
How to Master

A Great

Golf Swing

How to Master A Great Golf Swing

Maxine Van Evera Lupo
Illustrations by Dom Lupo

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My special appreciation and heartfelt thanks
to all of those who encouraged and supported me in
my effort to help those who play golf
help themselves play better.

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Foreword

During the mid-1970s I began working with professional and amateur golfers, peripheral to my clinical duties in the Navy Medical Service Corps. In helping players chase their golfing dreams it became very apparent to me that peak performance could only be achieved through a complete interaction of proper mental focus and sound swing mechanics.

Searching for golfing excellence is often a mysterious and somewhat mystical pursuit—a thrilling adventure of trying to master concentration, focus, imagery, and tactile feel, all while performing a complicated sequence of technically correct body movements. In searching for excellence we meet the golf swing, a creature with a mind of its own that can lead us on a nerve-wracking emotional journey that ranges from joy and euphoria to agony, frustration, suffering, and despair. Such is the game we play! It tempts us with an addictive web that never lets us know with certainty when our next exhilarating payoff will arrive.

Understanding swing mechanics and how they cause an object with dimples and no smile to do strange and unusual things (i.e., go hard left, hard right, too low, too high, too fast, too slow) falls within the realm of the professional golf instructor. In 1983 I met Maxine, myself an avid golfer in search of better swing mechanics. Not only was I introduced to her teaching brilliance on the less than tee, but far more important, I was blessed with a lifetime of warm friendship and by the marvelous gift of her wise and good counsel. I also found her original guidebook *How to Master a Great Golf Swing*, a valued reference tool in my pursuit of game improvement. In this reissue of her innovative step-by-step instructional guide, present-day golfers of all ability levels will find many “pearls of wisdom” outlined in a clear, concise approach to fifteen key fundamentals of the basic golf swing. Maxine’s insights can become wonderful companions on the exciting journey of mastering the golf swing. In conjunction with dedicated practice and sound individualized instruction, this book can enrich the reader’s knowledge of proper fundamentals and provide a solid foundation for capturing the magical essence of creative shot making.

There are no easy ways to gain complete mastery of the golf swing, no simple short cuts to achieving consistent peak performance in the game of golf. To appreciate this all we have to do is watch the weekly trials, tribulations, and struggles of the most talented players in the world on the men’s and women’s professional golf tours. However, after enjoying this book, after all the learning and studying, and after all the practice and play, I hope you are able to capture the true spirit of the game that Maxine so effectively taught me—

“Believe” mightily,
“Hope” joyfully,
“Hit” divinely . . .

. . . but most of all have fun and enjoy the game.

—Dr. Jay Brunza

Chapter One

Understanding the Basic Golf Swing

The golf swing is structured on the natural tendency and physical ability of an individual to swing, throw, or hit conceivably anything. Although everyone who plays golf employs this ability to some degree, many players still play badly more often than they play well. As a result, many hundreds of books have been written on golf to help dedicated students play better.

Bobby Jones wrote in 1959, for instance, that golf was not taught the way it is learned; that it was taught as a science but learned as a game and that teaching and writing had become far too technical and complicated. "What the game needs most," he wrote, "is a simplification of teaching routines which will present a less formidable aspect to the beginner and offer to the average player a rosy prospect of improvement." Regardless of Bobby Jones's admonition to teachers and writers to keep it simple, however, golf still remains frustrating for players.

Although knowing how to swing a golf club is accepted without question as a skill necessary for playing, still buried under a cloud of misconception is the belief that too much thinking about it complicates performance. Nothing could be more inane. Because of this, golf should be taught as a science because its difficulty does not necessarily lie with golfers who think too much or with teachers who teach golf as a science, but with players who play it as a game without first learning it as a science.

