfect putt the minute you step up to it, and more often than not, you'll sink it just as you saw it.

Other times, it will take much longer to get a picture of the putt, and even then you won't be comfortable. But don't make your stroke until you have the best read you can get. You have to believe in your line if you want to have a good chance of sinking any putt. When the putt has lots of break in it, be sure to visualize the entire path that the ball will take, particularly the last part as it drops.

And if it must come in from one side, visualize that moment in particular. Keep in mind that every cup has sort of a gate or doorway. On straight putts the doorway faces directly parallel to the blade of your putter. On putts that break, however, you have to mentally reposition that doorway -- slide it a bit clockwise or counterclockwise around the cup to allow for the sidwinding approach of the ball.

I'm a confirmed "spot putter," which means that once I have the path of the ideal putt visualized, I pick out a point at the crest of the break and orient my eyes, my putter blade and my mind toward that point rather than at the hole. After all, if my read is correct, and if I hit that spot with the correct speed, the rest of the putt will take care of itself.

So search for those spots and discolorations in the green that you can use to discipline your aim on putts. This practice also teaches you to ensure that the line of your putt is a smooth one, free of twigs, debris, and particularly ball marks. (Ball marks, by the way, are a "hot button" with me. I often repair two or three of them on a green, and I can't understand why every player can't take care of his own. In fact, I once went so far as to suggest that players be fined for failing to repair their ball marks.)

Once you have the line in mind, ingrain it by continuing to visualize the ideal path of the putt. Ingrain the feel for distance too, as you take your practice strokes. Don't just flip the putter back and forth. Stroke an imaginary ball with exactly the force you plan to impart on your putt.

Distance is by far the most important consideration on putts of 20 feet or more. Hit the ball the correct length, and even if you misjudge your direction you'll rarely finish more than a foot or two from the hole. Keep in mind, however, that "proper length" for an aggressive putter means striking the ball with enough force to rattle it into the cup.

The only way to get a touch for distance is to practice. Someday, spend 15 minutes hitting the same 50-foot putt, and at the end of that session you'll be able to hit it consistently to within a couple of feet of the hole. It's just a matter of training your hand and arm muscles to respond to what your eye sees, then refining that ability through repetition.

Long-putt practice always gives me sort of a general sense of feel. For a more refined touch, I like to work on the fast downhillers, particularly those with some break in them. These are without question the hardest putts. Usually, I'll hit them off the toe of the putter. This deadens the hit a bit while still allowing me to make a normal stroke.

I practice uphill putts when I want to work on the mechanics of my stroke. Whereas on a downhill, you simply want to get the ball moving on the proper line with the proper pace, on the uphiller you have to make it go. If you want to be successful when putting up a steep slope, you must keep your head down and steady, keep the putterhead low going back, and accelerate through the ball -- all hallmarks of a good stroke.

Another great way to practice your stroke is to hit putts first using only your left hand, and then only your right. You can "teach" each of the hands the proper feel much more easily when you work with them one at a time.



Once you have the line in mind, ingrain it by continuing to visualize the ideal path of the putt.

Tip #32: Take the Right Position

Alignment is the most important factor in determining the path of your shots, but ball position is unquestionably second on the list. I recommend keeping things simple and using the same ball position for virtually all shots.

This is in conflict with players and teachers who say the shorter the club, the farther back you should play the ball. I disagree with that. If you keep the ball in the same spot for every club, you're going to create one of the most important assets a golfer can have -- consistency.



For the vast majority of his full swings, Norman positions the ball just behind his left heel.

When you move the ball back for the shorter clubs, you're basically changing the loft of the club. If, for instance, you play the 7-iron a half-inch farther back than you do the 6-iron, then what you're doing is taking some of the loft off the 7-iron. In effect, the 7-iron becomes a short 6-iron. Changing ball position changes the point in your swing at which you make contact with the ball. As far as I'm concerned, it's hard enough to worry about one impact point without having to keep track of a dozen of them.

For the vast majority of my full swings, I position the ball at a point just in back of my left heel. Through years of trial and error, I've learned that this is the position that works best for me. Letting the ball move around in your stance is a sure way to high scores.

Early in my career there was a year in which I was having some trouble with my game, and I couldn't figure out my problem. My swing felt fine, but my shots were spraying all over the place. My countryman and good friend, Bruce Devlin, who knows my swing well, was doing television commentary at one tournament and spotted my error right away.

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He saw that I had allowed my ball position to drift about an inch forward, so that I was playing everything off my left instep. After he told me I went directly to the practice tee. I had it completely straightened out 20 shots later. The next day I made eight birdies. That started the finest period of my career, and in the following 13 months I won 10 events worldwide.

Ever since that experience I've kept close tabs on my ball position. I now check it every day with a method that allows me to monitor my alignment and my ball position at the same time.

I have a "picture" I look for at address, when I look down through my hands to the club and ball. I know I'm in correct alignment and my ball position is in its proper place when I see the back of the thumb pad of my left hand cover the instep of my left foot.

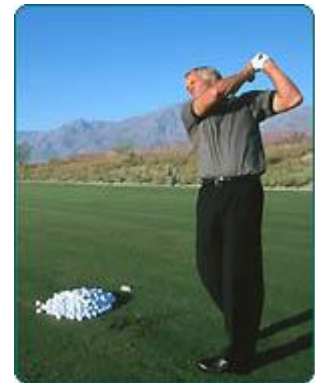
When I don't see this picture, I check my alignment and ball position to determine which of them is off. Once I have that thumb pad eclipsing my left instep, I'm back in the groove. And since I play virtually everything from a square stance and with the same ball position, this picture works, no matter what club I have in my hand.

Should you adopt this same position and this same ideal picture? Probably not. There is quite a range of acceptable ball positions. You could probably play the ball at least one ball-width in front of where I do and at least two ball-widths farther back. Ideally, however, your ball position should be at the very bottom of your swing arc, and that point is different with every physique.

A short, stout person has a relatively low center of gravity, a flattish swing, and a shallow, short arc. He'll tend to reach the bottom of his swing earlier. He should therefore use a rearward ball position, whereas a tall, lanky person with a higher center of gravity and a big wide arc will tend to need a more forward ball position, to compensate for the necessary lateral movement in his swing.

Beyond these considerations, a player with a lot of leg action will tend to play the ball forward and "go after it" in his forward swing, whereas a player who keeps a very steady swing center and gets most of his power from a big turn of the upper body, will play the ball back toward the center of his stance and "trap it."

My best advice is to find your ideal ball position just as I did -- by trial and error. Then memorize that "picture" that you see at address when you're playing well and be able to recreate it before you pull the trigger on any shot.



Changing ball position changes the point in your swing at which you make contact with the ball.

Tip #33: Perfect Your Putting Position

Today, I putt with the same basic method I used when I began playing golf at age 15. It seems logical, it's simple, it feels good and it works for me. It always has.

There was a time in my career, however, when I didn't use this method. It began back at the 1978 British Open at St. Andrews. I was playing a practice round with my countryman, five-time British Open champion Peter Thomson, when Peter offered me some advice.

He said I'd never become a truly great putter with the open stance and swinging-door stroke I used, and he suggested I develop a square stance and a straight-back-straight-through stroke in order to ensure keeping the ball on line.

It made sense to me, and it seemed easy enough to do. Besides, who was I, a young kid fresh on the tour, to argue with a five-time Open champion? Even though I had putted well with my method, I gave Thomson's advice a try.

For seven long years I gave it a try. The weakness, I finally realized, was that I simply wasn't comfortable with the square-to-square technique. In the process of working on it, I tried a half dozen putters and never got to the point where I was absolutely confident over the ball.

Ironically, it was at St. Andrews again that I abandoned the method and went back to my old style. I'm not sure what prompted me, but one morning during the 1985 Dunhill Cup I simply stuck my old Wilson 8802 putter back in the bag, went to the practice green, and started putting like a kid again.

The following year was by far my best as a professional, due in large part to the fact that, statistically, I was the leading putter on the U.S. PGA Tour.

So learn from my mistake. If your putting stance and stroke feel natural and work well, and if you usually get through 18 holes with 30 putts or fewer, stick with your method.

I don't care whether you putt cross-handed, left-handed, stiff-wristed, floppy-wristed, pigeon-toed, knock-kneed, or standing on your head. If your method feels and works fine, keep it.

If, on the other hand, you're uncomfortable with your present putting method, abandon it. I'd never offer this advice so blithely with regard to a full golf swing, but putting is different.

It's fundamentally a Machiavellian pursuit -- the ends justify the means. So if you don't like the way you're now putting, experiment. Go to the practice green and try different methods until you come upon a style that feels comfortable, and propels the ball boldly into the hole.

My own stroke feels good to me because I've used it for so many years. I stand very tall, with my feet only an inch or so apart and my arms stretched straight down from my shoulders with almost no bend. This gives me a feeling of unity with the putter shaft.

I also stand open just a hair. Although I'm sure I did this originally simply because it felt comfortable, I can now say that the open position gives me a slightly better look at the hole than I had with the square stance. I use a reverse overlap grip -- the index finger of my left hand overlapping the pinky of my right -- to minimize wrist action, and I play the ball in the same position I do for full shots, a hair in back of my left heel. This leaves my hands directly over the ball.

My stroke is wristless, generated by my shoulders and arms. As I said earlier, the head of the putter opens slightly on the backswing and closes down after impact, in response to the rotating of my shoulders. I make no attempt to keep the face square throughout the stroke. However, this method does bring the face into a square position through the impact area.

The most distinctive aspect of my putting method is undoubtedly the fact that I address the ball off the toe of my clubface. I begin my backswing from the toe-address position, then reroute the putter during the stroke so that at impact I hit the ball smack off the sweetspot. Again, there are no explanations for this little wrinkle except that I've done it that way since I was 15, and it works.

As with full swings, it's important to have a consistent pre-shot routine, sort of a countdown of things to do before striking the ball. This keeps your mind off negative thoughts and establishes a rhythm for the entire stroke.

On the green, that countdown should also encompass the matter of lining up the putt. My routine begins when I align my golf ball, being sure to turn it so that I strike the label. There's no magic to orienting the ball in this manner -- it's simply a way of developing a consistent pattern.

Next, I begin surveying the putt. First I look at it from behind the ball toward the hole. Then I double-check, from behind the hole toward the ball. On my way back to the ball, if it's a right-to-left breaking putt, I'll take a look at it from the left side, vice versa for a left-to-right breaker. By this time, I'll have a good image of the way the ball will run.

- Greg Norman

Tip #34: Aptitude Starts with Attitude

There are several good ways to swing at a golf ball, but only one good way to play golf -- aggressively.

Picture the swings of Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Seve Ballesteros. They are three very distinctive styles, yet each of those players has demonstrated time and again that he knows how to grab hold of a tournament and subdue a course. Each knows how -- and when -- to be aggressive.



If your stance and stroke feel natural, and if you usually get through 18 holes with fewer than 30 putts, stick with your method.



An aggressive golfer has a positive outlook, a smooth swing and a hunger for the bottom of the cup.

Aggressive play is a vital asset of the world's greatest golfers. However, it's even more important to the average player. Attack this game in a bold, confident, and determined way, and you'll make a giant leap toward realizing your full potential as a player.

I can't tell you how many amateurs I've seen who cripple themselves with a cautious, frightened attitude. It pervades their entire game, beginning with the tee-shot. Facing a tight or difficult fairway, I can see the fear in their eyes. This frightened attitude leads to a steering swing and a veering tee shot.

On approach shots, they rarely take enough club to go boldly at the flag. Instead they fall short, where most of the architect's worst perils lurk. In bunkers, these players are completely intimidated. As a result, they fail to make the necessary accelerating swing, and either they leave the ball in the sand or blade it across the green into another bunker, leading to even greater trauma on the next shot.

Many amateur golfers are good pitchers and chippers, but they often lack the ideal attitude around the green, an attitude which can be summed up in two words: "sink it." It's the same with putting, where the most common -- and absolutely inexcusable error among weekend golfers is to leave the ball short of the hole.

All of these problems can be countered with an aggressive approach to the game. The aggressive golfer plays with a positive outlook that translates into a smooth, unhurried swing and a voracious hunger for the bottom of the cup. And that

in turn translates into lower scores.

I can see you saying to yourself, "That's easy for Greg Norman to say." And I can understand why you feel that way. You figure I'm this big, strong Australian guy who was born with tons of talent to swing fearlessly at every tee-shot and gun at every flag.

Well let me tell you, you don't have to be big, strong or Australian to play aggressive golf. You don't even have to be highly talented. You simply have to know how to make optimum use of whatever you have. Aggressiveness comes not from genetics or environment, but from within. When I say "within," the last thing I mean is ego.

I've seen lots of guys play ego golf. In fact, occasionally, I still hit an ego shot or two myself. But those are bad shots, even when they're played perfectly. Ego shots are attempted by people who think they are better players than they actually are.

Let's face it, to a greater or lesser extent, we're all susceptible to ego - we're all victims of our best shots. If on a certain occasion in my career I was able to slam a 1-iron 260 yards over water to within a foot of the flag, I have a strong and pleasant mental record of that shot, and when I come to a similar situation it's natural to call on that memory. If my ego then takes over, I'll say to myself, "I hit that beautiful high 1-iron back in 1986, I can do it again now."

