

# Chapter 1: Why Thirty Years of Slicing Was Never Your Fault

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## The Myth of Grip Strength, Flexibility, and Shoulder Turn as the Cause of the Slice

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You have been told it is your grip. Then it was your shoulder turn. Then someone at the club, standing by the practice green with a cup of tea, told you it was your hips, and you spent a winter doing stretches in the garage.

None of it held. The slice came back every spring like a tenant you could never quite evict.

Here is the uncomfortable truth: grip strength, flexibility, and shoulder turn are not why you slice. About 60% of recreational golfers hit a slice, according to GOLFTEC's analysis of its swing database<sup>1</sup>. That is not a flexibility statistic. That is not an age statistic. Sixty percent includes men in their twenties who can touch their toes and men in their seventies who cannot reach their own shoelaces. If stiffness caused the slice, the young and supple would be exempt. They are not.

I remember standing on the range at my own club years ago, watching a man in his thirties — fit, flexible, a gym member three times a week — hit the exact same banana ball I did. He could touch his toes. He still couldn't hit a fairway. That was the moment I stopped believing the flexibility story.

## What Actually Happens at Impact: The Clubface-to-Path Relationship, Explained Without Jargon

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Let's strip this down to the one thing that actually matters.

GOLFTEC studied roughly 14 million recorded swings and found three primary causes behind a slice: an open clubface relative to the swing path, restricted hip rotation, and a steep angle of attack<sup>2, 3</sup>. Notice what tops that list. Not flexibility. Not strength. The clubface.

Here is the plain version, no jargon. Your swing path is the direction the club is travelling through the ball — it might go slightly left, slightly right, or straight down the line. Your clubface is simply where the face is pointing at the moment it strikes the ball. When the face is aimed further right than the path is travelling (for a right-handed golfer), the ball picks up sidespin and curves away from the target. The wider that gap between face and path, the more severe the curve<sup>1, 4</sup>.

The face controls direction. The path controls curve. When the two disagree, the **face wins the argument** — every time.

This is the whole book, in one paragraph. Everything else — the tee peg test in Chapter 3, the coin feel in Chapter 4, the elbow fix in Chapter 7 — exists to bring your clubface back under control at the one moment it matters, which is the split second before the ball leaves the clubface.

An open face relative to path is the dominant factor, which is why GOLFTEC's coaching staff frames the slice as almost always rooted in an over-the-top move combined with an open clubface, rather than swing path alone — reframing "aim more left" as the wrong fix for most amateurs<sup>5</sup>. Aiming left with an open face just moves your slice further right. You have probably already discovered this the hard way, more than once.

In a GolfWRX Instruction & Academy thread titled "Finally fixed my slice with the driver... well, pretty quickly," a club golfer describes resolving a long-standing slice relatively fast once they isolated and corrected the clubface issue, rather than continuing to fight their swing path (GolfWRX Forums, Instruction & Academy). That pattern shows up again and again on that same forum. Golfers spend years rebuilding a swing path when the actual leak was three degrees of open face at impact.

**Case:** A GolfWRX member had chased a slice for years through path corrections — aim changes, stance tweaks — with no lasting fix. Once they stopped adjusting the path and isolated the clubface instead, the slice cleared up in a fraction of the time they had spent fighting it the old way.

## **Why the Modern Lesson Industry Sells a Six-Thought Swing When the Old British Pros Needed One Feel**

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Walk into most golf lessons today and you will leave with a list. Rotate the hips more. Delay the release. Shallow the shaft. Keep the lead wrist flat. Shift the pressure earlier. Six thoughts for a swing that lasts about one and a half seconds.

The club pros who taught the game in Britain through the 1950s and 60s did not have launch monitors or slow-motion video. What they had was time with a player and a single question: what does square feel like in your hands? They taught face control first, before flexibility drills, before gadgets, before anyone had drawn a swing plane on a whiteboard. One feel, trained until it lived in the hands without conscious thought.

The modern industry, understandably, sells complexity. A six-thought swing needs six lessons, a launch monitor session, and a follow-up. A one-feel fix needs a tee peg and twenty minutes. I am not accusing anyone of bad faith — most young coaches teach what they were taught, and what they were taught is technically accurate. But accurate and usable are not the same thing for a man who plays once a week and has forty-five minutes on the range before his knees start complaining.

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A swing thought you cannot hold under pressure on the first tee is not a swing thought. It is trivia.

The old British method worked because it respected a limit every golfer eventually meets: you can only hold one thought clearly when the pressure is on. Everything after the first thought is noise competing for the same narrow channel.

### **The Honest Reason the Slice Always Comes Back After a Lesson: The Fix Was Never Trained Into the Hands**

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Here is the part nobody tells you at the end of a lesson, as you're paying and booking the next one.

A lesson changes what you understand. It rarely changes what your hands do under pressure, because understanding and feel live in different places. You can leave a lesson knowing exactly why your face is open at impact — restricted hip rotation, a steep angle of attack, an over-the-top move — and still slice your very next tee shot, because knowing is not the same as feeling.

Restricted hip rotation is genuinely common. Most club golfers slide their hips laterally rather than rotating them, which leaves the clubface open at the moment it matters most<sup>6, 7</sup>. A coach can explain that clearly in five minutes. But explaining it does not install it. Installing it takes repetition against a feel-based checkpoint, which is exactly what a one-hour weekly lesson rarely has time to deliver.

- ✓ Notice: does your lesson end with a list of thoughts, or one feeling you can reproduce alone?
- ✓ Ask yourself honestly whether you have ever drilled a fix without a club in your hand, the way the old British pros insisted on
- ✓ Before your next range session, pick one single feel from this book and commit to it for the whole bucket — no switching mid-session

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ The slice is not caused by weak grip, poor flexibility, or an insufficient shoulder turn — 60% of golfers slice regardless of fitness<sup>1</sup>.
- ▶ The clubface, not the swing path, is the dominant factor in a slice; when the two disagree, the face wins<sup>1, 4</sup>.
- ▶ "Aim further left" fails because it does not touch the open face causing the curve<sup>5</sup>.
- ▶ The old British method taught one trainable feel for a square face, not a checklist of six swing thoughts.
- ▶ A lesson can teach you the cause of your slice without ever training the fix into your hands — that gap is why it keeps returning.

This leaves an honest question hanging over everything that follows: if the face controls the ball and the fix has to live in the hands, not the head, how do you actually check — right now, without a coach standing over you — whether your own face is open before you ever hit a shot?

That is exactly where Chapter 2 begins.