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How to Build the Perfect Stance

Address is the most overlooked part of putting. Even the players who work at it do so without thinking about the three most critical areas: stance width, grip size and a new measurement called the Angle of Symmetry. These are not simple basics—they’re the secrets to consistently holing putts.
ALTHOUGH I’VE BEEN teaching golf for close to 30 years, I’ve dedicated a lot of my time to studying the psychology of learning and how the mind and body work together to perform motor skills. These interests led me to a three-year research project in Dr. Frank Jobe’s Bio-mechanics Lab at Centinela Hospital in Los Angeles in 2004. During this time I studied the way golfers typically distribute weight across their feet, and how their ability to balance—or lack thereof—affected their full swings and putting strokes. We analyzed hundreds of golfers and collected massive amounts of data in search of a balance silver bullet. In the end, we found three.

The most significant of these discoveries is what I call the Angle of Symmetry, an angle that your body tends to create over and over (in your back, knees, arms, etc.) when you execute a motor skill in perfect balance. Everyone has an Angle of Symmetry, and the more you incorporate it in your setup and stroke the better your results will be—as in “off-the-charts” better. As I continued to research the Angle of Symmetry, I learned that repeating it successfully—the key to tapping its power—was dependent on grip size and stance width, the other two balance silver bullets (and two parts of your setup that I’m sure you’ve never thought twice about). It launched a whole new subset of studies designed to accurately determine these measurements on a golfer-by-golfer basis. The results led to the most personalized custom-fitting program the golf world has seen (www.gripsize.com).

My research on stance width and grip size proves you can’t address a putt in balance without nailing these two setup elements. I’ll show you how to get them right with a unique whole-body measuring technique that’s changing the way athletes approach any contact sport.

5 Things I’ll Teach You In This Chapter

1. The importance of stance width and how to find one that’s right for you.
2. Why grip size is critical, and how to fit your flatstick to match your body.
3. How to find your Angle of Symmetry (it’s easier than you think).
4. How to build your Angle of Symmetry into your stance for better balance and putt control.
5. How the right stance width, grip size and the Angle of Symmetry give you a better view of your line.
We’ve developed a series of mathematical formulas to help you find your perfect stance width and grip size.”

Dr. Wright’s research applies to all contact sports. Former MLB All-Star Reggie Smith teaches stance width and grip size at his elite batting clinics.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF PERFECT STANCE WIDTH

EVERY GOLFER, and every type of athlete for that matter (I instruct professional hockey, baseball and tennis players using the same research), has a correct, mathematically determined progression of stance widths that allows them to be perfectly in balance at address. This means that your feet are equally balanced on the ground, your arms are hanging freely and your eyes are in a neutral position to see your line of attack. When you take your address position with the wrong stance width, your body assumes an out-of-balance position that creates tension (tight muscles in your body’s core). This leads to more flex in your right or left knee and a right or left rotation of your hips, depending on your body type.

This is all very bad stuff, but what’s even worse is that an imbalanced address position makes it almost impossible to swing your putter in the direction you want—pretty alarming since we’re talking about a very small movement made at a fairly slow pace. To understand this phenomenon, it’s important that you become familiar with the terms Center Of Force (COF) and Line Of Force (LOF).

CENTER OF FORCE (COF): The point in each foot where your weight is centered.

LINE OF FORCE (LOF): A line connecting the COF in each foot. For most sports, the LOF should point in the same direction as the target you’re hitting toward.

WHY YOU NEED IT

When you’re imbalanced (i.e., standing at your perfect stance width) your COF shifts from the center of both feet (where it likes to be when you’re balanced) to either your heels or your toes. Often, the COF will be in the heel of one foot and the toe section of the other. This sets the LOF at an angle to your target line (illustration, opposite page). If your LOF points to the left of your target (like it does when the COF in your left foot is in the heel and the COF in your right foot is in your toe), you’ll swing your putter to your left. The opposite occurs when your LOF points to the right of the target line.

