

CLASSIC LESSONS

BEN HOGAN'S PANE OF GLASS

It is surely golf instruction's most famous and influential image. On page 78 of the 1957 book *The Modern Fundamentals* is an image of Ben Hogan addressing the ball... with his head sticking through a pane of glass. The image – The Hawk's interpretation of 1920s coach Seymour Dunn's concept of the golf plane – has been used almost constantly ever since as a visual reference for the tilt of the swing. But what are we learning here? And how can we take the idea from visualisation into movement? Let's take a look.

1 Mapped out
Hogan's imaginary pane of glass ran up at an angle from the ball, resting on his shoulders. He described it as "sort of a three-dimensional road map" for the path of the club, a guide for the ideal upward/backward backswing blend. He argued that by swinging on this angle, the golfer's movement would remain co-ordinated: "The player pre-groups his forces so that each component is correctly geared to work with the other components on the downswing."

**2 Crash... and burn**

While the pane itself represented the inclined angle of the swing, Hogan saw the golf swing operating beneath it. He wanted the golfer to imagine their lead arm brushing against the underside of the pane as they swung to the top, the lead shoulder doing something similar as it rotated down under the chin. "You are heading for disaster if you thrust your arms up above the plane so that they would shatter the pane of glass," he wrote.

3

How to use Hogan's timeless tip

This famous image remains an excellent way for golfers new and experienced to conceive the inclined plane of the golf swing. However, trying to picture a sleeve or a shoulder rubbing against it during the swing can begin to feel difficult and uncomfortable... especially as the moves Hogan describes in his book weren't exactly what he did in practice. To work on swing plane, keep the pane image in your head while using a pair of alignment sticks.

**Feel on-plane**

With those two ineffective positions logged, now move to the ideal delivery position. This time, the stick/clubshaft line points right down at the ball/ground-stick, its combined length on a similar angle to Hogan's pane of glass. Feel this position, absorb it, build in a little downswing putting momentum to find it. Then look to repeat it during the swing itself.

**Feel too flat...**

Lie one stick on the ground to represent your ball-hole line. Grip the other against the handle as shown. Take your regular stance. Swing slowly down to your delivery position, the hands at hip height. Get the stick to point well above and outside the ball/ground stick.

**Feel too steep**

Now move to the ideal delivery position. This time, the stick/clubshaft line points right down at the ball/ground-stick, its combined length on a similar angle to Hogan's pane of glass. Feel this position, absorb it, build in a little downswing putting momentum to find it. Then look to repeat it during the swing itself.

YOUR COACH



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PLAY BETTER 100

WHY IT REMAINS RELEVANT TODAY

Hogan was not the first to talk about the plane of the golf swing, but he was the first to give it a name. He was also the first to bill it warrants. Six decades on from the publication of the image, PGA coaches like me continue to deal constantly with the problems caused by getting too steep or too shallow during the swing; this simple, famous image endures as an excellent illustration of this important element of swing technique.