

Light Up the Target with Your Putterface

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[ZipTip: TARGETING / AIM: Light Up the Target with Your Putterface](#)

Visualize the direction straight out of the putterface as a long straight rod whose tip sweeps side to side over the hole or aim spot as you get a fix on precise face orientation to the target.

Along with target localization, green contour reading, a straight stroke, and distance control, one of the essential elements of putting competence is accurate putterface alignment at address. According to a study of 1,000 golfers by putting expert Dr. Tony Piparo, over 90% of all golfers (including pros) seriously misalign the putterface at address on putts as short as six feet. About a year ago, Colin Montgomerie made the same discovery and worked to overcome his misaiming. Obviously, target localization is the foundation of putterface alignment, but it's only the beginning.

There are three main perceptual skills for accurate alignment of the face:

- localizing the target in space in relation to the body's position,
- sensing the line between the target and the putterface, and
- recognizing the perpendicularity of the line and the putterface.

Here's a mental aiming tip that combines all three aspects at once to help improve putterface alignment perceptions:

Imagine a thin glass rod extending straight out of the putterface all the way to the hole / target, just above the surface. You pivot the putterface so it sweeps the end of the rod in a small arc across the hole. The hole has a thin vertical metal pole extending up out of its center. Only when the rod's end is centered in the hole does it make a contact with the pole that fires a laser through the glass rod and lights up both the line of the putt and the target itself. Your putterface is properly aligned when you "touch" the hole in this manner.

[Some Theory.](#)

Aiming is not simply visual; it is also a matter of body position-sense and action-orientation to a point in space (touching, grasping, pointing, etc.). You highlight the body position-sense aspect of aiming by squaring your body, hands, and putterface to the target. In face-on targeting, as in archery, shooting, and darts, the centering of vision is primary. If you point accurately at a target in front of you, and then close your non-dominant eye, you will notice that your pointing fingertip coincides exactly with the central focus on the target in your field of vision. The dart throw is, in essence, a "touching" of the bullseye with the dart's tip, as if you stood only a few feet from the target and actually reached out and stuck the dart in the bullseye.

Unfortunately, from the conventional address position in putting, this sort of straightforward visual dominance is not available for accurate hand-eye coordination. Hence, the importance of the body position-sense. With the suggested image of the glass rod, you can effectively "touch" the target itself with your putter. The laser ignition lighting up the glass rod and the target is just a dramatic, reinforcing special effect. The main point is that you really can sense the "touching" of the target by moving the putterface more accurately than by trying to do so exclusively with your vision.

[A Little Background.](#)

A tip from the 1960s by Jerry Pittman in *Golf Magazine* suggests that aiming to a point off to the side of the cup, and putting balls to this spot and then to spots closer to the hole by stepwise adjustments, hones your sense of targeting the face to the hole and sharpens your sense of "the line." Another pro, Bill Linton, in *Golf Digest* suggests securing a pencil to your putter shaft with a rubber band so the pencil points straight out of the face with the aiming lines. Another pro suggests thinking of the hole as having a pole sticking up out of it and trying to aim at the pole. A sports psychology experiment features a record player turntable with a putter mounted on the spindle to test subjects' ability to turn the face until it appears to face the hole directly -- that is, perpendicular to the line from putter to hole. And in more recent days, the use of laser putters has grown. On these devices, a miniature laser is mounted just atop the putterface pointing square ahead and is turned on by pressing a button on the grip only after the golfer decides he has done his best at aiming the face. A small card directly behind the hole tells the tale, depending upon whether the red laser dot appears directly behind the hole or off to the side.

All of these approaches concern themselves in varying ways with the three perception skills of putterface alignment. The suggested image / mental technique in this tip integrates them together.

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

This technique is extremely easy to practice at home. All you need is a target like a shot glass or a golf ball six to ten feet away, some floor space without alignment cues (e.g., patternless carpet, and not a tile or wooden plank floor), and your putter. Try mentally rotating the face from pointing, say, six inches left of the target to six inches right, making the tip of the imaginary rod travel in an arc across the target. You should experience a sense that everything "clicks into place" only when the rod seems to "touch" the center of the target.

At this point, to check the face, you can either have a companion take a look at your face alignment from behind, or carefully mark the alignment you have with a toothpick, pencil, straw or similar straight object in front of the face and then check it yourself. A wooden ruler would work pretty well because you can press the end flat against the putterface to get an accurate indication of the face's true aim direction. Then stand behind this indicator and use your face-on targeting skills to assess how you're doing.

On the practice green, if you find yourself missing putts consistently to one side or the other, set up a level ten-foot putt and deliberately aim your putterface about eight inches off center to the opposite side and putt a ball to this spot. Then work in toward the hole in a series of two-inch steps. When you aim for the hole, aim for the center of the hole and orient your putterface until the glass rod contacts the central pole. You should get a sense that you can "touch" the hole in the way your hands aim the putterface.

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