

# HOW TO BUILD A REPEATING SWING

A fresh season awaits, and along with it yet another opportunity for you to become the ball striker you've always wanted to be. This year, however, you're going to do something about it by recasting your swing using these modern fundamentals.

*By Shawn Humphries with David DeNunzio*

*Photography by Leonard Kamsler*

Maybe 2006 was the year for you—the one when rounds came together and the ball flew from the clubface exactly as planned. If it was, congratulations! And don't change a thing. But if you're like the rest of us, it was an inconsistent year at best. A good shot or a great round here, a lost opportunity or a wicked slice there.

If 2007 is going to be the year for you, compensations and luck won't get the job done. You need a swing you can replicate every time you take your stance over the ball. But where do you start? The answer lies on the following pages, where we break down every segment of the swing you want and provide insights and checkpoints you can use to improve every position. Our guide is simple because even adding just a few new wrinkles will pay huge dividends. And since perfecting one segment of your swing makes the ones that follow automatic, lasting improvement will come more quickly than you expect. ►



**BACKSWING**

Form an "L" with your left arm and shaft, then move it to the top for maximum width and power

Page 118

**DOWNSWING**

Keep your elbows level to stay on plane—the key to consistency

Page 122

**IMPACT**

How the back of your left hand can help you make Tour-quality contact

Page 124

# PRE-SWING

A three-point stance builds the foundation for success

The majority of your swing errors—and the need to make compensations—are the result of mistakes in your setup. Copy the positions below to put your backswing on autopilot and set the stage for all the other components of your swing to fall into place.

**DON'T BEND YOUR BACK**  
Keep your spine straight—a line should connect the back of your shoulders and the back of your head.

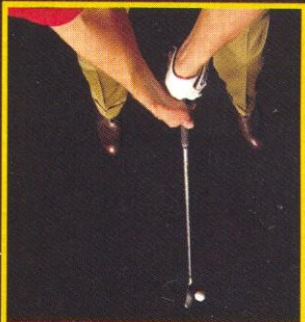


**KEY CHECKPOINT**  
**THREE-POINT STANCE**  
The correct blend of knee bend and hip tilt will align three points: the balls of your feet, your knees and your shoulders.

**HANG OUT**  
Allow your arms to dangle freely from your shoulders (right arm hides the left).

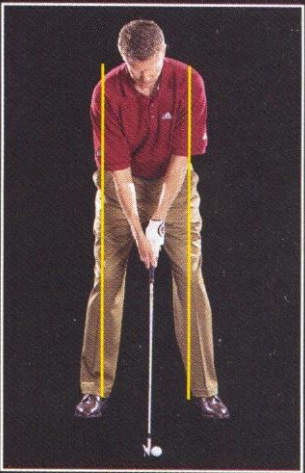
**UNLOCK YOUR KNEES**  
Bend them slightly and tilt more from your hips (keeping a straight back) to sole the club.

**BUCKLE UP**  
The shaft points at your belt buckle when the club is soled properly on the ground.

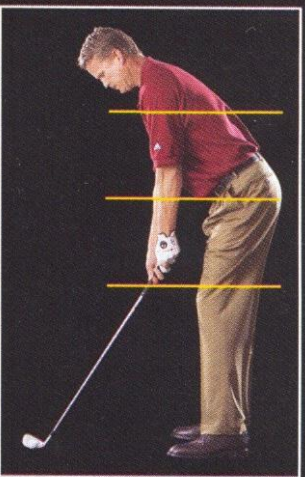


**WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE**

Your right shoulder lower than your left, and your hands even with the ball (zero forward-press).



**MAKE IT SEMI-WIDE**  
Take a balanced, shoulder-width stance using your heels—not your toes—as a guide.



**CLIMB A LADDER**  
With good posture, your knees, hips and shoulders are spaced equally apart, like a ladder.

**BUILD A REPEATING SWING**

# TAKEAWAY

Move your shoulders—and nothing else—to start the club back

Your takeaway exists for milliseconds and consists of just a few inches, but what a critical few inches! If your takeaway is solid, you'll easily generate two key features of a repeating swing: a wide swing arc and an on-line path.

**BE A TEAM PLAYER**  
Your shoulders should work in unison to move and control your hands and arms, not vice versa.

**CONTROL DISTANCE**  
Keep your right arm at the same distance from your torso as you take away the club.

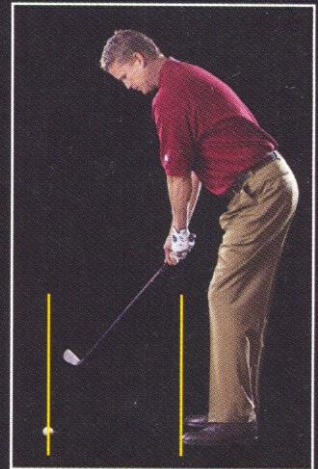
**BUCKLE UP—AGAIN**  
You've done it right if the shaft still points at your belt buckle (no inside or outside move).

