

WOODIES' WORKSHOP

SMART PRACTICE SERIES | VOL. 3

The Chipping Framework Simple Decisions That Get the Ball Close

Four principles every weekend golfer should know before they reach for a wedge.

FREE GUIDE

How to use this guide

You're twenty yards from the flag. Clean lie. Plenty of green to work with. You reach for the lob wedge. You've reached for the lob wedge every time since you started playing. This guide explains why that's costing you shots, and gives you a simple framework to make the right call before you even pull a club from the bag.

Chipping isn't mostly about technique. It's also about selecting the shot that is easiest to execute and gives you the highest margin for error for your current lie and distance to the flag. Run through the four principles below before every chip. Stop at the first option that fits. Over time, it becomes instinct.

The 3 principles going in

- The lowest shot that does the job is almost always the right shot.
- Every chip starts with a decision, not a swing.
- The goal is never a perfect chip. It's always to give yourself a makeable putt.

What should I bring?

- Wedges: LW, SW and GW/PW for the drill work
- Putter: you'll use it more than you think
- Hybrid or 3-wood: essential for Drill 1
- This guide: printed or on your phone

The Framework at a Glance

Run through this in order before every chip. Stop at the first option that fits.

#	Principle	The rule
1	Keep the ball on the ground whenever possible	Use your putter or a hybrid/3-wood to keep the ball rolling. You are a better putter than you realise.
2	Keep the ball low	If you can't putt it, the bump and run gives the highest margin for error. Mid-iron, slow stroke, ball on the ground fast.
3	Aim for the landing zone, not the hole	With your stock chip, aim for half the distance to be via roll. That landing spot is your real target, not the flag.
4	Short-sided? Take your medicine.	A 10-15 foot putt to save par is a great outcome.

PRINCIPLE 1: IF YOU CAN PUTT, PUTT. IF NOT, GET IT ROLLING AS FAST AS POSSIBLE.

Before you reach for a wedge, ask yourself one question: is there anything stopping me from using my putter here? A tight fringe, a clean lie, a flat path to the hole. Any of these is reason enough to pull the flat stick. You are a better putter than you realise.

If you're not confident in the putter or the ground between you and the hole isn't putter-friendly, the next question is: what's the least-lofted club you can use to get the ball rolling quickly? A hybrid or 3-wood played with a putting stroke is one of the most underused shots in the amateur game. Grip down the shaft, set up exactly like you're putting, and make a smooth putting stroke. The ball comes out low and runs like a putt, but the longer shaft carries it through any light rough with ease.

Using a simple putting stroke gives you a higher margin for error on shots around the green, take any advantage you can get.

PRINCIPLE 2: BALL LOW, CLUBHEAD SLOW

The instinct most golfers have around the green is to try to lift the ball. They scoop. They add wrist. They try to help it up. This results in chunks and shots in the teeth.

The bump and run with a club like an 8 or 9-iron gives you as much margin for error as possible. Make a slow, controlled pitching stroke, maintaining a solid 'V' between your grip and each shoulder throughout. The club has loft built into it. Its job is to get the ball airborne. But the lower loft on the mid-iron returns the ball to the putting surface quickly and lets it run out towards the pin.

The slower and more deliberate the stroke, the more control you carry through the shot.

The golfer who keeps the ball low to the ground and rolling is playing simple, smart and stress free golf.

PRINCIPLE 3: AIM FOR THE LANDING ZONE, NOT THE HOLE

The stock chip is designed to carry any immediate trouble and land and roll out towards the hole. It's a more reliable shot than a high-spinning chip that needs to fly all the way to the flag and stop dead. As a rule, aim for at least half the distance to be via roll.

Whatever club you've chosen, give yourself a spot to land the ball, roughly halfway between where you're chipping from and the hole. That patch of green is your real target. Not the flag.

Pick your landing zone before you pick your club.

PRINCIPLE 4: SHORT-SIDED? TAKE YOUR MEDICINE.

Being short-sided means the flag is cut close to the edge of the green nearest to you. You've got little green to work with and almost no margin for error. This is the situation where most double bogeys are made, not because of a bad lie, but because of a bad decision.

The smart play is to forget the hole. Get the ball on the green and give yourself a chance with the putter. A 15-footer for par is a very good outcome from a short-sided lie. A blade through the back or a chunk into the collar is a double in waiting.