That's not aggressiveness, it's naivete. Ninety-nine times out of one hundred, such shots fall short of the miracle shot you once pulled off. In my case, the 1-iron may miss the green and maybe even go in the water. In such a situation, a smooth, smart swing with one of my fairway woods would be the wisely aggressive choice.

Everyone makes an ego mistake once in a while, but only a foolish player does it often. Such a golfer bases his shots not on wise course management but on self-delusion and wishful thinking. When he runs into trouble, he typically reacts badly. He can't accept his own incompetence, so he attempts a recovery shot that's usually beyond his reach. This frustrated, desperate demeanor only leads him into worse trouble.



Aggressiveness comes not from genetics or environment, but from within.

- Greg Norman

Tip #35: Mental Readiness

Proper mental preparation is important on the tee-shot, particularly when the hole offers a special challenge in terms of length or tightness. On holes that call for long carries, don't let yourself become the architect's pigeon.

I confess that I still fall for this one. I'll look down the fairway, see the big bunker at the corner of the dogleg, and immediately ask my caddie how far I have to hit the ball to carry the sand.



While you're waiting to tee off on the first hole, take some time to relax your mind and relax your muscles.

Instead, I should be contemplating the best way to work my ball around the trap. Don't go for the big carry unless it's comfortably within your power. Put the drive in play - then get aggressive on your approach shot.

When you're looking down the throat of a tight-driving hole, you need to loosen up mentally. I find that the best way to do that is first to loosen up physically.

If I'm not hitting first, I try to do this while my partners are hitting their drives. I close my eyes, take a deep breath, and then slowly roll my head to the side, first one way and then the other. I go through this exercise on the first tee of virtually every tournament I play. It relaxes my neck and shoulder muscles and gets me ready for a free, smooth swing.

Not too long ago, I learned another method of loosening up, from my good friend, Seve Ballesteros. We were talking about the various mental techniques we use on the course when Seve said, "Whenever you see me at Augusta standing on a tee with my arms folded, I'm actually getting set for the next shot. What I do is take a deep breath and then press my hands hard against the bottom of my rib cage, for about fifteen seconds. When I let go and breathe out, there's a great feeling of release and relaxation. That's when I step up to hit my drive."

Even short holes demand some extra thought and concentration. Too many golfers make the mistake of teeing off every par-4 and par-5 with their driver. But on a par-4 of only 300 yards or so, that may not be the best ploy.

Normally such short holes have small, well-protected greens, and are best approached with a shot that will bite when it lands. If you knock your drive to within 60 yards or so of the green it's hard to hit the ball with sufficient force to impart the backspin that will make it stop.

Therefore, it's wiser to tee off with a fairway wood or long iron, leave yourself 100 yards or so from the green, and swing firmly with a sand wedge or pitching wedge that will enable the ball to fly over any greenside trouble yet stop quickly after it lands. This tactic may look cautious from the tee, but it's aggressive where it needs to be - on the shot to the flag.

- Greg Norman

Tip #36: Shotmaking Strategies

It was always my ambition to win my first major championship by a wide margin, so I'd be able to savor the final moments of triumph. In the 1986 British Open I got my wish. My five-stroke victory allowed me to enjoy the 17th and 18th holes at Turnberry, secure in the knowledge that no one could catch me.

Hole number 16, however, was another story. On the tee of that 415-yard par-4 known as Wee Bum, I let my drive get away from me. Off it sailed into the darkest reaches of the right-hand rough.

Granted, I was five strokes clear of my closest pursuer, but 16 is no place to spray a tee-shot, regardless of how big your lead may be. The approach must be played to a green that is tightly guarded by the only water hazard on the course, a small stream for which the hole is named.

Hit the ball short or right and you're in the drink, facing the loss of at least one stroke and likely more. Hit it long and you'll likely catch the back bunker, leaving a downwind, downhill explosion with the bum staring you in the face. It's a challenging shot, even from a good lie in the middle of the fairway - something I most certainly did not leave myself in that final round.

They say, however, that major championships are won with a combination of talent, tenacity, and luck. If that's true, then without question my share of good fortune occurred at 16 on Sunday. As Pete and I tramped across the hay and gorse en route to my wayward drive, I had no idea what to expect. But when we shouldered through the last circle of spectators, I beheld one of the prettiest sights imaginable.

There was my ball, sitting smack in the center of a gallery path. Amid some of the most daunting terrain in linksland golf, I had somehow found a gorgeous lie. One hundred thousand people had been trampling that area for a week, so instead of being buried in tangled grass, my ball was sitting cleanly on hard, bare ground. I couldn't have dropped it in a better place.

I looked at Pete and my first three words were, "Perfect, perfect, perfect." My next words came almost immediately. "I've got the shot," I told him.

The wind was coming at us from about two o'clock angle. And with the clean lie I had, I knew I could put plenty of spin on the ball. My plan was to hit a big, high fade and send it at the center of the green, knowing that its left-to-right movement would be more or less canceled out by the right-to-left wind.

The shot came off just as I had hoped. My ball hung up in the sky, fighting against the wind but not drifting a bit either right or left. Down it came, 10 feet from the hole. It was precisely at that moment that I knew I'd won the championship.

Good luck gave me an opportunity. But good shotmaking enabled me to make the most of it. The ability to play fades, draws, punches, and lofting shots is what marks true players. Combine this ability with an aggressive overall game, and you can lift your talent to the peak of its potential.

The Basics



If you can understand the way spin influences the flight of the ball, you have a head start at learning how to impart that spin.



Every shot stays on the clubface for a millisecond thus imparting backspin on the ball.

Shotmaking is fundamentally the process of spinning the golf ball in special ways. Thus, if you can understand the way in which this spin influences the flight of the ball, you'll have a head start at learning how to impart that spin.

When you hit a straight shot with normal trajectory, you impart pure backspin. As you make impact with a 7-iron, for instance, the clubface pinches against the back of the ball and makes the ball rotate "backwards," toward the club.

The ball actually climbs up the face of the club for a millisecond. Then this backspin lifts the ball into the air. As the ball leaves your clubface it is spinning backwards at the rate of nearly 150 revolutions per second.

Every shot in golf has backspin-the drive, the chip, the sand shot, even the duck hook and the shank. In fact, even a putt skids backward for an inch or so before it begins rolling forward.

Fade and Draws

When you cut across the ball, however, either from out to in or from in to out, you impart sidespin along with the backspin. It is this sidespin that causes the ball to curve to the right or left.

Clockwise sidespin makes the ball move from left to right. In basic terms, you impart this spin whenever the face of the golf club is open in relation to the angle of your swing path at impact.

Please recall that "open," in the case of the clubface, means pointing to the right of the swing path. This should not be confused with an open stance in which your body is aligned to the left of the target line.

It's important also to understand that this open clubface is the only root cause of fades and slices. You can make a perfectly square, on-plane swing, but if at impact the face of your club is pointing to the right of your target line, you'll curve the ball from left to right.

Conversely, you can have your club pointed perfectly down the target line, but if you hit the ball with a glancing blow from out to in, that straight-forward clubface will actually be open in relation to (pointing to the right of) the path of your swing. This also will produce a slice. The more open your clubface is in relation to your swing path, the more clockwise sidespin you'll put on the ball. Slightly open faces produce fades, wide-open faces produce slices.

Draws and hooks come from the opposite situation, where the clubface is closed in relation to (pointed to the left of the path of the swing at impact. This imparts counterclockwise spin which makes the ball turn from right to left.

As with the slice spin, it doesn't matter whether your swing path is from out to in, in to out, or straight into the back of the ball; if your clubface is pointed farther left than the line on which that club is moving, you're going to curve the ball from right to left. A little spin produces a draw, a lot of spin means a hook.

- Greg Norman

Tip #37: The Punch

The punch shot has saved me countless strokes over the years. In the 1986 Masters, the punch came to my rescue on the 1st hole, after my tee-shot strayed under a tree. From there I had a little over a hundred yards to the green but the ball had to fly under the tree limbs, then clear the rise of the elevated green and sit tight. One in back of Jack Nicklaus, I couldn't afford to play cautiously.

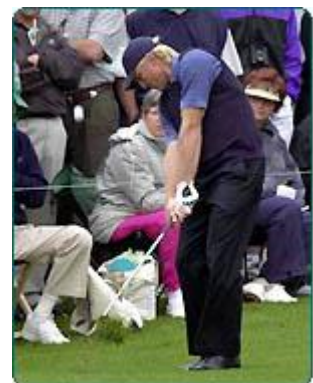
Taking a 9-iron, I smacked the ball just the way I wanted, and it came to rest 10 feet away. When the putt went in, I had birdied four holes in a row. All for naught, as it turned out, since I bogeyed 18 to lose by a stroke. Still, it was gratifying to play such a good punch shot under pressure.

You can think of the punch either as a low pitch or a long chip shot. It can be played with anything from a 7-iron to a pitching wedge - the 7-iron if you want it to run after it hits the green, the pitching wedge if you want it to stop.

Set up with the ball at least an inch in back of your left heel, your hands well forward of the clubface, and about 70 percent of your weight on your left side. Your stance can be square for this shot. Grip down a bit on the club, but most important, grip firmly.

The swing is quicker than that for any of the short shots. What you want is a quick-back/quick-through motion with some snap to it. Keep your wrists out of it, and keep the clubhead as low to the ground as possible, both during the backswing and the short follow-through. Standing a little open will put a bit of a fading tail on this shot. A slightly closed stance will make the ball draw just a bit.

Feel is important on this one. When you select your club, make trajectory your first concern, behavior of the ball on the green your second concern, and distance your last. If the shot is 100 yards, don't feel that you have to hit the wedge, unless you want the ball to stop quickly after it hits - a 7-iron will often do the job more easily.



At address, the ball is back. From here it's a quick-back, quick-through swing with an abbreviated follow-through.

- Greg Norman

Tip #38: The Chip Shot

When tossing a ball, it is necessary to face my palm directly at my target. I also have to swing my arm straight back and through, and the only wrist action is a natural flex on longer tosses. Those two elements -- a square right palm and a smooth arm swing -- become the cornerstones of my short game.



Shortening the distance between your hands and the ball enhances feel, so choke down on the club for virtually every shot inside 50 yards.

But those are just two of the basics. In playing virtually any shot around the green, you need to make a few important adjustments in your setup.

First, narrow your stance and open it up, so that your feet, knees, hips and shoulders are aligned about 20 degrees left of square, and your heels are close together. On a chip shot, your heels should be no more than six or eight inches apart. The narrowness will help minimize weight shift and body movement that can sabotage your touch and control. The open stance will enable you to get a good look at the target.

Second, grip down at least an inch on the club, and much more if you like. Sometimes I'll grip down right to the metal if it feels right. Shortening the distance between your hands and the clubhead puts you in closer touch with the ball--almost as if you're tossing it -- and that enhances your feel.

Gripping down also enables you to take a good crisp swing without worrying about hitting the ball too far. For a standard chip shot, your ball position should be about the same as for a long shot, off the left heel or perhaps a hair in back of that.

With the open stance, however, it will seem as if the ball is farther back, and that's fine, because you want to have a bit more weight on your left side and you want to keep your hands ahead of the ball, both at address and throughout the swing.

As I said, the chip is basically a mini-swing. I don't try to do anything fancy or make any special moves. It's just a short backswing controlled by the arms. The longer the chip, the farther I bring the club back, but it's rare that my hands swing as far as waist-height.

Ken Venturi, one of the game's finest teachers, advocates a completely wristless style of chipping, while Phil Rodgers, a short-game wizard, teaches an extremely wristy method. I don't agree with either method because neither is natural. Each is trying too hard to use a particular style.

In my mind, the chip shot is as natural a movement as tossing a ball. If your wrists break, they break, but don't try to keep them stiff and don't try to flick them. Let the wrist cock occur naturally. On the shortest of chips you'll have no wrist action at all but on the longer ones you'll have quite a bit as the weight of the clubhead tugs on your hands at the end of the backswing. But, don't think about it, just let it happen.

You can learn a lot about the overall look of the chip shot by watching Tom Watson. No one is better around the green, and a big reason, I believe, is that Watson hits his short shots hard. Tom is, by nature, just as aggressive a player as I am, and that attitude is reflected in his short game. Notice how he brings the club back briskly and returns it crisply to the ball. Using this compact up-and- down stroke, he's able to put plenty of backspin on the ball for good control. He's also able to pop the ball out of the trickiest lies, and get it consistently up to the hole.

So, be crisp and aggressive, even on your shortest shots. Lead through impact with your hands, applying a slightly descending blow to the ball. One test to be sure you're hitting the shot this way is to imagine a race between your hands and the clubhead, with your left knee as the finish line. If your hands don't win that race every time, you need to work on your chipping.

The proper move through impact is to brush the tops of the grass. In fact, it's always wise to take a couple of practice swings before you play a chip to get the brush-brush feel of taking the club back through the fringe and bringing it through the ball. When I have a tough chip, I'll search out an area that is similar to my lie and then go through this little dress rehearsal. Invariably, I'll learn something about the texture and resistance of the grass that will help me to adjust the force of my actual swing.