Here's why: Science is defined as "knowledge of facts and laws arranged in an orderly system." Similarly, the art of teaching golf evolved from a study of sequential movements that employ both shifting the weight and turning in a natural swinging-hitting action. Ultimately then, a sound method of teaching a "basic" swing developed. Regardless, however, most golf swings are not patterned after this prototype that makes the golf swing work because most golf swings are self-taught and self-developed.

Rather than learning from time-proven guidelines, too many players have first taken up the game with the object of just hitting the ball and then continued the practice until bad habits formed. The result is that very few golfers ever know what either does or doesn't make the golf swing work. What most golfers need, therefore, is not giving up the game, continuing to play badly, or simplification of teaching, but a greater effort toward learning.

Although independent actions within the golf swing are all fairly natural, such as shifting the weight to accommodate swinging and hitting, problems occur because the golf swing itself, as a whole, is not natural. In 1981, for instance, Sam Snead, famed for his "natural" golf swing, wrote, "I like to have a quarter for every shot I hooked with my natural grip before I developed the unnatural

grip that let me hit them straighten.” And Ben Hogan acknowledged that there is absolutely “nothin’ natural” about the golf swing. A natural swing can be developed, though, by learning how to establish and swing through positions that promote coordination.

Unlike more natural movements such as those found in tennis or baseball, the body turns rotationally in golf while the arms swing upright with the hands together—movements that are natural in themselves but unnatural in golf. As a result, a “basic” swing evolved as a series of fundamental positions and movements that coordinate and can be “built” in practice to serve as a self-help method for improving personal performance. The following pages present these fundamentals in sequence. You’ll learn what they are, their purpose, how to apply them, where they are located in the swing, and how they affect each other. Learning about this golf swing as taught by teachers who teach “knowledge of facts and laws arranged in an orderly system” is the most important self-help “tool” for improving personal performance.

Playing well within their own ability motivates golfers at all ages and levels of proficiency to improve for personal satisfaction. How far you progress is not always a matter of inherent ability but often the ability to establish or adjust those parts of your own golf swing that are not fundamentally correct by comparing your swing with basics. Even more important, however, is that while you’re learning the use of fundamentals you’ll be learning to help yourself—and helping you help yourself is the purpose of this book.

Chapter Two

Learning To Use Fundamentals

Anyone can play golf and, with practice, can play consistently well. Many golfers fall victim to self-imposed problems and frustration in golf, however, because they have not developed a sound golf swing based on fundamentals.

One dictionary defines a fundamental as “a principle, rule, law, etc., that forms a foundation or basis, essential part, indispensable, underlying.” A golf fundamental, then, may be defined as “a position or movement that is essential to building a strong foundation for a sound, repeating golf swing.”

The combination of inaccuracies that cause problems in golf is neither prevented nor corrected by doing a few things right. You prevent problems by doing most things right and correct them by mastering specific positions or movements that relate to specific problems.

