



15 Easy Ways to Improve Your Golf Game

golficity
GOLF. MADE SIMPLE.

Contents

Introduction..... 3

How to Focus on the Driving Range..... 3

How to Improve Your Mental Game..... 4

How to Compress a Golf Ball 7

How to Stop Hitting Shots Fat..... 8

How to Stop Slicing The Ball..... 10

How to Tune Up Your Game During the Off-Season 12

How to Gain Consistency With Your Driver 13

How to Read the Green Like a Pro 15

How to Eliminate 3 Putts..... 18

How to Escape the Sand..... 20

How to Hit from the Thick Rough..... 21

How to Hit Fades and Draws..... 22

How to Spin a Golf Ball Like a Pro 24

How to Avoid Blow-Up Holes 26

How to Avoid Injuries 27

Conclusion.....**30**

Introduction

This eBook is arranged in a "how to" format, with each chapter covering a new "how to" instructional tip to help you learn the things you've always wanted to do with your game. Enjoy!

How to Focus on the Driving Range

If you're like the rest of us, you love to go the driving range and get all your aggression out with your driver. Some of will even burn through an entire bucket of balls before even putting the driver down. Next time, instead of showing off to everyone how you do your best 'John Daly', we suggest trying a different approach.



Keep in mind that we are human beings and our bodies and muscles should be warm and stretched before powering through a golf ball with a driver. Start by giving yourself a good stretch, especially your lower back and legs. A standard stretch to the floor to touch your toes will help loosen up your hamstrings and lower back – hold it for 30 seconds. Then grab a wedge and slowly swing it back and forth 20 or 30 times to loosen up your arms and back muscles.

Begin your practice with your short wedges then work your way up from your 9 iron through your lowest iron. Statistics show that a majority of your golf score is determined from about 200 yards and in. After moving through about 15-20 balls with your the wedges and irons, it's time to move upto your hybrids and drivers.

Now that you're warm and limber, begin to take a few swings with the driver. Closely analyze the ball trajectory and see if you need to fix a hook or a slice. If you notice a slice, perhaps you should realign your stance and grip – same with the draw.

Lastly, we always advise playing a mental game with yourself on the range. The idea is to simulate a real round with the purpose of practicing and improving your focus. Simply going out and swinging a club at the range completely neglects your mental game (which you'll find is easily the most important part of your game).

To practice in this manner, start by hitting your driver down the range just as if you are on the 1st tee. Then, with the next ball, pick a target and line it up as if it is your second shot to the green (say 140 yards out). Continue to do this with the next 20-30 balls. At the end of your session you will have essentially you just played 10-15 holes on the range (without putting).

But don't stop there! Something we enjoy doing after our bucket is empty is to move on to the chipping green for a 15 minute session of chipping continuously. Follow that with 15 minutes of putting and it give you a solid 1 hour practice session to cover all the essentials.

One last little tip: save the *shortest* putts for last. Drilling a few consecutive short putts at the end of your practice session will do wonders for your confidence and will leave you feeling more fulfilled at the end of your practice session.

How to Improve Your Mental Game

To paraphrase one of the authors below, it's astonishing that with all of the advancements in golf equipment, video swing analysis, etc., average amateur golf scores on the whole have not improved one bit over the past few decades. If you take a moment to reflect on this idea you'll begin to grasp the gravity of the statement.

So why is this?

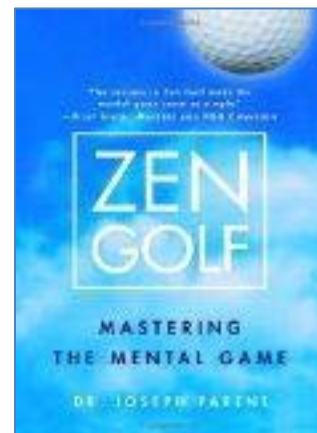
We've all heard (and always politely agree to) phrases like "golf is played on a five inch course – the distance between your ears," and "golf is 90% mental and 10% physical," but do we ever really take that to heart?

Over the past few months we've dedicated a significant amount of time and focus to improving our own mental golf games by treating it as the same

process as learning any other skill. Think about it, we'll spend countless hours and dollars investing in learning the physical aspects of our swing (from swing training tools, to books, iPhone apps, lessons, and so on) yet when it comes to our mental game, we acknowledge its importance but rarely take our development any further than that. It's almost as though we resign ourselves to either "having it" or not, and instead rely on our physical swing, and the improvement of our equipment, to carry us past this hurdle.

In a quest to improve our mental game "soft" skill, we've come across a number of golf mental game books ([Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) alone comes up with a whopping 245 published titles) but two in particular have really stood out. Through our research we've found these two books stand above the rest in their ability to provide excellent, detailed, and highly actionable information for improving your mental golf game:

1.) [Zen Golf: Mastering the Mental Game](#) by Dr. Joseph Parent: Let us put this simply by saying, if you only ever pick up one book on improving your mental golf game, Zen Golf should be the one. For [under 15 bucks on Amazon](#) (less than the cost of a dozen golf balls), we can nearly guarantee that this book will do more for your golf game that buying that new \$400 driver.



