

IMPROVE EVERY PART OF YOUR GAME

PART ONE

# TEE

■ Driver ■ Hybrids ■ Par 3s ■ Set-up  
■ Swing tips ■ Drills ■ Strategy ■ Fixes

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET EACH HOLE OFF TO THE PERFECT START**



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# Welcome...

To the first of three free instructional supplements, aimed at helping you perform better with every club in the bag

**O**ver the next three issues we will cover everything from booming drives to pressure-packed short putts, but we start logically enough with the tee shot – described by legend Ben Hogan as the most important shot in golf. “You can be the greatest iron player in the world, but if you’re in the boondocks it won’t do you any good,” he reasoned.

Hogan also once said he had never seen or been part of a good round that began with an errant tee shot, and it’s highly likely this rings true with you.

A solid opening strike has the ability to set the tone, rhythm

and your confidence for the day, and these tips from TG Top 50 coaches Steve Astle and Chris Ryan are tailored to help you do just that.

Of course the tee game is about more than driver, and both hybrids and irons are represented over the next 30 or so pages. But whatever the club, this guide is packed with a potent blend of tips, drills, swing thoughts and strategies to help you make your best start to the hole, whether it be a 500-yard par 5 or a 120-yard par 3.

May it bring you fewer lost balls and the lower scores we all hope for. Good luck!

## MEET THE COACHES

### TG TOP 50

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### The venue

This TEE guide was photographed at the immaculate La Reserva layout in Sotogrande, Andalucia. La Reserva joins Valderrama, Real Golf de Sotogrande, Almenara and La Canada in making up Sotogrande's prestigious quintet of golf courses. For more information visit [sotogrande.com](http://sotogrande.com) or call 0034 856 560 922.



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# Three steps to better aim

Whether you are shooting towards a fairway or a green, good alignment is essential to success. Mower stripes can help you, but beware of them as they don't always run towards your target. Instead, use alignment as the basis for this three-step pre-shot routine.

## STEP 1: SEE THE TASK

Your first step is to picture the shot you want to hit – from impact right down to where the ball lands and how it bounces. When your task is clear in your mind, your brain and body will get to work on finding ways to achieve it.

## BUILD THE LINE

Once you've established your landing point stand directly behind your ball-target line and hold the club in front of you, at 45°. Look through the shaft to see landmarks on your line, and build a sharper picture of your aim.



**STEP 2: INTRODUCE THE CLUB**

With those intermediate reference points fresh in your mind, position the club so the face aims down that path. Take a moment to get the club's aim right, because its position needs to form the basis for the rest of your address position.



**STEP 3: SET UP AROUND THE CLUB**

Use the face's aim as a reference for your feet, hips and shoulders. Remember, your body needs to aim parallel to the face, and therefore slightly left of your target (right-handers). Viewing it like a 'railway line' is a good image.





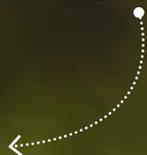
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# Select the tee height

From time to time we will see tour pros simply throw the ball down on to the turf and hit it off the deck. It might look impressive, but unless you are at that level I would not recommend it. Whatever club you are hitting, teeing the ball up gives you an advantage you'd be daft to give up. Just make sure you're teeing it at the appropriate height for the club. Follow these guidelines.

## DRIVER: HALF THE BALL SHOWING

Tee the ball so half of it is visible above the crown of the club.



## SWEEPER SYSTEM

To gain distance with the driver, you need a high launch and flight. The driver's minimal loft means you have to generate it through the club's attack angle. Teeing the ball high lets you sweep upward through impact and a strike higher in the face also helps; impact above the club's centre of gravity creates 'vertical gear effect', which adds launch and reduces spin.

**HYBRID: HALF THE BALL SHOWING**

Tee the ball so half of it is visible above the crown of the club.

**HIT FORWARD**

Play the ball just inside your lead instep so impact is at the bottom of the arc for a level-to-up attack that suits a higher tee.

**SAME AS THE DRIVER**

The versatile hybrid can deliver a good trajectory with a downward strike. But with the ball teed up, the sweeping motion used for the driver is better. So obey the same rule, with the crown cutting through the middle of the ball.

**IRONS: GIVE YOURSELF A 'GOOD LIE'**

Tee the ball down, leaving just the flare of the peg visible.

