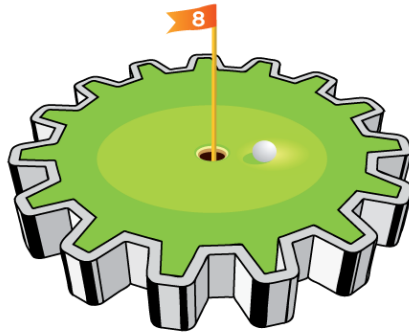




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# The Chain Reaction Golf Swing

by Walter G. Lis

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Please Note: The content in this book was written from the perspective of a right-handed golf swing. All instruction can easily be applied to a left-handed swing by simply using the opposite body side part.

## Introduction

The game of golf doesn't need to be so difficult. I've often whispered, murmured, mumbled, questioned and screamed this statement while playing and practicing golf over the past 15 years. Unfortunately, the game has been hard for me, real hard.

I've hit more balls, practiced more shots and played more rounds than most passionate Midwest golfers during this time. I've read books, magazines, websites and worked with no less than ten different PGA professionals. All of these sources of knowledge have helped, especially the instructors. However, nothing has helped me more than perseverance and a love of the game.

No other game could cause so much stress, anxiety, grief, disappointment, anger, confusion, optimism, pride, adulation, euphoria and satisfaction like the game of golf. For most of us, the game of golf should be called "Adversity", because we deal with it every round.

For some people, the game has not been as hard. Congratulations and good luck to those of you who didn't have to struggle to break 100 for an extended period of your life. You understand why golf is such a great game because it's always been there for you.

For the rest of us, we understand that the Golf Gods are a fickle lot, prone to playing tricks on us and testing our fortitude. One day could bring us the best round of our lives, the next our worst. We know the truth, it's a hard game.

This book is for the rest of us. It's everything I've learned over the past 15 years about creating a simple, repetitive, **Chain Reaction Golf Swing**. My goal with this publication is to share what I've learned to hopefully save you from decades of searching to find a consistent swing.

Over the past 15 years, I've lowered my handicap approximately 15 strokes to around a 7-8. I hope this book speeds up your learning process so you can have similar success much faster and enjoy the game, because it doesn't have to be so hard.

# The Golf Grip

The beginning chapter in almost any golf instruction manual is usually about how to grip the golf club. It's always the most important and often the least emphasized component of the game.

Since your hands are the only part of the body that comes in to contact with the golf club, it's much easier to play good golf with a technically sound grip. There are certainly many examples of players with unconventional grips who are able to compensate within their swing. However, these types of feel-based compensations take time and a great deal of consistent practice to overcome their inherent flaws.

## Types of Grips

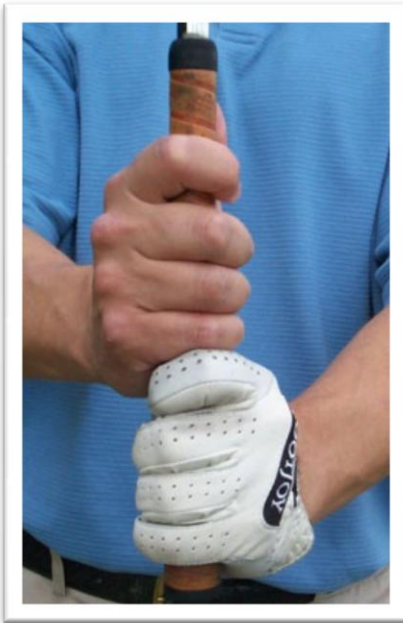


Figure 1 - Ten Finger Grip

### Ten Finger Grip

This is the simplest grip to hold the golf club but is not very popular these days. Known as "the baseball grip", it can help generate a lot of power, but can cause a player to use too much grip pressure in the swing. However, this grip is usually suitable for beginners or for players who experience joint pain, have arthritis or weak hands.

