



The Greenside Bunker

The golf course is a wonderful place to relax and enjoy a walk and the company of good friends. However, golf is also a very interesting sport that was never designed to be easy and hence, the introduction of hazards to the golf course. Many golfers wince when they hit a shot off line and find it nestled in the sand. They approach the shot with fear as they don't really know how to get it out. However, bunker shots are not that difficult and if you follow three simple principles, you will find yourself not only escaping the bunker every time, but making more saves from the sand!

Principle #1: Open Up

The set-up is very important in making consistent and successful bunker shots. When you grip your sand wedge you must ensure that you are holding the club with an open face. This is important because it not only adds loft to the club to help you get the ball airborne, it also increases the bounce angle on the sole of the club. For those of you that don't know, the bounce angle is the angle between the bottom of the sole and the leading edge of the club. A maximized bounce angle will allow the club to enter the sand and slide through without digging too much, creating that nice and smooth splashing motion in a great bunker shot. If you are holding the club open you will see more of the club-face than usual and the grooves will point to the right (see right). Remember, you are in a hazard so it is against the rules to ground your club, so let it hover over the sand.



You also want to think open when you take your stance. Because the face of the club is open, there will be the tendency for the ball to veer off to the right, so by opening your stance you can counter that action. Stand open to the point where the grooves on your club are now square to the target. Your body will be aligned left of the target, but your club-face and swing path will be right down the line to your target (see left).



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Principle #2: Get Into the Sand

In order for you to get out of the bunker you have to get your feet and your club into the sand. Let me explain. When taking your stance, wiggle your feet back and forth a bit until your feet sink into the sand a couple of centimeters. This process helps you in a few ways. First, it allows you to dig in and get a little more solid footing for balance in your shot. Secondly, although it is against the rules to test the surface of a hazard, while fairly taking your stance you can get an idea for how hard/soft the sand is which will affect your shot. Third, it actually allows you to lower your body in relation to the ground, making it easier to make a natural swing that goes into the sand a little bit as opposed to swinging at the surface (see right). I like to put the ball in the middle of my stance as that is naturally the lowest part of my swing arc.



The second component of “Get Into the Sand” is to swing the club into the sand. A great bunker shot happens when a player swings into the sand about 3 centimeters behind the



ball and allows the sand to propel the ball out of the bunker. A great bunker shot does not involve the club even making contact with the ball! In fact, if you have ever actually hit the ball in a bunker you know that it sometimes hurts and almost always results in the ball sailing over the green into a whole new world of trouble. As you can see, when the club enters the sand before the ball, the sand gathers between the ball and the club and actually moves the ball. This is the sign of a great bunker shot (see left).

Principle #3: Send it to the Target

Even with a great set-up and the knowledge of having to swing into the sand, many golfers fail from the bunker. They will either be too scared to take a good swing at the ball, leaving it in the bunker, or they will make a great swing and leave the club dug into the sand, also leaving the ball in the bunker. Now that you are set-up properly it is time to make a $\frac{3}{4}$ swing and send the club to the target.



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Because the bunker shot relies on the sand to propel the ball out, you must put more power into the shot than you would with a chip shot. Take a $\frac{3}{4}$ swing forming the “L” shape between your left arm and the club (see right). Now just simply swing into the sand 3 centimeters behind the ball and swing through, sending the club and the ball to the target. When all else fails, if you can swing into the sand 3 centimeters behind the ball and follow through to the target, the ball will come out every time! (see below)



Review

The next time you get into trouble in the sand remember these three principles to find your way back on course:

1. Open Up: -Open club-face
 -Open stance
2. Get Into the Sand: -Dig your feet in about 2 cm.
 -Swing the club into the sand 3 cm behind the ball
3. Send it to the Target: -Make a $\frac{3}{4}$ swing
 -Follow through to the target

Practice sand shots at your favorite course or driving range to build your confidence and to get a feel for your alignment and distances. With a little practice, you will be making sand-saves in no time.

For any lesson enquiries, please contact the pro-shop at 933-4721!