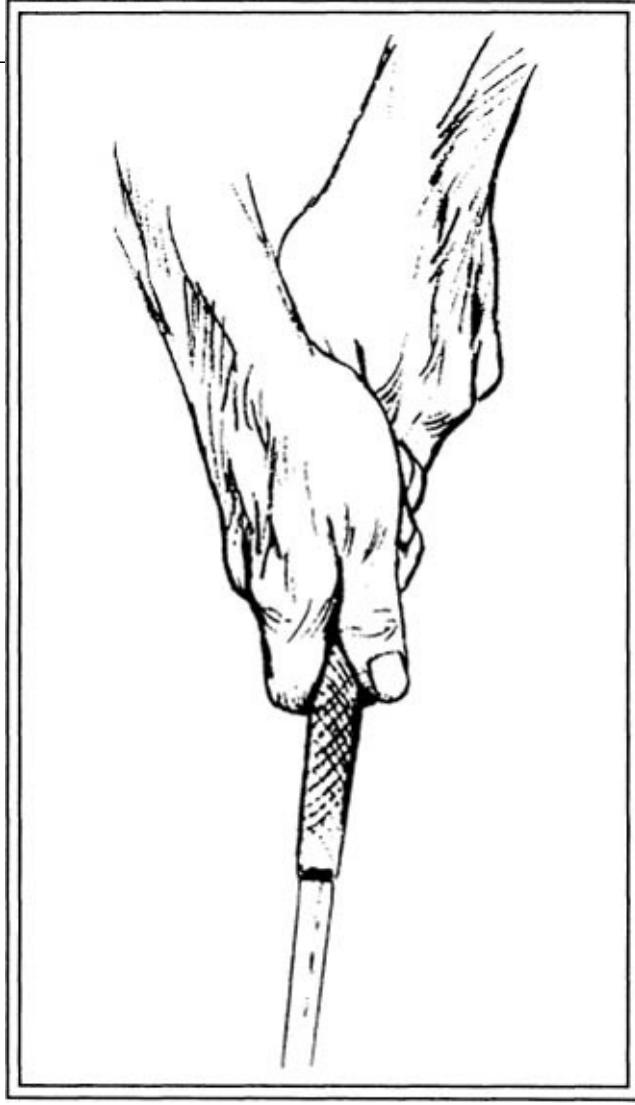
Understanding and applying these basic positions and movements help individual golfers improve personal performance and proficiency in two ways: (1) by learning how to establish positions initially that promote coordination, thereby avoiding problems; and (2) when problems do occur, by knowing how to correct or adjust those parts of the swing that are not fundamentally correct by comparing the swing with basics. Without fundamental guidelines as points of reference, however, it is difficult to establish correct positions, keep the swing intact, or analyze and correct swing problems.

Building a basic golf swing is the same as building a prefabricated house. Each must be built on a strong foundation with sections built independently that are strong enough to give strength to the whole. Units or sections of the swing, although always part of the whole, are the grip, position at address, backswing, downswing, and follow-through. These units are then connected with fundamental procedures such as “the waggle” and forward press that tend to promote good timing and rhythm—all of which are developed in the learning stage by simply connecting the units in sequence.

All golfers use some fundamentals, whether they are aware of them or not. While they may use some, however, most golfers can improve their swing considerably by learning to use more fundamentals more effectively. Since each golfer and each golf swing is unique and not everyone uses the same fundamentals in exactly the same way, not all golfers can improve or correct their swing by using the same fundamentals. Therefore, in both teaching and learning, *learning which fundamentals affect each individual swing is the key to self-improvement*. The following chapters help you understand and achieve that goal for more enjoyment of golf.

PART I

The Grip



Chapter Three

Analyzing the Grip

An accurate grip is the most basically important ingredient in a reliable golf swing, contributing about 60 percent to its overall efficiency. Difficulty in other sections of the swing can frequently be traced directly back to the grip, because an incorrect hand position may have restricted the *ability* of muscles in other parts of the body to perform correctly. This inability of the other muscles gives the false impression that the difficulty lies somewhere other than in the grip.

Because the grip is so basic, golfers initially develop one that seems comfortable but does not necessarily contribute to the swing as it should. *Initial* comfort in golf may not always imply correctness; therefore, a study of the contribution the hands make to the swing, both separately and as a unit, can benefit even experienced golfers who presume their grip is correct.

The Vardon, or overlapping, grip—named after British champion Harry Vardon—positions the little finger of the right hand over the left forefinger, and it is rarely disputed as being the most popular put-together formula. The interlocking grip, where the left forefinger is locked in between the last two fingers of the right hand, is equally effective. This book refers to the more common overlapping grip throughout, but the principles applied refer to all golf grips, including the less common 10-finger grip.

The obvious purpose of establishing the grip is to enable the hands to work together as a close-knit unit. However, establishing the grip and actually completing the grip are not exactly the same. Because the right hand is positioned lower on the club than the left, extending the right arm to complete the grip exerts a muscular influence on other positions. Unless firmly secured, these other established positions may then inadvertently be changed.