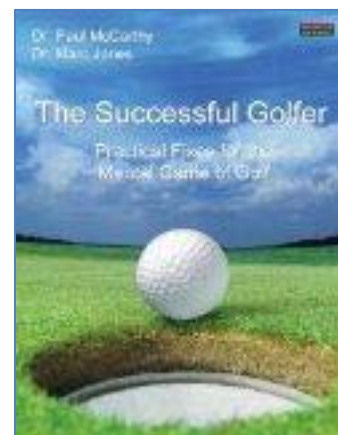
In the book you'll learn concepts like, how to gain "unconditional confidence" and "natural commitment" by focusing on things like "listening to your intuition," "cultivating and strengthening your awareness," staying "calm, cool, and collected," and even something as simple as "remembering to breathe."

These may seem like simple concepts but Dr. Parent provides the analogies and methodologies you need to apply them properly to your golf game. In fact, we were astonished how little the author actually discusses the physics of your swing (something we're all used to talking about ad nauseam), yet we still saw improvements in our game immediately upon implementing his mindset suggestions.

Our suggestion; throw a copy of [Zen Golf](#) in your golf bag to refer back to from time to time. Just like physical muscle training, repetition (in this case concept repetition) is vital to long term improvement and habit forming. Having the book on hand to refer back to when you're most frustrated with your game will prove invaluable.

Another thing we strongly suggest is to pick up the [Zen Golf audio book version](#) (something we personally benefited quite a bit from) which can be purchased on [Amazon.com](#) or [iTunes](#), whichever you prefer. Simply put, this is a book you'll inevitably return to over and over again, so we really enjoy having the audio copy available to listen to as a refresher on the way to the course. The author, Dr. Joseph Parent, narrates the audio book himself and does an excellent job of grabbing your attention and conveying his ideas in plain, and understandable terms.

2.) [The Successful Golfer: Practical Fixes for the Mental Game of Golf](#) by Dr Paul McCarthy and Dr Marc Jones: Authors Paul McCarthy and Marc Jones (a couple of great guys incidentally) actually sent me an advanced copy of this book a few months ago and I'm quite glad they did. The book itself is broken up into three sections and is perfect for readers looking for quick, to the point, yet still well thought out answers to the most common golf mental hurdles.



The first section of The Successful Golfer contains the authors' top 50 mental golf faults each with it's own practical fix. These sections are short, sweet, and too the point, allowing the reader to jump around to the questions that apply most directly to his or her game which is excellent for those seeking a "quick fix."

In the second section the authors (both experienced sports psychologists) dive deep into current research studies and how their application has proven to help countless golfers' games.

In the third and final section of the book, McCarthy and Jones piece everything together to provide the reader with "practical techniques for becoming a confident golfer." This portion of the book presents information

on things like “goal setting,” “practicing for the real thing,” and proper “self-talk.”

The Successful Golfer is perfect for those analytically minded golfers who want to know the hard evidence and tools behind this “soft” mental skill. Like Zen Golf, you can grab The Successful Golfer on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or [iTunes](https://www.apple.com/itunes) for under \$20 but sadly no audio book is available as of yet.

When factoring in not only the game improvement, but also the game enjoyment (primarily from their suggested shifts in mindset) these books have brought me, I can say with absolute certainty that they are both money well spent. Grab a Kindle or iTunes version today and you could be playing and enjoying the game at a higher level by your next round!

How to Compress a Golf Ball

Chances are somewhere along the line you’ve heard a golf instructor talking about “compressing the ball.” When you compress a golf ball, your club head drives through the ball on impact actually squeezing (compressing) the ball as it’s struck. Doing this correctly will give you a more accurate ball flight over a longer distance, and will offer a greater amount of backspin.

Wondering how it's done? Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. Make sure to shift your body weight to your back leg and focus on swinging around your body. This will allow you to set up a shallow approach angle to the golf ball.
2. The next step is to shift your weight to your front leg and make sure your back shoulder (the shoulder that is behind the ball) moves forward through the golf ball.
3. Concentrate on swinging more down on the ball which will create a forward lean at impact.
4. Make sure to turn your top hand (the hand that’s on the top of the golf club) towards the ground during impact to trap the ball.
5. If you’ve done everything correctly, your divot should be out in front of the ball, a clear indication that you’ve successfully trapped the ball during your swing.

Golf tips like this are always tough to grasp, and reading about the method is never enough. Get out there and practice on real turf and make note of your divot. If you're taking a divot before where the ball lies you're not doing it properly.

How to Stop Hitting Shots Fat

Few things frustrate a golfer more than when you nail a beautiful drive down the fairway and end up destroying the hole because you hit your approach shot "fat" or "chunked it," as we say.

Making contact with the ground before the ball causes a dramatic loss in club head speed and momentum, thus resulting in a shot that travels far less than desired.

We're all guilty of this occasional "chunk shot" and if we learn to eliminate it from our golf game, we'll all save a few strokes. So, how do you stop hitting golf shots fat?



Here are a few of the most common reasons why players hit the ball "fat" and how to remedy the issue:

Balance: When chipping, most golfers worry about the need to get the ball lofted high into the air so they tend to lean back and shift their weight onto their back leg. This causes an unnatural shift in balance to the backside and ultimately causes the club to ground into the dirt before the contact is made with the golf ball.

