

THE SET UP

All in the Set-Up

To be a tour-standard putter you need a tour-standard set-up and balance over the ball



By Dr Paul Hurrion

PHOTOGRAPHY:
DAVID CANNON/GETTYIMAGES
WWW.PRO-STANCE.COM

These images were shot in Abu Dhabi in the wonderful sunshine that greeted the European Tour in February, when most of you were at home looking out on the snow and wondering when you might actually get to set foot on the golf course. During those early-season events I tend to spend most of my time emphasising to players the importance of adhering to proven fundamentals in terms of the set up and posture that governs a good stroke. After any sort of layoff it's easy to slip back into old habits so you really do have to work on re-establishing the ground rules for the putting stroke – and that means going over the details of your grip, posture, ball position and balance.

Across this page and overleaf you'll find a number of tips and 'reminders' that will help you to cover the key points. If you haven't done so already, go and see your local pro or contact your regional GEL fitting centre and get yourself a putter that is precisely fitted to your specs. I'm not saying that will guarantee you success, but it will certainly help you to enjoy a consistently better set up and posture, which will be reflected in the quality of your putting stroke.

With your feet set at shoulder-width, bend from the hips to create a balanced posture. The ball position is just a fraction ahead of your sternum – the buttons on your shirt

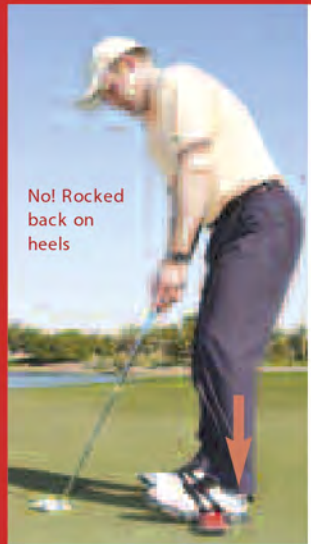
Upper part of the fore-arms rest lightly on each side of the chest, the hands just slightly ahead of the ball, creating this gentle putter lean



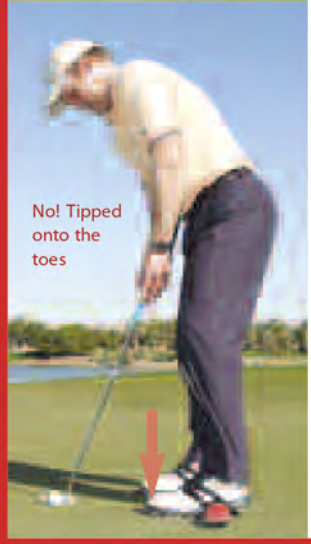
Choosing a comfortable and consistent grip is something you have to go figure for yourself – and as likely as not you will change it pretty regularly as feel comes and goes. Most important is that the palms of your hands are neutral as they come to join together on the grip. I like the feeling of draping the left forefinger down the shaft with the standard reverse-overlap style (left), but also recommend the reverse-handed style (right), which helps to get the shoulders level at the set up



This symmetry of the forearms with the putter-shaft is something I recommend you look for – have your putter cut to size and ‘fitted’ to your posture for a consistent set up



No! Rocked back on heels



No! Tipped onto the toes

The 'Pro-Stance' has proved one of the most popular of the training products I have developed and a lot of tour players use it to build their stability in the set-up (not only with the putter but in the full swing also). The key to the Pro-Stance is that inflating the tube and standing with it directly under the arches of your feet, any tendency to set-up out of balance is quickly revealed. You don't want to be too far back on the heels (top) or tipped forward so that your weight is too much on the toes (above). The ideal posture sees the upper body angled nicely, your weight counteracted by your rear-end as you push it out and gently flex the knees (main).



Unit of the arms and upper body is in control of the positioning of the putter at the set up and then on governing the pace and shape of the stroke – as long as you maintain this symmetry the putter-head remains low to the ground as it traces a shallow arc

Keep the symmetry of your stroke, matching back and through

One of the key aspects of the putting stroke is what I refer to as the 'rise angle' – i.e. the angle at which the putter-head is seen to rise up in the follow-through immediately after the ball has been struck. There is a long-standing myth out there that by lifting quite dramatically up on the ball you impart some sort of over-spin which gets the ball on a better roll. This is not the case - trust me, I have researched this extensively, studied hours of close up video footage and analysed reams of data on spin, and 'skid' and roll through the impact area. And the evidence all points to the fact that you achieve the best 'roll' on the ball when the putter exits the stroke at a shallow angle, not manipulated in any way as you swing to the follow-through.

The stroke itself, of course, is controlled by the pendulum motion of the shoulders

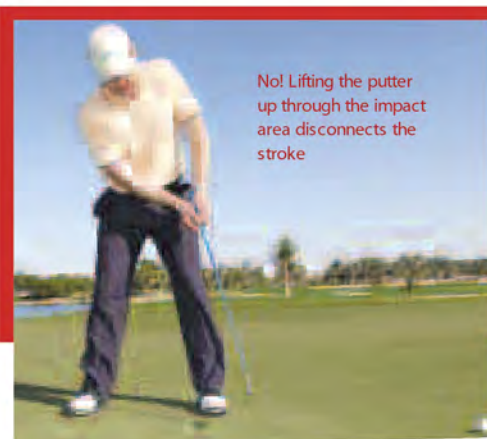
and upper body (the shape and consistency of which is of course determined largely by your ability to repeat a good set up position – so work on that!). My own feeling is that the momentum of the putting stroke comes from within, my body centre, as I create a simple pendulum-type motion to get the arms, hands and the putter moving as one. There is no manipulation in the hands. The grip is soft and the putter responds to the tick-tock momentum that is created, back and through.

The best way to think of it is that the ball simply gets in the way, and as the stroke continues on to its natural conclusion you can see that the rise angle mirrors the lift angle in the backswing. When you marry up the two halves of your putting stroke you will enjoy solid and consistent contact with the back of the ball – and hit the putt on the desired line, at the desired pace.

"For a step-by-step video guide to using my Putting Mirror, and fine-tuning all aspects of your putting alignment for a perfect practice session, visit the GI website today – www.golfinternationalmag.com" Dr Paul Hurrion



Arms and shoulders maintain their Y-shape relationship into the follow-through – there is no pulling up of the hands or crumpling of the arms. The result is a stroke that traces a perfect arc through the ball – i.e. the 'rise angle' of the putter-head in the through-swing mirrors the shallow angle of the backswing



No! Lifting the putter up through the impact area disconnects the stroke

The difference may appear too small to be significant but even pulling up the hands and the putter-head like this (left) – as opposed to releasing the putter with the correct action and 'rise angle' above – is enough to cause the ball to be mis-struck and the putt to skew offline. So work on the pure symmetry of your stroke, matching up the angle of your swing arc back and through



No! 'Rise' angle too great