FIGURE 2

Aligning the hands and clubface square to each other helps return the clubface to square when the hands hit through the ball.

To promote full understanding, **Part I** presents a study of the grip itself, studying each hand separately as well as together. **Part II** then separates the hands while introducing fundamentals that position the clubhead, feet, and lower body *before* the right arm moves to position the right hand.

Before we actually begin studying the grip, look at your hands and study their natural actions. Although alike, they oppose each other, working independently yet together through muscular control.

Use either hand to toss a soft object (such as a wad of paper) up in the air and hit it to the left with the palm of your right hand. Notice that your hand automatically pulls back with a little wrist action to slap or hit the object for distance. To hit the paper in the same direction with the *left* hand, however, you use the back of your hand, employing a natural firm-wristed “batting” effect, striving to hit the object straight rather than far. Both hands hit squarely at impact, however, and the same natural use of the hands is employed in the swing; through the grip you impart this action to the clubhead. The left-hand grip allows the left arm to keep the ball on target with backhanded firmness, while the right-hand grip allows the hand to smack the ball for distance.

Top performance in golf is not determined by brute force but by coordination of muscles.

The essential function of the grip is to align the hands and clubface at address in a manner that will return the clubface to square at impact. Aligning the back of the left hand, the palm of the right hand, and the clubface all square to each other and to the target in the address position returns the clubface to square when the hands hit naturally back through the ball. ([Figure 2](#)) Once established square, the hands and clubface swing squarely together throughout the golf swing; therefore, the alignment of the thumbs in relation to the toe of the clubhead at address can be used as a guideline for swinging correctly as well as for establishing positions at address.

Top performance in golf is not determined by brute force but by coordination of muscles, and as awkward as it seems, the grip is devised to promote accuracy and coordination throughout the entire golf swing. Though it isn't *initially* comfortable, it soon becomes so with practice.

Golf clubs are only extensions of the arms, and the grip is a sensibly constructed tool for transferring power from the body to the clubhead through the hands. They must be positioned accurately, closely united, firm, and active in order for good hand action to coordinate with other swing movements. An accurate grip develops confidence by promoting accuracy and coordination in a sound *repeating* swing.



Chapter Four

Fundamental No. 1: The Left-Hand Pistol Grip

An accurate grip is the very foundation of an accurate golf swing. Although any method will teach the same left-hand grip as taught by the pistol grip, the pistol grip uses the hand's natural conformity to the shooting position to establish the grip more naturally.