**ADD WIDTH**  
Keep your left arm soft but fully extended, just like it was in the address position.

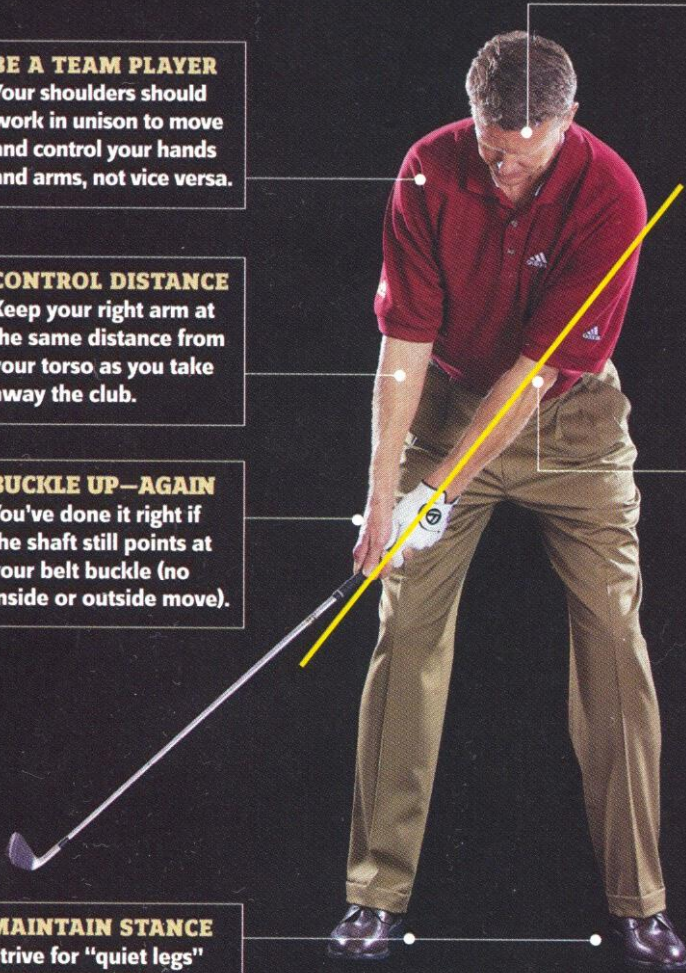
**MAINTAIN STANCE**  
Strive for "quiet legs" with your weight secured to the insides of both feet.



**WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE**  
Relaxed arms that keep the club in front of your body.



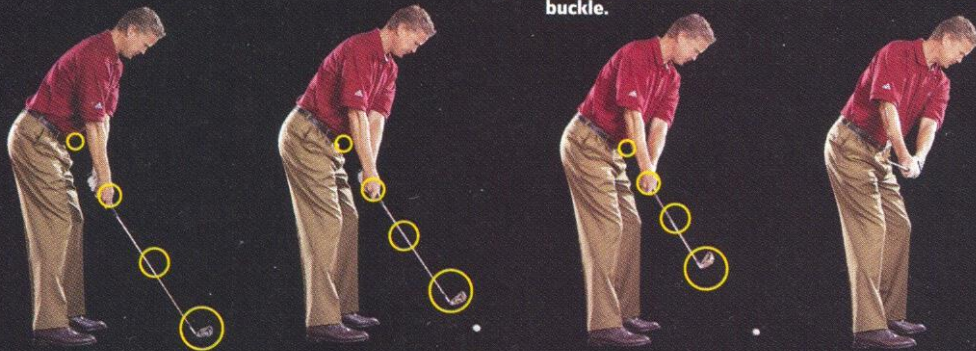
**STAY ON PLANE**  
Your shoulders should move your arms and club straight back, just slightly inside your target line.



**KEY CHECKPOINT**

Throughout your takeaway, your club, shaft and hands are in line with your belt buckle.

■ Your takeaway is a shoulder-dominated move—rock them back like you're trying to hit a 100-foot putt. Overusing your hands increases the likelihood that you'll whip the club too far inside. Notice the absence of wrist hinge until the club is well away from the ball.



# TO THE TOP

Make an "L" then move it up to achieve maximum width and power

It's not important how far back the club is at the top—it's how you get there. The key is to maintain the width and plane you established in the takeaway and ratchet up your power.



## WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE

Your left wrist should be flat and your right wrist bent—the perfect anti-slice position.

## KEY CHECKPOINT

### LOOK FOR THE L

At the end of your takeaway, rotate your forearms and hinge your wrists to create an L. Move the L to the top by turning your shoulders to create maximum width and power.

## HOW TO DO IT

1) Set the club parallel to the ground and your target line by rotating your forearms and hinging your wrists.



2) Keep turning your shoulders and make sure the back of your left hand matches the angle of the clubface.

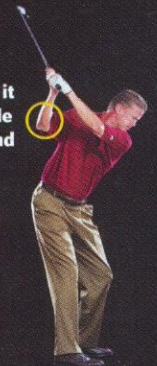


## KEY MOVE

3) Lift your arms as you continue to turn—this is what maintains the L.



4) You've done it right if the angle of your left hand and clubface still match and you've created separation between your right side and your right elbow.

