

Gripping News to Fix Your Swing

Changing the way you hold the club this winter could have great impact next spring. By Trent Wearner

AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS SUCCESS, Jack Nicklaus would famously visit his teacher Jack Grout during the off-season. They'd work on, of all things, his grip. That doesn't surprise me. Fundamentals, such as grip and setup, get a little off during the season—the result of players trying to patch a bunch of ineffective positions together to find that one good shot, while those three, four or five “others” dominate their results.

Those three, four or five undesirable shots are typically just slightly different compensations

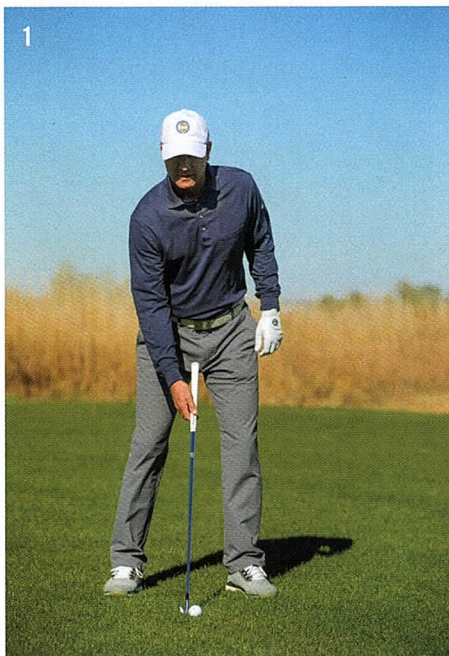
unleashed by a poor grip. A disastrous chain of events regularly occurs because of a poor grip; conversely, an effective chain of events can follow a proper grip.

The grip is the most “fundamental fundamental”—and the one that poor golfers get all wrong as they go through the process of establishing it. Why is that?

The answer is simple: People go wrong by placing their hands on the handle while in the address position.

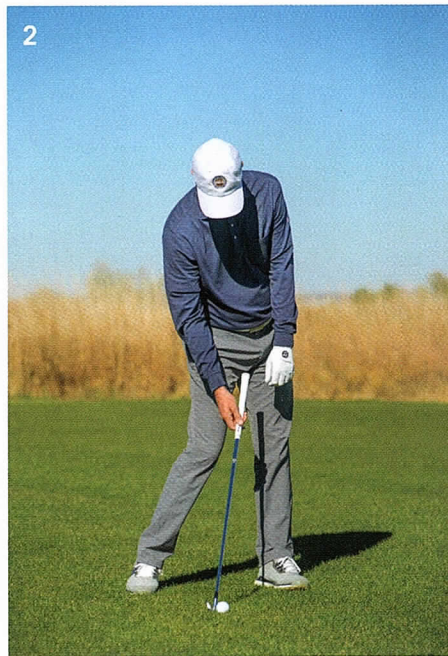
First of all, your grip has a direct influence on the clubface throughout the entire swing and whether your grip produces a square, open or closed clubface is what makes you either unconsciously patch a bunch of ineffective compensations to try to direct the ball toward the target or not.

That said, you want to place your hands on the handle in a way that is natural to how your hands hang and, most critically, that you do so while you and your club are in the impact position, not the address position.



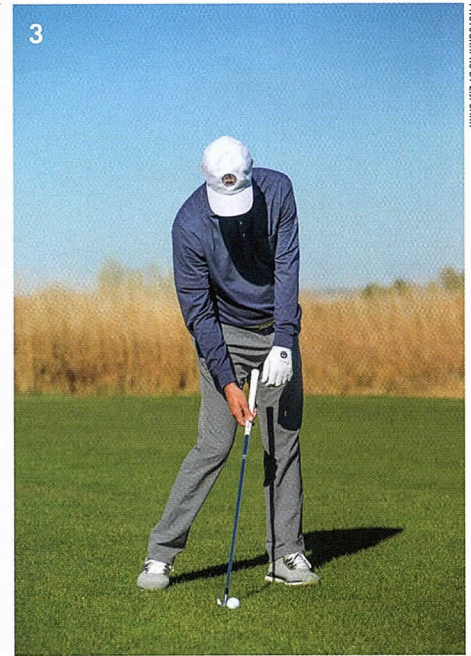
FIRST

Without using a “golf grip” simply hold a middle or short iron in your trail hand (right for a right-handed player) and sole the club on the ground so that the clubface is relatively square (I say “relatively” square because some people prefer a slight fade while others prefer a slight draw. These small, yet significant differences are allowable.)



