

MIRROR, MIRROR

58
improve your

PAUL HURRION

Putting guru Dr Paul Hurrion reveals how the use of a specially designed mirror as a practice aid can help you achieve perfect alignment, consistency ... and make more putts.

Mirror, Mirror

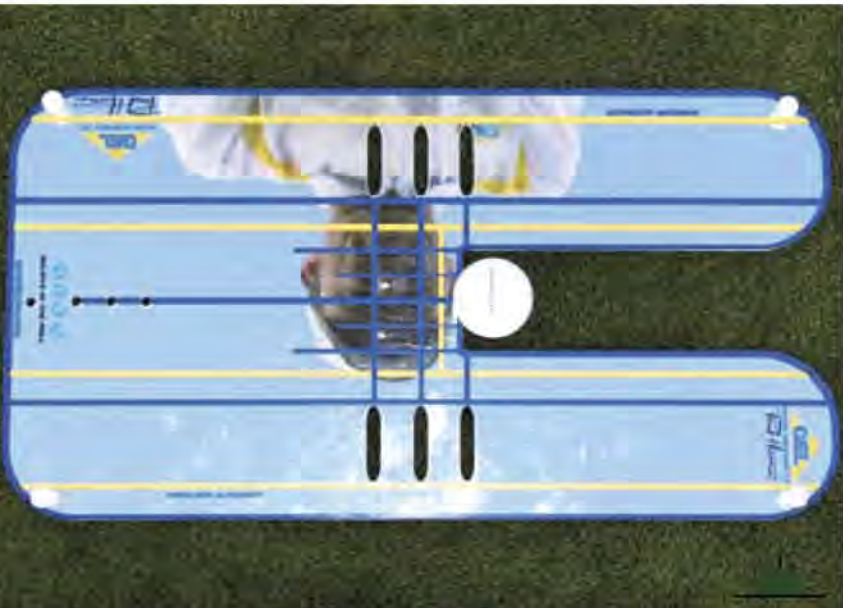


IF I HAD TO CHOOSE one training aid for my golfers to use consistently, it would have to be my GEL Putting Alignment Mirror. The graphics and tools provided by the GEL Mirror enable them to understand and develop consistent alignment of the putter face, their shoulder line and their eye position during each putt.

It is easy to use for a quick practice indoors at home or in the office, as well as on the putting green where tees can be used in specially designated positions. Also, I recommend they use it on all manner of putts – breaking, straight and different lengths. Yes, breaking putts – read on.

The vast majority of amateurs don't practise their putting. I don't count five minutes before they play at the weekend as practice. Yet they are the first to complain about their putting – 'not my day', 'unlucky', 'poor greens', 'not my fault', are among the excuses trotted out. I have to ask if you can realistically hope to reduce your handicap if you don't seriously practice with the one club that you use the most in every round of golf?

Is the answer to go and buy the latest driver that will give you another 10 yards off the tee and spend time and money whacking balls down the range? Of course not, but many golfers seem locked into that scenario. I may sound a bit unsympathetic,



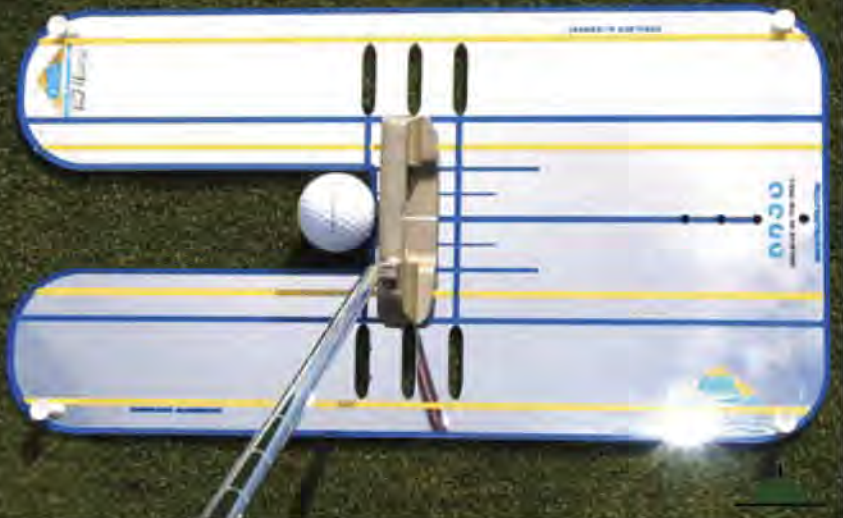
might love it, but without their own awareness the golfer is guessing and can be fooled into thinking it was a good putting stroke.