The Procedure

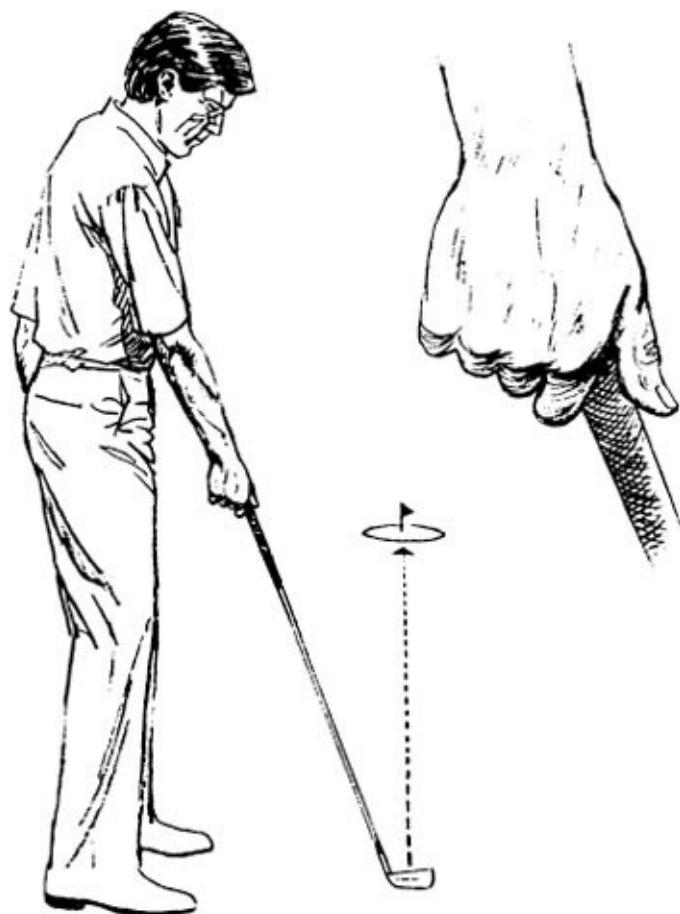


FIGURE 4

- Center the clubhead between your feet, square the clubface toward a target, and steady the club by

holding the tip of the handle with your right hand. ([Figure 4](#))



FIGURE 5

- ▶ Assume a shooting position with your left hand: point the forefinger straight ahead with the other three fingers in an open cupped position. Align the three fingers parallel to the thumb. ([Figure 5](#))



FIGURE 6

- ▶ Extend your left arm to aim the forefinger alongside and straight down the shaft. Square the back of the left hand directly toward the target and measure the top of the handle to the top joint of the thumb where the wrist breaks. ([Figure 6](#))



FIGURE 7

- Bend your wrist to cock your hand downward. The thumb, rather than the forefinger, will then aim alongside and straight down the shaft. The forefinger will point between your feet, toward your heels, and the knuckles of the cupped fingers will be parallel to the handle. ([Figure 7](#))

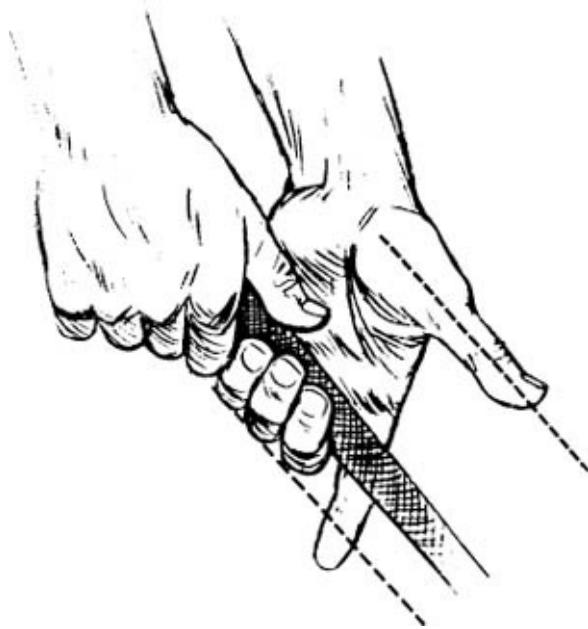


FIGURE 8

- Use your right hand to press the handle firmly down into the upper joints of the three cupped fingers and the base of the palm by pressing a small fold of skin from the palm down onto the last two fingers. ([Figure 8](#))

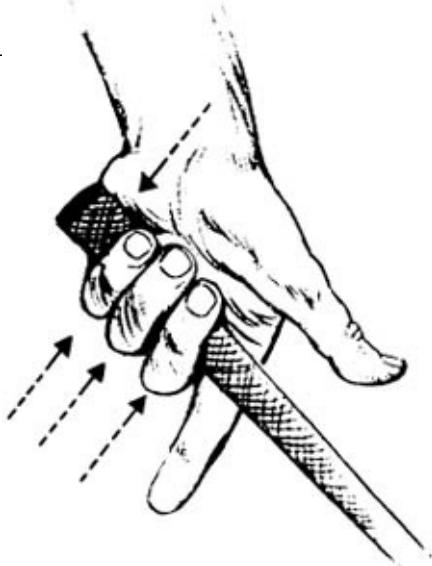


FIGURE 9

- ▶ Leaving the thumb and forefinger off the club, close your hand by gripping *up* with the fingers while pressing *down* with the heel pad of the hand. A tiny bit of muscle should extend over the tip of the handle. The gripping action of the hand will cock your left wrist inward. ([Figure 9](#))