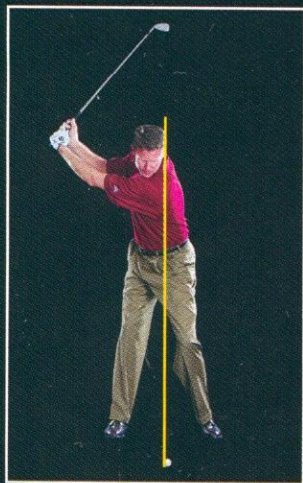


BUILD A REPEATING SWING

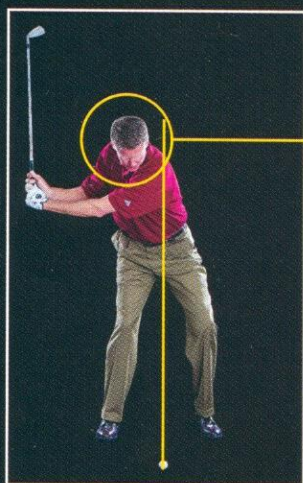
# TRANSITION

Move from backswing to downswing without moving your head

The top of your swing is the moment when you need to seamlessly transition from backward movement to forward motion. The key is to let gravity do its thing.



Before you start down, make sure your head and shoulders are behind the ball—this gives you the best chance to stay on plane.

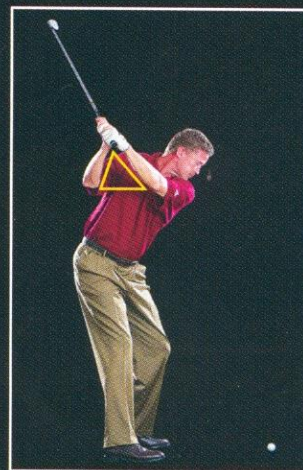


The transition happens in a flash: your hips "bump" to the left and your arms drop, but your head and shoulders stay back.

**KEY MOVE**

As you make the first move down, keep your head and shoulders up (no dropping, bobbing or tilting).

■ If you're on plane at the top, your chances of success skyrocket. A quick check is that your elbows are level to each other. If your right elbow is above your left, you're too steep; if your right elbow is below your left, you're too flat.



**SET THE LEVEL**

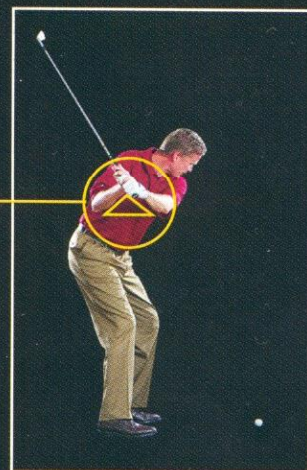
Level elbows are a good guarantee that you're on plane at the top position.

If you've kept your hands away from your body going back, you'll have all the power you need without swinging hard.



**KEY CHECKPOINT**

If you drop your arms correctly without moving your shoulders, you should still see level elbows.



**GO, GRAVITY, GO!**

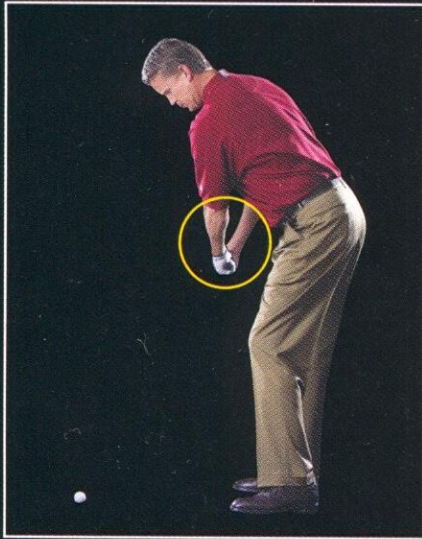
Your first move down is to drop your arms—make sure you keep your right shoulder and your head up. ▶

**BUILD A REPEATING SWING**

# DOWNSWING

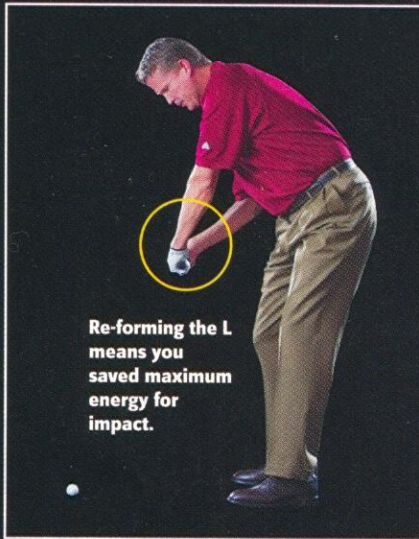
Keep your right shoulder back for increased arm speed

You made your takeaway and backswing using mostly your shoulders. Now it's time for your arms to power the club into the back of the ball. At this point, excess body and shoulder action is typically the cause of your swing moving off plane.



**BACKSWING L**

The L formed by your left arm and shaft that appears in your downswing...



Re-forming the L means you saved maximum energy for impact.

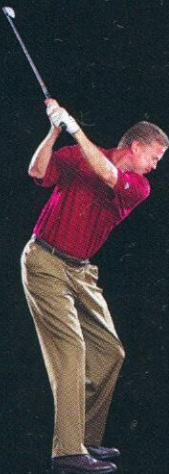
**DOWNSWING L**

...should reappear in your downswing at the same position.

