

LEARN TO PLAY SIMPLY GREAT GOLF!

Chapter 7: G.A.S.P. Pre-Swing Fundamentals

By PGA Professional, Mike Passmore

Simply Great Golf Academy, Possum Trot Golf Club, N. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

This chapter of Learn to Play Simply Great Golf teaches you to play your best golf by using the same G.A.S.P Fundamentals – Grip, Aim, Stance and Posture, of the best golfers for full swing shots. These pre-swing fundamentals promote your best golf swings.

Grip . . . is the coordinated alignments of your hands, club face and shaft.

The best approach is to begin by viewing the general proper alignment of your hands by relaxing your arms with your hands by your sides. This is a neutral alignment that matches a good basic golf swing for a straight ball flight. Your hands naturally hang in an “over” alignment rather than “under” as you see the back of your hands, rather than your palms.

Begin your “grip” by resting your club head on the ground with the club next to your lead side (left side for righties) where your hand and arm naturally hang. Visualize a line straight down the shaft that runs straight out the bottom line of the club face to coordinate the alignment of the shaft and face.

Next, align your lead hand on the club handle so that the heel of your hand is just below the end of your club handle. The club should lay diagonally across your hand in a combination of a fingers-palm wrap with the heel of your hand and your thumb on top of the club handle.

Now, bring your lead hand and club over in front of your body and position your other hand in the relaxed, hanging alignment so that the club is wrapped in your fingers and the thumb of your top hand is mostly covered by bringing your lifeline into it.

There are three basic styles of hand alignment – over-lapping, inter-locking and “10-finger”. All three grips are functional and the simplest grip for beginners is the 10-finger grip with the pinky finger of the bottom hand next to and touching the index finger of the top hand.

Proper Grip Pressure is probably the single most important pre-swing fundamental that produces your best golf swing. I would estimate that 90% of poor golf shots, from putting to driving, come from excessive tension of the hands and arms.

Once you have formed your “grip”, with the club head resting on the ground, use just enough tension in your hands to hinge your wrists and bring your club shaft to the horizontal position. This position is the heaviest the club will ever feel and this position gives you the feel of the proper tension level of both your hands and arms that you must begin with and maintain throughout your golf swing to play your best golf.

Aim . . . is the relation of your club face to your target.

Make your “leading edge” or bottom line on your club face at a right angle to your target line – the visualized line from your ball to your target.

Many golfers have learned to stand behind their ball and pick a point on the ground up to a few feet ahead of their ball as an easier way to align the bottom line on the club face toward the target. I did my

own study and found that approximately 90% of golfers aim better by looking back and forth between their club face and target rather than trying to aim to an intermediate point.

You can make sure you are practicing proper club face aim by laying a club down on the ground a few inches across from your ball and pointing to your target. The bottom line on your club face should be at a right angle to the club shaft line on the ground.

Stance . . . is the width and pointing of your feet and the alignment of your feet in relation to your club face and ball.

Position your feet “shoulder width” apart for iron shots— shoulder joints to insteps (2 inches wider for wood shots), and with your toes pointing slightly outward to promote the proper body rotation and weight transfer during your swing. Also position your feet so that a visualized line across your toes is at a right angle to the bottom line on your aimed club face and so that your ball is positioned correctly for the club you are using.

The proper “ball position” is to visualize a right angle line to the line across your toes with the ball positioned in the middle of your stance with your wedges - your shortest full swing clubs, and one inch inside the instep of your target-side foot with your driver (the left foot for righties). Position your ball progressively toward your target-side foot one-half inch with each club beginning with a #9 iron so that the #9 iron is one half inch ahead of center, the #8 iron is one inch ahead, etcetera.

You should be trying to make one basic golf swing motion for most golf shots. Based on this principle, your ball position in relation to your stance should change for different length clubs. Your shorter clubs with a more vertical shaft angle will have a different rate of rotation than your longer clubs which means your club face will “square” to your target earlier at the bottom area of your swing arc.

Also, a more centered ball position will create a more descending angle of the club head causing more golf ball back-spin and your ball will stop more quickly after landing than a more forward ball position. A more forward driver ball position will produce less back-spin so that your ball will release and roll more for longer drives.

Posture . . . is the alignment of your body. Proper posture promotes the properly coordinated body rotation, “weight transfer” and “arm swing” with balance throughout your swing.

Stand up straight, stick your rear end way out and allow your upper body to tip forward keeping your back straight and your neck in line with your spine. Flex your knees slightly and pick your heels up slightly then drop them so that your weight is positioned slightly forward of center. Your arms should be straight and hanging from your shoulders, not reaching and not too close to your body or your arms will not move on the proper path.

The best golfers are very consistent in their approach to orienting themselves to their club, ball and target. They understand the influence their Grip, Aim, Stance and Posture can have on the quality of their golf swing and golf shot.

Chapter 8 of Learn to Play Simply Great Golf will detail The Best Full Swing Training Exercises.

Mike Passmore has achieved a ranking of 2006 Top 6 PGA Instructor in the U.S. and he is a 3-Time PGA Section Teacher of the Year