The final point in chipping is a strategic one. Concentrate on knocking the ball in the hole, but gear your shot planning to a specific spot on the green. As you assess the situation, visualize the ideal shot in your mind. This will show you the point at which the perfect shot will hit the green and begin its roll to the pin. Focus on that spot, and gear every bit of your technique to making the ball hit it.

In general, you want to get the ball rolling as soon as possible, and this is where club selection comes into play. Many golfers play up to 90 percent of their greenside shots with the same club. In Jack Nicklaus' case that club is the sand wedge. Other players prefer the pitching wedge.

In my mind, that's making things too difficult. It forces you to stretch the capabilities of the club -- and your abilities -- too far. The way I see it, there are seven or eight golf clubs in my bag that are useful around the green, so why not take advantage of them?

I play my chip shots with anything from a sand wedge to a 3-iron, depending on the demands of the situation. The more green I have to work with, the lower-lofted club I'll use. For instance, when I'm on the fringe facing a chip of 70 or 80 feet, I'll take out the 3-iron and hit what amounts to a long putt. Using my normal chipping stroke, I'll pop the ball just onto the putting surface and let it roll all the way to the hole. I'll also use the long and middle irons on uphill chips, especially when the ball has to climb to the top of a two-tiered green.

For a 40-footer, I might go down to a 5- or 6-iron, for a 30-footer, an 8- or 9-iron, and for the shortest chips I'll use one of my wedges. This way I don't have to try anything fancy or make any outlandish adjustments so that my club will fit the shot. I just use that same basic chipping swing, keeping the technique simple, consistent, and confident.



Norman's short-game routine utilizes half the clubs in his bag.

- Greg Norman

Tip #39: The Takeaway

If you've developed a sound set of pre-swing fundamentals, the rest of the game is little more than, as one instructor put it, "two turns and a swish."

I agree entirely with Jack Nicklaus, who believes that the most important part of the swing is the first 18 inches you move the club away from the ball. The "takeaway," as it is commonly known, sets the pattern for every motion that will follow.



You want to glide the club away from the ball, keeping it as close to the ground as possible for as long as possible.

"Low and slow" are the key words here. You want to glide the club away from the ball, keeping it as close to the ground as possible for as long as possible. This is the way to establish the wide swing arc that delivers maximum centrifugal force and power. The farther you can extend that clubhead away from your body (while still maintaining good balance and timing) the longer you will hit the ball.

The way to create this low, slow movement is to start your swing with your entire body. The takeaway may appear to be a movement initiated with the hands only, but you must actually bring in not only your hands but your arms, shoulders, and even your lower body, all working in unison.

If you were to use your hands only, you'd tend to pick the club up in a wristy motion that is neither low nor slow. The sooner you cock your wrists, the shorter the arc you'll produce, and the less power you'll put into the drive.

I like to key on my left elbow during the takeaway. I've found that the farther I can move my left elbow directly away from the target the longer, stronger takeaway I make.

Also, by keying on the elbow, I bring everything into play. It's as though the elbow pushes the hands and wrists, and pulls the shoulders. The pushing action eliminates any wristiness, and the pulling ensures that the upper torso begins its backswing rotation.

Good overall swing tempo begins with the takeaway. If you snatch the club away quickly, you'll either continue that frantic pace throughout the swing or overcompensate and decelerate on the way down to the ball. Either error is devastating.

On the other hand, if you take the club back too slowly for the first foot and a half, you'll subconsciously feel the need to get things moving faster, and invariably you'll jerk upward in the backswing, producing more of a lift than a proper turn.

Sometimes I actually watch myself take the club back, even as I'm playing a tournament. I don't really follow the club with my eyes, but I do sort of monitor the movement with my peripheral vision, to be sure I'm gliding it back at the proper speed and in the proper direction.

The path on which the club should travel during the takeaway is a subject of much discussion. A few years ago, I wrote in a golf publication that the takeaway should be straight back from the ball. Shortly thereafter, I got a letter from an irate reader.

"Have you ever tried to take the club straight back from the ball?" he asked. "It's impossible!" Well, of course it's impossible, for the simple reason that we stand to the inside of the ball. Eventually, as the hips and shoulders turn, the club will have to begin to travel inward and around the body.

My point in that article, and in this tip, is, if you will make a conscious effort to take the club back straight for as long as possible, you'll give yourself the optimum chance for a powerful, square-faced return of the clubface to the ball.

- Greg Norman

Tip #40: Difficult Lies

Once you develop shotmaking options, it's simply a matter of knowing when and where to apply them. Here are a few common greenside challenges and the best ways of handling them.

From any sort of hardpan or firm lie, your best option is to punch the ball. The idea is to trap or pinch it, by pulling the club into the back of the ball. Any other type of swing might cause you to bounce the club off the hardpan and belly into the back of the ball.

The same punch shot is best from a cuppy lie or a lie in a divot, where you have to go down and scrape the ball out. Play the ball back in your stance and lead with your hands into a low follow-through. These shots will not fly very high, and you can expect them to run a long way.

From the opposite type of lie -- heavy grass -- the ball can react in either of two ways. If you go at it aggressively, it will jump out fast, like a mini-flyer. If you play it with a soft, dead-handed swing, it will sort of float out.

If you want a shot that jumps out quickly, take a pitching wedge or 9-iron and play a punchy sort of chip with the ball well back in your stance and a brisk, stabbing swing. If you want the floater, play it more like a lob. Move the ball forward in your stance, open your clubface a bit, and take a slow, smooth swing.

If it's a short floater you want, here's a trick I like to use that helps me eliminate wrist action: I use my putting grip, a reverse overlap, with my left forefinger covering the first three fingers of my right hand. This, combined with an arm-and-shoulder swing, seems to deaden the impact. It's also a good technique to use from wet fringe grass where you won't get as much backspin as normal. The shot should be played with either a sand wedge or a 60-degree wedge.

When you have a lie in heavy grass and you need to move it more than a few yards, use the lob swing, and play it the same as you would a bunker shot. Take the sand wedge or third wedge, open it up and hit down and through the grass at a point an inch or two behind the ball. This should produce the high, soft shot you want.

Probably the most difficult situations for chipping are imposed by hilly lies, and of these, the toughest is unquestionably the downhill lie. The ball tends to shoot low and fast, so this is where you should soften your impact as much as possible. Use the most lofted wedge you carry, and if you're playing to a downward-sloping green, address the ball with a slightly open face.

At address, try to align your body parallel to the hill, and slant your left toe more toward the hole than usual. That will help prevent you from tilting down the hill during the swing. Play the ball just in back of its normal position in your open stance, and try to keep your wrists out of this stroke. The key here is to stay with the shot and not quit on it. You need to hit down and through this ball, difficult as that is with the downhill lie.

One strategic consideration: always leave the pin in the hole when you're chipping downhill. The far lip will be lower than the near one, so even a slightly firm shot will tend to roll across the top of the hole. With the flagstick in, you'll give yourself a margin for error.

When I'm chipping uphill, on the other hand, I usually take the pin out. In this case, the back lip is higher and acts almost like a backboard, allowing for a more aggressive stroke.

If my lie is uphill, I'll also make a couple of adjustments. First, I'll take a less lofted club than I would for a level-lie chip in the same situation. A 7- or 8-iron, for instance, instead of a 9-iron or wedge. The tendency from this lie is to leave the chip short, so the straighter-faced club will automatically add some distance.

Again, align yourself with the slope and flare that left foot toward the target to brace yourself both at address and during the forward swing. Take the club back down along the slope and bring it up through the same path. And since the common error is to be short, think "sink" and be more aggressive than usual.

When you have a sidehill lie, take a little extra time to plan the shot, because you usually have to allow for the slope. If the ball is above your feet, choke down a bit on the club and aim a bit to the right, to allow for the tendency to pull this shot. From a lie where the ball is below your feet, beware of the dreaded shank. To avoid it, widen your stance a hair, bend from the waist a bit more than normal and keep your weight back on your heels. You'll have a tendency to push a shot from this lie, so aim a bit left of your target.

The trickiest situation is when you have to deal with a hill that intervenes between your ball and the green. In this situation, the best alternative is a bump shot, where you smack the ball into the side of the hill, then let it bounce up and onto the green.

There are a couple of different ways to play it. You can hit a hard shot into the top of the bank and play it to take one high bounce onto the green, or you can go for more of a skittering shot, with two or three bounces along the bank. The best way to make your decision is to take a good look at the grass on the hill. If it's long and thick, go for one bounce at the top. If it's short and firm, you can go for the two-or-more bouncer.

In either case, take a mid-lofted club, such as a 7- or 8-iron. First determine where you want the ball to land on the green, then ask yourself where you'll have to hit the bank in order to make it pop up onto that landing spot on the green. In effect you have two landing spots here, so this shot takes more planning than any other.

The shot called for is a punched chip, so play the ball well back, make a short, stiff-wristed swing and sock into the back of the ball. Then hope that your calculations were accurate.

Finally, here's the shortest of chip shots. In fact, although this shot is played from off the green, it's more like a putt than a chip.

The situation has your ball at the back edge of the fringe, resting against the first cut of rough. You can't get a putter through the grass to putt it, and yet a conventional chip shot would be a risk. The solution is to hit the bellied wedge shot. You actually putt the ball with the leading edge of your sand wedge. The heavy flange of the sand wedge will glide smoothly through the long grass and bump the back of the ball just as nicely as a putter.



In heavy grass, the ball can either jump fast like a mini-flyer or just float out.



The most common error on uphill chips is leaving the ball short, so be aggressive.

This may sound like a tough shot, but you'll find after a couple of practice attempts that it comes off very easily. Just use your usual putting grip, stance, and swing, being sure to grip down on the shaft of the wedge so that it in effect becomes the same length club as your putter. A stiff-wristed motion works best on this, but the main point is to glide the club smoothly back and through the ball. Practice will tell you that because the wedge's clubhead is heavier than that of a putter, you don't have to hit this ball as hard as you would a putt of the same distance.

- Greg Norman

Tip #40: Adapting To Different Sands

In the course of my yearly tournament schedule I see a half dozen different varieties of sand, each with a different degree of coarseness, compaction and depth. Each of them calls for a slightly different attack.

I've always felt that the finest bunker sand in the world is in Australia. Maybe I'm just used to it. After all, for a decade or so before I became a golfer, I spent a lot of time on the Australian beaches.

The Aussie sand is rather granular and firmly packed, and the bunkers at most courses are shallow and constructed so that the ball rarely plugs, even in the front lip. Instead, it just rolls back down the face.

The same type of sand is prevalent at many British courses, certainly at the seaside links where beach sand is smoothed and compacted by constant wind. (Consequently, buried lies are relatively rare in the British Open.)

In general, this type of sand is easy to play from because you can judge more easily the chain reaction from club to sand to ball. You can also impart plenty of spin from these firm bunkers because you tend to get a lot of bounce. For that reason, you should generally attack such shots with a less open clubface than you would use in most bunkers. It's also wise to play the ball back in your stance a bit more than usual. This will encourage more of a digging action and guard against a belly-bounce.

In deep, powdery bunkers such as those at Augusta National and Oakmont, the wedge will tend to dig and bury. So it's wise to play from these bunkers with an open sand wedge and to position the ball a bit more forward in your stance than usual. The loose consistency also requires a relatively firm swing. If you play most of your golf on a course with this type of sand, you should be sure to get yourself a wedge with plenty of flange.

The trickiest kind of bunkers may be those with loose sand over a firm crust. When Bob Tway holed his explosion to beat me at Inverness, he played from this type of bunker.

In hard-bottomed bunkers such as this, the ball rarely buries, but you have to be careful nonetheless. Generally, your club will glide smoothly through the sand and ball, unless you dig a bit too deeply and cut into the crust. When that happens the club can slow down, causing you to leave the ball in the sand. It's safest to attack these bunkers with a heavy-flanged wedge, to allow the club to bounce off the surface.

One of the reasons I like to play out of the British bunkers is that the sand is often wet. This really makes it pack together densely, providing a uniform cushion under the ball so that the wedge slides smoothly underneath and bounces up and through rather than digging deep.

In wet sand, you usually have a clean lie, and this tempts many players to try to play out with a chip shot. As far as I'm concerned, that's absolutely the worst idea in the world. As aggressive and confident a player as I am, I never try to play chip shots from the sand. The possibilities for error are simply too great. In fact, I'll take out a putter and roll the ball out of a bunker before I'll chip it.

Another reason never to chip from wet sand is the fact that a blast is so simple. You actually have a couple of options on how to handle it. If you need distance, you can address this ball with a square face, since from wet sand you don't have to worry about digging too deeply. Since the wet, compact cushion will transfer your energy quickly, you don't need to swing very forcefully to get plenty of fly and roll. Just take the usual open stance and make a smooth pass at the ball, hitting an inch and a half behind it.

If, on the other hand, you need to play a short shot to a tight pin, this is your chance to show off and maybe even make the ball suck back into the hole. Open the face of the wedge wide and lay it back, position the ball just back of center in your open stance, and make a very quick, nipping swing -- short back, short through with plenty of acceleration -- taking only an inch of sand behind the ball.

