



Are Your Beliefs Holding You Back?

Are you confident your wedging technique is current? Coming up on 20 years of coaching and over 15,000 lessons taught; I find that players who struggle with wedge play have faulty beliefs. Their understanding about the intended design of the club and how to go about making a stroke that takes advantage of that design is lost on them. If you believe your chipping could be better, perhaps there's something you're missing.

At some point in the '90s, instructional content, specifically wedge play, was leading us interested golfers down a hazardous path. While I'm certain it wasn't intentional, the information being shared led a generation of players into a dark place.

My short game mentor, Stan Utle, Top 50 instructor on *Golf Digest's* teachers list, exposed to me many years ago that most of us were doing it wrong. His mentors, and the ones before them, had direct lineage to some of the all-time greats. How did this simple way of hitting shots become so challenging? Well, that's an article for another time.

Our academy recently brought Utle in to do short game schools for our students and he shared some pearls of wisdom that the most successful players on the planet adhere to. You might think, "There's no way I could approach short shots the way the professionals do!" But part of their bril-

liance is Tour players like to find the easiest ways of doing things and let their athleticism and touch make that skill world class. So if these fundamental concepts are so repeatable why aren't we all using them? Perhaps you just haven't been exposed to them yet — *or*, your beliefs system is holding you back from changing.

Set-Up: Figure 1

1) Stance is narrow, square and lead foot is slightly flared to assist with a fluid pivot. 2) Shaft position is fairly neutral, with the slightest forward tilt. This keeps the "bounce" exposed and allows us to use the club the way it was designed.

3) Tilt is something that 95% of golfers don't have right. Get your nose or sternum in line or in front of the ball. This levels your shoulders, helping with an accurate landing at impact. Soften your lead arm; this makes moving into the finish easier.

Stroke: Figure 2

Let your wrist hinge the club (15 to 45 degrees) on plane, and be sure your right elbow stays soft. Starting the downswing, unhinge your wrists down the plane aggressively while feeling yourself working into a tall finish. There is no need to swing your arms toward the target. The arms do more dropping than swinging towards the target. Notice how close the butt of the club is to my body in the finish. I can only achieve that with soft elbows.

Finish: Figure 3

Closely mowed grass makes players nervous. So they force it. If you're falling back or pulling the club through instead of swinging it, you'll tend to hit thin shots. Your reaction will be to move the ball back in your stance, which forces you to hit down steeply, leaving a tiny window for a good shot to happen.

Don't make it so difficult. The sole of a good wedge will interact with tight turf just fine. Finish tall, with shoulders feeling horizontal to the ground, chest over your lead foot, *both* elbows relaxed and soft.

Summary:

Role of Hands: hinge club up and down and maintain a firm grip

Role of Body: Pivot and finish tall

Role of Arms: Follow the direction of the body while letting elbows retract in backswing and through swing.

BEWARE: Tension in the shoulder or elbow joints kills your chances for solid contact and proper distance control.

Bad wedge players

- Have too much forward shaft lean at address
- Never release their lever/hinge
- Stay down too long though the shot

Skilled wedge players

- Start with none to minimal shaft lean
- Release their level early in their downswing
- Stand up through impact and into their finish.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3