Try setting up your chip shot (on the practice range) and bring your rear leg backwards, out of your stance to take it out of the equation (if done correctly, about 90% of your weight should be on your leading leg with your back leg just there to stabilize you from falling over). Now that almost all your weight is on the front foot/leg and the back leg is neutralized try hitting 20-30 balls just standing on your front leg. What this does is train you shift your weight forward, forcing you to swing through the ball instead of swinging under to try and lift it. When done correctly you should be able to

feel your weight rolling from your big toe to your little toe on the foot where all of your weight is placed.

After a few shots you can bring your back leg back into your stance, keeping mindful of your weight shift and distribution. Don't allow yourself to start leaning too heavily on that back leg again!

Swing: Try slowing your backswing a bit without slowing your swing speed down. Slowing down your swing speed can cause you to drop your body and shoulders which will result in your hands being lower to the ball, and ultimately, striking the ground first. Instead, try practicing a slower backswing with a normal follow through – you can do this by bringing the club back at 75% speed and coming through at full speed with your weight shifted forward. The slower backswing should help improve your overall tempo and will give your body more time to get into proper alignment before the downswing begins.

Obviously if you're only 30-40 yards off the green you cannot take a full swing, so practice all types of scenarios and see if this helps you compress the ball better when on approach.

Club Face: Sometimes golfers open their club face too much because they're afraid of sculling the ball or hitting it "thin". However, the wide open club face will force you to pop the ball up and hit it short, essentially not allowing the club head to do what it is designed to do.

Close the face to a normal angle but be careful not to close it too much. A closed club face may cause the heel of the club to strike the ground on a downward angle before the club makes contact with the ball, causing the dreaded chunk shot.

To recap, focus on shifting your weight forward and practice hitting approach shots on just your front leg. Sometimes it helps to practice taking a step forward with your front leg to over exaggerate the weight shift like you're taking a fastball over the left field wall. Slow down your back swing a bit but try to still come through the ball at normal speed and make sure your club face stays square through impact.

Give these tips and try and you'll be salvaging those pars and birdies instead of hitting your shots fat and losing control of the hole.

How to Stop Slicing The Ball

We've all been there – the dreaded slice shot that starts off the tee going straight before violently slicing onto the next fairway or into someone's backyard....

You replay the swing in your head over and over and feel like you've done everything the same on tee but for some reason the ball slices sharply wreaking havoc on your score for the hole.

Let's examine this issue a bit deeper by diving into a few quick tips to help you hit straighter shots both off the tee and on your mid-game (for simplicity we'll be assuming you're a right handed golfer, but if that's not the case, just reverse the directions to the opposite side of the ball).



First let's define what a slice shot is:

When you slice the ball, the flight path of the ball curves in the shape of a banana starting out to the left of the target before dramatically moving back to the right of the target. The slice shot is one of the most common miss-hits for amateur golfers and it usually leads to penalty strokes and lost balls.

Now let's break down basic slice avoidance in three parts:

Avoid Adjusting Your Stance: Golfers who slice the ball will often try to adjust their stance and move their body left to change their aim. The idea being if you're going to slice the ball you might as well aim well to the left so that the ball will move back towards the intended target.

The problem with this “solution” is two-fold. First, if you do manage to make solid contact and the ball doesn’t slice you’ll be well left of your target, and second, by simply “playing around your slice” you’ll never give yourself the opportunity to truly fix the problem. This is not even mentioning the fact that a slice takes quite a bit of distance off the shot, so you’re selling yourself short every time you play into it.

Instead, try keeping your shoulders and body aimed at your target. A simple way to check your aim and alignment is to hold the golf club horizontally across your thighs with the butt end of the handle pointing at your target, then move the club up across your shoulders to see if they too are aimed in the same direction. You can even ask your playing partner to spot check you to see if you’re aimed at your target or if you’re too far left or right.

Starting with these simple alignment techniques will make sure you’re squaring up to the ball correctly and will help set the foundation for a proper swing. Even something as simple as having your body misaligned can cause a slice, so make sure you’re pointing your shoulders and hips in the direction you want the ball to travel.

Fix Your Grip: Proper grip pressure is one of the most important keys to a good swing. A weaker grip will lead to a more open clubface at impact and can therefore easily amplify a slice. This doesn’t mean that you need to squeeze the life out of the club, because doing so will result in the opposite of a slice...known as a hook.

For righties, turning your grip slightly to the right will lead to a “stronger grip”, which will prevent you from gripping the club more tightly. The key to a good grip is to avoid all tension in your wrists while eliminating the “weak grip” so that you’re not leaving the club face open at impact.

Select the Right Shaft: If you're already playing with a regular (or even a higher flex) driver shaft you may want to stop by a local golf shop and experiment with hitting something stiffer. More flexible shafts allow the club to bend (flex) more during your swing which can lead to that push slice we’re trying to avoid.

Be Mindful of Impact: The point of impact is the most important thing to consider when correcting a slice. For a golf ball to slice from left to right it must be spinning in a clockwise direction.

