



LEARN TO PLAY GOLF

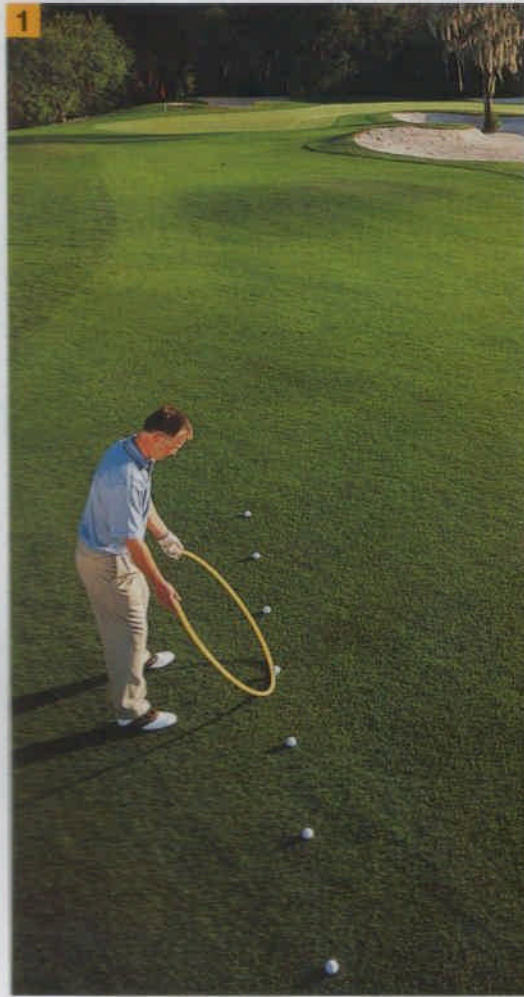
LESSON ONE:

Build a clear image of what your swing needs to do

The object of golf is to strike the ball from your starting point (the tee) into the hole in as few shots as possible. Unlike other sports, in golf you have a stationary ball, which gives you time to think. In other words, your mind tells the muscles of your body which way to move. This is why your first crucial step is to gain a crystal clear mental picture of what you are trying to achieve with your swing. I am going to help you via three key concepts. Base your entire golf learning around them.

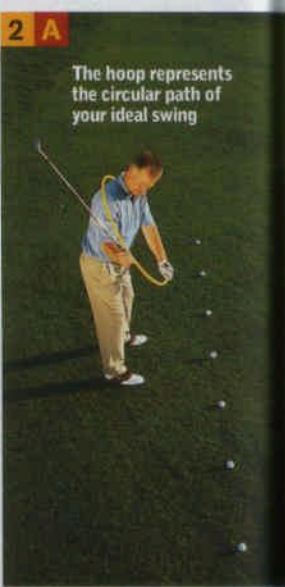
CONCEPT (1)

Swing round to hit straight!



