

THE PUTTING DOC

PAUL HURRION: HOW TO PUTT LIKE A TOUR PRO

THE PUTTING DOC

How biomechanics and the study of human movement can improve your putting stroke



1. Bending gently from the hips, and with your feet parallel to the line of the putt, grip the putter with your right hand, the left hand on your thigh. Make sure the putter is sitting flat on the surface of the green

2. In order to create a natural fulcrum for your stroke, angle your upper spine so that vertebra C7 (the nobby one!) is flat. That creates your 'pivot point'

3. In your posture, and with your left arm comfortably in place, you want the shaft of the putter to be an extension of the left forearm – the angle matches up perfectly

By Dr Paul Hurrion

QUINTIC – PUTTING BIOMECHANICS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTYIMAGES
SHOT ON LOCATION AT VALDERRAMA

Whether I'm working with Open champion Pdraig Harrington, Lee Westwood or amateur golfers of all skill levels, the key to my teaching method is simple and is based on the extensive studies that my team and I have conducted on the science of human movement. And before you can hope to develop a repeating stroke, you have to have a putter that is perfectly 'fitted' to your height and set-up; one that assists you in standing to the ball correctly and making a pure, repeating stroke.

What do I mean by having a putter 'fitted'? Well, it's not rocket science. For the cost of a new grip and perhaps 10 minutes with your local pro, you can have your existing putter adjusted so that it meets the criteria we look for, the basis of which is illustrated here. The key, quite simply, is that you want the length and the lie angle of your putter to 'fit' your posture over the ball, so that the clubhead sits flush behind the ball while the shaft matches the angle of your forearms at the set-up. The vast majority of golfers use a putter that is too long. By adjusting the length, you can very quickly improve the nature of your stroke.



Key check: left forearm in tune with lie angle of the putter

Middle of sternum aligns with the top of the leading edge

Ball an inch forward of sternum

HOW TO ESTABLISH THE PERFECT BALL POSITION

One of the secrets to good putting is that you 'collect' the ball – i.e. it gets in the way of the putter-head as you swing it back and forth with rhythm. To establish the correct ball position, hold your right hand flat on chest at your sternum, fingers pointing out. A vertical line from here should go through the top of the leading edge of your putter. The ball sits an inch forward of that point.



✓ Correct: sole of putter is flush on the green

✗ No! Heel up, putter too short or too flat

✗ No! Toe up – putter too long and/or too upright

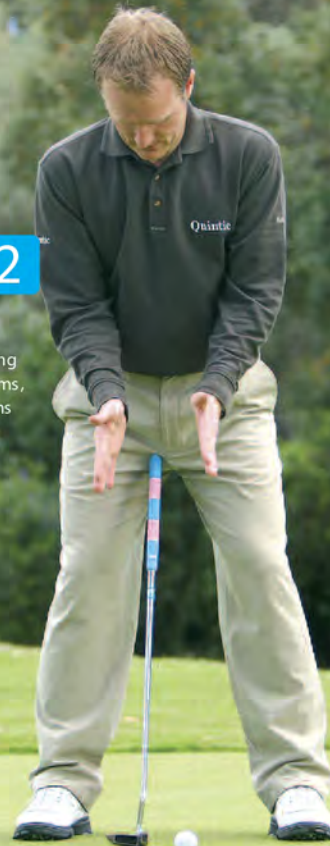


In posture, tuck your elbows in to your body so that the palms face forwards

1

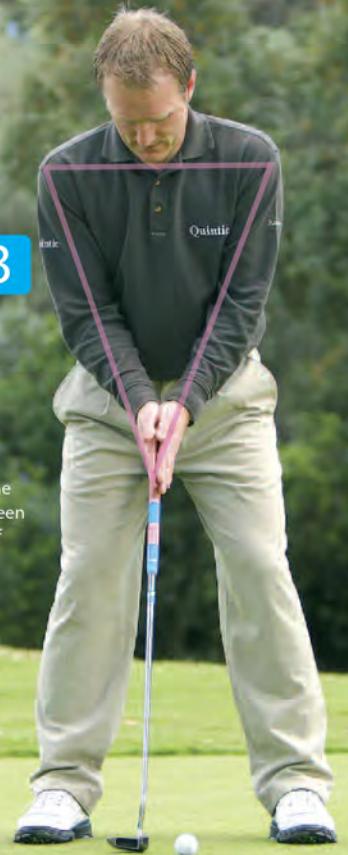
Without moving your upper arms, rotate forearms so that palms are opposing

