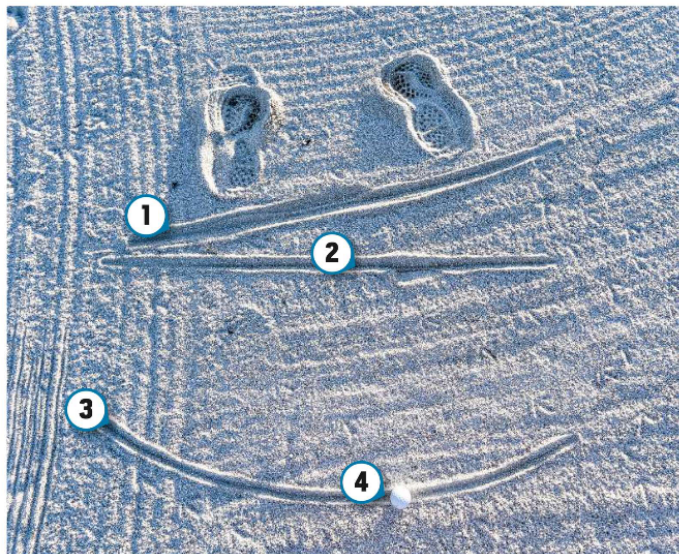




Scoring zone... GO IN-TO-IN IN SAND

Watch any tour pro play a standard bunker shot these days and you will see an action that works in-to-in, just like any normal golf shot. This is quite a diversion from the old wisdom in sand, which

mandated cutting across the ball with an open face. In-to-in is proven to offer better strike quality and more accuracy, so if you want to improve your own sand play, build your action around the technique detailed here.



To understand the basic approach to the in-to-in bunker shot, examine this image: it gives you the basic stance, ball position and swing shape that you'll need to employ.

1. FOOT LINE

Aim your feet slightly left of parallel to the ball-target line – if the target is at 12, your foot line should point to around 11. We need your body to turn through with your swinging arms, and in sand this isn't so easy; this open stance gives your lead hip a little extra assistance in clearing.

2. TARGET LINE

Naturally this line remains parallel to the ball-target line at any point between the ball and your feet.

3. SWING PATH

This is perhaps a slightly curvier representation of the journey we want the club to take, but it's important you visualise the swing path in bunkers very much as in-to-in. This gets you out of the old out-to-in way of thinking and encourages you to swing at the target, not across it.

4. BALL POSITION

Play the ball forward of centre, under your lead chest. This promotes impact with the club moving in the level section at the base of its arc – ideal for the shallow sand divot that gives you control over contact and the ball.

From that basic concept of how we are going to stand and swing in bunkers, make two more changes to your address to improve your action...

1. OPEN THE FACE

Hold the club in front of you. A square face would see a vertical leading edge, pointing to 12 noon. Open the face until the leading edge points to 1 o'clock. This exposes the curved sole or bounce to the sand, and adds loft... promoting a skimming strike with plenty of height.



2. BRING THE FACE BACK TO SQUARE

This open face will tend to send the ball right, so bring it back to square by lowering the handle. This can be tough to visualise, but focusing on aiming the grooves rather than the leading edge can help. Make sure the butt of your sand wedge's handle points below your belt line.



SWING AROUND YOUR BODY

Those address adjustments will promote the correct, modern in-to-in attack. But during the swing itself, focus on making a more rotary action that sees armswing and body turn working together to move the club back and through around you. Picture the clubhead describing that curved, in-to-in arc through the ball. You will gain three chief benefits:

SHALLOWER STRIKE PATTERN

The ideal bunker strike sees a shallow, level attack angle. When you deliver the club into the ball on a shallow arc, the curved sole can skim the sand properly, helping you limit the amount of sand trapped between the face and the ball. That means control of strike and distance. With out-to-in, the attack gets steeper and the contact less controllable.

MORE ACCURACY

The theory with out-to-in was that the open clubface offset the leftward path (right-handers). This was flawed, because as the face gets weaker it has less influence on shot direction. The wide-open face typically failed to counter the path, often creating pulled shots. Play the shot with a more neutral path and face and you can send the ball at the target every time.

SIMPLER BALL POSITION

One other problem with out-to-in was that it encouraged a wide-open stance. With the foot line so far off the ball-target line, golfers would struggle to position the ball correctly in their stance – typically it would go too far back. Played with a square or slightly open stance, in-to-in allows you to position the ball in a familiar spot, just forward of centre.



CHEST TO TARGET

As always in bunkers, complete your followthrough, your hands reaching shoulder height at least. Make sure that at the finish, your chest has rotated to face the flag, with your hands in front of it. This position reveals a good, even contribution of arms and core that allows the club to move correctly around your body.