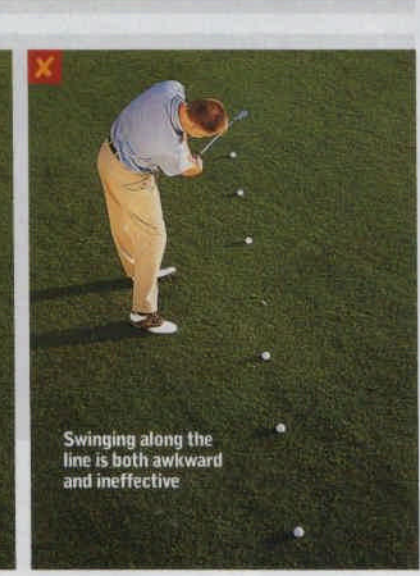
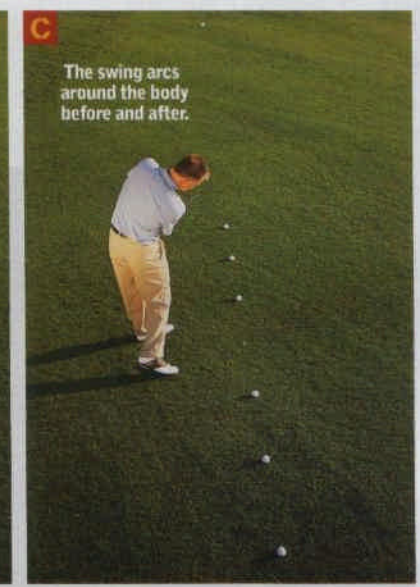
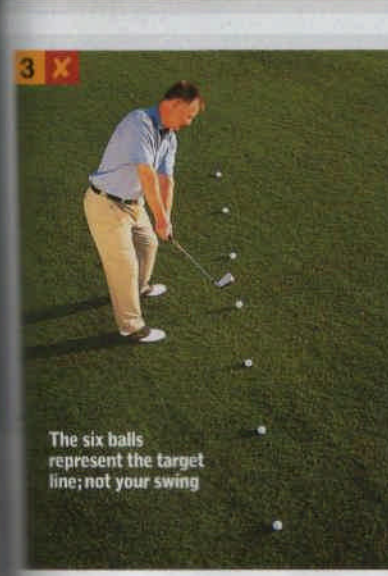
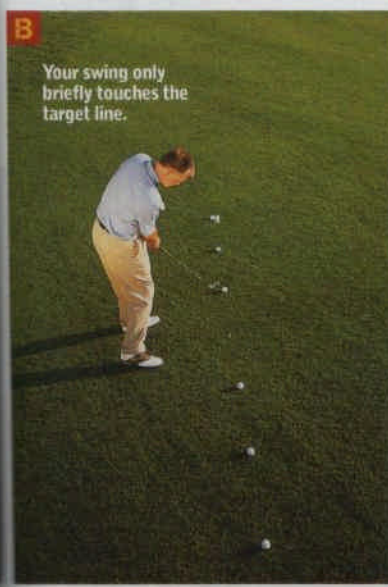
1) A CIRCLE ON AN ANGLE
Take a look at this picture. I've positioned a series of balls to show the line between my ball and my target – the flag. This is known as the 'ball-to-target line'. The ball-target line is a simple concept but make sure you understand it – it is central to learning to play golf. Now look at the hoop in the picture. The hoop is at an angle and represents a mini version of the path your club must take as you swing back and through the ball. Think of your swing as a circle on an angle.

2) CORRECT SWING PATH
Build your concept of the path of your golf swing around these three important facts:
A) The hoop (your swing path) moves away from your ball-to-target line as it moves back from the ball. It curves round to your side of the ball-to-target line, what we call 'inside the line' ('outside the line' refers to the area the far side of the ball-to-target line).
B) The hoop, and therefore the path of your swing, touches your ball-to-target line only very briefly, at the bottom of its arc. This, of course, is where the ball is.
C) The hoop (and ideal swing path) returns back 'inside' the ball-target line as it moves forward and through towards the target. A swing which arcs around your body both before and after the ball is known as an in-to-in swing. You'll achieve this naturally by standing to one side of the ball.



3) WRONG SWING PATH
It might seem logical that you should swing the club up and down this ball-to-target line to hit the ball at your target. But this is wrong. Problems crop up when you follow the misguided concept that you need to swing along your target line to hit the ball straight. It leads to awkward moves and the sensation of your arms swinging a long way from your body.

IN A NUTSHELL
The clubhead moves in a circular movement around your body.



INSTRUCTION BEGINNERS

SCORE RANGE 100+

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN
 ■ The very basic principles of the golf swing:
 ■ Swing path ■ Clubface control ■ Angle of attack

So you want to learn to play golf? Good for you. Golf is perhaps the toughest sport in the world, but it's also definitely the most rewarding. My name is Adrian Fryer. I am a PGA professional and have 20 years of teaching experience, working with all standards of golfer from first-timers to pros. But this six-part series is expressly for beginners. Not only will it teach you the essentials of technique, from tee to green – it will also tell you all the other things you need to know to get a start in this great game. How do you join a club? How much should

you be looking to spend on gear, and what should you buy? How do you get a handicap? What are the rules you need to know? Also, throughout the series I will be showing you how to overcome the obstacles the game throws up at beginners. Golf can seem an intimidating game with its private clubs, dress codes, etiquette and skill snobbery. But I will give you the need-to-knows to handle this. Learning to strike the ball well (or at all, at first) is not easy and can be frustrating. You'll need commitment and patience. Again, I will help you along the way by telling you what

you can reasonably expect of yourself. Did you know, for example, that only one person in three actually manages to make contact with the ball on their first swing? This series will take you from complete beginner to a point where you feel comfortable and happy to set foot on the golf course. Sure, this road's got a few pot holes in it, but it leads to a wonderful place. Golf offers you exercise, companionship and the thrill of putting your body and soul to the test every time you step foot on the first tee. I wish you a long and fulfilling relationship with the game.