Place the little finger of trailing hand close to the index finger of the lead hand and cover the thumb of the lead hand with the center of the palm of trailing hand. (See Figure 1)

### Interlock Grip

This is the most commonly used grip by amateur players and some professionals including Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods. This grip provides a nice balance of pressure within the club and the hands, allowing for moderate grip pressure and maximum control.

Interlock the little finger on the trailing hand with the index finger on the lead hand. The thumb of lead hand should fit in the center of the palm of the trailing hand. (See Figure 2)

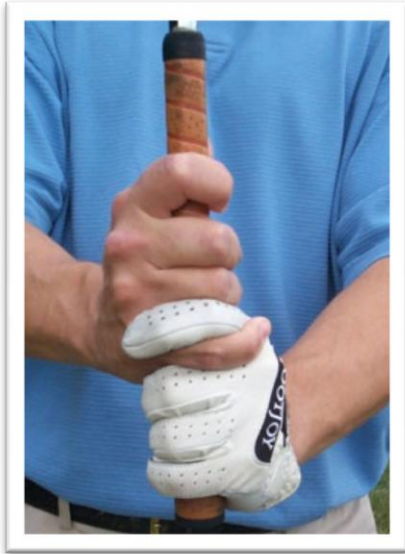


Figure 2 - Interlock Grip

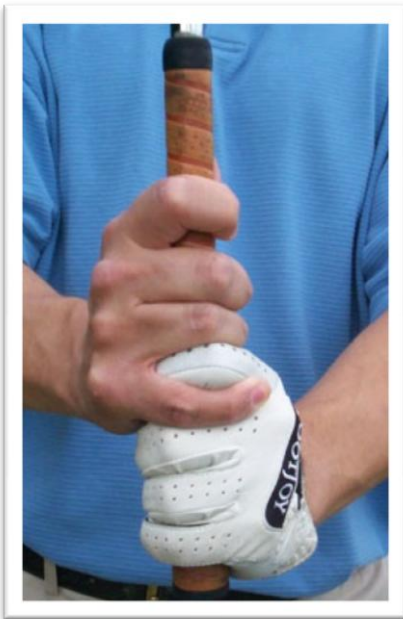


Figure 3 - Overlap Grip

### Vardon Overlap Grip

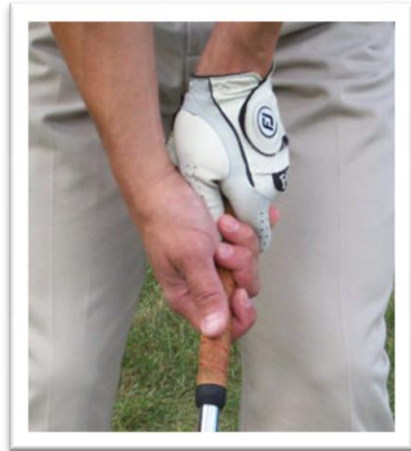
This grip is most commonly used by advanced and professional players. The grip creates consistent directional control while allowing for lighter grip pressure.

Place the little finger on the trailing hand and between the index finger and the middle finger on the lead hand. The thumb of the lead hand should fit in the center of palm of the trailing hand. (See Figure 3)

## Grip Variations

It's been said that the effect of a correct grip is to minimize the influence of the hands in a golf swing. Therefore, an effective grip should allow you to square the clubface at impact without much hand movement and will also aid in making sure that you are using your body and shoulders to control the club head.

A strong golf grip is one in which your hands are turned more to the right or clockwise. In a strong grip, the dominant hand is able to exert more of an influence on the swing. This is why it is called a strong grip since the dominant hand traditionally provides the power in the swing. (See Figure 4)



**Figure 4 - Strong Grip**

For a right handed golfer, a strong grip occurs when the right or “dominant” hand rotates under the grip. When looking down towards your grip, the knuckles on your hand should be primarily pointed towards the ground, while the knuckles on the left hand will be pointing towards the sky.

Historically, a strong grip places more emphasis and stress on the lower body to help square the club face at impact. Some PGA Tour professionals with strong grips include Zach Johnson and David Duval.

