

Peter Thompson

“The Golf Expert”

A Square Clubface – What Does it Mean?

A square clubface is a complete mystery to most golfers so what does it mean? Read an extremely informative explanation by the golf expert Peter Thompson and expand your knowledge and improve you golf.



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First Published in Great Britain in 2009 by Jurassic Coast Publishing Ltd

This edition published in Great Britain in 2009 by Jurassic Coast Publishing Ltd

www.jurassicoast.com

Square Clubface – What does it mean?

Understanding what to do is one of my key coaching techniques.

There is little point in me understanding what I need my pupil to do if the pupil has no idea of what is required. One of my pupils said to me it had taken her three years to really understand what I expected from her.

Understanding what to do takes as long as it takes and I will say the same thing in many different ways until the penny drops.

The lady concerned reduced her handicap from 19 to 7 and she won the 2008 Royal Air Force Golf Association Ladies Championship so she is happy she took the time to understand and I am delighted that I took the time to help her.

I ask many of my pupils if they understand what a square clubface means and the usual response is that they do. The lower the handicap, or if my pupil is a professional golfer, then they will probably have a good idea what a square face means but many people say yes when they do not understand what a square face really means and after a few probing questions it becomes clear that they do not.

This is perfectly normal so this article is designed to help the reader understand what a square clubface means and how vital it is to the height and direction of the shot.

The clubface hits the ball and the only function of the entire swing is to deliver the clubface to the ball so it is pointing where you want the ball to go.

The ball will only go where the clubface goes and not necessarily where you want it to go.

A square clubface really means a straight clubface i.e. it is pointing where you want the ball to go. This is easy to understand in the address position but not so easy when the club head is moving.

Photograph No.1 shows my normal address position with a club only 12” long. The reason for having this short club will become clear as we continue the article.



If you imagine there is a line on the outside of my left forearm and a parallel line on the leading edge of the club. The leading edge of the club is where the bottom groove is.

Many manufacturers paint the bottom groove or even the bottom two grooves white so the alignment of the clubface becomes easier.

Are you one of the thousands of golfers who wondered why the lines are painted white? Go on admit it – you did not know why the lines were painted white but now you know why you can use the lines to your advantage.

Some drivers do not have grooves so you need to visualise the bottom edge of the clubface.

If you can visualise the leading edge of the club remaining parallel to the outside of your left forearm until the ball has been hit then you will understand what a square clubface is.

If you sit in a chair, holding a six or seven iron with your normal grip and hinge your wrists upwards until the club head is opposite your head then the leading edge of the club should still be parallel to your left forearm. If it is your grip is probably correct.

If the leading edge is turning to your left (closing the face) you will need to adjust the way you hold the club by moving either the right hand or the left or perhaps both hands to your left until you can hinge your wrists keeping the clubface square. If the leading edge is turning to your right (opening the face) then adjust your hands to your right until you can hinge and keep the face square.

Wrist hinges can vary by up to 90 degrees with the average hinge being 90 degrees. One of my pupils hinges his wrists 60 degrees and another pupil can hinge his wrists an amazing 150 degree, a difference of 90 degrees. You should only attempt to hinge your wrists as far as they are physically able to. The textbooks will suggest a hinge of 90 degrees but that is only an average.

Sitting in a chair to practice your wrist hinge / square face is a great idea as it focuses your mind on only one aspect of your swing. Believe me if you cannot achieve a square face sitting down you certainly will not in the full swing

Whilst you are still sitting in your chair and having hinged your wrists correctly rotate both arms to your right until the club is parallel to the ground and the left forearm and the leading edge of the club will still be parallel so the face is still square.

At the top of your full swing you will be unable to see the left forearm and the leading edge at the same time. This is why I have used the short club.

Photograph No.2. Shows how a square face will look at the top of the backswing with the left forearm and leading edge still parallel.



By using the short club I can see the left forearm and the clubface. To achieve the same view hold your club near the club head. It will feel strange but you can see the clubface and your left forearm at the same time.

You could also use a mirror to check the clubface or ask a colleague who understands how the left forearm and clubface should look. After a while you will start to feel where the face is when it is square.

Photograph No.3. Shows a closed clubface (pointing to the left of the target line)



This means the ball will go to the left unless you adjust the clubface in the downswing and this could be difficult as you have less than half of one second before the ball is on its way.

Many top golfers have the clubface slightly closed so they have less manipulation of their wrists at impact and they can drive the ball forward.

If you close the face you will decrease the loft on the face by the number of degrees it was closed by. This why shots that go to the left are usually shots that are played low.

Photograph No.4 Shows an open clubface (pointing to the right of the target line) this creates the opposite problem coming down as an open face will send the ball to the right and again you will have less than half of one second to correct it.



If you open the face this will increase the loft and the shots will tend to go to high and to the right.

A shot that is hit one degree left or right will be 10 feet off line over 200 yards. That is just one degree and it is possible to have the clubface open or closed by up to 90 degrees making the game almost impossible.

A shot from 100 yards would miss an averaged sized green (500sq yds.) to the right or to the left if the clubface was open or closed by a mere six degrees.

One of my pupils had a handicap of five with a very open clubface. We adjusted the face to square and his handicap went down to three and he became club Champion at Bramshott Hill. Another pupil, playing off a handicap of six, closed the clubface. This was corrected and a gross 63 at Meyrick Park (Bournemouth) followed shortly afterwards.

I reduced Gary Wolstenholme's handicap from +1 to +5 and Gary could detect where his clubface was within half of one degree by looking at his left wrist at the top of his backswing.

Many golfers make the classic mistake of assuming that a square face is when the left wrist and the clubface are parallel at the top of the swing. This only applies if the left wrist is parallel to the clubface at address and in the vast majority of golfers this is not the case.

CONCLUSION

The ball goes where the face is pointing and not necessarily where you want it to go.

YOU are in control of the clubface so practice the movements outlined in this article so your clubface remains square and this will improve your chances of hitting the ball where you want it to go exponentially.

A good technique is crucial. As a fellow coach once said: “Anyone who thinks psychology is more important than a good technique ought to see a Psychiatrist.”

I wish I had said that - it is so true.

Remember the club and ball are static, so you are in complete control.

Best Wishes and Keep Golfing