PLAY FEEL GOLF & SHOOT LOW SCORES

By Anthony Procopis.

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Play feel-golf and shoot low scores

Understanding and committing to playing feel golf will simplify the game for you. You will learn when to think, see, feel and swing at just the right time. (Then Review.) The secret to playing your best golf will be how well you carry out the process: think, see then feel the swing you will make, then, make the swing (when necessary, analyse the shot).

All great players have been *feel-players*. They sharpen their techniques and make sure they are set up to the ball correctly. But it is their **feelings, intuition and creativity** that are the **main drivers** behind shooting low scores and creating great shots on the golf course.

Remember, all great pros started playing golf when they were young. They played with imagination and intuition; those qualities drove their success.

The greats like Hogan, Woods and Nicklaus worked on their techniques (the latter two, under watchful coaches) but they also married technique with – and never lost – playing with **feeling, intuition, and imagination**. If they didn't play this way you would never have heard of them.

Many young up and coming players (and older technique-focused club-golfers) got side-tracked, stagnated, and even regressed because of a "technical" swing-focus – I know this from personal experience and observation and conversations with others.

They lost their natural feel, imagination and confidence and never progressed as the greats did. That was me – along with a vast number of young, dedicated tour-golf wannabes.

It wasn't through lack of effort; I was a madman for practice – way too focused. I hung onto the dream for a long time. I finally let go, but I didn't walk away from golf, rather, I changed my approach – combining technical competency with the drivers of low scoring as I mentioned before, **imagination and feel.**

I now average no more than eighteen holes/week and quite often, just nine holes once every two weeks. I hit 14-15 greens in regulation 50 per cent of the time – way higher than at any time in my career when I was practicing every day. A couple of years ago when I was playing eighteen holes once/week, I shot a career low, nine birdie round of 65, in medal conditions. My permanently improved ball-striking and shortgame come from a solid, technique combined with a focus on **thinking and seeing, feeling the swing I needed to make for the shot, then swinging.**

There is a lot going on when you are playing; you have your emotions, beliefs, past miss-shots/holes and playing partners to negotiate. It's not always easy getting back to focusing on the right things for each shot, but it does hold the key to your best golf – it's the way the legends of the game played the game. And they didn't get bogged down in paralysis by analysis as some many of us golfers have.

I remember reading somewhere (probably in one of Doctor Bob Rotella's golf books) that when the great Byron Nelson was asked about what he

focused on in his swing to shape a shot when he was playing at his prime, he said something like, *funny thing is, when I wanted a draw, I thought draw, and when I wanted a fade, I thought fade*. Byron used his eyes to envision the shot which in turn fed his body to swing; he made instinctive swing adjustments as he swung (importantly, not using large amounts of conscious thought).

The best players *think, see*, feel and or calculate the lie, distance, wind, dangers, and target; this informs them on what club and swing to use to create the ball-flight that will send the ball to the target. As soon as possible and with no other thoughts, they commit to THAT particular swing that will send the ball to the target. (They may have swing-key they use which we will discuss later – but make no mistake, they are committed to a rhythmical swing that will send the ball to the target.)

There is in an infinite numbers of swings; for success, YOU MUST SELECT ONE pre-shot then COMMIT TO IT.

Don't waste any more time with paralysis by analysis.

If I wrote a golf instruction manual 25 years ago it would have been purely on technique and would have slowly evolved over the years. The ideas in the book you read today are very different to what I focused on when playing and practicing in my teens and twenties. I wish I knew what I now know back then.

By playing with more feel, you will be more concerned with the target and ball-flight. And that really is what golf is about, hitting the ball through the air or across the ground to the target. And a consequence of

being keenly orientated towards the target – as opposed to being self absorbed in golf-swing technique minutiae, you'll hit the ball better. And that means better shots with all the clubs in your bag, from putter to wedges to irons and the driver. You will be able to confront shots that you were once fearful of, and your confidence and fulfilment will grow.

Your journey starts with learning how to feed your muscles and nerves the right commands. Let's get to it.

When to use your planning-brain and your golf swinging-brain

Great golfers know when to think rationally. They calculate distance, the wind, no-go-areas for shots, have a game plan and make sure they practice to improve, or maintain, all parts of their game (high level players seek out practice rounds and yardage books also). However, when selecting the swing to hit the ball from a given lie or off a tee, they switch from this rational **information gathering** part of the brain to the part that **senses, feels and is responsible for movement!** Yes, responsible for movement!

Practice and follow this shot-process and you will consistently play solid golf for the rest of your life:

Think and gather information on distance, target and no-go areas, lie, and wind – while you listen to what your intuition is telling you about **what swing and club you are capable and comfortable with using to**

create the desired ball-flight. Then, walk in, setup and **swing using the selected swing.**

What about technique? Your technique will get better if you start focusing on how to get the ball to the hole by using your imagination to create shots. You will make better contact with the ball when your swing is balanced, in-tempo, and orientated towards the target.

Learn when to think, see, feel and swing

I'm not against good technique or working on it, I think it's better to have a good setup and grip than poor ones, but when it comes to playing and scoring low, you want to think, see, feel, and swing without delay.

The rational part of your brain (neo cortex) is responsible for speech, analytics, mathematics and logic. It's the one that sets the alarm, pays the bills and stops your child from walking onto a busy road. It's kind of boring but necessary.

The **Limbic** part of your brain (older than rational neo cortex) is incapable of speech. It is responsible for feelings, emotions, action (like the golf swing), trust and loyalty.

The brilliant, reactive shots or kicks in football, tennis or basketball come from the non-thinking side of the brain. The rational thinking part of the brain, if used, will get the talented sports person to:

- training on time
- get to bed early to ensure ample sleep and recovery and

- eat nutritious food instead of junk food.

Playing golf with just your rational brain would have you constantly running through an energy and rhythm-sucking list of swing-positions to hit or, being too focused on or worried about, your setup and where you are aligned. You may also strategize too much over how to play a hole which can also stop a free-flowing swing.

When the best players are about to hit, they are **not thinking**, they are free and loose, acting upon the feelings and energy that looking at the shot has given them.

What you see, feeds what you feel. What you feel, feeds your swing.

There is no room for the rational part of the brain to destroy the process.

I will give you real life on-course examples in the chapters to come. The Train It/Automatic Golf System videos help put these words into action for you (see back and front of book for links to videos, and I have linked to some in this book).

