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GOLF

# Simplified

How to Become a Short Game Magician

Increase your enjoyment  
and lower your handicap

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Become a  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Thank you for purchasing this report on how to improve your short game and ultimately lower your scores. Please take the time to go through and use the simple tips contained in the report. This is not meant to take the place of your local PGA professional but rather to open your eyes to the possibilities and potential that lie within you.

I believe that everyone has the ability to play better golf. Most avid golfers either feel they don't have the time to improve or don't know what to focus on in order to improve. The goal of this report is to show you some simple ways to lower your score without spending mind numbing hours at the range. My hope is that this report makes you realize that with the right direction and commitment you can get better quickly.

The key to improving in any area of your life is to have realistic expectations and try to look at small steps forward towards your goal rather than feeling you should accomplish your main goal all at once. For example, if you currently can only get your ball out of a sand trap by throwing it, let's set the goal of getting out on your first swing every time. Then you can look at proper distance, direction and trajectory.

You should also make this fun. Instead of going to work on your game, how about going to play on your game. Once you get the proper techniques down you should try all kinds of crazy shots and different lies. End every practice session with flop shots. This is your reward for practicing. Flop shots are fun. Just don't hurt anyone!

Although you may notice a light-hearted tone to this report, please know that I am very serious about helping people improve and shoot lower scores. It is a great feeling to show someone how to hit a chip shot correctly and then watch the look on their face as they do it. That is what I want for you. I want you to have many magic moments that ultimately lead you to the lowest scores you have ever shot. Let's get started.

# Chapter 2

## Sand Shots Made Simple

The reaction of most people when they get into a green side bunker is one of dismay. There will normally be a few words that you won't hear in church. You then watch them grab the club like an ax and chop away until they give up in disgust. If they do manage to get it out, it either barely creeps out or screams across the green

Let's paint a different picture. Your ball ends up in a green side bunker and you stroll confidently into the trap, set your feet and take a smooth swing which causes the club to slide under the ball and float up onto the green.

What is the difference? Maybe skill level plays a part but more important is technique. Anyone can get out of a bunker with the proper technique. So if you struggle to get out of bunkers, set that as your first goal then work on getting closer and closer to the hole.

One of the things I like about bunkers is that they are a mirror of your full swing. Shortly I will get over the proper technique but rule number 1 is to keep your body very quiet, in other words you want to have very little movement. Whenever I am struggling with my full swing, I head right to a practice bunker. Without fail, I struggle to hit good shots. This tells me that I am moving my body during the swing. All it takes is a few minutes of focused effort to start hitting good shots again which will then translate to good full swings. This will make sense as we move along.

As I watch people struggle with bunker shots, I see some common mistakes. The first one is that most people try to help get the ball in the air. They do this by having their weight on their back foot, the shaft angle leaning away from where they want to hit it and then to compound the problem, they let their right hand run underneath their left in a scooping motion. That combination normally causes the club to actually skip across the sand instead of digging in and going under the ball.

Think about this for a moment. You have a club with 58-60 degrees of loft and then as I will show you, you are opening the face to add even more loft. Do you then need to do

all of those other things to help the ball get airborne? Let's go over what you want to do rather than what you do not want to do.

First and foremost, you want to relax. Set your feet into the sand with the ball in the middle of your stance and a slight flex in the knees. You want the shaft either perpendicular to the ground or leaned slightly forward. You never want the shaft leaning back or away from the direction you want the ball to go. Your weight should favor your front foot. One common mistake that I see is trying to open the face of the club (meaning add loft) by leaning the grip and shaft back. This will cause the club head to skip off of the sand resulting in a poor shot. To open the face of the club, you actually want to loosen your grip and turn the club head to the right (if you are right handed). This is how you add loft and keep the shaft angle correct. It is important to maintain this shaft angle at and beyond impact. This will prevent your right hand from getting ahead and underneath your left. It will also prevent you from trying to "help" the ball into the air.

