



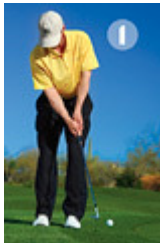
5 Shots 1 Club

(Sand Wedge, That Is)

By Dale Abraham, PGA Photos By Ryan Noll

The most successful golfers are the most creative ones. (Consider how inventive Phil Mickelson is when his tee shots get him in trouble.) But creativity on the course comes in many different forms. Sometimes, it means rethinking how to shape your shots; other times, it's how to escape a jam.

In this article, I'm going to demonstrate how to be creative with just one club. I've taken my 56° wedge and given myself five situations that demand completely different shots. Read on and change the way you play the game!



1. The Bladed Wedge

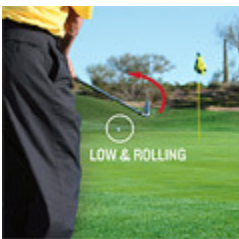
My ball has come to rest between the fringe and the rough, and it's difficult to make solid contact. The only way to escape is to hit the ball with the sand wedge's leading edge. I call this, "blading it."

Here's how to do it: Address the ball as if you would a putt, with the ball forward in your stance and your hands even with or slightly behind the ball. Then, grip down on your wedge so that your bottom hand is at the end of the grip, almost touching steel. Hover your club so its leading edge is level with the equator of the ball. Finally, all you have to do is make a putting

stroke, and hit the ball at or slightly above the equator so that the ball rolls just like a putt.

2. The Low Runner

When you've got plenty of green to work with, it's best to get the ball on the dance floor and rolling as quickly as possible. It's always easier to control the ball on the ground than in the air.



First, make sure you play the ball back in your stance. Then, place your hands and weight toward the target and pull your left foot back slightly from the target line. Maintain the angle in your right wrist through impact so that your hands remain ahead of the clubhead. This essentially delofts the club so you can hit down into the ball no matter what the lie. With very little wrist action and the hands well ahead of the clubhead at impact, you can produce a low ballflight with little spin on it.

To produce more run, swing the club slightly more around your body and allow the clubface to turn over through impact, so you "hook it."



3. The Spin Shot

Ever see Tour pros hit a wedge that stops on a dime? Of course you have. Everybody wants to hit that shot. Now you can.

To get your ball dancing when it hits the green, you need to use the right equipment. Here I've pulled my 56° sand wedge from my bag. But that's not all I need for some Tour-quality action. I also make sure my grooves are extra sharp and the cover of my golf ball is urethane-covered. Anything less, and I won't be able to pull off this shot.



First you need a good lie on short grass. You'll also need a lot of speed when you swing through the impact zone. Think: striking a match.

Place your weight slightly toward the target to promote a descending blow. Then, make sure you swing through aggressively, matching your arm swing to your body turn as you do so. I want you to accelerate through impact while controlling your open clubface. This sawed-off motion allows the ball to climb up the clubface for maximum backspin.

As for equipment, make sure your grooves are sharp and you play a soft ball. You can't pull this off using an old Rock Flite.



4. The Putt Chip

If greenside shots sap your confidence, try my "putt chip." It's simple. Just set up as if you're about to putt, but use your sand wedge.

Start with your weight and hands forward toward the target, and the ball back in your stance underneath your right eye. Use your putting grip and grip down on the club. The ball should be off the club's toe. Set the club's toe on the ground, so its heel is up. This helps deaden the shot.

With both of your elbows bent out slightly, make a putting motion, but strike down into the ball. The ball will come off the club softly and roll just like a putt. Use this motion with different clubs in your bag to produce more or less roll. Warning: This shot works only from within three or four yards off the green.



5. The Flop Shot

Phil Mickelson is the world's best flop-shot artist, and it has gotten him out of many jams. It's the perfect shot when you have to carry a hazard and land it on a sliver of green.

First, open your club's face, so its toe almost touches the ground. Then open your stance and aim your feet, hips and shoulders to the left of your target.

If you have a tight lie, place your weight forward and drive the club into the ground with a full-length swing. If you have a fluffy lie, center your weight to shallow the bottom of your swing arc. (If your weight is forward like the tight lie, the club will slide underneath the ball too much, and you'll whiff it.) By centering your weight, your angle of approach into the ball will be more level, which means you'll have much less of a chance of sliding underneath the ball.



Place the toe of your sand wedge on the ground, grip the club as you would your putter and make a putting motion — but strike down on the ball!

