


## THE FIRST TEE NINE GOLF FUNDAMENTALS


For consistency across The First Tee network, coaches should cover a minimum of the first five of the Nine Golf Fundamentals as part of *The First Tee Life Skills Experience: Par Level*. The order of the Nine Golf Fundamentals as presented is recommended for new coaches; however, the order may be flexible for experienced coaches. Coaches should understand there is an interaction of skill development across the fundamentals. For example, if the golf theme of the day is distance-response, depending on skill level, coaches may have PLAYers explore how size and length of swing, or club selection, influence distance-response. To enhance PLAYers' experiences, coaches should keep all instruction and feedback focused on distance-response.

**WHILE EACH FUNDAMENTAL REPRESENTS A DESIRED OUTCOME, coaches need to create learning environments that increase the curiosity of PLAYers. How?** Coaches should utilize *The First Tee Coach building blocks* to create an environment that facilitates self-discovery through experiencing different sizes of swings, club selections, face alignments, ball locations and so forth.

When coaches create optimal learning environments, they should blend golf and life skills and deliver core lessons in a manner that utilizes The First Tee Coach building blocks strategies and behaviors. To facilitate this process, helpful charts follow each of the golf fundamentals in this section.

In each chart, the  mastery-driven ideas in the **left-hand column** are starting points to help coaches develop a complete lesson plan—Warm-up, Seamless Games/Activities and Wrap-up—to meet objectives of the lesson. For example, in one class activity, which distance-response games could coaches create or utilize that involve PLAYers swinging the club different lengths for putting, chipping, pitching and/or full-swing and be integrated with Core Lesson 15, Finding Your Personal Par?

**Tip:** When creating seamless games, design different levels of challenge for varying ages and skill levels to explore.

The corresponding questions in the **right-hand column** are starter questions to help coaches create an environment that  empowers youth throughout the games created. For example, during a distance-response game that involves swinging the putter different lengths for different distances on the putting green, coaches could ask PLAYers, *What happens when you make a bigger putting motion?* and then follow up with related questions that facilitate self-discovery.

## THE FIRST TEE GOLF FUNDAMENTAL: DISTANCE-RESPONSE



**DISTANCE-RESPONSE** describes the ability to produce the optimal range of motion and/or energy combined with club selection to roll or propel the ball the desired speed or distance. When playing golf, there are several factors that can influence the distance a ball travels, including:

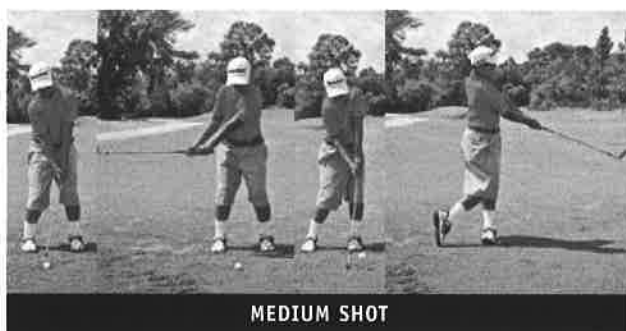
- size or length of motion,
- club selection, and
- variable amount of energy or speed applied to the motion.

At the Par level, PLAYers will explore altering the distance the ball travels—with an emphasis on size or length of motion and/or club selection—in order to play different shot lengths on the golf course.

**WHEN PLAYers ARE AT YOUNGER AGES DEVELOPMENTALLY,** *it is easier for them to develop speed, so this is a great time to train for speed through swings that are full and fast. Coaches should also create opportunities for PLAYers to experience and understand the other golf skill categories of putt, chip and pitch. The way to create a different distance-response for these skills is to modify the size or length of motion and/or the club selection to targets that are not as far away.*

**Size or length of motion**—Generally, the size or length of the swing needed is directly related to the distance a PLAYER is from the target. That is, when a PLAYER is closer to the target, the size of the swing is smaller or shorter; and when a PLAYER is farther from the target, the size of the swing is bigger or longer.

