

SCIENCE & MOTION

perfect putting

By Sam Pleshette, PGA Professional



Have you ever had the feeling on the golf course that the putter is like an extension of your arm and you can hole putts at will, then the next time you play hoping to do the same it feels like you are trying to putt with a piece of two by four?

Why is it that the putting stroke and your performance varies so much from one day to the next? The answer lies in the consistency, position and movement of the putter during the stroke.

When hitting a putt on a straight path, a clubface that is more than 1 degree closed at impact results in a 4 metre putt being missed to the left. It's facts like these that demonstrate how fine the line is in golf between success and failure, and how precise you must be to improve putting performance.

With the naked eye it is pretty difficult to accurately measure parameters such as the clubface angle, the path of the stroke and the rhythm. That's why the scientists of a company called Science and Motion alongside international Tour Players have developed a unique analysis and training system called the Sam PuttLab.

The Sam PuttLab is based on accurate ultrasound measurements. It analyses the 28 most important parameters of your putting stroke and displays the results in easy to understand graphic reports, helping you discover your individual strengths and weaknesses for better and more efficient training.

There are a whole array of different putting styles seen on Tour these days, but despite all these variations there are biomechanical attributes common to all good putting strokes. There are also a



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preferred range of measurements to each area of a consistent putting stroke. As well as measuring these, the Sam PuttLab also measures your consistency rating which can be more important than the measurements themselves because your ability to repeat a movement more frequently will result in more similar performance.

The situation on the course where you hit it a putt 6 feet past on the first and 6 feet short on the next is a sign of inconsistencies somewhere in the putting stroke!

A typical session with the Sam PuttLab starts with a chat to the pupil to find out exactly what they have noticed about their own putting tendencies. To discover why these they happen (and more), the measurement session begins.

This involves the student hitting 5 putts towards a target. From these 5 putts your putting stroke is analysed and feedback on every conceivable area you could think of related to your putting stroke is provided within seconds...



What the Sam PuttLab tells you...

What the Sam PuttLab doesn't tell you would make a much shorter article! Listed here are just a few of the areas of the putting stroke you receive feedback on. Each parameter will affect your ability to either **A.** Hit the ball on your intended line, or **B.** Control the distance.

After 5 putts are analysed it is possible to view a 2-D or 3-D playback image of your stroke, and also see an overall report of your putting stroke, giving you a percentage grading in 4 different areas: *Technique, Timing, Consistency* and an *Overall rating.*

After the analysis session the coach and pupil will know exactly where the inconsistencies are in their putting stroke, and would then form a plan of action on what needs changing in order to correct it.

The Sam PuttLab is an excellent tool when you are making changes, whether that be changing putters, or changing technique - as you can measure exactly there and then which type of putter, or which type of technique gives you the best performance and consistency results. Only when your overall rating improves can you really begin to make improvements in your putting performance.

Some results explained...

Face at address : Basic but very important, if you are not aiming at your target and you are trying to make a square contact, it's only luck or a bad stroke if the ball ever goes in the hole.

Face at impact : Important in determining where the ball will finish. A clubface open or closed at impact with a square path will result in you hitting the putt to the right or left of your target line.

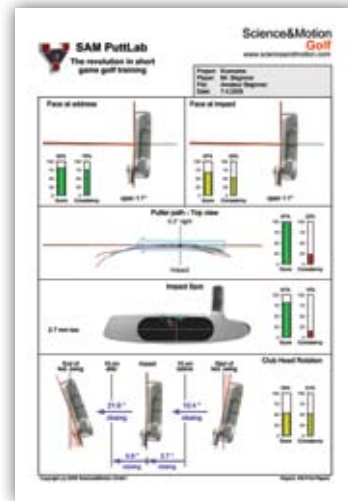
Putter Path : If you are correctly lined to your target a square putter path at impact is required.

Rise angle : For a proper roll you should impart immediate topspin to the ball avoiding backspin and skidding. A positive rise angle will give the ball some forward spin and a better roll. The skidding phase will also be reduced. The ideal range can also depend on what type of green you generally play on. Slow greens with longer grass will generally require more loft than fast greens and vice versa.

Impact Spot : The 'Impact spot' parameter shows the horizontal hit distance on the putter face relative to the centre of the putter. Off centre hits are vulnerable to a loss of energy which is transferred to the ball. Therefore your putts will travel inconsistent distances.

Club Head Rotation : The preferred amount of rotation as measured on the Tour inside of this range is about 1 to 3 degrees. A putting stroke with a lot of rotation has to be timed well for consistent performance, because the clubface is square for less time in the stroke.

Rhythm and Timing : The overall times can differ between different stroke types. More aggressive players show shorter times in both backswing and throughswing. More cautious players show higher times. Rhythm and timing are always the same, but the complete stroke can be somewhat slower or faster. Players like Ben Crenshaw and Phil Mickleson tend to have a longer slower stroke, as opposed to players such as Tiger Woods and Thomas Bjorn who have shorter aggressive strokes.



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