

## > What Is More Important in Golf Putting, Line or Distance?

***Summary: Almost all golf players believe that controlling distance is the key factor to a solid golf putting performance. This is not 100% true. See why line or distance can be the most important factor, depending on the nature of the putt you have to make.***

I believe you picked a wrong answer to a silly question in the title! Yes, whatever your choice, the answer is wrong and this makes my question a silly one. Keep reading and discover that line or distance can be the most important factor, depending on the nature of the putt you have to make.

In order to follow my theory you have to separate long putts from the short ones because the skills needed to master long and short putts are different.

**> For long putts you need putting technique and feel**

**> For short putts you need putting technique and special knowledge**

As putting technique is needed for both of them it won't be treated here. It's out of the scope of this article. I'll focus on feel and knowledge and try to explain why they are important in different ways when you putt.

### **1- Let's start with long putts**

When you try to sink a long putt, if you are a talented lucky person, you may hole it but usually you don't. So, what you desperately need is to let yourself a manageable short putt in order to avoid 3 putting. A tap-in would be great! To achieve this objective and assuming your technique is good enough, the other skill you need is feel. **Yes, you have to feel the peculiar conditions of that green, that day, at the right time you are putting.** Otherwise you risk letting the ball a few yards long or short and increase your chances of 3 putting. Good technique is worthless if you can't predict how moisture, grain, grass length, grass consistency, green slope and wind are influencing green speed. Some of these factors change on a daily basis and others on an hourly basis or so. Only slope and grain remain constant. This means that you have to

develop the capacity to let your brain process all the information you get. Then you'll start feeling how to produce strokes adjusted to your needs.

To get that feel, necessary to prevent the long putt fiasco, you need lots of practice and attention to details. For instance:

- > Moisture makes greens slower.
- > As the temperature raises, grass becomes harder making the green slower.
- > If the wind is against our putt the ball will move less and vice versa.
- > The great majority of golf courses don't mow the greens on weekends. So, if you play Saturdays and Sundays consider that, all other factors being the same, greens are slower on Sundays.
- > And so on, and on and on.

## **2- And what about short putts?**

Well, short putts are different in many ways. You still need putting technique but feel isn't so overwhelming as in long putts. Now what you need above all is special knowledge to help you anticipate how the ball will behave after the putter stroke. Even for short putts, straight lines are not the rule but the exception. There are so many factors influencing the ball trajectory on the green that it is almost impossible to make it follow a straight line. The most important are: slope, wind, grain and imperfections.

Imperfections matter but their effects are often unpredictable and the only solution against them is to pray (and even that one usually doesn't work). Grain is less important than slope and wind and can be overlooked when they are present. Wind and slope have the same nature: forces that work to change the way the ball is moving on the green. Under normal conditions wind effect is negligible. If it is strong, the best solution for the golf player is to consider that it slightly increases the effect of slope if it is blowing downwards or slightly reduces it if the opposite is true.

**This means that slope is above all when it comes to short putts. It causes your ball to move along a parabola shaped line and you MUST know how to anticipate the ball trajectory (putting line) in order to hole putts.** That is why I keep telling that knowledge is a key factor here. Of course practice is important but if you don't have the right tools to understand what is going on you risk to practice not to improve but to "perfect" your mistakes. Only when you learn how to deal with parabolas you will get a clearer picture of your putting lines BEFORE you putt, not after.

I know that some of my readers consider this is not worth the effort it takes. I disagree and can explain why. See, if you make 3 putts for a long putt you think it was one stroke too much. And what if you make two putts for a short putt, isn't it one stroke too much? Where is the difference? Keep track of your putts and you'll discover that you lose more strokes making two when only one was needed than making three when only two were needed.

**> To finish this article, let's draw some conclusions and guidelines:**

- a)** Distance is the most important factor for long putts.
- b)** Line is the most important factor for short putts.
- c)** During a round of golf all of us have more short putts to do than long ones.
- d)** The solution to increase the putting performance is to get rid of three putts (for long putts) and to increase the conversion rate (for short putts).
- e)** Collecting real data is the only way a player has to identify their weaknesses.
- f)** Discard myths even if everybody seems to believe they are true.

There is still one point missing that is not as easy as it seems: how to define long and short putts? If you are interested, please go to the page "Contacts & links" on my site [www.puttinglines.com/links.php](http://www.puttinglines.com/links.php) and contact me. I'll send that page to you by email. It's part of my ebook Golf Putting Lines and I don't want to let that one online.

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