How to play YOUR BEST GOLF all the time

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London
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
CHAPTER VI

THE GRIP HOLDS YOUR SWING TOGETHER

The first thing that determines how well you’re going to be able to play is the way in which you hold the club.

The coupling between you and the club has to be right for you, or you haven’t a chance of being able to put yourself into the shot.

I’ve seen some golfers become quite good despite bad grips to which they adjusted themselves by long and unnecessary practice. I’ve also seen some experts devise ingenious methods of holding the club to compensate for physical abnormalities. But far more than these exceptional cases, I’ve seen golfers who might have improved greatly absolutely destroy their chances of doing their best because they never learned how to hold the club in a physically and mechanically sound coupling of player and implement.

Innumerable times I’ve had golfers come to me complaining about some fault that is ruining their swings. In some instances, they’ll have made their own diagnoses of the troubles. Of course, each diagnosis is as complex as it can possibly be made by the victim’s profound delibera-
tions in clinics at the club bar with others equally un-
qualified to analyse or instruct.

A good number of these victims will begin telling me what’s wrong with their swings. They don’t seem to realise that if they knew what was wrong, they wouldn’t be coming to me and paying me for an expert diagnosis and cure.

Generally, in such cases I find that the cause of the trouble is an incorrect grip which makes it utterly impossible to get any element of the swing correct. The situations have a parallel in your own car. If the transmission isn’t right, everything else can be O.K., but the car won’t go.

When you haven’t got the connection (the hands) functioning properly, your arms, elbows, shoulders, body, legs, and feet can’t work in the correct manner.

The basic factor in all good golf is the grip. Get it right, and all other progress follows.

The quickest and most encouraging improvement I have been able to effect in my pupils’ games has come from teaching them how to hold the club so there will be neither looseness nor dead stiffness as the ball is hit.

To hold the club properly, let the shaft lie where the fingers join the palm of the left hand. The last three fingers of the left hand are closed snugly to the grip.

A good tip is to keep the little finger of the left hand from being loosened; then the next two fingers will stay firm.
The left thumb is placed down the right side of the grip.

Where a mistake in the left-hand grip is frequently made is in having the shaft lie from the root of the forefinger diagonally across the palm, about to the heel of the hand.

After the club is placed at the roots of the fingers of the left hand, and the fingers closed snugly against the grip, the grip is pressed up slightly toward the heel of the hand, although it continues to lie in its original position against
the left forefinger. Therefore, some make the mistake of believing that the proper placement at the beginning is diagonally across the palm.

What you should always do with the left-hand grip is to keep it just as near to the roots of the fingers as possible.

The position of the left hand on the shaft definitely must be slightly over to the right of the shaft so the V of the thumb and forefinger points to the right shoulder. That's old advice, but still the best.

Your right hand should be put on the grip with the

**THE LEFT-HAND GRIP**

![Diagram of the left-hand grip]

These three fingers hold grip snugly.

The V of thumb and forefinger points to your right shoulder.
club lying in the channel formed when the fingers are bent, and with your left thumb fitting snugly under your right thumb.

The right little finger goes over the forefinger of your left hand, or curls around the exposed knuckle of the left forefinger. It doesn’t make any difference which of these two positions the right little finger takes—whichever one you like.

The right hand is placed slightly to the right of the top of the shaft.

THE GRIP
WITH BOTH HANDS

The V of the right thumb and forefinger also points to your right shoulder. Forefinger of right hand is against side of shaft in strongest position for hit. Hands fitted compactly together. Pressure of right-hand grip one-half that of the left-hand grip.
The right thumb is in a natural position to the left of the shaft. It is important that the right thumb and forefinger be as close as comfortably possible because these two parts of the right hand are a vital combination in a grip for power. The right thumb-forefinger combination enables you to whip the club through with all possible speed. The club is held in the right hand with about half the pressure of the left-hand grip.

Keep both hands fitted compactly together. They must co-ordinate the essential factors of left-hand control and right-hand power, and unless they’re working closely, your hand action will be faulty.