Great players give up thinking and start feeling what shot feels right. They sense how their hands and arms will work on the backswing and through impact; they sense/know the tempo and length of swing they will use; they picture the height the ball will fly at; then they swing without delay using the swing they have selected.

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This type of golf decreases anxiety and unleashes your natural golf swing – which comes with excellent tempo.

This is a far superior way to play compared to thinking technically about your backswing plane, keeping still, or keeping a straight left arm. You can never play your best golf in technical, analytical mode.

The initial Thinking part of the *Feel Golf Process* is also good for the player that is not technically focused but lacks the focus around picking out a precise target, no-go areas etc.

Information overload destroys golf swings and scoring ability.

A strong focus on technique takes focus away from more important principles that go towards good striking and low scoring. This technical focus is exacerbated by today's myriad of outlets for information – web, magazines, smart phones, and television.

You can add an obsession with buying new golf equipment as a waste of time and money too. New equipment will do next to nothing to improve your game. Upgrade every five to 10 years then forget about it.

A problem with improving at golf and learning *do-this do-that* information is that golf is more art than science. Played well, it takes good thinking, creativity and intuition.

The commentator, writer and marketer explain what they have observed with their eyes. For example, an in-depth video analysis of a player can

reveal a slight dip in the head on the downswing; the club moving outside the line on the backswing; the player being set up too far from the ball and way open with alignment or the discovery of a player's strong grip. The analyst/coach would say, "we have some work to do here".

What I have just described are the obvious positions and movements that Lee Trevino – 6-time Major Winner and regarded as one of the greatest ball-strikers ever, gets into to hit it pure. While we are there, look at 4-time Major Winner Ray Floyd's swing.

Stopping Lee's head from moving down three inches on the downswing and straightening up his stance and his grip would DESTROY what makes him great – his tempo and body and hand action. By focusing on trying to swing in a so-called orthodox way and get into all the *pretty positions*, he would stop doing what made his shots fly to the hole – his **imagination and intention, fed his hands, arms and body**.

When your mind wanders off your intention (what trajectory the ball will take and how the swing will feel) consistently good golf becomes impossible.

Lee twisted and turned his body; he closed and opened his hands and clubface, and he used his arms and legs – changing the speed of all these parts of his swing depending on what the shot called for.

You can't mathematically put this all together. You can't rationally join point 'A' to 'B' to 'C' at speed and make it work – or even pick it apart and re-build it; isn't going to happen.

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When playing, keep your focus off technique and pass hitting the ball over to **creativity and your intention for the shot**. That is where the genius in all of us lives.

We try to copy the greats of golf and their swings. What we should be doing is copying their **creativity, intuition and thinking** because those ingredients are what produce good swings and low scores.

You can copy a great player's rhythm – if his/her natural rhythm is similar to yours. May times I have been inspired by watching great players on TV; watching and "soaking" up a good players rhythm and then going out to the course for nine holes and applying that inspired rhythm (again, it's a feeling). Good rhythm blends the movements of the arms, hands, legs and hip and shoulder turns, and the delivery of the club into the ball at just the right time from the correct path at the correct angle.

Note: we all have internal rhythms that we swing best at. If you're a fast talker/thinker, you are probably naturally going to have a quick tempo like Ben Hogan or Nick Price. Or maybe you're laid back and have Freddie Couples speed when it comes to walking, living, and swinging.

I'm more of a middle of the road. Pick someone who matches your natural rhythm and let the image of their golf-swing soak into yours.

So, if golfing-nirvana is not found by physically copying great players' technical positions, how do you improve?

Enter the Feel Golf Process

Your best golf will emerge when you play with **creativity, intuition and appropriate thinking**. Your **subconscious brain** can do the necessary calculations and adjust to execute all different swings and shots if you give it a chance to operate freely.

A picture paints a thousand words and that is where good golf starts – with pictures. The pictures and or targets trigger **feelings and energy** – provided you let this happen. Technical thoughts destroy the process.

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The Process: Mental, Vision, Feeling/Energy, Action, Review

M.V.F.E.A.R

You can see how similar MVFEAR it is to the four Rs in The Truth About Putting (Read, Routine, React and Review).

(Read equals Vision and Feeling/Energy; react equals Automatic Action; review equals review.)

The **mental** must not take over the **vision** and the **vision** then **feeds** into **feeling** for the **swing** and the shot you are going to make. Finally, once the feeling is ready, you execute right away. You then review the shot and the process if needed.

Let's look at each part of the process.

Mental/Think

Take in the lie, distance, target and no-go areas and think strategy – what is the smart shot (**play comfortable**). A few examples of smart thinking:

- If the hole is tight with danger, play a safe club – whatever that maybe (generally it will have more loft and or the club will be shorter).

- Don't hit at pins at the sides or backs of greens. I see this mistake made every game I play. Time and time again, 95% of club-golfers (including single figure golfers) shoot at flags ALL THE TIME. This is dumb, sucker-golf. Suckers and robots go at flags that are 8 yards from the back or sides of the greens when they have 30 yards by 15 yards to play with! Jack Nicklaus shot predominantly at the middle of the green – and he was the greatest ever! Don't be zombie for the flag, strategize, have some discipline and hit primarily to the middle of the green – if you goal is to shoot low scores!

  (In my early twenties on super-fast greens with quite an ordinary swing, I shot 3-under par at our National Pro-Golf Trainee Championships because I tried a new strategy: aim at the center of the green! I bogeyed one hole which came from a 3-putt on the 17th hole. A conservative strategy joined to a confident swing is a recipe for low scores.)

(You can shoot more at flags from a short distance – less than 130 yards, but even then, beware of pins located at the very back or front of greens or near the sides; much easier to make bogies than birdies.)

Vision and Intuition

1. What is the **most comfortable** shot for you to play?
2. What **ball flight** (shape and height) do you want to play (draw, fade, or straight, high or low)?

3. What **precise target/s** are you aiming at for **every** shot you play? **You better have at least one** (you may have two if you want to start at A and bend it into B). Be specific, don't just hit "down there" or at the fairway, aim at a tree, a bunker that you can't reach or can carry, or something artificial.