Adrian

ADRIAN FRYER

Quick Notes

NEED-TO-KNOW

The Rule book

One of the first things you should do is get hold of one of these: golf's official rulebook, issued by British golf's ruling body, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews. As well as going through golf's 34 rules, it gives pointers on etiquette, defines golfing terms and explains various ways of playing the game. You can pick one up for free at your local pro shop or visit www.randa.org



GEAR

Anatomy of a club

- 1) Clubface
- 2) Grooves
- 3) Leading edge
- 4) Shaft
- 5) Ferrule
- 6) Loft (measured from the vertical)
- 7) Toe
- 8) Heel





LESSON ONE:

Build a clear image of what your swing needs to do

LEARN TO PLAY GOLF

CONCEPT (2)

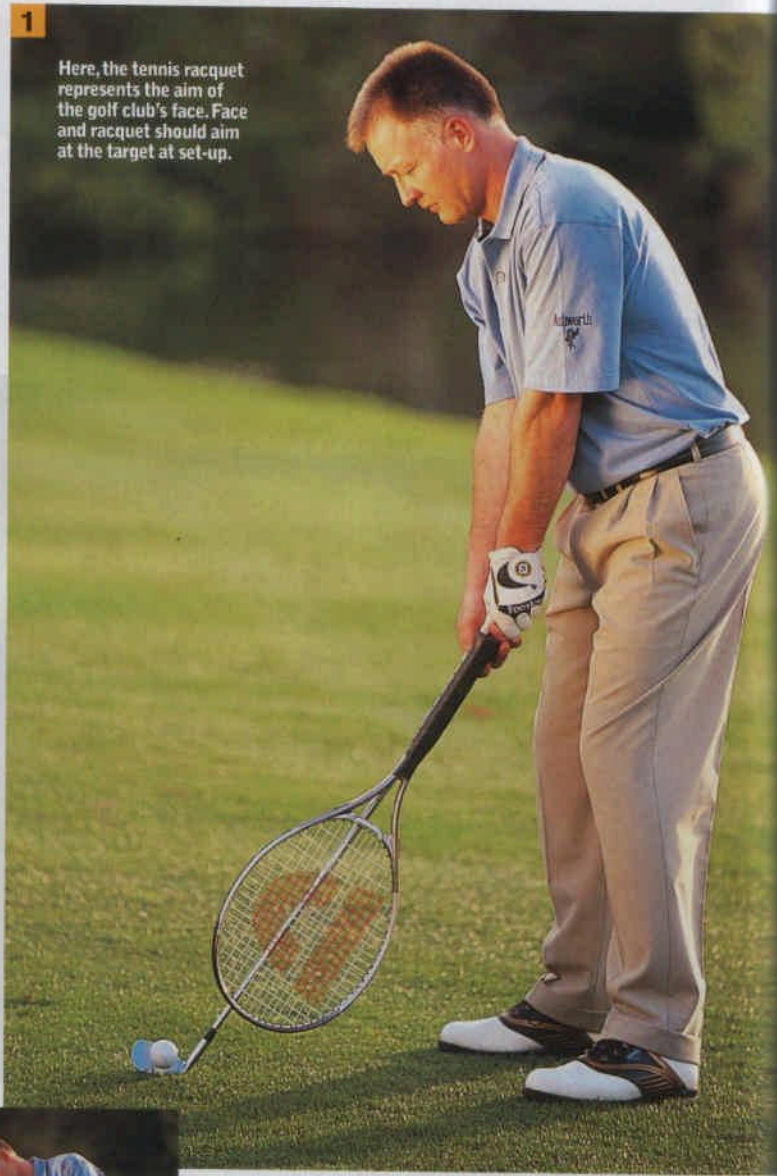
The clubface rotates through the swing

1) CLUB ROTATION

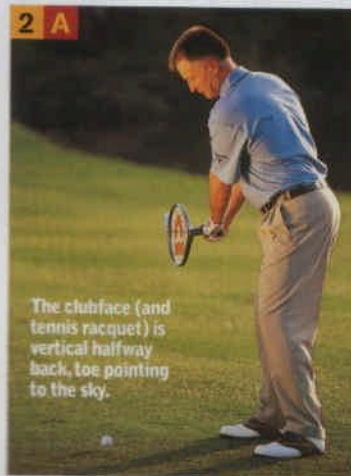
Here, I've attached my golf club to a tennis racquet to emphasise the position of the clubface. The angles of clubface and racquet are one and the same. The angle of the clubface at impact dictates where the ball goes. If the clubface aims flush at your target at impact, it will tell the ball to go there.

