

Set Up for Success

How to Stand Properly to the Ball

By: Connie DeMattia, PGA

Your address position involves your posture, weight distribution, the width of stance, aiming and ball position.

Posture is critical in making a good golf swing. The most important thing here is to create a spine angle, a tilt to the spine that you are able to maintain throughout the swing. To do that you must be in balance, bent properly from the hips and with some flex in your knees. *(Dr. Paul Callaway, the first Director of Physical Therapy for the PGA Tour, was kind enough to contribute a very helpful and useful second article which will discuss the health benefits of proper posture along with a few exercises that I would highly recommend for every golfer. His article will follow this one.)*

Weight distribution. A good guideline is that if someone were to push you gently, either forward or backward, you would be able to maintain your balance. Your hands will hang almost straight down allowing you to sole the club to the ground. Your weight should be distributed between the balls and heels of your feet and equally distributed between the two feet. You should be able to tap your heels and wiggle your toes. At this point you have counter balanced your weight. You should be able to draw a vertical line from the back of your shoulders through your knees to the balls of your feet. Now you are in balance.



The width of stance has a lot to do with the length and shape of your swing. A good rule of thumb is that your stance with a mid-iron (6 iron), measured at the inside of your heels, should be the width of your shoulders. Of course, there are variations. The wider your stance, the wider and lower or flatter your swing is going to be. A wider stance inhibits the hip turn. A narrower stance encourages more turning of the hips and a longer, more vertical swing.

Your stance will narrow as the club gets shorter. The width of your feet will never be as wide as it should be with a driver. You do not need as much speed for the finesse shots, so you do not need as much support from the base.



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Aiming the body and clubface. The hardest thing about teaching amateur golfers about aiming is that they let their ball flight dictate alignment, however, when practicing to hit the ball straighter (which in most cases what we all would like to do) it is ideal to practice alignment to a target, and alignment dictates your ball flight. This being stated, it is best to set the clubface “square” or aiming down your starting line. Now set your body perpendicular to the clubface or parallel to the line which you want the ball to start. The shoulder and forearm alignment is more important than the feet. Why, because the hands and arms are holding and directing the path of the club while the arms are attached to the body in the shoulders.



How to position the ball. The position of the ball in relation to your stance is one of the most important and most overlooked fundamentals in golf.

Your ball position determines to a great extent the direction in which you swing. If you play the ball too far forward, your shoulders will aim to the left at address, and tend to swing to the left of your target line. If too far back in your stance, your shoulders will aim right at address, and tend to swing to the right of your target line.



Where is the ball positioned? This is very important, because it is not about the position between your feet, but rather the position to the left shoulder! You can use your feet as a reference, but only if you are certain to have taken a balanced and proper setup with your body as we have already discussed (feet the width of your shoulders). A driver should be positioned even with your left shoulder joint, which should be opposite your left heel, and steadily moved back with each club until you get to the middle of your stance with a wedge.

Ball Position:

Most golf shots are played with the ball somewhere between even with your left heel (driver) and even with the center of your stance (wedge).

As clubs get shorter and more lofted, it is the added loft that dictates the ball moving back from the left shoulder joint. Lofted clubs will “square up” sooner than less lofted clubs in a centrifugal motion. A good golf swing is a centrifugal motion around your spine.

If you have any questions about the golf swing or would like to improve your golf performance, please contact, **Connie DeMattia**, Golf Digest's “Best Teachers in Illinois” and 2005 Illinois PGA “Player of the Year” at **312-925-7968** or by e-mail at connied@cdgolfpro.com.