

Your Plan for '18

Not all golf improvement comes from better technique. Instead, develop a better strategy for each hole. By Trent Wearer

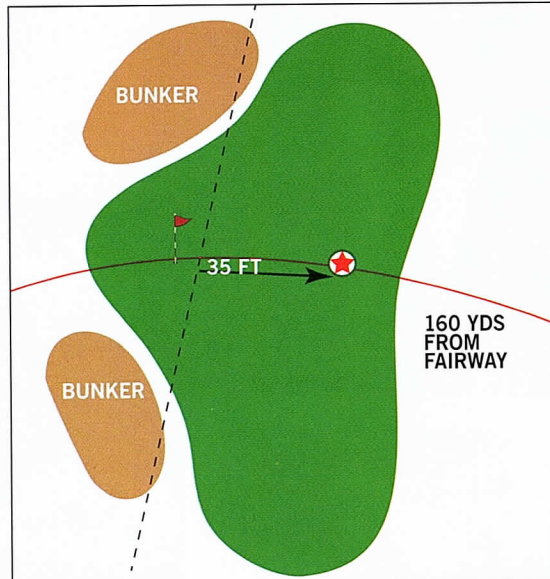
THANKS TO RANGEFINDERS and on-course GPS, we know the exact distances to every hole. But on your approach shots, the hole is not necessarily the correct target or area to which to hit your shot. For each hole you literally need to map out a strategy.

BE REALISTIC: The first aspect to a better strategy is arriving at a realistic outcome with regard to proximity to the hole. Ultimately you need to find out how close you hit your shots to a specific target. But consider: From the fairway, 150-175 yards out, the average PGA Tour player hits it 28 feet from the target; from the rough at the same distance, 43 feet. Also, from that distance, they only hit the green 63 percent of the time. You're not as good as those guys, so you need to choose targets that allow even more room for misses.

MAP YOUR APPROACHES: With the winters being less busy, head out to your home course and diagram each approach shot.

- If the course doesn't already have a drawing of each green, get out your paper and pencils and draw the shape of each green including any hazards or trouble spots around it.
 - Know the typical club that you hit into each green (Let's say it's an 8-iron on Hole 1) as well as the distance that you hit it—and don't lie to yourself! (For the purposes of this piece, let's say your 8-iron goes 160 yards).
 - Determine how close you hit the ball with that club to a target. Let's estimate that you hit it 35 feet from a target. (Find this out by going to the course early or late, hitting a few approaches and stepping them off. You can also have a session with a teacher with a launch monitor.)
- KNOW AND GO LOW:** Armed with a plan will allow you to score better—even if you're having an off day. Just make sure to move your target even farther away from the trouble. You may not shoot your best score but you'll salvage a decent score—and lose fewer golf balls. 🏌️

Rated the #1 Teacher in Colorado by his peers and *Golf Digest* since 2013, Trent Wearer, is a three-time Colorado PGA Teacher of the Year and the recipient of the Colorado PGA's Player Development Award. With the unparalleled accomplishments of his students, he has been elected as a Top 25 Elite Master Junior Coach in the U.S. by Future Champions Golf (FGC) Tour. He is a Golf Channel Academy Lead Coach and the author of the popular practice book, *Golf Scrimmages*. He and his award-winning staff coach people of all ages and abilities at Meridian Golf Club. TrentWearerGolf.com; 303-645-8000



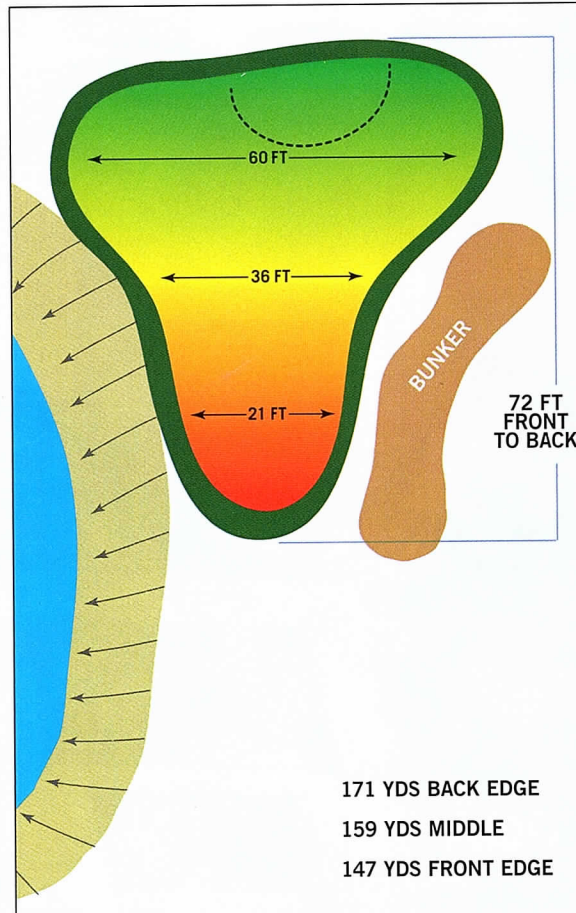
APPROACH 1:

Trouble Behind

From the closest edge of the trouble (black dashed line) step off 35 feet to the safe side to establish your target (see red star). That star/target gives you 35 feet to miss it left and not go in the trouble/bunkers and 35 feet to the right so at least you now have an easy chip than being short-sided in the bunker.

If the pin is located where the star is, take dead aim! But even if the pin isn't where the star is, the star should serve as your target. Here's why:

If the pin is in back, avoid bringing the back bunker more into play and risking a short-sided up-and-down. If the pin is in front, shoot for the star. You'd rather have a 20- to 40-foot putt from the star to a front pin than find yourself short of the green to the right.



APPROACH 2:

Trouble All Around

From the fairway, the grass between the left fringe and the water makes this shot seem benign. But its slope won't hold a ball, so the water basically starts at the left fringe.

Without considering hole locations, first think about the widths of the green. This one has three areas: the front at 21 feet wide, middle at 36 and back at 60. Knowing this alone should prompt you to hit to the back or middle-back part of the green.

This green is 72 feet (24 yards) deep, so if it's a front pin of 150 you're going to need to add at least 10-12 yards to put you in the yellow area.

If the pin was in the red area, whether or not you go at it depends on the club and how accurate you are with it. A lower handicapper might go at it with a wedge but as the shot/yardage gets longer, shot dispersion gets bigger so the player would hit beyond/over the red area giving them more area to miss right and left.

The red area with a club over a 9-iron is a very low percentage shot. Even if you avoid the water and find the bunker, a bunker shot to the red area will likely not hold the green and end up wet. If you're in the bunker or green area, a shot from the bunker gets easier because you have some room beyond the hole.

171 YDS BACK EDGE
159 YDS MIDDLE
147 YDS FRONT EDGE