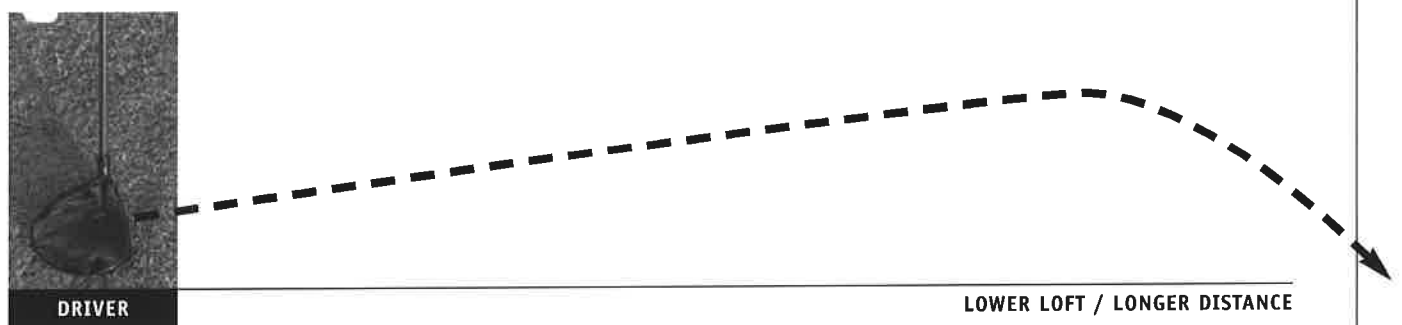
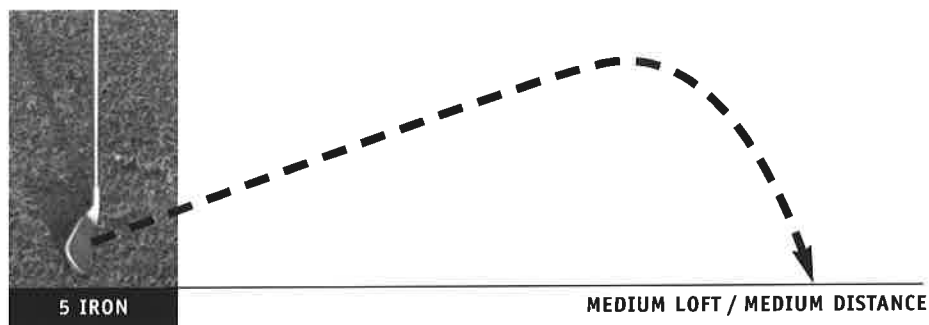
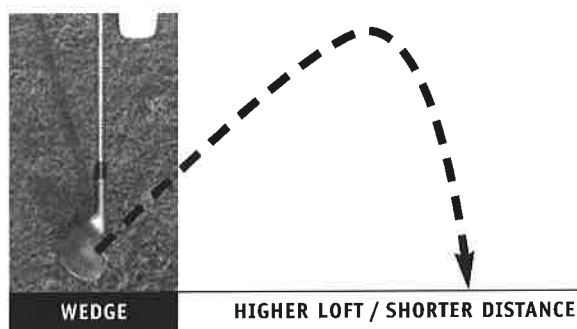
- A simple method for teaching distance-response with young people is to equate the size of the motion and the distance of the shot as follows: little swing = little shot, medium swing = medium shot and big swing = big shot.
- Using the chip motion as an example, the following pictures show a smaller chip motion (little shot), medium chip motion (medium shot) and a larger chip motion (big shot) to hit the same club different distances.



**Club selection**—One way to control the distance a ball carries and/or rolls when chipping, pitching or making a full-swing, is the club selection. It is the combination of the club's length and loft that determine a club's power. The length of the golf club determines the speed the clubhead travels, whereas, the loft of the clubface determines the degree to which the ball is propelled up and out toward the hole. Longer clubs travel faster with lower loft (such as driver, metal woods, hybrids) and have more distance potential. Shorter clubs travel slower with higher loft (such as 8 iron, 9 iron, wedges) and have less distance potential.

