

10 common mistakes

How average golfers can improve their game

From page 29

The player should pay attention to the missed hit shots and figure out how their body worked to make the ball respond the way it did. The player should get in tune with their ability and understand the ball flight laws.

Mistake No. 5: The player doesn't know the proper distance and therefore uses the wrong club selection.

Or the player doesn't know how far they can hit a particular club. They try to lay up to avoid a hazard and they do not calculate how far they need to hit the shot to avoid the possibility of going in the water.

The Fix: The common mistake is the player wants to hit the shot as close to the hazard as possible. Wrong. Play it safe.

Figure out a distance far enough away from the hazard and determine the distance for the next shot. Find the widest landing areas of the fairways and the thickest part of the green. By playing it safe, the player should try to hit away from possible penalty strokes. Figure the distance to the trouble and hit the right club for the safest distance.

Research the distance of each club by hitting at least 10 balls to a targeted area. Look at the shot dispersion and pace off the yardage. This should give the player a comfortable idea of what distance each club should travel.

Mistake No. 6: Posture. Players tend to stand too upright or slouch over too much when swinging a club.

The Fix: Get your body into the proper stance. Stand at attention, now bow to your partner. Let your arms dangle under your face. Do not bend at the knees. Just let them relax one click.

As for weight distribution, the right side should be lower than the left side (opposite for left handers) with the right side collapsed just a little. The player should have good balance on their feet, at setup and also at the top of the swing.

While in your stance have a person give you a little push on the back of your shoulders to

see how stable you really are — and again from the front of the shoulder blades. If you feel like you're losing your balance, go ahead and shift your weight around on your feet to make yourself more stable. Try to keep your feet shoulder width apart. Do the same drill at the top of your swing. You need to develop a good base before each swing. This will help you be more consistent.

Most players will fall back on their heels on the back swing coming out of the stance, making it harder to get back to the impact position.

Mistake No. 7: Reaching out at the ball during address and impact. A player's arms are almost at a 45-degree angle from the ground. It takes too much effort to hold your arms out at address and therefore it's even harder to get back to that position at impact.

The Fix: Refer to the posture where the arms just hang in the natural position. If you feel like your hands are too close to the body then make the adjustment and kick out your rear end a little (check your weight distribution). The distance between your zipper and your grip should be around four knuckles.

Find a picture of a professional golfer and by using a straight edge notice how their eyes are over the shaft (approximately over the shaft label). You may have to bow more to get to that position.

Mistake No. 8: Ball position. Some players believe they need to change the position of the ball based on what club they are using. If the ball is played too far back in the stance, your shoulders will aim right and you will start the back swing from the inside and probably come over the top at impact (slice or pull). If the ball is too far forward, your shoulder will be aiming left and you will take the club more on the outside and loop under coming down resulting in a block or a hook.

The Fix: The ball position should be played one ball forward of center for short to mid irons, two balls left of center

with long irons and fairway woods, three balls left of center with the driver. This may vary a little based on your swing arch.

Here's a drill: Take your swing with the proper stance and posture and see where your club hits the ground. You should notice that it's very close to the left center. If you are hitting the ground way before the ball there's a good chance you are not pivoting your hips or coming out of your stance.

Mistake No. 9: Coming out of the stance. Players tend to straighten the knees or their back on the takeaway. This makes it difficult to get in the proper position at impact.

The Fix: Try to maintain the flex in your knees throughout the swing and stay over the ball with your posture. This will promote more coil in your backswing, which creates more power (by increasing swing speed) and possibly more distance.

I like the drill where you take the broken shaft and stick it into the ground at a 45 degree angle with the grip behind your right knee (opposite knee for left handers) at setup. You can put your head cover over the grip to make it more comfortable. The feedback comes from straightening your knee you will feel the grip/head cover push into the back of your knee.

Mistake No. 10: The Takeaway. Players tend to pick the club off the path too soon causing an outside path or pull it back behind them too fast causing too much of an inside path.

The Fix: Use a one-piece takeaway. The club must try to stay on the correct path going back with little or no movement with your head.

Here's a drill. By placing a tee behind the ball about a grip's length, try to clip the tee on the takeaway. This may simplify the feeling of a good takeaway. The results of a good takeaway will put the club in the right position at the top of your swing. The club should be pointing at or near your target.