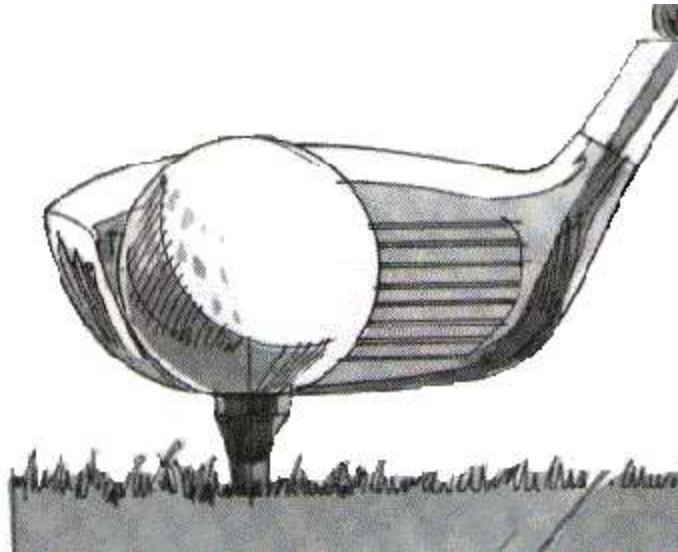


Fire In the Hole; How to Play Golf without It Being Difficult Vol.2 Beginners Guide..



by Terry D. Clark

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INTRODUCTION

Famous author Mark Twain once wrote, "Golf is a good walk wasted." Many people feel this way. After all, what's so fun and interesting about

hitting a little white ball with a metal stick trying to get it in a little hole? However, the truth is there is fun to be had on the golf course as is evidenced by the millions of golf enthusiasts all over the world.

Ever since the game of golf was invented back in the 15th century, people have been fascinated with mastering this often frustrating game. In 1750, the game of golf evolved into what we know it as today, and since that time, technology and technique has improved on the game, but mastering the game of golf still lies in the individual playing the game.

One of the great things about golf is that it is more than a physical sport. Your mental state can play a huge part in your golf game. If you hit a bad shot, it can really affect your next stroke and so on and so forth. It's important to realize that if golf were less challenging, it wouldn't be nearly as much fun.

People can spend thousands of dollars in efforts to improve their golf game. They buy videos, books, new equipment, and lessons from a professional. Improving the golf game is a multi-million dollar industry as it seems like there are all sorts of people offering advice on things you can change to improve your score.

Just as the golf swing has been improved upon over time, so has the equipment used to play golf. In the 1800's, golf bags came into use as an easier way to carry around clubs and balls. Golf balls were made lighter and able to travel further and tees were used to help make the ball easier to hit off the tee box.

But even with all this new technology, no one has really perfected the game of golf. If that were the case, there would be scores of 18 with a hole in one on every hole. The truth is that even the professionals can't perfect their golf game. Man is fallible and he makes mistakes. But when it comes to the game of golf, mistakes are inevitable.

I've heard many golfers tell me that they played great but scored horribly. That statement made me really think about my own golf game. I, too, have had rounds where I've hit the ball well but it wasn't reflected in my score. How is it possible that we can hit the ball so well yet still take a 6 on a par 4 hole? The answer isn't easy, but it can be addressed.

I'm not a golf pro, but I do love the game of golf. I've always wanted to improve my golf game, so this book will help both you and me. I decided

that researching what the pros have to say would be a great way to put their advice to good use. Compiling all of that information into this book would also be a great way to share that advice.

Let's look at different aspects of the game of golf and find some easy ways to improve our scores!

EQUIPMENT

Believe it or not, the equipment you use in your golf game can truly make a difference in how well you strike the ball. With new technologies in club designs and materials used to make the clubs, you can get overwhelmed at the various choices you will have when buying golf equipment. We'll look at this section from the perspective of your skill level.

Beginner – Average scores over 100

Because you are just learning the game, you will want to have clubs that are more forgiving when you make bad shots – and those bad shots will come. The beginning golfer should be looking for clubs that are the most forgiving when the ball is struck off-center. Perimeter-weighted clubs place the most weight of the club around the edges, which prevents the club head from turning with a poorly hit shot.

If you would like something that makes it very easy to get the ball in the air, you should look for irons that have more sole weighting. Sole weighting lowers the center of gravity by putting the weight under the ball, helping to get it in the air quicker.

Titanium is stronger, denser and lighter than steel, thus the club head can be made larger with the same amount of material. A larger head also means the size of the sweet spot will be larger. Since off-center shots will make you lose distance, a larger sweet spot will be the most forgiving.