*New PLAYers may not be able to generate enough speed or make solid contact with longer, lower-lofted clubs, and may find their long-distance club is actually a shorter/higher lofted club such as a 7 iron.*

- Rather than changing the length or speed of the swing, a simple way to control distance is to make the same swing with different clubs.
- Below are some examples of the distance and trajectory of different clubs.



## DEVELOPING DISTANCE-RESPONSE



**Mastery-driven** ideas for creating golf games that must be integrated seamlessly with life skills:



Corresponding open-ended questions coaches can ask to **empower youth**:

- Swing the club different lengths (small, medium, big) and see how far the ball goes.

- *What happens with a bigger/smaller motion?*
- *What other sports do you play that require you to swing bigger? Smaller?*

- Swing at full speed or force.

- *How fast can you make a full swing and keep your balance?*
- *What happens to the ball when you swing fast and keep your balance?*

- Use different types, sizes and weights of implements—such as a tennis racket, baseball bat, golf shafts (with grips on end for safety) or alignment sticks—to hit different types, sizes and weights of balls.

- *What is the same or different when you use different implements to strike a ball?*
- *What do you notice when you strike balls that are different types, sizes and weights?*

- Use the same club to hit the ball different distances.

- *How do you vary your swing length to hit the ball different distances with the same club?*

- Practice putting uphill and downhill to explore distance-response on the green.

- *What do you do to adjust the length of your stroke to the speed of different slopes when putting?*



SEE P. 17 IN THE LIFE SKILLS SECTION OF THIS GUIDE FOR A SEAMLESS DELIVERY TIP PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE OF HOW DISTANCE-RESPONSE MAY BE PAIRED WITH CORE LESSON 10: EXPLORING THE GAME.

*Note: This pairing is NOT required; however, is a suggested starting point for those who are becoming familiar with the seamless delivery of the Life Skills Experience.*

## THE FIRST TEE GOLF FUNDAMENTAL: TARGET AWARENESS

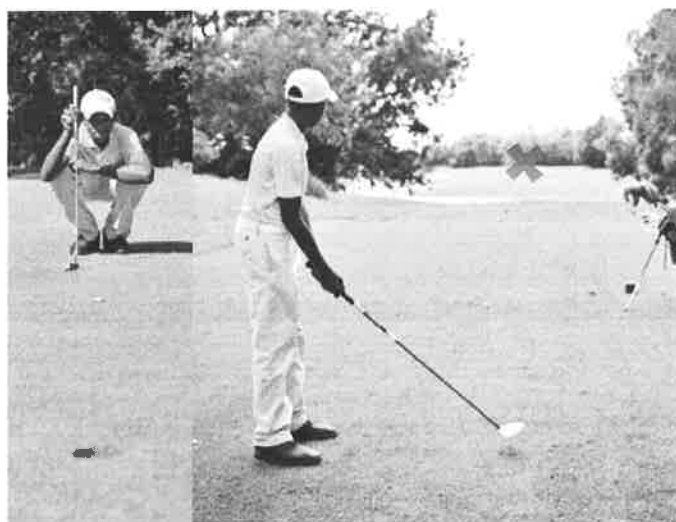


**TARGET AWARENESS** involves:

- a. target selection,
- b. distance to the target, and
- c. reaction to the target.

It is essential for PLAYers to understand the ball is not the target. Instead, the target is where they want the ball to land in order to reach the ultimate target, which is the hole. PLAYers will explore becoming more aware of their target in order to get the golf ball in the hole. At the Par level, the focus is not only on target selection, but also the distance to the target.



**Target selection** — Having target awareness begins with standing behind the ball and selecting a target. Standing behind the ball allows PLAYers to look toward the target with binocular vision, similar to shooting a free throw. Sometimes the target on the putting green is the hole or to the right or left of the hole on a sloped green. At other times, the target may be a part of the fairway, or if the hole has a “dogleg” shape, a group of trees through the fairway in the direction that PLAYers want their ball to go.



**Distance to the target** — For beginning PLAYers, this could be as simple as answering the question, *Do I use my far, medium or short distance club?* or, *Is this a big putt, medium putt or little putt?* Intermediate PLAYers could identify the yardage to the hole and select a club for that yardage. Advanced PLAYers may consider factors such as weather-related elements, slope of the ground, type of grass and lie of ball.



