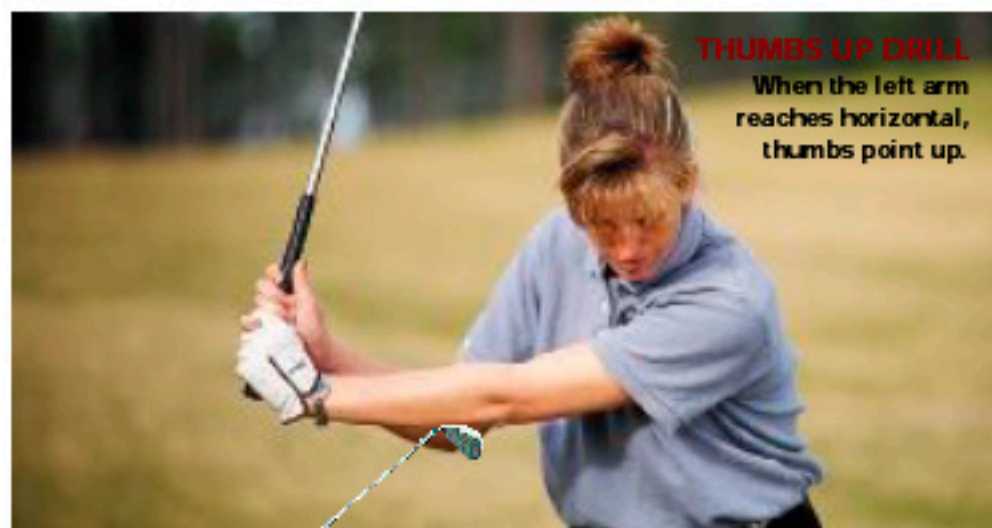


Backswing Fix



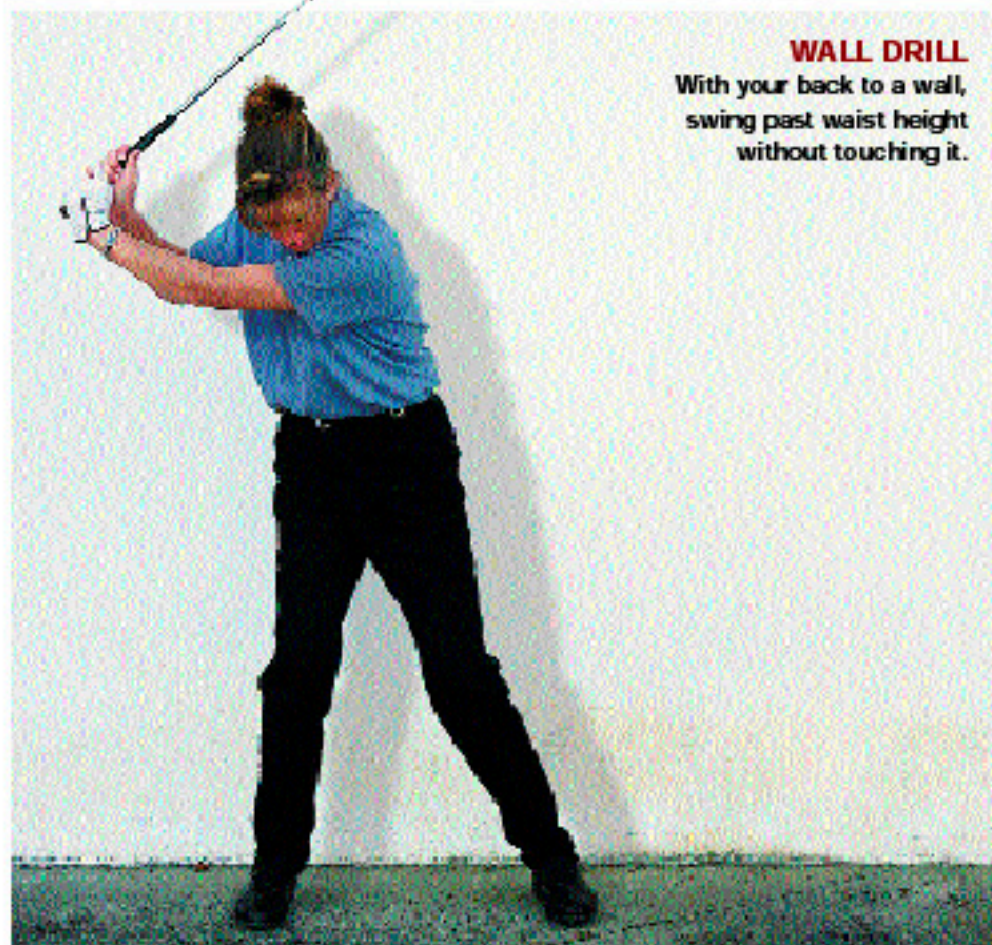
PUSH BACK DRILL

Roll a ball straight back to start on the correct path.



THUMBS UP DRILL

When the left arm reaches horizontal, thumbs point up.



WALL DRILL

With your back to a wall, swing past waist height without touching it.

The best drill to start it straight

A common fault among slicers is pulling the club too far inside on the take-away, which usually leads to a reverse pivot and/or a steep downswing. Here we look at three drills designed to keep the club on a straighter path going back.

First is the Push Back Drill, in which the golfer tries to roll a ball placed two inches behind the clubhead along the extended target line for the first two feet of the backswing. The second drill is Thumbs Up, in which the golfer swings back until the left arm is parallel to the ground, at which point he or she checks to see if both thumbs point to the sky. Third is the Wall Drill: The golfer stands so his or her rear end is touching a wall and then tries to swing past waist height without letting the clubhead bump the wall.

THE TEST*

Forty-eight golfers were randomly assigned one of the drills. Each group was balanced for age, gender, handicap, and golf experience. All shots were hit with a 6-iron from a tee.

Participants made warm-up swings, followed by two warm-up shots. Then they hit five shots, with launch conditions recorded on a Golf Achiever. After this pretest, each golfer was taught his or her assigned drill and began training cycles consisting of a practice swing using the drill, a shot using the drill, and a second shot trying to apply the drill. Six cycles were followed by a three-minute break. Each golfer completed 18 cycles.

A post-test was conducted under the same conditions as the pretest.

continued



IN MY OPINION

The Wall Drill provides something the other two drills don't: immediate and effective feedback. Bumping the wall lets the golfer know right away that his club is too far inside. Every participant working with this drill was able to focus quickly on a single objective—don't hit the wall. After doing it for a short while, it's easy to recall a mental picture of the wall, which helps correct the shape of the backswing. It's a simple, memorable, and effective image.

THE RESULTS

Thumbs Up did the best job of correcting backswing path error, reducing the inside path by 3.36 degrees. The Wall Drill was a close second with a 3-degree improvement. Given the test's margin of error, these results were equally significant, creating a statistical dead heat. So we looked at the next most important measure—shot distance—and found the Wall Drill won with ease, adding an average of 13.72 yards of carry to participants' 6-iron

shots versus 7.92 yards from Thumbs Up.

Push Back reduced the inside backswing error by 2.43 degrees, with no statistically significant increase in carry distance. %

GOLF *Eric Alpenfels, a GOLF MAGAZINE*
MAGAZINE *Master Teaching Professional, is director*
of The Pinehurst Company Golf Institute in Pine-
hurst, North Carolina.

**Research supervised by Dr. Bob Christina.*