The main swing thought at this point is that you want to take a complete swing. Make sure that your grip is relaxed and take a  $\frac{3}{4}$  back swing and a  $\frac{3}{4}$  follow through. The difference between a swing from the fairway and from the trap is that you want to come down as steeply as possible so that the club digs in rather than bounces. You want to focus on a point behind the ball that you want the club to enter the sand. Look for a different color grain of sand and bring the club down on the point and follow through, allowing the club to simply slide under the ball and easily loft it out of the sand. A little practice will help you figure out how far each shot goes relative to the distance you hit behind the ball.

Here is the key to becoming an exceptional bunker player. Even if you do everything up to this point you will at best become an inconsistent bunker player. The way to become exceptional is to keep your entire body, not just your head, as quiet (still) as possible. Watch a professional and notice that their shoulders, arms and hands do all of the work. A common mistake is to raise your head slightly during the back swing. This makes it almost impossible to get the club back where you want it. I like to get in a bunker with the sun at my back and make some swings while watching my shadow. This really helps you see any movement.

As an added benefit to becoming a better bunker player, if you can transfer the swing onto the rest of the course, you will become a better ball striker. Limited head and body movement are keys to improving all areas of your game.

One more tip for playing out of hard or wet bunkers. While it is easier to play from a hard fairway bunker, it is more difficult to play from a hard green side bunker. The reason is that it is a challenge to get the club under the ball. The ball will also come out

with less spin so will run farther. There are 2 keys you need to focus on. You must bring the club down steeply. If you make a shallow swing, the club will bounce and you will be yelling fore to anyone in the line of flight. The other part is that you have to increase the distance you hit behind the ball. No matter how steep you attack the ball, you will get less sand and more distance. Therefore, hit the sand a little farther behind the ball than normal.

## Chapter 3

### Chipping Like The Pros

Chip shots around the green are another part of the game that some people panic about. In reality, most chip shots are fairly routine. You will sometimes have difficult shots that require more loft or longer carry. You can also get the occasional bad lie. All of these issues can be dealt with when you start with the correct technique. While everyone would love to hit flop shots ( which are covered in another chapter), they are very difficult to hit correctly and in reality are rarely needed.

The key to chipping well lies with the left hand and the back of the left hand to be specific. Similar to the average player's futile attempt to extricate themselves from a green side bunker, trying to help the ball into the air by flipping the right hand under the left will result in consistently poor shots. What I see is that a golfer who does this seems to alternate between fat chips and thin chips, neither of which will lower your score.

The technique is actually quite easy to learn. As with most things in life, it is the execution that is difficult. Practice will make it easier but you must practice with the right technique otherwise you ingrain bad habits.

First you want to assess where you want to land the ball and whether you want to run it up to the hole or carry it most of the way. This will determine club selection. The technique is the same regardless of how you want to play the shot. The more you practice with different lofts, the easier it becomes.

You want to choke down on the club at address. Play the ball slightly back in your stance with more weight on your front rather than back foot. As you move your weight forward before you hit, lean the shaft slightly forward as well. Your hands should actually be ahead of the ball. This is the most critical part of chipping. The back of your left hand is facing the target. It will continue to face the target through impact and beyond. If you only do this you will get better.

You are now at the address position with your hands ahead of the ball and your weight forward. Now, bring the club back with your shoulders only. No body or head movement. Your hands should only move with your shoulders and your wrists will not do anything except go along for the ride. Practice this motion over and over. Just this change will make a huge difference.

The length of the back swing will be determined by the length of the shot and the loft of the club. You then initiate the down swing with your shoulders with the focus on the back of your left hand. Make sure that the left hand keeps going at the target and that the right hand never tries to get underneath or ahead of the left.

The main reason this technique is so effective is that it enables you to hit the ball the same way more consistently. Once you are hitting the ball consistently, you will then learn to judge distances much better. If you focus on the technique, everything else will follow including lower scores.

