

Shoot from the hip

By bending forward from the hips and keeping the small of your back straight you can get your eyes right over the ball, all of which helps to move the putter back and through on a straight line.

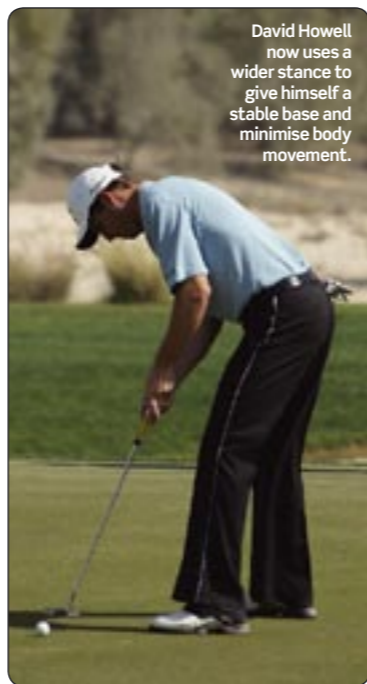
Putt like a pro

Perfect stroke

Knock shots off your scores by learning the set-up and stroke secrets of top Tour pros Padraig Harrington and David Howell, from their coach **Phil Kenyon**

Stay still

By working hard to minimise body movement during your putting stroke, your centre of gravity will remain fixed, which will help you to return your putter head square to the target line at impact.



David Howell now uses a wider stance to give himself a stable base and minimise body movement.

ALL CHANGE

David Howell's old, narrow stance meant his centre of gravity moved during the stroke. But with his new, wider stance (above), everything is stable and body movement has been vastly reduced.

STABLE SET-UP

One of the most noticeable elements of both Howell and Harrington's putting technique is their address position. They both use a distinctive wide stance, which gives them a solid, stable base that minimises body movement and helps to return the blade square to the target at impact.

Next time you see them on TV notice how both players are bent forward from the hips, so the small of their back is flat and their eyes are directly over the ball. This is the perfect posture for a straight back-and-through putter path.

Both players have worked with leading sports science consultants Quintic to have their body movement measured during the putting stroke, and this has played a major part in helping them to build a more stable stance.

Get committed

A few seasons ago, Padraig and David decided to improve what they considered to be the most important part of the game. They worked with putting expert Harold Swash and biomechanics expert Dr Paul Hurrior to build efficient, repeatable putting strokes that are the envy of many pros. Their secret to success? Good, solid fundamentals. If you want to make these changes you need focus, commitment and a strong work ethic.

1 USE THE RULER



On the level

If you are standing too upright, the ruler will not stay in place.

Flat shoulders

To help my pupils get a straight, flat back I will often place a ruler across the top of their shoulders. If the back is flat, the ruler will rest comfortably; if the spine angle is too upright, the ruler will not stay in place. You can even hit putts from this position, keeping the ruler balanced. This will help train a smooth rocking action of the shoulders.

CHECKPOINT

The ruler should be horizontal to the ground when you lay it across the top of your shoulders. This shows that your back is flat and parallel to the ground.

2 EYES OVER THE BALL



The right lines

This position means you can look along the target line to the hole.

Head start

Few golfers get into this position, with their head pointing straight down and their eyes over the ball. But it's what you should be looking to achieve at set-up. From this position, as you rotate your head to look at the target, your eyes will always track down the target line. This is really important when you consider that putting is reliant on hand-eye co-ordination.

CHECKPOINT

The next time you set-up, get into the ideal posture and imagine there is a laser beam running from the pupils of your eyes on to the top of your ball.

3 NARROW YOUR FOCUS



Leave a gap

One of the features that David Howell in particular has worked on is to focus on a spot just behind the ball, as opposed to focusing on the ball. This can be something as small as a blade of grass. Focusing on a static object will help you to keep your head still, and will minimise body movement, because the head often moves as a result of the eyes wanting to follow the ball.

CHECKPOINT

When you address your putt, leave a small gap between the putter and the ball. Now focus on a blade of grass, or a tiny patch of grass, between them.

4 PRAYER POSITION



Get a grip

Hold the club lightly between your palms to keep your hands still.



Handy advice

If you struggle to take the hands out of your putting action, then this is a great drill to encourage your bigger muscles to lead the stroke. Simply place your palms together on the outside of the putter grip, and press them together lightly on the grip so that you have hold of the putter. Now focus on rocking the putter back using your shoulders only.

CHECKPOINT

You should be able to feel that your left shoulder is leading the stroke, rocking underneath your chin as you take the putter away from the ball steadily.