

The Drive for Success: Tempo, Mind and Body

For most Golfers there are two components of the golf game that outweigh all the others combined.

Driving and Putting.

As Golfers we just love to rip it off the Tee and see those putts sink into the middle of the hole – we never tire of it. But they have a greater impact on our game than we realise - the difference between a good score and a bad score is often down to the way we execute these two skills.

A golfer can be a bad driver and still get a decent score if he is a good putter. And conversely, a bad putter can end up with a respectable score by driving well. The old adage about 'driving for show and putting for dough' is not entirely correct. Driving well can certainly pay dividends in the final score too.

But which is easier to learn?

I'd probably say putting is easier for most golfers to pick up initially. The amount of movement and coordination required for driving is more complex than the hand/eye focused activity of putting. There are similarities in executing both well but most golfers would agree that driving is more complex and harder to execute than putting.

Even for "older" golfers whose handicap is sneaking back up point 1 at a time, it is often his driving and long game that will have suffered due to a lack of flexibility and suppleness that comes with the onset of years. However, they are all invariably still wizards around the green. A good putting game once learned, usually stays with you for life; whereas a good driving game often suffers.

Regardless of your age though there are certain fundamentals of driving that every golfer should know; fundamentals so important that they will often make a tangible difference to your game:

SWING TEMPO – If you go out to a driving range and take a look at everyone there, you can always point out the beginners from the experienced players. Most beginners have a tendency to rush through the swing. They may take forever when standing over the ball, trying to focus with all their might on hitting the ball - but once the swing begins - it's like a whirlwind - and as a result they often miss hit the shot, ending up with a slice or top or they even miss the ball altogether.

One **practice drill** to force yourself into taking time on the swing is to take a normal address but when you get to the top of the backswing hold that position for a **count of 3** and **THEN** swing through. This will force you to relax and get into the habit of proper follow-through and patience throughout the entire swing.

USING YOUR MIND – Some of the mental aspects of golf are apparent even to the novice golfer. However, the mental aspect of driving itself is often neglected. But to drive successfully you must engage in Visualisation. The pros use visualisation, and if it helps them, it will help you too.

Before you take your drive, run the process through your mind. See yourself in your "mental movie" picking out a target down the fairway (or range) you then address the ball, get comfortable, relax and execute a smooth, even tempo swing that sends the ball straight down the fairway to the target that you had picked out. Then, and only then, should you actually go through the motions that you visualised, for real - making sure that you perform each step in the same relaxed manner that you did in your "mental movie".

When you are over the ball, relax and let go. Believe the ball will go towards your target. You'll be surprised just how many times it does. And when it does it reinforces your belief, your confidence grows and the whole driving experience becomes a successful self-perpetuating process. Even to the point, that should you hit a poor drive (once in a blue moon) you simply shrug it off as a "freak" rather than the norm.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR BODY – As mentioned earlier, the drive is more physical than putting. Because of this, those that do not have natural body coordination and control tend to suffer the most on their drives. So although it's most important to visualise your swing, as mentioned before, it's also important that your tempo is smooth and that you don't rush things in the downswing.

Only do this **practice drill** until you feel what it's trying to explain, then go back to focussing on the visualisation aspect of your driving:

Try making a long, slow backswing with your driver and feel the transfer of weight take place. By the end of the backswing you should feel that your right hip is supporting the majority of your weight. If you can hold onto that pressure as you begin to transfer into the downswing you will find that your transition is smoother.

The objective of all of this focus is to make sure your body doesn't outpace your hands in the swing. You want the hands to lead and the body to follow or you want them to smoothly flow together. What you don't want is the body to lead the hands. Because if your chest is turning too fast towards the target line during your downswing, your arms and hands get left behind creating an "open posture" at contact. Which results in the customary "slice" or even "topped" shot. This exercise will prevent that from happening. So once you get a "feel" of what's being explained here, let the tempo and visualisation take over and see yourself repeating the swing – over and over.

Good luck with your driving.