**SQUEEZE POINT**

Iron face can only apply maximum power to the ball with a downward attack angle. Teeing the ball low encourages this.

**BALL, THEN TURF**

The swing's low point falls under your lead armpit, so play the ball back of this position to promote a downward attack angle. In the centre, or under your shirt buttons, is a good guide and leads to the ideal ball-turf strike.





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# Make your best start

The driver is all about power and speed. However, neither are helpful when it comes to starting the swing, a move that needs smoothness and rhythm if you are to make a co-ordinated, controlled swing. Here are three ways to bring that back.

## **SMOOTH TEMPO**

This control-oriented goal creates a smooth tempo to your first move back and demands you start with good width.



## **ROLLBACK DRILL**

In practice, place a ball behind the clubhead and stick a tee a yard behind the ball on your ball-target line. In your takeaway, focus on rolling the ball back to the tee.

### TENSION BUSTER

When we want power we instinctively grip the club more tightly. But that strangling makes it hard to move the club away in a measured way.

### FREE THE WRISTS

To release tightness, give the club a good waggle; cock and hinge the wrists twice and you soften them up, promoting a smooth start.



### HEAD START

Take your regular grip and stance. But lift the clubhead up and move it up the line towards the target, a couple of feet forward of the ball.



### PULL BACK

Now pull the clubhead back over the ball and make a usual backswing. The clubhead in motion as it passes the ball lets you feel how passive the hands are at the start.

### PASSIVE HANDS

Feel how rotation of the core, rather than the hands, plays a more dominant role at the swing's start.



### NATURAL WIDTH

The moving clubhead doesn't need any hand snatching to set it in motion. It naturally creates welcome width.



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# Tee up to suit your game

There's a golden rule for any long-game shot; if you start the ball in trouble, it can easily stay there. In other words, don't set out to draw it off the lake. This has clear implications for the tee, the one time in golf where you get some

choice of where to play from. You can use the width of the tee to suit your regular shot shape, and give yourself your best chance of finding the fairway... or the green. Here's how (left-handers, please reverse the instructions).

## IF YOU DRAW... USE THE LEFT SIDE OF THE TEE

The left side gives drawers a nice angle to hit up the right of the fairway. If the ball draws, you're down the middle; if it doesn't, you're on the right of the fairway or the right semi. You're safe.



## IF YOU FADE... USE THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE TEE

Hitting from the right allows faders to aim safely up the left of the fairway. If the ball curves you're A1; if it doesn't, you're still in play. Using the tee like this gives you a wider fairway to hit.



#### **PIN LOCATION**

If the pin is on the left of the green, favour the right of the fairway, and vice versa, for the most helpful line in.

#### **WIND DIRECTION**

Tree tops and other flags inform of wind strength and direction.

Note this when picking your start line.

#### **FAIRWAY CONTOURS**

If a fairway has a bumpier side, all things being equal, favour the smoother part to set up a level stance for the approach.

#### **BLIND AREAS**

Find out if there is wide fairway or water beyond a blind area. It helps you form a clear plan you will execute with conviction.

## **Four driver checks**

Whichever side of the tee you choose to use, if you're hitting driver there are four aspects you should take into account to help you plan and visualise the shot.



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### 1 DRAW A LINE

There's nothing to stop you drawing a line on your glove as a guide to grip placement. Draw the mark from under the heel of the hand to the index finger knuckle, and place the handle under this as you grip the club.



### WRIST MOBILITY CHECK

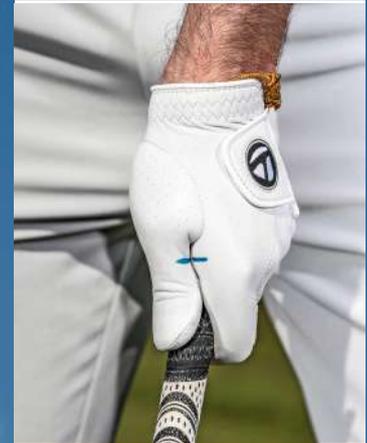
This placement routes the club through the correct part of the palm and fingers for a neutral alignment that allows you to cock and hinge the wrists correctly to help with accuracy and power.

# 3 ways to mark your glove

There are no rules to stop you marking up your glove in order to help your game. Here are two ways to help you get your grip in the correct position every time.

