

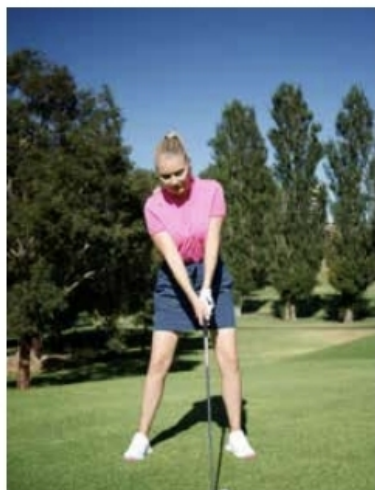
The Dream Drive

By Skye Choueiri

THE DREAM.... To stand up on the first tee and crush your first shot straight down the middle of the fairway (preferably in front of a group of middle aged men! Ha.)

Let's make that dream a reality in a few simple steps! The main issues I have seen from instructing women over the years are; they struggle to get the ball in the air, they get nervous, and struggle with achieving any sort of distance. The driver is a very different club to your irons, fairway woods and wedges and a lot of women don't hit their driver far or straight because they don't consider the differences. In this article, I break down these issues and give you the tools you need to hit longer and more consistent drives. Follow my simple tips and you'll be on your way to getting the ball airborne and creating more speed and power in your golf swing.





The Setup

Since the driver is so much longer and has less loft than other clubs, it requires a few changes, mostly during the setup. With the driver, we want to deliver the golf club much shallower and strike the ball on the upswing to reduce spin and increase carry distance.

- Tee it high! One of the most common things I see lady golfers make is they don't tee the ball up high enough. When you tee the golf ball up, ensure half of the golf ball is above the driver. Set yourself up for success by teeing it high and watching it fly!
- Widen your Stance. Widen your stance so that your feet are slightly wider than your shoulders.
- Move your Ball position forward - Your golf ball should be just inside your lead heel. Another way to think about this is directly under your lead armpit.
- Grip lightly! Let's remove all that unnecessary tension.
- Spine Tilt - The longest club in the bag demands a strike on the clubface on the upswing. Establishing the correct tilt will let you launch the ball higher, with less spin leading to more distance. Tilt your spine and shoulder away from the target. Your lead shoulder and hip should sit slightly higher at address.



Spine Tilt Drill

1. Take your normal address position and place your right hand on your thigh.
2. Slide your hand down your thigh 2cm, and regrip the club. Your lead hip and shoulder will now sit slightly higher than the trail side.



Posture

If you want to maximize your distance off the tee, posture is KEY! Many women hunch their shoulders at address which then restricts your ability to turn freely.

To set up in the correct posture, you need to:

- Flex your knees. Ensure your knees aren't 'locked out' or too bent.
- Hinge forward from your hips, and not from your thoracic (upper) spine
- Leave yourself enough room between the butt of the club (grip) and your hips. Approximately a hand span.

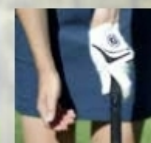


Check Your Grip - Neutral Vs Strong Vs Weak

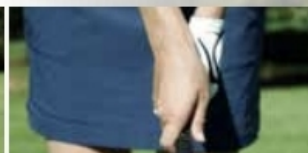
As you look down at your left hand during address, there should be 2 knuckles visible. This is classed as a neutral grip. The 'V' made by your left thumb and forefinger should point up towards your right shoulder.



If you can see more than 2 knuckles, your left hand is said to be in too strong a position. A stronger grip will generally close the clubface during the swing causing a draw or hook.



If you can see less than 2 knuckles, your left hand is in too weak position. A weaker grip will generally cause the clubface to open during the swing causing a fade or slice.



Rotate, Rotate, Rotate

A lot of golfers have a tendency to pick up their arms on the backswing and under rotate their torso which can lead to the arms taking over, or the arms completely collapsing at the top of the swing. If the left arm collapses (bends) at the top of the swing, it makes it difficult to generate speed and deliver the club correctly on the downswing.

Follow this simple match up drill to ensure you get good rotation of your shoulders and hips on the backswing. You will need 2 alignment sticks (or golf clubs) for this drill.

Step 1 - Place an alignment stick on the ground just inside your trail foot

Step 2 - Take your normal set up

Step 3 - Place a club across your shoulders and rotate into your backswing.

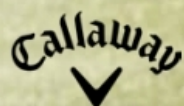
In this position, the club across your shoulders should match up to the alignment stick inside your trail foot. Struggle with rotation? Don't be afraid to lift your left heel off the ground!



Learn To Release

One of the things we see in good player's swings is a good extension and release with the arms and hands after the ball has been struck. After impact, both arms extend toward the target (see picture) as the body continues to uncoil and rotate toward your lead side (left side for right-handers). Learn to extend and release the club correctly to avoid the dreaded 'chicken wing'.

A very simple exercise you can do is the L to L Drill. I want you to make some smaller swings, creating an L on the backswing by hinging your wrists and repeating it on the follow through. These are simple positions you can create by hinging the wrists. The second L position is the key point. A lot of golfers hold onto the clubface thus getting the dreaded chicken wing position. See how my left arm is bent in the photo? That is what we call the 'chicken wing' When you 'chicken wing' the right palm is facing the sky post impact (see picture). We need to learn how to release the hands, create some speed and closure which will help square up the face and lead to longer, more consistent drives.





Stop Hanging Back

Hanging back is exactly as it sounds – this is where a golfer will hang-back her weight on her trail leg and doesn't transfer it forward into the swing onto the lead foot.

A lack of weight shift causes a huge loss of power and a lack of distance off the tee. Even though you want your driver slightly ascending at impact, ensure you transfer your weight to the lead foot as you start the downswing.

Most women will try to hit 'to' the golf ball or try to scoop the golf ball in the air with their arms which causes the club head to slow down through impact.

- Swing to a complete finish point. The golf ball is only at the half way point of the swing. Don't swing 'to' the golf ball. Focus on accelerating through to your finish position.
- Initiate the downswing with the lower body. Turn your hips, extend your arms and Finish in a nice balanced position on the lead leg, with your hips and chest pointing down the fairway.





Hear The Whoosh

Try this simple drill to help create some speed during your swing.

- Turn your driver upside-down so you're holding the shaft near the club head. This will make the club feel significantly lighter, so you can swing faster with your hands and arms.
- The grip end of the club should make a "whoosh" sound at the bottom of the swing. If it doesn't, you're not generating enough speed (and if it makes the sound at the start of the downswing, you're accelerating during the wrong part of the swing).
- Once you have managed to hear the 'whoosh' at the correct position, turn the club around and hit a few shots.



Breathe...

Now you have the tools to hit longer, more consistent drives it's time to take these to the first tee! Follow these 3 steps to compose yourself and crush your drive!

Think

The key questions to ask yourself here are: Where is my target? Where do I want my ball to finish? What is the wind doing? What shot do I want to play?

Rehearse

During your practice swings – FEEL – EG. a great shoulder turn or your hands releasing and SEE the shot- visualize your drive going down the middle of the fairway!

Do

Once you're over the golf ball, take 2 deep breaths engage with your target and pull the trigger!

