

The complete golf swing

Part 2: Stance

Inside Golf continues our comprehensive instructional series on the complete golf swing. This month Peter Croker delivers an in-depth look at stance.



Peter Croker

Alignment

Feet, knees, hips & shoulders should be parallel to the target line.

Periodically place a club across your toes after you have set up for your shot. Then step back and check this alignment. Keep at it until you can get it right.

Have someone else check your shoulder and hip alignment by placing a club across your shoulders and then hips. You could sometimes swear these alignments are parallel to the target line, only to find them not even close!

Three point set exercise

Starting from an erect & good posture:

- Point 1 - Bend at hips (not waist) allowing buttocks to push out, then
- Point 2 - Unlock knees, then
- Point 3 - A) Slide hips slightly left
B) Tilt backbone (not just shoulders) slightly right.



Foot and Ball Position

For a golfer who is 5 foot 8 inches tall, stance measured from outside the heels may vary from about 20 inches (shoulder width) for a driver down to about 16 inches apart (hip width) for shorter irons. For a taller golfer these measurements might be a bit wider, for a shorter golfer these measurements might be a bit narrower. Your feet would be 'toed out a bit' (about 15 degrees).

Because you are pushing through impact and will therefore get more extension, the ball is played opposite the toe side of center of your clubface. This will allow you to be just that bit more aggressive through your shots.

Ball position exercise

Ball position is critical and can vary a bit for different golfers and maybe for an individual golfer over time. Hit a ball off a tight fairway lie (very closely cut grass) and then note where the ground has been first contacted in relation to your stance. It may be a couple of inches inside of your left heel, or vary from this. Repeat the process placing the ball immediately behind where you first contacted the ground until you find the location where you are able to reliably hit crisp shots, striking the ball first and ground immediately afterward. This is where you should position the ball for your future shots with that club. This position may vary a bit from long irons to short irons. Perform this test to determine ball position for chipping as well.

After completing the above, you could also place some powder on your clubface and make some shots, ensuring you are striking the ball on the center of the clubface. You might find that you have to correct the ball position in terms of how close you stand to the ball.

Hands & Arms

You have bent over at the hips so that your shoulders are over the balls of your feet and your buttocks is out for balance. Your hands should hang straight down. Now when you hold a club as the clubshaft lengthens your

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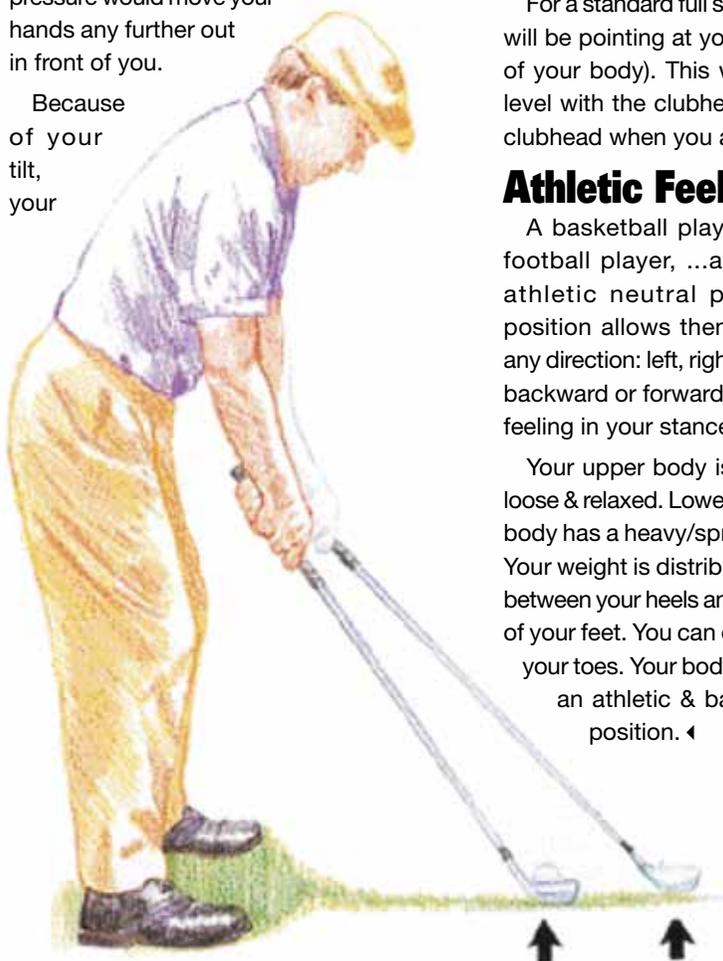
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hands will ride a bit higher to accommodate the additional length. For structure, your hands would be pushing downward and out the clubshaft, but not so much that this pressure would move your hands any further out in front of you.