## 2 MESSAGE YOURSELF

There's nothing to stop you writing a short note to yourself somewhere visible on your glove. 'Commit', 'Rhythm', 'Trust' and '80%' for power, are all good examples. Make sure it's relevant to your game.



## 3 CLOSE THE THUMB & FOREFINGER

A sound top-hand hold sees the thumb and fleshy pad of the index finger fused together. Leave a gap here and the handle can slip down into it during the swing, costing you control of the club. So make two marks on your glove, one on the thumb and one at the base of the index finger, and make sure the two marks meet as you grip the club. It's an easy way to avoid a damaging bad habit.



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# Make a full backswing

Loading up fully on the backswing is key if you are to reach your power potential off the tee. The way you set up at address can either encourage a full rotation, or limit your ability to turn. Follow these three rules to make sure it's the former.



## **RULE 1: TILT YOUR CHIN BACK**

Jack Nicklaus is a great example of tilting your head to face slightly behind the ball at set-up. At address, swivel your neck slightly backwards so you look at the ball more through the lead eye.



## • **SHOULDER MOBILITY**

Rotating your head is a simple way to encourage a full shoulder turn. With the head looking straight down, shoulder rotation places demands on the neck muscles to stretch. Any stiffness or resistance can shorten the turn.

## • **STRAIN-FREE TURN**

With your neck twisted slightly from the target, the shoulders can make a 90° turn without straining the neck muscles. If you feel resistance through your neck at the top, experiment with a swivel.



**RULE 2: SPLAYED FOOT**

The way you align your feet strongly influences your hips' ability to rotate. A pigeon-toed stance limits hip rotation, while splayed feet open up the joint, encouraging it. So to encourage a full backswing, turn the trail toe out.

**FREE YOUR TRAIL HIP**

Turning the trail toe out puts the hip in a position where it wants to turn. It promotes good rotation through the core, to help complete the backswing. Wider stances limit hip mobility, so keep the trail instep under your hip.



**RULE 3: HEEL RISE?**

During the backswing, your rotating upper body causes the hips to turn, which pulls the lead knee inwards. The super-flexible can make a full turn without excessive hip turn or knee motion, so their lead heel stays floored. But if that's not you...

**FULLER ROTATION**

...don't fight it. If you don't have this flexibility, copying elite players who keep the lead heel on the turf at the top often costs you rotation. Allow that heel to rise with your hip rotation and you'll find it easier to complete a turn.



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**KEY 1: THE SPINE  
LEANS FROM BALL**

At the top, the ideal driver backswing sees the spine lean slightly from the target, the lead shoulder coiling somewhere over the trail hip. This angle helps deliver a level-to-up impact blow, for an ideal launch.



# Two keys to better drives

With its long shaft, the driver swing sets up a wide action that is not always easy to contain and control. Here are two keys – one for the upper body and one for below the belt – that will help you reach the top in good shape.



**KEY 2: YOUR KNEES CHANGE FLEX**

At address, your knees are flexed the same amount. By the top, the trail knee needs to be slightly straighter and the lead knee more flexed. This helps you rotate around your set-up body angles, keeping your swing powerful and online.



**SPINE ANGLE TIP**

Turn your driver upside down and pin it to your chest. Take your set-up posture, the shaft running down vertically. Drop your trail shoulder 'til the handle hits your lead leg. That sets up the ideal set-up spine angle.



**FLEX CHANGE OPERATION: START THE MOWER**

Form fists in your golf posture. Pull the trail hand up, as if starting a mower. As you do, let the lead fist punch down. It trains rotation around the body angles.



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### 1 SET UP TO BE...

Take your gloved hand off the club and cock your thumb and index finger to form a right angle. Place the thumb against your chest, the forefinger against the trail arm.