**MATCH IT UP**  
The back of the left hand and face of the club match up just like the takeaway.



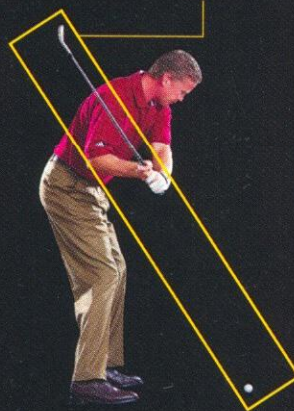
**HOW TO DO IT**



**1** At the top: Level elbows, shoulders turned twice as much as your hips and hands away from your body.



**2** With very little leg movement, the arms drop straight down (elbows are still level).



**KEY CHECKPOINT**

If you make your downswing with mostly arms, you'll easily keep the club on plane.

**3** Envision crushing a plastic soda bottle under your right armpit; check that the shaft sits between both elbows.

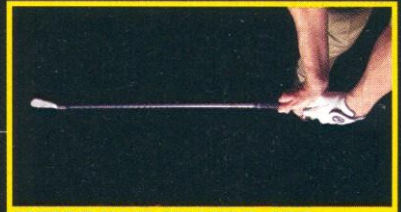


**4** Maintain posture and re-create the L formed between your left arm and clubshaft.



**5** Keep your head, body and shoulders up—this allows your arms to continue to drop and rotate into the ball.

Few players understand how power is created in the downswing. Most of us confuse power with force, which is why we try to force the club into the back of the ball by using our bodies while our arms simply go along for the ride. Downswing power is the result of speed, and the faster your arms fall, the more speed you can create. Arm speed is power.



**WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE**

When your hands reach your right thigh, the club should be parallel to the ground and your target line.

**HOLD IT BACK**  
Don't let your right shoulder dominate your downswing—hold it back and your swing will fall into place.