A weak grip is one in which the left hand rotates more towards the left, or counterclockwise, as does the right hand. This type of a setup places an emphasis on precise timing. If a player's timing is a fraction off, they can find themselves turning their hands over too quickly at impact as they sense that the club is open before hitting the ball, often resulting in a glancing blow or a curved shot. (See Figure 5)

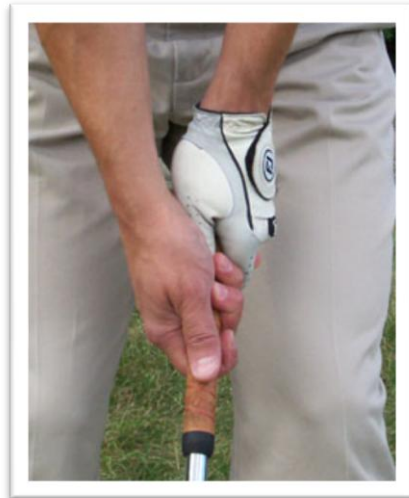


**Figure 5 - Weak Grip**

Quite often, golfers with a weak grip will have an open clubface through the swing, further compounded by the tendency to rotate the clubface open during the takeaway. Most golfers will try to compensate for this move on the fly by changing their downswing path to the left to get back to their target. This type of move can provide an unwanted slice or a pull, depending on the position of the clubface at impact.

Each hand is given an equal opportunity in a neutral golf grip. Most professionals consider the neutral golf grip to be optimal because it will usually allow your hands to react properly during an aggressive swing.

Here are the steps to achieve a neutral grip. With your hands hanging naturally at your side, you should see two knuckles on the outside of each hand. Keep your left hand in this position while pinching the butt-end of the grip with the fingers of the right hand. (See Figure 6)



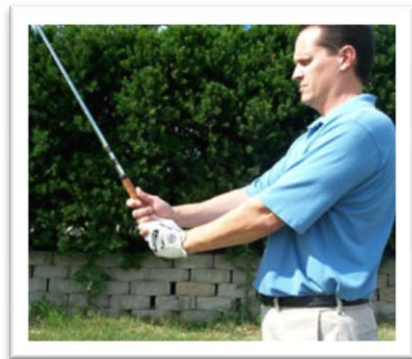
**Figure 6 - Neutral Grip**



Place the handle into the fingers of the left hand making sure the left hand does not move or turn into a new position. With the left hand, hold the club above the waist at a 45 degree angle. You can now check to see that blade is square and only two knuckles are showing in the left hand grip.

Then position the right hand like a pistol pointing the index finger straight along the shaft of the club. Place the grip into your two middle fingers on your right hand while keeping the index finger pointing straight ahead. Next wrap the thumb pad of your right hand directly over your left thumb and close the right index finger around the grip. Now you can see that the “V” lines between the thumbs and index fingers in each hand should be pointing close to your right ear.

Gripping the club while the club head is on the ground positions the club in the palm of your hand rather than in your fingers, which will weaken your grip. Be sure to grip the club while standing upright with the club head toward the sky. (See Figure 7)



**Figure 7 - Gripping the Club**

Worn golf grips can cause you to squeeze the club too tight, creating a lot of tension in your arms and shoulders, which will cause a short, quick swing. In addition, golf grips also need to be the correct size for each golfer’s hands. If the grip is too large, your hands are slow to react to the swing, and if the grip is too small, your hands will overreact.

It is quite important to fight the urge to grip the club with too much pressure. The looser you keep your grip, the more flexibility and greater distance in the swing. In terms of how much grip pressure you should use, Sam Snead advocated the same pressure as if you were “caressing a baby bird”.

One of the most common mistakes that golfers make is they tighten or loosen up one of their hands in their grip which can cause a shank or hook. The tightening of the lead hand can cause the ball to shank and tightening of trailing hand will cause the ball to hook.

Consistently work on your grip and you will be creating a solid path for your golf game for the rest of your life. A sound grip makes the game much easier and is the foundation of your swing.

Practice your grip often and you will soon become comfortable adjusting your pressure or even new positions to assist in hitting different shots. A little work in this area will go a long way towards an efficient swing.

