

Stick to



Bombs Away!

You've probably heard that you need to swing faster in order to maximize distance. That is not true. Based on launch monitors and 3D testing we've been doing in the industry, you have to concentrate on hitting up with the driver. We found during these tests that two people can swing at the same exact speed, but the golfer with the better angle of attack can hit the ball up to 20 yards farther. To practice this, place a stick just past your ball on an ascending angle, the attack you should be generating at contact. If you really have a tendency to hit down on the ball, exaggerate it so that it has more of a lofted angle.

the Basics

Make this simple piece of equipment your best friend on the range.

BY JASON BIRNBAUM

Photos by Steve Ellis

During my time as a teaching professional, I've always found physical training aids to be difficult to work with for a variety of reasons. For one, my students rarely owned them and wouldn't make it a point to buy them. Secondly, it's not exactly convenient to transport them to and from the range.

However, there is one very simple piece of equipment that provides an endless amount of learning possibilities on the range, and that is an alignment stick. I'm sure you've noticed their popularity growing among range dwellers. In a way, they've revolutionized the whole idea of a training aid. Once used exclusively for alignment (hence the name), if you use your imagination, there's so many different drills you can set up to help your swing.

The fact that they're so easy to buy and carry makes them one of the most efficient resources a golfer can use. When I break one out during a lesson, I focus mainly on ball striking—in particular, distance and accuracy.

If you practice the following four drills, there's no doubt you'll be hitting the ball straighter and longer next season.

Down and Dirty

Contrary to what you do with your driver, you should focus on hitting down on the ball with your irons. I like to lay a stick just in front of the back foot. The key is not to make contact with the stick, which is difficult if you like to "scoop" the ball and release the club early. You'll notice a difference in your ball striking (and divot taking) immediately.



Mimic the Stick

This next drill will have you focused on maintaining a consistent swing plane. Place the stick in the ground a few yards behind where you're practicing, at the same angle your shaft sits at address. Work to mimic your takeaway and backswing to the angle of the stick. The beginning stages of the swing in this drill are most important and should ultimately lead to correct positions on the downswing. If not, glance back at the stick to see where your shaft is lined up on the way down.



Take Dead Aim

This drill has proven to be very effective with my students and provides a great visual in terms of accuracy. Place a stick 10 yards out, directly between the ball and the target. The idea is to either hit directly over the stick, or work the ball from either side. Your alignment should see significant improvement. ■



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