FIGURE 10

- ▶ Drop your thumb straight down on top of the handle and *lightly* curl the forefinger around the handle of the club. ([Figure 10](#))

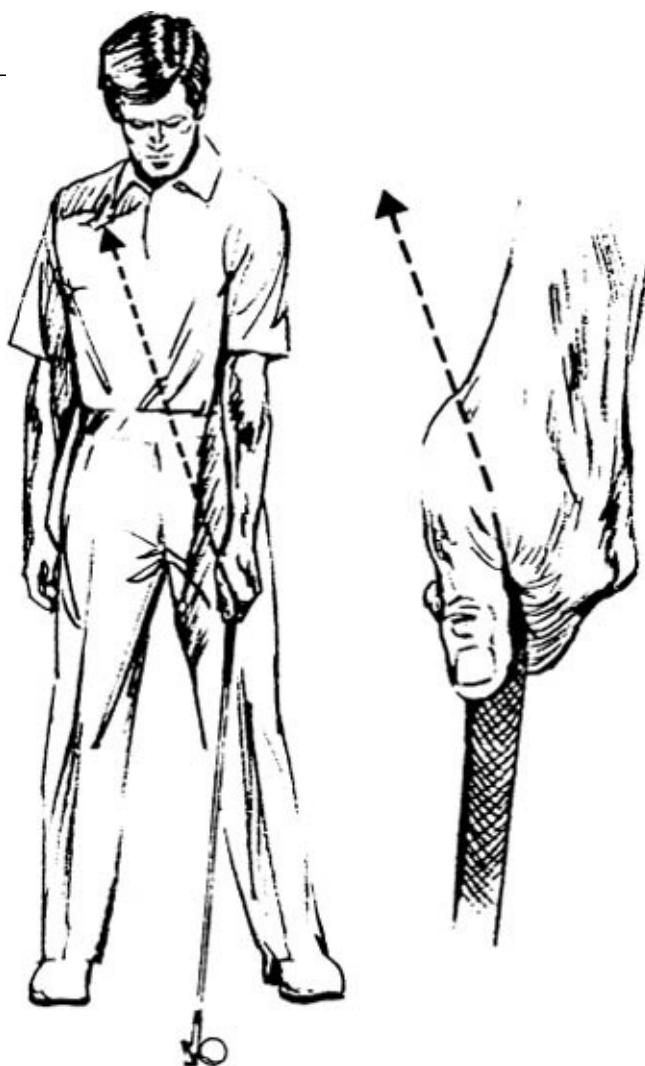


FIGURE 11

- ▶ Press down slightly with the flat pad of the end of the thumb. Although the thumb remains on top, firming the grip will pinch the base of the V formed by the thumb and forefinger together, and the line of the V should aim toward the right shoulder. ([Figure 11](#))

Importance of the Procedure

Mastering the left-hand pistol grip:

- cocks the hand into position so you can grip the club naturally while maintaining an upright posture*
- locks the club into position with a palm, three-finger grip*
- strengthens the left-hand grip*
- accurately positions the left thumb*
- removes the left-hand pincer fingers as a control factor in the swing*

