

WOODIES' WORKSHOP

SMART PRACTICE SERIES | VOL. 4

The Ideal Putting Setup

Seven positions that give every putt the same starting point, before the stroke ever matters.

FREE GUIDE

How to use this guide

Most golfers walk onto a putting green and think about the line. Very few think about the setup. This guide changes that. The seven positions below are the foundation every consistent putter is built on. Get them right and your stroke has a platform to work from. Ignore them and no amount of practice will make your putting reliable.

The 3 rules of this guide

- The setup comes before the stroke. No technique adjustment works without a reliable address position underneath it.
- Check it, don't just feel it. Your address is almost impossible to feel accurately. The drills in Section 3 exist to verify, not to guess.
- Build it once, keep it. The correct positions don't change between holes, courses, or conditions. Get them right this week and they work every week.

What should I bring?

- Putter
- 3-5 balls
- A coin (for Drill 1)
- A practice green or putting mat
- This guide: printed or on your phone
- Optional: a phone or camera for Drill 3

Section 1: The Seven Setup Positions

1. EYES OVER THE BALL

Drop a ball from the bridge of your nose at address. If it falls onto the ball or just inside it, your eyes are correctly positioned. If it drops outside, you are standing too far away. Eyes over the ball gives you the truest view of your line.

Feel for: Bridge of your nose directly above the ball.

2. HANDS UNDER SHOULDERS

Let your arms hang naturally from your shoulder sockets. Your hands will settle directly below your shoulders, not reaching forward and not tucked in. That natural position is your correct address.

Feel for: Arms hang naturally. No reaching.

3. FEET NARROWER THAN SHOULDERS

The outside edges of your feet should align with the outside edges of your shoulders, narrower than your normal iron stance. A narrower base keeps your lower body quieter and reduces sway through the stroke.

Feel for: Outer foot edges match outer shoulders.

4. SHOULDERS SQUARE, NOT TILTED

Shoulders parallel to your target line and level, not tilted. A higher right shoulder points the putter face away from your intended line. Most golfers only discover this fault when they check themselves in a mirror.

Feel for: Both eyes at the same height.

5. LEAD FOREARM MATCHES SHAFT ANGLE

The angle of your lead forearm should match the putter shaft angle all the way to the elbow. When this line is unbroken, the putter becomes an extension of your arm. Most badly struck putts start from a break at this point.

Feel for: Forearm and shaft: one unbroken line to the elbow.

6. BALL 1 INCH FORWARD OF CENTRE

Ball approximately one inch ahead of centre in your stance, just inside your lead foot. This is less forward than many golfers assume. It places the putter at the point of slight upswing on its arc, promoting clean end-over-end roll from the moment of contact.

Feel for: Just inside your lead heel.

7. HANDS AT THE INSIDE OF THE LEAD THIGH

Your hands should sit at the inside of your lead thigh at address. This naturally places them slightly ahead of the ball and promotes the gentle forward shaft lean needed to keep the blade square through impact.

Feel for: Hands above the inside of your front leg.

Section 2: The Grip Options

REGULAR (REVERSE OVERLAP)

The familiar foundation

How to hold it:

Grip the putter as you would any other club. Lift the index finger of your lead hand and lay it over the fingers of your trail hand. This small change connects both hands and quietens the trail hand's tendency to take over the stroke.

Best for:

Most golfers. The most common grip on tour and at club level. Start here if you are building a putting routine from scratch.

LEAD HAND LOW

The wrist corrector

How to hold it:

Your trail hand sits above your lead hand on the grip, the reverse of your normal hold. This naturally squares the lead wrist through impact and prevents the breakdown that causes pushed and pulled putts.

Best for:

Golfers who see the lead wrist collapse at impact. One of the most common adjustments on tour when putting accuracy drops.

THE CLAW

The trail hand eliminator

How to hold it:

The trail hand hangs on the grip with the fingers curled loosely underneath, palm facing toward you. The trail hand acts purely as a guide. All the work is done by the lead hand and the bigger shoulder muscles.

Best for:

Golfers who struggle with yips or an overactive trail hand. Unorthodox in appearance, surprisingly effective in practice. Worth a serious trial.

There is no universally correct putting grip. Start with the regular grip. If the lead wrist collapses through impact, try lead hand low. If the trail hand dominates, the claw is worth a serious trial.

Your Setup Checklist

#	Setup Position	Key Cue
1	Eyes over the ball	Bridge of your nose above the ball
2	Hands under shoulders	Arms hang naturally, no reaching
3	Feet narrower than shoulders	Outer foot edges match outer shoulders
4	Shoulders square, not tilted	Both eyes at the same height
5	Lead forearm matches shaft angle	Forearm and shaft: one unbroken line
6	Ball 1 inch forward of centre	Just inside your lead heel
7	Hands at the inside of the lead thigh	Hands above the inside of your front leg

Section 3: Check the Setup

These are not technique drills. They are position checks. Run through all three before every putting practice session until reaching the correct address feels as automatic as standing up straight.

BLOCK 1 -- THE COIN DRILL

5 min | 5 attempts

The most direct eye position check available without a mirror. You need one ball, one coin, and about two minutes.

DRILL 1 -- EYE POSITION CHECK

3 correct drops

Place a coin on the ground at your ball position. Take your putting address over it. Hold a second ball at the bridge of your nose and release it. If it lands on the coin or just inside it, your eyes are in the right place. If it drops outside, step closer to the ball. Repeat until three drops land true.

BLOCK 2 -- THE ARM HANG CHECK

3 min | 3 reps

DRILL 2 -- HAND POSITION CHECK

3 reps, compare each

Stand tall with your arms hanging loosely at your sides. Without moving your arms, bend from the hips into your putting posture. Note where your hands fall naturally: they should sit at the inside of your lead thigh, directly below your shoulder sockets. Grip the putter from that position. That natural hang is your correct address.

BLOCK 3 -- THE FOREARM PHOTO CHECK

2 min | 1 photo

DRILL 3 -- SHAFT ANGLE CHECK

1 photo, adjust, confirm

Ask someone to stand near your target, at roughly shoulder height, and photograph you from there facing back toward you. From that angle, the angle of your lead forearm against the putter shaft is clearly visible. They should form one straight line from the elbow down through the hands. If there is a visible kink at the wrist, adjust your hand position and take a second photograph to confirm.

Before You Move On

Work through these three checks until you can reach the correct address without consciously running through each position. Once that is automatic, you are ready for Part 2: The Putting Playbook, which covers distance control, directional accuracy, and green reading built on top of the foundation you now have.

WOODIE'S TIP

The setup is not the exciting part of putting. But it is the part that makes everything else possible.

Notes & Reflections

Which of the seven positions needs the most work?

What does my natural grip feel like now, compared to the standard position?

One thing I will check before every putt this weekend:

Every great putter shows up to the same address every single time. It is not talent. It is routine. Run the checklist. Build the habit. The stroke takes care of itself when the foundation is right.

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
- > Vol. 4 -- The Ideal Putting Setup
- Vol. 5 -- Building the Ideal Golf Grip