Play to your strengths. If you are consistent hitting a fade and not a draw, go with it (or visa versa). Most importantly, **know the swing you are going to make before you make it.**

Feel/Energy

When you use your vision and intuition, you will **know** what type of swing and feeling you should use. You may have a feeling for how your hands will move through the ball; they may roll, or they may hold off, they may feel firm or soft or you may want a swing/feeling that sends the ball high up into the sky.

You may have a faint feel of hinging your hands more in the backswing and or, the feeling of your lead wrist being flat or cupped at the top of the swing.

You should have a feeling for how long the backswing will be and it should change for different shots (drives, irons, three-quarter shots, pitches, and chips).

Have a feel for the backswing, transition, downswing, and follow-through. Know the tempo you will use.

Big point... There are **no rules**. Remember Lee Trevino? He broke so-called technical rules; he distorted, manipulated, and compensated with his body arms and, most importantly – **his hands.**

Look at Jack Nicklaus. He played with very high arms and a steep backswing plane. This caused him to wait on the transition for his arms to drop down before his head backed up (moved away from the ball at impact). **From these compensations and textbook mistakes, rhythm and great striking is born** (weird, but true).

The best players play like this. They play with rhythm, good tempo, feelings, and ***secret moves – not written down in books;*** they intuitively do these moves for certain shots (I have a bunch of them).

This doesn't mean your swing should be free, loose, and not directed towards an intention as I mentioned above. You should have familiar shots, movements, and feelings that you call on often. Identify what works for you and use them all the time! And, the greats mentioned, both had superb rhythm and tempo.

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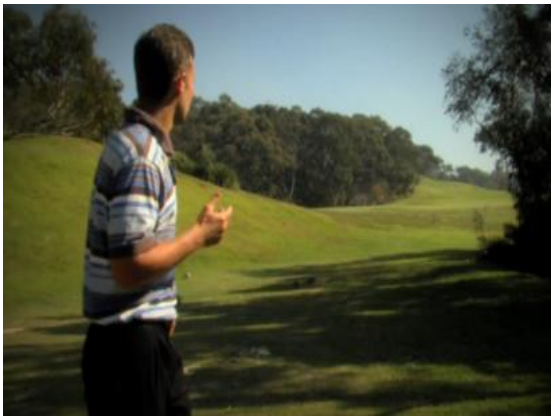
Feel, energy and creating great golf shots

Firstly, get focused on a target and how you want to the ball to fly there.

Now you need to feel the swing that you are going to use.



Calculate distances. Have a conservative strategy and pick your target.

Listen to what your intuition is telling you about shot to play and what swing to use.

Don't question the feeling. Apply it to your swing and the ball.

Let's dig deeper into these "feelings" I'm talking about.

Half-shot example

You may have a soft 50-yard pitch to hit...you imagine and feel where your hands will stop in the backswing, restart, and go down and through into the follow-through. You imagine a brisk move through the ball. You can use a practice swing or two for these "feel shots"; this may help you "feel the swing you are going to make before you make it."

"Know the swing you are going to make before you make it." Here, I'm thinking "high fade"; visualizing it soaring up high and curving a little right. My body will make adjustments to make this shot happen. The feeling is strong.

Here is my video demonstration of the Feel and Programming for a 60-80 yard shot: **Feel it, program it, hit it.** << Video Link Click and Play.

For some standard shots that you hit, you will replicate feelings and swings that you have used on successful shots in the past (known as "muscle memory").

The shot: I walk in, settle, waggle (two for me) and swing; fuelled by feelings and energy. This is pure, natural and automatic!

You will have a routine that you follow based around MVFEAR – the routine that all great players follow.

I know when I hit my driver, I get a perfect lie on a tee each time and I get a reasonably large landing area – the fairway.

My routine is to try and pierce the ball low and straight at a specific target in the distance (this is very good for your technique) with neutral hands through the ball (not rolling much). I imagine more of a fade move with my hands – a little hold-off move; it feels this way probably because I spent my first decade of golfing doing the opposite – rolling the wrists; the latter is a "kids swing" that good players evolve out of.

I feel how my tempo will be, how far I swing back with my hands and arms and have a feeling for the pivot motion I will make. I never get to parallel which helps with control. It sounds weird but when I'm driving well, I feel my left arm/wrist connecting a line to my target. A smooth transition and the ball goes off low, straight, and long. This is feel for a swing I have used thousands of times before.

Find YOUR "best driver-swing and feels", then use them again and again (simply, use the same swing that works for you – aimed at different targets on the various holes).

You can achieve better a technique through feel by not thinking about technique.

On the technical side, what happens to my swing when I imagine a low-ball flight with neutral hands through the ball?

By imagining a low-ball flight: I can't move off the ball (to hit it low you need to be on your left side through impact and not swaying off the ball on the backswing); I don't over swing; my hands and the clubface move well through the ball in a natural, non-rolling way.

But I **never** think of these technical aspects; I set up the same way each time and use the same pre-shot thinking and feels as explained – I pick out a precise target and imagine a low piercing ball flight that doesn't lift above the treetops in the background (pictures and feelings).

(Tee height: the top of my ball moves from just above the head of my medium size driver to equal with the top – not high.)

This is pure, natural golf – using a routine and swing you know works – versus, sabotaging your swing by trying new, unproven techniques or tips.

From imagining this, I have given my body/brain a template to follow. I know how my arms and hands will move on the backswing and how they will behave through the shot.

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The example given is for a standard drive for me. For irons shots there are a few more variables, so you must work and feel a bit more. The variables include different length clubs, lies, slopes, distances and three-quarter or full shots.

Feel, energy and real-life examples of the MVFEAR process

Recently, I went out just before dark and played five holes – playing extra practice shots when necessary (don't play too many from one spot – play fewer shots with more effort placed into each shot).

I found myself in a fairway bunker 190 yards out from the green, into the breeze and with out-of-bounds next to me and all the way down the right side to the green. On the left there was bush and out-of-bounds.

Feelings: I select a three-iron, and I want to definitely cut this ball (fade). I don't want to start the ball near the out-of-bounds right.

I **feel** like making a swing where I feel my wrists hinge up. I **feel** I want to make a soft, smooth, dropping of the arms from the top of the swing. I **feel** I want to come down on the ball a little. I **feel** I want to hit the ball "late" so I hit the ball first then sand – if at all (arms and hands not quite fully closing the clubface – resulting in a fade). I **feel** I want to be quiet with the feet and legs. You can see how most of these feels for this shot revolve around me "cutting down" on the ball, but at the same time, being late and un-rushed with the release of my wrists – as opposed to a big slice producing swing.

