

Golf Digest

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Pocket Tips

STEP BY STEP

The tour's radical new swing

Aaron Baddeley
Two-time tour winner



The Stack & Tilt Swing

By Andy Plummer and Mike Bennett



We start every lesson with this exercise. Place two clubs in a line, with a 12-inch gap between them. Using a 5-iron, hit balls from directly between the shafts. If your shoulder and hip centers are in front of the ball at impact, you'll make divots on the target side of the shafts. If you're hitting the ground behind the shafts, your centers are stuck behind the ball.

The two master moves

Tilt to the left going back and spring up through impact



The Stack & Tilt Swing contains two basic moves: (1) a tilting to the left on the backswing and (2) a standing stretch on the through-swing. The left tilt keeps your body over the ball. The standing stretch that starts before impact and continues to the finish opens up your body to the target, which allows your hips to keep turning and maintain their speed.

Get centered over the ball

Your spine should be vertical at address

Your swing centers, the midpoint between your hips and the midpoint between your shoulders, should be stacked at address. Your grip should be neutral, your weight 60-40 on your front foot. Here Aaron is hitting a 5-iron, so the ball is just ahead of the middle of his stance, directly below the centers. This over-the-ball posture pre-sets a rotary swing with no shift to the back foot.



Swing your hands in

The turning body creates an inside swing path



To keep your spine over the ball, which is the goal, you have to tilt to the left on the backswing. This tilting action causes your shoulders and hips to turn on a steep downward angle, your right leg straightening and your left knee flexing forward. As your left shoulder turns down, your hands move on a circular arc around your body, and your arms stay on your rib cage.

What the backswing feels like

The right hip moves up and behind you



Your hips are level at address, but because your spine tilts toward the target going back, your right hip turns much higher than your left. It should feel as if your right hip is moving up and behind your body.

Keep your body over the ball

Your shoulders and hips don't shift going back

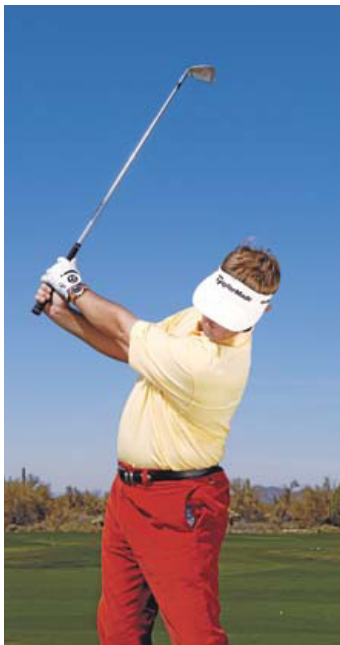


Your spine should be vertical at the top, which will make you feel tipped over your front leg. This tilting toward the target happens continuously on the backswing. Your upper body is now full of torque. Here Aaron is tilted a few degrees to his left, which is the feeling you should get. Your arms stay low and inside, because they're moved by the rotary motion of the body; no lifting off the rib cage.

What it feels like at the top

Mimic the stretch of a lefty follow-through

Imagine you're making a left-handed follow-through. Grip the club like a lefty and swing through, feeling how your right side stretches and your spine tilts back. Then take your normal grip and feel that same stretch on a right-handed backswing.



Lean into your left leg

Flexing your left knee sets up the downswing thrust



The entire body starts down together. More weight moves to your left foot, with a distinct leaning into your left knee. Your hips start to turn back to level, and your legs reverse roles, your left leg straightening and your right leg flexing. The turning body is supplying the initial acceleration, so you must maximize rotational speed. Your hips have to come out of their tilt to keep accelerating. The move that releases your hips is a springing up of the lower body.

What the transition feels like

'Crushing the can' under your left foot



As you start down, imagine you're crushing a soda can under your left foot. Your body has stayed centered on the backswing, so there's no need to shift back to the ball. This downward pressure on your left foot sets up the upward thrust of your hips through impact.

Spring up on the ball

The lower body pushes up through impact



The upward thrust of your lower body that releases your hips also helps deliver the club. Because your body is leaning on your front side, the club comes down steeply and will crash into the ground unless the swing shallows out. This pelvic thrust takes some of the steepness out of the swing and allows your hips to keep turning, which keeps the clubface closing at a constant rate and your hands swinging on a circular arc.

Flex your torso forward

Your belt is level and much higher

With your hips released, your torso flexes forward and your butt tucks under your back. Your spine tilts away from the target for the first time. Your belt is level and several inches higher than it was at address. Your hips and shoulders have continued to turn, and your hands are still swinging on a circular arc. The so-called release is the body releasing from its forward tilt, not some manipulation by the hands and arms.

