

Articles and Tips - Side-Hill Lie

One of the situations that creates problems for many golfers is the side-hill lie. Whether the ball is resting above or below your feet, setting up to the ball can be uncomfortable. Executing a solid swing can be even more challenging. Side-hill lies can be problematic in both full swing and short game situations, so let's look at all the possibilities.

Ball Above Your Feet

In a full swing situation, the swing needs to be a little more “around you” and not as much up and down. This helps you impact the right amount of ball and ground. In other words, a properly rounded swing helps limit the possibility of hitting the shot fat or thin.



In a rounded swing, the club comes from a shallower plane, which helps close the face at and through impact. The more above the feet the ball rests, there is a greater chance of the shot pulling more to the left.

In fact, if you are a habitual slicer, a great drill is to find a spot where the ball will be above your feet and hit from there. That feeling of “shallowing the swing plane” creates confidence in hitting a draw and, in time, will eliminate the slice tendencies.

When you hit it right to left, you want to make a few practice swings to get a feel for the new angle. You want to feel where the bottom of the swing is in this situation. That's where you want to contact the ball—at the bottom of the swing.

You typically also want to take about half-club (or full club) less than what you'd normally hit from that distance. When the ball is above your feet, the shot usually is going to go farther than you expect.

In chipping and pitching from this type of lie, the more lofted club you have in your hands, the more left the ball is going to want to go. So if you're hitting a higher pitch around the green from a ball-above-the-feet lie, the ball is going to tend to come off more to the left. So be sure aim a little right of your target. This holds true for full swing shots, too.

I encourage my students to use way less wrist hinge in short-game situations with the ball above your feet. Choking down on the grip is a good idea, too. All of that helps you more easily find and manipulate the bottom of the swing without hitting too much ground and expect the shot to go to your left.

Ball Below Your Feet

In most cases, the ball should want to curve to the right because it's more difficult to close the face. However, a lot of good players tend to pull this shot and fail to have it cut back to the right. But, more often than not, you should expect the ball to fall more to the right. You might need to take one more club than normal, depending on the severity of the slope. You're not going to hit it as far because it's more difficult to stay balanced when the ball is below your feet as opposed to it being above your feet.



In fact, I see a lot of players, when the ball is below their feet, hit the ball off the hosel, creating the dreaded “shank” shot.

So depending on how far below your feet the ball is, you also need to widen your stance to create a more stable base. You should feel as if you're “sitting down” in your golf swing and not allowing your weight to go down the hill toward the ball.

Having a lie below your feet is a difficult shot, no doubt. In some situations, it's pretty easy to hit it off the neck, off the hosel, anywhere but the sweet spot. Overall, however, expect the shot to cut or move to the right (for right-handed players, of course). You really need to work on your balance and finding the bottom of your swing in those situations.

As far as chipping when the ball is below your feet, it's sometimes difficult to find the bottom of the swing. Meaning, you can “blade” hit your chips or hit them too thin more easily when the ball is below your feet. I encourage my students to hinge the wrists a lot more in those situations. The more wrist hinge you have, the easier you'll find the bottom of the swing when the ball is below your feet.
