

Hitting Golf's Toughest Shots

Contributed by Jack Moorehouse

Always going for broke can cost you strokes and inflate your golf handicap. Still there are times when going for broke is called for—like when the club championship is on the line or you need a birdie to break 70 or 80 for the first time. If your luck's like mine, that's usually when you face a pretty tough shot.

The six shots described below are among the toughest going. They're extra difficult for amateur golfers who aren't accustomed to hitting shots under pressure, especially for those with high golf handicaps. But using your head and following the advice given below will improve your chances of making a successful shot.

Bunker Shot with Water Long

This shot is among the hardest in golf. You need a really good lie; otherwise, play it safe and hit toward the fat part of the green. If the lie is good, however, go for it! Start with a full turn and don't be skittish about blasting out of the bunker. Remember you're displacing a couple of pounds of sand, so you'll need plenty of momentum. Don't try to lift the ball, as some students do in their golf lessons. Instead, hit down and through into the sand a few inches behind the ball.

Cutting the Dogleg

I won't take a risk unless I'll gain a full shot in the process—a strategy I've discussed in my golf tips articles. So think before deciding. If the gives you a chance to make the green in two on a par 5 or to drive the green on a short par-4, then don't feel intimidated and go for the shot. Before hitting you need to know exactly how far to carry your shot or your tee shot won't reach the fairway, forcing you perhaps to take a penalty shot. Also, stay relaxed with this shot. Waggle your club a few times to relieve tension in your hands and take several fast practice swings. You'll slow down when it comes time to tee off.

Approach over Water

If you're like the players who listened to my golf instruction sessions, you're probably terrified of water. Some years back a GOLF MAGAZINE survey of recreational golfers tabbed this shot the most terrifying. If you miss you not only lose the ball, you add a penalty stroke to your score. Here's how to hit it. Take several practice swings until you've identified the shot, then step up to the ball and repeat the swing. Don't hesitate. It lets too many negative swing shots enter your mind. Keep your posture steady, letting your shoulder pull you through impact. Picture your belt buckle facing the target—a positive image that will help you accelerate down and through the ball.

Escape through Trees

Ever try to make up for a bad shot only to dig yourself deeper in a hole? Resist the temptation to hit a miracle, after you've hit a bad shot, like hitting into the trees. Instead, focus on hitting the next shot well. And the shot after that. And the shot after that. Hit enough good shots and you'll make up for the bad shot.

When you find yourself in a clump of trees, resist the temptation to hit a miracle shot. Your goal is to get out of the trees and put your ball back into play, even if it means hitting side ways. Examine your lie closely before hitting, then choose your club based on the lie. Choose carefully. If you need to hit a 140-yard low trajectory shot, don't play the ball back in your stance while using an 8-iron, hoping to keep it down. Instead, use the 3-iron or the 4-iron and make a long chipping motion. You'll stay relaxed and reduce the chances of a mis-hit.

Long Fairway Bunker Shot

Long irons are probably the hardest clubs for recreational golfers to hit, especially out of a bunker. Instead, try the comfort of a fairway wood. The club's loft and wide sole helps the clubhead slide through the sand, making the shot easier. In addition, make two small adjustments to your swing to encourage a descending arc on the swing. Open the clubface slightly for a little extra bounce and play the ball back in your stance an inch or two. Also, dig your toes not your heels into the sand. Take a normal swing and you'll make ball-first contact.

Greenside Lob Over a Bunker

This shot is my personal favorite. The lie determines how aggressive you can get with the shot. So take a close look. Try to get a sense of how much grass is behind the ball and how much air is underneath it. If the lie is tight, you won't

be able to get the club under the ball. If it's too fluffy, you might flub landing into the bunker. Make a nearly full backswing and then drop the club to the ball to pop it up. Keep the clubface pointing to the sky and use a short follow-through. Keep your head stable and centered.

You probably won't face these shots more than a couple of times a year. But you can bet that somewhere along the line, you'll have to hit one at crunch time in a round, match, or tournament. But if you keep your wits about you and commit yourself to the shot, you may be surprised how many times you'll pull one off.

About the Author: Jack Moorehouse is the author of the best-selling book "How To Break 80 And Shoot Like The Pros." He is NOT a golf pro, rather a working man that has helped thousands of golfers from all seven continents lower their handicap immediately. Source: www.isnare.com