

BALL POSITION

Setting up with the ball in the right position is absolutely vital if you want to hit it big. Place the ball in the wrong position and you'll lose major distance.

Notice how, in this picture, that the ball is well forward in my stance and teed up high? I teed it that way because I want to hit the ball on a slightly ascending blow and high on the clubface to take advantage of my modern driver's trampoline effect. If I were to tee it up farther back in my stance (toward my right foot), I'd either hit down on the ball and pop it up or hit it low without a whole lot of "juice."

It wasn't always like this. When drivers were made from persimmon woods, you could tee it lower, but the way modern driver's clubfaces are constructed, it's to your advantage to catch the ball on the top of the clubface so it launches high with little spin. That way it'll really carry.

Power Fundamentals

ADDRESS POSITION

In the large photo below, I'm addressing the ball, and in the small photo, I'm swinging just before impact. What these two photos demonstrate is cause and effect. My proper setup has produced a great impact position.

In the setup photo, however, note that I line the ball up just opposite the clubface's toe. Why do I do this? Well, when you set up with your driver, your clubhead is on the ground, but the ball is elevated—they're not at the same level. Still the elevated ball remains your impact point. When I raise my club to ball level at impact, I naturally want the ball to be in the center of the clubface. But because of the difference in elevation between the two objects, when I return the clubhead to my impact position, the ball will be opposite my club's heel. I compensate for this by addressing it off the toe.

mentals

Get ready to hit it big

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Photos By David Johnston

OFF THE TOE



SQUARE



FOOT FLARE

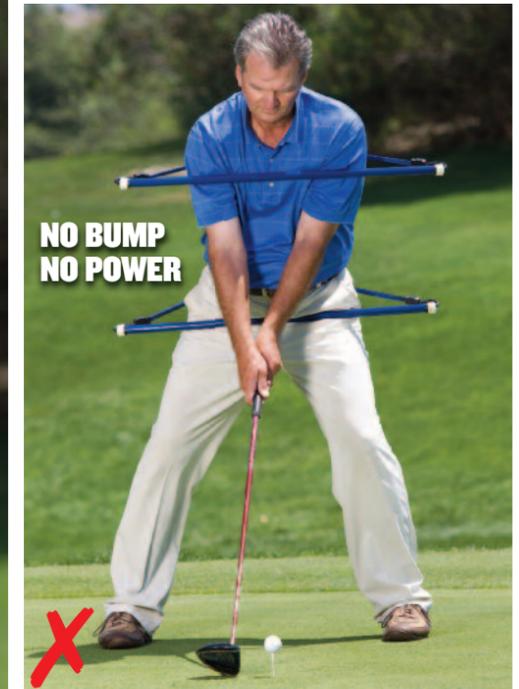
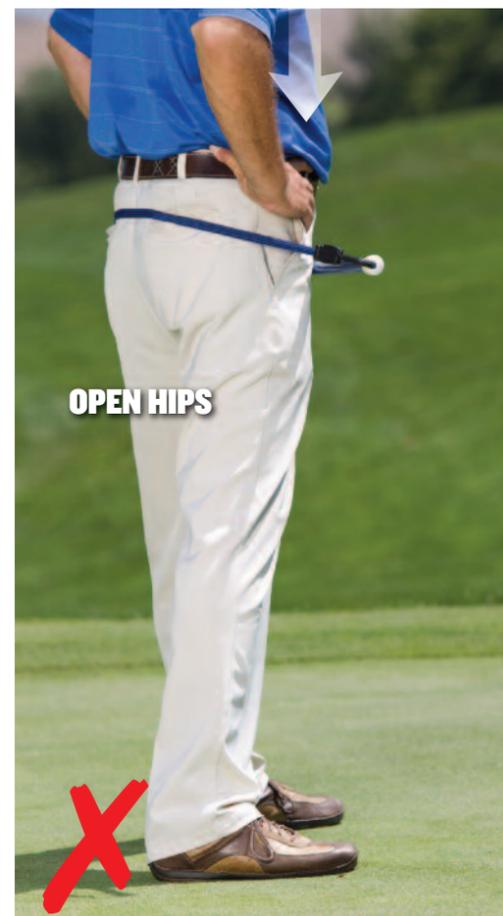
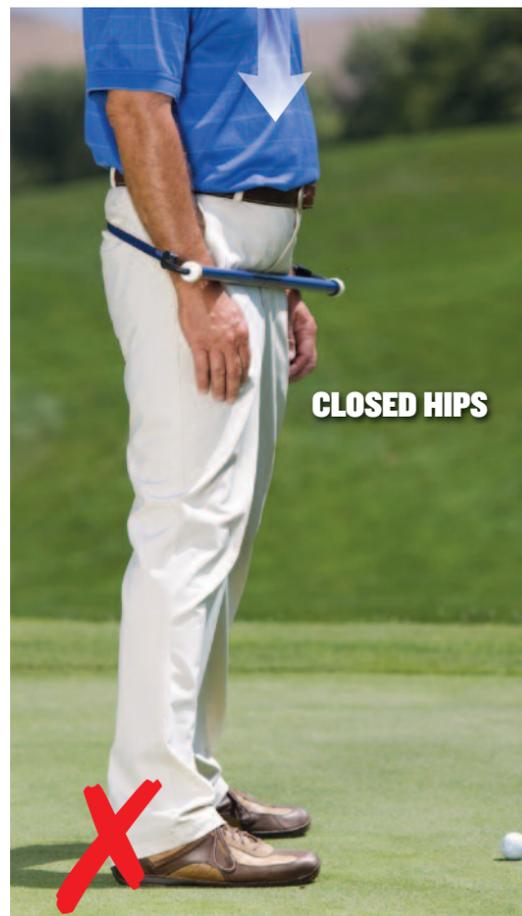
The angle of your feet at address directly impacts your hip alignment. Look at these six photos and pay attention to how the slightest foot flare affects my hip alignment, and thus my swing.

