

Putting



A good, confident putting stroke can take your game to a new level. Here's how to perfect your stroke and make three-putts a thing of the past.

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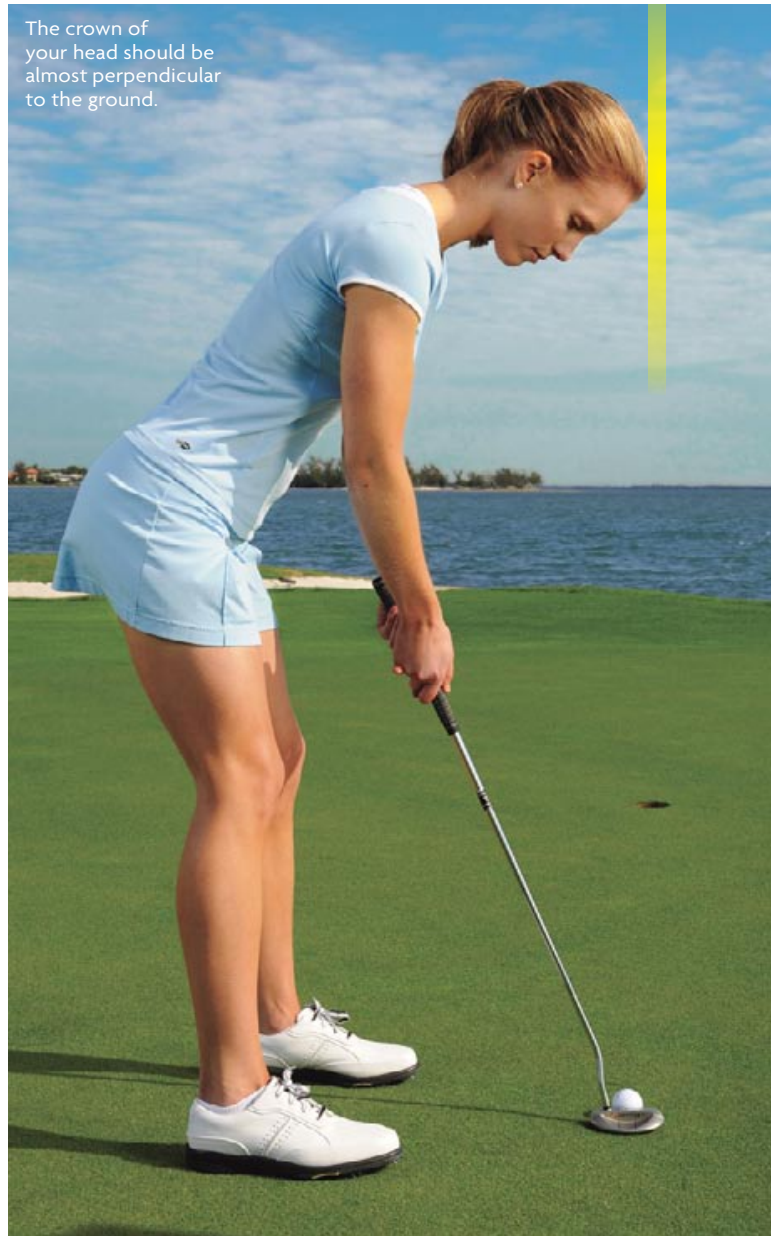
Setup: Use proper fundamentals

FOREARM ANGLE: If you're gripping the putter properly (in your palms, rather than in your fingers), the shaft angle should match the angle of your forearms, with your elbows bent inward. If your arms are too rigid, your grip is poor or your putter is the wrong length.

ARM HANG: Tilt forward from the hips so your arms hang in front of your chest and your hands are under your shoulders. Your eyes should be directly over or slightly inside the ball. If the putter is too long, you'll have to stand too far from the ball; conversely, if it's too short, you'll have to stand too close to the ball.

SQUARE LINE OF VISION: Your face should be roughly parallel to the ground, eyes square to the target line. The entire crown of your head (not your forehead) should be able to rest flat against an imaginary wall. This allows you to swivel your head to look at the target without twisting your body and altering your aim.

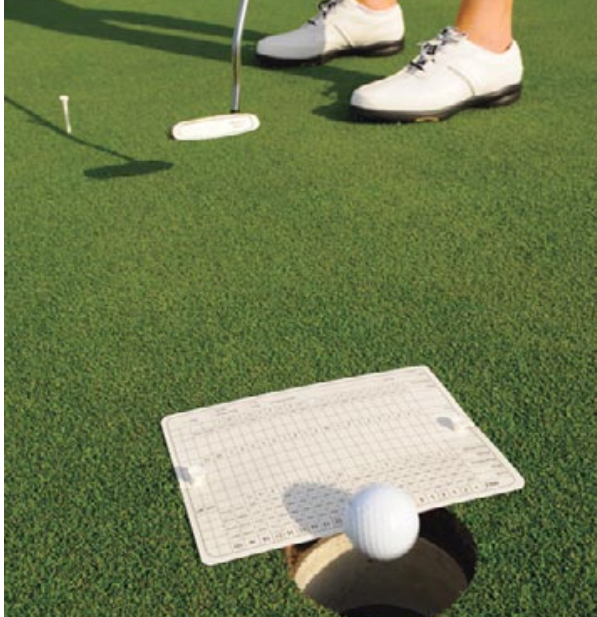
The crown of your head should be almost perpendicular to the ground.



Does your putter fit you? Try this simple test

When you address the ball, does all of the above criteria take place? If the putter is too long (which it is most of the time) or too short, you will have to compromise one or more of the above.

