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Five Steps For Improving Bunker Technique

By Jack Moorehouse

Although hitting from a bunker is straightforward once you learn the basics of stance and posture, the thought of hitting into a greenside sand trap unsettles many golfers. Improving your technique reduces the fear of bunker play and builds self-confidence in your shot-making capabilities.

Assuming the texture of the sand is similar, and the ball is not plugged, the technique for hitting out of a greenside bunker remains the same for shots up to 30 yards (27m). The key to making this shot, as I've explained in my golf tips, is hitting the sand about 1 to 2 inches behind the ball, throwing the sand forward with the ball. For longer shots the only thing that changes is the swing's length. Rhythm and tempo remain the same.

Below are 5 points I cover in my golf lessons on bunker technique. They're the focus of my golf instruction once I've reviewed how a wedge works and the fundamentals of stance and posture.

1. Move Arms Away in Unison

Having taken a slightly open stance, resist the temptation to get too steep early in the takeaway. Keep the wrists passive as you sweep the club away. Try to synchronize the arm swing and body turn. In other words, make the first part of the takeaway a one-piece movement. Also, make sure the clubhead follows the path away from the ball parallel to the line of your toes.

2. Rotate and Open

Rotate your left arm and wrists as the swing continues, as if you were looking at a wristwatch. It's a visual I often use in my golf instruction to help players remember to make the move. It opens the clubface and helps maximize the bounce effect on the sand wedge at impact. Also, start hinging your wrists as the clubhead passes your right thigh. Keep your head still, turn the left shoulder in under the chin, and turn your back to the target.

3. Turn to the Top

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As your body turns, you should feel as if your clubhead is pointing toward the sky and your wrists are cocked. Keep your head and body centered over the over the ball. Swing the club down on a slightly flatter plane, with good rhythm and tempo, as always. This is a key move any time you swing a club.

4. Make the Right Contact

Hitting the right impact point is critical when playing from the sand. In golf lessons I tell students to visualize the ball sitting on top of a tee instead of the sand, then focus on clipping the tee beneath the ball, which just happens to get in the swing's way. Executed properly, this move will throw the ball out of the bunker with just the right amount of sand.

5. Create a Controlled Explosion

As the club comes down in the downswing, you should feel your hands drag left, pulling them across

the ball through impact. Make sure that your right hand doesn't cross over the left and that you clear your left hip as the club comes through. If the stance and clubhead are open sufficiently, the ball will fly straight, with a high trajectory.

Of course, the technique for longer bunker shots differs slightly. The key with longer shots is in the follow-through. Use a full finish for long bunker shots, and a short finish for shorter bunker shots.

Below are two exercises that I use in golf lessons to help students improve their bunker technique:

- This exercise establishes how the sand wedge should really work. Stand in a practice bunker without a ball. Adopt your normal bunker stance and take several swings down into the sand. The object is to get the feel of the clubhead dragging through the sand, not digging into it. After a dozen shots, try hitting a ball. Pick out a spot where you want the ball to land and then go for it. Repeat the exercise until you're comfortable with the feel of the wedge splashing through the sand.

- Focusing on a spot where the clubhead hits can divert attention from where it emerges, resulting in a fluffed shot. The "Two Lines" exercise helps eliminate the tendency to lose focus. Stand in a bunker and take your normal bunker stance. Draw two lines in the sand about 6 to 7 inches apart. The lines represent the length of the sand you should carve from under the ball. Line up several balls between the two lines then hit them. The clubhead should enter the sand where the first line is and emerge where the second line is.

Practicing these two exercises while keeping the 5 points in mind will help build better bunker technique. As you become more and more comfortable with hitting out of a bunker, you will increase your self-confidence. And that, as I often tell my students, leads to better play and lower golf handicaps.

Jack Moorehouse is the author of the best-selling book "How To Break 80 And Shoot Like The Pros." He is NOT a golf pro, rather a working man that has helped thousands of golfers from all seven continents lower their handicap immediately. He has a free weekly newsletter with the latest golf tips,

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golf lessons and golf instruction.

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Top Golf Tips For Beating The Bunker

By Kirsten Hawkins

When a golfer ends up in the bunker, you can usually hear swearing all the way to the clubhouse. It's not that they are bad; it's just that they feel bunkers can defeat them.

There are a few hidden tips that not many people have caught onto yet. Here are a few hidden bunker busters that will make you wish that you knew this before you hit your first bunker.

Your first step is to imagine that the bunker is not your worst enemy. If you think the bunker is your worst enemy, you will fear them and this will have an adverse effect on your game.

So next time you land in one, don't just give up, hit the ball, and hope. That will get you nowhere. You will just end up taking another bunker shot; and the scorecard will increase with every shot you take.

Another important thing to keep in mind is your footing. Many people will simply allow their feet and legs to adjust to the sand. That is not the best thing to do; make the sand work for you by taking the time to establish your footing.

The next thing you should do is take an open stance and get relaxed. If you are comfortable on the tee, then why can't you be comfortable in the bunker?

After this, you will need to distribute your weight in an effective manner; usually more to the left-hand side is the best way to go when you are trapped in a bunker.

Now practice your motion. When swinging the club, move the same distance backwards as you do forward. Learn it and remember it: the shot in the bunker will always be tricky.

You should now prepare for the shot, but remember to hit the sand roughly two inches before the ball. This creates a scoop effect that will allow the ball to be played out of the rough instead of rolling straight into the same bunker.

You should also accelerate through the ball. This allows for more power in the shot and will give the ball that little bit of extra distance towards the hole.

Always remember that the sand is your ally, not your enemy. Don't fear the bunker and you will constantly surprise yourself with the one-shot bunker trick.

Kirsten Hawkins is a golf enthusiast from Nashville, TN. Visit

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<http://www.golfinginstitute.com/>

for more

information on how to improve your golf game.



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