## The Setup

In this section, we take everything you've learned about the grip and add the remaining elements of the setup. Just as with the grip, our goal is to simplify this process so that it becomes a familiar and consistent part of your overall routine as soon as possible.

Throughout this process, it's always a great idea to practice your setup while looking in a mirror for feedback. You can also consult a friend or even video record yourself and watch the playback. What we feel and what we're actually doing can sometimes be quite different, so it's a good idea to always monitor yourself and return to the basics.

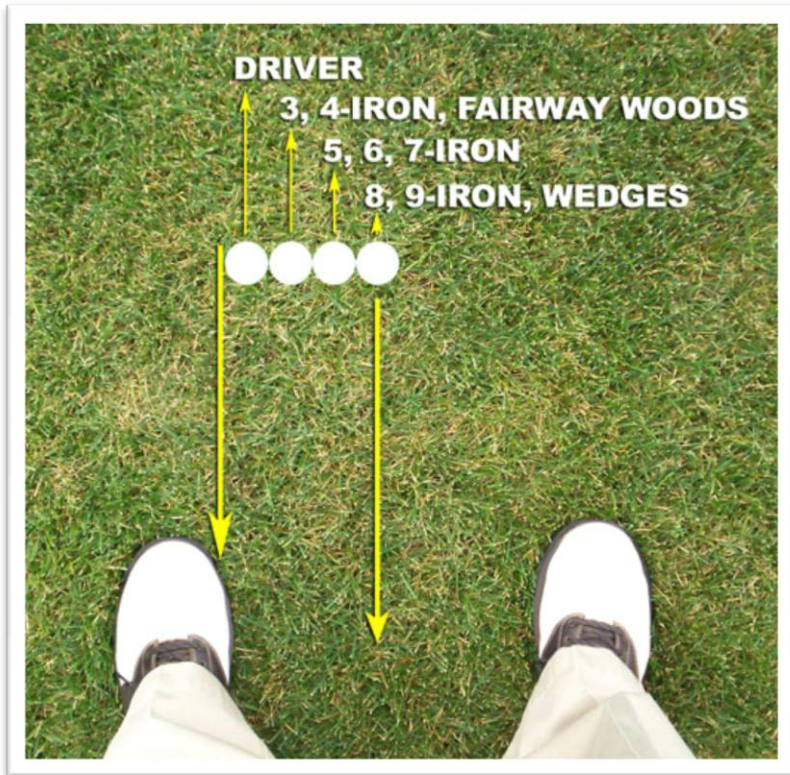
As most professionals agree, the golf swing is a chain reaction. If you don't keep the first links in the chain (grip and setup) together, you'll have little chance of maintaining that reaction successfully through the rest of the swing.

### **Ball Position**

Correct ball position plays a big role in keeping that chain reaction of the golf swing working. If you play the ball too far back in your stance, you'll have a tendency to hit shots to the right of the target. Conversely, if the ball is too far forward, there is a chance that your shots will miss the target to the left.

Most professionals advocate playing the ball between your left foot and the middle of your stance, depending on the club. For example, the most popular ball position for the driver is just inside the heel of your front foot. This position allows you to hit the ball further forward in your stance, producing impact on a slight upswing, taking advantage of the loft and design of the club.

The suggested ball position for the remaining clubs progresses from left to right. Subsequently, the long irons are played a ball or so to the right of the driver's position. Mid-irons are played about one or two balls to the right of the long irons, finishing with the short irons, which are played at about the middle of your stance. (See Figure 8)



**Figure 8 - Ball Position Guide**

The objective of each of these positions is to allow you to hit the ball at the lowest point of your swing, taking advantage of the club's loft and allowing you to make crisp contact with the ball.

It's also important to note that the objective for every full swing, not including bunker shots, is to hit the ball first. Your divot should always come after impact with the ball. This concept is sometimes not understood by many amateurs who try to scoop the ball, therefore negating the loft and sabotaging the intended design of the club. We'll discuss this concept in more detail in the "Downswing" section.