Some heads feature an "offset" design to prevent your shots spinning left-to-right and giving a straighter ball flight. The offset means the face is

slightly behind the hosel of the club head. This gives you an extra split second in the swing to get the face back to the square position.

For your driver, the larger the head the more forgiving it will be. These are all going to have the largest face, producing the largest sweet spot. This is very important, since a beginner doesn't always hit the ball right in the middle of the clubface. (Studies have shown you lose 10 yards for every 1/8" of an inch you miss the sweet spot!!!)

For fairway woods, the lower profile woods make it easier to get the ball airborne, as the weight is mostly below the center of the ball.

Graphite shafts are the most forgiving shafts for poorly hit shots. They absorb the vibration like a shock absorber, allowing for a much better feeling shot. Graphite shafts are lighter weight, so you will pick up some swing speed which will give you more distance. For this reason graphite shafts are more popular than steel shafts in the metal woods when distance is your primary goal.

Steel shafts don't feel as soft, and they are heavier, but they are more accurate than graphite. For this reason, they are usually better for the irons, since you are less concerned with distance and more concerned with accuracy since you are hitting into greens and at the pin.

Intermediate – Average scores between 80 and 100

The intermediate golfer should be looking for a club that maximizes both distance and control. The more perimeter-weighting you have, the more forgiving the club, but the more weight directly behind the ball gives you more distance. These club heads all seek to optimize the balance between distance and control.

You should look for distance clubs with titanium heads. They are very light, allowing you to generate more club head speed to get more distance, yet still more controllable than the largest of the oversize titanium heads.

For intermediate golfers, any shaft would work well. It's important that you pick out the properties of a shaft that will help your game the most. The

lightweight shafts have a lower flex point, which help you get the ball in the air quicker. The standard weight shafts have a higher flex point, which allows for better control. Graphite shafts and the True Temper Sensicore shafts have a bit softer feel.

Advanced – Average score less than 80

Advanced golfers need the weight of the club head where it is needed most... right behind the ball. The weight is more directly behind the ball, meaning a shot struck in the center of the club will explode off the club face.

The advanced golfer will want a driver with a large head so the sweet spot is larger and you have a better possibility of longer drives. Irons should be lightweight with the proper degree of loft for all situations.

If you are an advanced golfer, you probably already know what clubs work best for you and where you need to upgrade.

Test out various clubs and find which ones are good fits for you. Practice, if possible, with different styles and take note of those that give you the best results.

When it comes to golf balls, you will want those that can give you the most distance and that aren't too "hard". There are many brands on the market that can fit into this mold, so test out a few and see which one you like the best.

So you've got your equipment, now let's take a look at some of the basics of golf and a good, effective golf swing.

THE BASICS

The purpose of this book isn't to teach you how to swing a golf club. However, it can never hurt to go over the basics of the golf swing and the golf stance. So often, we get into bad habits on the golf course when it comes to our swings. We forget the things we initially learned about and

start swinging the club in really the wrong way.

Everyone has their own golf swing style. Very few people stand the same way, have the same backswing, and hit the ball the same way. For that matter, very few people are able to duplicate a swing exactly the same every single time. But there are some basics to a good golf swing that everyone should keep in mind.

The full golf swing is an unnatural, highly complex motion and notoriously difficult to learn. It is not uncommon for beginners to spend several months practicing the very basics before playing their first ball on a course. It is usually very difficult to acquire a stable and successful swing without professional instruction and even highly skilled golfers may continue to take golf lessons for many years.

So let's just go over the basics of the golf swing first – just as a review.

The Grip

There are three basic golf grips that you can use: the overlapping grip, the baseball grip, and the interlocking grip. We'll cover each of those in a minute. Here's the basic rule for gripping a golf club.

Start by holding the club directly in front of you with your right hand with the club head pointing away from you at about a 45 degree angle.

Next grip the club with your left hand. The club will be mainly in the palm across the pads at the base of the fingers. However, the club will lie across the first section of the index finger. The thumb will be positioned straight on top of the golf club shaft. Relative to the golf club, the thumb will be in the twelve o'clock position. Now, with your right hand, grip the golf club just above your left hand with the fingers, not the palm, of your right hand. The thumb will be positioned slightly off to the left. Relative to the golf club, the thumb will be in an eleven o'clock position. If you have gripped the golf club correctly, only the first two knuckles of your left hand will be visible. Also, your left thumb should be completely hidden under your right hand. The index finger position of your right hand will look and feel like a gun trigger finger.

