



Train Your Takeaway

A proper takeaway is one of the foundational components of a solid golf swing. If things go off track in the first few feet of movement, the entire swing sequence can be compromised, leading to inconsistent ball striking, loss of power, and directional issues. One key checkpoint during the takeaway is keeping the clubhead “outside the hands” as the club moves back from the address. This doesn’t mean forcing the club away from your body; rather, it refers to maintaining proper width and sequencing in the takeaway to set up a more efficient swing path.

Many amateurs mistakenly roll the clubhead inside too early by rotating the forearms or dragging the handle back with their hands. This move flattens the swing plane prematurely and can lead to an over-the-top move on the downswing, weak slices, or blocks. To help correct this and develop a fundamentally sound takeaway, you can use a simple training aid that’s probably already in your bag: alignment sticks.

Why the Clubhead Should Stay Outside the Hands

Let’s clarify what we mean by “clubhead outside the hands.” If you were to pause your swing just a couple of feet into the backswing (around when the club shaft is parallel to the ground), the clubhead should be slightly outside the line of your hands when viewed from down the target line. In this position, the clubhead is not behind your

body or rolled inside; it’s more in line with your target and keeps the shaft on plane.

This positioning encourages:

- Proper rotation of the shoulders and torso instead of the hands
- A wider arc, which increases potential speed and consistency
- A more neutral clubface, helping with square impact

How to Use Alignment Sticks to Train the Takeaway

Setup: to get started, grab two alignment sticks:

Stick #1: Lay one on the ground aimed at your target. This acts as your target line and helps square up your stance and aim.

Stick #2: This is your takeaway guide. Stick it in the ground at about a 45-degree angle just outside your trail foot, about three to four feet (right foot for right-handed golfers, left foot for a left-handed golfer), aligned parallel to your target line. The top of the stick should point upward, mimicking your ideal shaft angle during the takeaway.

Here’s a step-by-step breakdown of the drill:

The Outside-the-Hands Takeaway Guide

Set up to the ball with your normal posture and grip. Use the ground stick to align your feet, hips, and shoulders parallel to your target line.

Take your club back slowly, focusing on keeping the clubhead just outside your

hands as the club moves to a waist-high position. The goal is to match the shaft angle to the stick in the ground (Stick #2).

Use visual feedback: If your clubhead swings too far inside, you’ll either miss the alignment stick completely or notice your shaft gets too flat and inside. If you’re too steep, you might feel like you’re picking the club up vertically and disconnecting your arms from your body.

Check the position of your elbows. You should feel as if they are squeezing together as you start your backswing. Stop when the club is parallel to the ground and check that your trail elbow is higher than your lead elbow. If it is, you will find it hard to roll the club as explained earlier.

Repeat several reps, stopping at the waist-high position to check your form. Over time, try to make the movement more fluid without stopping.

Common Mistakes

Rolling the clubface open: A common misstep is allowing the clubface to open too much during the takeaway, often paired with the clubhead moving inside. Keep the clubface square to your spine angle as it rotates back. It should match the angle of your back.

Dragging the handle: Pulling the club back with your hands causes the clubhead to swing too far inside and behind the hands. Make sure the movement is led by your upper body, not just your arms.

Lifting instead of turning: Picking the club up vertically in an effort to “stay outside” often leads to a disconnected, steep motion. The club should move naturally on plane—this drill is about improving awareness, not creating artificial mechanics.

Final Thought

Using alignment sticks to train your takeaway is a simple, affordable, and incredibly effective way to improve your full swing fundamentals. By focusing on keeping the clubhead outside your hands in the early part of your swing, you’ll build a better backswing structure, increase consistency, and ultimately strike the ball more cleanly and powerfully.

Next time you head to the range, bring a couple of alignment sticks and give this takeaway drill a try. With just a few reps a day, you’ll start seeing—and feeling—the difference.

