

The Cardinal Rules
Of Golf (Part 2)

Get A Grip

Role The Hands
Play In Your Swing

In the last issue, we discussed how making good decisions on the golf course can reduce your scores. This rule of keeping par in play is a way of simplifying your thoughts and employing a problem-solving method that you can trust, no matter the situation.

In this issue, we will explore the conscious function of the hands within the swing. All too often golfers are confused about how they should hold a club and what their hands should be doing during the swing. Most amateurs try desperately to control the club as it moves through their swing in an attempt to control how the ball flies. What they are forgetting is that unless you have control of the club before you begin the swing motion, there is no way you can consciously control the swing. >>

By **John Hughes** • Photos by Russell Kirk Photography

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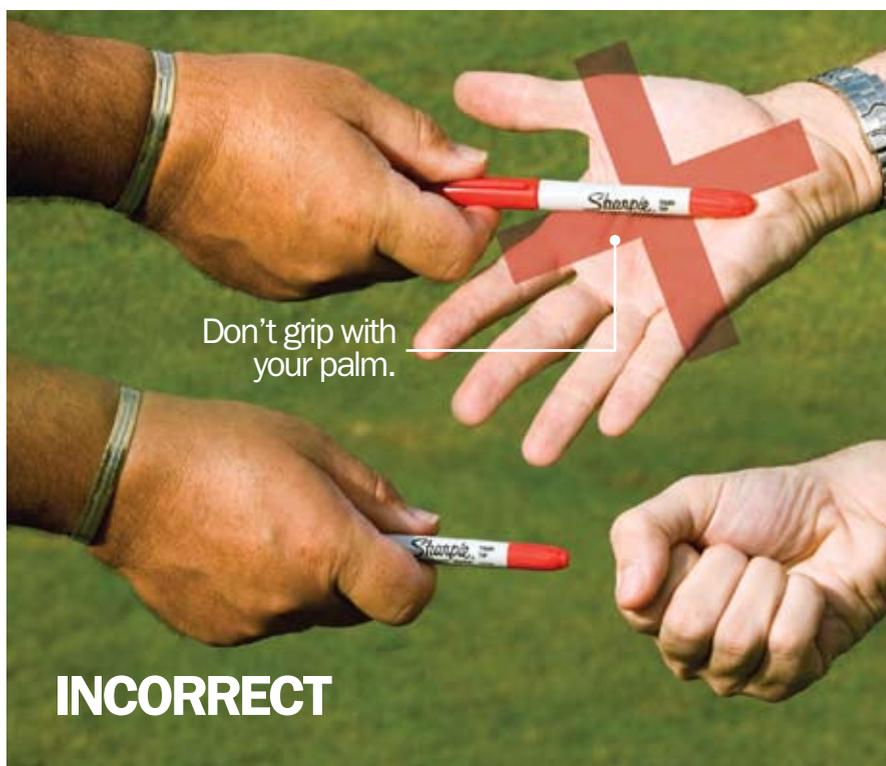
To simplify your efforts within the swing in relation to your need to control the club, remember that the hands have only one conscious task in the swing — holding the club correctly. There are plenty of other tasks the hands, wrists and arms perform within any given swing. However, no matter what the shot or task you ask these body parts to complete, they will not function properly unless your hands are holding the club correctly. This is the very first block of the foundation to your swing. Without a great grip, your swing can topple upon itself.

If your hands are securing the club in a correct position and with the proper pressure prior to you setting the club into motion, all of the tasks required of the hands, wrists and arms will be completed in sequence on their own.

How should you hold the club? You want to put your hands on the club in a way that replicates where your hands should be at impact. If you can do this properly, you will be able to secure a consistent and correct grip position that's ideal for you.