A couple of other points to keep in mind is that the club should accelerate into the down swing. Deceleration will minimize your chance for success on any golf shot and the chip is no different. Let the club flow through the shot like the trap shot description in the last chapter.

One final thought before we move on. In most instances around the green, you should look at a chip shot the same way you would a putt. The goal is to make every putt and every chip. You should therefore, read the green before you hit your chip. Look at the break, how much uphill or downhill and also grain. I think grain is more important for chipping than even putting. When you chip, many times you will be putting backspin on the ball. If you are chipping into the grain, the ball will stop much faster. Just some food for thought.

# Chapter 4

## The Flop Shot

The flop shot is one of the most fun shots in golf. The goal is to hit the ball as high as you can and have it land softly with very little roll. It is used around the green when you need to get the ball up quickly and stop it where it lands. I consider it an all or nothing shot where if you pull it off you are a hero and if you miss it you are a goat.

Although they are a lot of fun, they are rarely necessary to use. I tend to use what I call a modified flop shot which is much easier to hit and control and is discussed at the end of this chapter.

The first thing to do when you go to practice the flop shot is to forget everything I told you to do in the last 2 chapters. You will be doing everything from start to finish almost exactly opposite of what you do on a chip shot or sand shot. While you can get better at both of those with only a little practice, the flop shot requires lots of practice. It also requires your full commitment and attention.

The first step in hitting a flop shot is to read your lie. Especially in the beginning, you want your ball to be in the rough and sitting up at least a little. If the ball has settled down and is sitting directly on the ground, it is very difficult to slide the club underneath and you will most assuredly be putting anyone in a direct line in danger because there is a very good chance you will hit a line drive skull shot.

When you set up over the ball, put your weight on your right foot. Open the face of the club as I discussed earlier except you want it as open as possible. Your hands should be slightly behind the ball rather than ahead as in most every other golf shot.

You will want to take a full swing at the ball. The key to hitting this shot properly is keeping your weight and hands behind the ball all the way to impact and beyond. Do not try to help the ball in the air. With the amount of added loft, the ball will go almost straight up so it will not go very far. The club will slide right under the ball. It is a beautiful thing to behold when done correctly.

The modified flop shot is one that you can use more often with less danger. You can use this either when you have a little farther to go or have more green to work with so can let the ball run out a little more.

Start with your weight in a neutral position, equal on both feet. Open the face of the club as you did for a full flop shot but keep your hands even with or even slightly ahead of the ball. You will need to practice your distance control but you will also find this shot much easier to hit. Bring the club about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way back and as you swing through the ball, make a slight weight shift forward. This will help you hit the ball more solidly as well as carry it farther but still get height and stopping power.

You will want to use the flop shot sparingly. It is great to have it in your bag of tricks though and once you master it your playing partners will be amazed. Now let's move onto the part of the game we all love to hate.

## **Chapter 5**

### **How To Make The Putt When You Have To**

For the average golfer, improving their putting is the fastest way to lower their scores. It can also be the most frustrating part of the game. It seems so simple yet in reality is not. The inability to putt has driven many great players from the game. Johnny Miller is a notable example. He was one of the best players of his generation and was certainly on his way to winning several majors when his putting woes forced him out of competitive golf. A great example among today's players is Michelle Wie. She went through a stretch where she could not make a putt. To her credit, she has battled back to win on the LPGA tour again. If this can happen to players like this, certainly the average player can succumb.

So how can you learn to putt better? I always teach people to use their larger muscles rather than their smaller ones. What I mean is that you should get yourself set up comfortably over the ball. Your grip pressure should be very light and your weight should favor the front foot. I like people to use a slight forward press which means that the hands are slightly ahead of the ball. At worst, your hands should be over the ball, but never behind the ball. When your hands are behind the ball it promotes mishits and it is very difficult to judge distances when you hit the ball inconsistently.