HOW TO FIND IT

To determine if your current stance width is correct, begin by standing in front of a mirror. Take two credit or business cards and place them between your index and middle fingers. Assume your current stance width and place your palms together as though you’re gripping your putter, with your right hand slightly lower than your left. From that position, relax your arms and hands and let them hang. At this point take notice of the orientation of the cards. If one of them turns in then you know your stance width is incorrect. Adjust your stance width until both cards point parallel to your target line. Once they do you’ll know you’re in the proper position.

“An out-of-balance stance creates tension.”

INCORRECT STANCE WIDTH

When I place business cards between my index and middle fingers and stand in an improper stance width, my left hand rotates inward.

CORRECT STANCE WIDTH

When I move to my balanced stance width for a putter, notice how the cards are identical in how they set and how my arms and hands hang exactly the same. This is the balanced position that you’re after.
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When you hold something that fits your grip size for both your left and right hands, your core muscles remain balanced and your COF is centered in each foot (assuming, of course, you have a proper stance width). When you place something in your hands that’s either too large or too small, core tension results and creates a left or right rotation of your hips, causing the COF to move forward in one foot and back in the other. Research shows that the grip size of most standard putters fits less than 5 percent of all golfers. Thus, 95 percent of you have a right or left hip rotation and a COF that’s forward in one foot and back in the other.

**The Importance of Perfect Grip Size**

**Too Small**

Here I’m using a putter grip that’s too small for both my left and right hands. Even though I’m set up in my balanced putting stance width, the grip size error causes my right knee to flex more than my left, forcing my hips to open up to my target. This moves the COF in my right foot to my toes, and the COF in my left foot toward the heel. My putter path will track the resulting Line Of Force, which is outside-to-in with this particular grip size.

**Too Big**

For this photo I’ve switched to a putter grip that’s much too big for both my left and right hands. Notice that my left knee is now much more flexed than my right, and the extra flex has forced my hips to close to the target line. As a result, the COF in my left foot has moved toward my toes, while the COF in my right foot has moved to my heel. This creates a Line Of Force that results in an inside-out putting stroke.

**Just Right**

Here I’m using a putter grip that correctly fits both my left and right hands. Notice that the amount of flex is the same in both of my knees. My COF is in the same location in both feet. The correct grip size coupled with the correct stance width, sets you up with perfect balance and aim.

**Both Hands Must Fit**

Here I have a grip that’s the correct size for my left hand but too big for my right. Notice that when I have the putter in my left hand only (top photo), my knee flex is the same and my hips are square. But when I add my right hand (bottom photo), my left knee flex increases and my hips close.

Your putter grip must be fit to both your left and right hands. My left hand is about 100 mils (about 1/10 of an inch) larger than my right, so my putter grips have to be slightly tapered to fit my right hand.

To get an idea of the perfect grip size for your left and right hands, set a club on the ground parallel to your stance line and three or four inches away from your feet. Grip your putter and assume your setup. Notice if one knee extends farther out than the other using the shaft on the ground as a guide. If either does, then your current grip size is incorrect and you’re establishing a LOF that doesn’t match your target line. In other words, you’re going to miss putts unless you make compensations in your stroke.

**Pull**

A grip that’s too small for your hands forces your right knee to over-flex and your hips to open. This puts your target line to the left.

**Push**

A grip that’s too big for your hands forces your left knee to over-flex and your hips to close. This puts your target line to the right.

**Centered**

The correct grip size, coupled with the correct stance width, sets you up with perfect balance and aim.

**Take your grip with your left hand only...**

...and if your posture changes when you add your right hand, you know you need tapered grips.
ALL OF NATURE has symmetry, whether you’re looking at the rings of a pinecone or the petals of a sunflower. Symmetry and balance are synonymous. The way you build symmetry and balance into your setup and stroke is to tap a naturally occurring angle in your body that I call the Angle of Symmetry. This angle varies from individual to individual. It’s part of you, embedded in your DNA and in your physique.