When both my feet are perfectly straight, my hips are square. Being square at address helps free your body so you can make solid, powerful contact. Not only will you be properly aligned (raising the chances of hitting it straight), but with square body lines, you can make a swing that's not compromised or "locked" in any way.

When my toes are flared, however, my hips rotate to the right, or close. This not only causes me to overrotate in my backswing, but also sends my club traveling "across the line" at the top of my swing. These two faults cause me to get "stuck" in my downswing, so I don't fully rotate through the

shot. Shots tend to be thin and weak, because I've approached the ball from a shallow angle. I may also get very "handsy" at impact, and either hook the ball or hit a shot that goes straight and to the right.

When you have heel flare (where your heel opens up), your hips rotate left, opening up so you get stuck in the backswing. This limits your backswing rotation (so your shoulders don't rotate 90 degrees) and produces a steep approach angle toward the ball. This leads to fat shots, pulls, slices and blocks, and, when hitting irons, divots that go from right to left. Why does this happen? Well, just because your shoulders stop rotating, it doesn't mean your arms and hands don't. They continue to turn back, causing the club to work up in the backswing. As a result, your downswing club path will follow your open hip line and create a steep "over-the-top" motion.

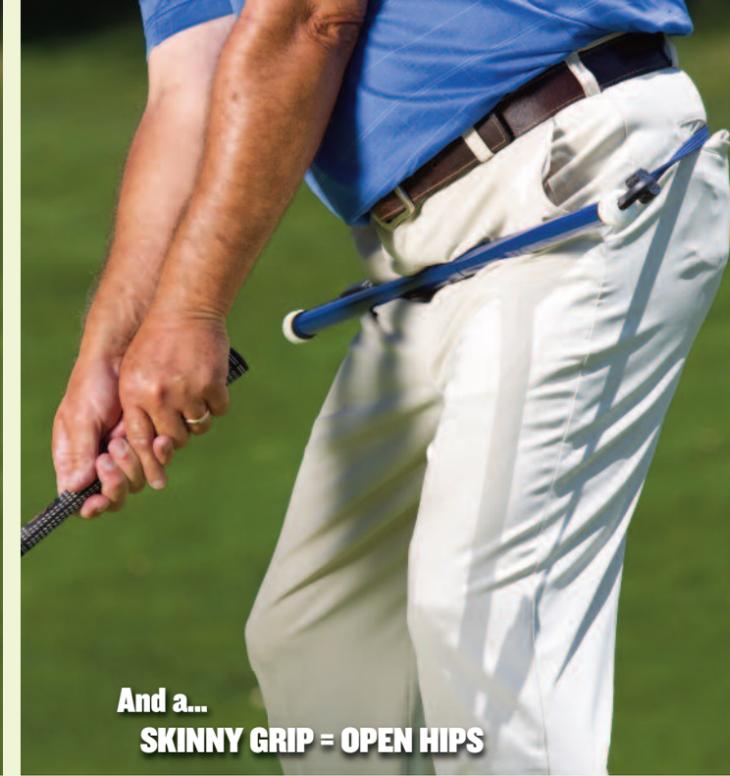


BUMP FOR POWER

When you look at my setup, it looks like more of my weight is on my right side than on my left. But it's not. It's actually distributed 50-50 because I've "bumped" my left hip higher. Why? Well, being right-handed, my right-hand grip naturally loads more weight on my right side. Raising or bumping my left hip toward my target until my weight is evenly balanced, gets me balanced, and good balance is the key to power.