## DEVELOPING TARGET AWARENESS

 <b>Mastery-driven</b> ideas for creating golf games that must be integrated seamlessly with life skills:	 Corresponding open-ended questions coaches can ask to <b>empower youth</b> :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a target from different perspectives:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) select a target while standing <u>beside</u> the ball and then hit a few shots or putts;</li> <li>(2) select a target while standing <u>behind</u> the ball and then hit a few shots or putts.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What other sports do you play that have targets?</i></li> <li>• <i>How are they similar to or different from the game of golf?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do you notice when you select a target from beside the ball versus <u>behind</u> the ball?</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a variety of motions from others sports (such as punt, pass, kick, throw, roll, hit) to propel balls to different types and sizes of targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is the same or different when you go to a target in others sports versus a golf target?</i></li> <li>• <i>How can you use this experience to help you swing to a target in golf?</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use different sizes, shapes and colors of targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are examples of your targets in golf?</i></li> <li>• <i>What happens to the motion of your swing when you change the size of your target?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do you notice when you add shapes or colors to your targets?</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Verbalize the target—out loud to yourself, a partner or your coach—before swinging.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does having a target influence the motion of your swing?</i></li> <li>• <i>How does verbalizing the target before swinging impact your swinging motion?</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Experiment with different lies and how slope can influence the initial line for putting; finding the straight putt line is essential to green-reading and the farther the ball lies from the straight putt, the more break will be present.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does the slope of the green influence the speed of the putt?</i></li> <li>• <i>How does the slope of the green impact which way the ball curves as it rolls?</i></li> </ul>



SEE P. 32 IN THE LIFE SKILLS SECTION OF THIS GUIDE FOR A SEAMLESS DELIVERY TIP PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TARGET AWARENESS MAY BE PAIRED WITH **CORE LESSON 11: RESPECTING THE RULES.**

*Note: This pairing is NOT required; however, is a suggested starting point for those who are becoming familiar with the seamless delivery of the Life Skills Experience.*

## THE FIRST TEE GOLF FUNDAMENTAL: GET READY TO SWING



**GET READY TO SWING** includes what a PLAYer does to put his/her physical body in position to swing. At The First Tee, get ready to swing takes into consideration:

- hold,
- set-up, and
- aim and alignment.

Additional physical factors, as well as an emphasis on the mental and emotional aspects of get ready to swing, are addressed under golf fundamental 7: preshot and postshot routines. PLAYers will explore various methods to hold the golf club, set up their body to the ball, and aim and align their body and clubface to a target.

**Hold**—Known as the grip, the hold refers to the positioning of the hands and fingers on the club as well as the amount and consistency of pressure applied to the grip. There are many ways to hold a club with the three most common types of holds being the 10-finger, interlock and overlap. A PLAYer's hold is important, because it impacts the direction and distance the ball goes.

*Initial thoughts to consider when holding a club:*

- Allow young and/or new PLAYers to hold the club in whatever manner is comfortable, while making sure the face of the club is aiming to the target.
- Explore how holding the club differently (strong hold, weak hold, neutral hold) may impact the direction and distance the ball goes. Various styles include a strong hold, weak hold and neutral hold.
- Keep in mind a PLAYer's hold on a club will adjust and develop as s/he gains experience.
- Allow opportunities to explore very tight to extremely loose holds, because hold pressure varies among PLAYers. Encourage them to feel the in-between pressure—while keeping wrists relaxed—as this should allow for the best result.
  - Explore how varying hold pressures help with different types of shots; for example, a firm hold can be helpful when hitting out of thick rough.
  - Experience various holds for different clubs; for example, a cross-handed hold for putting.



\* Photographs of the holds are modeled by right-handed PLAYers. For left-handed PLAYers, the hands would be reversed.