Most important, go at this shot with the confidence it deserves. When you hit it properly, you can really make the ball dance.

- Greg Norman

Tip #42: Tackling Trouble Shots

I like trouble. In a perverse way, I actually enjoy finding my ball in a bad lie or a tough situation.

Trouble forces me to stretch my shotmaking skills, and that's part of the fun of playing aggressive golf. Besides, when I'm in a tough spot in a tournament, it's sort of fun to have the spectators gather round and speculate on how I'm going to escape.



In deep, powdery bunkers, open the blade of the sand wedge and position the ball more forward in your stance.



Most bunker shots offer a margin of error, so attack them with confidence.



The three qualities you must possess in order to play quality trouble shots are patience, realism and imagination.

Sometimes I'll kid around with them. Then if I play the shot successfully, they all go crazy and I get a big kick out of it too. The fact is, for the fan or the player, there's no greater thrill in golf than a spectacular recovery shot.

The other reason I like trouble is that it gives me a chance to do something big -- to turn the tide of a hole, to convert an apparent bogey or double bogey into a par or birdie. That type of swing in fortune can yield tremendous dividends both for one's score and one's psyche.

Throughout this book I've tried to stress an important theme regarding what it takes to play good golf: Attitude is more important than aptitude.

If you take the correct mental approach toward the game, the physical capability usually follows. Nowhere is that more important than with regard to trouble play. So try to view bad lies and tough situations as I do -- not as setbacks but as opportunities. If that sounds like a tough assignment, the following pages should help.

The Basics

Before you can become a good trouble player you have to become a good trouble thinker. That requires three qualities.

The first is patience. When your golf ball plops into deep rough or sails into the center of the woods, take a deep breath. Then forget that shot and start concentrating on the next one. I get angry sometimes too, but I've learned that in golf you can't channel such anger toward anything positive. I've also seen lots of players turn their anger into all sorts of negatives.

Some get despondent. They act as if they've been victimized and there's nothing they can do about it. So they give up. When they reach the ball, they take no time or care, they just swipe at it once -- sometimes twice or three times. If they don't get it back into play, they close the book on that hole. Sometimes such a predicament will ruin these people for the rest of the day.

Others get angry. They suddenly start to see the golf course as a mortal enemy. They no longer want to hit the ball, they want to hurt it. When this type of player knocks his drive out of bounds or plops it into water and has to play a second ball, he usually hits that second ball into trouble too. Anger blurs his ability to concentrate sharply and swing smoothly.

And still others get overly ambitious. They sense that after their bad shot they've lost a certain amount of ground, and they become determined to regain all of that ground on the next shot. From a thick lie in the center of a dense forest, this player will take out his 3-wood and go for the flag. That's usually the beginning of a very big number.

If you can keep your cool after hitting a ball into trouble, you'll have a big advantage over all these other types of players (three groups which, from my observation, encompass about 90 percent of amateur golfers). So whatever it takes, cool yourself down, put the bad shot behind you, and repeat to yourself, "Patience, patience." Later on, you'll be glad you did.

The second quality, which goes hand in hand with patience, is realism. It's important to be able to accept your fate and deal with it. Walter Hagen, the man who won four consecutive PGA Championships, once said that in a given round of golf he expected to miss at least five shots. That way, when his ball rolled into trouble, he was mentally prepared to deal with it. Hagen, incidentally, was probably the greatest trouble player of all time.

Be realistic about your next shot as well. Take a businesslike approach to the problem. You hit the ball in there, and you now have to hit it out. Your assignment is to evaluate the various options and choose the shot where reward most outweighs risk.

When your ball is 200 yards from a water-guarded green and sitting in eight-inch rough, the shot with the biggest reward may be a 5-wood, but from a poor lie, you'll risk smothering or pulling that shot, or hitting it into the drink. The risks are greater than the reward. An 8-iron layup won't reward you to the same degree, but the risks will be minimal.

The final quality for good trouble play is imagination. You have to be able to "see" all the shots, all the options available to you. Sometimes this is just a matter of keeping your wits about you and scanning the area for escape routes. I'll never forget the situation I found myself in at Winged Foot in the 1984 U.S. Open.

It was the final hole of the second round, and I had hooked my tee shot into big trouble in the rough of that long par-4. Bob Rosburg was following our group for ESPN at the time, and when he got to my ball, he made one of those dire pronouncements for which he is famous.

"Greg's absolutely dead," he said. "He has a solid wall of trees between him and the green, and there's no way through them. His only option is to chip out to the fairway."

When I got to the ball, I must admit, it didn't look promising. But when among trees I'm a strong believer in looking straight up, in search of a high way out. Sure enough, there was an opening up there. It was only four feet wide, but it was at the exact height for the path of my 6-iron, and a 6-iron was the club I needed to reach that 18th green.

Charlie Earp, my first golf instructor and good friend from Australia, was caddying for me that week, and when I started peering up into the branches I could see him cringe. But I took out the 6-iron and told him, "I can get it through there."

And I did. The ball sailed straight through the center of that four-foot opening, landed on the green, and finished five feet from the hole. Rosburg couldn't believe it.

Actually, the shot itself was nothing fancy, just a solid, straight 6-iron. But hitting the shot wasn't the tough part -- seeing it was.

As I said, trouble makes me stretch my shotmaking skills, and a good portion of those skills are mental, not physical. I suspect this is true of most touring professional golfers. When we're in a difficult spot, we work harder, concentrate harder. And more often than not, we pull off the shot.

You may not have the physical skills of a professional, but there's no reason why you can't approach and evaluate trouble situations with the same mental acuity. In fact, to use these skills you need nothing more than a sophisticated version of your normal pre-shot routine.

I begin playing a trouble shot as I'm approaching the ball. Often you can see your situation better -- get a view of the big picture -- when you're 100 yards in back of it. You can see the actual height of the trees, the nature of the terrain the shot will have to cross, and sometimes you can get a better view of the pin position as well.

Once I'm at the ball, the first thing I do is inspect the lie. If it's in heavy grass, several shots are immediately made impossible. Likewise, if it's sitting on hardpan or some other tight lie, certain shots are eliminated. I also make note of whether the grass is wet or dry and whether it's growing with my shot or against it.

Next I take a look at what's in front of me. Let's say I'm in the rough, I have 150 yards to the green, and I have to hit the ball under the tree limb that's hanging about six feet off the ground. I begin to imagine what the ideal escape would look like -- some sort of punch that lands in the fairway and runs to the green.

This is when I start asking myself questions: Does my lie allow me to put the club on the ball for such a shot? (If the grass is very thick, the answer is no.) Can I find my way to the green with such a shot or does a bunker or water hazard block the way?

If the answers to the questions raise doubts about my first shot, I'll search for other options. This is when I look up into the trees for a possible high escape. I'll also consider whether a hook or slice shot would be possible from the situation. If no other option is available, I'll return to the question of the low shot and make my decision, either to go for the green or to lay up.

Once that choice is made, I'll match a club to the situation. In the case of the shot I've described, let's say I choose to go for the green. I'll next visualize the ideal shot once again, and that picture will automatically tell me the best club to choose, probably a 4- or 5-iron, which I would play back in my stance and hit with a short, crisp, punch swing.

If I make the more difficult decision -- to lay up -- I'll again imagine what the ideal shot would be. (This is something that amateurs often fail to do. Instead, they take a careless, cavalier attitude toward safe shots, and often chip the ball too short or clear across the fairway into further trouble.)

I'll decide the ideal point from which I'd like to play my next shot, then I'll visualize hitting my safe shot to that point. Finally, I'll choose the club that offers the best chance of executing that safe shot.

Adopt this type of routine and you'll be pleased with the results. You'll discover, just as the pros do, that the tighter the spot you're in, the tighter your focus of concentration will be, and the more impressive your shotmaking will be.

- Greg Norman

Tip #43: Meaningful Practice

The key to mastering both the basics and subtleties of shotmaking is practice. At some tournaments, people will come by and watch me practice, and I'll look to them like a complete hacker.

First I'll hit a big slice, then, with the very next ball, a big hook. Then I'll hit one way up in the air, and without changing clubs I'll hit a low screamer. I'm simply practicing my shotmaking.



When your ball plops into deep rough or sails into the center of the woods, take a deep breath, forget that shot and concentrate on the next one.

In my mind, this is the most enjoyable practice of all. And one of the nicest things is it's good training for your visualization and mental discipline as well. What I like to do is pretend I'm playing a particular golf course, and using one club, such as a 4-iron, I try to hit the shots that the course calls for.

If the first hole is a dogleg left, I'll try to hit a draw. If the hole normally plays into the wind, I'll try to hit a low second shot. Then I'll play the second hole, hitting a high downwind drive.

I'll pretend that the flagstick on that hole is on the back left of the green, and I'll play a draw that will seek out the pin. I'll hit each of these shots with the 4-iron, hitting to a wide open practice range. It's the ultimate test of your ability both to imagine shots and to play them.

The other great way to practice your shotmaking is to take a bag of golf balls and toss them into some of the worst places possible -- into fairway bunkers, behind trees, from difficult lies. Then try to get the balls out of those positions in at least two different ways.

If, for instance, you're blocked by a tree, try to hit a high shot over it as well as a draw or fade around it. This type of practice is, after all, the real thing. It also forces you to develop your imagination. Knowing how to hit these shots is of comparatively little value if you can't recognize the opportunities to play them.

So get used to your talent at bending the ball and test the limits of that talent. Once you know what you can and can't do from various lies, you'll "see" shots you've never seen before.

It's the combination of talent and vision that will enable you to play aggressively from almost any lie.

- Greg Norman

Tip #44: Club Selection

The fact is most approach shots are not played on absolutely calm days from level, well-clipped fairway grass to dead-flat landing areas. To blindly follow the yardages is almost as wrong as to chronically underclub.

As we all know, virtually every situation calls for some sort of adaptation. And this is where club selection becomes an art as well as a science. This is where an aggressive player can distance himself from the pack.

Wind is probably the largest influence on carrying distance. Figure on about one club for each 10 miles per hour of wind. If you'd hit a 5-iron under normal conditions, use a 3-iron with a headwind of 20 miles per hour.

A headwind also tends to accentuate any right-to-left or left-to-right action on your shot, so if you habitually play a fade or draw expect it to veer more than normal. In the case of the fade, it's wise to add another club.

When you're playing with the wind at your back, you'll need less club. The same type of formula applies -- one club for each 10 miles of wind speed. With gusts of 20 miles per hour, that 5-iron becomes a 7. Expect lots of bounce and roll too, because the ground will likely be drier than usual. You may want to take even less club and play for a bounce, if the entry to the green allows.

In the British Open, yardage is all but irrelevant because of wind. I remember one day in 1986 at Tumberly playing the 15th hole with a driver. It's a 190-yard par-3. On another day, I reached the green with a 7-iron.

When the wind blows from the side, there's little effect unless you normally play a fade or draw. If you usually hit the ball from left to right, you may be able to use less club when playing with a left-to-right wind, but you may want one club longer when that fade is being buffeted by a right-to-left wind. The same is true with a right-to-left shot -- take less club when following a right-to-left wind and one more when fighting a left-to-right wind.

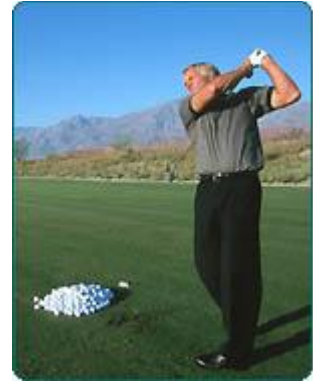
Grass conditions are also important. If your lie in the fairway is a bit shaggy, expect extra distance and use less club, particularly on the short and middle irons. (When blades of grass intervene between the clubface and ball, you can't put maximum backspin on the shot, so it will fly a bit farther than usual.)

Conversely, from a tight, closely clipped fairway, you'll usually get a bit more backspin and a bit less distance. On Tour we love these fairways because they enable us to make the ball dance. However, most players are well advised to use one more club than normal when the lie is tight.

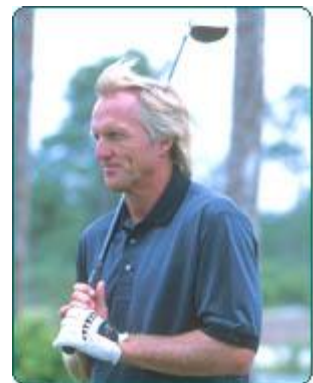
Turf conditions are important in the area of the green also. When you're landing the ball on hard, dry ground, it will bounce high and roll farther, so plan accordingly. You may want to take one or two clubs less than normal, land the ball several yards short of the green and let it bounce on.

Of course, when bunkers front the green, this strategy is complicated. On such occasions -- particularly on a par-5 with a hard, shallow green, I've intentionally hit my second shot into a bunker in order to be sure of landing the next shot softly on the green.

When the landing area is wet, you'll want to be sure to take enough club to land your ball at or near the hole, allowing for no bounce and roll. Of course, if the whole golf course is wet, you may have that extra distance built into your lie.



On the range, Norman plays a course in his mind, intentionally shaping shots to fit each hole.



