

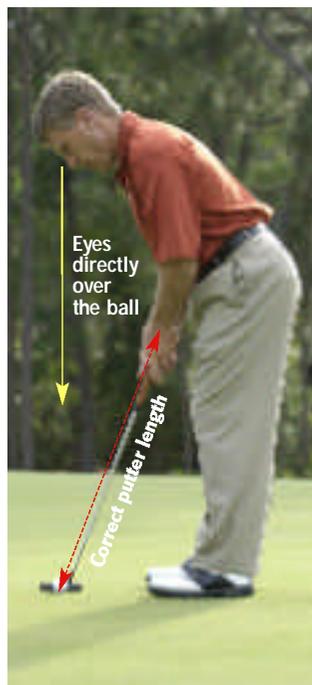
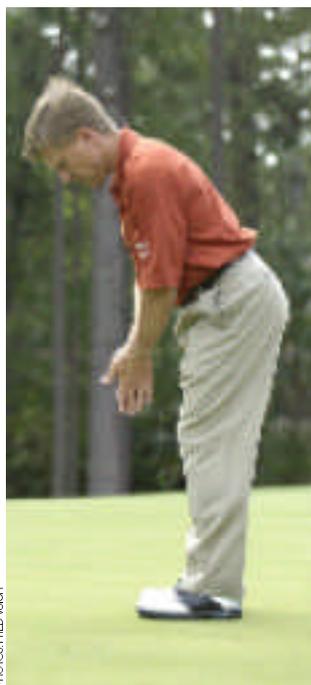
How to find a putter that fits you

Nearly every golfer uses a putter that's too long. Here's how to find your match

By Todd Sones with Greg Midland

ABOUT 80 percent of the students in my schools play with ill-fitted putters. The vast majority use putters that are too long and force them to stand too tall at address or with their arms jammed up into their bodies. Either way, the end result is a bad stroke.

When you buy a putter make sure it fits you so you don't compromise your stroke. Here's how to make certain your putter fits.



PHOTOS: FRED MUECH

1 Stand with your weight balanced in the middle of your feet, and tilt forward so your arms hang straight down, palms facing, with a slight elbow flex. This is the ideal putting posture.

2 Recall this posture as you address a ball. Your eyes should be directly over the ball. Have someone measure a line from the top of your left wrist to the ball (where your eyes hit the ground). That is your correct putter length

3 Check the lie angle of your putter before you buy. The sole should be flush to the ground. If the toe of the putter is pointing up off the ground it isn't a good fit.

Three buying tips

- The standard length of a men's putter taken off the rack is 35 inches. That's too long. On average, 33½ inches is about right.
- Your height is not the main determinant in putter fitting. Stuart Appleby (6'1") and Justin Leonard (5'9") both use 33-inch putters. It's a combination of arm length, torso size and legs.
- Once you determine your ideal putter length, make sure you find a model that has markings and a design that help you with alignment. Try out several different styles to find the one you like best.

Don't cut it short

- If it's occurred to you that your putter will fit better if you just snip a few inches off the top of the shaft, don't do it. If you do you'll alter the club's swing weight, and that changes the feel and performance of the putter head. Bottom line: it's not a good idea.

HOW TO SET YOUR TARGET NUMBER OF PUTTS

● Regardless of your handicap, you can shoot par on the greens. If you don't already do so, start tracking your total putts per round. Then look at the chart below for your personal putting par, based on your handicap. Make it your goal to match this target number and you'll see lower numbers on your card.

HANDICAP	PERSONAL PUTTING PAR
30 and over	36 putts per round
20-29	34 per round
10-19	32 per round
0-9	30 per round

● Todd Sones is the owner of Impact Golf Schools, based at White Deer Run Golf Course in Vernon Hills, Ill.