

# Articles and Tips - Aim and Alignment

---

I spent a week at the famed Baltusrol Country Club in Springfield, N.J., during the PGA Championship, the fourth and final Major Championship of the year. I've always loved walking the tee line on the driving range at a PGA Tour event. It's a thrill to watch the greatest players in the world hone their swings and prepare themselves for a Major. The buzz is always bigger at a Major, and all the top instructors are fine tuning their star players. You'll see teachers like Hank Haney, Rick Smith, Dave Pelz, David Leadbetter, Butch Harmon and Dick Harmon to name a few. When I'm not busy watching Ryan Palmer, I look around to see what the other players are working on, and how their swings might have changed during the season. One thing I always notice is that the great players always set up a work station to practice. They'll use something as simple as their umbrella placed on the ground for alignment. Some use a couple of clubs on the ground - one on the ball line, one for their feet - like railroad tracks. I've seen Stuart Appleby use poly rope that he stores in his bag. He tacks it to the ground with tees in the form of an open ended rectangular box. Zach Johnson uses an aid from Eyeline Golf called the Practice-T alignment and ball position guide. They all have their methods, but their goal is the same: proper aim and alignment. I remember in 1986 when Seve Ballesteros led the Masters until the 15th hole on Sunday. That's when Jack Nicklaus shot 30 on the back nine with five birdies and an eagle to win his sixth Masters Championship. Still, Seve played great for 67 holes. His brother Vincente caddied for him that week and helped him with ball position on every shot. My point here is that the greatest players in the world always work on the basic fundamentals of aim and alignment. They work on it on the range, and they work on it while they play. Watch an LPGA event on TV and watch how many times the caddie helps aim their players in during pre-shot routine. The rules allow the caddie to help align the player; however, the caddie must move before the stroke is played. Do you practice with a target in mind? Do you practice with any clubs on the ground to help with aim and alignment? Does your ball flight effect where you aim? This instruction article will help you learn how to aim the clubface to the target, and then how to align the body parallel left of the target line. Both are key ingredients to accurate shot-making. When I was younger, I had a teacher who said, "If you can't shoot the gun straight, what difference would it make to aim the gun?" Ask yourself: When your shots go awry, are you sure that you're always properly aimed at the target? For the average player, proper aim and alignment can fly straight out of the window with a few crooked shots. They get frustrated and stop aligning themselves to the target on each shot. If you're a mid- to high-handicapper, try to work on aim and alignment at all times - even when you're frustrated. Most low-handicappers have more control of the ball and tend to have better fundamentals with aim and alignment. Over the years, I've learned that most players aim based on past experience of the ball flight. A player who hits a big hook will aim more right of the target, and a player with a slice will tend to aim to the left. If you're doing this, you need to break this habit. Aiming left to compensate for a slice can encourage the club to go even more "over the top" because you're set up with such an open stance.

---

On the driving range, always practice in a work station with clubs lying parallel to your feet and the target line.



To check make sure you're properly aiming and aligning yourself, pick a target on the range and set up to the ball. Go through your pre-shot routine, but instead of hitting the ball, lay your club down on your toe line. Stand back and see where you are actually aimed. It should be parallel left of the target. Try it to three or four different targets, and see how accurate your ability to aim is to a target on the left side of the range. Then check it to a target on the right side of the range. Practice makes perfect.

Your goal in alignment is to point all the body components parallel left of the target line: the toe line, knee line, hip line, arm line, shoulder line and eye line.



And remember, always practice from an aligned work station. That will help create an awareness in your pre-shot routine to aim and align yourself to your target on the course.

Use a credit card in your teeth to help encourage level eyes and square shoulders. It's a wonderful way to check eye and shoulder alignment to the club shaft on the ground.

---

And remember, always practice from an aligned work station. That will help create an awareness in your pre-shot routine to aim and align yourself to your target on the course.

---