Wind has a huge influence on distance and ball flight.

From moist fairways, you'll normally get that same flyer effect you get from fluffy fairways, as the water diminishes your ability to apply backspin. So club yourself down when playing out of dewy or moist lies.

When the fairways are downright wet and sloshy, however, it's another story. Your footing and balance will be poor, your club will tend to knife into the turf, and you'll lose distance, so take the longer club and make a more controlled swing.

Now consider the influence of elevation change. When you're playing to a green that is set high on a plateau, you'll need more club because the ball will come to earth before it has had a chance to complete the full extent of its flight and carry. The opposite is true when playing to a valley green. You'll have more hang time, so you'll be able to use a shorter club.

The challenge is compounded if you're also standing uphill or downhill. When you have an uphill stance, you'll tend to catch the ball more on the upswing and hit more of a lifting shot, which will give you extra height but less distance than from a flat lie. Take at least one more club, depending on the severity of the slope and whether or not you're also playing to an elevated green.

When you have a downhill lie, you'll tend to trap the ball and hit a lower shot than usual. It will therefore tend to roll more than normal, particularly if your landing area is also on a downward slope. Figure on at least one club less than usual.

Temperature is also a factor. In extremely hot weather, you can expect to be looser, and your ball will be a bit livelier as well. On average, take one less club. In the cold, you'll be stiff, the ball will be hard, and you'll have no feel. Swing smoothly using at least one club more than usual.

When you're undecided, it's usually smart to take the longer club. As I said, the architect traditionally places his most difficult hazards in front of the green where everyone can see them and be intimidated by them, so if you're in between clubs on a well-guarded hole, certainly go with the longer stick.

However, my overall feeling on this matter is that you should go with your initial choice, no matter which club that may be. Your first choice is the intuitive, confident one and will therefore promote the more natural, free-flowing swing.

To a degree, it's also a question of individual makeup. If you're naturally a hard swinger, I think it's best to take the shorter club and go at it rather than trying to manufacture a short shot. If on the other hand you're a smooth swinger, you should definitely put that smooth swing on the longer club. If, under pressure, you tend to get your adrenaline pumping, go with the shorter club; if you tend to tighten up, go with the longer club.



A downhill lie produces a lower trajectory, so figure on at least one club less than usual.

This between-clubs situation often occurs on the tee of a par-3, and there you have a couple of things you can do about it. First, remember that you can take advantage of the full teeing area. Take the longer club if you want, and step back two driver lengths. As a practical matter this won't make much of a difference, but it may give you the added confidence to make a full swing on the longer club.

Another way of shortening the longer club is simply to tee the ball at the edge of a divot to promote a clean, upward hit and a floating shot that will not fly as far. Conversely, you can lengthen the distance of the shorter iron by hitting it directly out of the grass, without a tee, particularly if you can find a fluffy area of the tee that will promote a flyer effect. I've often used this ploy when playing into a headwind, because it promotes a spinless shot that is less susceptible to the effects of the breeze.

Most of all, however, try to get yourself away from that huge majority of golfers who consistently underclub and overswing, leaving their approach shots short of the green.

I admit there's a certain macho kick in putting a hard swing on a short club and muscling the ball to the green. That's human nature, but it isn't the nature of golf.

My experience is that golfers who like to brag about their 150-yard 9-irons rarely produce scores worthy of boast. Physical aggressiveness is of minimal use in golf.

- Greg Norman

Tip #45: Be Brave And Be Bold

I advise you to play as aggressively as you feel each and every day. That advice actually applies to the long game, but once you're on the green you should try to do the same thing every day on every putt -- ram it into the back of the hole.



Regardless of the situation, Norman has one goal when he stands over a putt -- to sink it.

Hubert Green, whose game and record I respect greatly, has a different philosophy of putting than I. He says his object on long putts is to leave the ball in the best place for his next putt. That may sound strategic, but to me it's simply negative thinking. If you entertain the possibility of a "next" putt, you're not focusing on sinking the one you have.

You'll note that I'm rarely short with my putts, whether they're hit from 60 feet or 6 feet. I frankly don't care where I leave the ball because if for some reason I don't sink my first putt, I'm absolutely confident I'll sink the next one, no matter where I leave it. Indeed, no matter where on the green, where in the world, where in the tournament I stand, I have but one goal when I stand over a putt -- to sink it.

As important as this bold, aggressive stroke is to my game, it's even more important to yours. In fact, I can think of 10 good reasons why every amateur golfer should putt aggressively.

1. You'll improve your chances: there are only four ways to miss a putt-by hitting it too far to the left, too far to the right, too long, or too short. However, if you strike all of your putts firmly to the hole, you'll immediately eliminate one of those four ways.

2. Statistics have proved, bold is best: Dave Pelz, the man nicknamed "Professor Putt" because of the voluminous research he has done on all aspects of putting, has proved that the ideal putt is a firm one. Using a special putting robot, Pelz hit thousands of putts and showed that the putt that has the best chance of dropping is one that is struck with sufficient force to take the ball 17 inches past the hole.

3. A firm stroke is a good stroke: A bold putter always hits the ball with an accelerating motion through impact, and a steady, smooth, accelerating stroke is one of the marks of all proficient, confident putters.

4. The psychological factor: Think back on the last time you missed several putts in a row by leaving them short. Pretty mad at yourself, weren't you? Chronic shortness can unravel even the best players. But if you miss a few putts by hitting them past the hole, the effect is rarely as severe. At least you have the consolation that you gave them all a chance.

5. A bold stroke travels best: Some greens are better conditioned than others. A lagging type of stroke may work fine on smooth, fast greens, where you can gently roll the ball to the hole, but on coarse, bumpy greens lagging rarely works. The aggressive method, on the other hand, is equally suited to any green, and it can give you a big edge when you're competing on shaggy surfaces.

6. Bold is best on long putts: If you go past the hole on your approach putt, you can watch how the ball behaves near the cup. For instance, when the ball tails off from left to right, you can be pretty certain that your return putt will break from right to left. If you leave an approach putt short of the hole, however, you have no "experience" near the cup, and the speed and break of your second putt will necessarily be something of a guess. That uncertainty can make the hole seem very small.

7. Bold is best on short putts: Except on the most severe slopes, if you strike the ball firmly for the back of the cup, you'll be able to aim your 2- and 3-footers straight at the hole. This takes a lot of the difficulty and worry out of the kneeknockers. Both your confidence and your competence will increase.

8. Boldness helps you analyze your stroke: When you get the ball to the cup every time, you can begin to see patterns in your putting. You may have an alignment problem that makes you hit everything to the right. Or there may be a weakness in your stroke that causes you to pull the ball to the left. But if you tend to leave the ball short a lot, you can't observe these things as easily.

9. Bold is best for match play: In match play, the format under which most weekend players compete, an aggressive stroke is even more important than for those of us on the pro circuit. Sinking a long putt on the Tour means only that we lower our 72-hole medal score by one stroke. Sinking a long putt in a match often means winning the hole, sometimes winning the match itself. And it always has an unsettling effect on one's opponent.

10. Bold is best for amateurs: You may never be able to hit a drive as hard as I do, but there's no reason you can't putt the ball as hard as I do, and a big reason why you should. After all, you can recover from a short drive with a good iron; you can recover from a short approach with a deft chip. But there's no recovering from a putt that is left short -- the stroke is lost forever. So don't cheat yourself in this area where you have every capability, and at last 10 reasons, to be bold and proficient.



The putt that has the best chance of dropping is one that is struck with enough force to take it 17 inches past the hole.

- Greg Norman

Tip #46: The Lob

The lob is the weapon to use when you have to get the ball up in the air quickly -- to clear a tree, a bunker, whatever -- and make it settle quickly near the pin. It's most easily played with a 60-degree wedge, but may also be played with a pitching wedge or sand wedge.

Ball position is the main key. Since you want to get the ball up fast, you should position it off your left toe. Your stance should be wider than on any other short shot, but still not quite as wide as for a full iron swing.

Most important, you should stand well open, aligned about 30 degrees left of your target, with your weight distributed equally between your feet. To get a feeling of being behind and under the ball, kick in your right knee just a hair.

Finally, you should open the face of the club several degrees and lay it back a bit. This will increase the effective loft of the club. The higher you have to hit the ball, the more open and laid back the club should be. Just be careful when you use a sand wedge that you don't build too much "bounce" into the shot, especially if you're playing the ball off firm turf.

This is the only short swing that shouldn't be crisp and aggressive. In fact, the best swing for the lob is long and lazy. Assuming you aren't on hardpan or a very tight lie (which would prohibit this shot) you want to slide the face of the wedge under the ball the same way you would on a bunker shot.

Gripping the club a bit more loosely than normal will help put some smoothness into your swing. Take your hands back to at least belt-height and at most shoulder-height, depending on how far you want to hit the ball. To ensure the proper pace of swing, try to make your downswing the same speed as your backswing.

You won't be able to do that, but if you come close, while maintaining acceleration through the ball, you'll have this swing mastered.

The lob shot will land softly and dribble to a stop. From tighter lies it will tend to kick to the right after its first bounce, so allow for that by aiming a bit to the left.

- Greg Norman

Tip #47 - Reinforce On The Course

No matter what your goal -- to lower your handicap, strengthen a particular part of your game, win more weekend Nassaus, whatever -- you should give yourself some room with easily achievable stepping-stone goals and devise a plan of consistent practice and play that takes you toward those goals.

"Consistent" is the key word. If you want to hit your goals, you have to stick to your plan and work at it. It's no different than adhering to a business plan with the goal of making a certain profit, or to a diet with the goal of a slimmer figure.

Fortunately, in golf at least, there are a few tricks you can use to keep moving forward. "Positive reinforcement" is what the psychologists like to call them.

For me, this reinforcement occurs on the course, while I'm playing. I talk to myself ... all the time. Sometimes silently, sometimes loud enough for me and my caddie, Tony Navarro, to hear, and sometimes loud enough for the whole gallery to listen in on.

The tougher the challenge, the more I talk. When I have a long approach shot to a tough pin position, for instance, as I step up to the ball I'll say something like, "You know the shot you want to hit. You've hit it a thousand times before. So go ahead and do it."

That's a necessary pep talk from the guy who knows me best, and believe me, it works. When you're standing on the edge of a tough shot, it's good to hear words of encouragement, even if they're only coming from inside.

I also talk to myself after shots. When, in the final round of the 1986 British Open, I hit a 4-iron that struck the flag and finished a couple of feet away, I said, loud enough for Tony to hear, "Damn, Greg, I'm pretty impressed by that one." Reinforcement once again.

You can use verbalization whether you're on the practice range, on the first tee of a big match, or anywhere on the course. It's one of the best ways to psych yourself up for the shot ahead and then congratulate yourself on your success in pulling it off. If you do it out loud, just try to do it in a gracious way that won't upset your playing companions.



Grip the club loosely and make a smooth, lazy swing for a soft landing lob.



Talking to your caddie on the course will keep you focused and psychologically reinforced.



You can draw confidence by visualizing past successes.

Verbalizing something is similar to writing it down -- it helps you to remember. You don't want to dwell on your shots -- good or bad. But you do want to file the good ones away for future reference. That way you'll be able to bring them back as part of another reinforcement technique -- visualization.

If you want to play aggressive golf, you also have to be ready to struggle constantly against a specific challenge. For each shotmaking situation you must consider both the safe route as well as the more audacious path.

For each of those alternatives, you should be able to dig back into your memory and call forth a fine shot -- complete with trajectory, flight path, bounce and roll. You should then be able to look at it in cold comparison to the demands facing you and decide whether you want to try it again. Having reviewed these mini-movies, you must select the best one to replay. And do so in the few seconds you have to play your shot.

This is all done through visualization. You envision the ideal shot, "seeing" the takeoff, flight, and landing of the ball in vivid detail. Then you recall successful similar shots from your past and draw confidence from those earlier successes. I can think of favorite shots for virtually every situation I face, and I call them forth each time I play. I'm not sure where in my brain I store those memories, but if I start to lose my mind, I hope that part goes last!

- Greg Norman

Tip #48 - The Right Club On The Tee

Except possibly the putter, no club is more important than the driver. And just as with the putter, you should feel absolutely comfortable and confident when you take the driver out of your bag. If you don't feel this way with the driver you now own, get another one.

And don't limit yourself to clubs with the number "1" on their sole plates. Frankly, I think most amateurs would hit the ball longer and straighter off the tee if they would drop the driver and go to a 2-wood. The 2-wood has more loft and gives you more elevation, less side spin and longer carry than does the driver. And with today's heavily irrigated courses, those are important factors.

The 2-wood is geared to hit the ball 240 yards on the fly and give you roll of about 10 yards, whereas the driver will hit it about 220 yards on the fly and give you about 40 yards of roll. On slow fairways, however, you won't get anywhere near that 40 yards of roll.

On the surface, recommending a 2-wood may not seem like advice appropriate to aggressive golf, but it is. After all, if this club will give you additional confidence, you'll be able to make a more aggressive swing on the tee, and that's what counts.