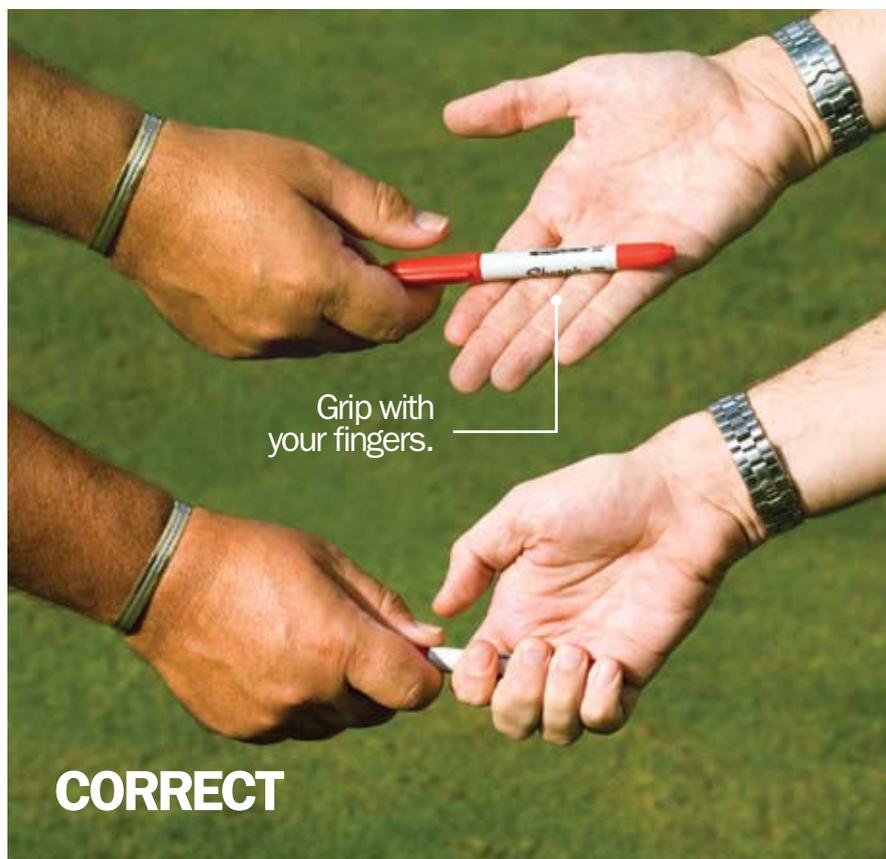
The first thing you must understand is that the strength of your hands lies within the fingers, not the palms, as it relates to a great golf grip. To illustrate this, place a pen in your palm and grasp it tight. Ask someone to pull the pen from your hand. Chances are the pen will escape your grasp. Now, place the same pen in the second knuckle of your fingers (counting from the base of the fingers). Grasp the pen again, this time only with your fingers, and ask someone to pull the pen out of your hand. Chances are that with much less effort, the pen stays in your hand, or should I say, fingers.

The handle of a golf club more closely resembles the diameter of the pen you just performed this experiment with, rather than the diameter of say a tennis racket or baseball bat. As the diameter of the object or "tool" (for our purpose, the club) becomes bigger, you are forced to place more of the handle into the palm. Because the handle of a golf club is smaller in diameter than other tools you regularly use, you must secure the club in the fingers of the hands. Placing the club in the second knuckle of the fingers allows maximum security with minimal effort.



INCORRECT

THE STRENGTH OF YOUR HANDS lies within the fingers, not the palms, as it relates to a great golf grip. To illustrate this, place a pencil or pen in your palm and grasp it tightly. Ask someone to pull the pen from your hand. Chances are the pen will escape your grasp.



CORRECT

NOW, PLACE THE SAME pen in the second knuckle of your fingers and grasp it again, this time only with your fingers, and ask someone to pull the pen out of your hand. Chances are that with much less effort, the pen stays in your hand.