There are occasions when a deliberate hook or slice may be required, but to play these shots with control is a job for the expert who knows just what combination of grip and stance to employ. Reducing a tendency to slice by putting the right hand more underneath the shaft is not a correction, it’s a distortion. That is the method sometimes recommended (but not by me) to the chronic slicers. The opposite tendency, that of hooking, also is sometimes reduced by putting the right hand more on top of the shaft in the weaker position. Obviously, in the latter case, the more logical thing to do would be to strengthen the left-hand grip and retain the full power of the right. But, as I’ve previously said, failure to think simply and directly is the cause of most faults in golf.

What you are seeking and must have in your grip is the utmost effectiveness in power and control. You need to keep the face of the club in correct alignment with the
path of the swing at all times, until the ball has left the clubhead.

The most serious and most frequent deviation of the clubface from its proper position occurs at the top of the swing.

What very few golfers—outside of the experts—understand is the difference between holding the club tight and not letting it get loose at the top of the swing. When I see a player hold the club tightly at address, I know that the odds are about ninety to one that the firm grip of the last three fingers of his left hand is going to open at the top of the swing, and he’ll never be able to regain control of the club for his downswing.

The big idea—the essential one—is to hold the club at address with easy security rather than grim, tightening intensity. You can keep that kind of hold on the club throughout the swing. The last three fingers of the left hand hold the club firmly. The right-hand grip is relaxed, and not at all tight throughout the backswing and the early stage of the downswing. When your right-hand grip does get firmer, just before and at the moment of impact, the tightening action will be spontaneous and precisely timed without conscious effort. The action must take place with such lightning speed that there is no possibility of deliberate application of the muscular strength that’s available in the hands.
The correct left-hand grip at the top of the swing. Note how last three fingers make the firm coupling with the club. This is absolutely essential and must not be relaxed.

Here is the most serious frequent error at the top of the swing—loosening the left-hand grip. That compels you to make the mistake of starting to hit from the top of the swing, and to hit with the body instead of the hands. Then anything can happen—slicing, hooking, topping, hitting under the ball, or missing it altogether.
A few very good golfers have the interlocking grip, with the little finger of the right hand entwined with the forefinger of the left, but I prefer to go with the majority who use the overlapping grip which is called the Vardon grip. Although the great British champion wasn’t the first good player to use it, he did popularize that element of golfing style in winning six British and one U.S. Open championships among his many victories.

There are several grip variations which a few of the

THE OVERLAPPING GRIP

The right little finger curls around the exposed knuckle of the left forefinger.
experts use. They can get away with these deviations because of considerable practice and play, enabling them to adjust to abnormal arrangements for combining power and control. But don’t try these. The unorthodox methods usually are matters of desperate experiment which the experimenters don’t use too long for the reason that they eventually discover their golf isn’t as good as it used to be.

The exceptions to standard technique which are employed once in a while by proficient players are invariably confusing to the average golfer. He may try these unusual grips which can’t be used with safety, and go from bad to worse.

There isn’t a first-class golfer in the world who doesn’t have excellent hand action. Plainly, nobody can have a fine quality hand action without a grip ideally fitted to his kind of hands.

Golf is a game to be played with two hands. Your left guides the club and keeps the face in the desired position for the hit, and the power pours through the coupling of the right hand and the club.

Your hands must be together and work together to get the utmost leverage, balance, precision, and speed that can be applied.

Always have your mind made up that you are going to whip your right hand into the shot.
That is a “must.”
THE GRIP HOLDS YOUR SWING TOGETHER

Any time you hear an argument advanced against the right hand whipping into the shot, you may be sure that the objection is fallacious.

Something about the right hand that must have your thought and practice is having that part of the right forefinger, which is nearest the palm, functioning positively in the hitting action. When the right-hand grip lies firmly between the forefinger and the thumb, it is in perfect position for a fast, firm, lashing action.

THE RIGHT-HAND WHIP

The lashing action springs from the joint functioning of the forefinger and thumb.

What seems to make the left-hand position and function a mystery to some is the simple fact that the left hand, not being as conspicuous as the right hand is, doesn’t get enough studious attention.

