The Simple Chip

By David Nevogt

Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide you with a simple, yet accurate and reliable method of chipping and pitching. This method turns one of the hardest shots in the game into one of the easiest. It doesn’t matter if you have a 5-foot chip shot, or if you are 50 yards out. Learning this method will enable you to setup to the ball, and use the same basic technique to put the ball close to the pin.

The chip shot should be one of the easiest shots in the game, and after you adopt this method, it will be. However, the current reality is that most bogey golfers continue to struggle with chip shots. There are several reasons why people have problems chipping the ball. Some of these problems and their solutions are highlighted below.

1. Lack of confidence.
   - This is a simple problem to fix. I am going to give you a setup and swing routine that works the same way every time. There are mechanics-related reasons for this method ensuring accuracy and consistency that we’ll get into later. However, the most important benefit you will get from this system is that you will have PROVEN to yourself that the system works. Imagine walking up to your 30 foot chip shot, knowing that you are going to put the ball close to the pin. You know how to get the ball in the air, you know how to set up to the ball, and you know the swing that you are going to put on the ball. You continue the process by reading the green and deciding where you want the ball to land. You know you are going to make solid contact with the ball because your method is so simple. Guess what...Believe it or not, the battle is 90% over with and you’re on the winning side. Do not underestimate the benefits that you will gain from having a confident chip shot that works. Just consider the number of times it has taken three strokes to “get down” from a few yards off the green. Those days are over.

2. Too much wrist action.
   - Consistency is the number one goal when you are chipping the golf ball. When you chip the ball you don’t need power. What you do need is a method that you know how to use...every time. In a chipping situation, letting the wrists break is the number one reason for inconsistency. After you learn this method you will be using the arms, and only the arms to hit the ball. This will add consistency to every chip shot that you make.

3. Hands not far enough forward.
   - You will be learning to setup up to the ball with your hands farther forward than you are used to. This helps the club slide over the surface of the ground easier without getting “caught” on the ground. This will add consistency.

4. Twisting the body too much.
   - As I mentioned, this method will teach you to hit the ball, using only your arms. Your arms will provide the power for your new chipping method. Your body will have to turn slightly, but only enough to allow the shoulders to rotate.
Grip

Just a quick note on the grip you will be using. I prefer the interlocking grip for the full golf swing, as I explained in “The Simple Golf Swing”. However, for the purposes of chipping the ball, I don’t care what grip you go with. You can use the interlocking, overlapping, or baseball grip. I don’t care where you grip the club. I don’t care how tight you grip the club. You will have to experiment a little bit with what feels comfortable for you. You have quite a bit of flexibility here.

The only part of the grip that is essential for you to understand (and different from the Simple Golf Swing) is that your entire grip, but especially your thumbs, have rolled to the right (a strong grip). In other words, your thumbs will no longer be placed on top of the club. For chipping, you will place them on the right side of the grip of the club. I have found that this helps guide the clubhead through the grass. You will find that it also helps to support the weight of the club.

Please see below for a detailed picture.

I will be combining the grip and setup sections of this manual. I have found that it is easier to achieve the correct positions by consolidating these two steps into one process. Therefore, most of the grip section can be found below in the setup section.

This is a summary of the required steps in gripping the club for a chip shot.

**Required**

- Roll the entire left hand more over the top than usual, letting your left thumb rest on the ride side of the grip
- Roll the right hand underneath the club, letting your right thumb rest on the right side of the grip. The right thumb will appear to be an extension of the left thumb
- Whatever grip you decide on, use it EVERY TIME
Here is my completed grip. As you can see, my left thumb is resting on the inside of the club. My right thumb is resting on the top of the club in this picture, but in most cases I prefer to rest the right thumb more on the right side of the grip than shown. A long pitch will require that the right thumb rotates more on top of the club as shown in the picture. For shorter shots the right thumb should rest more on the right side of the grip.

