

Become a Feel Chipper

Throw out the textbook—the best short-game players rely on touch rather than mechanics.

By Amy Alcott with Stina Sternberg
Photographed by Dom Furore

i have always looked at the golf swing like a dance step, and you definitely need a bit of that idea in chipping. Some golfers call it “feel” or “touch.” Whatever you call it, it’s more instinctual than mechanical. I like to think of it as the ability to get the ball close to—or in—the hole every time, from anywhere around the green. Feel chipping requires good hand-eye coordination and lots of practice, but it’s also very much a mental thing. You need imagination and confidence; you need to know in your heart that you’re ultimately prepared to pull off any shot. Most important, you can’t use a chipping stroke that’s too rigid. Exhale, loosen the grip of your right hand and start to *feel* what’s happening during the stroke.

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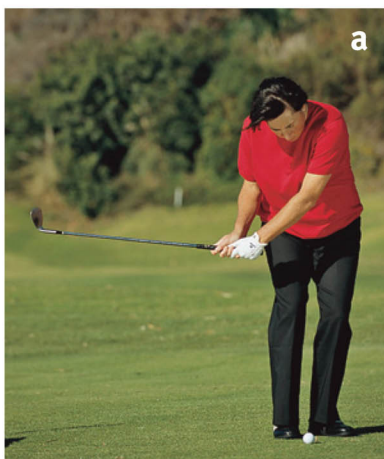
LOCATION: THE RIVIERA COUNTRY CLUB, PACIFIC PALISADES, CA

Visualize the shot >>

“Feel” requires complete confidence in the shot you’re about to play. The best way to commit to a chip is to picture exactly how it’s going to play out before you hit it. Step behind the ball and look at the green. Pick a spot where you want the ball to land in order for it to bounce and roll to the hole. See the entire shot in your mind. Then step up and execute.

Relax your body <<

Instead of keeping your wrists and hands stiff throughout the chipping stroke, (a) allow them to be a little soft as you take the club back. (b) Let the clubhead drop down behind the ball at impact. (c) Keep your knees soft and let your lower body react to the stroke through impact and follow-through.



DRILL

follow the path

To perfect solid contact—a prerequisite to feel chipping—you need to be able to keep the clubhead low to the ground through impact. If you lift the club up too early, you’ll top the ball and all feel will be lost. Practice by placing a six-inch path of tees in the ground. Keep the clubhead level with the tees for as long as possible through the impact zone.

