



one-plane swing

eliminates push
shots & duck hooks

You've read endless advice about swing planes and ball trajectories. You're mentally drained from trying to figure out which of the three-dozen tips you've read recently is the right one for getting the club squared to impact. You're ready to pull out your hair after coming across yet another piece of advice on the proper swing arc that directly contradicts the one you memorized two weeks ago. The easiest way to embed a consistent, effective swing path is to break it down. Like any trip, this one is easier to take if you use clear signposts along the way. So let's talk about the path your club should be taking to the ball and, to make sure it arrives at its destination properly, three crucial stops it should make along the way.

By I.J. Schecter with Doug Weaver • Photos by Rob Tipton/Boomkin Golf

+ Two-Plane vs. One-Plane

Two types of swings are in fashion today — the two-plane and the one-plane. Until recently, almost all professional golfers used a two-plane swing, involving a fairly erect posture, narrow stance, a level turn and a swing that brings the arms up almost vertically, on a steeper plane than that of the shoulders.

Over the last 15 years or so, swing scholar Jim Hardy has introduced the increasingly popular one-plane swing, which is distinguished from the two-plane by its physical ease and mechanical simplicity. This is the main reason why golfers like Peter Jacobsen, after two hip surgeries, have adopted it, and why top players such as Tiger Woods and Annika Sorenstam, after rising to the top of their games with traditional two-plane swings, are also beginning to use one-plane variations.

While both types of swings end up at essentially the same spot — square to the ball at impact — they get there in different ways. I'm not here to endorse one or the other. You'll figure out which better suits you. But regardless of which one you choose, let me describe the routes.

+ The Setup

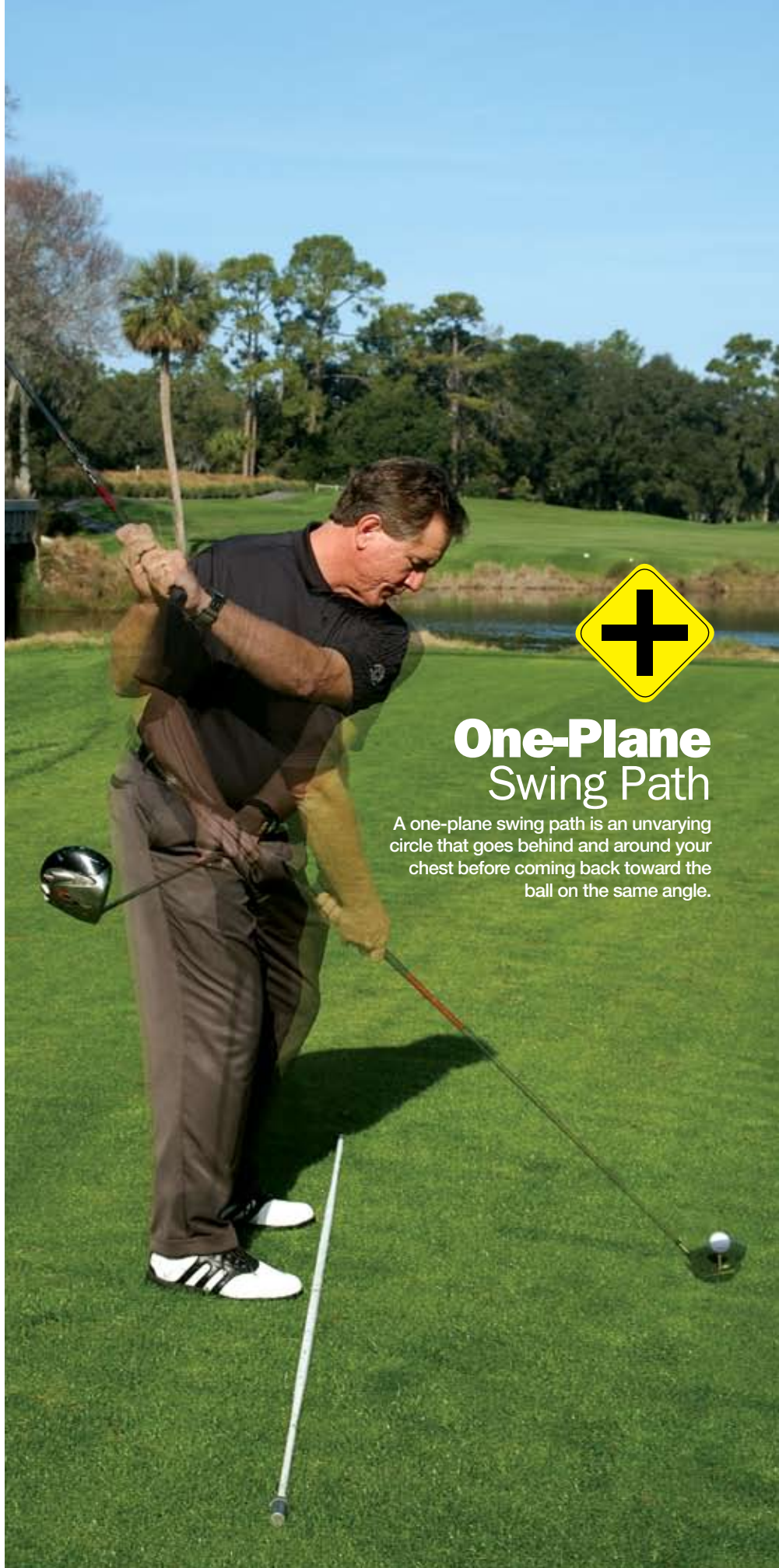
Because they follow different paths — a two-plane swing goes straight back and over your shoulder, whereas a one-plane is an unvarying circle that goes behind and around your chest before coming back toward the ball on the same angle — the two types of swings also require slightly different setups.