2



Sandwich the putter between the palms of your hands

3



FEEL A SHOULDER-CONTROLLED MOTION

The exercise you see me rehearsing here is one designed to help you get a real sense of 'feel' for a stroke that is controlled by the rocking of the shoulders, the hands, arms and putter essentially going along for the ride. In other words, it teaches you the benefits of what the pros refer to as 'connection' between your upper arms and chest – the vital quality that leads to a repeating stroke.

To prepare for the exercise, stand in good posture, but with your elbows gently touching your body, the palms of your hands facing outwards (1). Then simply rotate your forearms to parallel so that the palms of your hands oppose one another (2). Finally, sandwich the putter between your hands as you settle into position over the ball (3).

All that remains then is for you to go out and practise, hitting putts of anything up to 20 feet from the hole. Basically, with your hands in this position, you eliminate wrist action and experience an enhanced sense of the shoulders controlling the motion of the putter back and through.

Both Padraig Harrington and Lee Westwood practise this religiously. Phillip Archer is another tour player who uses this exercise every day, reverting to his regular putting grip once he has the feeling of 'connection' ingrained.



'Sandwich' the grip between the palms of your hands, and then focus on the sensation of controlling your stroke with the shoulders. As you learn to eliminate unwanted wrist action, so you will be left with a more solid and reliable pendulum-style action

Notice that the shaft and the left forearm remain in tune throughout the action – that is one of the secrets to a professional style putting stroke





Relationship between arms and the putter is maintained to the finish – right hand is passive

ONCE YOU HAVE THE TECHNIQUE, JUST REPEAT YOUR STROKE WITH RHYTHM



Let the ball get in the way as you pull the putter-head through with the left hand

Whether you use a standard right below grip or prefer the left hand low, the focus in making the stroke is to work on the length and the overall rhythm of the motion – and the key to that is to make sure the length of the backswing is reflected in the length of the follow-through. So many players suffer on the greens because they decelerate the putter, but if you focus on making your follow-through at least the length of the backswing you will eliminate that problem.

Another (often related problem as it is caused by anxiety) is lifting the head to look up too early. All good putters discipline themselves to keep their eyes fixed on the position of the ball until it is on its way to the hole. This is a much-underestimated skill, as even the slightest movement in the head can throw a stroke off line. As a drill, press a coin into the green and hit short putts off it (above right), making yourself focus on that coin as the ball is struck. That will teach you to keep your head and lower body as still as possible. Let the ball get in the way of the putter, and look for the coin.

The benefits of the Reverse-Handed grip
Finally, if I were teaching someone new to golf, I would recommend they use the left-below-right grip (as Pádraig does). Why? Because you want a passive right hand in the stroke, while the left arm pulls. After all, you never see a caravan being pushed by a car, do you...?

For further information, visit www.paulhurrion.com

ON THE MONEY: KEEP YOUR HEAD STILL, AND YOU'LL HOLE MORE OF THOSE CRITICAL FOUR-FOOTERS



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For your chance to win one of 5 brand new Paul Hurrion Signature range putters by GEL Golf, simply answer the following question:

Dr Paul Hurrion is putting coach to the 2007 Open champion – is he:
(a) Padraig Harrington, or (b) Vijay Singh

To enter, visit www.golfinternationalmag.com and follow the links to the 'Paul Hurrion/GEL Golf' Competition. Alternatively, send your answer on a postcard to: Paul Hurrion/GEL Competition, Golf International, 10 Buckingham Place, London SW1E 6HX.

* Closing date for entries is January 31 2008. The first five correct entries drawn after that date will each win a GEL Golf/Paul Hurrion Signature Series putter of choice from the brand new 2008 Signature Range. The Editor's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered in to.



One of the models in the new GEL range for 08 – the Agito (Latin: 'to put in motion')