Because of your tilt, your



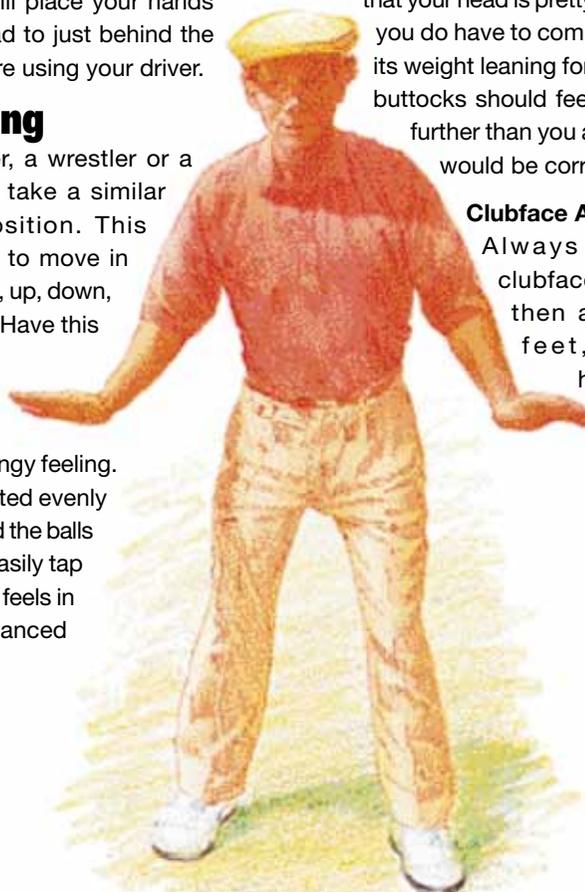
right forearm would be a bit lower than your left forearm and your right elbow is pointing down at your right hip - not out. Your left arm hangs extended and your right arm is bent.

For a standard full shot the butt of the club will be pointing at your belt buckle (center of your body). This will place your hands level with the clubhead to just behind the clubhead when you are using your driver.

Athletic Feeling

A basketball player, a wrestler or a football player, ...all take a similar athletic neutral position. This position allows them to move in any direction: left, right, up, down, backward or forward. Have this feeling in your stance.

Your upper body is loose & relaxed. Lower body has a heavy/springy feeling. Your weight is distributed evenly between your heels and the balls of your feet. You can easily tap your toes. Your body feels in an athletic & balanced position. ◀



Extra Tips

Your Head

Looking from the front, have someone check that your neck & head is in line with your spine. Another factor to consider is that your head is pretty heavy and you do have to compensate for its weight leaning forward. Your buttocks should feel stuck out further than you at first think would be correct.

Clubface Alignment

Always aim the clubface first and then align your feet, knees, hips and shoulders

to fall in line parallel to the target line.

Don't Reach / Don't Pull In

The section 'Hands & Arms' is exact. Have your hands pulled in a bit or pushed out a bit at address and you are asking for 'hidden' swing problems from the start.

Too Wide a Stance

A stance that is too wide will tend to restrict a natural body turn and reduce the amount of power you can generate.

Hunch

Your shoulders and back must not 'hunch over' to compensate for standing too upright. Correct shaft length is imperative. For instance, if your clubs are short, it can make for a very awkward setup indeed.

Peter Croker has been a PGA member since 1971 and has given lessons with his Croker Golf System to professionals including Vijay Singh, Arnold Palmer, Roco Mediate, Fred Funk, Olin Browne, and Bob Charles. Based at The Dunes Golf Links, he also runs a unique online golf academy: www.crokergolfsystem.com
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