Here are three of the most common golf grips and how to use them:

- The overlapping grip is the most common golf grip used. It is used mostly by male golfers and those with strong wrists and forearms. The little finger of the right hand lies on top of or overlaps the index finger on the left hand.
- The baseball grip is most commonly used by younger golfers, females, seniors, and those with weaker wrists and arms. The index finger of the left hand and the little finger of the right hand meet but do not overlap or interlock.
- An interlocking grip will be used by golfers with shorter hands and fingers, those with thicker or chunkier palms, and golfers who have difficulty with the overlapping grip. The index finger of the left hand and the little finger of the right hand overlap each other and interlock.

If your golf grip pressure is right, the club could almost be pulled out of your hands, but not quite. A correct golf grip will make you feel as if you are holding the club mostly in the palm and last three fingers of your left hand. Regardless, both hands should hold the club with equal pressure. A correct golf grip doesn't guarantee a successful golf

swing; however, a defective golf grip will almost always result in a failed golf swing.

Your Stance

If you start with a bad golf stance, you'll probably follow with a bad golf back swing, a bad downswing, and a bad follow through. Not to worry though. It's just not that difficult! Your golf stance may not be perfect, but you can compensate by staying balanced and relaxed. Your weight should be equally distributed over your left and right leg. If you can pick either of your feet off the ground, you're not balanced.

Start by placing the inside of your front foot just ahead of the ball. Since you're going to be using a driver or 3 wood, the front and back feet should be shoulder width or slightly more than shoulder width apart.

Next, bend at the top of the legs (keep your back straight) and then bend slightly at the knees. The kneecaps will be directly above the balls of your

feet. The angle of your back to the ground will be approximately 45 degrees. Your arms should be hanging straight down from your shoulders.

Good posture counts. Keep your back straight but don't tense up. You might think of it as pushing your back pockets higher. Your weight should be on the balls of your feet, not on the toes or heels. Likewise, your weight should be equally distributed between your front and back foot. Now you should be more comfortable and less tense. If you're out of balance, you're falling down. That's no way to start a good golf swing.

A line drawn across the front of your feet should point to your target. You may want to check this by first placing your club up against the toes of your feet and then step back and see if the club is really pointing to your target. This is your target line and your knees, hips, and shoulders should also be parallel to this line. One slight adjustment will be the position of your shoulders. When you assume the proper golf stance and grip, your club and left arm will form a straight line between your shoulder and the ball. For this to happen, your right shoulder will be slightly lower to the ground than the left, but a line through your shoulders should still be parallel to the target line.

Once you grip the club and take your stance at the ball, find a way to relax and loosen up before you start your swing. You may want to waggle – or shake your tush - just a little bit and to heck with those who might laugh at you. Once you hit that monster shot, they'll stop. Now you're ready to swing.

The Backswing

Essentially, the backswing is a rotation to the right, consisting of a shifting of the player's body weight to the right side, a turning of the pelvis and shoulders, lifting of the arms and flexing of the elbows and wrists. At the end of the backswing the hands are above the right shoulder, with the club pointing more or less in the intended direction of ball flight.

The downswing is roughly a backswing reversed. After the ball is hit, the follow-through stage consists of a continued rotation to the left. At the end of the swing, the weight has shifted almost entirely to the left foot, the body is fully turned to the left and the hands are above the left shoulder with the club hanging down over the players' back.

Instead of thinking about your arms and swinging your club backwards, try to think of your back swing as turning your back to the target. You're not swinging the club up in the air; instead you're just putting the club behind your back. It's like winding a spring! The back swing works from the top down. The back swing takeaway starts at the top with your arms and shoulder turning, and it works its way down to your hips and legs. The back swing is all about coiling up your body and creating the muscle tension or torque needed to release a powerful downswing. More specifically, resistance is created between the greater turning of the upper body and shoulders and the lesser turning of the hips and lower body.

Don't get in a hurry! A hurried back swing doesn't make the downswing any faster. In fact, it may be just the opposite. You've got to remember that somewhere at the top of that back swing, you've got to change and go the exact opposite direction.

The speed of your back swing should be at a steady tempo, not real fast or real slow. The tendency is to go too fast. Any time your golf swing begins to break down; your first correction should usually be to slow down my back swing.

Turn your back toward the target or, maybe better, think of turning your chest away from the target. Pick the thought that produces the greater feeling of coiling or resistance. Don't allow the back knee to fly outwards. Keep your weight towards the inside of that foot.