If it faces right of your target the ball will slice to the right. If it aims left the ball will hook to the left.

A) This truth causes no end of problems for beginners. If the face needs to be square to your target at impact, it seems best to keep it square throughout the swing. But this leads to a stilted, up-and-down, weak 'rocking the baby' type of action.



1 Here, the tennis racquet represents the aim of the golf club's face. Face and racquet should aim at the target at set-up.



The clubface (and tennis racquet) is vertical halfway back, toe pointing to the sky.



Before and after contact, your hands and arms rotate, squaring the face only briefly at impact.

2) LEARN TO ROTATE FROM THE BEGINNING

The golf swing needs to move in rotational movements, not in straight lines. Right from the start you must get into the habit of rotating the clubface. If you can, attach a racquet to your club like I've done and copy these two moves left:

A) The racquet/clubface starts off square to your ball-to-target line and facing your target. As you move back body, arms and clubface must rotate together so that the toe

of the club points to the sky and the clubface is vertical.

B) Your body, hands and arms then rotate back through the ball, returning briefly to square at impact. They carry on rotating until the toe again points at the sky. You may wonder "how can I possibly time it so the face is square just at impact?" Don't worry - this is where the correct hold of the club comes in, and we'll look at that next month.

3) USE YOUR THUMBS

This rotation sounds a bit fiddly but is in fact a very natural movement to make.

A) Try it for yourself simply by placing your hands opposite each other and sticking your thumbs forward, away from you as shown.

B) Move back, rolling your forearms until your thumbs point directly away from your target.

C) Then simulate a swing through an imaginary ball, again rolling your forearms until your thumbs are pointing straight at your target.

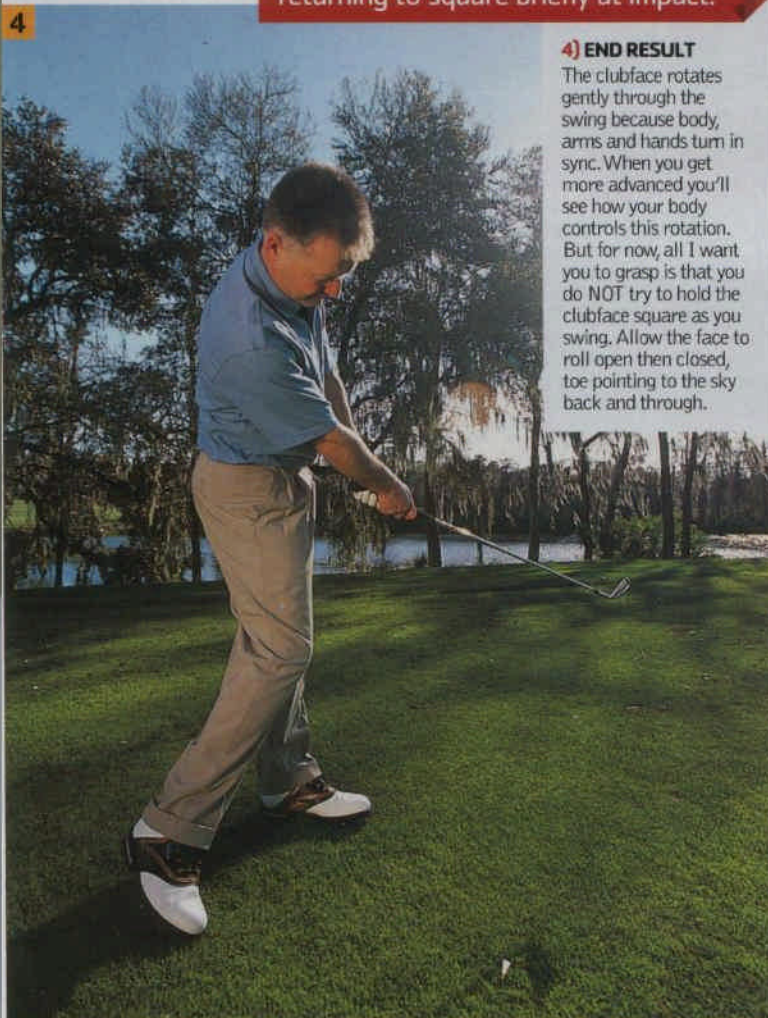


B A simple thumbs test can reveal how natural it really is to achieve proper rotation.



