

Use Your Putter to Improve Your Ball Striking

We all know the importance putting has on shooting low scores, but did you ever think to use your putter to improve your ball striking? Try this drill to help train your hands and wrists into a new position for 2022. It's the same position the best golfers in the world have in their swings and a big part to what makes them such great ball strikers.

Your hands are the only thing connecting you to the golf club. The direction and distance your golf ball flies are directly related to how the clubface contacts it. Most recreational golfers have poorly trained hands and wrists during their swing. Those hands and wrists lead to inconsistency in hitting the center of the clubface, having the face open to the target at impact and too much loft on the club at impact. All these things not only strip you of distance and direction but will have you thinking you need to fix other parts of your swing.

Here is the Drill: Train your hands and wrists to properly feel your putter. If you grip your putter like you would your 7 iron, you will have your thumbs on the flat part of the grip.

Make a backswing and stop at the top. You will probably feel or see the flat part of the grip is pointing to the ground. Your Thumbs will be underneath the grip. If this is the case, Your clubface is open. This is the start of your trouble. To hit a good shot from this position requires either

perfect timing or luck, both of which are hard to come by.

Now from that position, twist your hands so the flat part of the grip points to the back of your head. (You will feel like you are trying to twist it to the sky.) Take a look at your wrists and you will see and feel more bow or flex in your lead wrist. Your trail palm will start to point to the sky. Your wrists will now look very similar to guys named Rahm, Morikawa, Hovland, Johnson, and Schauffele. All listed in the Top 10 golfers in the world.

From the top of your backswing, take 10 repetitions trying to get the flat part of the grip from your comfortable position to point at the back of your head. You can even do this while sitting on your couch! It might feel like turning a screwdriver for some.

Next try to keep your wrists in that position and take the club down to impact. When you get down to the golf ball you will see your wrists in an unfamiliar spot. You will also see the putter face delofted and more closed than your old impact position. The flat part of the grip will now be pointed to 11:00 on a watch for a frame of reference. This is the position all good ball strikers are in at impact.

You are on your way to training your hands and wrists to feel how they should feel in your swing. Devote 10 minutes a day to this drill so your brain and body can work together to process what you are doing and adapt to this new position.

You want to eventually make this swing without thinking about it.

At the end of each 10-minute practice session with your putter, pick up your 7 iron and see if you can recreate the position and feel with a conventional round grip.

Extra Credit: Go see your Illinois PGA Professional and have him put a putter grip on an old 7 or 8 iron and try this drill while hitting balls.

When you have done this drill enough and your wrists are in a better position at the top of your backswing and into impact, you will start to feel what the center of the club face feels like on a regular basis. Your golf ball will fly farther and straighter than before.

When your hands and wrists are in a better position, your body will start to work better as well. Many of the faults or issues you had like "coming over the top" or "reverse pivot" with your body positions were caused by it reacting to or trying to fix your hands during the swing. When your hands and wrists are good, your body will start to be too. That's for free! 

Mike Carbray is director of instruction for Butterfield Country Club and owner of Journey 2 Better Golf Training. He is a 2018 Illinois PGA Teacher of The Year, a 2021 Golf Digest Best In State Instructor and has been named a Top 50 Growth of The Game Instructor. Follow him on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @MikeCarbrayGolf for more information and help with your golf game.