The result was a superb strike – ball then sand. The ball went up to the green with just half a follow-through. The follow-through was just a reaction to the swing; it was abbreviated, unscripted and it felt superb.

(See me demonstrate the Think, Feel, & Swing process for a standard Fairway-Bunker Shot **here**.)

Key point to natural shot-making…

I first think and look: what shot/swing is appropriate for the lie and where the danger is; I get a hunch on the shot to play. I have feelings/intuition about how my hands and arms and feet will react in the swing and then I step up and play the shot in an energized yet relaxed manner.

(Of course, practice the shot if you don't have the swing on recall, then you can call on it when required.)

This all happens quickly and instinctively, no deep thinking. Listen to your intuition and then go and create the shot with your body, arms, hands and club – fuelled by your feel for the shot.

And for next shot, the feels in my arms and hands and body will be different. As mentioned in the past pages, I might need a 50-yard pitch, a flop-shot or a putt. Each shot requires a totally different swing and intention – a low shot, high shot, slow swing, fast swing, straight ball-flight, left-to-right ball flight or a right-to-left ball-flight. Your task is to be aware of what is needed then to use the swing that will get you the desired ball-flight.

Mental anchors, awareness and swinging smooth

It is vital when we swing that we keep relaxed and have a smooth transition from the top of the swing.

All the great golfers are smooth from the top.

Many greats have had vastly different swings with not so perfect backswings. What they all had in common was a smooth transition where they can "drop" the club and arms into the correct downswing path and angle of attack.

Going through the mental, vision, feel/energy process will set you up to make a smooth swing. You can make the smooth transition part of your imaginings for the swing.

Create a relaxed mental environment so you can swing smooth.

The most common cause of poor shots for every golfer, all the way up to tour pros, is rushing the transition from backswing to downswing.

Here are some tips to help you stay relaxed and swinging smooth.

- **Be relaxed and happy**. Simple but it helps relieve tension which will help you swing smooth. Also, when you are deep into the back nine and having a great round, try to walk slower.
- **Be relaxed from the top of your swing.**
- Every now and then, stand and **close your eyes and count to ten.** This will relax you and help keep nervous energy under control.

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- **Swing within yourself.** Choose a club that you are not stretching the yardage with. For your irons, always choose a club that you can swing within yourself to get to the target. If you hit your eight-iron 135 yards and you have 139 (no wind) hit the seven. **Do not** hit the eight. You will, as I have done many, many times, make a poor swing if you stretch your yardage because you are trying to hit the ball too hard. Be disciplined, take one club extra. By doing this you're creating a relaxed mental environment for you to swing smooth.
- Tip: If you want to take off four to eight yards, **grip down the grip two inches then swing normally.** I do this many times in EVERY round I play.
- **Think of the distance as you swing**. If you hit a club 150 yards and you have 142 to the hole, keep the 142 in your head and your swing will adjust. You won't swing too hard because you know you must take a little distance off it.

In summary, if you are not using a mental anchor (awareness key – see below) **simply go through the MVFEAR process as is.**

The Process: we have selected a shot/swing that can contact the ball cleanly; we know the ball-flight we want (straight or curved and what trajectory); we know how our hands, arms and body will swing the club, we get energized for the shot then move in and hit the shot using the swing we have felt and selected pre-shot.

If you can keep your swing smooth and unrushed following the process above, great. If you sometimes still rush your swing, use a **mental anchor** (see below).

Being smooth from the top with a mental anchor (awareness key).
As I play nowadays my mind is occupied – or anchored – in the MVFEAR process.

When I hit, I'm feeding off the feeling that I have created from seeing what type of shot (height and shape) I will play. My hands play a big part in creating this shot; a "hold off" with the hands for a fade, a "neutral release" for a straight shot and a "slight roll" for a draw. I'm reacting with feel to the shot I want to play.

However, I have used **awareness keys** – **mental anchors** – over the years and I still use them on some shots such as short putts and bunker shots. I use the path and spot to anchor my mind (putting).

On greenside bunker-shots I try to keep smooth and relaxed and not over swing (a personal tendency) – by having awareness for the shaft coming down into the downswing. This keeps my mind, body and shaft in sync and keeps me from rushing from the top of my swing. In the early part of the downswing, I am trying to be aware of where the shaft is, my mind is anchored, and swing is in sync.

With all good shots to some degree, you will have a sense of where the club is when you are swinging.

The point of the mental anchor is to keep your mind quiet and give the swing a chance to respond to the preconceived feelings that we will apply to the shot without mental interference and or tension.

You will see in the videos that I talk about transition and the downswing at length. I have talked about it being the "magic move" – and it is.

I was thinking about this the other day when I had a strong one-under par in the wind on our long back nine. When I swing well it feels like the swing is like a pendulum; it goes "one – two"; "one" representing the backswing and "two" representing the downswing.

But there is a little more to it than "one – two". "One – two" has two words and that hyphen – representing the smooth transition or "wait" up the top of the swing; **one, wait, two – the pendulum swing.** Don't overdo the wait though – not too fast at transition, not too slow.

Mental anchors (awareness) that can help you transition smoothly from the top of your swing.

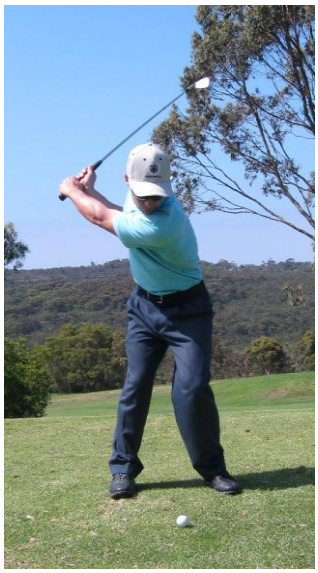
We go through our MVFEAR whilst we are looking and working up some feel for the shot. You can also make your mental anchor part of this process. Do not go overboard with practice swings – less is best.

Like I said on the previous pages, going through the MVFEAR process, along with not stretching your distances, will create an ideal mental environment for you to execute a smooth shot.