To understand better how this works try to visualize the process of striking a tennis ball with a racket. In this example, an open racquet that makes contact with the ball in a right to left motion will cause clockwise spin on the ball, making it curve from left to right. That's the exact same thing that is happening with a golf slice.

One easy way to tell if this is the case with your swing is to simply look at your divot (if you left one). On the course (not so much on the tee box), the divot you create with your club will be pointing left on a slice shot, indicating that you are coming across the ball on impact. Conversely, the divot left after a correct swing should point directly at the target, thus indicating that you have made clean contact directly through the ball rather than coming across it.

If you're noticing a theme with these tips you're right. The key to correcting your slice is to make sure your fundamentals (aim, grip, impact, etc.) are executed correctly. So, if you're trying to stop slicing the ball forget the gimmicks and don't try to pile on a million little adjustments. Instead focus on your going back to your swing fundamentals and you'll start to see a positive impact on your ball flight and direction.

How to Tune Up Your Game During the Off-Season

When the cold weather approaches many golfers are forced to pack away the clubs and go into hibernation for a few months until spring rolls back around. But, for those diehards who want to get a little more out of their game we advise not storing your clubs away just yet. That said, here are some helpful tips for tuning up your golf game during the off-season while you wait (not so patiently) for spring to arrive.

- **Short Putts:** Hand-eye coordination and developing a proper rhythm are two key aspects to successful putting. Practicing putting at home (or in your office) provides a great opportunity to compartmentalize your putting stroke and focus on improvement in these areas. If you don't want to spring for a [putting mat](#) (they're pretty cheap), you can just as easily pick up a rug remnant for a similar feel.

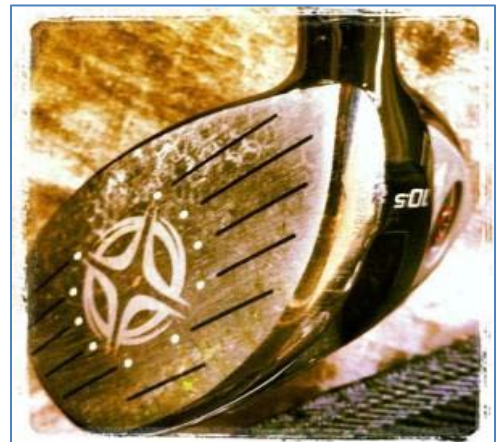
Start by creating a target on your makeshift putting surface (the old coffee mug will work just fine) and focus on nailing short 3-5 foot

putts. Short putts will help you concentrate on the mechanics of your stroke (your “pendulum swing”) and enhance your hand-eye coordination and rhythm. If the weather is decent, try the same drill on a real practice green but remember to keep it short. The whole point is to focus on just a few key parts of your stroke and get the fundamentals down before adding in other dynamics such as slope and angle.

- **Chipping Practice:** Now that you have the practice mat, pick up some wiffle golf balls and head into the basement. A thicker style golf mat is preferable for this drill to replicate rough grass. Use a product like the [BirdieBall](#) system or simply set up a small garbage can about 15 feet as a target. Work on chipping the wiffle balls into the garbage can. The idea of this drill is similar to the putting drill above, it's all about developing a rhythm and better hand-eye coordination. Repeat this drill and move the can closer or further as you wish. Again, the point of this practice is to focus on the basic mechanics of your swing. Obviously a waffle-type ball won't respond the same way a regular golf ball will but you can still use the time to practice keeping your head down, squaring the clubface, and developing an even and consistent rhythm. For a different look try removing the garbage can and setting up the putting green mat used for short putts with a target in the middle. As with putting, if the weather permits, try this on a real chipping green with real golf balls.

How to Gain Consistency With Your Driver

Even the best golfers experience difficult streaks with their driver from time to time. We can all relate to occasionally losing confidence in our driver. Some have even taken the drastic step of putting the driver away entirely, and resigning their game to long irons simply because they don't 'trust



it'. But we must not give up so easily. The driver is an essential club for scoring, as it allows you to shorten your second shot, thus presenting you with better scoring opportunities.

The key thing to remember is relaxation – don't be tense or angry when swinging this club. The more relaxed your muscles are, the more control you will maintain and therefore, the longer and straighter your shots will be. Get the word "TEMPO" tattooed on your forearm if that's what it takes to remind yourself that you do not have to be tense and swing fast to get what you want out of the "big stick" (don't really get the tattoo, but if you do, make sure you share a picture).

Now that you have the correct mindset for your swing, try this: First, set up your body (this is known as 'The Address') shifting some of your weight to the back leg – a little lean to the backside doesn't hurt if it will help you shift the weight.

Keeping your eyes and the buttons on golf shirt facing down on the ball, slowly bring the club back parallel to the ground before raising it to the set position. There should be very little weight shift at this point.

At the set position (when the hands are behind your head) make sure to keep your lower body relaxed. Do not force ALL of your weight to the back foot or you will create too much movement when you begin to swing through the ball.

Remember to stay relaxed when coming through the ball – let that big club head do the work. Keep your eyes and shirt buttons pointed down at the ball until impact, eventually turning them toward your target as you shift your body through the ball.

