

# In Putting, the Knees Hold the Hips, the Hips Hold the Head!

by Geoff Mangum

Geoff Mangum's PuttingZone™ Instruction

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[ZipTip: SETUP & STROKE: In Putting, the Knees Hold the Hips, the Hips Hold the Head!](#)

Your visual attention to the putterhead-ball interaction at impact ought to keep your head still in putting by itself, but if you nonetheless have a problem, try "marrying" the sense of stillness in your hips to the pivot point in the center of the base of your neck ("hips and head hold still"), while the arms and shoulders turn back and through on this stable pivot.

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How do you keep the head, eyes, and pivot point of the stroke (in your neck) stable while moving your shoulders, arms, and hands in the putting stroke? Tighten your knees and fix your hips in place.

## [Some Theory.](#)

Body movement is a combination of nerves, muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, and bones. Of these, the ones that hold you still are the joints with steady muscle tension. In the "athletic ready" stance, like a quarterback prepared for the center to hike the ball, the body is stable over a base of fixed joint positions by muscle tension. This position is very close to the balanced stance for optimal putting, except I recommend more bend in the neck and head for eye usage reasons. But the fundamentals of balance and stability are the same.

In the "athletic ready" position, it appears as if you are preparing to sit on a stool, but in fact your stance is action-oriented to what is in front of you and in your visual and conscious field of awareness. Your weight is NOT back on the heels, but either fully planted or favoring the toes. For the full swing, this stance is often recommended and the stability of balance is checked by shoving the golfer back on the shoulders to see that he or she resists change in the position effectively.

And when you move, every part of your body is influenced. The faster and heavier some body part is as it moves, the greater influence it has in making other body parts move. It's easier to make a slow arms-only stroke without altering your hip position than it is to turn your whole torso back and through over still hips, especially if your turning is not nice and easy.

## [What to Do.](#)

*Tighten the Knees.* So, you have your knees bent and flexed a bit, your rear a little out, and your upper torso canted forward. All together, this arranges a different balance of your body's center of gravity (just below the navel area) from the one of normal posture. The key is how this balance is maintained in a steady state: the balancing sends equal

pressure into both feet and the flexed muscles affecting the knees hold the lower body fixed in position.

These muscles are the front and back thigh muscles and the back calves -- i.e., the leg muscles above and below the knees. Put a little tension here and feel the positioning of your knees stabilize. You don't have to go knock-kneed like Arnie, but he was onto the same trick.

*Fix the Hips in Place.* Now, you have to go one step further to stabilize the head DURING the stroke itself. The key here is the hips. In a normal turning motion of the upper torso, the lower back muscles tug on one or the other hip to swivel the upper torso. The leg muscles in the thighs are ordinarily also involved, and that's a problem in putting.

If you watch Ben Crenshaw and a number of other pros, you can detect a little knee action in the putting stroke that is not dissimilar to the knee action in the full swing. In the full swing, the hip turn over a stable right leg is vital to a good swing motion, and is accomplished with the target-side knee going out toward the ball and laterally back, and then in the downswing the hind knee going toward the ball and both knees moving laterally targetward with the weight shift.

Having knee-motion in putting is certainly a choice, but it makes keeping the head still much harder because it's not possible without causing some hip turning, too. It is also the "normal" or "default" move for nearly everyone, because of the engrained movement pattern of the fullswing influencing the putting movements. This makes it hard to resist without paying specific attention to the problem.

Holding a little tension to fix the knees in place needs to be supplemented with fixing the hips in place, too. Nick Faldo and David Leadbetter suggest the image of squeezing a beach ball between the thighs as a way to get good control in the hip turn for the full swing. Clearly, you CAN still turn your hips with knees tightened. So you need a little more than that for putting.

Just consciously take stock of the position of your hips in their square relationship to the plane of the putt line and plan on keeping them there as you make the stroke. No turning; no lateral motion. Now move the shoulders and arms while the head stays put just like the hips. Think "hips and head hold still." That's all there is to it -- the head and neck stay still and the hips stay in place, while the shoulders and arms alone are moving back and through.

### [Make This Part of Your Game.](#)

Not everyone wants still knees in putting, but everyone not as experienced as Ben Crenshaw should. You don't have to go to the golf course to practice this. Just do it, right where you are. Assume your square setup position, put a little tension in your leg muscles to fix the knees in place, and then take note of your two hips. Keep the hips fixed in place as you make a stroke. Look at the gap between the putterface and the ball and think "hips and head hold still .... okay ... now let me see ... where was I? Oh yes, this twelve footer ...."

The feeling you should get is one of great balance and stability. That's where the accuracy and precision gets in the door! Now you can concentrate on solid contact and rolling the ball right down inside the cup.

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