However, for certain shots, you may need something extra to keep your mind quiet and let your body swing free without any mental interference.

Mental Anchors you might want to use to help with a pendulum swing and smooth transition:

1. ***Feel the golf club when you swing* – especially into the first part of the downswing.** This gets your mind, shaft and body in sync. This takes practice but it works great. A simple line would be: "see the shaft coming down". On the backswing you want the feeling of your hands, arms and shaft SWINGING your body with legs and hips simply turning in response (your arms should be relaxed & not overextended).



The legs and the hips are swing wreckers; they are strong and do not have to move far in comparison to the hands, arms and club. Hands, arms, and shaft "swing" the body around... THEN the reverse happens from the top of the swing: hips and left knee turn, and the upper body waits with the **arms and wrists lagging;** this is where you will **feel the shaft coming down in the first part of the downswing**.

The Scene: you are shooting a low score, and you are on the back nine; the pressure is rising. You have waves of adrenalin pumping through your body that you are tapping into to hit the ball long. So, an awareness anchor to keep you being too fast from the top of the swing is vital. It decreases tension and will keep your swing under control.

Once you make that smooth transition, you're away. You can hit as hard as you want. If you don't have a faint awareness of the club

and where it is during transition, your **swing and club** are out of control.

As I mentioned earlier, what I see and feel during the swing is the shaft when it is just coming down past the shoulder. It is not vivid, but I feel it; I have an awareness of where the club is. This means I'm making a smooth transition because I **know** (my brain) where the shaft is. When the swing is too fast, and the transition rushed you are out of sync and have no feel for where the club is. This is CRUCIAL, use it.

I used this anchor for many years including the first time I got to 5 under par (finished -4) and when I had a bogie free round of 6 under par. If you don't have something to keep your swing under control when the adrenalin is pumping as you try to successfully finish a record round, your swing and perhaps your thoughts, will detrimentally impact your swing.

2. **Think "wait"** up the top of the backswing. Again, this is going to help you be smooth from the top. You walk into the ball and hit while thinking "wait".
3. **Have relaxed arms**. Just say to yourself, "relaxed arms". Walk into the setup position saying, "relaxed arms". This generally helps you relax throughout the round too (the arms bend and fold, do not overextend – as stated on previous page).
4. **Feel you right instep through the swing (right-handers).** Great for balance and again, just like "see the shaft on the way down" above, your mind is aware and anchored to your foot. You're not out of control (I used this one for two to three years). You can also

try feeling both your feet when you swing. This will keep you mind quiet and your body and swing well balanced.

All these anchors work great for all clubs including the driver.

In summary, we go through our ***think, see, feel*** **process.** We have a feeling for how our arms, hands and body will move. Within this process you may want to remember an anchor (if you use one) like "wait". We then go up to the ball, set up and ready ourselves and swing the with the feel we have generated pre-shot.

Practice drills to help you feel your swing

Practice punch-shots! I can't impress upon you how important it is to be able to swing **less than full** when you want to. This will be so good for your tempo and swing mechanics. If you can't do it, it means you can't control and feel your swing.

The discipline works like a mental anchor. You are **controlling** your swing. Your awareness, body, club and swing are all working in sync. Of course, it is also a vital skill for playing in the wind.

Practice the part pitch shot (30-70 yards).

Many regular club golfers, including some very low handicap players, struggle with this one. Getting better at it will help your entire golf swing.

There is a different tempo needed for these part shots. It is not a full swing. You are being asked to stop the swing way short of full, make a smooth transition and then a strong downswing in a short space of time.

The shorter the swing, the less time you have to get your sequencing correct – which is "**one, wait, two"** or "**swing, wait, accelerate"** or **"turn, wait, turn"**. It's a great way to get better feel and awareness in your swing.

Side note 1: Tour tempo

Good natural tempo can be scientifically verified. This is known as "tour tempo". This discovery was made by a "golf nerd" rewinding and playing video footage of tour players golf swings decades ago.

He found that if a player played a well struck shot that took 21 frames to make a backswing (measured in a slow-motion video format), the player would take seven frames on the way down into the ball – a constant 3-1 ratio. If there was a player with a naturally faster swing, or the same player had a shorter distance or was playing a three-quarter punch shot that required a shorter swing, the ratio might be 14 to 7 – a perfect 2-1 ratio. And a different player might have a longer 27 to 9 ratio (3-1).

Poor swings which result in poor shots don't have the perfect ratio. For example, they might have a 27 to 12.

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Side notes 2: The case of the dripping audio system

At my local sports oval I noticed a loudspeaker, part of the ground's public address system, had a virtual drip. Every few seconds it would drip.

Before I knew it, I had started calling out at the same time as the drip would sound. **I wasn't calculating,** rather, my subconscious mind had perfectly tapped into the tempo of the drip.

Humans can get the tempo of a beat in music very quickly. It's an innate skill that we all have.

In golf, we bring out this talent for tempo when we quieten our minds (an anchor helps) so our swing can react smoothly, in tempo and in-sync.

The variables are the length of swing and the speed. What is common for every swing with good tempo is a smooth transition; swing, wait, accelerate. (The "wait" relates to the arms as the lead knee will start the downswing and optimally, other body parts and the club will follow; see page 28 for the sequence.)

Back to the practice range…Hit to different targets and distances.

Get into a regular habit of practicing these shots on the practice range. Hit 40-yard pitches with your sand-iron to a pin, and then use a stronger wedge to the same pin. Then try 60 or 70 yards with the two or three different wedges.

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Finally, for a test, alternate between different pins, hit one shot to 40-50 yards and then the following shot to 60-70 yards.

You will have to go through the MVFEAR process.

Start from behind, pick out the trajectory you want the ball to fly at; imagine and feel the length of swing you will need. Imagine a nice smooth transition then into a downswing that is accelerating. Imagine how you will use your hands on the backswing, through impact and into the follow-through.

Remember, don't get confused with this. We are playing "feel golf" and tapping into our intuition and feel for the shot.

Find a swing that works can consistently make good contact; once you have achieved this, record what **swing** goes with what **ball-flight** and **distance.** Apart from enhancing feel, you will have a new set of swings that you can call on when required on the golf course.

Hitting high shots and low shots.

Be aware of how your body, arms and hands naturally make compensations to hit the ball way up high towards the clouds and what happens when you envision – and then hit – a low piercer underneath the treetops towards your target. If you sense a feeling in your swing and the shot comes out well, replicate the feeling on the next shot and the next, you have a new shot!