**BE A POWER SAVER**  
As your arms fall, your wrists should remain hinged, saving the energy within for impact.

**MOVE IT OR LOSE IT**  
As you drop your arms, isolate your weight to the inside of the balls of both feet.

**6** You've done it right if, once again, the club, shaft and your hands are in line with your belt buckle.



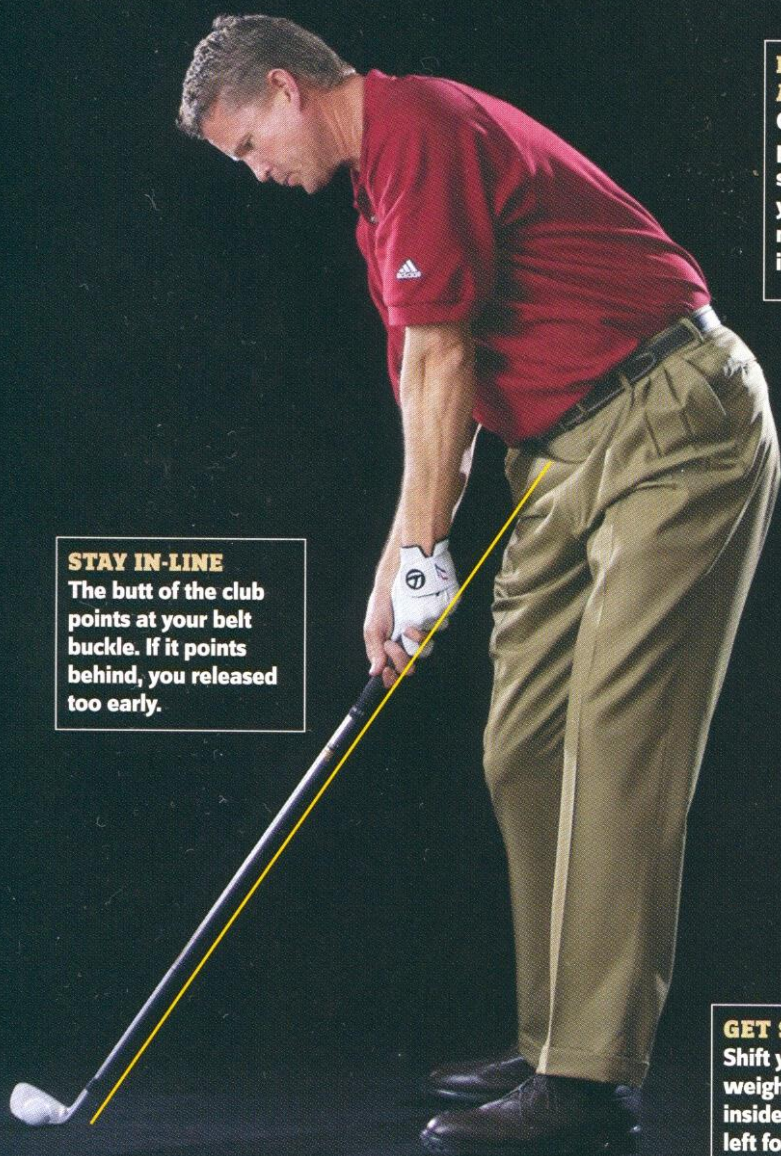
**BUILD A REPEATING SWING**

# IMPACT

Rotate the club through impact with your arms, not your hands

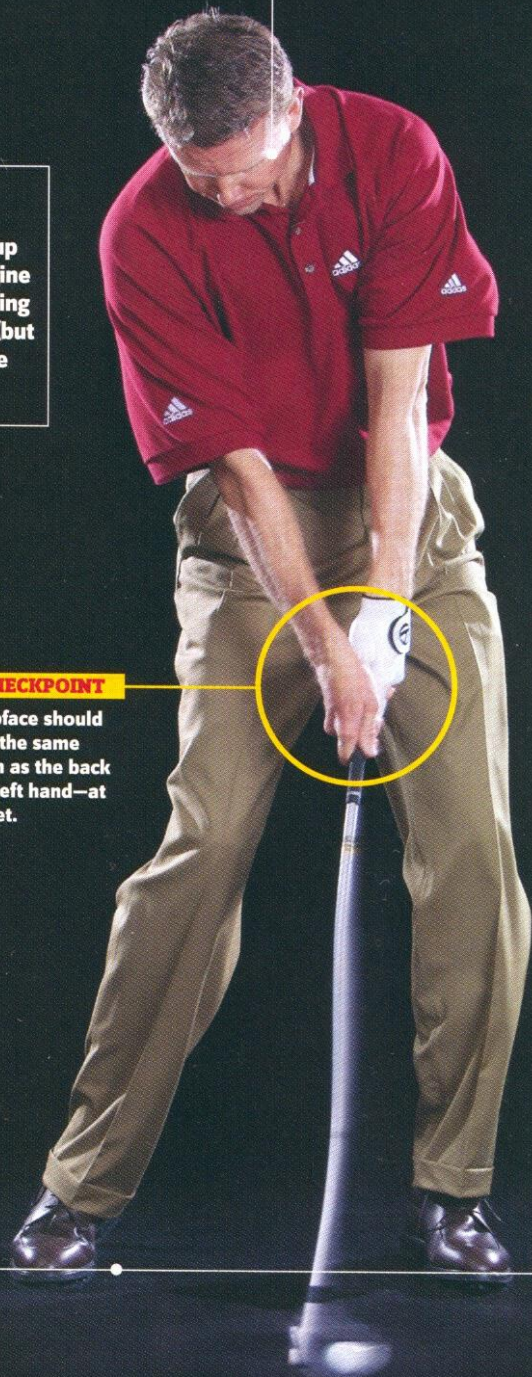
If you've followed the plan to this point, quality impact will happen by itself, but knowing where you should be when you strike the ball is an important step in improving the other elements of your swing.

■ Your impact position should be a mirror of your address position. You'll always make solid contact if your spine and the back of your head are aligned just like they were at address, and if the shaft angle at impact is the same as it was at setup.



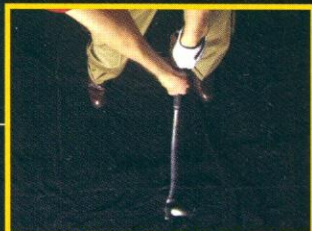
**STAY IN-LINE**  
The butt of the club points at your belt buckle. If it points behind, you released too early.

**RE-CREATE ADDRESS**  
Copy your setup posture—imagine someone holding your head up (but not still) before impact.



**KEY CHECKPOINT**  
The clubface should point in the same direction as the back of your left hand—at the target.

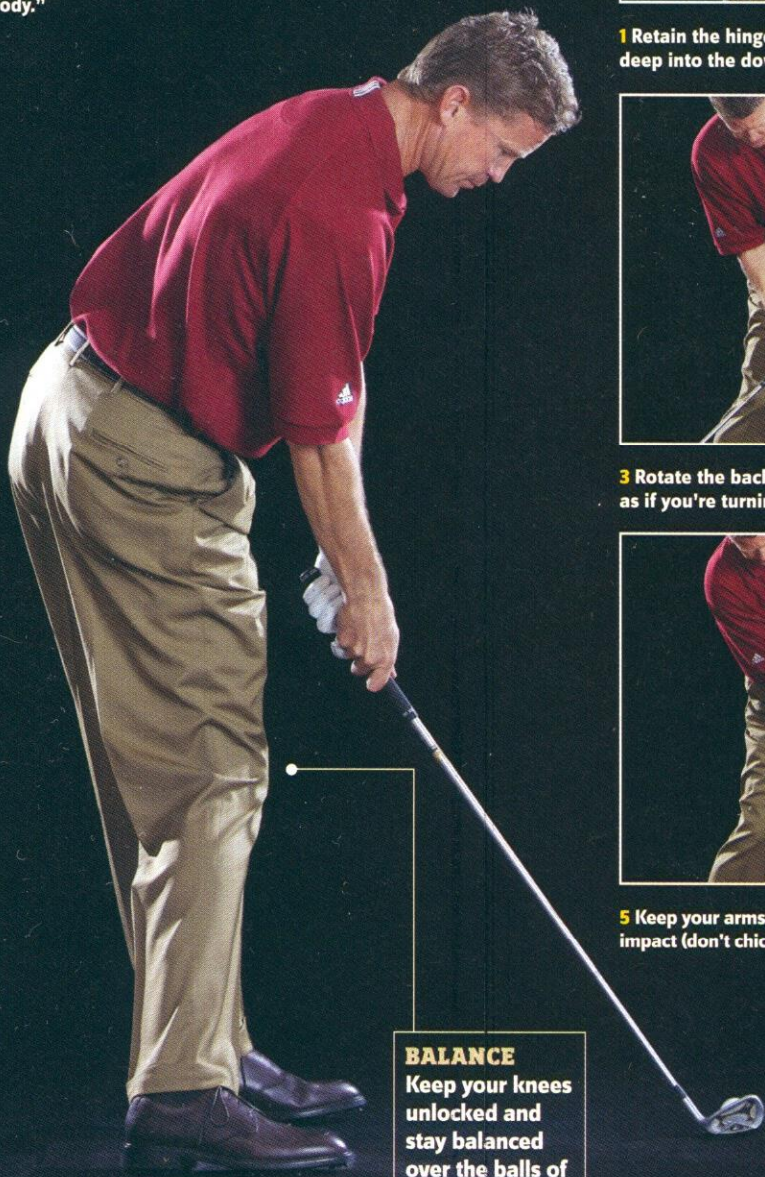
**GET SHIFTY**  
Shift your weight from the inside of your left foot to the outside and keep your right foot stable.



**WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE**

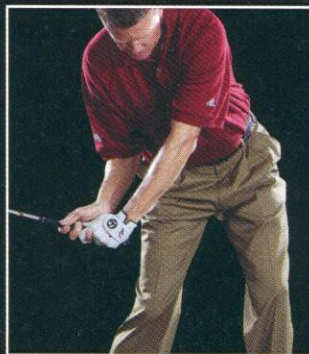
It's important to rotate your arms as fast as possible through the hitting zone. Think "fast arms, slow body."

■ Don't attempt to square the clubface with your body. Instead, turn the back of your left hand toward the ground. At the same time, try to rotate your right palm skyward.

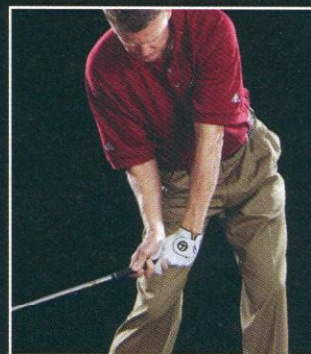


**BALANCE**  
Keep your knees unlocked and stay balanced over the balls of both feet despite shifting your weight from your right side to your left.

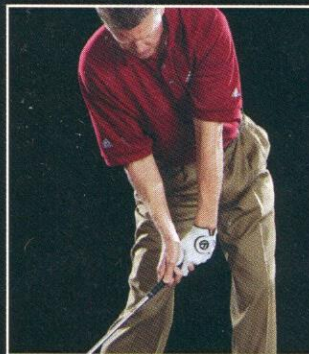
**HOLD THE "L" THEN OPEN THE DOOR**



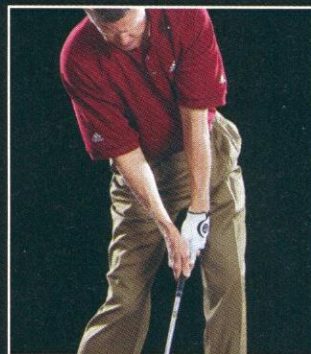
**1** Retain the hinge in your wrists deep into the downswing.



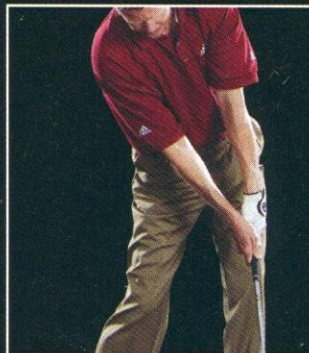
**2** Continue to move your hands while your right shoulder stays back.



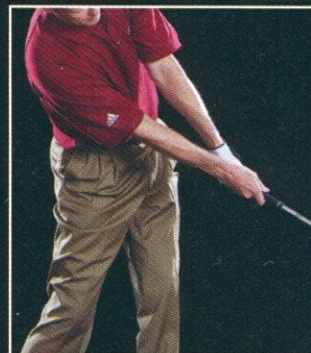
**3** Rotate the back of your left hand as if you're turning a doorknob.