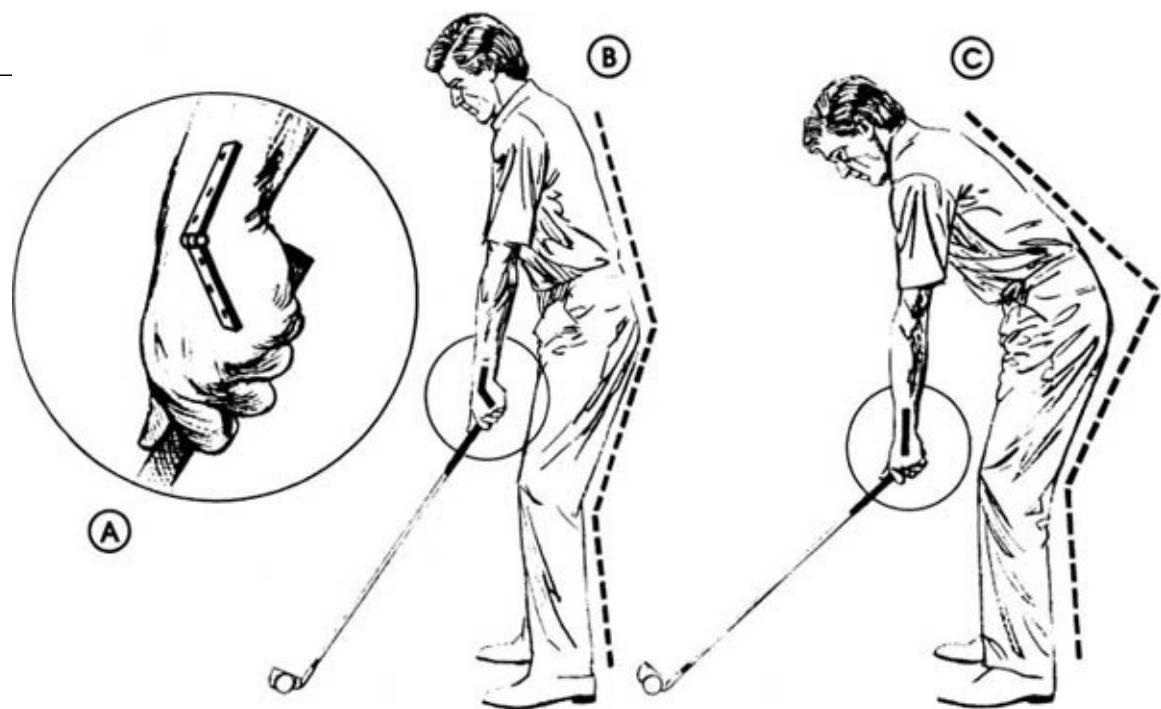


FIGURE 12

Hinging the left hand downward (A and B) promotes accuracy at address and through the swing by preventing the body from leaning over too far to position the clubhead (C).

A: Cocks the hand into position so you can grip the club naturally while maintaining an upright posture.

“Hinging” the left hand downward at address angles the cupped fingers parallel to the diagonal line of the shaft, making it easy to grip the club naturally while keeping your posture upright. ([Figure 12A and B](#))

Keeping your posture upright establishes important positions at address that promote such things as natural hand action and good footwork. Although their grip may be correct, golfers frequently establish positions that affect the swing adversely, often by leaning over too far and cocking their hands upward either to establish the grip or to position the clubhead. ([Figure 12C](#))

Cocking the hands upward at address causes leaning over, and vice versa, frequent positioning the hands too low for good hand action; leaning over too far moves the weight toward the toes, making it difficult for you either to maintain balance or to shift your weight while swinging. The pistol grip, however, uses the natural angle of the left hand to establish correct positions.

B: Locks the club into position with a palm, three-finger grip.

The backhanded batting action of the left hand uses natural muscular control to keep the ball on target, and a strong left-hand grip must be established to fortify the hand at impact. Strength combines with feel and maneuverability, however, when you secure the club with the muscular power of the heel of your hand and *grip* the club with your fingers.

With the club secured at the base of the palm and the three fingers of your left hand firmly around the club, gripping up with the fingers and pressing *down* with the muscle of the heel of the hand firmly locks the club in place. Your left hand is firm and strong with the feel of the club in your fingers.

The basic palm-and-three-finger grip presses the skin at the base of the palm either upward

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