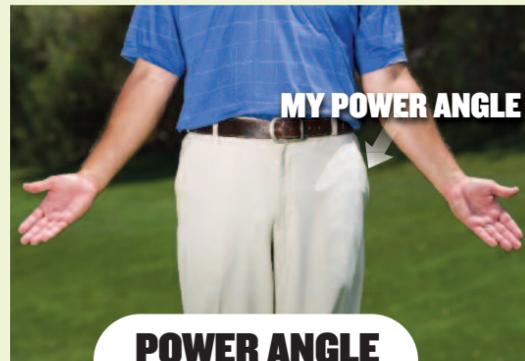
For me a...
FAT GRIP = SQUARE HIPS



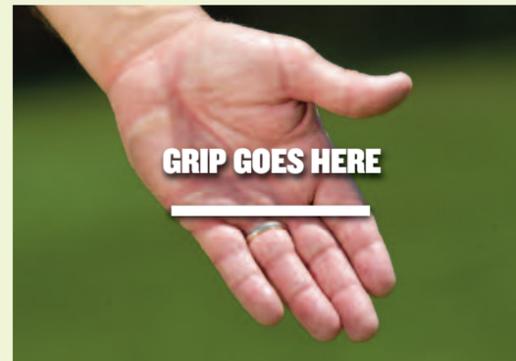
And a...
SKINNY GRIP = OPEN HIPS



GRIP GOES HERE



MY POWER ANGLE



GRIP GOES HERE

POWER ANGLE

Notice my forearm angle when I rotate my palms forward? If you take the angle of my forearm and draw a line 90 degrees to the ground, that's what I call my "power angle." Everybody has his own power angle. In fact, research confirms that this angle shows up in 15 different places at address and repeats throughout the swing. Let's look at this angle as it relates to your grip and posture.



**PARALLEL SHAFT
=
CORRECT GRIP**

GRIP

To find the right grip, set the club's handle at the point where your little finger meets your palm. Then set the handle across your fingers. Feel pressure in your middle right two fingers and your last three left fingers.

To determine if your grip rests at the correct angle in your fingers, place the club in your left hand, stand tall and rotate your palms out to your "power angle" position. If it's correct, the club shaft should be parallel to the ground.

GRIP SIZE

Over the years, the only change to grips is in their materials, from leather to rubber. "Off the shelf" grip size however remains the same. The only problem is that those grips fit only 3-5% of the population.

Why is this significant? Well, if you place anything in your hands—a golf grip, a hammer, a steering wheel—your core muscles naturally adjust and respond to that object. Consider that when you hold a grip that's too small for your hands, your core tightens on your *nondominant-hand* side, and your hips rotate right, closing your stance. (Most players slice the ball *because their grips are too small*, thus causing their hips to open.) Both of these positions lead to a power loss and high risk for a repetitive-motion back injury.

How do you know if your grips fit you? It's simple. Place a club on the ground so it's about five to six inches away from you and parallel to your stance line. Then address the ball with your driver. Stay in your posture and move your driver aside. If your right knee is closer to the shaft, your hips have rotated left; if your left knee is closer to the shaft, your hips have rotated to the right. Either way, your grip doesn't fit you.

Now, because your hand size varies, check again, this



time holding the club in your left hand and then in your right hand.