I can recall at least one instance where my decision to tee off with a fairway wood was instrumental to victory. In the final round of the 1986 European Open in Sunningdale, England, I was in contention when I came to the third hole, a short par-4. From tee to green the hole isn't much more than 275 yards, and that green is an inviting target.

I knew I could get there with my driver -- my only question was whether I could hit it straight enough and soft enough to keep it from running through the green. Then I said to myself, "If you take the 3-wood and hit it as high and hard as you can, with just a bit of draw, you might get to the green."

Out came the 3-wood. Knowing I couldn't possibly hit it over the green, I made an aggressive swing, stayed behind the shot a bit to ensure plenty of height, and absolutely nailed it. Not only did the ball reach the green, it came down two feet from the hole and bit. In went the putt for an eagle two. That spurred me on to tie Ken Brown, whom I beat with a birdie on the first playoff hole.

Whether you settle on a 1-wood or 2-wood, give some thought to the length of your driving club. I became a straighter, more solid driver the day I shortened the shaft of my club by three-quarters of an inch. If your driver is longer than 43 inches and you're currently erratic with it, consider having your pro cut it down an inch. My bet is that you'll be pleasantly surprised at the improved compactness and timing of your swing, and at the better control your tee shots will have.

For the same reasons, I'm an advocate of getting the stiffest shaft of club you can handle. This is particularly true if you have a hooking problem. In fact, as fine a player as David Graham has always been, he eliminated his hook when he went to an extra-stiff driver. The stiffer shaft does not whip through and close the clubface as easily as a whippy shaft, so in effect you can swing more aggressively.

Of course, there's such a thing as too stiff a shaft. When you hit all your tee-shots dead to the right, it usually means the shaft is too stiff for you to square up the club. In such a case, you should back off from that one level of stiffness. If that shaft is an X (for extra stiff), go down to an S (stiff); if it's an S, go to an R (regular).

The only golfers who should not seek the stiffest shaft possible are players in desperate need of distance, including some women and senior players. If this is the case with you -- if you're not getting your longest tee shots much farther than 175 yards or so -- try a more flexible shaft in your driver. With an R or L (ladies) shaft you'll have an easier time "closing the door" of the clubface in the hitting area, and you'll likely develop a draw or hook which will give you a few extra yards of roll. Just be aware that these yards may come at the expense of accuracy.

You should also pay attention to what's called the face depth of the driver. The term should actually be "face height" because that's what it is, the distance from the bottom of the face of the driver to the top. In any case, the shallower the depth of the face, the lower the center of gravity of the club and the higher you'll hit the ball. The deeper (taller) the face, the higher the center of gravity and the lower you'll hit the ball.



Finding the right club will give you additional confidence to make a more aggressive swing.

Arnold Palmer, for instance, has a swing that produces low shots, so to counterbalance that tendency he uses a shallow-faced club. Bear in mind that all metal woods have very low centers of gravity, so for that reason they have little loft built into their faces. When someone tells you he has a 9-degree metal wood, you can assume it will hit the ball about the same height as a standard 12-degree wooden driver.

- Greg Norman

Tip #49 - Low Shots

When you need to keep the ball down, under a tree limb or into a headwind, it pays to know how to hit a low shot.

Let's say you're 150 yards from the green and you need to keep it low. You'd like to hit it about the length of a 6-iron with the trajectory of a driver. But since the 6-iron has about 25 degrees more loft than the driver, you need to make some adjustments.

As with the curving shots, most of the adjustments are done at address. The first thing I do is widen my stance by about an inch. This lowers my center of gravity and sets me up for a flatter swing with a more driving type of impact.

Since this lowering brings my hands closer to the ball, I grip down a half inch or so on the club. This adjustment will also help me to keep my swing under control. And since I want as little loft as possible, I position the ball several inches in back of its normal place in my stance. This will keep my hands and body out in front of the ball on the downswing and will in effect take some of the loft off the club.

My final change is in my alignment. When I flatten my swing, I have a tendency to draw the ball to the left, so I compensate by aiming both the clubface and my body a couple of degrees to the right.

Since you want a horizontal attack on the ball, it's important to take the club back that way -- low and long. This is the only swing where I don't take the club back to parallel. When I'm hitting a low shot, my hands don't go much farther than shoulder height. On the downswing, I drive through hard with the hands, keeping the club low through the extension, so that the ball will stay low as well.

One of the keys on the low shot is staying in front of the ball at impact. It follows therefore that when you want to hit a high shot, you should make adjustments that will allow you to stay in back of the ball.

The first thing I do is position the ball about a half inch forward of its usual spot in my stance. I then widen my stance a half inch.

Together these changes put my center of gravity about an inch to the right of where it is for a normal shot. I'm an inch more in back of the ball. This also gives me the feeling that I'm down and under the ball, and that I'll be catching it on the upswing.

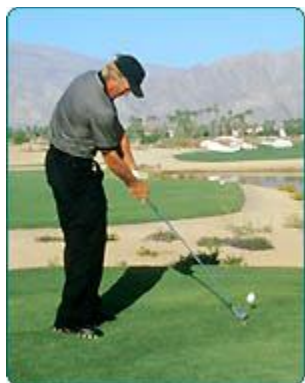


Make a controlled three-quarter swing with a low finish to keep the ball low.

- Greg Norman

Tip #50 - The Downswing

I've always found it helpful to think of the golf swing as a horse race among the various body parts. It's an unusual race in that every horse leaves the starting gate at the same time, in a unified takeaway, and everyone hits the finish line simultaneously in a mass photo finish, but in-between the field spreads out a bit.



In a good swing, your position at impact is almost identical to your final position at address.

The first horses to reach the top of the backswing are the knees and hips, followed by the shoulders which have had to rotate twice as far. After the shoulders complete their rotation, the arms go a bit farther and then stop before the wrists complete their cocking as the weight of the clubhead gives a final downward tug.

It's the same leaders on the way down to impact. Even as the wrists are completing their part of the turn, the lower body has moved into the backstretch. The left knee moves laterally into the downswing and pulls on the left hip which in turn pulls the left arm downward. At the same time, the right knee begins to drive toward the target, taking with it the shoulders, arms, and hands.

At the last split-second before impact the race tightens again, as the swiftly moving arms catch up with the bigger muscles in the shoulders, hips and legs.

When you execute the swing properly, the leadership of the legs creates a lag of the hands and clubhead, resulting in what's commonly called a delayed release. In this position, just prior to impact, the wrists have not yet uncocked and there is a tremendous amount of club head speed ready to be unleashed.

That's what happens in the final millisecond-the club whips through and catches the rest of the body parts, all of which have achieved their roles at impact at the same moment. In a good swing, your position at impact is almost identical to your final position at address.

If you've executed the swing correctly, the club will move straight along the line for about a foot on either side of the ball.

One good way of encouraging this action is to imagine a second ball about a foot and a half past your actual ball, and then striving to hit that ball in addition to the real one.

- Greg Norman

Tip #51 - Developing A Sixth Sense In The Sand

Sand play was one of the last aspects of golf I took seriously. It was not until after I started playing the U.S. Tour regularly that I really began to work on my bunker game. Oh, I had a grasp of the basics, but I had no real finesse, no sharpness. I guess I was so cocky in those days that I figured I'd rarely have to dirty my spikes in the sand.

Boy, was I naive. After a couple of years of watching guys like Gary Player and Seve Ballesteros, I realized I'd never be a complete player -- or a consistent winner -- without a strong bunker game. So I worked on the refinements, using the bunker as my laboratory and experimenting with all sorts of nuances of stance and swing.



Once you have a feel for the basics, pursue some of the finer points of bunker play and adapt a technique that works for you.

I learned a couple of important things. First I saw that there is more room for artistry and creativity in a bunker than in any other part of the course. You have so many options, so many ways of playing a shot. And the more of these options you know, the more confident and aggressive you can be.

Second, I saw that bunker finesse is far easier to develop than putting feel or a soft touch around the green. Why? For that same reason Walter Hagen mentioned -- you don't have to hit the ball. The sand acts as a buffer, a margin for error. And therein is another source of confidence, another reason to play bunkers the only way they can be played -- aggressively. Until you can make firm, confident swings and actually try to sink that shot out of the sand, you won't be going at these shots with the proper attitude.

You should go through the same type of experience I did and feel out your own arsenal of shots. The best way to learn sand play is to teach yourself, by relating different setups and swings to the corresponding ball flights and rolls. In this way, you'll develop your own sixth sense in bunkers.

What you'll learn, more than anything else, is the way to vary the length and trajectory of your shots. There is a greater variety of opinion on this subject than on almost any aspect of golf instruction.

Some teachers and players advocate that to increase the length of a sand shot, you simply increase the length and force of the swing. Others say it's merely a matter of increasing or decreasing the distance you hit behind the ball. And still others key on ball position and weight distribution.

My own practice sessions have put me in the "vary the amount of sand" camp. I've spent hours hitting balls, thousands of sand shots -- and hundreds of those swinging with my left hand only, to get a feel for the way the club reacts with the bunker -- and I know that one thing is not arguable: the more sand you take behind the ball, the less backspin you'll apply, the lower the ball will fly and the longer it will run. Conversely, the less sand you take, the more backspin you'll apply, the higher the ball will fly and the faster it will stop.

There is another related law: The more open your sand wedge at impact, the less sand you'll explode and the more height and backspin you'll put on the shot; the less open the face, the more the club will dig down into the sand, and the less height and backspin you'll get.

Combining these two laws will help you to play virtually any shot you'll encounter. For instance, if you want maximum height and bite, the idea is to turn the clubface as open as possible and take as little sand as possible by hitting right next to the ball.

Indeed, if you can make impact so that just a few grains of sand intervene between your club and ball, you'll have the ultimate in friction and backspin. In a sense this is like hitting the ball with a sandpaper-faced club. It produces maximum backspin and bite. When you see me or other Tour players make the ball suck back from sand, this is what we've done -- played a wide open-faced shot and taken just a thin veil of sand with the ball.

Looking at it another way, this is the reason that a ball always runs a long way when it's hit from a buried lie. When the ball is buried, you have to go down after it. To get down after it, you have to dig into the sand, which means a square face. Digging down deep means you'll be taking a lot of sand, which produces a low ball that runs a mile.

The suck-back shot and the buried lie are two extremes. More often, you encounter a situation that's somewhere in the middle, and naturally that calls for a compromise in your technique. Let's say, for example, that your ball is semi-buried but you don't have the luxury of hitting a hot-running explosion, because you're near the front lip of the trap and the pin is fairly close to you.

It was for situations such as this that I developed the stab shot -- an open face combined with a hard downward dig into the sand. The open face gives me the height and bite, the downward dig gets the bailout.

Other players have developed other solutions. Creative guys like Ballesteros and Chi Chi Rodriguez have dozens of different sand shots, but Jack Nicklaus played superbly for years with just two basic shots he called the explosion and the splash.

As I said, the best way to solve the mysteries of the sand is to take the basics with you into a bunker, learn how the physics of earthmoving affect ball flight, and develop the shots that fit the course you play most often, and fit your overall



Attacking with an open clubface produces a high shot with lots of backspin.

game.

Knowing the basics of sand play takes away your fear; knowing the subtleties will actually lead you to enjoy playing from bunkers. Once you have a feel for these things, you can pursue some of the finer points of bunker play, adapting your technique to different types of sands and the challenges of uneven lies.

- Greg Norman

Tip #52 - Fades And Draws

When you cut across the ball, either from out to in or from in to out, you impart sidespin along with the backspin. It is this sidespin that causes the ball to curve to the right or left.

Clockwise sidespin makes the ball move from left to right. In basic terms, you impart this spin whenever the face of the golf club is open in relation to the angle of your swing path at impact. Please recall that "open," in the case of the clubface, means pointing to the right of the swing path. This should not be confused with an open stance in which your body is aligned to the left of the target line.



An open stance encourages an outside takeaway and a cut across the ball at impact.

It's important also to understand that this open clubface is the only root cause of fades and slices. You can make a perfectly square, on-plane swing, but if at impact the face of your club is pointing to the right of your target line, you'll curve the ball from left to right.

Conversely, you can have your club pointed perfectly down the target line, but if you hit the ball with a glancing blow from out to in, that straight-forward clubface will actually be open in relation to the path of your swing. This also will produce a slice.

The more open your clubface is in relation to your swing path, the more clockwise sidespin you'll put on the ball. Slightly open faces produce fades, wide-open faces produce slices.

Draws and hooks come from the opposite situation, where the clubface is closed in relation to the path of the swing at impact. This imparts counterclockwise spin which makes the ball turn from right to left.

As with slice spin, it doesn't matter whether your swing path is from out to in, in to out, or straight into the back of the ball; if your clubface is pointed farther left than the line on which that club is moving, you're going to curve the ball from right to left. A little spin produces a draw, a lot of spin means a hook.

Instructional advice abounds when it comes to playing intentional fades and draws. Many teachers advocate the stronger grip, with the hands rotated to the right on the club. Others recommend finagling with your weight distribution or swing speed. Still others recommend stiff-armed swings for a slice, more wrist for a hook.

I avoid these methods completely. For one thing, they're complicated. As I've said before, golf should be kept as simple as possible. Secondly, it's silly to believe you can regulate the curve of a golf ball by regulating your wrist cock or weight shift. Finally, I distrust such methods because they don't relate to the root causes of sidespin that I've just discussed.