As you finish the swing you should be up on your back leg's tip-toe while your front foot stays "nailed" to the floor. If done properly throughout the swing the majority of your weight will have shifted from the outside arch of your back foot to the ball of your front foot.

With these tips in mind head to the driving range and try to hit your driver in a simple, relaxed manner. Remember, A 220 yard drive down the middle is a lot better than a 310 yard drive into someone's kitchen.

Once again...*tempo* is key. Stay relaxed, swing smooth, and the ball should go straight.

How to Read the Green Like a Pro



It always starts out so wonderfully. You stick a green in regulation and you feel as though you're on top of the world as you walk up to the green. Then, three excruciating putts later, you're knocked off your short lived throne and sulk up to the next tee box trying to regain your crushed mental focus.

“What...no break?!? Where is my touch? What was I thinking?” You replay the hole over and over in your mind as you mentally flog yourself for ruining such a great opportunity.

We’ve all been there. Learning to read the green properly is one of the biggest challenges faced by golfers of all skill levels. So the question becomes, how do you correct this and become a green reading sharpshooter?

Reading the green properly can be the difference between 7-10 strokes per round. Yes...7-10! With that in mind let’s start with a new way of thinking about reading putts.

Try this visualization: if you were to fill the entire cup with water until it was overflowing like mad, which direction would the water fall off the green? Would it fall fast right? Would it sit tight and create a puddle? Visualizing the flow of water will help you better determine where the green slopes and undulates.

Once you've grasped that concept move on to trying these three simple steps the next time you're about to line up that next important putt for birdie, par, or a bogey save.

Observe your putt from both sides

Let’s say you have a 7-footer for birdie on the first hole of the day. You want to get the round off to a great start and at worst you wouldn’t mind the par before moving on to the second tee. We all get nervous of the three putt bogey, so here’s what you should do first to prevent that.



With this putt, stand behind your ball and take note of your first impression of how you think the “water will flow out of the cup.” Move back the same distance you are from the hole (you're now standing 14 feet from the cup with the ball halfway between you and the cup.) Squat down and look for the same slope. Now walk around the hole to about 7 feet from the opposite angle and squat down to confirm the slope is correct. Using multiple perspectives like this will help you gain a better understanding of the break. It is however always important to keep in mind the pace of play. A good idea is to start reading your putt while your playing partners are setting up for theirs (just be mindful of not getting in their way or creating a distraction).

Also remember that you can read a slope perfectly, but if you strike the ball too hard or too soft, you'll still miss the putt every time. This is why you hear so many golfers saying “you read the break correctly, but you just powered through it.” Or, “that was the right line but you just didn't give it enough speed”. With that said, here is a simple trick to work on your speed:

When practicing putting (something we can all afford to do more often) spread your feet to the width of the stroke. For a short putt, there may be 5 inches between your feet and for a long putt, maybe its 18 inches. What this does create a measuring stick from toe to toe on which to gauge your stroke. Practice this drill it and see if it helps you better match your ball speed to stroke ratio.

Pick your spot

Staring down a 25 foot birdie putt can be intimidating. Seeing the hole so far away often causes us to take ourselves right out of the game. We think, “there's no way I'm making this one” and with that mindset we never will. A better way of lining up these longer puts is to simply pick a spot where you want the ball to go (after taking into account slope and speed). For example,

you may say to yourself, "I just want to roll it over that small green spot 5ft ahead of my ball with enough speed to get to the hole. Aiming for a closer point in this way can often help you put a better, more accurate roll on the ball than if you were aiming for a cup far off in the distance.

Ultimately putting doesn't have to be as difficult as we tend to make it. The key is consistent mental focus and effective physical practice. Next time you have the opportunity, take 3-5 balls out of your bag, throw them on an undulating practice green, and have at it for 30-60 minutes. Do this often enough and you'll rapidly improve your ability to read the green, leading to the confidence you need on the course. Shaving off the 7-10 strokes we mentioned above can be the difference between carding your usual 85 or that 78 you've been chasing after!

How to Eliminate 3 Putts

Have you ever hit a green in regulation and 3-putted for bogey? Of course you have, we all do it! Here are some tips to lower your putt count and turn those bogeys into a par or better.

First thing you need to do is line up your putt from both sides of the cup and give yourself a read from alternate angles (as mentioned in the previous chapter). If you are 8 feet out, step back from the ball about 8 feet to double your field of vision before bending down to inspect the line. Walk around to the other side of the cup and get a read from about 8 feet. Don't let anyone give you grief about wasting time; golf is about patience and focus – they can wait. Once you gauge the general direction of the slope



from the ball to the cup, line up and take a few practice “swings”.

Don't overly concern yourself with the idea of 1-putting the hole. If you end up sinking the putt from that range you're lucky (even PGA TOUR pros, playing at the game's highest level, only make 8ft putts an average of 49% of the time), but from 8 feet or more, it's rare to drill it, so rehearse two-putting on the practice greens with this simple drill.

