

BLUEPRINT A SHARPER GAME

As your golf season gets up to speed, base your game on these five key set-up and swing fundamentals

PICTURES BOB ATKINS



TG TOP 50
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One of golf's stranger quirks is that the better a player is, the more obsessed they are with their fundamentals. Ok, that's not a hard and fast rule; but aspects like grip, posture and ball position form part of a tour pro's daily work on the range. Club golfers, in contrast, often see the fundamentals as for beginners, preferring to focus on complex mechanics. Yet those mechanics will only be as

good as your basics allow them to be. So let's put the horse back in front of the cart and base your game on solid foundations. Let the five aspects we deal with here – grip, ball position, posture, balance and armswing control – form the basis of your action. And if you hit a blip, work through them; one will provide the answer.

■ Shot at beautiful Palmeraie resort, Marrakech, Morocco. Visit www.palmgolfclubmarrakech.com

#1 Grip: control the clubface

Clubface control is the bedrock of good golf, and can only be achieved through your one link with the club - your hands. Find a couple of coins and follow this process



Feel the pinch

Pinch each coin between your thumb and your index finger knuckle, as shown. Place your hands in front of you, palms facing, and crook both index fingers. This puts both hands in the ideal position to grip the club.

Square route

The pinched coins help you route the club through the correct parts of each hand while keeping the face square. But check the handle sits under the heel of your gloved hand.

Maintain mobility

Make sure your grip pressure is light enough to allow wrist mobility and hinge. Draw circles in the air with the clubhead to ensure your hold is both secure and alive.

Add the club

With the coins in place, take your hold. Check the leading edge is vertical as you grip the club. The coins should be parallel to each other, and angled up to your trail shoulder.

#2 Ball position: control the attack angle

Clubs are designed to attack the ball at different angles. Work on three key positions

Picture the low point

To grasp ball position, picture the arc of the club as it swings down and through. At a certain point it bottoms out - the swing's low point. It's represented here by the white chalk line.



Establishing low point

The swing's low point falls under the lead chest. With an average-width stance, insteps under shoulders, that places it a couple of inches inside the lead heel. Hit most of your shots from here, but move the ball an inch or so back to compress short irons and similarly forward to sweep the driver.

Driver: hit up

Distance comes from a high-launch, low-spin strike, both encouraged by a level-to-up impact strike. So position the ball after the low point for an impact with the club a beat into its upward arc.

Mid-irons: on the line

For anything between 7-iron and the driver, play the ball near the low point of the club's arc and driving it slightly down and forward - an effective angle for the mid-loft clubs.

Short irons: hit down

These work best with a descending strike; it helps the lofted face apply pressure and backspin. So from 7-iron up, play the ball behind the low point to promote a downward strike.



#3 Posture: control your turn

A great swing cuts out unneeded motion, and swinging around your set-up body angles is literally pivotal. Your ability to do this hinges on the quality of your posture

Perfect pivot

Constant body angles aid consistency. A steady spine angle acts as a central pivot to your swing, helping you move the club up and down the ideal plane, set by the shaft angle.



Pelvic tilt

To maintain your spine angle, you must set it at angle at which it can rotate. This means tilting your pelvis. Focus on the angle of your belt, aiming the buckle more down at the ball. This sets the spine at the best angle to pivot around.



Pelvic hurdle

Watch for tucking the backside and rounding the spine. This makes you want to straighten up during the swing, costing you those constant angles and throwing the club off line.

Stable base

We'll talk about balance in more detail in part 4, but balance also plays a key role in setting your posture. For now, dangle your club opposite your trail pocket and check the shaft runs through the centre of your knee joint down to your shoe laces.

#4 Balance: control the force

Learn to swing in balance and you can control the energy your swing creates - and that means consistency of path, plane and attack angle. Follow these guidelines

Balance at set-up: get the jump

Stand to the ball, but without a club. To feel what perfect balance is, imagine you've been asked to jump over the ball. How would you set your weight to achieve that?



Balance mid-swing: back-to-front

The swing demands some weight or pressure shift back and through. To achieve this with balance place one club outside your lead foot and one inside your trail foot. Cross your arms and turn to the top so your chest is over the rear shaft.



Perfect symmetry

You'd instinctively set your weight 50-50 with pressure under the laces of both feet. With even pressure side to side and front to back, you're perfectly balanced and ready to swing the club.

Controlled weight shift

Rotate through until your chest is over the forward shaft. Consider those shafts as reference points for how your weight should move during the swing. They'll allow a controlled and effective weight shift while keeping your swing balanced and controlled.

#5 Armswing: control the arc

An effective shape gets the club travelling on the right path, controls your action's arc and gets the face looking in the right direction. Focus on armswing to achieve it



Swing shape: shoulder focus

Grip the club with your trail hand only. Swing it back so the shaft bisects your trail shoulder, as seen from behind. At this point the shaft will be at or close to its address angle. This is a great guideline for an effective swing path, setting up a downswing with the club travelling in the right direction.



Throughswing: mirror image

Still with just the trail hand on the club, swing through to the equivalent throughswing position. Again look for the same two references – shaft cutting through the lead shoulder and its angle mimicking set-up. Try this drill slowly at first, and then faster to feel an effective swing shape at full speed.



Control arc and face

Make a half backswing. Keep your lead arm extended to retain the space between hands and chest, giving your swing a consistent radius. Create an L-shape between lead arm and shaft to generate leverage. Check your glove badge faces forwards; it reveals the forearm rotation that keeps the face square.



Repeat on the other side

Again, seek out that mirror image on the way through. An extended trail arm allows your swing to track on the same radius as the backswing, important for consistency of strike. Finally, check your glove badge has rotated to look behind you. This ensures you maintain forearm rotation and a square face.