When your left hand retains control of the club as it should, you will not suffer the usual error of the higher handicap player. This is the mistake of wasting the hand action too soon.

Usually this mistake is made by straightening the
wrist almost immediately after the downswing starts. Then, the ball is contacted by a stiff-arm push instead of with a vigorous whipping action.

You probably won’t be able to observe in the fast action of the experts’ play how their hands are over the ball or slightly past it before their wrists start to uncock. But, when you look at photographs of the stars in action, you will see how they get the right-hand whip precisely at the most effective time—and much later than the average player does.

When the grip is correct, there isn’t an inclination to let the right-hand whip in too soon. What causes the right hand to throw from the top of the swing is that the left hand is loose, and the right hand tries to take over the function of control as well as power. Therefore, the right hand is in frantic action in a spontaneous effort to do the whole job.

By becoming acutely conscious of the necessity of a right-hand whip when the club is getting close to the ball, you will be pleasantly surprised at how your shoulders, hips, and footwork are naturally disposed to co-ordinate with the hand action.

There’s another detail of the swing that you won’t have to worry about much when your grip is correct, and that’s wrist cocking. When you retain a snug grip with the last three fingers of your left hand on your backswing, your wrists are easily cocked at the top of the swing, and they’re cocked in the proper, nearly horizontal plane beneath the shaft.
THE GRIP HOLDS YOUR SWING TOGETHER

With a half-palm grip of the left hand, you just can't cock your wrists correctly and retain control of the club. The uncocking of the wrists as the clubhead nears the ball is greatly facilitated—almost assured—when you have the proper grip.

In my teaching, I eliminate every possible detail that might confuse the pupil when he's actually playing. That’s no time for him to be disturbed by having to make some conscious effort. He should be free from the interference of the consciousness.

I have found that one of these disturbing points is the tendency of the right elbow to get far away from the body during the swing. This fault is definitely a result of an improper grip. When the club is held correctly, the right elbow is sure to stay comfortably close to the body and pointing down. Thus does the correct grip eliminate the pupil's becoming distracted by paying attention to the elbow position during the swing. When the grip is good, that becomes good automatically.

The correct grip, which is the governing component of hand action, is certainly the greatest single detail towards achieving direction and distance of the golf shot.

When you get your grip right, you have automatically eliminated many of the bothersome details which may confuse you and prevent proper execution of shots.
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1. Study the shot to be played, particularly in relationship to your capabilities.

2. Select the right club (and tee the ball correctly if it's a tee shot).

3. Take the correct grip.

4. Take the correct stance for the shot to be played.

5. Keep your head steady.

6. See that your left knee points behind the ball on the backswing.

7. Have your wrists broken to the fullest extent at the top of the backswing, without loosening the left hand. The right-hand grip is firm, but not tight.

8. Pause at the top of the swing.

9. Don't rush as you start down, but get your right knee in toward the ball.

10. Keep your head steady.

11. Keep your hands ahead of the clubhead by keeping your wrists cocked, and whip your right hand into the shot at the last second.

12. Keep your head steady.
A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Edinburgh, and educated at the University there, Tommy Armour left school to fight in the First World War.

He joined the Royal Scots as a machine gunner and later became an officer in the then new branch of the service, the Tank Corps. While serving with the tanks he was caught in a mustard gas attack and lost his eyesight, but later he regained sight in his right eye.

The winner of many amateur golf events in Europe as well as the French Open, Armour went to the United States soon after the war ended and turned professional in 1925. In 1927 he won the U.S. Open Championship and the Canadian Open. Subsequently he went on to win every major championship: the British Open; the P.G.A.; the Western; the Metropolitan; and too many cash-prize tournaments to attempt to list.

In 1929 he took over the post of golf professional at the Boca Raton Club, in Florida. He is still teaching there, and his instruction ranges from teaching duffers how to break 100 to brushing up the games of the top tournament professionals when they can’t iron out their own difficulties. Armour claims that the Boca Raton part of his golf career has been the best—the part he has enjoyed the most.