Your wrists should be completely cocked by the time your left arm is parallel to the ground. The golf club shaft should be at a 90 degree angle to your left arm.

Don't focus on the club head during the backswing. Instead think of the arm as being hinged at the left shoulder. Then, like a gate that swings open from its hinges, the left arm hinges at the left shoulder and swings across the body until it approaches the right side at my right armpit. The left arm remains relatively straight, but could bend slightly.

Your shoulder and upper body turn begin as the left arm reaches this position. As the arms go back, two things should happen:

1. The forearms will naturally rotate clockwise slightly until the golf club head points to the sky. Opening the club face more won't seem right to you if you tend to slice, but don't resist this very natural movement.
2. As your arms travel up and back and the golf club shaft approaches parallel to the ground, you will gradually begin cocking your wrists. Then by the time that your left arm is parallel to the ground, your wrists should be completely cocked at a 90 degree angle.

Cocking your wrists is a very important part of creating club head speed. This is often a big swing problem. You can get so concerned about "taking the club straight back" at the beginning of your back swing that you don't completely cock your wrists. Fixing this problem can straighten out several golf swing problems.

The next part of the golf swing is the shoulder and upper body turn. The left arm has swung across the body near the right armpit. The natural continuation of this motion is to begin the turning of the shoulders. The shoulders will turn from parallel to the target line to approximately perpendicular to the target line depending on your own flexibility. As this happens, the hips and then legs will also become involved in the turn.

Wouldn't you like to feel more body torque build up in your golf back swing? Of course! A friend gave me this golf swing tip just the other day. Maybe you'll find it to be as helpful as I did. Instead of trying to create body torque by turning your shoulders, think of turning your lower chest (Let's say about six inches above your bellybutton) away from the target. Of course when you do it this way your shoulders will still turn but you should feel much more torque building through your body.

Don't let the knee of your back leg turn or fly out or to the back as the back swing progresses. You'll lose part of your body torque. At the height of the back swing, you'll feel like your back is over top of your back leg. At this point your weight has shifted back over your back leg.

It is truly a myth that the head stays over the ball as at address and the body turns on an axis formed by a line traveling through the head and the

backbone. In reality, the body turns on an axis formed by a line traveling through the head and the back leg. Keep in mind that the head is moving slightly backwards. The head should stay fairly level and not bob up and down. Where are the arms and club at the end of the back swing? Should the golf club be parallel to the ground? Honestly, you shouldn't really don't give that much thought. As long as you don't bend the left arm more than slightly, these positions will be determined by how far you can turn your upper body.

If you keep your back knee in, the back foot will feel your body weight on the inside as the shoulders turn. Towards the end of the golf back swing, some golfers make the mistake of letting the heel of their front foot leave the ground. If the back swing coils the spring, the

feet must stay anchored to the ground to give the body something to coil against. Better to let the front foot roll or sort of lay down on the inside of the foot without dragging.

If you start with a correct golf stance, grip, and back swing, the best advice for your down swing for the most part is to just let it happen! The down swing and follow through should be the very natural result of everything that precedes it. You may want to use the "No Arms Drill" in the next section to memorize the feel of the golf swing which leads to a more comfortable, automatic golf swing. If you're at the correct position at the top of your back swing, your body will start to unwind releasing the golf club which will strike the golf ball and lead to a balanced follow through.

Think of the follow-through as your victory salute to a successful golf swing! Your front leg will be fairly straight and your hips will be forward forming a straight line with your front leg.

Your head may feel like its back a bit and your back leg will be forward of the back foot which has rolled to the inside, front of the foot. Most all of your weight will be on your front foot, completing your weight shift from the back side to the front side. This is like a barometer of your entire swing. When your golf swing is balanced and smooth, you end with that nice reverse C position at the end. On the other hand, you could end your golf swing off balance and catching yourself from falling down. Then it's time to go back to the beginning of your golf swing and find where you lost that balance.

You should have only one swing thought during your golf down swing.

That's because you really don't have time for two. Consequently, your only thought should be to turn your belt buckle (or bellybutton) towards the target as fast as you possibly can. This movement should begin about a third or half way through the golf down swing. It will end, of course, when you are pointed towards the target at which point you will have already hit the golf ball and you're into the follow through. And you should also be seeing the golf ball traveling straight down the fairway!

On the golf down swing your body will move forward and turn on an axis formed by a line traveling through the head and the front leg. Keep in mind that the head will be moving forward from its position at the end of your golf back swing; however, the head should stay fairly level and not bob up and down.