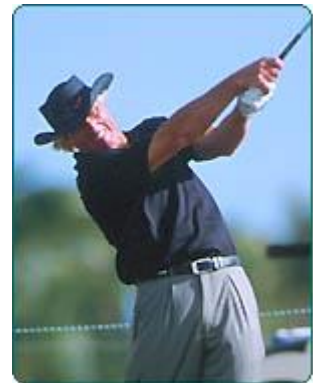
In my mind, there's only one good way to play intentional fades and draws, and that's by pre-setting them with your alignment at address. The alterations I make are minor, and once I set them, I'm through. My grip and swing remain the same, without any manipulation or conscious change of any kind.

For a left-to-right shot, I begin my address as usual, by setting my club behind the ball and aiming the clubface straight down the target line. Then I make a change. Instead of aligning my body parallel to the direction in which I've aimed the clubface, I set up in an open stance, with my feet, knees, hips, and shoulders aligned several degrees to the left of the target line.

This setup will cause me to take the club back on a line that is outside that of a straight-back takeaway. That will result in a swing that returns the club to the ball along that same outside path. At impact, the clubface will be aimed straight down the target line but will be swinging across that target line, thus imparting clockwise spin. The ball will start out to the left of the target and then, as the spin takes over, it will drift back toward the target.

It's as simple as that. The more drift I want, the more open I stand while keeping the clubface aimed straight down the target line.

For the draw, it's naturally just the opposite. I set the clubface straight at the ball, then align my body several degrees to the right. This promotes a takeaway that will be more to the inside than usual, resulting in an impact that is from inside out and imparts counterclockwise spin. The ball starts out to the right, then draws back in toward the target at which I aimed my clubface. The more curve I want, the more I aim myself to the right.



A closed stance sets up an inward takeaway and an inside to outside path at impact.

It's that easy. Just set up correctly and then trust your swing. In fact, if there's one key to the swing, it's a mental one. Forget about where you want the ball to finish, and concentrate instead on where you want it to start.

Go back to the idea of visualizing the apex of your shot, and in this case think of hitting the ball to the farthest sideward point of the fade or draw. If you set up properly and direct your ball to that crest of the arc, it will turn on its path from that point to the target.

- Greg Norman

Tip #53 - Getting Out Of The Trees

There are four ways of getting out of the trees: going over them, under them, to the right or to the left. The nature of your lie will eliminate various options and dictate others.



Visualize your ball shooting through an opening in the trees and keep that image sharp as you make your swing.

For instance, if you're in heavy grass, you won't be able to put much sidespin on the ball, so you can forget about hooking or slicing around the tree. You'll also have trouble hitting a low shot, because in order to get the ball airborne at all you'll have to go at it with a steep swing. Thus, your best bet from rough is usually a high shot. That's one of the reasons I always look upward when I'm in tree trouble.

If, on the other hand, you're sitting on hardpan or any type of tight lie, the high road is hazardous. A low shot or a slice is often the best route out of this situation.

Of course, occasionally you'll find yourself in a predicament where none of the traditional escapes will work. Let's say you're in the final hole of a dead-even match. Your opponent has just played his approach to within birdie range, and you're stymied by a big tree. In this situation you have only one option -- you must hit through the tree.

It's a desperate shot to be sure, but if you analyze and approach it intelligently, you'll maximize your chances of pulling it off. First, don't just slug the ball indiscriminately at the tree. Look for the most sparsely foliated area of the tree and then fit your shot to that opening. The distance to the green may be 150 yards, but you may have to hit anything from an 8-iron to a 2-iron to make the shot work.

Second, take at least one club more than you think you need. This will allow the branches to slow the ball's flight a bit. After all, a tree may be 90 percent air, but so is a screen door, so expect some resistance along the way.

Finally, once you have the ideal shot in mind, take a clear mental picture of it. Visualize your ball shooting through that opening in the trees and keep that image sharp in your mind as you make your swing. You'll be surprised at how this positive mental picture will help you out of most negative situations.

- Greg Norman

Tip #54 - Three Trick Shots

I hate taking unplayable lies, and you should too. It's like an admission of defeat. The following three shots are for those situations that seem unplayable but are not. They just require a little ingenuity.



Sometimes a little ingenuity is all that's needed to prevent taking an unplayable lie.

The first shot is played when your ball lies so close to an obstacle that you can't take a stance or swing from the conventional side. So you play it left-handed.

If the ball is sitting cleanly, the best club to use is a putter (if you have one of those models that may be hit either right- or left-handed). Failing this, take a 9-iron and turn the club so that the blade stands on its toe. Grip it like a lefty, with your left hand below your right on the club.

Take a couple of practice swings to get the feel of this shot. Then address the ball with the toe of the club, and make a short, crisp swing. The ball may go several yards, it may go only a few feet, but in either case you should be better off than if you were to take an unplayable lie.

The second shot is an alternative to the lefty shot, when you need a bit more distance. I call it the one-handed chop. Take the same 9-iron, grip it with only your right hand, and stand with your back toward your target. The ball should be positioned about nine inches diagonally in front and to the right of your right toe.

From this position the swing is nothing more than a wristy chop. Again, make a couple of practice chops before you try the real thing. If you hit this one squarely, you can move the ball fifty yards or more.

Finally, when your ball comes to rest under a low-lying tree or bush, try the kneeling shot. If you follow the U.S. PGA Tour, you'll recall the controversy when Craig Stadler played this shot in the 1987 San Diego Open.

Stadler spread a towel on the ground and knelt on it to protect his slacks, unaware that a recent USGA decision had deemed such a practice to be a way of building a stance and thus a breach of the Rules.

A day after Stadler committed the foul, a TV viewer who saw a tape of the shot reported the infraction. Stadler was penalized, and because he had failed to assess himself the penalty, was disqualified for signing an invalid scorecard.

So if you decide to play this shot, kneel on the ground and on nothing else. Take a wedge or 9-iron and align yourself well to the right of where you want to go. With your arms at shoulder height you'll be making a very flat swing, and with the loft of the club actually pointing to the left, you'll have to compensate.

Once you're aligned, lock your eyes on the ball and make a short, stiff-wristed swing-almost like a big putt. You'll be surprised at how well you can recover, even after the course has brought you to your knees.



Stadler famously played a shot from his knees during the 1987 San Diego Open.

- Greg Norman

Tip #55 - Post Impact

Once past impact there's nothing you can do to influence the flight of the ball, but since a good follow-through is the result of a sound swing, it pays to know what the proper finish position looks like.



Rhythm and tempo can't be taught, they must be absorbed.

Basically, you're facing the target. About 80 percent of your weight has transferred back to your left side. In fact, after impact that weight is for the first time on the outside of your feet, as you roll onto the side of your left foot while balancing on the toe of your right. Your hands, which have been pulled almost violently through impact, now begin to come back inside and upward, into a final position over your left shoulder. Most important, you're in balance: not tilting back or forward, left or right, but totally stable.

A couple of years ago, one of the trademarks of my swing was a pronounced slide of my right foot toward my left foot just after impact. That happened because I transferred so much of my weight onto my right side on the backswing, then returned so much of it to my left side on the downswing. A swing computer once measured the pros on the PGA Tour and found that I made the most pronounced weight shift of anyone. Over 90 percent of my weight was going back and forth during the swing. That pull simply brought my right foot along with it.

These days, I set up with a slightly wider stance than I used to. In this way, I start with a bit more weight on my right side at address, and therefore I don't have to shift as much during the swing. This minute change has virtually eliminated the slide. It's also had the benefit of counteracting a tendency to hit the occasional errant shot to the right.

The one aspect of the swing I haven't said much about is tempo. That's because I feel it's largely an individual matter and should be matched to your overall temperament and the speed with which you generally do things. If you walk and talk quickly, you should probably swing quickly (although not too quickly). If you do things in a more deliberate fashion, then by all means, adopt a more leisurely pace of swing.

Just be sure you keep to your tempo throughout the round. One problem that all of us have is a tendency to speed things up a bit when the pressure is on. I know I do. Back at Turnberry (site of the 1986 Open Championship), when I let a couple of shots get away from me and bogeyed the fifth hole of the final round, my caddie said to me, "Slow down. You're swinging fast, you're even walking faster than normal. I'm going to walk a bit more slowly, and you just keep pace with me." That put me right back on my natural tempo, and I had no problems from there to the finish.

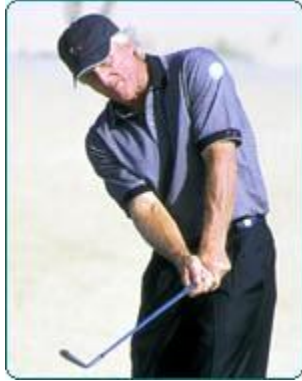
With regard to rhythm -- the way the backswing and downswing work together -- the downswing clearly must be faster paced than the backswing. But that doesn't mean you should consciously speed up on the way to the ball. Good rhythm and tempo can't really be taught, they must be absorbed. My best advice is for you to go to a Tour event, sit by the practice tee for a while, and watch the pros. Seve Ballesteros is a particularly good model. His marvelous rhythm and tempo never vary, no matter what club he has in his hands.

- Greg Norman

Tip #56 - The Pitch Shot

Add a few yards to the chip shot and you'll be facing a pitch. Generally, chip shots can be from a few feet to about 25 yards. Beyond that, you're pitching.

The address for the pitch is similar to that for the chip -- an open, narrow stance, the ball off your left heel, your hands forward and your weight shaded to the left side.



"On short pitches, I'll simplify things even more by switching from the pitching wedge to the sand wedge," Norman said.

The difference is that everything is a bit less marked than for the chip. The stance is a bit wider -- your heels will be about a foot apart. It's less open too, with your body pointing only about 10 degrees left of square. You grip down only about an inch on the club.

The swing is basically a long chipping swing. Obviously, you'll have some degree of that natural wrist action, but again, let it happen, don't make it happen. Keep your legs and lower body quiet and let the arms do most of the work.

There's a great variety of opinion regarding the best way to vary the length of pitch shots. Some teachers suggest varying the length of the swing, others advocate gripping up and down on the club and a third philosophy says you should vary the pace of the swing.

Let me rule out that third alternative immediately. Except on special shots, such as the lob and the punch, I don't believe in changing the pace of the swing. You have a natural tempo, and unless a difficult situation requires you to change it, you shouldn't. As I said with regard to the chip, short shots must be struck crisply and aggressively.

This leaves the two other methods -- varying the swing length and varying the grip length. I use both of them. The shorter the pitch I have to play, the shorter the swing I'll use. And when I get down in close range, I'll grip down on the club as well. The key is to allow myself on each shot to make a firm, aggressive swing. I take length out of the club and length out of the swing in order to maintain a firm, confident attack on the ball.

On the shortest of pitches, I'll simplify things even more by switching from the pitching wedge to the sand wedge. Why grip way down and shorten my swing when there's a higher-lofted club that will do that work for me?

And today, with the advent of a third wedge with even more loft than the sand wedge, even the shortest of pitches may be made with a minimum of swing variation. The 60-degree wedge has about five degrees more loft than the sand wedge and about 10 degrees more than the pitching wedge. For playing short, high shots that need to stop quickly, it's an amateur's best friend.

With any pitch shot, however, planning is vitally important. Pick out the spot where you want the ball to land. With a hard, fast surface that spot may be short of the green. On soft, uphill shots, it may be quite close to give the shot some thought. Then take your practice swings as you visualize the ball lofting to your ideal landing area. This will help you generate the right feel.

- Greg Norm

Tip #57 - Handling Grass

Learn to like the rough, because it's not going to go away. You'll be hitting into it-and out of it-as long as you play this game. Besides, it's not as bad as most people think. In fact, with the right attitude and the right technique, you can hit the ball longer and straighter from the rough than from anywhere on the course.



Norman hits from the rough during the first round of the 2003 Open Championship.

Indeed, the longest iron shot of my life may well have been a 5-iron I hit one day from the rough. I was playing in the final round of the 1980 Australian Open at the Lakes Golf Club near Sydney. I had a one-stroke lead when I came to the tee of the 17th hole, a par-5. The fairway on this hole is an island, calling for something more conservative than a driver off the tee.

I hit a 1-iron, and hit it too well. It went through the far end of the fairway and settled on a grassy downslope just inches from the water. From there I had 260 yards to a green with water on the left and worse trouble everywhere else. With a downhill lie I didn't want to mess with a low-lofted club, so I resolved to lay up short of the green with as-iron.

Well, as so often happens, in trying to put an extra-smooth swing on the ball, I nailed it dead-flush. The minute I felt impact I knew I had hit it big. It jumped out of the rough and flew forever. It did not land short of the green, it did not land on the green, it sailed clear over the green, leaving me a full wedge back to the pin. In all, that 5-iron traveled more than 300 yards.

I hung on to win that Open by a stroke over my countryman, Brian Jones, and a few months later I was amused to read a letter to the editor in one of the U.S. golf magazines. It was from a fellow who had seen a description of the tournament. He couldn't believe the reports of my shot, and he ended his letter with an exhortation to the Australian Tour: "Send us this man who can hit 300-yard 5-irons."

