

Point and Putt: A Fresh Way to Fill the Hole on Short Putts

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[ZipTip: TARGETING / AIM: Point and Putt: A Fresh Way to Fill the Hole on Short Putts](#)

For shortish putts, use one of the most fundamental techniques all humans use every day to help locate the target -- point at it!

Here's a tip to help with those short putts -- say, under about 8 feet. Have you seen Tiger point at the hole after sinking a putt? Ray Floyd is known for the same thing, called "shooting the hole." It's sort of a Chico Marx gesture, like when Chico sweeps the keyboard on his piano into the treble range and then "shoots" the highest key with his index finger held like a pistol. Well, you ought to point at the hole BEFORE making the stroke. It's a much less odd technique than "plumb bobbing" or squatting on your haunches and cupping your hands on the bill of your cap.

[Why Point.](#)

Pointing is a physical gesture deeply engrained in our everyday behaviors. The brain and body relate to our surroundings in survival-related actions such as grasping food and alerting to threats. Our targeting or relating to objects in space works best at this basic level -- grasping fruit from a tree branch, pointing to a snake in the grass. Pointing is a limb movement that connects the body to an object or location in space, and it does so by coordinating the body's position visually and physically with the target. Grasping is the fundamental motion, but pointing is very nearly the same as grasping. When you point at a target, the head and eyes orient with the limb extension and the pointing fingertip centers itself with the line of our focused sight. Point at a nearby lightswitch on your wall, close your nondominant eye, and see if your fingertip is not touching your line of sight that runs straight between your pupil and the target. In fact, your fingertip will appear to "touch" the target itself.

When you point to a target, you coordinate the head and eyes in relating the body's position to the target. In other words, you make the location of the target very definite and vivid. Your sense of the true location of the target in relation to your body is perceived physically and visually in a way that is superior to simply looking at the target.

Pointing at the target is a form of target focus that helps the brain plan the stroke motion to roll the ball into the hole. The target focus "sorts out" unclarity about your relationship to the hole in terms of how the stroke out to proceed: what is the correct orientation of the plane of the stroke; how should the upper torso and shoulders orient to make the stroke smoothly and accurately; what is the direction the backstroke should start out away from the ball; given the stroke's tempo, what sort of stroke power is called for; and so forth -- all quite "thoughtlessly" in the effortless realm of the subconscious.

What to Do.

To take a six-footer as an example: Sight the puttline from behind the ball as usual, then setup in the address position. You will have a pretty good notion of the puttline, but the exact location of the target is probably a bit lacking in clarity. With your eyes above the ball and the putter held in the rear hand, lift the target-side arm and point directly into the heart of the hole. Let your visual focus follow the pointing. Then point at the exact spot on the front rim where you expect the ball to enter the cup. Then move your eyes to the spot on the rear rim opposite this entry point -- directly across the center of the cup. This gives you very precise focus on the hole, its distance and location, and the entry of the ball.

On a six-foot putt, your arm is lifted away from your body something around 45 degrees. If you relax your arm and let your pointing finger sweep back to the ball, tracing the exact path along the green you want your ball to roll over, you will gain a similar focus on the putt's path all the way into the hole. In addition, you will gain a preview of the stroke motion in the proper plane from the feeling of your arm dropping from pointing at the hole to pointing at the ball. So you not only localize the hole and the pathway very definitely; you also get a kinetic preview of the stroke itself, in the proper plane.

Now putt the ball into the hole.

To review:

- sight the putt from behind the ball;
- from the address position, point and look at the hole and identify the front entry point and the opposite back point on the rim;
- sweep your pointing finger back along the putt path to your ball, following with your gaze.

With these definite, fresh perceptions of the target location, path, and stroke plane, sink the putt.

Make This Part of Your Game.

On the practice green, place a couple of balls about four or five feet away from the hole for fairly straight putts. Notice how your sense of what is necessary to sink the putt becomes more definite and confident when you point at the hole and sweep the line. Sink a bunch of putts using this technique. You will likely find a very substantial improvement in your short-putt performance. If so, then extend the technique to your play on the course. If anyone says anything, tell them you are just "shooting the hole" in advance!

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