

CLASSIC LESSONS

# ERNEST JONES' 'SWING THE CLUBHEAD'

Some 85 years ago, a golf book was published. Called *Swinging into Golf*, it was written by one of the few famous golf coaches of the day, Manchester's Ernest Jones. And on its green cover, it displayed two slightly surreal images of a disembodied hand dangling a piece of cloth. This image would come to represent one of golf's most famous coaching principles: swing the clubhead. And it's as relevant today as it was eight decades ago.

**What Jones believed**  
Ernest Jones was the ultimate advocate for keeping it simple. "The most amazing thing about the game," he once noted, "is the fact the poorest players are the ones who try to do the most. I believe, rather, in simplifying the game by giving the pupil one definite and positive axiom to keep in mind every time he plays a golf shot. That is, 'Swing the clubhead'."

Jones believed that when a golfer genuinely

felt the sensation of swinging the clubhead, the mechanics fell into place naturally. In this, he subverted the perceived wisdom of the day that you needed the mechanics in place to build the swing. He wanted his pupils to sense the swing through the hands, reasoning "The hands are the medium which controls the swing, with body parts – arms, legs, shoulders and such – performing as admirable followers." His unusual method for demonstrating this feel is still used by coaches to this day.

**Feeling the swing**  
**The hanky drill**  
To get his students to feel a swing, Jones would routinely tie his pocket knife (representing the clubhead) to his handkerchief

**Swing the clubhead Why it's stood the test of time**  
Jones' passion for swinging the clubhead was born of a fervent belief that the golf swing could be neither learned nor executed when broken up into individual parts. It was a principle adopted by another, significant Jones – Bobby – but not by Ernest's teaching associates, who feared he was making the swing too simple. 'Swing the clubhead', then, acts as a terrific mantra to hang on to in an industry that habitually overcomplicates the game.

(representing the clubshaft), and ask them to swing it in a circle. "The more you practise trying to sense what you are doing with the clubhead itself and the less you know about what your muscles are doing," he said, "the more pleasure you are going to get out of the game."



YOUR COACH



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## DRILL HOW TO FEEL THE SWINGING CLUBHEAD

There is, of course, nothing to stop you making your own version of Jones' swinging handkerchief. But here is an excellent exercise that will help.



**1**  
**Finger and thumb grip**  
Start by making your hold as light as possible while still retaining control of the club. That means thumbs and forefingers only as shown, with all other fingers off the handle. Use a lofted iron for this drill, and tee the ball up.



**2**  
**Swing back...**  
True to Jones' philosophy, we are going to keep this as simple as possible and just swing the club back, with no thought or manipulation. Just place your attention on the clubhead, and consider Jones' advice: "Swing the clubhead with your hands, NOT with an active bending, flipping, or levering of the wrists." That light grip will help you, allowing the wrists to hinge naturally through the weight of the club, and not needing any conscious effort.



**3**  
**... and through**  
As with the backswing, maintain your focus on swinging the clubhead. Feel the swing as a whole, not as a sequence of individual movements. Note how, when you let the club swing and allow your body parts to become "admirable responders", rhythm, balance and timing take care of themselves. After five swings, grip normally (but lightly) and hit five more balls, looking for that same sensation of one whole, fluid, co-ordinated motion.