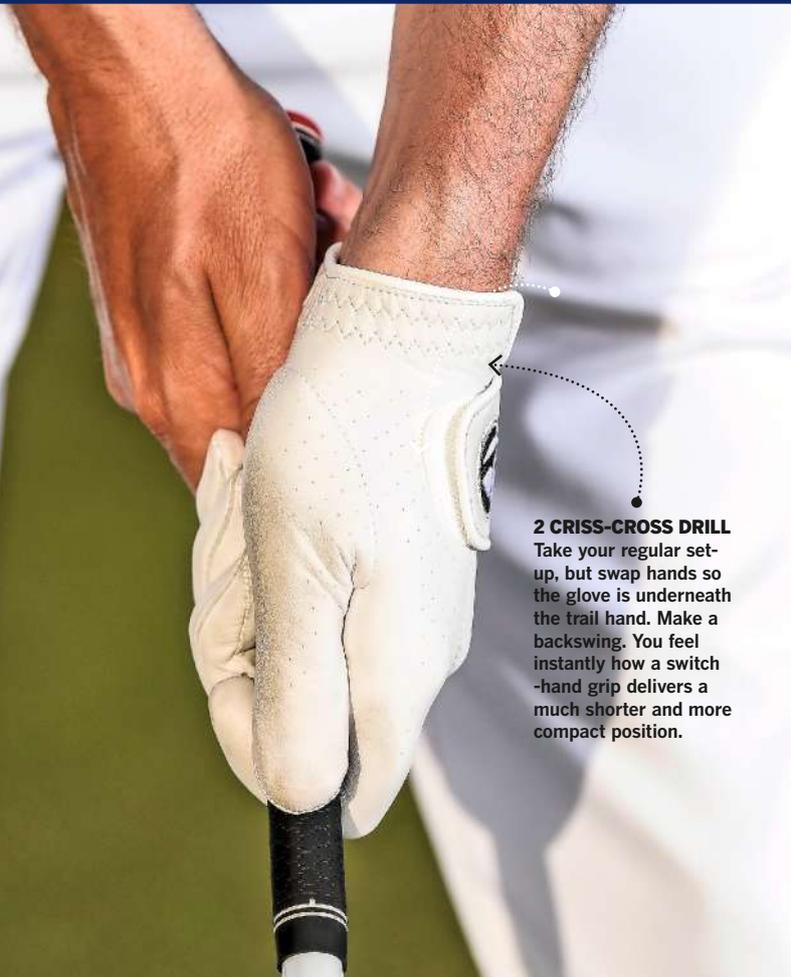
# Stay in touch

With the driver, the temptation to wind up massively behind the ball is tough to resist. But an overlong backswing can cost you control, as coordination between arms and body is lost. Try these exercises to keep your arms and body synced...



