

A close-up photograph of a golf club head and a golf ball. The club head is on the left, showing its face with vertical grooves. The golf ball is on the right, positioned next to the club head. The background is plain white.

# **POCKET CADDY**

## **Quick Reference**

Cures for players most common faults  
and shot problems

**By Steve Kirkpatrick**  
PGA Professional

NO



YES



## **2. Topping your tee shots — occasionally chopping under the ball**

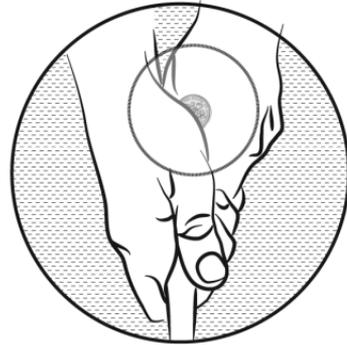
If you ask most players why they top the ball they will answer “Because my head is coming up.” I will agree that lifting the head as well as the body can cause the ball to be topped, but this is not the majority cause. In fact I could hold the head of many poor players rock steady and they would still manage to top the ball. This is because the problem is not with their head moving, but rather from the way they start their downswing.

Rather than swinging the club freely with the arms and hands from the top of the backswing the player holds onto the club while unwinding their legs and body. This causes the club to move outward before it can start downward. You top tee shots and chop under others because the approach angle to the ball is too steep — the result of the club moving across the target line on an out-to-in path.

“Swinging oneself rather than the club” is the overuse of the legs and body and too little use of the arms and hands in the downswing. If your shots follow this pattern practice hitting shots with your feet together. Begin with a six iron and tee the ball up slightly until you begin to consistently make solid contact.

Make sure you start your downswing with your arms and hands without using your body. Swinging the club freely with the arms from the top of the backswing moves it from the inside delivering it into the back of the ball from behind and inside it rather than across and on top of it.

At first you may feel that you’re casting the club but stick with it and soon you’ll feel the release of your hands and the club head squaring at impact. You’ll also no longer be falling off balance from overusing your body. Gradually widen your stance while continuing to the lead with your arms and hands.



## **10. Often hit turf behind the ball or top the ball**

This is generally a timing issue. The simplest definition of timing is the coordination of leg and hip movement with the swinging of the arms. If your shots fit the above description then the hands and arms are too fast for the leg and hip action. You are casting the club with your hands and wrists at the start of your downswing.

Because your hands and arms are too fast the club reaches the bottom of its upward and downward arc too soon—before it gets to the ball. This is why you take divots behind the ball, or the club has begun its upward arc before impact resulting in topped shots. The ball usually starts right because at impact the club is moving in that direction. It hasn't returned to the on line portion of the path because the hips haven't turned and cleared. The ball generally curves left because the hands and arms being too quick have closed the club face at impact.

The main cause of casting the club is from the hands separating at the top of the swing. The left thumb and right palm separate at the top then reconnect to start the downswing. This causes the wrists to uncock too early in the downswing. To correct this place a small coin or piece of string between your left thumb and right palm and hold it in place during the swing. This will stop the separation of your hands and the resulting casting of the club.

This adjustment along with the clearing of the hips will allow the club head to be along the target line and at the bottom of its arc when impacting the ball. You'll soon be hitting straight and solid shots once again.



[www.kirkpatrickgolf.net](http://www.kirkpatrickgolf.net)