Most golfers are accustomed to a two-plane setup, characterized by a more erect stance, feet squared to the target line, slightly uneven weight distribution and closeness to the ball, promoting a more upright swing.

The one-plane version features a more bent-over posture, wider stance, more closed alignment, the forward foot not square to the target line, the hands positioned under the chin and even weight distribution between the feet, which promotes a flatter swing trajectory.

STOP Stop No. 1

The position of your hands and wrists halfway through your backswing should provide clear evidence whether you're using a two- or one-plane swing. Since the two-plane backswing is intended to be pulled straight back up over your



One-Plane Swing Path

A one-plane swing path is an unvarying circle that goes behind and around your chest before coming back toward the ball on the same angle.

shoulder, halfway through the backswing (at the 9 o'clock position), your arms will be moving on an upright plane, your clubhead slightly outside or aligned with your hands and your wrists hinged.

Here's a good test: If you're on-plane and you allow your palms to open while in this position, the clubshaft should slide down through them if you're using a one-plane swing. With a one-plane swing, your lead arm will, at this point, already be turning back across your chest — a move toward the inside — causing your shoulders to turn on a plane 90 degrees to your spine. If you're using a one-plane swing, which is flatter by nature than the two-plane swing, the clubshaft will not slide through your palms so easily, if at all.

Here's another simple way to feel the distinction between the preliminary paths of one- and two-plane swings and to help decide which you're more comfortable with. Have your instructor or a friend stand beside you as you set up to the ball, so that your rear shoulder is almost touching his front one. Ask him to step back 6 inches. Now, slowly start your backswing. If your lead arm (and your club) comes straight up without brushing your instructor or friend, initiating a straight line, then you're performing a traditional two-plane swing. If, on the other hand, the arm and club begin to describe a more circular arc and make contact with your instructor or friend — whom you now owe a drink — you've adopted a one-plane swing.



Two-Plane Swing Path

Most golfers are accustomed to a two-plane setup, characterized by a more erect stance, feet squared to the target line, slightly uneven weight distribution and closeness to the ball, promoting a more upright swing.



Stop No. 2

At the top of the more traditional two-plane backswing, the front arm is more upright (between the ear and shoulder), and the shaft of the club is parallel to the target line. By contrast, the one-plane swing arrives at the top of the backswing with the front arm on the same plane as the shoulders, at an angle closer to 45 degrees. This in turn keeps the clubshaft parallel to the target line and maintains an unchanged spine angle from the initial address position. It is called "one-plane" because the angle of the front arm matches the angle of an imaginary line drawn between the shoulders.

To better understand the paths that one- and two-plane swings take to get to the tops of their respective backswings, put down your clubs for a minute and take out your lawnmower, preferably one with a cord. Now, bend down, place your support hand on the mower and,



Perform this simple test with an instructor to feel the distinction between the preliminary paths of one- and two-plane swings and to determine which one you're more comfortable with. Have your instructor stand beside you as you set up to the ball, so that your rear shoulder is almost touching his front one. Ask him to step back 6 inches and slowly begin your backswing.

with your lead hand (right hand for a right-handed golfer), pull the cord.

The first time you do this, pull it straight upward, until your upper torso begins to turn upward, too. This point represents the top of a two-plane backswing.

Now pull the cord again, but this time use your arm and shoulder instead of your hand. In addition, pull back around your ribcage, keeping your elbow close to your body, so that your torso is pulled around more horizontally. It should be more of a rotating twist than an upward turn. At the extent of this movement,

If your lead arm (and club) comes straight up without brushing your instructor, initiating a straight line, then you're performing a traditional two-plane swing. If the arm and club begin to show a more circular arc and make contact with your instructor, you've adopted a one-plane swing.