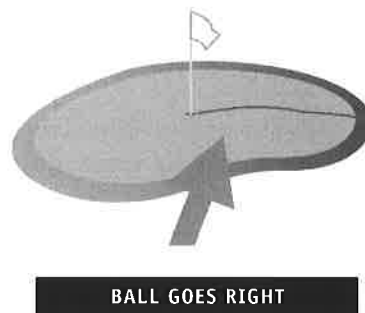
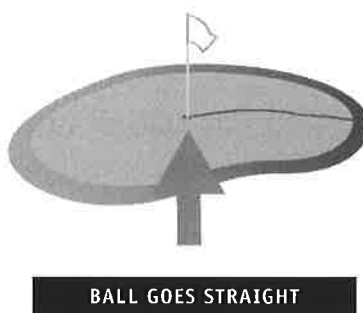
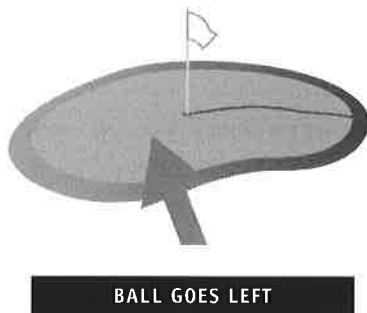
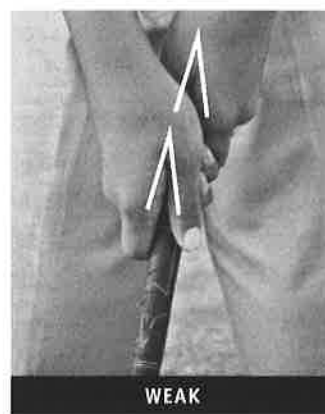
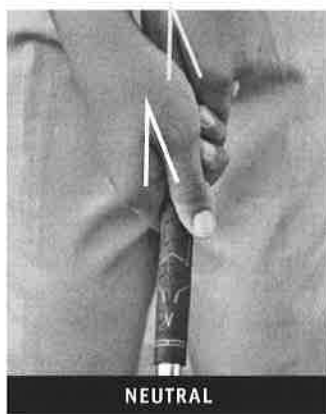
*Commonalities among holds for skilled PLAYers typically include having the:*

- Hands touch one another,
- Club more in the fingers than in the palms, and
- Left- and right-hand “Vs”— formed by thumb and index finger — parallel to one another (see photographs below).

*Basic concepts on how the hold impacts distance and direction:*

- Holding the club more in the fingers rather than the palms generally enables the clubface to travel with more speed and return to square (point at the target) when it contacts the ball. All other factors aside, the results are greater distance and increased accuracy.
- Holding the club with a stronger grip typically causes the clubface to be closed, or pointing to the left of the target, when it contacts the ball. The ball, consequently, goes left.
  - Stronger grip: for a right-handed PLAYer, the “Vs” are pointing toward the right shoulder and/or the right hand is more under the club.
- Holding the club with a weaker grip typically causes the clubface to be open, or pointing to the right of the target, when it contacts the ball. The ball, consequently, goes right.
  - Weaker grip: for a right-handed PLAYer, the “Vs” are pointing toward the right eye or ear and/or the right hand is more on top of the club.

How a PLAYer holds the club will influence how his/her swing feels. A PLAYer with a stronger hold on the club will have different swing feels than a PLAYer with a weaker hold on the club. It is important to know that many great PLAYers have had very strong, neutral and very weak grips.





**Set-up**— Refers to how a PLAYer positions his/her body prior to making a putting stroke or swinging motion. Set-up includes the stance of the feet, body posture and ball position. In general, PLAYers should assume an athletic and balanced posture with the:

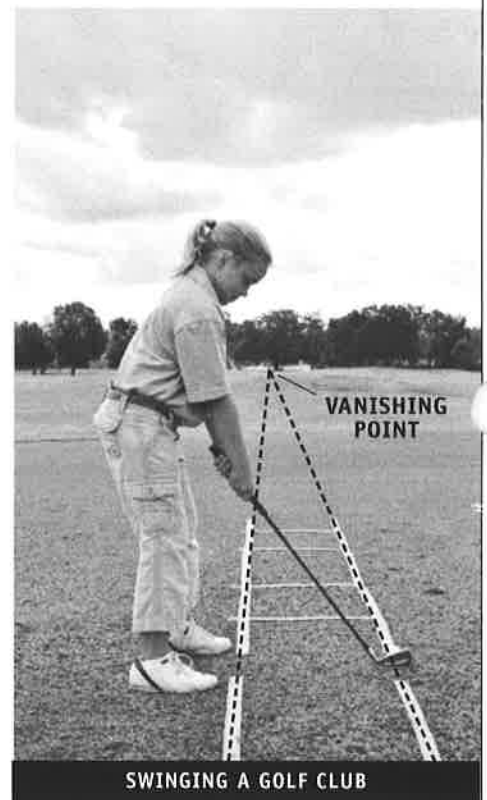
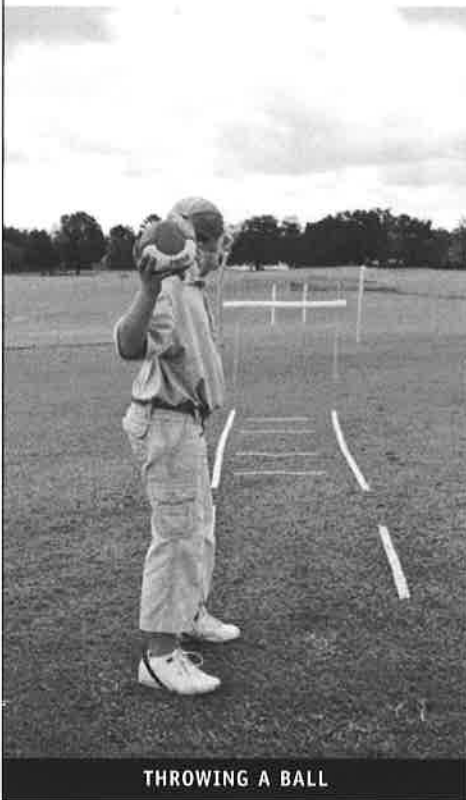
- Feet approximately shoulder-width apart (or more narrow for shorter shots such as a chip);
- Hips bent, like bowing to the ball, and knees slightly flexed;
- Arms hanging naturally beneath the shoulders in front of the body; and
- Ball positioned between the PLAYer's feet (or slightly more toward the target side for longer clubs such as a driver).

Variations in the stance, body posture and ball position can be unique based on the golf skill being performed as well as the individual, so PLAYers should be encouraged to explore a variety of set-ups.



**Aim and alignment**—Aim refers to the placement of the clubface in relation to the ball and target. Alignment refers to the position of the body in relation to the ball and target. PLAYers are positioned in a side orientation to the target similar to hitting in baseball or softball. Ideally, the:

- Clubface is designed to point or aim toward the desired target (also called “square” to the target), and
- Body is aligned approximately parallel to the intended target line.
  - Imagine a railroad track with the target line being the far side of the track and the PLAYER’s body line being along the near side of the track.



## LEARNING TO GET READY TO SWING



**Mastery-driven** ideas for creating golf games that must be integrated seamlessly with life skills:



Corresponding open-ended questions coaches can ask to **empower youth**:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore different ways to hold the club, as well as amount of pressure when holding the club.</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What happens when you hold the club with your hands closer together? Farther apart? With a tighter hold? A looser hold? Use a 10-finger hold? An interlock hold? An overlap hold? Another hold that you make up?</i></li> <li><i>How do you hold the club on shots you like?</i></li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore different ways to set-up to the ball (stand tall, bend way over, somewhere in the middle).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What happens when you set-up to the ball _____ (standing tall, etc.)?</i></li> <li><i>How do you set-up to the ball on shots you like?</i></li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore different widths of stance (really wide, really narrow, etc.).</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What happens when you take a stance that is _____ (really wide, etc.)?</i></li> <li><i>How wide or narrow do you set-up to the ball on the shots you like?</i></li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore different ball positions (far back, far forward, etc.).</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What happens when you position the ball _____ (far back, etc.)?</i></li> <li><i>Where do you position the ball on the shots you like?</i></li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore different ways to aim the clubface and align the body.</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What happens when you aim (a little left, really left, etc.) and align (a little right, really right, etc.)?</i></li> <li><i>How do you aim the clubface on shots you like?</i></li> <li><i>How do you align your body on shots you like?</i></li> </ul>                                    |



SEE P. 46 IN THE LIFE SKILLS SECTION OF THIS GUIDE FOR A SEAMLESS DELIVERY TIP PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE OF HOW GET READY TO SWING MAY BE PAIRED WITH CORE LESSON 12: MEETING & GREETING WITH A-L-R.