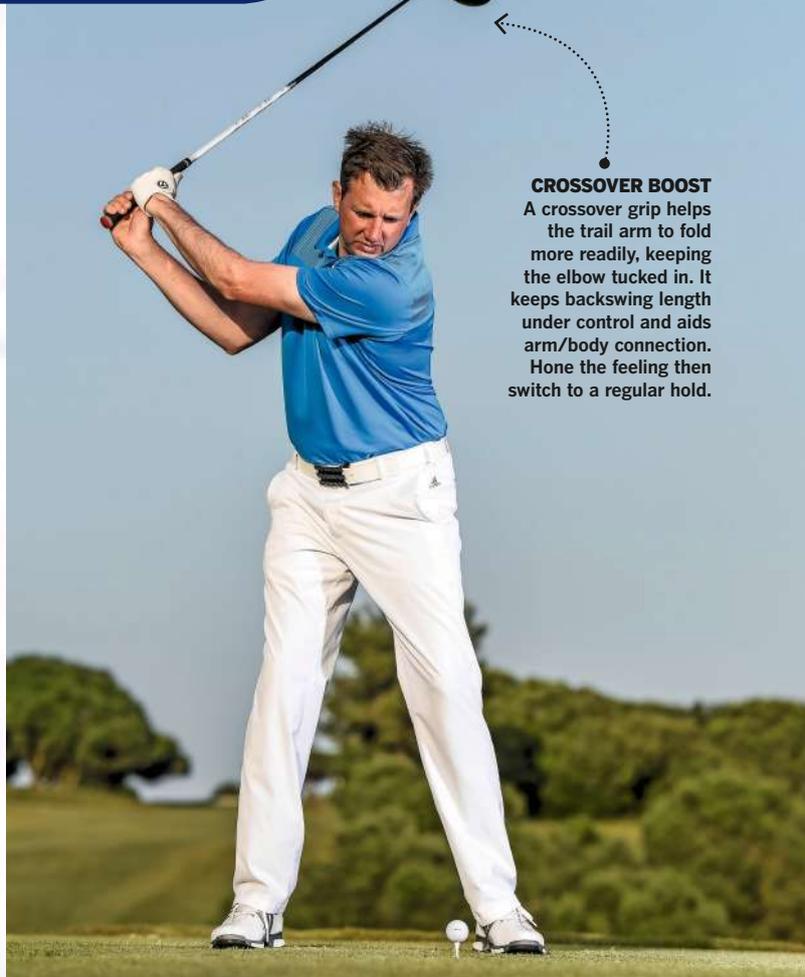
### ...BETTER CONNECTED

Make a backswing with your trail arm. If you stay compact and connected, the thumb and forefinger will remain in contact with the chest and arm. If you get long and loose, the top of your arm will come away from the body.



## 2 CRISS-CROSS DRILL

Take your regular set-up, but swap hands so the glove is underneath the trail hand. Make a backswing. You feel instantly how a switch-hand grip delivers a much shorter and more compact position.



## CROSSOVER BOOST

A crossover grip helps the trail arm to fold more readily, keeping the elbow tucked in. It keeps backswing length under control and aids arm/body connection. Hone the feeling then switch to a regular hold.



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# Move through impact

Impact is of course the moment of truth for your swing. While the club is moving too fast for conscious thought at this stage, there are two drills that can help you train the most effective positions before and after the ball.

## APPROACHING IMPACT: CANE DRILL

Find an alignment cane or old shaft and stick it firmly into the ground at the angle shown, a couple of feet back from your trail foot and just in front of your toe line.



## ON THE PULL

Try to pull it out of the ground – this mimics the sequence needed to deliver the club with accuracy and speed, the big muscles in the backside and legs straining to pull the arms through.



**DOWN AND OUT**

This drill also helps you get the feeling of extending upwards through impact. We need your hands pulling up through impact because the move flings the clubhead powerfully down and out to the ball.

**HAVE A REHEARSAL**

Spend a few minutes trying to pull the cane from the ground, getting the feeling of your lower body taking the strain with your hands pulling upward. Then take your driver and aim to repeat those feelings.



**AFTER IMPACT: LEAD ELBOW FOLDS**

Swing the club with the gloved hand only on the grip. As you swing the clubhead through, let your chest and belt buckle rotate to face the target. As your core turns, feel your lead elbow stay close to your side as the elbow folds. This encourages the clubface to rotate through square, and promotes an effective release of the club.



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# Two checks to tame your slice

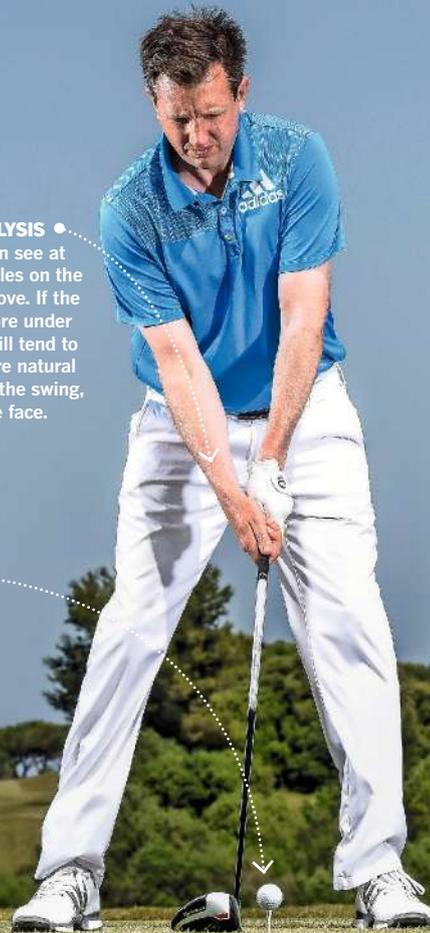
The stats suggest more than eight out of 10 golfers hit a slice. But before you label yourself as one of them, be sure this shot applies to you. A true slice starts left of your target line before cutting across to the right (right-handers); a shot that starts right and cuts is not a true slice, and these three tips won't apply. Also watch for heel strikes; these start the ball left, even if your path isn't sending the ball there. Check your set-up to beat the slice and focus on these three areas:

## GRIP ANALYSIS

Check you can see at least two knuckles on the back of your glove. If the hand turns more under the handle it will tend to rotate to a more natural position during the swing, opening the face.

