

How To Practise *Less More Often*

The Grip – “Get a grip”.

ENGLISH is a varied and colourful language, and is one of the best ‘vehicles’ through which to convey clear and unambiguous meanings; so to “grasp tightly” or “take a firm hold” are two definitions of the word grip in English and are not what a player wants to be doing, or feeling when holding a golf club. Ignore the position of the fingers on the club for a moment and imagine the correct type of pressure required. A good example would be as if you were squeezing a family sized tube of toothpaste.

Visual 1: Squeeze the tube with a uniform pressure through both hands until the paste appears at the end of the tube (not on the bathroom ceiling!), **but** when you release your hands, the vacuum will take the paste back into the tube.



This is one of many similar analogies to describe grip ‘strength’. None of them will create any image or sense of real pressure, that ‘tightly’ or ‘firmly’ seem to mean to many players, nor the idea of some players, for whom the primary intent seems to be to strangle the club to death. Whichever ‘grip’ you choose, ensure that the pressure is light to firm as a maximum throughout the fingers of both hands.

Most athletic activities require loosened muscles before you start. Taking the club in a death like grip is contrary to this basic principle, inducing in this case a contraction of the muscles up the forearms and on into the shoulders, which is not a good platform off which to try to stretch the muscles, as you make a backswing. Something is going to ‘give’ and it will almost invariably be

the ‘grip’, which will come loose at the top of the swing. Wear marks on a glove are often a sign that the club is moving in the hand!

The ‘classic’ grip places the club’s ‘handle’ across the roots of the fingers, with the thumb of the top hand pointing down the ‘handle’ towards the club head and with it aligned slightly off centre and away from the target.

The lower hand’s position ‘mirrors’ that of the top hand, except that the tip of thumb and forefinger on this hand can almost be joined together. The ‘ball’ (the fleshy part at the base of the thumb) of the top hand’s thumb ‘sits’ on top of the lower hand thumb, obscuring it from view. Conventional wisdom will also require that an observer will see the ‘V’s’ formed by the thumb and forefinger of each hand pointing towards the player’s back shoulder.



Visual 2: What about the need to have the hands working as a unit? If we could re-design our anatomy just for golf, then we would probably want to join the arms together with one hand. There are some ‘grip’ options which will help to make two hands function and feel as if they were one.

Visual 3: The ‘hammer’ or baseball ‘grip’ places all eight fingers and both thumbs on the grip; feels powerful and is often a good option for children, but it does keep the hands slightly more separated than the next two choices.



Article by John Cockayne
Cell Number: 073 896 7931
Email: cathco@mweb.co.za
Website: www.businessofgolf.co.za



Visual 4: The interlocking grip; the small finger of the lower hand grips or ‘interlocks’ with the index finger of the upper hand. Promotes a great feeling of unity between the hands, but two fingers are ‘lost’ off

the club, reducing actual contact with the club. This is the preferred ‘grip’ for Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods, who having won 32 Major Championships between them, would provide a fair argument that this should be all players’ ‘grip’ of choice.

Visual 5: The overlapping or Vardon grip; named after Harry Vardon, a multiple winner of the Open Championship, who popularised the use of this grip during the early part of the 20th



century. Gives a good sense of unity; the small finger of the lower hand ‘sits’ in the ‘groove’ between the index and the next finger on the upper hand and only one finger is off the grip. This is the grip of choice, as over 80% of the world’s tour players use variations of it. **Don’t be afraid to experiment until have found the ‘right’ grip; the key ‘must do’ with any grip is that it should enable the player to return the clubface square through the ball at impact consistently.** ■

About the author

John Cockayne is the author of ‘How to Practise Less More Often’. He is a founder member of the PGA of South Africa and he has spent over 30 years coaching this frustrating game! A key current focus for John is as the Programme Director at Corporate Golf Academy and The Green Pages Golf School. The Golf Academy provides innovative tailor made clinics and golf academies for companies and The Green Pages provides coaching for individuals.