As previously mentioned, you will have quite a bit of flexibility when it comes to the grip because chipping the ball is all about finding what is comfortable for you. However, I do have some tips below. They reflect the way I grip the club, and what works best for ME. I want to be clear, though, that when I teach chipping, I explain to the student that I am flexible on the grip, and I give them some time to find out what works best for THEM. Everyone is different.

**Tips**

- Experiment with moving your right thumb toward the top of the grip as the distance of your shot increases
- Choke down on the club. If I have a short chip, I usually hold the club where the shaft and grip meet. Choking down results in better control
- I use the interlocking grip for chips
- Experiment with a firm versus loose grip on the club. I prefer a firm grip for chip shots

**Setup**

The first step in setting up to chip the ball is to stand straight with the club held in the left hand. The ball should be positioned off the inside of the right foot. Hold the club with the left hand so that when you look down at your left hand, it appears to be just at the outside edge of your left leg.

You can see that the ball is positioned on the inside of the right foot. Also, the left thumb is on the inside of the handle of the club. The left hand is just on the outside edge of the left leg.
The next step is to open your stance by repositioning your feet. Opening your stance will create loft. It’s the only way to get loft with your hands this far forward. Drop your left foot such that your chest and shoulders are at a 45 degree angle to the intended target line, as are your feet. Then realign your right foot so it is parallel with your left foot. Please look at the picture below.

![Flagstick and feet in correct stance](image1.png)

*The flagstick represents the target line. The feet are at a 45 degree angle with the target line and they are parallel. You can’t see this in the picture but the chest and shoulders are also set at a 45 degree angle to the target line.*

![Red line on original line](image2.png)

*The red line in the picture to the left represents the original line. As you can see, to open your stance you will have to move your left foot back and around. Then make your right foot parallel to your left foot. You may need to reposition your right foot slightly closer to the ball and farther from the hole. Notice that the toe of the right foot will be pointing to approximately the front edge of the golf ball.*

The next step is to simply reach down and grab the club with your right hand. When you grab the club, you will tuck your right hand underneath the grip a little bit more than usual. Now, experiment with moving your thumb on the inside of the grip vs. the top of the grip. The goal is to have the most support of the club as possible. Your wrists will be very bent, and your hands will feel like they are forward far too much. However, these steps are taken to promote consistency. Give it a try and you’ll never go back.
You are now in position to make a good chip. Here is what it looks like from a few different views.

Stance is open, hands are very forward, and the club face is pointed at the target. Your wrists are stiff but cocked, and they will be throughout the swing.

Below you can see that the clubface is pointed at the target.

Club face pointed at the target.

Most importantly, during the setup, you will be forming a triangle. Remember that, because the key to good chip shots is keeping that triangle intact throughout your whole swing.

Here is the finished product. Please notice the triangle that has been formed. It is crucial to retain this throughout the entire swing.

Your left elbow will remain locked throughout the entire swing. The right elbow will bend slightly during the backswing.

Here are some views from the top of the swing. This is how it will look from your perspective. The flagpole is pointing at the target.
**Backswing**

The setup is the most important and hardest part of the chip shot. During the backswing there are only a few things that you have to focus on. The first is that the left elbow must remain locked throughout the swing. Second, you must keep the triangle intact. Third, and most importantly, you cannot break the wrists whatsoever. The angle created between the shaft of the club, and your left wrist must remain constant through the entire swing sequence.

As you can see in the picture to the left, the triangle is still intact. The shoulders have rotated slightly. The right elbow is starting to bend slightly. The angle of the wrists created at setup remains steady even at the top of the backswing.

The backswing is the simplest part of the chip shot. First, the swing is all arms. There should be very minimal body movement. No horizontal movement or vertical movement. No head movement, and NO WRIST movement. Everything remains still except for your arms. Using only your arms to swing the club provides a very good control. You quickly learn how hard to hit the ball, because you are only using one power source. That power source is your arm speed. If you try using your arms, body, and wrists to chip the ball, you will never gain consistency. Remember, consistency is the ultimate goal.
Again, you can not break your wrists. Again, this is for consistency reasons. That angle created at setup should be there at the top of your backswing, and it should be there when you finish your follow-through.

