

Back to basics

# Four keys to consistency

Minimise your misses by staying neutral from set-up to impact

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**F**rom scratch to 28-handicappers, every golfer says the same: 'I want to be more consistent'. Achieving a good degree of consistency takes some application; but if the fundamental elements of your set-up and swing are flawed then no amount of practice time will yield results. In this article, we will target those fundamentals.

A good, consistent golf swing is all about creating good impact conditions. The tricky thing about the swing is that because every action produces an equal and opposite reaction, it just takes a few undesirable movements early on to create bigger problems when the club meets ball.

The following tips and drills will give you the ability to start and then maintain neutral positions. When your swing path moves up and down the line – with your clubface not too open or closed – from set-up to impact, you can start to build some genuine consistency.



## Matchplay tips

# 1 Your set-up: Go back to neutral

Too many golfers react to a miss by setting up even more open or closed. To minimise your misses you need to do the opposite. Imagine a clock face. As a fader your natural instinct after a miss is to aim even further left, at 10 o'clock (main image). This simply compounds the problem. Instead you need to work your way back to a neutral position. Aiming at around 11 o'clock will minimise your sidespin and therefore your misses, while allowing you to feel comfortable over the ball and retain your natural shot shape.



### Minimise misses

If you've hit a slice or a hook, resist the urge to aim further left – like I'm doing here – or right. Instead, stand squarer to the target. Aiming further to one side just increases the problems.



### Look at the clues on your clubhead

If you're not sure how you're lining up or where you're attacking the ball from, look at the peg score marks on the bottom of your club. If they point towards the heel you're attacking the ball from in-to-out and vice-versa if the marks point towards the toe.



### How to find neutral

Your natural shot shape starts with the grip. A weak grip (above left) promotes a slice while a strong grip (above right) can lead to hooks. Place two tees in the Vs between thumbs and forefingers so you can check your grip and work it to a stronger position.

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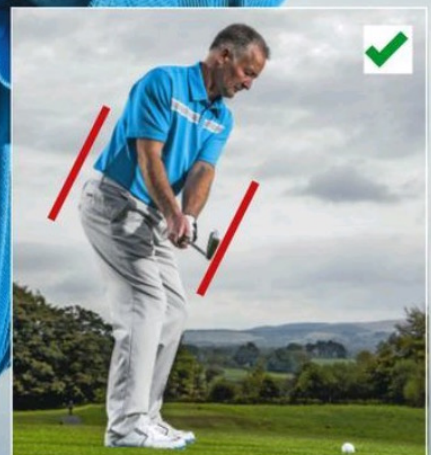
## 2 The takeaway: Your face angle influences attack

If the first yard of your swing is offline, you'll spend the rest of it compensating. Your takeaway affects where you attack the ball from on the downswing and the position of the clubface at impact. Staying neutral throughout the takeaway – and right through to the top of the backswing – will keep you neutral later on.



### How to find neutral

Place an Allen key in the butt of your club at the same angle as the clubface; it's an easy way of showing yourself where the face is pointing at the top of your backswing. A neutral position at the top sees the key form a straight line with your left forearm.



### What neutral looks like

This is an ideal reference point. With the shaft horizontal, the clubhead should be just outside your hands with the face at the same angle as your spine. Both are vital for staying on plane through the rest of the swing and delivering the face squarely at impact.

# 3 The downswing: Understand your path

## A neutral path

A good takeaway can be wasted if your transition into the downswing is wrong. If you feel as though you have got into a neutral position up until this point but are still slicing or hooking the ball then it is your swing path on the way down that is the cause.

Trying to swing through a gap – I have used two tubes to illustrate this for you – will allow you to establish which swing path you have. A neutral path will see the club pass through the middle (right).



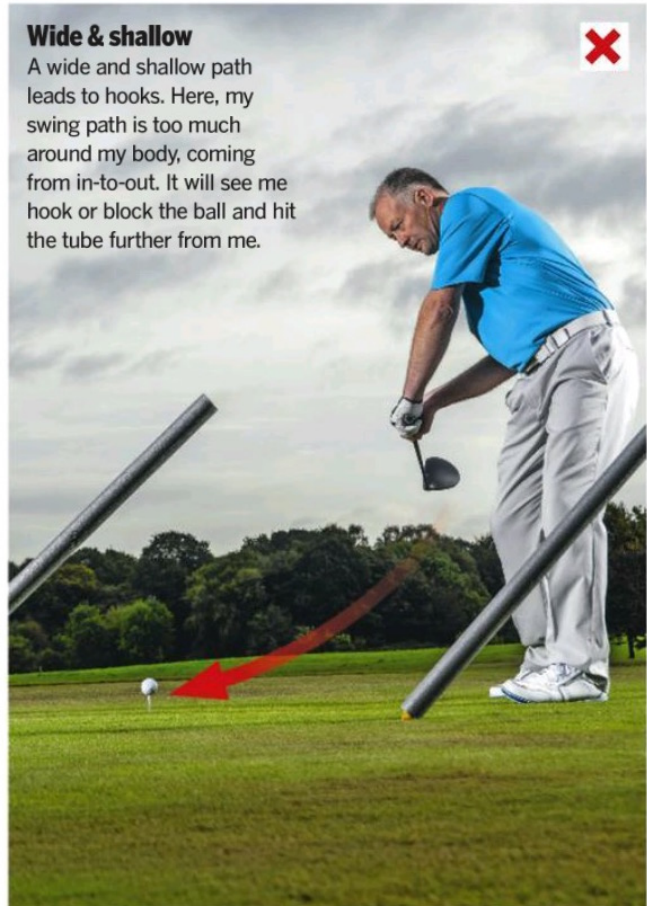
## Narrow & steep

A narrow and steep path causes a slice. In this instance my path is coming from out-to-in meaning I'll cut across the ball and hit the tube nearer me.



## Wide & shallow

A wide and shallow path leads to hooks. Here, my swing path is too much around my body, coming from in-to-out. It will see me hook or block the ball and hit the tube further from me.



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### Hands too far ahead of the clubface

If the object is ahead of your arm you'll tend to leave the face open or compensate by rolling it shut, causing pushes and hooks.



### Hands too far behind the clubface

If the object is behind your arm at impact, you are 'casting'. This is where you flick the clubhead at the ball with your hands, leading to fats, thins and powerless, high shots.



### How to find neutral

Stick four pencils or tees into the ground - you can use balls on a range mat. If you can get the clubhead to pass through the box without hitting the four objects, you will have delivered the club on a neutral path, which helps you square the face more consistently.

## 4. Impact: Keep the face square

The No.1 goal is a good impact. That comes from a neutral swing path and a consistent low point to the swing's arc. To achieve those, your hands should lead the club into impact. You can test this by sticking an object, such

as a ball or a tee, to the butt of your club. The object should be hidden behind your left arm at impact. This keeps the clubface square while promoting consistent striking and compression down on to the ball.



### Hands just right

I've used Blu-Tac to attach a ball to the end of my grip. In this neutral impact position, it can't be seen. Compare it to the poor positions on the left and then practise this move.

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Shot on location  
at Mottram Hall,  
Cheshire.