Stop No. 3

It is on the way back toward the ball that, for most golfers, the one-plane swing will begin to feel odd. Most likely, you've grown up learning a two-plane swing, so the one-plane route will feel counterintuitive to your muscles. After all, you've spent hours trying to perfect a swing in which the club is brought straight back up and over your shoulders before your hips start to release, pulling the rest of your body along with them.

In the one-plane swing, your upper body releases first and your lower body second. The swing is designed this way in order to help you avoid getting "stuck" partway through the downswing, a circumstance that leads to perilous adjustments as a result of flawed timing.

For many golfers, after their hips release in a two-plane swing, their hands tend to drag, forcing the clubhead to end up pointing away from the target (to the right if you're right-handed, to the left if you're left-handed).

This results in either a push or a hook, due to an instinctive flip of the hands. The one-plane swing is in fact intended to eliminate that stuck spot by starting the downswing with the shoulders instead of the hips.

To better understand the difference, set up in a sand trap with your 9-iron as though preparing to take a normal shot. Adopt a one-plane posture with a fairly wide stance, your hands under your chin and your body slightly more bent over. Begin the one-plane swing by going back and around your torso, ending at the top of the backswing with your shaft parallel to the target line. At the top, allow your shoulders and upper torso to uncoil first, bringing your arms and club back along the same angle into the appropriate hitting slot.

As you perform this downswing, don't look up. Make sure your eyes are fixed downward all the way and keep your clubhead in the sand right through the finish.

When your swing is completed, observe the arc the club has made in the sand. Notice that it's different than





Lawnmower Drill

To better understand the paths that one- and two-plane swings take to get to the tops of their respective backswings, put down your clubs and take out your lawnmower, preferably one with a cord. Now, bend down and with your lead hand (right hand for a right-handed golfer), pull the cord. The first time you do this, pull it straight upward, until your upper torso also begins to turn upward. This represents the top of a two-plane backswing. Now pull the cord again, but this time use your arm and shoulder instead of your hand. In addition, pull back around your ribcage, keeping your elbow close to your body so that your torso is pulled around more horizontally. This represents the apex of a one-plane backswing.

the straight sweeping line a two-plane swing would leave. The one-plane swing makes this arc because it encourages you to maintain the same spine angle from start to finish. You will feel your swing path tending toward a hook as you come through the downswing. This perception is caused by your shoulders releasing before your hips, creating an exaggerated sense of the more inside club path.

You might also think of swinging to the target with a two-plane swing as getting to the 12 or 1 o'clock position (for a right-handed player). In a one-plane swing, this would mean the swing path targets 11 o'clock.

Whether you favor a one-plane or two-plane swing, proper mechanics and repeated execution will get you to the proper impact position and lead to success. In the two-plane swing, your arms swing down in front of



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Sand Trap Drill

To better understand the difference in the downswing between one- and two-plane swings, set up in a sand trap with your 9-iron as though you're preparing to take a normal shot. Adopt a one-plane posture (slightly more bent over, hands under your chin, fairly wide stance) and begin your swing, going back around your torso and ending at the top of the backswing with your shaft parallel to the target line. At the top, allow your shoulders and upper torso to uncoil first, bringing your arms and club back along the same angle into the appropriate hitting slot. Make sure your eyes are fixed downward all the way and keep your clubhead in the sand through the finish. Observe the arc the club has made in the sand. Then do the same with a two-plane swing setup, backswing and downswing motions. Notice the one-plane swing makes an arc instead of the straight sweeping line left by a two-plane swing, as it encourages you to maintain the same spine angle from start to finish.

your body, your hips and shoulders rotate through and your club moves on a relatively straight line down to the proper position. In the one-plane swing, your torso and rotating front arm carry the club down and back inside the target line through impact. In both cases, the destination is paramount. To reach it, you just need to visit the right spots along the way. ☘

Doug Weaver is the director of instruction at Palmetto Dunes in Hilton Head, S.C. I.J. Schecter's new collection, *Slices: Observations from the Wrong Side of the Fairway*, is available now in bookstores or at amazon.com.

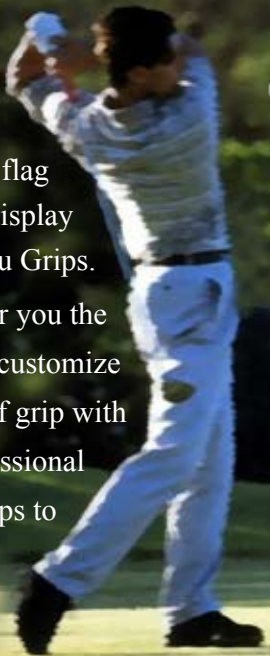
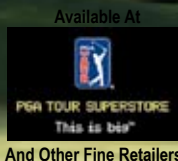
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