Many PGA Tour professionals have their own theories on ball position. For example, rising star Anthony Kim is a tremendously

talented player who plays shots in which the ball position is anywhere from his left heel to his right heel. Anthony usually bases his ball position on the club, trajectory and even the spin he wants to put on the ball.

Jack Nicklaus advocates a constant ball position, regardless of the club used. Jack suggests changing your stance, depending on the club being used. Tiger Woods follows a more traditional approach, using much of the traditional ball placement theory mentioned above.

### Stance Width

The proper width of your stance will vary in relation to the club that you're hitting. The maximum width should be for your driver, while the short irons should be played at the minimum stance width.

Like ball position, the actual recommended minimum stance width varies among golf teachers. Although many professionals instruct their students to maintain a stance with the feet approximately at shoulder width, we advocate limiting your stance so that the inside of your heels match the width of your hips. (See Figure 9)

The primary reason for this is that a wider stance restricts your ability to pivot your weight on the backswing. Keeping your stance at about the width of your hips will help your weight transfer, downswing and follow through.



Figure 9 - Stance Width

## Alignment

It's a good practice to continually check entire body alignment (feet, knees, hips and shoulders), so that everything is square to the target. One issue that often occurs for amateurs is having a slight tilt in their spine angle, which affects their eye line. Any unnecessary tilt can cause problems, affecting alignment and causing your stance to be off target. Once again, reviewing your alignment in front of a mirror or on video can be very beneficial in identifying problems and maintaining consistency.

## Stance and Posture

An important fundamental for all beginning golfers is recognizing the importance of keeping your lower body as quiet as possible. Our primary goal is to use the shoulders to start the swing. Too much movement in your legs can often derail this concept.

Your legs should act like a brace for your upper body to pivot on. It's a good idea to feel some sort of tension in the inner muscles of your thighs as they help stabilize your lower body.

After establishing a solid base, your next focus is on maintaining a straight spine angle. When addressing the ball to take your stance, lean over from the hips with your arms hanging down naturally. Your lower back should be flat with your shoulders relaxed and your chin up. Your knees should be slightly bent, allowing yourself to maintain a tall, athletic position.

This position will also help you decide how far to stand away from the ball. While in your proper stance and holding the club, simply move towards the ball so that your arms continue to hang down naturally. Once you reach the distance where the club is squarely behind the ball, you're now the proper distance from the ball.

## **Balance**

While in your stance, you'll want to feel your weight right down the middle of your feet – not necessarily on your heels or your toes, but right in the middle. If you're in the proper position, it should be difficult for someone to push you over from the back or front.

Speaking of feet, one of the last items in your setup checklist is to rotate or open your left foot about 15 degrees towards the target. The reason for this move is to increase your stability and assist your ability to turn during the takeaway.

It's important to remember that the golf swing is a fluid motion that requires flexibility and rhythm, especially during your setup. Yes, there are quite a few positions and postures that we've covered that go in to a good setup, but being too stiff or rigid will have a detrimental effect on any kind of athletic movement. The golf swing is controlled athleticism at its finest, so remember to stay loose.



## The Backswing

A good backswing will set your golf club in a powerful position that will also allow you to easily control the downswing and keep the swing's chain reaction intact. Your primary goals in this segment are to feel your body rotate and coil without swaying, harnessing a tremendous amount of power and energy. With this rotation, you'll also swing the club on plane to the backswing, setting your hips, shoulders, hands and wrists for release on the downswing.