I had trouble believing that 5-iron myself. But therein is a lesson. Expect the unexpected in the rough. Whereas 99 percent of fairway lies are predictable, in the rough every situation is an adventure.

Flyer Lies

Most lies in the rough are known as "flyers," because of their tendency to produce shots such as that 5-iron of mine. What happens is that the blades of grass get between your clubface and the ball at impact, which inhibits normal friction and backspin. The ball shoots out of the lie like a high-speed knuckleball. With no backspin to pull it down, it flies higher and farther than a crisp fairway shot and it hits the ground running.

Virtually every time your ball nestles into light, dry rough, you have a flyer lie. The first thing to remember is to use less club than you would for a fairway shot of the same distance. If from 170 yards you'd normally hit a 5-iron fairway approach, go down to a 6-iron and maybe even a 7-iron from the rough.

However, this advice comes with one caveat. Although the ball will jump off the clubface of your middle and short irons, and to some extent off the lofted woods (5, 6, 7, etc.), you won't get the flyer effect from the long-shafted steep-faced clubs. They simply aren't able to get down and through the grass. The truth is, you'll hit the ball about the same distance from the rough with a 4-iron as with a 2-iron, maybe farther. As a general rule, in fact, I would recommend that you not attempt to play from a flyer lie with any iron or wood numbered 1, 2 or 3.

Your technique on this shot 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.

This single change in ball position is all you need to handle a flyer. Just make your normal swing as if you were in the fairway. There's no need to swing any harder or softer or to make any special movements or maneuvers. Just trust your golf swing and apply it confidently to the ball. Remember, if you make reasonable contact with this shot, it will fly far and straight.

Thick Lies

When you find your ball nestled deep in thick rough, you don't have a flyer. In fact, the best you can hope for from this situation is sort of a floater. Dense grass will slow down your clubhead to the point that you'll be barely able to extricate the ball. Whereas the flyer takes off like a rocket, this floater ascends like a blimp.



When the ball drops deep into thick rough, the best you can hope for is to excavate it with sort of a floating shot.

Your club selection on this shot is restricted to the short irons - 8, 9 and the wedges -- with the pitching wedge usually the best choice. 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 clubhead 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 feet. The faster you can get the club moving through the ball, the faster that ball will climb out of its nest and the farther it will go.

Perched Lies

The final and least common rough lie is the perched ball, where you come to rest atop a tuft of grass. These lies appear easy but they're not. They invite you to belt the ball 200 yards, but you'll never belt it 200, you have to pick it.

More than any other shot from heavy grass, the perched lie demands care and precision. Before you do anything else, take a close look at the lie to determine the exact level at which the ball is perched. In so doing, tread softly and be careful not to dislodge the ball, or it will cost you a one-stroke penalty.

Once you know the height of the ball, select your club. Generally speaking, you should take more club than you would for a fairway lie of the same distance—a 5-iron shot from the fairway would become a 4-iron shot from the rough because of the tendency to hit slightly under this ball and come up short. Whatever club you use, be sure to grip down on it an inch or so to compensate for the fact that the ball is high off the ground.

Even if you don't normally follow my technique of addressing the ball with the club held slightly off the ground, do so on this shot. If you ground the club, you might disturb the grass beneath the ball and set off a chain reaction which will topple the ball. Also, if you address this shot with the club soled, you'll likely hit under it, maybe even whiff it. To hit the back of this ball you need to address your club to the back of it.

On the swing your single objective should be to take the club back in a low, wide sweep. To promote this, position the ball about an inch forward of its usual position in your stance, thus shading your weight a bit more to the right than on a standard shot. Also, be sure that at address your left shoulder is markedly higher than your right. Then just sweep the club back and away. Keep pretending the ball is on a tee, and you'll do fine.

- Greg Norman

Tip #58 - Reading The Green

stroking the ball is only one part of putting -- the mechanical part. Equally important is the artful side -- reading the green.

Good green reading comes with experience. After hitting enough putts over enough different types of terrain and grass, you develop a sixth sense of how the ball will roll. As you walk onto a green, whether you realize it or not, you take in all sorts of subtle information.



Norman studies the green during the first round of the 2003 Open Championship.

If the green appears light, you know you're putting against the grain; if it's dark you're downgrain. If the green is set on a high area of the course and you feel a breeze as you step onto it, you sense that the putt will be fast. Even if you don't look closely at the surrounding terrain, you are aware of any major slope in the land.

Without having to tell yourself, you know which is the low side of the green and which is the high. If the putting surface is hard and crusty under foot, you receive one message, if it's soft and spongy you get another. Experience with many, many putts allows you to run this data through your computer before you even mark your ball.

The most elusive aspect of green reading has to do with the grain. Grain refers to the direction in which the blades of grass grow. The light/dark appearance is one way to read it. Another method you can use is to take your putter blade and scrape it across a patch of fringe. If the blades of grass brush up, you're scraping against the grain. If they mat down, you're scraping with it. (Incidentally, be sure to do this scraping on the fringe. On the greens, it's against Rule 35-1f.)

A third method is to take a look at the cup. Often, the blades of grass will grow over the edge of the cup in the direction in which the grain moves. Incidentally, grain usually grows toward water, especially toward the ocean, and in the East it's apt to lean toward the mountains. If you're not near any such topography, figure on the grain growing in the direction of the setting sun.

Grain is strongest on Bermuda grass, where short, crewcut-like blades tend to push the ball strongly. Although each putt on each green is different, as a general rule you can figure on stroking the ball about 20 percent harder than usual on a putt that's dead into the grain, and about 20 percent less on a downgrain putt.

When the ball breaks with the grain, read-in extra "borrow" on the putt. When the slope is against the grain, play for less break. These effects are less marked on the long-stemmed bent and other strains of grass, but they are present nonetheless.

The break of your putt will also be affected by the firmness of a green, the wetness/dryness, the amount of wind you're facing, and even the time of day. In general, any time you have to hit the ball hard, you play for less break.

Another way of reading the break on a green is to watch the way other players' putts behave. I'm all for this "going to school," but with one caveat: Allow for any difference between your own playing style and those of your fellow players. If, for instance, your friend is a lagger and you're a charger, don't playas much break as he does.

Finally, if I have one hard and fast rule in putting, it's this: Never hit the ball until you have a good vision of the path on which it will roll. Sometimes the vision will come to you immediately. You'll see the perfect putt the minute you step up to it, and more often than not, you'll sink it just as you saw it. Other times, it will take much longer to get a picture of the putt, and even then you won't be comfortable. But don't make your stroke until you have the best read you can get. You have to believe in your line if you want to have a good chance of sinking any putt.

Conditions	
Play More Break	Play Less Break
1. Hard Green	1. Soft Green
2. Dry Green	2. Wet Green
3. Grain With Slope	3. Grain Against Slope
4. Downhill	4. Uphill
5. Bermuda Grass, Kikuyu	5. Bent Grass, Rye
6. Afternoon	6. Morning
7. Crosswind With Slope	7. Crosswind Against Slope
8. Light Tailwind	8. Headwind, Heavy Tailwind

- Greg Norman

Tip #59 - Slice An 8-iron On Long Bunker Shots

Here's one of the greatest shots in the game -- and a wonderful way to handle golf's toughest situation, the long bunker shot.

Usually, when you have 40 yards or more to the pin, it's a matter of playing a long version of either a runner or one-bounce shot. These can be tricky to gauge, even for pros.

The problem is, to get enough distance with a sand wedge, you have to take a fairly big, fairly hard swing while also minimizing the distance you hit behind the ball. Even the best golfers occasionally make the mistake of coming a bit too close to the ball and blading the shot, or of quitting on the downswing and fluffing it entirely.

For these reasons, I've developed a secret weapon for long bunker shots—a slicing 8-iron. You can't use it when you're facing a buried lie or a high lip, but in all other cases I'd recommend it over the long explosion.

Take the 8-iron and don't choke up on it -- use the full length of the club. Play the ball well forward, off your left instep, and take a very wide, very open stance. You should aim yourself more to the left than on any other shot, about 45 degrees or so. The clubface, like your stance, should be open, and laid back as well.

What you want to do is make a shallow, splashing explosion. You won't have to worry about getting too deep because the ball is well forward in your stance and the club is well open. Still, the idea is to hit at least an inch and a half behind this ball, and that's a lot of sand for a long shot.

The longer shaft and stronger loft of the 8-iron will help you get distance, but you still must give this a hard swing. However, that's what's nice about this shot—you can belt it and you don't have to worry about digging down deep; and you can get all the distance you need without having to hit too close to the ball.



On long bunker shots, distance is often difficult to control with a sand wedge.

But the best part is watching the ball dance. When you hit this shot right, it'll fly on a line several yards left of your target, hit the green still at least ten feet left, and then suck directly back to the right. When you apply that sand- paper-like friction to the ball, this shot will scoot to the right faster than any shot in the game.

It takes some practice, as all sand shots do, but once you get a feel for it, you'll find yourself relying on this slicing 8-iron to bail you out of the toughest of predicaments. And you'll amaze your friends at the same time. This is a shot Walter Hagen would love.

- Greg Norman

Tip #60 - The Seven-Fingered Shot

One of the most frustrating aspects of playing from the rough is the fact that it's difficult to develop any finesse. Particularly around the green, it's tough to make the ball land softly and stay near the target.

Recently, however, I developed a shot that can do some tricks. The idea originally came from one of the masters of touch, Seve Ballesteros. While practicing sand shots with me one day, he taught me something that I've since adapted to the rough.

Let's say you want to hit a high, soft shot over a bunker and make it stop near the pin. That's a tall assignment from the rough, but with this technique, it's possible.

After setting up for a high shot, make a normal swing, but just before impact, release the pressure in the last three fingers of your left hand. You don't really let go of the club, but you do lighten that pressure down to almost nothing.

The result is that your right hand flips through and under the left, flipping the clubhead under the ball and upward. At the end of the shot, the bottom of the club faces straight toward the sky. The shot flies very high, comes almost straight down, and sits tight after it lands.



To make the club flip upward through the ball, lighten your left-hand grip pressure as you swing through impact.

- Greg Norman

Tip #61 - Gamesmanship

One of the subtler aspects of aggressive driving involves the gamesmanship that goes on at the tee. When you're in a match, the tee shot is the opening gambit and sets the stage for the rest of the battle on the hole.

Since I'm a long hitter, I like to have some fun with my opponents. Sometimes on an extremely long hole, if I'm hitting second, I'll take out an iron and lean on it as my opponent gets ready to play his shot. Occasionally I can actually see him thinking, "This hole is 450 yards and Norman's teeing off with a 1-iron? My God, he must be even longer than I thought." If I can get those types of thoughts going through my opponent's mind, he might do anything. Then when my turn comes, I put the iron back and take out my driver.

I do the opposite too. On a tight hole where I know everyone's debating about club selection, I'll quickly take out my driver and waggle it a bit for everyone to see. The other guys then may make the mistake of selecting too much club for the shot. After they hit, I'll put the driver, which I had no intention of hitting, back in the bag and select a more intelligent club.

I like to talk it up on the tee too, especially when I'm playing against a fellow who I know is something of a gamesman himself. I've stepped up to short par-4s and said loudly to my caddie, "Can we get it to the green today?" He'll then say something like, "No problem," both of us knowing full well that we have no intention of trying such a shot. It's all an act for the benefit of the shorter-hitting opponent, just something to get his brainwaves stirring as he prepares for his own tee shot.

But you don't have to be a power-hitter to be able to use gamesmanship. If you hit the ball straight, you can be just as effective. When you're the second to play on a tight hole, you can take out an iron. If your longer-hitting opponent sees you, he may back off his driver. Then, after he hits, you can put the iron back and hit it past him with your driver. You can also talk it up on the tee and put wayward thoughts in a slugger's mind. Try a line such as "That OB on the right sneaks up fast, doesn't it?" or "Thickest rough on the golf course is on this hole." Believe me, it works.



Most players will admit that gamesmanship -- especially on the tee -- is part of golf.

Of course the most common form of gamesmanship takes place on the tees of par-3 holes. I'll never forget the time I used it on a fellow British Open champion. He and I were both in contention in a major Australian event when we got to a par-3. The shot was between an 8-iron and a 7-iron. I knew my opponent was debating his choice, and I also knew he had a tendency to be a bag watcher. So, hitting first, I took a 7-iron and gave it a swing which was big and long but was actually quite soft and slow -- all arms and no hand action. The ball landed on the front half of the green. He then chose a 7-iron, hit it way over the back of the green, and took four.

Such gamesmanship may seem to stretch the limits of sportsmanship, but the fact is, everyone does it. It's part of the game on Tour. And the top players know how to use it best of all. During the 1986 U.S. Open Lee Trevino got me good. At the 10th hole one day, each of us had a tricky downhill birdie putt. Trevino hit first, and when his putt finished a foot or so past the hole he said to his caddie (for my benefit), "Herman, that is the fastest putt I've seen all year long." It worked. I left my approach putt five feet short and then missed the next one. Lee parred the hole and I bogeyed.

- Greg Norman