## BALL POSITION

If your ball position creeps forward it tends to open your shoulders, promoting an out-to-in path. It also moves impact later in the club's arc as it is moving back inside. Keep it no further forward than lead foot instead.



## ALIGNMENT

Your swing path is influenced by the aim of your feet, hips and shoulders; if you're open, you'll swing out-to-in across the ball. Note that square alignment means your body aims parallel to your ball-target line, not at the target.

# The step drill

One of the most common reasons for a slice is the upper body dominating the start of the downswing – sending the club outside the ideal path. This simple drill will help your lower body lead, a move that helps the club drop on to an inside track.



## ANKLES TOUCHING

In your regular stance, bring your lead foot across to your trail foot, as shown. Make your regular backswing with your ankles tight together.

## STEP CHANGE

When your backswing is at three-quarter length, plant the lead foot forward – back to its original position. Doing that as the upper body completes the backswing sees weight move forward and ensures the lower body leads.





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### DRIVER: HIT UP AND OVER

Place a headcover a grip's length ahead of the ball on the ball-target line. Tee the ball up so its equator bisects the crown of the driver. Address the ball, ensuring it is opposite your lead instep.

# Tune your attack angle to the club

A tee shot can mean you are hitting anything from a 9° driver to a 52° wedge. It's vital you change your attack angle to match the loft you are using. That means a level-to-up sweep with the low-lofted driver and a downward squeeze with the shorter irons. Here's how to create both.

### MISS THE COVER

Your sole objective is for the clubhead to miss the headcover. Achieving that will create the ideal, upward attack angle. If you catch the headcover, your angle is too steep.

### IRONS: SQUEEZE DOWN

Tee the ball low so it just looks like a very good lie. Take your regular set-up with a 9-iron with the ball centre or just forward of centre in your stance. Fold your bag towel to quarter size and put it six inches or so behind the ball.

### MISS THE TOWEL

Simply try to avoid the towel as you strike the ball; it only works if your hands correctly lead the clubhead through.



### PUSH THE HANDLE

To feel the ideal 'squeezing' iron attack angle, push the handle towards the target until the shaft bows. As it requires some force to make the shaft bend, you will be forced to recruit the key core and lower body muscles.



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# Hit your driver 80 yards!

When we are swinging with the driver, we are looking for aggression and power. This tends to lead to a rapid motion in which we can lose awareness of what we are trying to achieve. Moving through your swing in slow motion can help you reconnect with the key positions and sequences. Focus on these four positions.



## HALFWAY BACK

Swing back very slowly. Feel your wrists begin to cock, your trail leg hold its position (containing lateral movement) and pressure build on the inside of your trail foot.

## AT THE TOP

When you move the club quickly, your hands and arms can tense up, shortening the backswing. A slow-motion swing aids a full coil and avoids 'sway'.



**FIRST MOVE DOWN**

Feel your downswing begin with your lead knee moving towards the target before hips, then shoulders, unwind. The upper half is passive.



**THROUGH IMPACT**

You can hit the ball, but ignore where it goes. Focus on feeling the club extend down the target line, your lead elbow staying close to your side.





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# Crack the whip to add power

At first glance the crack of a whip and the smacking of a golf ball may not seem to have much in common. In fact, the two movements are built around the same principle of pulling one end backwards to add speed to the other. Split your hands to work on your whip-crack release.

## FAST REACTION

When you pull the handle up just before impact, the clubhead reacts by releasing downwards and out. The faster you pull up the handle, the quicker the club releases.

## PULL UP FOR SPEED

Just as in cracking a whip, you build speed in the clubhead by pulling the handle upwards away from the turf as the club approaches the ball.

## SPLIT HANDS TO CRACK THE WHIP

Pull the handle up with a split-hand grip and you'll accentuate the feel of that down-and-out release.



**EXAGGERATE IT**

As you swing down to impact, experiment with pulling the lead hand up, away from the ball. The split hand grip exaggerates the firing of the clubhead downwards.

**SLOW TO FAST**

Work slowly at first but as you gain confidence with the drill begin to speed it up to regular pace. Then move the low hand to a usual position but repeat that feeling of the gloved hand pulling up.



