

The Dreaded Four-Letter Word

Do you have the putting yips? Swing and equipment changes can solve your woes. By Bill Choung

Yips. Many experts have misdiagnosed the most dreaded four-letter word in golf as a mental issue. We have discovered from our research that yips are a biomechanical problem and there are swing and equipment solutions for you.

Yips just don't begin and end with putting; it exists throughout the whole bag. We just use a different phrase for it with the long game—getting stuck.”

How do you know you have the yips? If the following statements describe you, you've got 'em:

1. I'd rather putt from 15 feet than 4 feet
2. I miss 2-foot putts
3. My right hand flips or twitches at contact
4. Driver ball flight: it starts 20-plus yards right of the target line and hooks to the left fairway
5. My left arm at the finish of my full swing resembles a chicken wing (right-handed golfer).

Why do I yip? On your downstroke, because your right elbow is stuck on your rib cage, you must make a compensation move to get unstuck. Your body must find a way to square the clubface at impact. If your arms can't swing naturally in a pendulum motion then your body must use the hands, elbows or the shoulder to square the putterface at impact.



Swing Solution: You must change your set-up. Get the arms away from your sides. Palms up ... stick your arms straight in front of your chest

1. Drop the arms until your elbows are touching your chest or stomach
2. Make sure the arms relaxed and there is little bend in the elbows
3. Bend from the waist
4. Start your swing with the arms creating a pendulum motion
5. Since you eliminated any need for compensational moves to square the putterface, the hands, elbows and shoulders will stay quiet
6. Look into non-traditional putting methods like the claw, left-hand low and brush.

Equipment Solution: The only way to reinforce the correct set-up is to make sure that the putter length and lie angle are optimal.

1. Regular putter: Make sure that it is not too long for you. I see too many players at every skill level using putters that are too long for their body. An ill-fitted putter will lead to an inefficient set-up. Make sure that the lie angle is optimal. Incorrect lie angle can create tension in your forearms.

2. Anchored putters: A correctly fitted belly putter will reinforce the swing solution mentioned above. Because the putter is anchored against your body, it will force you to set up correctly. After all, in golf, 90 percent of the success comes from optimal set-up.

Finally, as I mentioned before, there are many non-traditional methods of putting like left-hand low, claw, brush, right hand only, looking at the hole, side saddle and anchored putters. If you

SCORECARD

- ▶ Yips just don't begin and end with putting; it exists throughout the whole bag.
- ▶ On your downstroke, because your right elbow is stuck on your rib cage, you must make a compensation move to get unstuck. Your body must find a way to square the clubface at impact. This causes the yips.
- ▶ Yips are a biomechanical problem and there are swing and equipment solutions for you.

are not familiar with these terms and think these sound more like dance steps from bad '60s beach party movies, then you have not suffered enough with your putting.

Some of these methods have produced some positive results for all of us including PGA Tour players. Sergio Garcia won last month using the brush putting stroke. Why? All these methods can help you get unstuck.

In a recent putting study conducted by a Stanford professor, a one hand only putting method was the most successful method. Why? If you use one hand only, it is nearly impossible to get stuck. And if you don't get stuck, you are able to release the putterhead without compensational moves. Don't hesitate to try different methods.

Next month, we will feature solutions for full swing yips. Meanwhile, find a local pro or fitter to help you; this game is way too hard to work alone.



Bill Choung is the founder of CompuGolf Center in Carrollton. He is a PGA Tour instructor and Golf Digest Top 100 Fitter. He has done extensive swing and equipment research on the PGA Tour and currently works with K.J. Choi and Danny Lee. He has worked with more than 40 Tour players. www.computogolfcenter.com.