

Big Oak Golf Academy

THE GRIP

The **VARDON-OVERLAP GRIP** is the most popular style used by the best professionals and amateurs alike. The interlocking grip tends to create too much grip pressure during the golf swing, it is not advised. Start with your upper hand, Place your fingers perpendicular to golf clubs grip and cover the middle creases of your middle fingers. Then, hold the club gently like you would hold a luggage handle, tool box. Not in the back creases next to the palm! The **THENAR MUSCLE** should be placed over the top and slightly to the right of center, for the right-hander, the middle of the pad of the thumb is the touch point also slightly right of center, slightly strong . If you are left-handed then switch to the other hand and the opposite side. Allow the club to feel heavy to the hand. Grip pressure should be light enough to feel the weight of the head of the club, on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the tightest, 3/10 is proper.

THE “BEN HOGAN CHECK” is illustrated on page 3. Hold the club horizontal or slightly above horizontal and remove the thumb and the last three fingers to experience the supportive position of the **THENAR MUSCLE**.

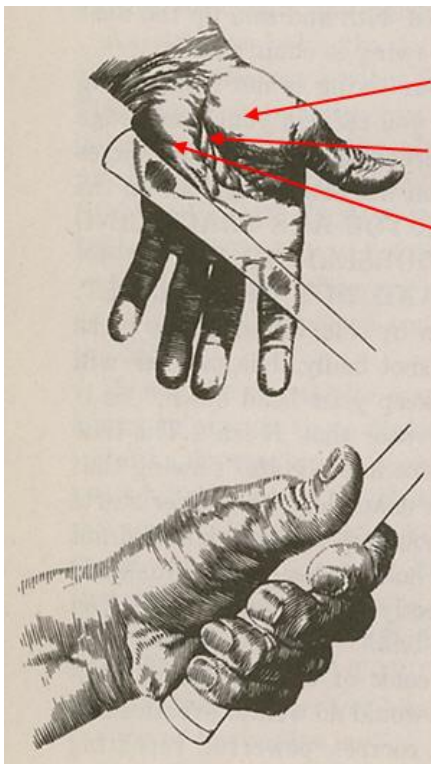
If the golf club slips or falls out of that position, then it must be corrected to support the club most efficiently by position and not by pressure from squeezing.

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To properly create the **VARDON- OVERLAP GRIP**, the lower hand should be placed together with the upper hand starting with the little finger overlapping onto the notch just past the knuckle of the forefinger of the upper hand. **SEE ILLUSTRATION BELOW**. The middle two creases of the middle two fingers once again must be directly under the grip, next the palm of the lower hand should fit and cover the thumb of the upper hand gently and without a tight attempt to control the club at address or during the golf swing. The thumb of the lower hand should go just past the center of the grip towards the finger tip of the forefinger, but not touching it or squeezing. Many great golfers play with the forefinger and thumb disconnected to ensure a passive lower hand. John Daly, Freddie Couples, Jim Furyk, Phil Mickleson, Vijay Singh, Michael Bradley, Brent Snediker, and the list goes on to prove the role of the lower hand on the golf club. Most of the LPGA players conform to this as well. Grip pressure should be light enough to feel the weight of the head of the club, on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the tightest, 3/10 is proper, while the thumb and forefinger of the lower and should be about 1/10 or 2/10.

(3)

The “Ben Hogan Check”



Thenar eminence

Lifeline palmar crease

Hypothenar eminence



(4)



The right-hand grip is primarily a finger grip.



The right index finger and thumb form a "trigger" position



If the club sits too high in the palm, it's easy to wear a hole in the glove.

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PRESWING ROUTINE

This is when a moment of great importance begins! This is when your **“FOCUS”** begins!

TARGET LINE AND REFERENCE POINT

Stand directly behind your ball in line with your target and look in the grass just in front of your ball for a reference point. Find a divot mark, leaf, twig, some spot to use when you start to address the ball. This target line and reference point will be used to aim your club correctly and to aim your feet and toe line as well. This effort should be used for every shot on the golf course, driving, irons, short game and putting, practice sessions as well. Always! You **do not** want to guess in this situation!

