

Introduction to Pitch and Putt

A Coaching Guide



Although derived from and played under the same basic principles as golf, Pitch and Putt is a skilled sport in it's own right. First played in Cork in the 1940's, Pitch and Putt has developed it's own rules, traditions and competitive circuit. In this time Pitch and Putt has spread throughout Europe and is now played as far away as China, Chile and Australia. The Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland is the governing body and the Rules of the Union are available from Club Secretaries.

The PPUI has in approximately 10,000 members and 120 affiliated clubs throughout the country. The game caters for ladies, gents and juveniles from 8 to 80. Most PPUI clubs have a recognised coach who has completed some of the PPUI coaching courses. This coaching leaflet is designed to guide you through shots involved in Pitch and Putt, while also learning some of the basic Rules and Etiquette of the game. Remember, our greatest wish is for you to enjoy the game. Pitch and Putt is fun!

INTRODUCTION TO COACHING

This leaflet deals with the fundamental steps – from grip through to stance and the various strokes – to aid you to play and enjoy pitch and putt. It will give the newcomer a starting point and may help the established player to solve some problems. A PPUI Certified Coach can pinpoint the improvements that can be made in your game and give you the advice you may need. Remember, the quickest way to improve in Pitch and Putt is to practice in the right way. Following these general guidelines will help you do just that:

- Try to take each shot on its own and clear the mind of past mistakes or errors. It helps if you simply concentrate on looking at the ball until it has been well struck.
- All drills – grip, good stance, slow backswing and so on – have a common purpose. They help you to bring the clubface through the ball squarely, travelling on line.
- When practising try to do so with a purpose. Sink five putts in a row, or put three pitches on the green.
- Remember that when trouble comes tension grows and you tend to play more quickly causing miss-hits. So slow down and take it easy. There is nothing that can go wrong that a good method cannot put right.

The next couple of pages outline various techniques required to play Pitch and Putt. All examples assume the player is right-handed

GRIP

There is no such thing as the perfect grip, but with a good grip it is much easier to bring the clubhead to the ball square and on line, which is the whole purpose of the swing.

- Lay the shaft across the open left hand, from the middle of the forefinger, to the base of the little finger
- Close the hand over the shaft, with the thumb lying along the shaft
- Place the right hand over the club close to, or better still, overlapping or inter-locking with the left. The palms of the hands should be parallel so as to keep the clubface square
- Hook the right forefinger around the shaft, trigger fashion and the right thumb too lies along the shaft, not on top of it

The V's between the thumb and forefinger of both hands should point towards the right shoulder. The club should be held with control, but gently, like a firm handshake

STANCE

The set-up and stance for all shots is similar, the difference being how big a swing you need and how hard you must hit the ball. Aim, ball position, posture and weight distribution are all key elements in helping a player to hit the ball consistently and successfully towards the target.

Initial set preparation for your shot:

- Place the clubhead behind the ball, square on its base
- Feet shoulder width apart, stay relaxed and comfortable with your knees slightly flexed
- The shoulders should be parallel to the hole and most of the weight should be on the left foot
- Keep both arms straight with your elbows close together

You are now in position to draw the club back, and then swing forward, keeping the clubhead low through impact. A good stance is essential for a good swing.

PITCHING

The pitch is a high shot played with a lofted club with the aim of landing on the green with minimum roll. The club is open at address, the hands are behind the ball and the ball is swept upwards off the tee. Establish a pre-shot routine to get the set-up right every time. This is fundamental to a consistent swing.

- Place the clubhead behind the ball, square on its base
- Keep both arms straight; pull your elbows close together
- Be relaxed and comfortable when taking up your stance, your feet about shoulder width apart
- Flex the knees a little; the shoulders should be parallel to the hole and your weight on the left foot
- Move the triangle of your hands, arms and shoulders back slow keeping the arms straight
- Keep the clubhead low to the ground for a controlled takeaway, it will come up naturally
- Use your hips and knees as well as your arms and shoulders. Your hands need only go to hip height for most shots
- Keeping your eyes on the back of the ball, the hands and arms swing the club down to the ball on the same line as the backswing, with your right arm close to the body.
- Accelerate through the ball at impact to a high follow-through. The body and head rotate to face the target at the finish.
- Your weight will transfer smoothly from right to left. The length of the backswing controls the distance of the shot.

CHIPPING

The chip shot is generally played from ten to thirty feet. When you hit a chip cleanly the ball will pop up into the air. How high it flies depends on the angle of the clubface, which is entirely under your control. You may need to hit a high, medium or low chip.

- Look at the lie of the ground, decide whether you need to hit a low running shot or a high one
- The chipping stroke is down and through. The hands should normally be ahead of the clubhead at address and kept there throughout the stroke. As chip shots are short, hold the club low on the grip, almost down to the metal, for better control
- Go back low and slow in the backswing. Play the shot with the hands and arms and a minimum of body movement
- On the downswing keep the clubface square clipping the grass as you accelerate through the ball. Keep your eyes on the back of the ball
- Keep your left wrist firm and the clubhead low on the follow through. The length of the backswing determines the length of the shot

Remember:

- Low Chip — Ball positioned at right foot with clubface closed.
- Medium Chip — Ball positioned in centre of stance with neutral clubface.
- High Chip — Ball positioned at left foot with clubface open.