By eliminating variables such as green reading, alignment and/or square club face you can build an awareness of good and poor strokes. If you expect to improve your understanding, awareness and feel then you have to be honest with yourself. If your putt misses to the left, I want you to understand what caused it to miss left – for example: 'I felt the putter face closing' or 'I felt my shoulders open and pulled the putt'.

Precision Alignment to Target Line

The first step in using the mirror is to align it accurately to your target. Start with a straight eight-foot putt on a flat and level area of the practice green; stand behind the mirror and aim the centre blue line exactly at the

on the Floor...



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target. The smaller your target, a tee peg for example, the more accurate your alignment will be.

Insert tee pegs in each of the four corners (picture 1, facing page) to ensure the mirror doesn't move. By using the alignment guides on the mirror you can check your eye position (see my article in last month's issue of Asian Golf Monthly), square the putter face to the target, get your shoulders parallel and check your ball position. You know the putt is straight and because you have reference guides to square the club face, I would expect you to get 90 per cent in the hole.

When you become confident at holing around 90 per cent, remove the mirror, and hit the same putt from the same spot on the green. You know the putt is straight! This introduces club face alignment into the equation and if the percentages drop below 80 per cent on this straight putt then you know you have to address the failure of being able to repeat correct alignment.

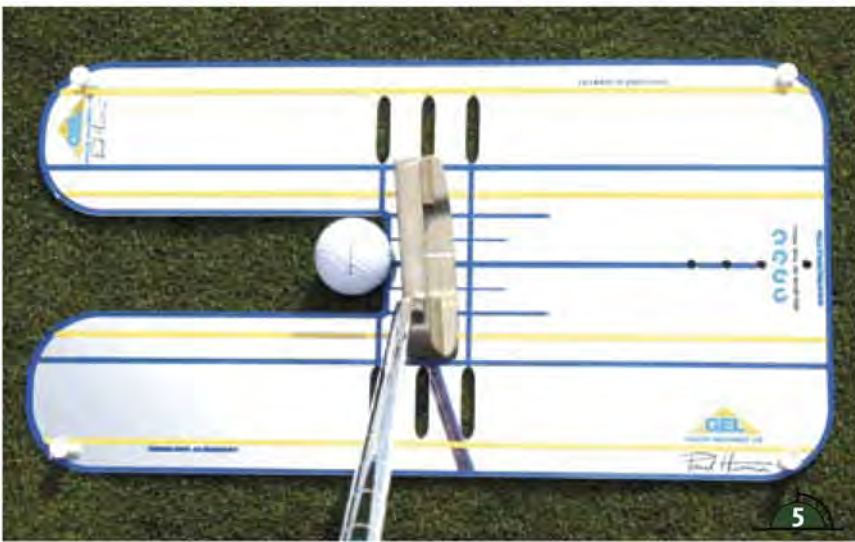
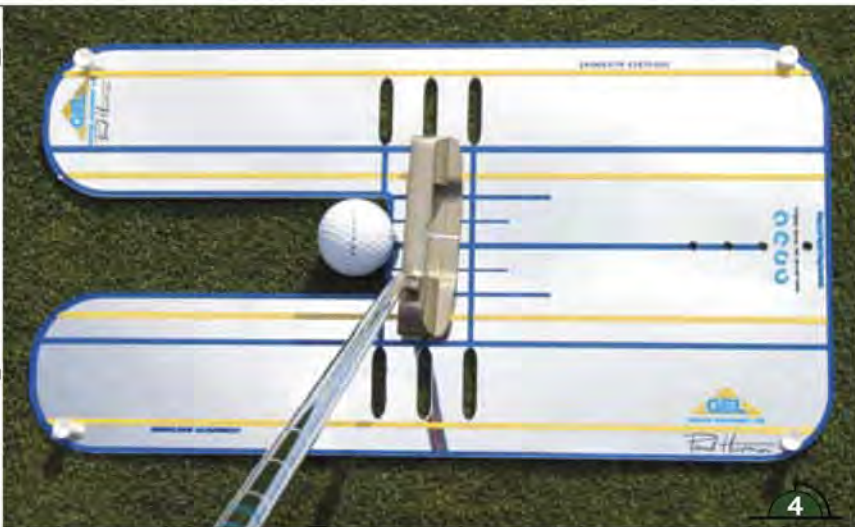
Once you are achieving 90 per cent, repeat the drill with varying length putts as this leads into the next stage of the drills. Find a slope and repeat the drill with breaking putts, align the mirror on the chosen line rather than at the target and repeat the process. This drill examines and improves your pace control, which has to be correct for the ball to take the break and find the hole and it helps you focus on the chosen line, which can be worked on in my next drill.