**4** Open the door so that the back of your left hand faces the target.



**5** Keep your arms extended through impact (don't chicken wing).



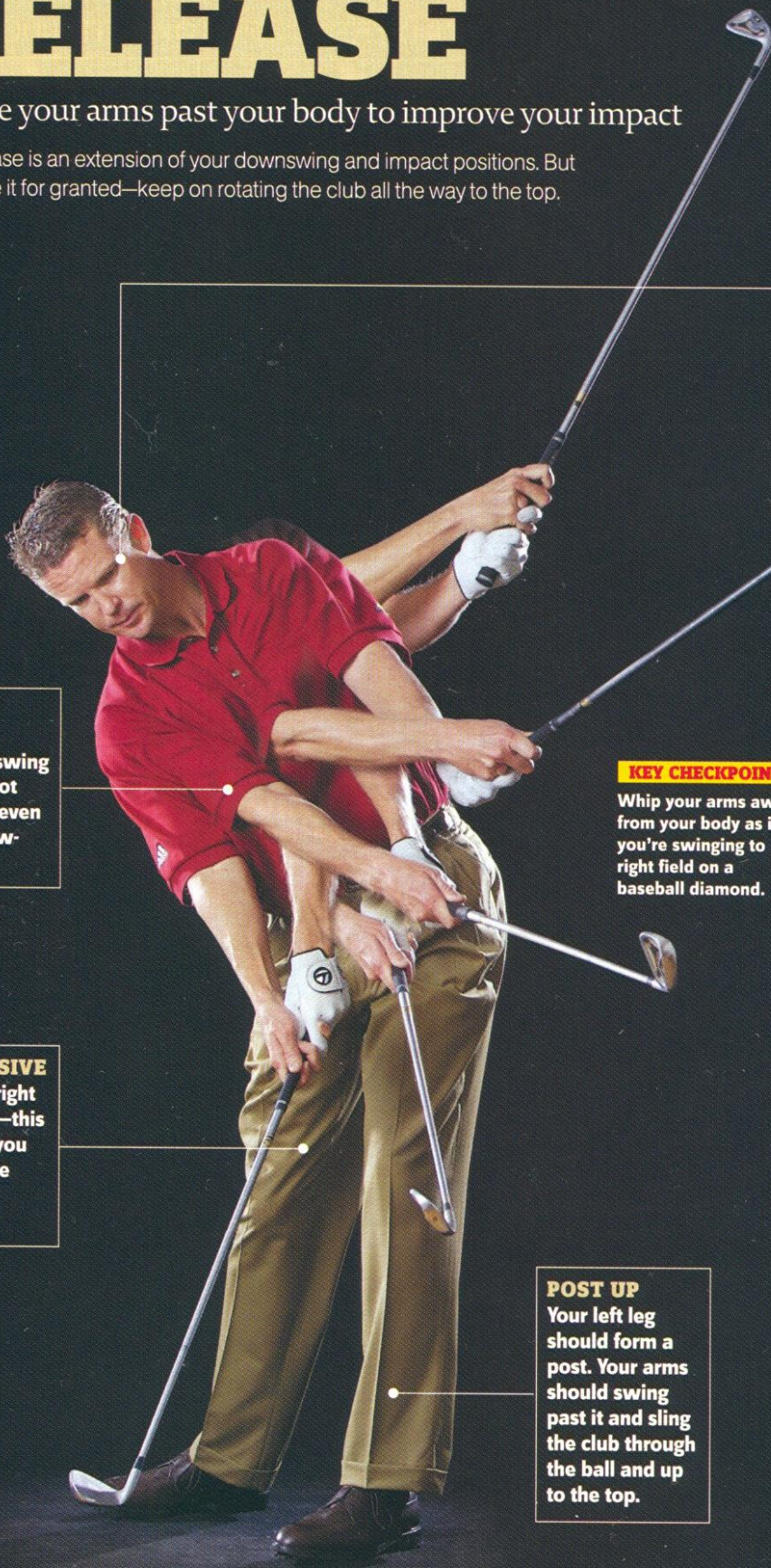
**6** Maintain the triangle formed by your arms, hands and shaft.

BUILD A REPEATING SWING

# RELEASE

Release your arms past your body to improve your impact

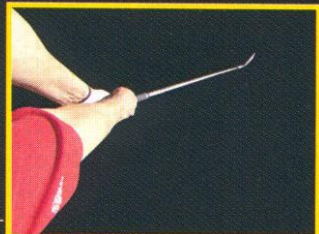
Your release is an extension of your downswing and impact positions. But don't take it for granted—keep on rotating the club all the way to the top.



**RULE OF ARMS**  
Your arms swing the body, not vice versa, even in the follow-through.

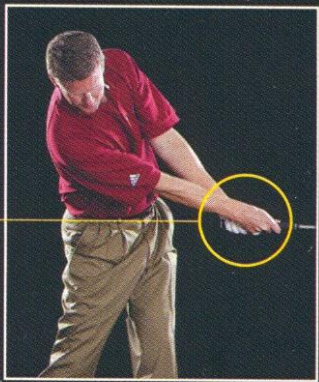
**STAY PASSIVE**  
Keep your right leg passive—this will allow you to rotate the club past your body.

**POST UP**  
Your left leg should form a post. Your arms should swing past it and sling the club through the ball and up to the top.

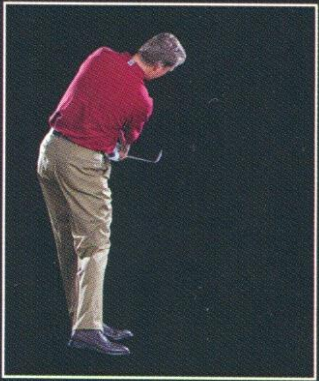


**WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE**  
In a proper release the shaft becomes a full extension of your hands and arms.