Take some tees from your bag and create a 1-2 foot parameter around a hole. With about 5-10 golf balls from 8-10 feet out, just try to put the ball within the 1-2 foot ring (if you're practicing on a home green or mat you can also try drawing a chalk circle around the cup). After you get ALL the balls within the ring, move back 3-5 ft and try it again. Doing this for about 30 minutes 2 times a week will teach you how to smoothly stroke the ball when putting, and stop blasting the ball 8 feet past the hole, or leaving it far too short for an easy drop in.

Another drill you can add to this routine includes placing a tee in the ground about 6 inches behind the ball (for short putts). Simply bring the putter back and try taping the tee with the back side of the putter. This will smooth out your stroke and keep you from overshooting the hole.

Want to add a bit of fun to your practice session? Try playing a game on the practice green. Take 10 balls and try to two putt all of them from 8-10 feet out. Do the same from 13-15 feet and one more time from 20+ feet out. When you're done, finish your practice with 10 5-footers. Keep a record of how many you made and try to keep topping your own “personal” best

Remember, one-putting from 8ft or more out doesn't happen too often — so don't rely on it. Instead, practice getting yourself close enough with the first put for an easy drop-in on the second. You'll love the way your scorecard looks if you follow this method.

How to Escape the Sand

So you just crushed your brand new [SLDR driver](#) 287 yards down the fairway and you're flexing those muscles a bit as you walk back to your cart. You then proceed to knock your 2nd shot short into deep bunker just off the front right side of the green. Immediately you begin thinking about your perfect drive wasted, your birdie potentially becoming a bogey...and then suddenly, your focus dissolves.



Any golfer will agree that the bunker shot one of the most intimidating and frustrating shots in the game – but it doesn't have to be.

Go to the driving range, reserve an entire bucket of balls for the practice trap, get to work on these simple tips:

1. When in a bunker just off the green, or within a close distance to the green, make sure you use your wedges (sand or lob) – preferably one with a high bounce. A lower bounce wedge tends to dig the sand too much, forcing you to not lift the ball properly.
2. Make sure you're standing closer to the ball than normal and keep the ball in the middle of your stance with a good amount of your weight on your front foot. Right handed golfers should aim to the left of the target
3. Open your clubface so the face is pointed straight up.
4. A bunker shot swing arc should reflect a "V" and not a typical letter "U" from a normal golf shot. The idea is to swing down on the ball with less weight shift during your backswing than compared to a normal swing.
5. Make sure to hit the sand 2-3 inches behind the ball and accelerate through the sand, allowing the club will glide under the grains and

make sure your swing is complete with a high follow through. For close greenside bunker shots try to concentrate on “throwing the sand on the green” rather than trying to pop the ball out. Throwing the sand onto the green will naturally help carry the ball in the direction in which the sand is thrown.

Now get up to the green, sink that birdie putt, and continue on with your round!

How to Hit from the Thick Rough

Congratulations, your ball is not in the woods or the water...it is however in some thick rough just off the fairway. What do you do now?

First things first, assess how deep and buried your ball is. In the rough choosing the right club and determining the type of shot you will play is largely dictated by your lie. Rough grass creates resistance when the club swings through the thick vegetation, thus causing the club to slow down before impact.



The heavier the rough, the more dramatically the club head slows, causing the shot to lose distance. Therefore, determining how much grass is going to interfere with the club head before impact is essential to hitting rough shots well.

Once you determine your lie, set up normally for your shot. Strike the ball with a normal swing and don't try to over muscle it because of the thick grass. Trying to “muscle up” in the rough is where plenty of golfers lose

focus and begin to drift from their normal easy swing. Remember instead to let the club do the work.

In other words, don't crank up the juice – just club up. If you are 175 yards from your target and would normally use a 5 iron, take out a 4 or maybe a 3 (depending on the thickness of the grass). The longer club will provide you with all the power you need to maintain your distance through the thick terrain.

It is also important to try and strike the ball cleanly without making contact too far behind the ball. Doing so will allow for even more interference with the rough. Instead try to come through the ball, making contact with the ground only after impacting the ball itself (the same concept as is the goal in with a fairway shot, your divot should begin after the spot where the ball was lying). Again...don't "muscle it!" Simply try to focus on proper club selection and making solid contact. The club and your normal swing will do the rest.

It's also worth mentioning here that most professionals agree that tightening up your grip a bit will also help you keep the clubface properly square at impact. The reason for this being that heavy grass will tend to grab the club and force the clubface open, so remember to squeeze the grip a bit more than normal in the heavy rough.

How to Hit Fades and Draws

Although most amateur golfers spend most of their time just focusing on hitting the ball straight, certain other variations of golf shots can give you an advantage...if you can pull it off.

A proper "draw" shot will provide a flight path of right-to-left for a righty golfer and left-to-right for a lefty. When the ball is struck, (for a righty) the

ball will begin slightly to the right of the target before “drawing” or “curving” back to the left towards the target. Do not confuse this with “hooking” the ball, as that term refers to a more violent pull, which, in our case, usually ends up out-of-bounds.

A draw is an advantageous shot to play to increase the roll and distance on the ball because of the flight path and speed.

Also, on a hole that plays as a dogleg left (for a righty), you can use this type of

shot to play the ball around the turn or maybe around a set of trees.