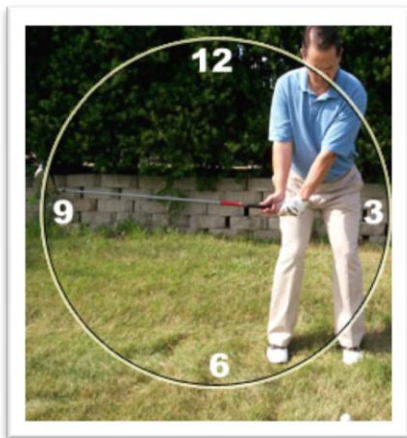
The first four feet of your backswing are entirely dictated by the arms and shoulders moving the club head together. You'll notice the triangle setup between the hands, arms and shoulders as they rotate at this point, maintaining the distance between all three during this movement. Your lower body remains still, acting as a support for this segment of the backswing and allowing you to maintain your balance. (See Figure 10)



**Figure 10 - Backswing 1**

This first sweeping movement of the club head should be smooth and slow. It's essential to establish a nice and easy rhythm at this point so that you can maintain this pace and allow the rest of the swing to proceed evenly without being rushed. A fast backswing often leads to timing issues, especially for beginners, that negatively affect how they impact the ball. LPGA legend Nancy Lopez is famous for her deliberately slow backswing and rhythm.

For beginners, it's helpful to think of this first section of the backswing as the nine o'clock position, since this segment ends with the club head being right around the number nine on a clock. During this movement, allow the club head to rotate naturally as your shoulders turn. As mentioned earlier, it is our goal to minimize any sort of club head manipulation by the hands. (See Figure 11)



**Figure 11 - Nine O'clock Position**

It is in this segment of the backswing where the concept of swing plane starts to become of primary concern. The swing plane is setup by the angle of the shaft relative to the ground at address. The club can be on plane, under plane or over plane. (See Figure 12)

As we raise the club head above the nine o'clock position, the wrists start to turn and cock as the shoulders turn and the arms lift. In this movement, your hands will swing over your right foot while the club head stays outside your hands.



**Figure 12 - One O'clock Position**

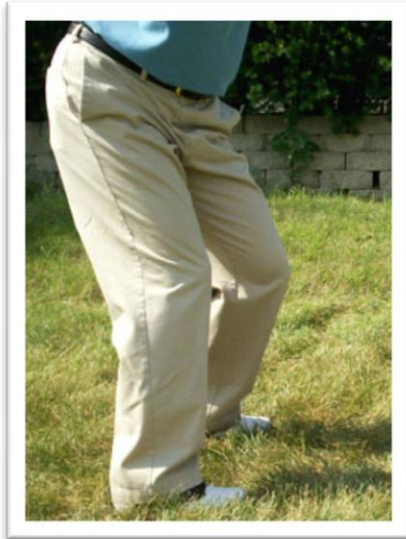
Taking the club too far inside or underneath the plane can often cause your swing to get too steep on the remainder of the swing, causing multiple compensations to occur in order to square the club head.

Taking the club too far outside or over the plane also creates similar destructive issues.

As the shoulders turn and the club head rises towards the one o'clock position, your hips should begin to rotate as well. This rotation is essential as we want to avoid swaying left or right by keeping our right knee flexed. The knee flex will help us rotate around our body and also aid in the transfer of weight from the center of our body ultimately to the inside of our right thigh. It is here where approximately 80 percent of your weight will be stored while at the top of your backswing.

This ratio will decrease as you move from the woods through the longer irons to the short irons, finishing at around 60 percent of your weight resting on your right side at the top of swing. For these shorter clubs, we're more concerned with accuracy and less about power.

Stay in your posture throughout the backswing by keeping the bend in your right or back leg throughout the entire backswing. Don't stand up straight with your body, but stay down so that you can maintain your body position. (See Figure 13)

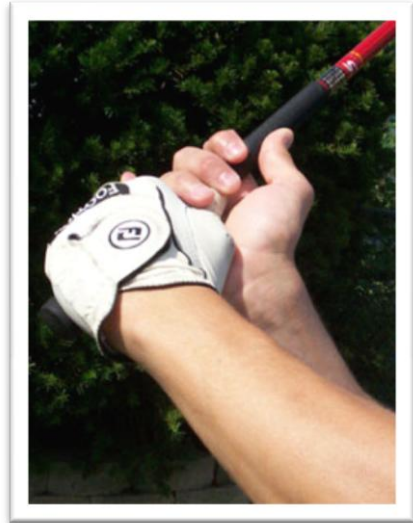


**Figure 13 – Right Knee Bend**

However, you do want to maintain your spine angle while keeping your chin up and your head and eyes level. Many golfers struggle with standing up during the swing, which causes them to lift and raise their head, making it very difficult to repeat this process for a solid impact on the downswing.