IN A NUTSHELL

The clubface is constantly rotating, returning to square briefly at impact.



4) END RESULT

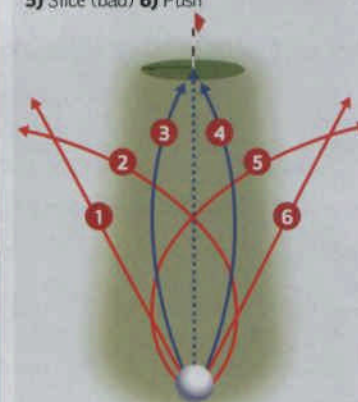
The clubface rotates gently through the swing because body, arms and hands turn in sync. When you get more advanced you'll see how your body controls this rotation. But for now, all I want you to grasp is that you do NOT try to hold the clubface square as you swing. Allow the face to roll open then closed, toe pointing to the sky back and through.

Quick Notes

GOLFING WORDS

Here is a glossary of shot shapes. Note fades and draws will work for you:

- 1) Pull (bad) 2) Hook (bad)
- 3) Fade (good) 4) Draw (good)
- 5) Slice (bad) 6) Push



NEED-TO-KNOW

How do I get a handicap?

Your handicap measures your ability as a golfer, and is essential if you want to enter competitions and play exclusive courses. But you do not need to be a member of a club to get one. The English Golf Union will do you an Associate Member handicap (call 01526 351888 for details) or you can get a handicap by joining a golf society such as the TG Golf Society (call 01733 575063).



BEGINNERS INSTRUCTION SCORE RANGE 100+

LESSON ONE:

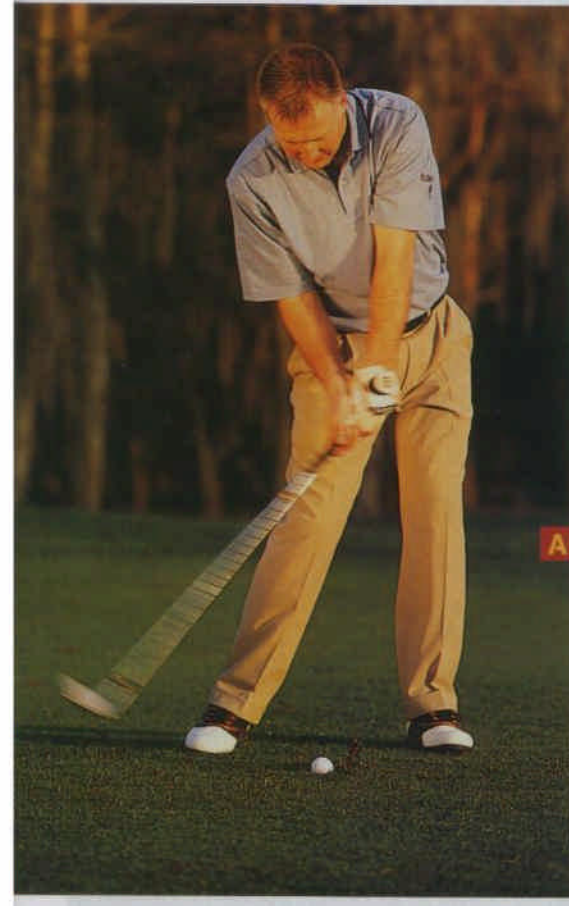
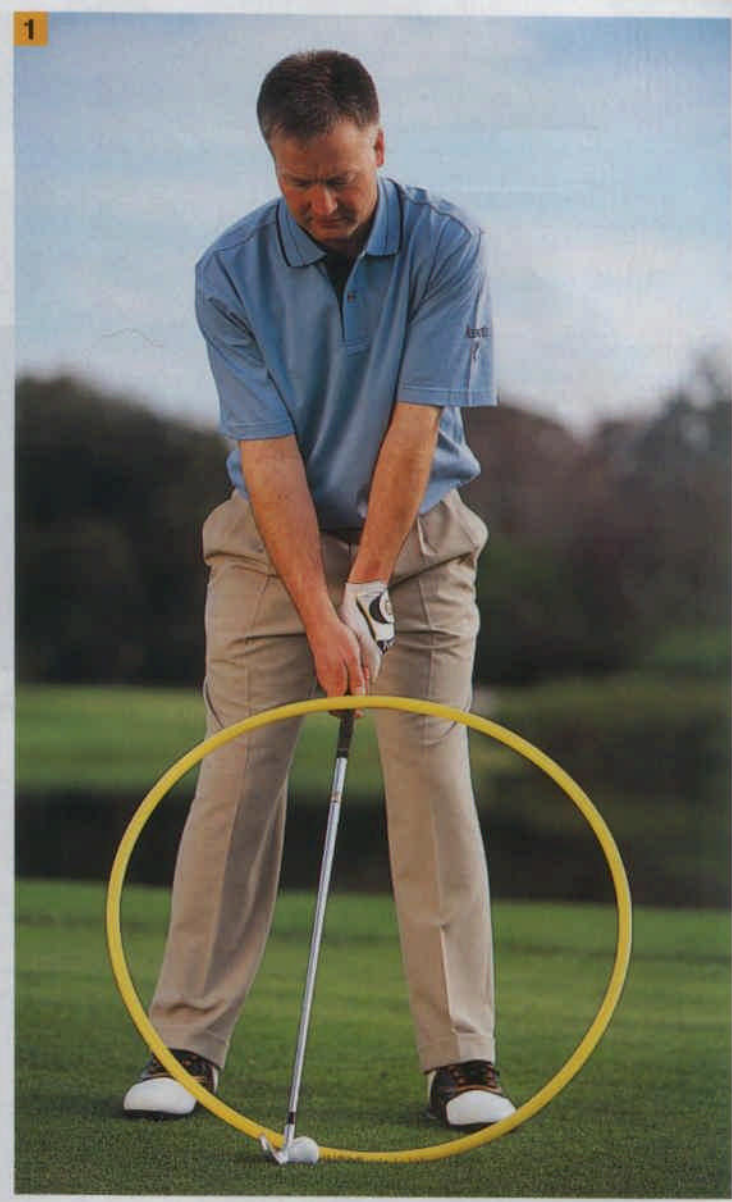
Build a clear image of what your swing needs to do

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CONCEPT (3)

Hit down to send the ball up

1) STRIKE BEFORE THE ARC LEVELS
 If you wanted to splash someone you would make the water rise by smacking your hand down into the water. This same principle is at work when it comes to getting the ball airborne. The way to get the ball to rise is by hitting down on it. Here I'm using a 7-iron and my trusty hoop to represent the angle that the club swings through the ball. Again you can see it is a circular movement, the club descending, reaching the bottom of its arc and then rising. It might seem perfectly logical to catch the ball on the upswing to make it rise – in fact it is the opposite! Strike the ball before the swing arc levels out to get the ball into the air.