**KEY CHECKPOINT**  
Whip your arms away from your body as if you're swinging to right field on a baseball diamond.

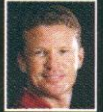


You're in the batter's box—release the clubhead toward right field.



Maintain your spine angle through impact to ensure a fast release—and more clubhead speed—with your arms.

# THE FULL SWING

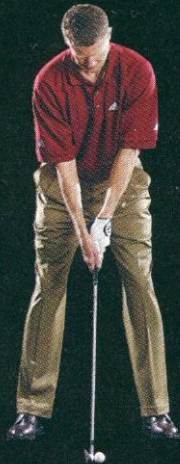


**Top 100 Teacher Shawn Humphries** is the director of instruction at Cowboys Golf Club in Grapevine, Texas

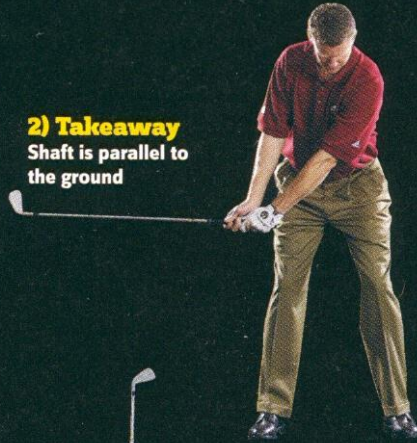
Focus on parallel and perpendicular

The final step is to put this sequence of positions into motion. The unifying move is creating the "L" and maintaining swing width. If you do that, your swing breaks into a series of alternating vertical and horizontal shaft positions that you can consistently repeat.

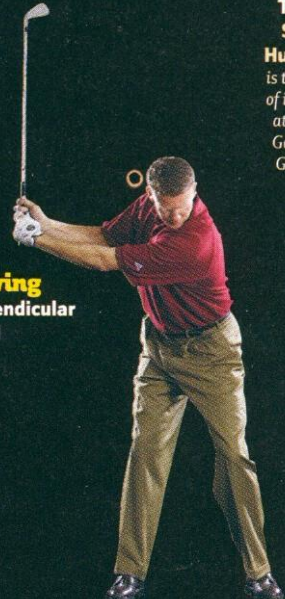
**1) Address**  
Shaft is perpendicular to the ground



**2) Takeaway**  
Shaft is parallel to the ground



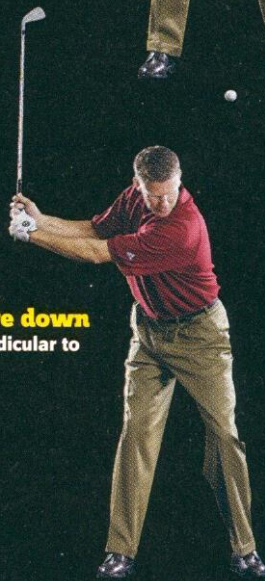
**3) Backswing**  
Shaft is perpendicular to the ground



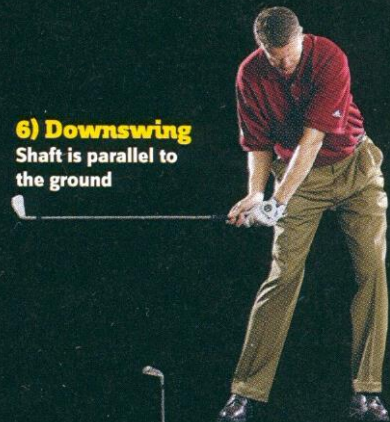
**4) Top**  
Shaft is parallel to the ground (though short of parallel is OK and actually preferred)



**5) First move down**  
Shaft is perpendicular to the ground



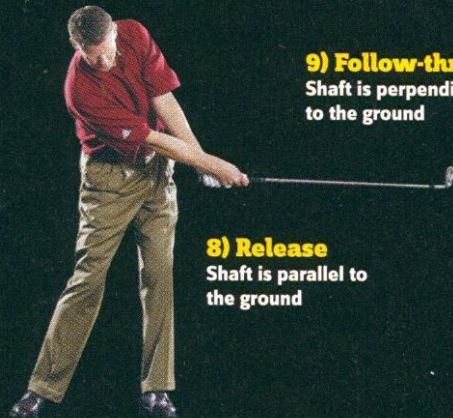
**6) Downswing**  
Shaft is parallel to the ground



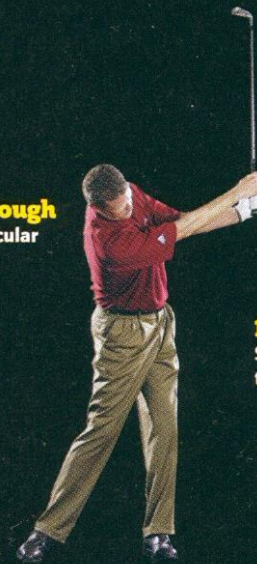
**7) Impact**  
Shaft is perpendicular to the ground



**8) Release**  
Shaft is parallel to the ground



**9) Follow-through**  
Shaft is perpendicular to the ground



**10) Finish**  
Shaft is parallel to the ground