Next, as you set your feet, ball position should be in the center of your feet for 5 iron or hybrids 6,7,8,9, and all wedges. As the club gets longer the ball position should move forward towards the target a little bit with each club, 4 hybrid or iron, 3 hybrid or iron, then fairway metals in the same manner, 7 wood, 5 wood, 3 wood, and driver. Ball position for the driver, while on a tee, should be placed near the forward heel to insure that the driver hits the ball on the upswing. Driver tee height should be at least ½ of the ball above the top of the crown of the soled driver.

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Squaring the face of the iron is vital, make the bottom leading edge of the iron perpendicular to the target-line and reference point. The wood has “bulge and roll” by design. It has a rounded convex face so you cannot square the face. Let it lay on its sole and it will look open a little, but that is correct. Closing it to, “so called square”, is incorrect. Your feet should be squared to the target by creating parallel lines between your feet and your target line. The knees are next, equally flexed enough to put the weight distribution slightly forward of the leg, but not on the toes, and not on the heels. Your spine angle, which is how much you bend at the waist forward over the golf ball, is going to change a little as the club length also changes. Taller with longer clubs and shorter with shorter clubs. Staying tall vs. extra bend is better for consistency. Point your chin at the ball, not your nose. Head down will restrict too much mobility needed for a good golf swing! Your distance away from the golf ball is determined by correct posture and about one fist measurement between the butt end of the grip of the golf club and the front of your forward thigh. Your forward arm should be hanging naturally, then adjust your feet closer, if needed, to achieve your proper placement. A famous quote from Byron Nelson, a renowned teacher of the game of golf. Spoken in his Texas drawl, he would say, “You cannot stand too close to the ball, move in, move in”.

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Do Not Reach for the ball, No high hands, No forward press. Being relaxed with hanging arms are is a great quality for a good golf swing. Tension destroys everything!

THE SHOULDER LINE & THE VISUAL KEY

Now it is time to add the lower hand to the golf club, but first we must understand a vital element discussing SWING PATH. It is defined as being either INSIDE-OUT or OUTSIDE-IN. The target line helps to define it. The side of the target line you are standing on is the INSIDE. The other side of the target line is the OUTSIDE. The golf club travels on the down swing, either from INSIDE to the OUTSIDE, or from the OUTSIDE to the INSIDE. The arms and the club will travel together along your **SHOULDER LINE**. This is a “**given**”! We **do** want to create an INSIDE- OUT swing path to encourage the DRAW PATTERN. The OUTSIDE-IN swing path will encourage the FADE PATTERN. A SLICE is a large FADE, and a HOOK is a large DRAW. The face angle is the secondary part of the equation that defines the sidespin the golf ball will have as it finishes its’ flight. To set your **SHOULDERLINE** properly you must tilt the shoulders upward and put them in a closed position. Compared to the target line, closed is aiming to the right for the right hander, and left for the left hander. The amount of tilt is 5 degrees, and the closed position is about 2 degrees.

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Before putting the lower hand on the grip, touching the back of the same knee will give you the proper position to be in at address. Even though you probably will feel tilted and crooked, it will help tremendously as you start your golf swing from this position. Taking the golf club into the back swing on an INSIDE PATH is helpful to create a down swing path of INSIDE-OUT.

The lower body should be symmetrical, 50-50 weight distribution is vital. Knee flex is also very important, just enough so your weight distribution is in the middle of your feet, not on your toes and not on your heels. Your VISUAL KEY is the back of the ball to help feel the tilt and closed shoulders properly. Add your lower hand to the grip as indicated on pages 1 thru 3. Be precise!

THE 2 THOUGHT SWING

Now you are at “*address*” and ready to make a backswing. Relax and take a gentle breath, let it out and ... the 1st of 2 thoughts is to create a “*one piece takeaway*“. Shoulders, arms, hands, and golf club should all move together with a shoulder rotation that is motivated by the “POSTERIOR DELTOID” muscle. Your head and neck are the axle of the wheel, your shoulders are the wheel. Do not move the head while you rotate the wheel. The back swing is complete when you can feel the weight of the golf club on the thumb of your upper hand.

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This is defined as the “THUMB UNDER” position. The sole of your lead foot should remain on the ground. Do not pick up your heel of your lead foot. Numerous mistakes can occur!!