You also want your arms, shoulders and hands to form a triangle with your shoulders the base and your hands the point. This is where the larger muscles come in. You want to start your back swing with your shoulders. Slowly bring the putter back low to the ground. You do not want your hands or wrists to take over nor do you want to pick the putter off the ground. The start of your back stroke is very important and sets the tone for the entire stroke. Once you reach the end of your backstroke you want to again use only your shoulders to begin the forward stroke. The putter should stay as low to the ground as possible and should be controlled completely by the shoulders.

It is important that you develop a consistent routine. Everyone develops their own routine over time and they are all different but the important thing to remember is to use it on every putt. Stand behind the putt and visualize the line before standing over the ball. Make it a routine that does not slow up play but is something that triggers your mind to focus on the task at hand.

I am a big believer in visualization on every shot. Putting is a part of the game that requires you to visualize more than any other shot. You want to stand behind the ball and not only read the green, you also want to see the ball going in based on the way you read the putt. In other words, if you have a putt with right to left break, see the ball rolling in from the right side of the cup. I believe if you only add this to your putting routine you will improve.

I am also a big believer in keeping your body as still as possible on every shot and simply rotating your body around your spine. This is absolutely critical when you are putting. Your head and legs should have no movement whatsoever. They must stay still until at least the impact point. I prefer the head stay still well beyond the impact point in order to produce a solid, consistent strike.

Mishit putts will drive you crazy. When you think of it, you are only moving the putter 18-24 inches and yet it seems that you hit the ball differently each time you make a stroke. How can you not hit a ball solidly during an 18 inch stroke? Improving your technique will improve your consistency. It is that simple. The key is to keep the putter as close to the ground as possible during the entire stroke. Rock your shoulders back and forth and limit any other body movement. And oh yes, practice!

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

So what have we learned? The goal of this report is to help you understand how to improve your short game in the least amount of time. Other than the flop shot, most of what is taught is technique combined with a little practice. The flop shot requires more than a little practice but even the modified flop shot can be used after only a moderate amount of practice. There are 2 keys to the entire process of improvement. The first is to understand and utilize the techniques. The second is to practice, always remembering the first key.

So many times I see people practicing with poor techniques. The more you practice poor techniques, the more ingrained they become and the more difficult they are to eliminate. Go to a practice area and start working on your chipping technique. Don't worry about results, focus on the process.

As you start to hit the shots more solidly and consistently, your confidence will grow. Confidence is a very important part of the process. When someone with a poor short game approaches a shot, their mindset is very different than someone who knows they are going to hit a good shot. This is where you want to be and you would be surprised how quickly you can get there.

I am a big believer in visualization. It is critical that you visualize each shot around the green. Once you understand the techniques I teach, you then want to work on visualizing each shot as you practice. This will move you along the improvement scale very quickly. At the end of every round, look at your scorecard and think about where you could have saved shots around the green. You will find a pattern. Maybe you had several 3 putts or skulled a couple of chips. Get to your next round a little early and practice those shots. See yourself hitting them properly. Watch your scores improve.

Each shot around the green is different. Look at how your ball is lying and whether you are playing from the rough, the fairway or the fringe. Each of them will react differently when struck. Learn to read the lie as well as the green. Understand how the grain of the

green will affect your shot. If your ball is lying very tightly into the grain, consider a lower lofted club to prevent the grain from grabbing and stopping the club. The pitch and run shot or even using a hybrid to get the ball rolling more smoothly are great options in those situations.

As I said in the beginning, this report is not meant to be read and filed away. There are many very simple tips that will quickly help you improve your short game and lower your scores. With the knowledge contained here, it is up to you how to use it. Start with the most basic concepts and practice until you feel comfortable. Keep trying more and more difficult shots. If you make it fun you will tend to practice more as well as enjoy and look forward to your practice time. Leave the cell phone in the car and take in the entire atmosphere.

Many people look at golf as a way to kill time and drink beer. If you have gotten this far then my bet is that this does not describe you. You want to get better and have more fun playing. Follow the tips in this report and you will get better.

Oh, and did I mention practice?