SECOND

Continuing to hold the club with just your trail hand, move your body to the impact position. This means—and this is important—that your weight should be heavily shifted onto your lead leg so that it is perpendicular to the ground and your hips are open. Your right knee has kicked in toward the left and the right heel has come off the ground a bit. Notice, too, how the shaft/handle leans toward the target in this position.



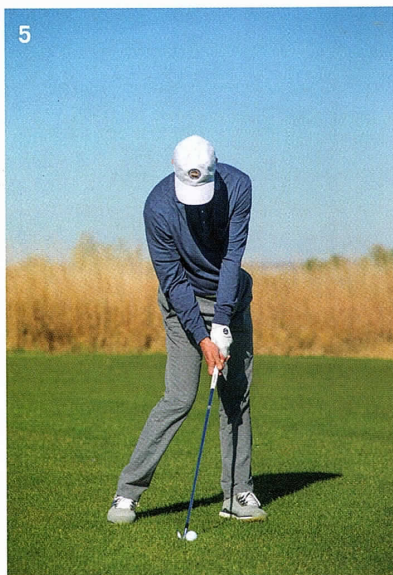
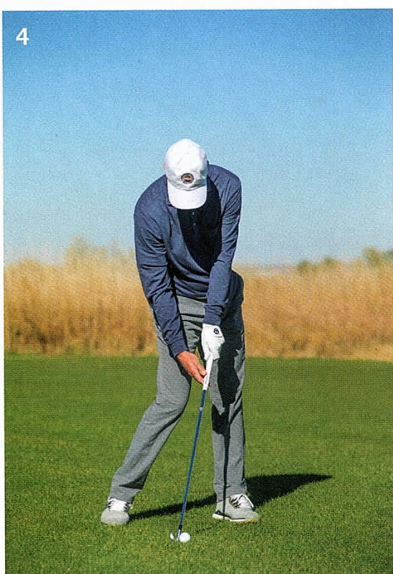
THIRD

Now, with your left arm hanging relaxed in a natural position to its side, slowly bring it out to the grip keeping that same natural hanging angle to your hand (ie: the amount of glove logo you see when the left hand is to your side is the same amount you should see when it moves onto the handle). Remember to keep the thumb and forefinger of this glove hand close together.

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THEN


With your left hand naturally on the handle while in an impact position, allow your right hand to hang naturally and then place it on the handle in its natural position.



FINALLY

After placing both hands on the handle while at impact, bring your body and hands back to the address position and you'll likely feel quite different than your normal grip. Your top hand will probably be turned over more showing the logo on your glove to the world (now you know why it's placed there).

Now hit some golf balls knowing that one swing is not a scientific sample. It's possible that the ball now curves a bit to the left or at least

more than you're used to. If the ball curves too much, it's because your previous compensations are still present. They'll begin to disappear naturally over time, or you can find a fantastic coach to help speed that process. Remember that an open clubface—the biggest reason why too many golfers in the world suffer from a slice—is caused by a terrible chain of events that begins with a dysfunctional grip. This different process of gripping the club should destroy that chain. 

Trent Wearner, owner of the Trent Wearner Golf Academy in Englewood, is a three-time Colorado PGA Teacher of the Year and three-time winner of the Colorado PGA's Adult and Youth Player Development Award. Frequently rated the #1 Golf Course Teacher in Colorado by his peers and *Golf Digest*, he has appeared numerous times on The Golf Channel and *Morning Drive*. trentwearnergolf.com; 303-645-8000