

Increase Driving Distance

Proven Club Fitting Techniques

Imagine how much you could lower your scores by getting the kind of distance you know you're capable of.

Adding distance to your drives changes the way you attack a golf course. And those extra yards give you a competitive edge. That's why most of the top players in the world are so focused on finding the right equipment to increase distance.

It's no secret that most of us want to hit it longer. Golf club manufacturers know this and try to produce drivers that push the distance envelope.

The problem? Most drivers sold at retail outlets are built to specs that simply don't work for most players' swings.

What can you do to find the right driver?

The answer lies in knowing what the most important club fitting parameters are and using them to match the right equipment to your swing speed.

There are five club fitting keys I can think of that you need to focus on for maximum distance and consistency: loft, shaft flex, club length, launch angle and ball spin.

1. Loft

Selecting the right loft may be the most important fitting parameter when you're looking to increase distance. What's the biggest mistake most of us make? Going with too low a loft.

Today, drivers play true to loft. That's a big change from just a few years ago when everyone was hitting 8° Great Big Berthas. Realize that those days are over. Today the unofficial "standard" loft may be about 10.5°.

If your swing speed is below 100 mph you'll do much better with higher lofts. Swing speeds that are 90 mph and less do well with lofts of at least 12°.

Slower swing speeds don't generate the spin rate needed to maximize distance. Higher lofts give you more hang time and more distance with the same effort.

Higher swing speeds? They do better with moderate or lower lofts. Look for lofts of 10.5° or less. Swing speeds in excess of 105 mph naturally generate more spin, and that translates into higher trajectories.

2. Shaft Flex

It's a fact: about 8 out of 10 players select a flex that's too stiff for their swing. How does this affect distance? All shafts have to bend in order to get the ball airborne. Players with lower swing speeds need more flex to launch the ball on the right trajectory.

Try to find the most flexible shaft you can handle with accuracy. More flexible shafts offer a couple of advantages:

- Increased distance with less effort because of the shaft's extra kick.
- Better feel with less harshness.

Better feel means more confidence, and that translates into better ball striking. Shafts that are too stiff produce weak shots that are pushed offline.

Remember this:

Not everyone fits this profile. If your swing speed is over 105 mph or if you have a quick backswing-to-downswing transition, then you'll probably have trouble unless you use fairly stiff shafts.

High swing speeds have trouble with control when shafts get too flexible.

3. Club length

A lot of us don't pay much attention to club length.

You probably think all clubs are built to standard lengths. The fact is, there are no standards when it comes to club length. Club length can change from brand to brand, or even from model to model within a given brand.

Most drivers sold today are built to a length of 45 ½", and many drivers reach 46". That's because (in theory anyway) longer lengths usually produce longer drives, right? Well not quite, you'll hit occasional bombs at these lengths but your consistency will suffer.

How come? Your percentage of on-center hits decreases pretty quickly once you go longer than 44.5". Miss the sweet spot by just a small amount and you can easily lose 15 metres on a drive.

Try going with a driver length of 44.5". Your average drive will be longer and more of those drives will stay in the fairway. That's the **biggest** reason most tour pros stay below driver lengths of 45".

If you're struggling with your driver have a clubmaker shorten the length to about 44.5". You'll be surprised at the results.

4. Launch Angle & Ball Spin

Launch angle is what happens to the ball after it hits the lofted club face and heads out on its journey. This point is also directly related to the angle of attack that the golfer impacts the ball. An upward plane of attack at impact will 'effectively' ADD some loft and result in a slightly higher launch angle (and vice versa). The weight and flex of the shaft can have some effects on the launch angle.

The combination of club loft, angle of attack, launch angle and ball spin will result in the TRAJECTORY of the ball.

What are the hottest selling golf balls? Just about any ball advertised as a "distance" ball. They're all pretty similar; they don't spin much, feel hard at impact, and are usually pretty inexpensive.

Distance balls do work, but ironically, not that well for most average players. The reason? Distance balls spin less. Slower swing speeds don't generate the spin needed to make these balls effective.

Players with fast swing speeds can take advantage of a distance ball's lower spin rate. Slower swing speeds do better with more spin. Look for two piece balls that are softer and spin more; you'll find they work a lot better in several ways:

- They stay airborne longer, maximizing carry.
- They spin more and that helps you hold greens better.
- They feel softer when hitting chips and short pitch shots.

I'm not sure about you, but I don't like the high pitched click and hard feel of typical distance balls when I'm putting.

Look for softer two piece balls with spin and you'll get the advantages of a player's ball at a reasonable price.

Summing things up...

Good swing fundamentals are a must for hitting consistently long drives. But with drivers and golf balls that don't fit your swing speed, you'll *never* reach your distance potential.