BEGINNERS INSTRUCTION SCORE RANGE 100+

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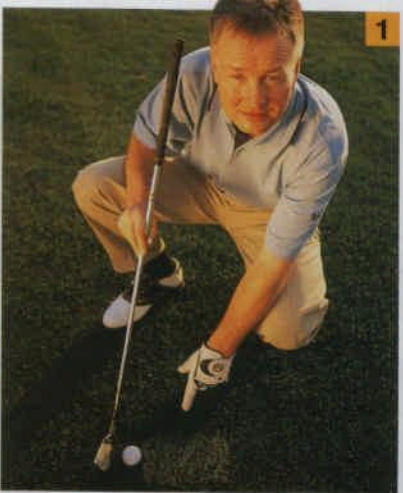
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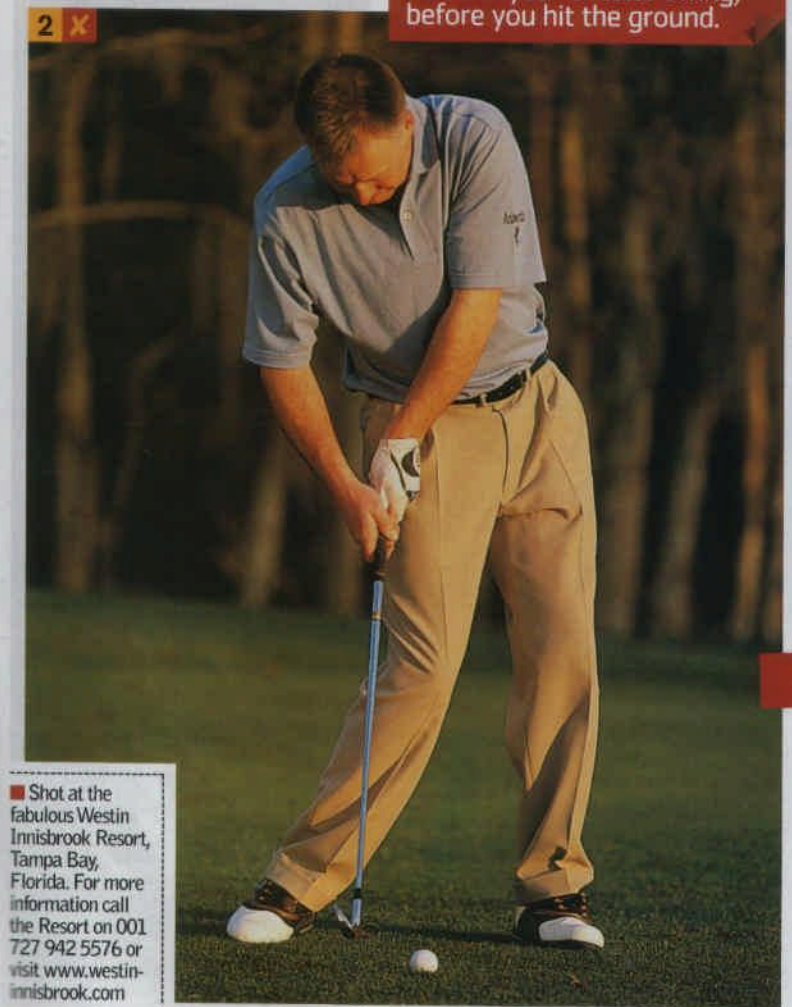
CONCEPT (3) CONTINUED...

1) DIVOTS
 Most pro golfers remove a chunk of earth – a divot – when they hit iron shots. It's important to realise that the earth is removed AFTER the ball has been struck. The club, swinging down into the ball, carries on into the ground. It is always ball first, ground second.

2) DON'T 'HELP' THE BALL INTO THE AIR
 Many beginners instinctively feel they must help the ball up into the air. If you try to do this you are making it impossible for yourself to swing into the ball with the correct, downward angle of attack. If you try to help the ball up you will tend to have the clubhead on the rise through the ball. This usually means you strike the ball on the bottom edge of the club, topping the ball along the ground – the very thing you were trying to avoid.



IN A NUTSHELL
 Strike the ball as you come down in your circular swing, before you hit the ground.



Shot at the fabulous Westin Innisbrook Resort, Tampa Bay, Florida. For more information call the Resort on 001 727 942 5576 or visit www.westin-innisbrook.com

Quick Notes

NEED-TO-KNOW

Where can I play?
 The driving range is your best bet, but you can also get on to a public or municipal course without a handicap. Private clubs vary over their welcome to newcomer visitors – it's best to phone first and ask – but non-club members are perfectly welcome to have lessons with the club pro.

GEAR

What to buy
 Beginners do not need a full set. For now, all you need is six clubs – perhaps a 3-wood, 5/7/9 irons, wedge and putter. You should be able to pick up a decent half-set for around £100, but half-sets can be difficult to find. I would advise picking up a starter set of 14 clubs (Usually around £200) and leaving half the set out for now.

ETIQUETTE

Safety first
 Before you make a swing, always look carefully to make sure there is no one behind you or in front of you. Sounds obvious but people do get struck, believe me. Two other safety rules: do not hit a ball if there is someone in range in front of you, and shout "Fore!" if your ball is heading towards someone. Note you can get golf insurance which covers you against mishaps.

WHAT NOW?

This first lesson has all been theory, and I make no apology for that. No doubt you are itching to hit golf balls but, as I said at the outset, it is vital your brain has a clear picture of what your swing must accomplish before you start playing. I suggest you begin working on these concepts by taking a 7-iron and striking a tee peg. Only when you can strike the tee regularly should you move on to a ball.

Next month Learn how to stand to the ball.