Since the golf down swing starts from the bottom and works its way up, then the feet are the place to start. Let's see, at the end of the back swing, the front foot was rolling (almost laying down) on the inside of that foot. Consequently, a good trigger motion would start by moving the left side towards the target and placing that foot back to being flat on the ground. To trigger this move, you should plant your front foot by moving the front knee towards the target. Your lower body will slide towards the target. Since both knees are still slightly bent and flexed, this move will give you sort of a squatty look and feel. You might feel as if you're dropping down slightly. Planting that front foot begins the chain reaction of your body uncoiling and your weight will shift back to the left (front) side. What you do not want to do is start the down swing with your arms and shoulders. This move will cause your wrists to un-cock too soon (called casting) resulting in some pretty nasty results (topped shots, slices).

The most effective golf swing tip I've found to prevent casting is also a very logical one. Begin your down swing before you finish your back swing. Makes sense! You're not likely to start your down swing with your arms and upper body if they're still winding up. So, as you feel your upper body approaching the end of the back swing you will move your front knee towards the target. As you do this, you'll feel that low, squatty position and know that you're starting your back swing properly with the lower body.

Often the golf swing feels uncomfortable and awkward, so you may want to try the following drill until you start feeling better about

the golf swing.

No Arms Drill

Remember, I said you should probably be spending less time thinking about what your arms are doing and where they're going? Once my wrists are cocked, I really don't think much about my arms.

This golf swing drill, simply put, is just practicing your golf swing without using a golf club. Consequently, you'll be able to concentrate on the feeling of your muscles coiling up and releasing without being confused or distracted by the movement of your arms.

This is also a good opportunity to practice keeping your feet on the ground. Practice having your front foot roll inward on the golf back swing and memorize that feeling.

Another upside to this drill is that you can practice it anywhere or anytime.

Begin by getting into your regular golf stance. You can place a ball down in front of you or imagine where it would be if that helps. Now instead of holding a golf club, cross your arms in front of you to where your left hand is at your right shoulder and your right hand is at your left shoulder.

Try not to do this drill fast or slow, but at a steady tempo. Do this drill frequently and memorize the movements and how they feel so you can do them without think when you're on the golf course.

Again, the golf back swing starts at the top (your shoulders and arms) and works its way down to your hips and legs. Remember, your head will move to the back but should not bob up or down. It should stay level. Of course, in this drill you don't use your arms, so you begin by turning your shoulders. I find it more beneficial to think of turning your midsection (Let's say about six inches above your bellybutton.) away from the target. Of course when you do it this way your shoulders will also turn. Get comfortable as you are feeling the torque building through your body. As your shoulders and hips turn, remember to not let your right (back) knee turn outwards (towards the back). This will have the feeling of pushing that knee inwards and/or keeping your body weight more on the inside of the back foot. Feel the front knee turn inwards and the front foot rolls towards the inside but still stay on the ground.

Start from the bottom. This golf swing drill is a good time to practice moving

your front knee towards the target as a trigger to your down swing. Don't forget to start that move before the back swing is complete. Get comfortable with that low, squatty feeling. Turn your hips with the swing thought of turning your belt buckle to the target. You will feel like your hips are leading the rest of your body. The shoulders will follow as you pivot on your front leg.

Use this drill to commit to memory, or muscle memory, any movement that isn't a swing thought. In a slight variation of this drill, you could start the golf back swing with your arms (no club). Practice hinging your arms at the shoulder and cocking your wrists as your arms cross your chest near the back arm pit triggering your shoulder turn.

And that's the basics of the golf swing. You won't get any better unless you practice, but if you have good solid mechanics in your golf swing, you have the beginning to a great game!

We've already said that golf is much more than just a physical game. It's a mental game as well. You have to keep a positive mindset when on the golf course, so getting your mind in the right place is very important.

THE MENTAL GAME OF GOLF

When you begin to address the golf ball and prepare for your swing, it's essential that you have a sense of relaxation. If you are tense when you swing your club, the chances of you hitting a bad shot are increased by leaps and bounds. However, you don't want to be TOO relaxed lest your grip isn't tight enough to hit the ball solidly.

Without relaxation, it is more difficult to maintain your tempo or rhythm from swing to swing and stay in good balance from start to finish. Because it is essential for the golf swing to function properly, relaxation of the mind and body should be our first priority. Please keep in mind that this also applies to the short game, even though I will be referring to the full swing.

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