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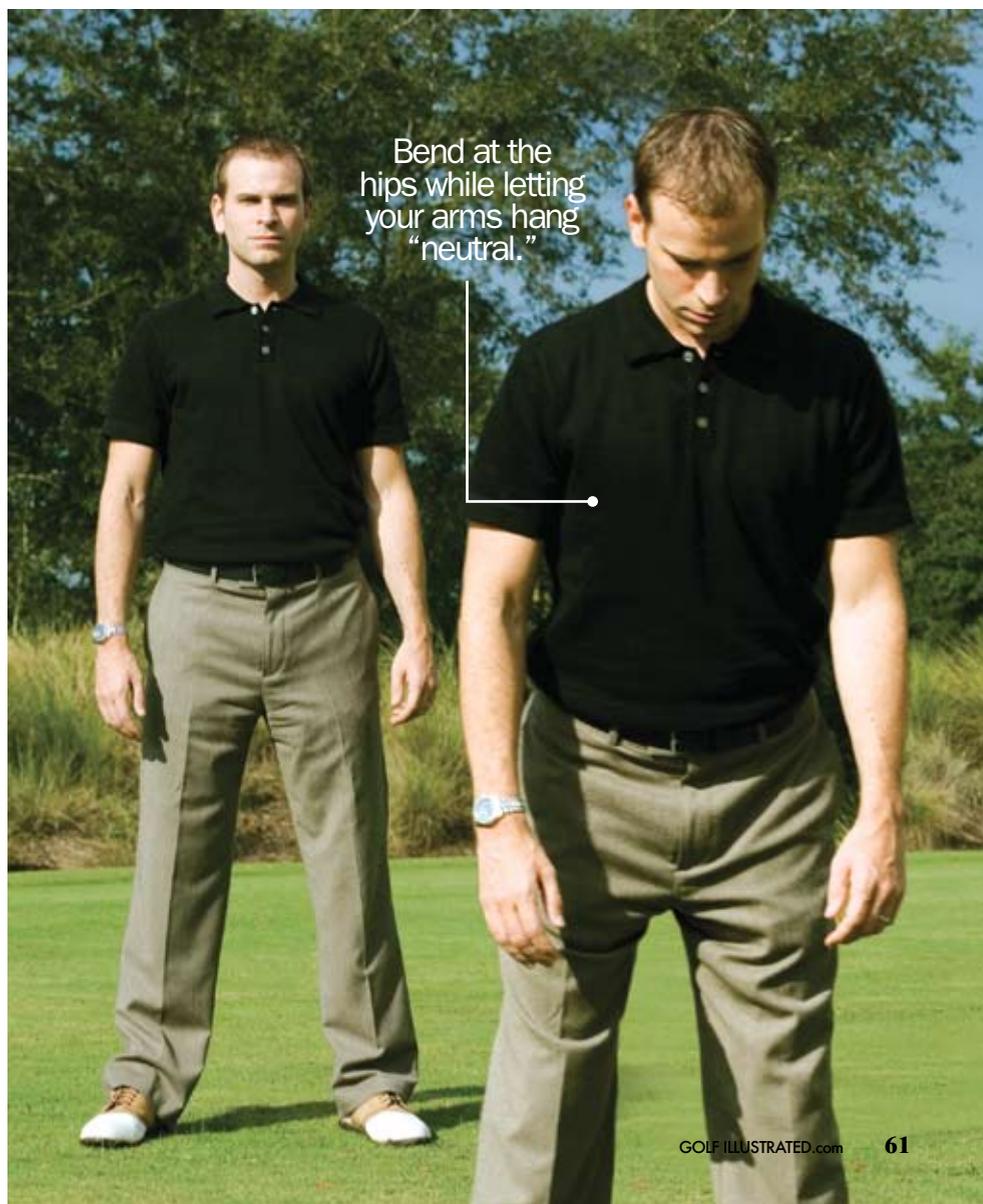
be aware of this position. It is this position your hands want to be in while the club is making contact with the ball. The ideal situation now is to find a way for the hands to place themselves on the club to replicate this position.