Now you are ready for the 2nd of the 2 thoughts. The down swing is the part of the golf swing that eludes many golfers that struggle with “*slice*” or “*distance*” issues. And the harder they try, the worse it gets! So, here is the proper way to move through the down swing. You should start the down swing with the lead shoulder and back knee at the same time. This will do a couple of proper things. First, weight transfer occurs to the forward side early enough to add some leverage to the golf swing, along with the turn of the lower body for more power. Secondly, this will be creating “*lag*”, which is the reduction of the angle between the shaft of the golf club and your leading arm. This encourages a bend in the shaft of the golf club called “*shaft load* “. Lastly, the “*release factor*” of the club happens as a result of the unloading of the potential energy from the shaft. The striking of the golf ball occurs and the momentum from all of this will create the finishing position. Your belt buckle points at the target, your back foot should have a vertical sole pointing away from the target while resting on your toe-nail. Your hands and forearms should be resting on your lead shoulder, so your elbows can be relaxed and bent. The golf club can touch your back. This will help your balance which is essential at this point.

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Your upper body should be facing the target, shoulders level, head square on your shoulders viewing the ball flight. The head should not be down anymore, this would restrict the fluid motion we are trying to create.

THE DOOR HINGE DRILL

While standing up tall and straight, grip the golf club properly and extend your arms forward about waist high. The club is the door, your wrists are the hinge on the door. Shoulders, arms, hands, and golf club should all move together with a shoulder rotation that is motivated by the “POSTERIOR DELTOID” muscle. Your head and neck are the axle of the wheel, your shoulders are the wheel. Do not move the head while you rotate the wheel. Create the motion level with the ground horizontally, no spine angle. With a gentle grip (3 out of 10), and your leading arm straight rotate to the end of your backswing, when your upper body stops your wrists and the club face should rotate 90 degrees open allowed by the weight of the head of the golf club. Try not to assist the hinging process. Your TEMPO should be slow and smooth. The sole of your lead foot should remain on the ground. Do not pick up your heel of your lead foot. Numerous mistakes can occur!!

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The forward swing is created by the lead shoulder and the back knee at the same time. Pulling the golf club in this fashion will create “*shaft load*” and cause the “*release factor*” to occur. Your hands and wrists will feel the snap of the golf club late in the forward swing. Learning to allow the weight of the head of the golf club to do this is challenging and essential!! Your finishing position will be the same as your normal golf swing. Your belt buckle points at the target, your back foot should have a vertical sole pointing away from the target while resting on your toe-nail. Your hands and forearms should be resting on your lead shoulder, so your elbows can be relaxed and bent. The golf club can touch your back. This will help your balance which is essential at this point.

SWING PATH DRILL

Go through your pre-swing routine and take a slow smooth golf swing. Watch the golf club head travel through the impact area hitting the rubber tee 1st, and then traveling over the top of the wooden tee in the corner of the range matt, or create a similar situation in the grass, observing the direction that the club head travels. An inside-out swing path is how we want to create a draw. Or, an outside-in swing path, which we commonly do not want, except to fade the ball on purpose. The club head will go through the impact area in a blurry fashion, pay attention.

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If it travels too fast, then slow it down so you can identify the swing path accurately. The shoulder line is parallel to the swing path created during the golf swing. This is a “GIVEN”. A closed shoulder position through the impact area will produce an inside-out swing path, and an open shoulder position through the impact area will produce an outside-in swing path. Use your lead shoulder, “deltoid muscle” to create the golf swing, not your hands.

PRACTICE METHOD

Between each shot practice one of the two drills given previously, at least 3 times. Then, place a golf ball on the range mat back from the rubber tee 7 inches and 1 inch to the inside. Go through your preswing routine in detail setting up to the golf ball. The goal is to hit the golf ball first and the rubber tee second. You should feel the “*click*” when you hit the golf ball and you should feel the “*thwap*” when you hit the rubber tee. This is a great way to know if your swing path of the golf club was “*inside-out*” or not. If you hit the golf ball first and miss the rubber tee, then your swing path was “*outside-in*”. We would only need an “*outside-in*” swing path to create a fade or slice shot pattern. We can learn more about that in the future.

This process has been proven successful. Be patient and diligent with your practice methods. Your confidence will grow as you gain more experience and you will be able to enjoy this game of golf at many higher levels. **Relax and have fun!**