**HOW TO FIND IT**

To locate your Angle of Symmetry, stand with your feet together and your arms hanging freely at your sides. Now, turn your palms so that they face directly away from you. Notice how this causes your forearms to angle away from vertical. This angle is your personal Angle of Symmetry, and it’s entirely unique to you. It’s the angle your body naturally creates to produce the most efficient and powerful motion.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANGLE OF SYMMETRY**

Your Angle of Symmetry is part of you, embedded in your DNA.

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**SYMMETRY & BALANCE**

*My Angle of Symmetry is 152 degrees; yours will be different. The Angle of Symmetry is unique for each individual.*

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**HOW TO BUILD IT INTO YOUR ADDRESS**

**YOUR ANGLE OF SYMMETRY** can easily be created by assuming a setup with a heavy weight held across your mid chest. This weight naturally sets your spine angle and thigh angle exactly the same as your measured Angle of Symmetry as you settle into your stance using your balanced stance width. The angle will show up in several parts of your setup, but only if your putter grip size fits both hands and if you’re standing at your perfect stance width.

Notice in the photos above and at right how many times my Angle of Symmetry of 152 degrees is repeated in my setup (it actually shows up in 12 different places). From this position I have absolute balance and my putterface will remain square to the target line longer during my stroke than in any other address position. If you were to alter my grip size, posture or stance width, my Angle of Symmetry would begin to change and, as it changed, my putter path and face aim would move off the target line.
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How to Build the Perfect Stance

ON THE PREVIOUS pages I showed you how to find your Angle of Symmetry and build it into your posture. The next step is to set it to your whole address, including the way you position your putter behind the ball.

I recommend you start setting this position with your grip. If you try to jump into your address position before doing so, there’s a good chance you’ll get it wrong from the start.

To begin, hold your putter in front of your body with your right hand on the shaft [photo, below]. Angle the shaft away from your body so it matches your Angle of Symmetry (once you practice with your Angle of Symmetry you’ll get really good at eyeballing it). Now set your left hand on the grip.

Once you have this position correct, tilt the shaft to the right, again to match your Angle of Symmetry [photo, right]. For me, this places the putter shaft on a line close to my right ear. Now place your right hand on the grip as you normally would. Again, learning this position will take some practice, but once you do learn it, it’ll become second nature.

After your grip and arms are solid, bring the putter down to the ground by bending your knees and hips so they also match your Angle of Symmetry. Obviously, you’ll need the help of a friend or a mirror at first, but it won’t take long for you to find your Angle of Symmetry positions on your own.

BALANCE AND PERSPECTIVE

Another major side effect of an out-of-balance address position is an inability to see the line of a putt correctly. By being forced into an unnaturally open or closed stance your perception of the ball, the line of the putt and the hole will be thrown off, sometimes significantly.

When you’re in absolute balance your visual perception of the putting line is accurate because you’re in a neutral position. Be careful here: If you assume a balanced stance width with a wrong grip size, your perception of the line will be inaccurate and the putterface will aim left or right of the target line. The same holds true if you assume a balanced stance width but get your Angle of Symmetry wrong. The key is to get all three things correct and to have your COF in the middle of each foot.

What I want you to do once you learn your proper stance width, grip size and Angle of Symmetry is to start using that combination to more accurately read the line. Try going behind your ball and facing the hole straight on (stand perpendicular to the target line). Assume your balanced address position with the putter on the ground [photo, right]. Now examine the line. You’ve probably never had this perspective before, but it’s much more accurate than the view you’re getting with your current technique. Decide what line you want to take to the hole and memorize it.

Now step to the ball as you normally would and again assume your balanced setup position. You should have a very clear idea of the line and be able to identify where to start the putt easily. Since you’re in proper balance the line you swing the putter along should match the line you see with your eyes perfectly.

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For less than the cost of 18 holes at your typical resort course, you can download several devices to perform a series of static measurements that, once entered into our online data form, allow our team to compute your perfect stance width, your perfect grip size and your Angle of Symmetry. Armed with these numbers you can create the ultimate address position—one that sets you up for putting success every time.

“`Our methods for nailing the three setup variables are based on your entire build and physical tendencies.”`