

Strait and narrow

Staring down a tight, tree-lined fairway can be a daunting experience and it is easy to let nervous tension ruin the accuracy of your tee shot. When hitting the target is the only option, follow these straightforward, on-course tips to keep a good score intact

Stay relaxed

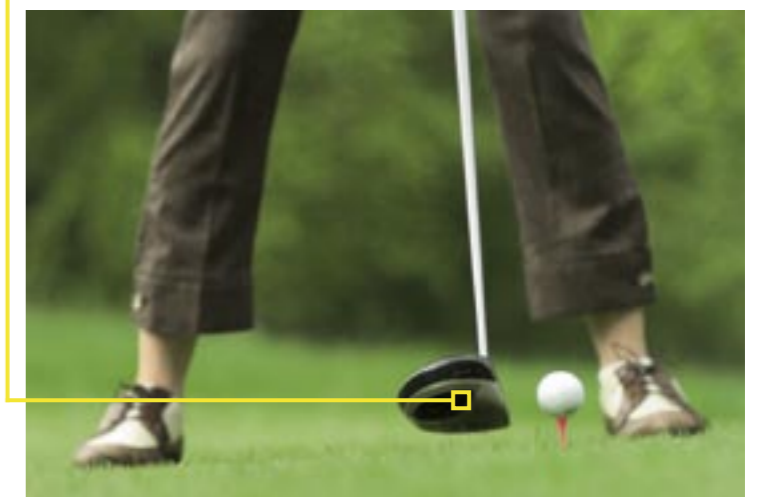
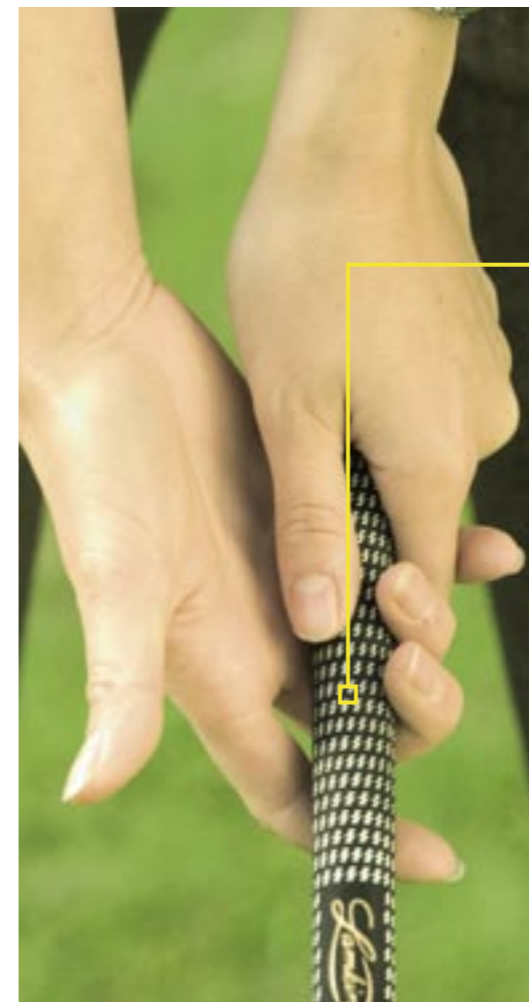
Most amateurs play their best golf at the end of a bad round. When a good score is no longer possible, relaxed, fluid swings often produce the most accurate drives of the day. Use these two simple tips to alleviate the tension that builds when facing a tight fairway.

Soft touch

Don't choke the grip but **hold the club softly in your fingers**. Relaxed forearms and shoulders are crucial for a rhythmical, balanced swing so make sure tension does not build by gripping the club lightly.

Hover shaft

Before starting your backswing, try **hovering the clubhead above the ground**. As you concentrate on keeping the club aloft, tension is drained from your body so you can achieve an athletic yet relaxed address position. ▶





Spot search

Stand behind your ball and pick a specific spot on the horizon. Here I am using the trees at the end of the fairway to my advantage – they provide a precise target at which to fix my aim.

As you set up to the shot, draw an imaginary line between the target and your ball. Picture your drive shooting straight along this line to avoid any destructive thoughts about the trees.

Narrow your aim

Now narrow your aim even further by picking a spot a few feet in front of the ball that sits directly on your chosen line. Concentrate on driving your ball directly over this spot and you'll be more likely to return the clubface square to the target at impact.



Think 'finish'

Desperate to steer the ball towards the fairway, many players produce an unusually short and jerky swing that ultimately costs control. As you set up to the ball ready to fire, think about swinging through to a full finish position.

Picture this movement in your mind. Simplify the shot by making this your only swing thought – you will commit fully to your drive and hit the fairway more consistently.

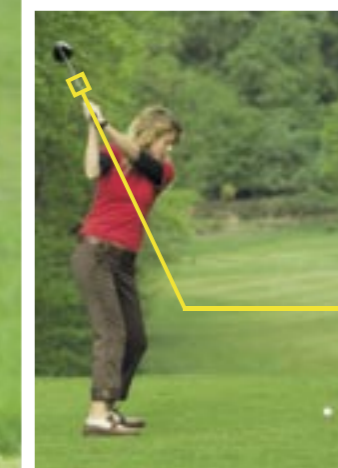


Wind tunnel

Finding a narrow fairway in the face of a stiff breeze requires a controlled, precise swing.

Before you hit the ball, make a practice swing with two clubs. This drill is used by many players as part of their warm-up routine but the momentum created by the extra weight also helps guide your hands and arms through a smooth stroke.

Remember that a clean strike will deliver ample distance so reproduce this rhythmic swing when you play the ball. Make sure that the shaft of your driver does not reach parallel to the ground at the top of your backswing. The picture near left shows the perfect position from which to attack the ball. ■



Meet the expert

Former county player and England international Katie Dawkins is a PGA professional at Hamptworth G&CC. She runs the New Forest Girls Golf Academy at the club, which caters for all standards of player.