*Note: This pairing is NOT required; however, is a suggested starting point for those who are becoming familiar with the seamless delivery of the Life Skills Experience.*

## THE FIRST TEE GOLF FUNDAMENTAL: BODY BALANCE



**BODY BALANCE** refers to how a PLAYER stands, moves and maintains stability before, during and after swinging a club, and includes static and dynamic balance.

At the Par level, PLAYers will explore what it means to have a “balanced finish” when they complete their swinging motion.

**Balanced finish**—Typically, when the PLAYER completes the putting stroke, his/her weight is similarly balanced as it was prior to the stroke. When the PLAYER completes the chipping motion, slightly more of his/her weight is on the target-side shoe. And when the PLAYER completes the pitching and full-swing motions, his/her weight is almost entirely on the target-side shoe. Additionally, for chip shots, pitch shots and full-swings, the PLAYER’s:

- Toe of the non target-side shoe is lightly balanced on the ground,
- Belt buckle is facing, or just left of, the target, and
- Balance is maintained until after the ball lands or stops rolling.

Imagine the PLAYER is holding his/her finish in a balanced position while posing for the camera.



PUTT



CHIP



PITCH



FULL-SWING

## DEVELOPING BODY BALANCE



**Mastery-driven** ideas for creating golf games that must be integrated seamlessly with life skills:



Corresponding open-ended questions coaches can ask to **empower youth**:

- Ensure that your stroke finishes before looking for the result; hold finish for three seconds.
- Practice various lies (uphill, downhill, side hill) on the golf course; notice how balance changes when you finish the swing.
- Introduce exercises such as swinging with eyes closed to increase balance awareness prior, during and after each shot.

- *What are you aware of when you hold your finish?*
- *Which lies are more/less challenging for you?*
- *What do you do to hold your balanced finish on the various lies?*
- *What is it like when swinging with eyes closed?*
- *How do you adjust your swing to have a balanced finish with your eyes closed?*



SEE P. 65 AND IN THE LIFE SKILLS SECTION OF THIS GUIDE FOR A SEAMLESS DELIVERY TIP PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE OF HOW BODY BALANCE MAY BE PAIRED WITH CORE LESSON 13: HAVING FUN WHILE YOU LEARN.

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## THE FIRST TEE GOLF FUNDAMENTAL: CLUBFACE AND BALL CONTACT



**CLUBFACE AND BALL CONTACT** encompass:

- a. clubface direction at contact,
- b. centeredness of hit, and
- c. impact position.

In almost all instances, solid contact between the clubface and ball occur when the clubface is pointing toward the target when it contacts the ball and when the PLAYer swings through the ball to the target which results in the bottom of the swing occurring after ball contact versus before ball contact. Participants at the Par level will experience and understand the importance of clubface and ball contact with an emphasis on exploring how the direction at contact can influence the direction the ball goes.

**Clubface direction at contact**—in simplified terms, the direction the clubface points when the clubface makes contact with the ball is the direction the ball will go.

- If the clubface points right (or “open”) of the target at ball contact = then the ball typically will go right of the target.
- If the clubface points directly at the target (or “square”) at ball contact = then the ball typically will go at the target.
- If the clubface points left (or “closed”) of the target at ball contact = then the ball typically will go left of the target.

Reminder: At this early level, coaches should keep the fundamental of clubface and ball contact extremely simple and resist the urge to dispense more information—such as centeredness of hit and impact position. These concepts will follow progressively at more advanced levels.

***For the Right-handed PLAYer:***



*THEN BALL GOES RIGHT OF TARGET*

*THEN BALL GOES AT TARGET*

*THEN BALL GOES LEFT OF TARGET*