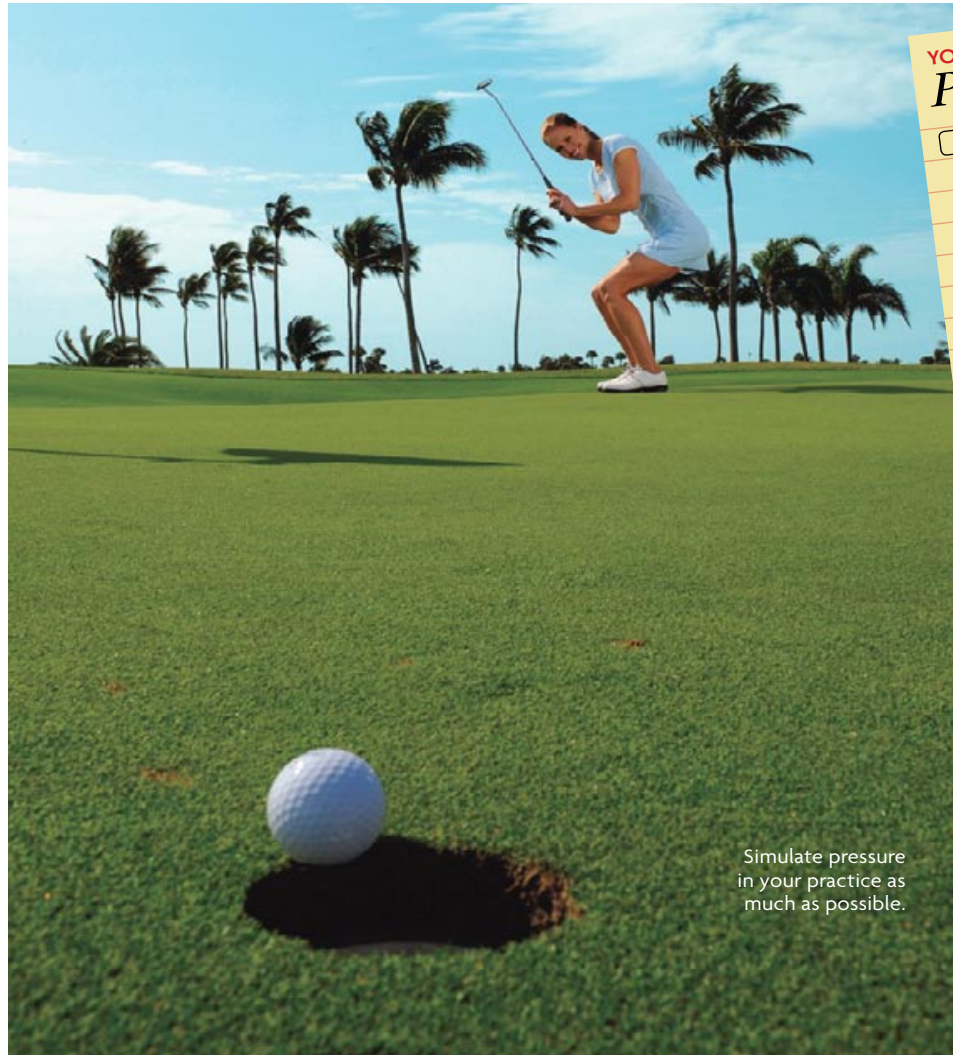
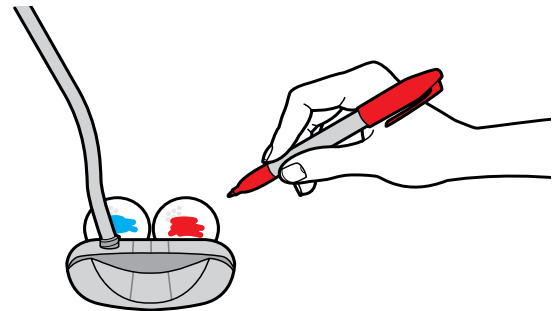
A good way to check if your putter fits you is to set up in normal address posture, without a club, and put your hands together as if in prayer (*far left*). Then open your hands and have someone slide your putter into them (*near left*). Your hands should fit at the top of the grip. If you have to manipulate your arms and elbows, the putter doesn't fit you.



Drill: Short putts

Find a hole on a mild slope so you can practice uphill, downhill, right-to-left and left-to-right putts. Stick tees in the ground three feet from the hole, directly north, south, east and west of it, and cover the lower one-third of the cup with a scorecard. Secure the card with tees. Take three balls and putt them from any of the four quadrants, until you've made 12 putts in a row from each direction. This drill forces you to hit each putt with the correct speed. For example: You want to stroke the uphill putt firmly enough so that the ball travels over the scorecard and drops into the cup. From above and the sides of the cup, you want the ball to enter on the high side of the hole without hitting the card.

Hit it flush. To learn how to make solid contact with the putterface square to the line of the putt, place two balls on the green side by side, one marked with a big red dot, the other with a blue dot. Place your putter just behind both balls and make a big enough stroke to send each one a few feet. If you've made good contact, you should see ink from both balls on the putterface (you may have to apply masking or Scotch tape to the face), and each ball should roll about the same distance.



Simulate pressure in your practice as much as possible.

YOUR PRACTICE PLAN *Putting*

- Head to the practice green before you go to the range. Players who go to the range first often don't make it to the putting green.
- Using one ball, putt your way around a hole at distances of 15 to 25 feet following this scoring system: one putt counts as a birdie, two putts equal par, and three equal bogey. Continue until you post a score of three under par. Beginners should hit putts from six to 15 feet. Don't allow yourself to go to the range until you've achieved your target score.
- Check your set-up fundamentals regularly, either in front of a mirror or with a friend.



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