Allow your shoulders to turn smoothly until your front shoulder is underneath your chin. At the one o'clock position the club should be fully set for the downswing with the wrists fully cocked or hinged. Here you will feel a tremendous stretch in your hips and rib cage as you store all that power before release.

Your left arm will be fully rotated with your left wrist straight and approximately at a 45 degree angle. (See Figure 14)



**Figure 14 – Flat Left Wrist**

While your left arm is primarily straight, your right arm should be at a 90 degree angle from the ground. The analogy given to this right arm position is of a waiter holding a flat tray.

With your arms set properly, your club shaft should be on plane as well. This will allow the backswing to proceed smoothly with tremendous power and rhythm.

You're now coiled and ready to release that power on the downswing. At this point, you are in a powerful, athletic position from which you can reverse direction and begin your downswing.

## The Downswing

The downswing is the final piece to the puzzle that is your golf swing. This is where you reap the benefits of proper grip, setup and backswing. All of your previous work will now make it easier for you to swing through the ball towards the target, keeping the chain reaction together.

At this point in the swing, you've coiled your shoulders and hips to the top of the backswing and are feeling the stretch down your left side. Your weight has rotated to the inside of your right thigh and your right knee is still maintaining its flex. For many players, it's a good idea to maintain this position at the top for a slight pause before you begin the downswing. This is a good way to purposefully segment the backswing loading and to begin the downswing.

It's now time to unwind and release that coil of energy that you've created. You begin by rotating your hips back toward your target along with a small lateral move in the same direction. As with everything leading up to this point, it's important to keep a smooth tempo throughout the duration of the downswing. Speeding up your rhythm at this point can cause major problems at impact. (See Figure 15)

Once you've begun to release your backswing tension through your hips the rest of the body will instinctively follow, pulling your shoulders back forward. Since the hips rotate approximately half as much as your shoulders, they will slow down allowing your hands and arms to drop into the slot in front of your right hip. We still want to maintain the same knee flex through this motion, limiting any head movement so you can return the clubface through the same spot where we started.



**Figure 15 – Hip Rotation**

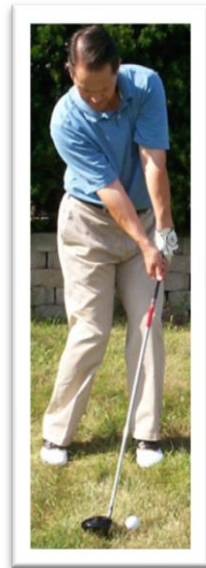
At this point, your shoulders are still slightly closed to the target and the club is now above your right hip and in front of your right shoulder. If the club falls behind the right shoulder, you know you've rotated your shoulders too quickly. This loss of synchronization will cost you much of your power.

With the club in the proper slot above your right hip and in front of your shoulder, the left hip and shoulder work together to accelerate the club head through the point of impact. By continuing their rotation together, the right side of your body can now release the club with all of the force that you've built up.

This is a powerful position in the golf swing where you can finally swing with power through the ball. As the left side of your body clears through impact, feel like you can clear your right arm and shoulders, hitting the ball with full force. The sensation of chasing the ball down the target line turning your right shoulder through is what professionals call "covering" the ball.

Upon rotation and release of the club, your right heel will come up off the ground and nearly all your body weight will transfer to your right side. While achieving this release, all of the components of the swing, including shaft angle, spine angle and the club head will all return to and through where they started in your setup. In addition, your head will remain behind the ball through impact. (See Figure 16)

At impact and during your follow through you'll feel the awesome controlled power that you generated through the swing. The force of the chain reaction golf swing is an amazing and fulfilling feeling. Once you feel it, you'll be hooked and the game of golf will never be the same.



**Figure 16 – Impact**



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