If you can work on hitting punch-shots and half and three-quarter wedge shots, you will have so much more control when hitting ALL your iron shots and even your driver. Remember the 132-swing when you have 140? That type of shot – with this skill – will be a piece of cake. You will now be able to increase or decrease the speed and length of your swing. Your tempo will be enhanced on all different swings and shots.

Half of the iron-shots I play in a game are not full swings.

Number 11 Pro Golfer in the World Rankings (2024) Tommy Fleetwood is renowned as a superb iron player. Most of his iron swings a less than full punch-like shots. He said that he developed this shot in training, and it worked so well that it is his default irons swing.

That said, it is hard to hit half long-irons or woods shots. I have found the simplest way is take distance off these shots is by gripping down the grip; this will naturally shorten the swing. For me, gripping down the grip three inches takes of 10 yards.

Practice the whole MVFEAR process (or if you like: **think, feel, swing, then review).** Simply going through the whole process when you practice swings, chips, pitches, and putts on the course, and on the practice fairway or green, will get you into the right habits to engage your creativity and best swing.

Your Swings: Regardless of your handicap or swing technique right now, hits poor and good shots, so we are trying – with the swing you have now – to use this process so **you can use your best swings more often for the variety of shots you will have to play in every round.**

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Here are couple of videos I did on ***the process*** many years ago where I give in-round examples of myself and my playing partner Gary – an 8 handicapper. Think about a recent round and misses that you made and what your mistake and or process was before the shots… Were you fully committed to the swing and or did you select the right swing/shot?)

Practice mental anchors and awareness

Try anchoring your mind when your practice. Create a relaxed mental environment for you to swing.

Try a couple of the awareness keys outlined. It isn't anything fancy. Think about where the club is as you swing, anchor your mind to feeling your feet or think of the distance to the target as you swing (e.g. this is my 135-yard swing, or this is my 160-yard swing).

They work by keeping your mind quiet so you can make a pendulum like swing; **turn – wait – turn**. That's it.

In-round examples of the MVFEAR process, and the unifying force that causes excellent putts, chips, part-shots, irons and drives

In this chapter I use some examples from my own games to highlight the Automatic Golf System in action.

I played in a midweek competition and hit the ball superbly – 15 greens in regulation and one fringe. The two greens I missed came from drives finishing just off the fairway that left me with no shot to the green – one under a fairway bunker lip and one solid drive that ran through the fairway and forced me to chip out from the trees.

I hit fades and draws; whatever felt right on the shot. I hit long running, low drawn two-irons up tight par fours. I hit high fades or mid-height draws into the greens when needed.

A classic example of the MVFEAR process in action…Our front nine was playing quite short – very dangerous if you miss the fairway but easy if you hit each one.

I found myself with a lot of in-between shots, too far for one club like 115 yards for a gap wedge when my standard yardage is 110 yards and a big jump down from my full 130-yard wedge. As stated previously, I try not to stretch my yardages as this quite often results in swinging too fast from the top.

I am on the fourth hole with 115 yards in. I take the wedge (maximum distance 130 yards), grip it down, feel how far I want to take it back with

a couple of practice swings, envision the ball flight and then go and make a terrible half hearted, crappy swing that sends the ball screeching off to the right.

The ball ends up some 30 feet from the hole (I'm looking to put all these shots to a maximum of 15 feet from the pin). I was not pleased. I had done this a couple of times recently.

On the next hole, the short par three fifth, I have 137 yards to the hole. My maximum wedge distance is 130 yards in standard conditions. I look at the shot and felt draw and I also felt what wind was there was helping.

Now this is pure feel and intuition. I have this particular shot/swing I use when I want to stretch my distance out longer than normal. (Yep, I'm about to break a rule that I just talked about, because I felt confident, I'm listening to my intuition, and I have a slight breeze helping.) The most important thing is that you have a vivid feel for the shot, which I did.

The swing I called on here was hands and arms being relaxed with wrists hinging so I'm not wide in the backswing (arms relaxed and wrists hinge). I imagine a sweeping draw and hit a beautiful shot to about 12 feet.

I miss the putt on the miserable cored greens that are about three on the stint meter! The greens had been cored one week prior.

On the next three holes the golfing gods are out to test me. I basically have three shots just like the one I messed up on the fourth: a perfect trial of the MVFEAR process and everything I'm talking about in this book.

All of the wedge shots I have on the sixth, seventh and eighth, are that in-between distance like the shot I had on the fourth. As we discussed earlier, these shots are all about tempo and "**knowing the swing you are going to make, before you make it**."

I worked on this approach shot prior to hitting. On the fourth I did not map, envision, and feel how I was going to hit through the ball – how I would grip down the club, swing three-quarters wait, and then accelerate. Sometimes we can get tentative on a three-quarter shot. We don't map out where the backswing will end and how we are going to hit through the ball.

On this shot, I knew where my swing was going to end. I would wait a little at transition, so it was not rushed, then I would swing through holding off my hands a little and hit the ball hard with a hint of fade on my intended trajectory. I pulled the ball slightly, but the ball ended about 15 feet from the hole. Good, I learnt from the fourth hole and made a positive swing and then a good positive putt over the bumps through the forest of grass jumping along and breaking left-to-right and into the hole. I picked the ball out of the hole (was two under now) and walked off the green in a very calm fashion. I then had an insight into the three-quarter shot – the one I messed up on the fourth and then **the one I got right** on the sixth. My insight was one that I have just started to apply to my putting – especially on short putts.

I love it when you discover something that is an **absolute truth**. It's an **absolute truth** when it can be applied to **all** parts of your game.

My short game is now better than it has been for 20 years because of this insight. I love hitting lob-shots and all types of shots from around the green because of it.

It unifies the two ingredients for hitting excellent putts and it's the main force responsible for why I now hit 14 to 15 greens in regulation for 50 per cent of my rounds (my most consistent ball striking ever by far), and it was the reason I hit the approach shot on the sixth hole well.

What is this unifying insight?