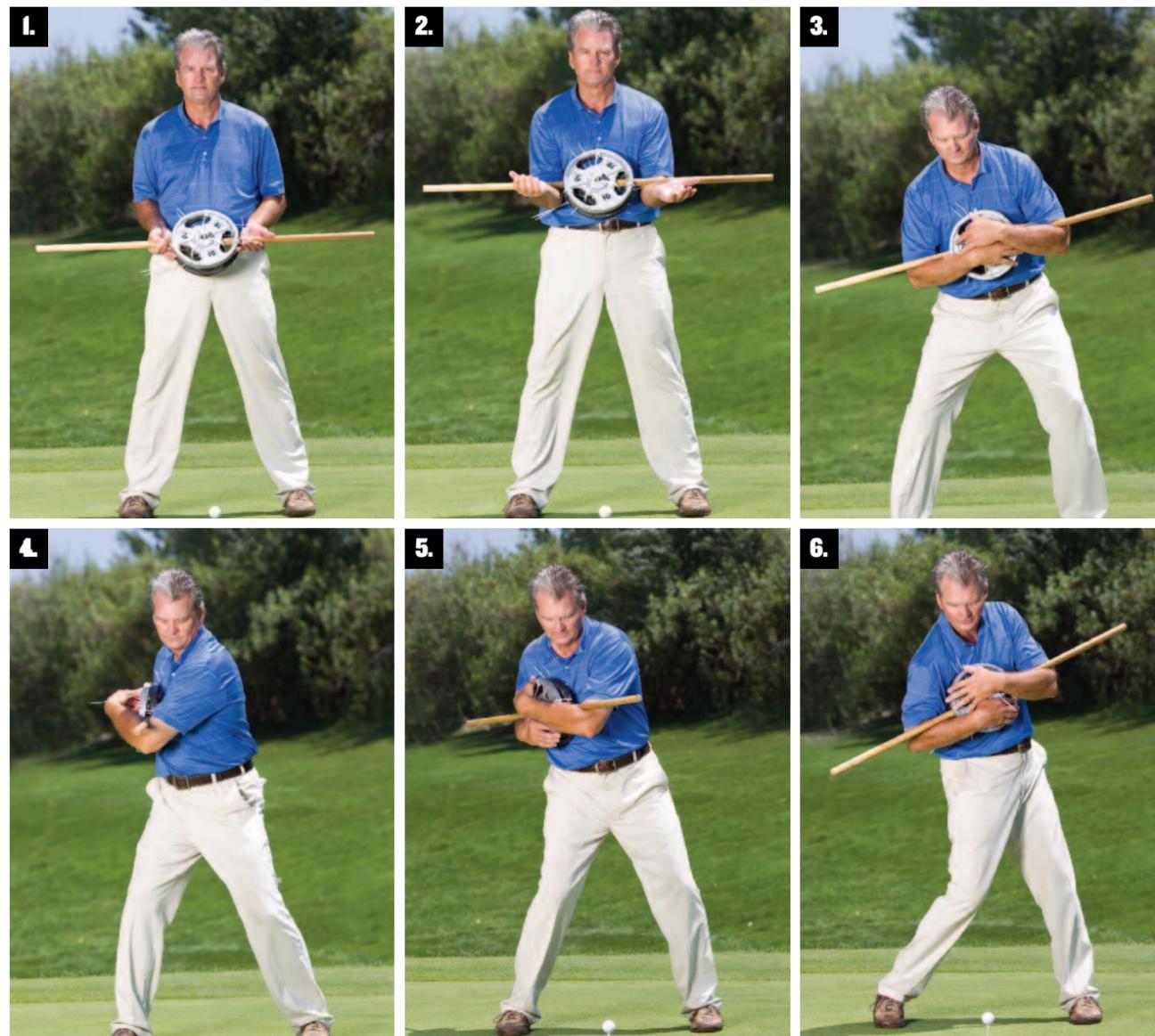
To have great core balance and big power, you must have grips that fit both your left and right hands. Why? An incorrect grip size creates imbalanced core muscles that lead to left- or right-hip rotation. Having an out-of-balance core limits your rotation on your body side that has the most tension.

When your grip size fits both your right and left hands, your core muscles will be balanced, allowing maximum rotation and the greatest power.

TRAIN AND GAIN

To find the perfect posture for maximum power, make a training aid like the one you see here. Take a four-foot dowel pole with a 1/4-inch hole through the middle, and attach two ten pound weights to it with zip ties so it's perfectly centered two feet from the pole ends.

Put a heavy weight across your chest and find a comfortable stance width. Next, get in a setup position where you feel like you can support that weight for the longest time in that particular position. Notice in these photos that it sets my posture so my spine and thigh angles are identical. This is the same angle from my earlier tip when my arms were out to the side. From this position, I'm in the optimal stance to have maximum rotation. This is my personal position of power. Biomechanically it's the most balanced, efficient position from



which to create maximum power with the least amount of resistance.

There are two things to consider when you set up with a heavy weight across your chest. First, I want you to feel the ease of rotation when you stay in the posture created by the weight. Next, if you change your spine angle or knee flex, I want you to notice how restricted your rotation is. This restriction will cause a power leak. Because of your unique body characteristics, you have one ideal posture. As with grip, grip size and stance width, we're all biomechanically different. This is why you shouldn't try to set up like your favorite Tour player. This ideal posture is *your* setup for maximum power with the least physical stress on your body.

Once you're able to find your ideal power posture with a heavy weight, consider the factors that change these power angles: stance width, grip size and grip. When these factors are set properly, you'll have absolute balance, freedom of motion and maximum power. When any one of these doesn't fit your personal biomechanic blueprint, your balance is compromised. These changes not only restrict your motion but also limit your power and increase the chance of potential injury.

When you use the weight across your chest to set your personal posture, you'll have newfound flexibility and power. You may be very surprised at the difference in where you are currently in your golf swing versus where your most efficient posture is. Some players have to stand taller, and others have more knee flex and spine tilt.