Accept the position you're in. Take the most reliable chip you have, pick a safe landing zone, and leave yourself a putt. You're playing for bogey, and bogey is fine.

When you're short-sided, the goal is a chance at making a putt. Not a chip-in. Play the percentages.

The Drills

Now that the framework is in your head, here's how to practise each shot. There's no fixed ball count. Chipping is about feel, not volume. Stay with each drill until something clicks, then move on.

DRILL 1 -- THE HYBRID/3-WOOD CHIP -- THE SAFEST SHOT YOU'RE NOT USING

For: clean fringe, light rough, plenty of green to work with.

Setup: grip down the shaft, heel of club just off the turf, stand slightly closer to the ball in a near-putting posture, ball in middle of stance, weight neutral.

The stroke: pure putting stroke, shoulders rocking, no wrist hinge at all. The club barely leaves the turf and the ball pops out low and runs.

Feel for: ball barely leaving the ground before it rolls.

WOODIE'S TIP

Quieten the hands and let the shoulders do the rocking. A simple putting stroke with the longer club will give the shot the ball speed it needs to travel through the immediate danger.

DRILL 2 -- THE BUMP AND RUN -- YOUR GO-TO AROUND THE GREEN

For: clean lies, light rough, mid-distances.

Setup: narrow stance, grip one inch down, ball just back of centre, hands slightly ahead at address.

The key: keep the triangle from your hands to your shoulders intact all the way through. Arms and chest move as one unit. The club's loft returns the ball to the surface quickly before it runs out.

Feel for: not digging into, or brushing the surface.

WOODIE'S TIP

For the bump and run, aim for 1/4 of the distance in the air and 3/4 on the ground. This ratio will need to change depending on the green speed.

DRILL 3 -- THE STOCK CHIP

For: mid-distance chips, standard rough situations.

Setup: narrow stance, 60% weight on the front foot, 40% back, ball just back of centre, hands slightly ahead. Try the clubface slightly open to let the bounce of the club do its job.

The key: same connected triangle as the bump and run. No wrist hinge. The loft gets the ball up and you just keep it moving.

Feel for: not digging or skimming the surface.

WOODIE'S TIP

If the club is thudding into the ground, reset your weight to 60/40 and feel the bounce of the club making contact with the surface.

DRILL 4 -- THE CUT CHIP -- HEIGHT AND SOFTNESS WHEN YOU NEED IT

For: ball needs to land softly and stop quickly.

Setup: stand slightly closer than your stock chip, open stance a touch by pulling the front foot back slightly, keep the heel of the club just off the turf, open the clubface then grip.

The stroke: swing along your foot line, which runs slightly left of target. The open face delivers height and spin.

Feel for: the club making contact with the surface just behind the ball and coming across the ball from out-to-in.

WOODIE'S TIP

Open the clubface before you grip the club, not after. Gripping first then opening the clubface will result in you closing the clubface at impact subconsciously.

The Decision Card

Run through this before every chip. Over time, it becomes instinct.

Situation	Best shot	Club
Fringe or fairway, flat path to hole	Putt	Putter
Fringe, Fairway, light rough and elevated greens	Hybrid/3-wood chip	Hybrid or 3-wood
Fringe, Fairway, light rough and plenty green to work with	Bump and run	8 or 9-iron
Medium rough, or pin near the near edge of the green	Stock chip	SW or LW
Ball needs height and softness on landing	Cut chip	LW
Short-sided -- little green to work with	Get it on the green	Most confident club for the lie

Notes & Reflections

Which shot in the framework felt most natural today?

Which situation still feels uncomfortable -- and why?

One chipping decision I'm going to make deliberately this weekend:

This chipping framework isn't something you master in one session. It's something you internalise over time -- until making the right call before each chip becomes as natural as pulling on your glove. The goal is never a perfect chip. It's always a makeable putt.

Keep an eye out for the next guides in this series:

- > Vol. 1 -- The 45-Minute Session That Gets You Ready for the Weekend
- > Vol. 2 -- Attack or Lay Back? Breaking Down Tee Shot Decisions
- > Vol. 3 -- The Chipping Framework -- Simple Decisions That Get the Ball Close