It is your **intention**. Why do most people miss short putts and short shots? Because they ease up, look up and **corrupt the tempo of the stroke.** Is it your sole intention when putting to putt the ball on your intended line? No. To make putts, you need more than that... Is it the correct ball speed? No. You can't hole the putt if the ball is not on the right line. What if we join line and speed together? What if you aimed the putt, or in the case of the three-quarter wedge, or the lob shot over a bunker, or the high fade into the back right pin, and **hit your intention**. Yes, hit it on every shot you play!

Sounds simple, but it's not quite as simple as it sounds because no two shots are the same although some are very similar.

The shots come in random orders. We go from a driver to a wedge to a chip to a putt to a bunker shot. They all need different swings, targets and feelings.

This is why we use the MVFEAR process; it can be used for every shot even though the shots differ.

This shot can only be played successfully if you know where the swing ends, finishes, how your hands will work (wrist cock and release) and the selected tempo you will use for the shot.

"Know the swing you are going to make, before you make it." Click on this webpage here at apgolf.net where I talk about this golf wisdom and demonstrate it in a part wedge shot.

Know how your hands will work on the backswing and how high into the follow-through they will finish; know how your arms will feel in the swing; know the trajectory that the ball will pierce off towards the target on; **know your intention**. Walk into the ball, set up and apply your intension (swing). (No other thoughts are allowed in to disrupt this optimal process.)

I messed up the three-quarter shot into the fourth green because I was not 100 per cent clear on how I would move and accelerate through the ball after I made my three-quarter swing. I knew where my hands and arms would end in the backswing, but I didn't imagine the downswing and a positive through-swing.

On the short par four seventh, with out-of-bounds all down the right and pin cut short just over a pond where the terrapins (like turtles but with webbed feet) and ducks hang out, I had another three-quarter wedge from 115 yards.

I gripped down the club, I imagined a half backswing – along with a couple of feel based practice swings. I was taking a full 15 yards off the shot. I imagine a hold-off fade shot, the ball flight, a background line and the acceleration through the ball and into my through-swing. **I knew my intention**. I step up and apply my intention. Another well executed shot finishes pin-high at about 13 feet. The putt bobbles up the painfully slow, bumpy green and just misses.

On the par five, eighth hole, after a conservative tee shot – following my strategy for the hole (using the Mental in MVFEAR), which called for a low, running drawn two-iron from the tee, to go with a well struck three-iron for position, I was faced with a similar, short distance approach shot to the earlier ones, but from a right-to-left and slightly uphill lie.

I go through the same process in the shot to the green. This shot calls for a draw off the hooked lie and the distance will play slightly longer because of the uphill lie which adds loft to the club. A solid shot results, the ball is struck from a not-so-easy lie to 20 feet.

I made a good read on the line and speed. Once a couple of spots and the hole were joined up in a "reading", the eyes moved back and forth a couple of times. I created an excellent feel for the putt. I had my **intention**. It was just a matter of walking up to the ball, going through

my routine, looking up and down at my spots along the line and **not** lingering on any one spot. At this time, it is now feel. I knock the ball firmly up the terribly slow, bumpy green along my read line and in she goes – three-under through eight holes.

The Takeaway: an ordinary shot into the fourth hole, combined with some introspection to find a solution to the poor approach, paves the way for a string of good approach shots and two birdies within a few holes. (That introspection is the R in MVFEAR – Review.)

The reality of golf

On the next hole I rush the tee shot a little and/or don't get a vivid feel for the swing. The ball finds the fairway bunker underneath the lip in near impossible position to play from. I make an okay swing, but the ball hits the lip, pops up and semi plugs back in the bunker; hole over; cruel game sometimes.

I play a good back nine. But the shot on the ninth hole cost me two shots and another one on 17 because I was not vivid with my **intention**. A chance to go super low slipped away with the tee shot on nine but even par on the long five closing holes and plus one for the day is fine. More importantly, much good came from the round that I could use in upcoming rounds and well into the future.

Know your intention; decide on the shot then go up to the ball and execute freely.

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NOTE: on those “part shots”, gripping down the grip substantially, will take yards off how far you can hit the ball, so simply gripping down, then swinging normally should be used when varying distances.

The shot review process, questions to ask yourself, and the importance of Routine

The “R” in MVFEAR stands for “review”. A big factor in getting better at golf comes down to being aware of your mistakes, fixing the problem and then applying the solution to the very next shot you have.

You have the capability, RIGHT NOW, with the swing you have, to go seven to ten shots better than your handicap – without getting all technical with your golf game (you would of course need to putt very well; I have a bit to say on that subject).

Be assured that when you fully follow the MVFEAR process, your technique **will** improve. You will have more control of your body and where the club is in the golf swing. You will have better tempo, swing path, angle of attack and clubface control. (Of course, good technical fundamentals matter, but you can also shoot way under your handicap with the swing you currently have.)

Your review process will revolve around you asking questions of yourself about your adherence to the MVFEAR process.

I know for me, the solution for any shot I miss will be found in the MVFEAR process. I have outlined in detail, mistakes I have made on

shots, my analysis of the shot and the solution that I have come up with for the next time I'm confronted with a similar shot (often within the same round). I do this constantly. By doing this, you will **never** play poorly for 18 holes because you keep trying and adjusting. You can see what I went through after missing that 115-yard shot.

The result of me reviewing the shot, using MVFEAR as the template for great ball striking, was three good approach shots in a row resulting in two birdies and a par – to go with excellent ball striking for the rest of the day.

Note: every time I have had four, five, six or even seven under par for 18 holes, I have made small mistakes that I have realized, addressed and used to make more birdies to go further under par.

Questions for you Review of the shot would include:

- Did you select the appropriate shot? (Low, high, shot shape, lie, risk factor.)
- Did you really have a feel the swing you wanted to use? (Tempo, wrist cock, timing, ball position required, release.)
- Did you select the correct club?
- Did you then step in, set up and swing without delay – using your normal routine and the swing and feeling you generated in the *think, see, feel* part of the pre-shot process?

The Importance of Your Routine

Stick to your routine always (same number of looks, waggles, time taken). Under pressure you'll want to run from the pressure by swinging and or set up too quickly or take too long by adding in extra waggles or looks – which equals too **careful – which** comes from anxiety and wanting more control over the outcome. Stick to your pre-determined swing thoughts and feeling and execute without delay.

(The pressure is amplified the closer you get to the hole. The expectation to make the putt or chip it close is higher than on a long shot. I deal with ways to stay free, focused and making putts under pressure in The Truth About Putting.)