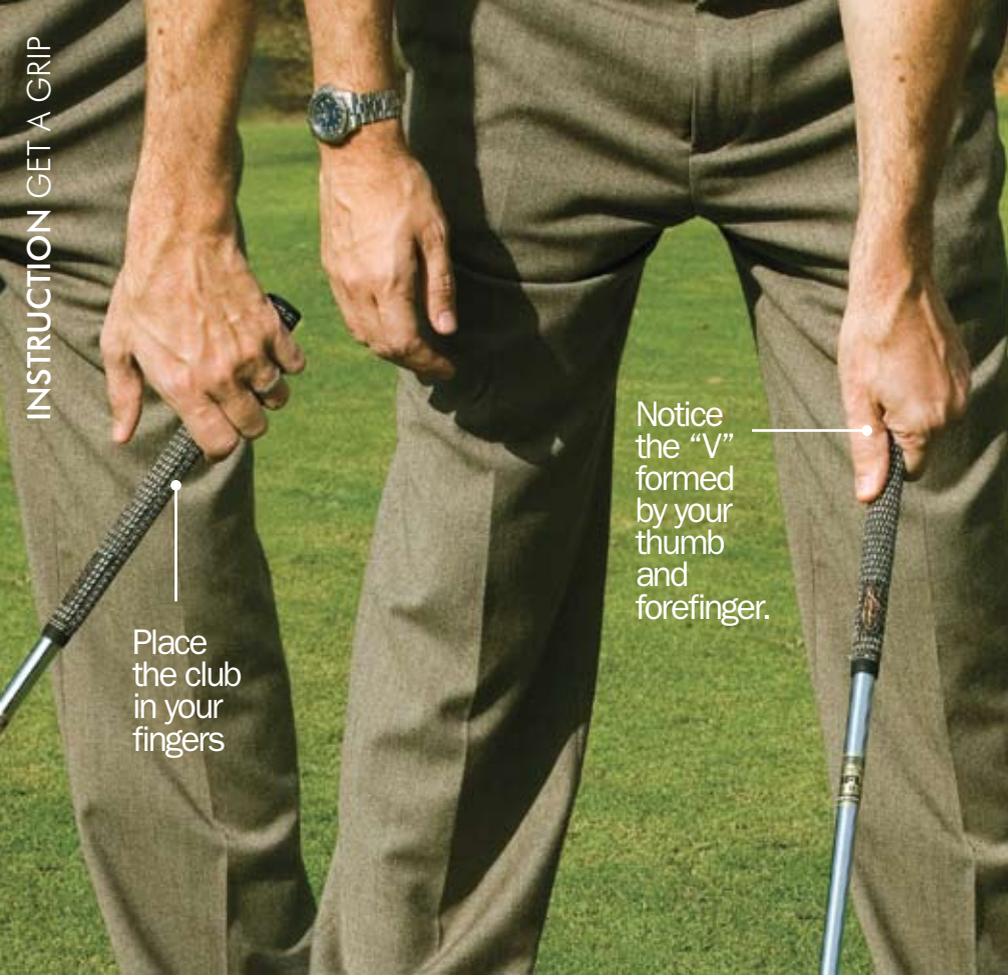
One way to accomplish putting your hands on the club correctly is to place a club within your top hand (left hand for right-handers) while standing erect.

The second issue you must deal with to secure a correct grip is the way your arms hang from your body. Stand upright, allowing your arms and hands to hang from your shoulders in a relaxed position. Take note as to the angle in which your hands hang from your shoulders, relative to your body. Do they hang parallel with your body (palms facing your legs), perpendicular to your body (palms facing behind your body) or at an angle to your body (somewhere in the middle of parallel and perpendicular)? Most golfers' hands hang in a somewhat angular position to their body. The medical term for this position is called anatomic resting position. For our purposes, we will call this "neutral" arm hang.

Leaving your arms in the neutral arm-hang position, bend at the hips, creating what is your normal golf posture. You will notice that your hands are still at the same "neutral" angle they were in while you were standing erect. You must

MOST GOLFERS' hands hang in a somewhat angular position to their body. Leaving your arms in the neutral arm-hang position, bend at the hips, creating your normal golf posture, and notice that your hands are still at the same "neutral" angle they were in while you were standing erect. It is this position your hands want to be in while the club is making contact with the ball.