PUTTING

The key to successful putting is to stand still and concentrate on the ball and not the hole. Pitch and Putt greens are small and all putts are short. You can use the putter around the green if the grass is short, dry and the ground even.

- Set the clubhead to the ball, properly soled and square to the target line.
- Settle into a comfortable stance, feet about shoulder width apart. Keep your toes, shoulders and hips parallel to the target line.
- Keep the body still (not stiff and rigid but relaxed)
- Keep your head down and eyes directly over the ball
- Only use the arms and shoulders during the stroke. Keep the wrists firm.
- Take the putter back low (i.e. sweeping the grass) and keep it low on the follow through, with both the backswing and follow-through equal
- Putter face is square to the swing path at impact
- The ball is struck from the sweet spot of the putter and is accelerating at impact.

BUNKER PLAY

The aim of the bunker shot is to get the ball out of the sand trap. With practice you can aim to land it on the green every time or even to go for the pin. It is not as difficult as it looks.

- Settle the feet into the sand with the feet apart, play the ball opposite your left foot and swing path pointing to the left of the flag.
- Open the clubface as for a high chip. Do not place the club in the sand. Hold the clubface over the sand about 2 inches behind the ball; this is your aiming point.
- Take a normal pitching stroke, entering the sand 2 inches behind the ball with a full follow-through. The ball will splash out on a shower of sand. You can swing hard when taking sand and don't be afraid to do so.

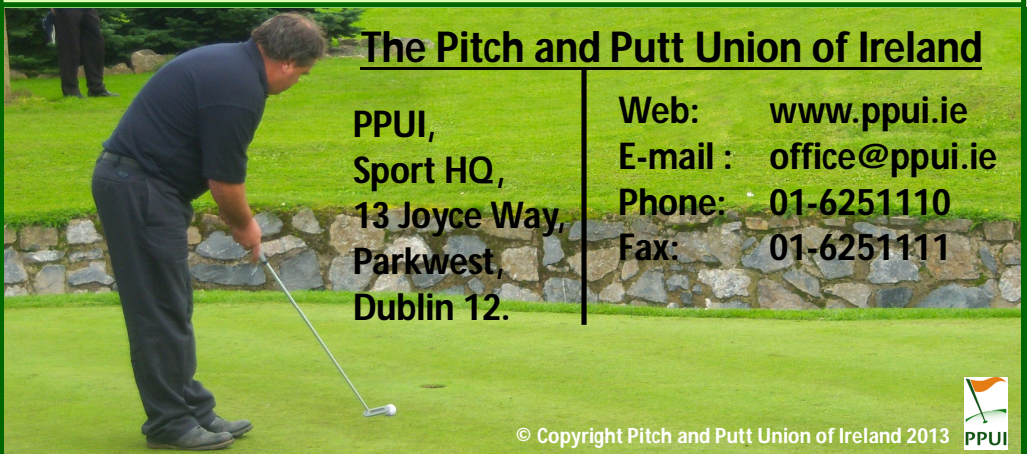
BASIC ETIQUETTE

1. Have respect for the course; do not damage greens by hitting them with clubs, etc.
2. Always try to repair the mark made by your ball when it hits the green.
3. Never play with more than three other people.
4. When you see that you are delaying the play of those coming behind, allow them to play through.
5. Always give precedence to those playing in a competition, if you yourself are not.
6. Let your opponent tee off first if he/she takes fewer shots than you on the previous hole.
7. When others are playing their shot, do not make noise. Do not stand too close to or behind them.
8. The ball which is furthest from the hole is played first.
9. Do not move off until all others have played their tee shot.
10. When you see that your ball may strike any person, always warn them by shouting "Fore".
11. You may not tee off until the players in front have finished play on the green and walked off it.

BRIEF RULES

1. The holes must be played in the correct sequence.
2. You may not practice on the course before playing in some competitions.
3. The ball must be played as it lies.
4. If your ball is obstructing the play of an opponent, you may mark the ball, allow your opponent to play and then replace it. You may use a pattern marker or an object no bigger than a 5c coin.
5. If your ball lies in a sand bunker, you may not touch the sand with your club in preparation to play the shot.
6. You must use a tee peg at the teeing ground.
7. The flag must be removed from the hole and placed off the green when putting.
8. If your ball strikes an overhead wire in direct line from the tee to green, you may replay the shot.
9. Both you and your marker must sign a competition card, having checked that the scores are accurately recorded.
10. In a Strokeplay competition, you must complete the play of each hole, i.e. you may not pick up your ball before holing out.
11. If both you and your opponent's ball are on the same green, you are penalised if you hit any ball with yours.

REMEMBER THAT PITCH AND PUTT IS FUN—ENJOY YOURSELF



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