

Iron Shots

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With woods one strives for distance. Accuracy is the objective of iron shots. With few exceptions, iron shots are expected to get the ball to its destination (the green) in one stroke. If one can't reach the green with an iron, he should be using a wood.

Hand control, to guide and control the club at all times, is the most important phase of the successful use of irons.

The proper selection of the club for each job is another vital phase of iron play.

A standard grip has been devised and accepted by most golfers, but my own differs somewhat. I use a combination of the overlapping and interlocking types. I do not recommend that others accept this or attempt to change theirs to conform with it. Mine is a matter of personal habit formed over the years. However, it is a strong grip, and it coincides with my belief that hand control is the key to successful golf, especially in iron play.

Correct procedure in gripping the club calls for placing the handle diagonally across the fingers and palm of the left hand with the thumb down and pointing to the right. The right hand is placed so that the club is grasped more in the fingers and so that the left thumb fits into the pocket formed by closing the right thumb down to the palm of that hand.

So far, I have been describing the regular overlapping grip. However, after my hands have been placed on the shaft, my left forefinger is interlocked with the right little finger. This unites the power of both hands and makes them operate as a unit instead of working individually.

The stance for longer iron shots is approximately the same as for wood play, except that it should be slightly closer to the ball to account for the shorter shaft and the more upright angle of the iron.

As the irons increase in number, however, the ball should be moved back from the driving position, off the left heel. Also, while a closed stance is employed with woods and long irons, the shorter irons require an open stance.

Balance is another important feature of good iron play. A slight flexing of the knees helps to maintain balance. It is important to bend from the knees instead of the waist; otherwise you are likely to throw your weight forward too much. Keep your head still and swing as if your arms and club were hanging from it like a pendulum.

There is nothing peculiar to the swing of an iron. The ability to relax and not hurry the shot, of course, is of the utmost importance. Swing, do not lift, the club back slowly to a horizontal position over the shoulders. Keep the left arm straight at all times. As the club is brought back, the body pivots to the right until, at the top of the backswing, the hips are turned away from the ball. Hesitate there before beginning the downswing.

On the downswing, as through the entire stroke, move slowly and deliberately to develop rhythm and timing. Start down slowly and pick up power when you start uncocking your wrists about halfway down. That is where hand control comes in. Keep moving your hands in the regular arc of your swing, but at the same time break your wrists to apply force to the shot. This uncocking motion must take place at just the correct time or you will either scoop the ball or hit down on it.

At the moment of impact, your hips are square to the ball. On the follow-through, your hips are turned away from the ball's line of flight. Guard against swaying with the stroke by bracing your right leg on the backswing and your left leg on the downswing and follow-through.