but I am not, as I believe that the majority of amateurs don't practise putting because they don't know how or what to practice.

There is no reason why each and every amateur should not reduce their handicap considerably by following the drills I recommend using the GEL Mirror. It is a simple, yet extremely effective, training tool enabling golfers at all levels to improve their putting stroke.

These are the drills I recommend to enable you to use the GEL Putting Alignment Mirror to its full potential, aiming for perfect alignment, consistency and making more putts.

One of my main aims when working with golfers is for them to be aware of the difference between a good stroke and a poor stroke. The majority of golfers and even top professionals struggle with the difference between a good and bad putt. Golfers regularly misread a putt and still hole it with a pulled or pushed stroke. The crowd



Toe and Heel Tee: Putter Path (Eliminate Heel or Toe Strikes)

This is one of my favourite drills. Square your putter face to the target and place two tees in the slots provided in the GEL Putting Alignment Mirror at the toe and the heel of the putter. The aim of the drill is to make a normal full stroke without touching either of the tees on the through swing. Gradually bring the tees closer together to ensure consistent return of the putter head to the same position each time. To make the drill even more effective, use tees in four or all six holes (picture 6) to mentally exaggerate the straight channel of the putter path that the putter passes through.

Once you can produce a consistent path with a square impact, you will start the ball on the line you have read. Then it's over to you and the line you have read on the green. With a perfect stroke you will quickly learn so much more about your green reading ability – perhaps for the first time!

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Eye Position Must be Parallel

It is very important that your eyes are parallel to the target, particularly with breaking putts where there is a tendency to look towards the target instead of correctly down the line of your aim. The GEL Putting Alignment Mirror (picture 2) teaches you to focus on the line, not the target. It reduces any tendency to manipulate the putter towards the hole.

Don't be surprised if your eyes are slightly out of alignment, which may be due to weight distribution. Remember my article using the ProStance balance training aid; the weight needs to be 50 per cent toes and 50 per cent heels, with slightly more weight towards the back foot. You must adjust your stance and position to ensure your eyes are parallel to the target.

Putter Face is Square: Non-Negotiable

It is vital that the putter face is square to the target line (picture 3). Use the blue or yellow transverse lines directly behind the ball as your reference point. You should be able to see the line directly in front of the putter blade which is at 90 degrees to the target.

If you strike the ball with an open face (picture 4) or closed face (picture 5) not only will the ball start off line, but it will impart unwanted side spin which will further reduce the accuracy of your putting.



Dr Paul Hurrion is among the world's foremost putting coaches. His passion for golf has led to a specialism in putting analysis and advice, assisting European Tour professionals and holding PGA accredited Putting Clinics. Through his work with Padraig Harrington, he advised Hi-Tec on the bio-mechanical design dynamics of their new CDT Golf Shoe. Paul has recently designed a signature range of putters for GEL Golf. For further information, visit www.quintic.com or www.paulhurrion.com