Remember [Bubba Watson’s miraculous shot from the woods](#) in the playoff at the 2012 Masters? That shot, although more of a purposeful hook than a draw, gives us an idea of what shot shaping at its highest level can accomplish.

Here’s how it done:

Aim your stance towards where you want the ball to begin and keep the club head facing where you want the ball to end up (the target). Don’t over exaggerate your stance because if you don’t draw it properly the ball might end up 3 fairways in the wrong direction. After taking your stance with your body and club head, back off the ball a bit. Keep your right shoulder (for a righty) high and rotate around the target, rolling your wrists over as you come through and strike the ball with a more closed clubface. Don’t kid yourself, the shot is very difficult, but give it a try on the range and see if you can pull it off.

As for the fade, it works in the complete opposite direction. Do not confuse this with a slice because like a “hook”, the ball will probably end up OB or in

some other unfavorable spot. A fade shot is played intentionally to create a “cut” on the ball for the same reasons as a draw, but in the opposite direction.

Again, aim your stance towards where you want the ball to begin and keep the club head facing where you want the ball to end up (the target). In this case your body will be more open and not closed like the draw stance. Your right shoulder (for a righty) should work down and under which will allow you to hold the clubface slightly open, allowing the ball to curve from left to right.

Our best advice is this...if you're just starting out work on mastering hitting the ball straight before attempting any shot shaping. But, when you're ready to give them a try, and if you can pull these shots off, you may give yourself a bit of an edge when taking your friends money this weekend.

How to Spin a Golf Ball Like a Pro

We all want to play like a pro out there and learning how to properly spin a golf ball is a good place to start. First let us disclaim that it is not easy to put backspin on the ball, but getting a golf ball to spin and stop where it lands on the green can give you a competitive advantage, shorten your putts, and shave a ton of strokes off of your game.

Spinning becomes useful when you're playing on firm, dry greens or when the pin is placed directly behind a hazard or bunker. The following list explains the basics of how to get the ball to spin upon landing on the surface, so read up and then go hit a bucket of balls on the range to test it out.



1. Try shorting your stance a bit, bringing your feet in just a little less than shoulder width apart.
2. Stand a bit closer to the ball and move it just a little further back in your stance.
3. It's best to first try this with a high degree wedge, like a 58 or 60 degree. The higher loft will help you to create more significant backspin, thus helping to indicate if you're headed in the right direction.
4. Swing down on the ball at a steeper angle, forcing the club to hit the bottom of the ball, just before making contact with the ground and creating a divot. A good visualization of how this works is by thinking about how you put backspin on the cue ball in billiards. In that case, when hitting the cue ball, you would strike the pool cue on a steep downward angle, with the downward force creating a backspin.
5. Lastly, remember to follow through your swing as if it was a normal shot.

Again, spin can give you an edge. After all, this game is all about putting a small ball into a hole in the fewest strokes possible, so why not get it as close to the hole as possible. Sometimes golfers will fear a green bunker that sits in front of the pin and play it safe by putting the ball 20-35 feet past the pin, leaving a long putt which may very well result in 3 more strokes. A good backspin shot will allow you to play the stroke safe from the lurking bunker by landing the ball past the hole and bringing it back towards your target. Now your 25 footer just became 7-10 feet, which is a definite two putt. Plus, as an added bonus, it looks pretty darn cool.

Check out [this great video clip](#) for more tips, as well as some excellent illustrations of how to put more spin on the ball, then get out on the range and start practicing. Happy spinning!

How to Avoid Blow-Up Holes

We've all been there before, you're playing great and on pace for a decent round and then, the dreaded "blow up hole." Whether we find the woods or a water hazard, a fairway bunker or even chunk shot from the rough...these are the holes that can throw all of your focus out the window. To avoid these demoralizing, card-busters, we suggest trying these few tips:

341	466	200	386	501	395	157
4	5	3	4	5	4	3
16	8	6	2	4	12	18
4	5	②	⑤	9		

- Keep the psychology of your game as simple as possible. Don't over analyze your swing, the wind, or anything else. When you struggle to maintain focus and over-think these aspects of your game, you subconsciously begin to lose that easy "driving-range" swing, suddenly, and inexplicably changing your mechanics. Obsessing about what you're doing wrong will cause a natural tendency to complicate your swing by adding unneeded "fixes" that take you away from your natural swing. Instead, when you feel like you're losing control of your game simply take a deep breath, relax, and swing the club freely.
- Learn to play conservative golf. If you're thinking about trying to crush your driver an extra 40-50 yards to make that par 5 more "reachable" you're already tending towards something other than a natural swing. This may cause the ball to fly off course, perhaps in the trees or somewhere else you don't want to be. Instead, try to focus on just keeping your drive in the fairway to set yourself up for a playable second and third shot. Smart golfers manage the course by playing good, intelligent shots like this. Taking too many unneeded risks will certainly reflect badly on your scorecard.

- Try to stay in the game mentally during your conservative play. If you hit a ball off the fairway behind a few trees, you may be tempted to try for that highlight reel shot over the tree to get it close, but remember, smart golfers consider the risk vs. reward of every shot. A very smart golfer once said, "if you can't make the shot 9 times out of 10 don't go for it!" One tree branch and the entire hole could be ruined. The safe play is often to get the ball out to the fairway and continue on with the hole. A bogey is not the end of the world but going four over on hole because you tried to play the hero shot will certainly make you lose a little sleep that night.