**HANDS APART**

As a drill to help you feel how to pull the handle up, away from the ball, grip your driver with your gloved hand in its regular position and your trail hand on the metal below the bottom of the grip.





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# Improve your swing path

A neutral swing path through impact means no need to manipulate the clubface... which means long-term consistency. The most common swing path flaw is out-to-in through impact – the classic slicer's attack. Use a range basket to check if this is your problem.

## CLEAN CONTACT

To improve your path, leave the basket in the same place and set yourself a goal of making a swing that misses it. Often, a simple goal-led drill like this can be more effective than complex technical work.



## BASKET CASE

Go ahead and strike the shot. If your attack path is out-to-in, the toe of your driver will catch the basket before the ball. The stronger the impact with the basket, the more out-to-in your path is.



## OFF THE TOE

Place the empty basket upside down on the ground, opposite the toe of the driver at address. Leave just a small gap between the toe and the basket. Now take your regular address position.

# Now improve your strike using a tee

With ball speeds dropping off quickly as impact moves away from the centre of the face, a centred strike is vital for power. Two tee pegs is all it takes to learn about the quality of your strike... and to improve it.

## CREATE A GATE

Stick the two pegs in the ground to frame your driver's clubhead, one a little off the toe and the other off the heel, angled to avoid the shaft. Again, take your regular set-up and hit the ball.

## MIDDLE GROUND

Miss the pegs and you can't help but make a centred strike, creating maximum energy transfer. Groove it 'til you miss the tees five times in a row.

## STRIKE PATTERN REVEALED

Ideally you will leave the two tee pegs intact. But if you find you are consistently catching the outer tee, your strike pattern will be out of the heel; hitting the inner tee means toe strikes.





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# When to drive with a hybrid

With its easy launch, generous hitting area and reasonably strong loft, the hybrid makes an excellent alternative club selection off the tee. But when should you think of bringing it into play? Look out for these five situations.

## **1** WHEN YOU ARE FACING A SHARP DOG-LEG

Most courses have one or two par 4s that curve sharply halfway up the hole. In these cases there is a real risk that you can run through the fairway with your driver. The chances are a well-struck hybrid shot will get you within relatively easy reach of the green while taking the trouble on the far side out of play.

## **2** WHEN YOU CAN'T REACH IN TWO

If you know you can't reach the green in two – whether it's a really long par 4 or a par 5 – you have to question the wisdom of pulling out the longer-shafted and harder-to-control driver. The hybrid is a safer option that will get you a good distance up the hole while keeping you in play.

## **3** WHEN IT'S DOWNWIND

The hybrid is weighted low and back in the clubhead, a position that puts the club's CG below the ball and encourages impact loft. The higher flight it generates gains easy yards when you're hitting downwind (although is a negative with a breeze in any other direction).

## **4** WHEN IT'S UPHILL

If the fairway sits above the tee, consider the hybrid. The lower-flying driver trajectory will see the ball bite the turf earlier in its journey, costing distance. The high-flying hybrid, in contrast, will carry further onto an elevated fairway; it might even out-drive a driver.

## **5** WHEN YOU JUST NEED IT IN PLAY

Closing out a matchplay lead, steadying the ship after a bad hole or two, suddenly losing control of your driver... there are many situations in a round or match where the value of keeping one in play is enhanced. Stay awake to these moments, and don't be afraid to pick the more controllable hybrid if they arise.



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# Par 3s: Seeing isn't always believing

## FALSE FRONTS

Some greens spill invitingly towards you, but this often means the front is on a slope and will reject any shot trying to roll forward or hold the surface. False fronts make the green seem bigger than it is, so club up.

Golf course architects enjoy the odd visual trick, and nowhere better than on the tee of a par 3. Watch out for these three tricks of the eye the next time you're weighing up your play

## DEAD AREAS OVER BUNKERS

We interpret bunkers as greenside traps on par 3s, but they're often positioned short of the green, with their lips concealing dead ground. It makes you feel the green is closer than it actually is, so check!

## BLIND SPOTS

It's rare you see all the ground between a par-3 tee and green. Contours can create blind areas that foreshorten the hole. If you don't have a DMD, check for hidden dips.



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- Get out of trouble
- Shape the ball

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