You will have to get a feel for how far back to swing the club. Just remember, it’s all arms, no matter if you are making a 40 yard pitch. Nothing changes, except you’ll bring the club back farther. Here is a picture of what it looks like for a longer pitch shot.

Please compare the picture above to the picture on the left. The only difference is that arms are drawn back a bit farther. The triangle is still intact, and no horizontal or vertical movement has occurred. The angle of the wrist formed at setup is still present.

Tips
- When you bring the club back, try to bring it back as low to the ground as possible.
- Use a slow backswing
- Generally, shorter backswings bring better results.
- Don’t move your head, and concentrate on the ball.
- Weight should be evenly distributed between your right and left foot
- The club head should come back directly along the intended target line

Forward-Swing

Here is a summary of what you will need to focus on during the forward swing. Basically, the items to focus on will be the same as the backswing. First, you can have no horizontal or vertical movement of the body during your swing. This will increase consistency, so really focus on it. A good way to make sure that you have no movement in your swing is to keep your head still. Look at the ball. Look at where the ball was lying, even after you have made contact with it. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to look where the ball is going before you make contact. This makes your left shoulder rise, which significantly reduces any lift that you would have gotten.

Second, you want to make sure that your left elbow remains locked during the follow-through. You want to be able to do the same thing over and over again. Keeping the left elbow locked will help you put the same swing on the ball over and over again.

Third, you will need to keep the wrist cocked as it was during the setup. Both wrists should be completely rigid, throughout the entire chipping process. They are always bent at the exact same angle as they were before you started the swing. This helps to build consistency and accuracy.
This is the most important concept to grasp in the chipping process. As you can see to the left, the wrist is still in the exact same position as it was in the setup. Your wrist should remain completely rigid throughout the entire swing process.

The fourth item that I will have you concentrate on is swinging through the ball on a low plane. What I mean by that is that you should not have the feeling of the club head moving up after you make impact with the ball. You should have the feeling of the club head moving through the ball, low, and toward the target. This works well because it forces you to keep your wrist stiff, and it also forces you to hit down on the ball.

As you can see, after impact the wrists are still not broken. The club shaft has extended past the front foot, but the club head is still sweeping low against the ground. As you can see from the picture, that combination will give you very nice elevation and it also provides great feel. It’s more of an out movement after contact than an up movement with the club head.

I have seen wonderful improvements when bogey golfers start following through with their chip. Instead of chopping at the ball, make a nice smooth swing. Don’t be afraid to follow through with your swing. The ball will not go any further, but it will create a lot of “feel” for you around the green.
Here is another picture of the low follow-through.

Here is a picture of the full follow-through from the front. Notice that the clubface is pointed down the target line when the follow-through is completed.

The club never wraps around your body. Even when the follow-through is complete the clubface is pointed down the target line.

View from the back. Again, the club is facing the target at the end of the follow-through.
Tips

- The club head should move forward through the ball directly along the target line.
  Straight back and straight forward.
- Follow-through should be smooth
- Left elbow is locked
- Wrist is bent throughout the entire swing, including follow through
- Keep the head and left shoulder down before and after impact

Conclusion

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of chipping and pitching when on the golf course. It has been estimated that two thirds of the total strokes in a round of golf are taken from within 100 yards of the pin. The ability to get the ball to within one-putt distance on a majority of holes can make as much as a ten stroke difference in the final score for the round.

You have now learned a method that is designed to provide a consistent method for pitching and chipping the ball. If you practice and apply the methods described in this manual, you will be very pleased with what you see on the scorecard. You now know a simple and effective method to put you within one-putt distance, while eliminating the frequent errors that occur within a few yards of the green.

I wish you the best of luck on the golf course, and remember to keep it simple!

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