Most importantly, make sure your head is in the game at all times and try not to over think anything. Just have fun and maintain slow, relaxed tempo with conservative shots. Try this next time you're out on the course and you'll notice some strokes disappearing.

How to Avoid Injuries

When we talk about sports injuries many of us immediately think of higher contact activities such as football, boxing, or baseball. Golf injuries on the other hand are not as widely discussed, yet believe it or not, a golf swing can place a great deal of strain on the body in a short period of time.

Playing golf involves the process of executing a repetitive motion (your swing) between 60-100 times per round, not including any warm up on the practice range. When you tie that in with walking upwards of four miles in a round (6000 yards = 3.4 miles) plus the occasional higher-impact moments (chunking on hard turf), you can create a more significant strain on your body than you may have expected. If taken too lightly injuries resulting from these activities can take you out of the game for a while.

With that said, the most common injuries a golfer might incur include back, knee, elbow, and wrist injuries. Head injuries and 'turf toe' are rare in this sport, unless of course someone doesn't scream fore and you're the target, or you plan on running all 18 holes!

Back Injuries

Back injuries are by far the most prevalent golf injury, sidelining countless golfers every year. Each swing of the golf club creates a high level of torque, a force which places quite a bit of pressure on the back from top to bottom of the spine. In



the backswing, although you may never feel it, a great deal of pressure is also placed on the lower back, which can cause lower-back strains. If your body is not properly prepared for this motion, the strain placed on your lower back could result in a sidelining injury. Luckily however, the chance of occurrence of this type of injury can be largely reduced with proper training and exercise.

Try using these simple exercises that increase range of motion in the lower-back region and increase your flexibility by staying stretched and loose (remember to always consult your doctor before starting any exercise routine).

- **The Row Machine:** Chances are your local gym has a row machine, if not you can order a set of rubber stretch bands on [Amazon for under \\$20](#) and use them on fence, pole, or any other stable object. Whether sitting or standing, hold the cable or stretch bands firmly and slowly pull them into your body and back out again. Do this a few times a week and even briefly before your round to loosen up your back muscles (you can easily throw a stretch band in your bag to help you limber up before taking a swing).
- **Pull Downs:** Similar to rows, use the bands above your head either on a pull down machine or with the stretch bands we mentioned before. Simply pull the cables or bands down slowly. Like rowing, this exercise will stretch and strengthen back

muscles, thus helping to reduce the chances of a potential back injury.

- **Yoga and Pilates:** These low impact types of exercises are the most important in our opinion, and perhaps the most overlooked. Yoga and pilates focus on your core abdomen area which is the center of balance and strength for your mid-section and the lower back area. Doing these exercises regularly will dramatically help your flexibility and lower body control. Heck, it may even improve your distance by providing a bit more strength in those always important turning muscles.

Knee Injuries

The golf swing can be brutal for your knees. The amount of pressure caused by the shift of weight from one knee to the other during impact places a significant amount of strain on each knee. This pressure can cause meniscus or cartilage injuries that can take a while to heal (we've seen Tiger Woods struggle with this injury throughout his career). Osteoarthritis, which is caused by wear and tear on the knee joints, is a common golf injury that many pro golfers are burdened with. Therefore, it's extremely important not to overlook joint stretching during warm-ups and not just focus on the back.

[This video](#) demonstrates a simple reverse lunge to knee drive exercise, which will help build strength and flexibility in this key area.

Elbow and Wrist Injuries

Similarly to the knees, the golf swing places a large amount of shifting weight and pressure on upper body pivot points such as the elbows and wrists. This can lead to elbow injuries such epicondylitis (which is known as golfer's elbow). Epicondylitis, or other similar injuries, can occur when a golfer strikes the turf before the ball and continues to jar their wrists and elbows repeatedly.

Here are a few helpful exercises that will help build strength in these key areas:

- **Ball Squeeze:** Try regularly squeezing a stress or tennis ball for 3-5 minutes as part of your normal workout activity. This will strengthen the small muscles in your wrists and elbows and could cut down the odds of wrist and elbow injuries.
- **Wrist curls:** If you don't already have access to one, [purchase a lightweight dumbbell or barbell](#), and then simply curl the weight into your forearm in a repetitive manner. 3 sets of 10 reps on each wrist will go a long way towards strengthening your forearms and preventing the chunk shot 'turf wrist' disaster – another injury we saw Tiger Woods struggle with recently during the US Open at Merion in 2013.

When it comes to avoiding golf injuries an ounce of prevention outweighs a ton of recovery. Following these simple suggestions will help you build strength and flexibility in the muscles most commonly used in the game of golf.

Conclusion

We hope this simple eBook has provided you with new insight to improve the way you play the game. Remember to get out there and practice the techniques listed here and we're sure that soon you'll see your handicap melt away.

Want more great instructional content? Be sure to check back with Golfcity.com regularly where we'll be bringing you weekly updates from the top golf writers, teaching pros, and instructors from around the world.