



Don't fear the bunker

Golf is a game that requires a multitude of skills; from driving, to putting, to chipping. One aspect of the game that often strikes fear and dread into the hearts of many amateurs is bunker play.

Whether it's a greenside bunker or a fairway bunker, getting out of the sand and onto the green can be quite the challenge. But fear not, with the right techniques and practice, you can become a bunker play master.

In this article, we will explore some of the best tips for golf bunker play that will have you getting up and down with ease.

Understanding Bunker Play

Before we dive into the tips, let's first understand the basics of bunker play.

Bunkers are designed to be hazards on the golf course, and require a different approach than the fairway or the rough.

When it comes to bunker shots, the goal is to hit the sand behind the ball first, causing the ball to pop out and onto the green.

This means you'll need to adjust your setup and swing to accommodate for the sand.

Top Tips for Golf Bunker Play

Open the Clubface:

When hitting a bunker shot, you'll want to open the clubface to increase the loft of the club. This will help you get the ball up and out of the bunker more easily. Make sure to aim the clubface slightly left of your target to account for the open face.

Take an Open Stance:

In addition to opening the clubface, you'll also want to take an open stance when hitting a bunker shot. This means pointing your feet and hips to the left of your target (for right-handed golfers). This will help you swing along the line of your feet and hit the sand behind the ball.





Pick a Spot:

When hitting a bunker shot, it's important to pick a spot in the sand where you want to hit the club. This spot should be a few inches behind the ball, and you should aim to hit the sand first before making contact with the ball.

Accelerate Through the Shot:

One common mistake many golfers make with bunker shots is decelerating through the swing. To ensure you get the ball out of the bunker, make sure to accelerate through the shot and follow through completely.

Practice with Different Clubs:

While most golfers use a sand wedge for bunker shots, it can be helpful to practice with different clubs to see which one works best for you.

Some golfers prefer a lob wedge or a gap wedge for bunker play, so don't be afraid to experiment and see what works best for your game.

Common Bunker Play Mistakes to Avoid

Now that we've covered some of the best tips for golf bunker play, let's discuss some common mistakes to avoid when faced with a bunker shot.

Fear:

One of the biggest mistakes golfers make in the bunker is letting fear take over. Bunkers can be intimidating, but with the right technique and practice, you can conquer them. Approach the shot with confidence and trust in your abilities.

Hitting the Ball First:

As mentioned earlier, the goal of a bunker shot is to hit the sand first, not the ball. Many golfers make the mistake of trying to scoop the ball out of the bunker, which often results in a thin shot that doesn't make it out of the sand. Make sure to focus on hitting the sand first and let the club do the work.

Not Enough Loft:

Another common mistake is not using enough loft on the club. Bunkers require a lot of loft to get the ball out, so make sure to use a sand wedge or a club with plenty of loft when faced with a bunker shot.





Poor Alignment:

Alignment is crucial in bunker play, as it can greatly affect the outcome of your shot. Make sure to align your body and clubface correctly to ensure you're hitting the sand behind the ball.

Bunker Play Practice Drills

Draw a Line in the Sand:

Draw your line in the sand a few inches behind the ball and practice hitting the sand first on your bunker shots. This will help you develop a feel for the proper impact position.

Experiment with Ball Positions:

Try hitting bunker shots with the ball positioned in different locations in your stance - closer to the front foot, centre, and back foot. This will help you determine the best ball position for your bunker play.

Practice with Uneven Lies:

Set up on a steep slope in the bunker and practice hitting bunker shots from downhill, uphill, and sidehill lies. This will help you adapt to different bunker conditions on the course.

Clock Drill:

Imagine the bunker as a clock face, and practice hitting shots at different clock positions (e.g. 9 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock). This will help you develop a feel for controlling distance and trajectory in bunker play.

Conclusion

For sure bunker play is a skill that can be intimidating for many golfers, but with the right techniques and practice, you can improve your performance in the sand. By following the tips outlined in this article, as well as avoiding common mistakes and incorporating practice drills into your routine, you can become a bunker play expert in no time.

Remember to approach bunker shots with confidence, trust in your abilities, and don't be afraid to experiment with different techniques to see what works best for your game.

With dedication and practice, you'll be getting up and down from the bunker with ease and this should help to lower your scores and even your handicap too.

Don't fear the sand – Good luck!