Long Game Routine Breakdown Lesson*:* Greg Norman's game fell apart in the last round of the 1996 US Masters because the time he took over the ball (which was always long – like Nicklaus). This time over the ball got longer and longer – as measured by Golf Psychologists at the time. This contrasts with Nick Faldo who won that year (and in two other Masters and three British Opens) and was a true Master in the Majors under pressure. (Faldo could be slow assessing the shot, but not over the ball.)

On care**free** versus care**less**: in golf, you want to be as care**free** as possible whilst still being orientated towards the target. The opposite would be a long time of the ball, many looks at the target and or a technical focus; this is too care**ful** and sabotages any motor skill.

Instinctive Putting Chipping and Pitching

A similar MVFEAR process is applied to putting and chipping. Earlier I talked about why most shot-putts are missed – because our intention (speed and line) is not defined vividly and therefore not executed upon.

In my chipping and pitching videos I talk about how I want my hands to work on the shot, how they will roll, hold, open, or be neutral. I then talk about the importance of the ball-flight and hitting the ball up on that trajectory with my hands. And the thinking and feeling assessment you will also access the lie and what adjustments you will have to make to the set up (ball position back, middle or forwards; weight distribution for down, flat or uphill lies; angle-of-attack: hitting up, down or neutral).

The next part of that shot would be to step into the ball, set up, (NOT look at the target) and hit with that feeling of the swing and ball-flight locked in your brain as your body reacts by swinging. For me, this has the effect of an unhindered acceleration of the club through the ball into the follow-through.

Taking **no** looks at the target once set up feels free and instinctive; it will probably feel careless to you but give it a try, it's solid.

See me hit a lob shot with this process here: https://apgolf.net/using-think-see-feel-and-swing-for-a-lob-shot/

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Summary: Playing Feel-Golf

I know that if practiced and adhered to, the MVFEAR process is going to help your scoring, swing and enjoyment of the game.

I once was, and many golfers are, bogged down with too many swing-sabotaging technical thoughts. This focus stifles the more important factors that I have expressed in this book: playing and swinging with creativity, feel and imagination. Remember, all great players use this process I have explained; it is talked about more by players nowadays but can still easily be overshadowed by too much technical analysis or the false promise of training aids and new equipment.

When Nicklaus positively had to hit his drive up a tight fairway he would revert to his dependable *cut swing*. This go-to shot was a weak fade that would go shorter in distance but would almost always finish in the fairway. **He knew the swing he was going to make before he made it.**

Tiger has his famous **stinger** – a low flying fairway-wood, rescue, or long-iron swing that he knows inside out. He uses it when he absolutely, must hit his ball in the fairway up a tight hole.

A recent example: a few days ago, I played a delightful nine holes on an unfamiliar course. I pushed my first drive of the day into the trees on the right. The second shot from 90 yards had to be hit under branches and run 70% of the distance to the hole. A six iron was my club of choice.

Contact: for me, most of the time I'm going to have the ball around the middle of the stance or back of and cut down slightly – hitting the ball

late with my hands past the ball at impact; this is far safer than trying to time a flat entry into the ball. Then I practice swing length and tempo, they will provide the desired ball speed. Then I commit to the swing.

I couldn't see the exact result because of the lengthening shadows but I knew I had hit the ball well – on the correct line at the correct speed – using the feel and swing I had imagined. To my surprise, the ball was only 5 feet from the pin!

And of course, the following shots that day would be completely different – from putts to drives to approach shots to bunker shots; all new creations.

(Years ago, I filmed two short escape-from-the-trees videos where taught the process for thinking, feeling and then hitting successfully; a lot more effort should go into these than most amateurs put in. I created a webpage where you can view them, here: https://apgolf.net/using-think-feel-and-swing-from-the-trees/.

All fine swings and shots are based on feel – syncing your hands, wrists, arms and turn, to swing the club and hit the ball on the intended flight path at the intended speed.

Three improvement points to finish on:

One: Practice seeing, feeling, and executing. Practice half and three-quarter shots, practice imagining different ball flights – low, high, left-to-right and right-to-left. Pick out specific targets. Practice a mental anchor and be smooth from the top of the swing.

Two: If you are confident with a certain club and swing and can hit the ball where you want it to go most of the time, use it as much as possible. And **play comfortable…**Meaning, **don't go for with extremely high-risk shots, play comfortable** and smart to produce better swings and to maximize low scoring).

Three: By being focused on the free-flowing swing you want to use for each shot – and hitting without delay – you drown out swing-sabotaging technical or negative thoughts.

Know the swing you are going to make before you make it.

Go for it.

Regards,

Anthony (AP), apgolf.net

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Resources and Courses to help other parts of your golf.

Videos and Lessons from this eBook cited (direct link to them):

1. Page 18: **Feel, energy and creating great golf shots. Video from this chapter:** For a 60-80 yard shot video: **Feel it, program it, hit it.**
2. **Page 22:** See me demonstrate the Think, Feel, & Swing process for a standard Fairway-Bunker Shot **here.**
3. **Page 34:** Using your best swing on all types of shots. In-Round Examples of *Think, See, Feel, Swing:* **Videos**
4. **Page 39: "Know the swing you are going to make, before you make it." Click on this webpage here: apgolf.net** where I talk about this golf wisdom and demonstrate it in a part wedge shot.
5. **Page 45: Shortgame:** See me hit a lob shot with this think, see, feel, swing, process here: **video**
6. **Page 47: Know the swing you are going to make before you make it"** – in action on-course from the trees! Check it out the videos **here**

All courses can be found at apgolf.net/courses/

1. **The Truth About Putting,** my largest course; video, email lessons and a detailed eBook. Focuses on better long and short putting – with a focus on creating feel and a simple putting routine that is strong under pressure.
2. **The Adults Golf Swing:** a refined, simple, 4-principles way to hit the ball; includes video, book, and email lesson training. Pros have a simple Adults Golf Swing; 90% of Amateurs move too much and have a Kids Golf Swing.
3. **The Simple Swing –** covers setup, tempo, arms and hands in the swing, pre-shot routine, practice v play, swing thoughts.
4. **Build a Better Shortgame** includes video, book and email lesson training covering all aspects of confident chipping, pitching, bunker play, half and ¾ wedge shots.

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