Place the club in your fingers

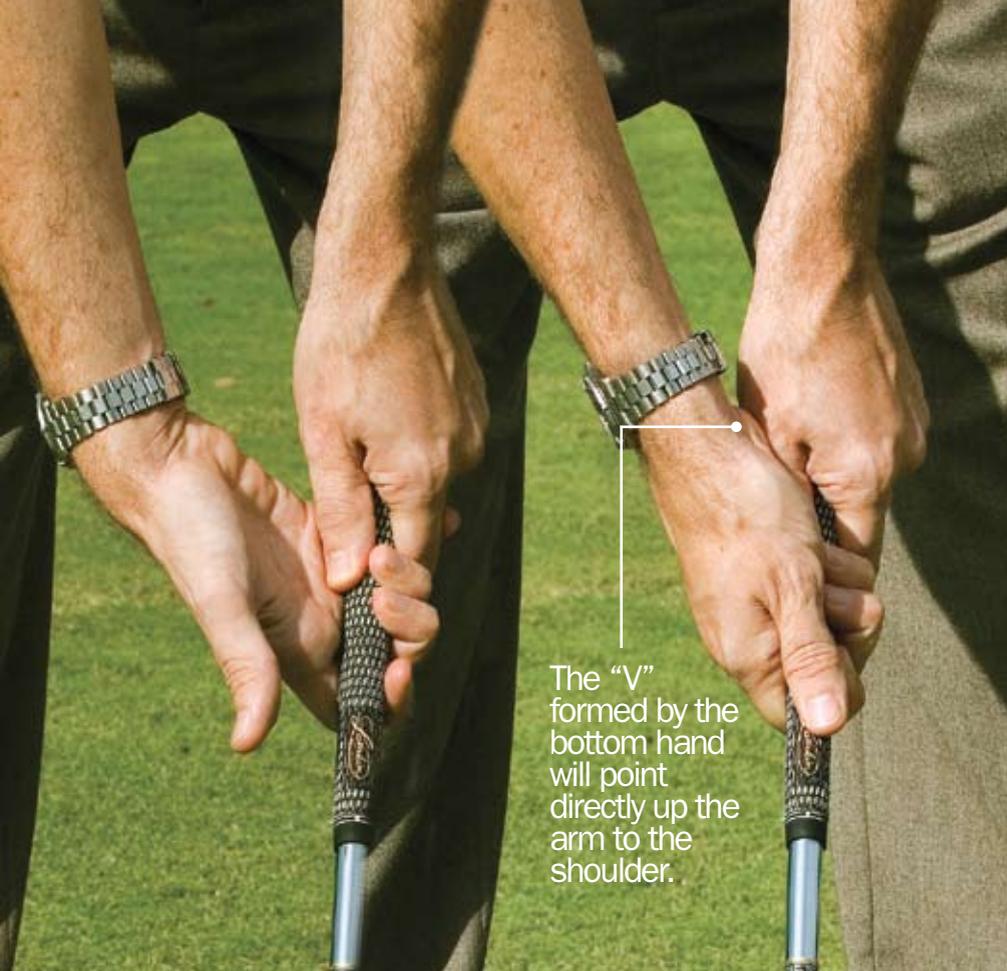
Notice the "V" formed by your thumb and forefinger.



ONE WAY to accomplish putting your hands on the club correctly is to place a club within your top hand (left hand for right-handers) while standing erect. Allow the fingers to grasp the club and instead of trying to grip the club with the remainder of the hand, try to close the fingers and then the hand. Next, with just the top hand on the club, move the club in front of your stance as if it were behind a ball. Your hand will be in relatively the same position it was when you allowed your hands and arms to hang. You will also notice the thumb and forefinger of your top hand forms a "V."

Allow the fingers to grasp the club rather than the palm. Now instead of trying to grip the club with the remainder of the hand, try to close the fingers and then the hand. You will find that the club remains in the fingers as the thumb takes a strong position on the opposite side of the club.

Next, with just the top hand on the club, move the club in front of your stance as if it were behind a ball. You will now see your hand in relatively the same position it was in when you allowed



The “V” formed by the bottom hand will point directly up the arm to the shoulder.



WHEN YOU PLACE your bottom hand on the club, allow the thumb of your top hand to fit within the “lifeline” crease of your bottom hand. Again, put the handle of the club within the second knuckle of the fingers of the bottom hand and close the fingers and then the hand. The “V” formed by the bottom hand will point directly up the bottom arm to the back shoulder.

your arms and hands to hang. You will also notice that the thumb and forefinger of your top hand forms a “V.” The vortex of the “V” is probably pointing to the opposite shoulder.

Finally, place your bottom hand on the club, allowing the thumb of your top hand to fit within the “lifeline” crease of your bottom hand. Again, put the handle of the club within the second knuckle of the fingers of the bottom hand and follow the same procedure used to finalize the top hand on the club, closing the fingers and then the hand. The “V” formed by the bottom hand will point directly up the bottom arm to the back shoulder.

The key is that you place your hands on the club in such a way that they can consistently replicate the neutral arm-hang position. This position allows the hands to hinge more naturally and for the arms to freely rotate as your swing begins. It also enables the wrists to hold the hinge longer as the club approaches the ball. This lets you release the club

at the proper time, affording maximum clubhead speed at impact. This position also allows you to place the proper grip pressure on the club, minimizing any undue pressure you might otherwise have used to hold the club previously.

Keeping par in play will now be a bit easier because you have a comfortable yet proper handle on the club. Just knowing you have better control of the club as it swings should enable you to concentrate on how you are going to play the course, instead of how you are going to swing the club. With these two rules in your bag, you should begin to see positive results in your scores.

In the next issue, we will put the trilogy together and give you one final cardinal rule of golf — never sacrifice your setup position. ⚡

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