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Jack Nicklaus believes that touch and feel with the putter are more important than mechanics.

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For great putting trust your touch

By [Patrick Cohn](#)
GolfWeb Columnist

Great putters that I work with all believe that having good touch and feel is necessary for great putting. You can't have confidence on the greens without a good sense of touch.

Why is touch so important? Touch controls speed, and having the right speed is half the battle of making putts. You must have the touch to leave the ball close to the hole on longer putts. But touch also dictates the line you select on breaking putts. On breaking putts, you have to hit a putt with the right speed in order for it to take the correct amount of break you planned. If hit too hard, a putt won't take the break, if hit too soft, a putt won't hold its line.

Great putters talk a lot about the importance of having "soft hands". Soft hands is light grip pressure, which allows you to feel your putter head and improve touch. Great putters have excellent touch and feel on the greens. Most good putters, like [Jack Nicklaus](#), believe great putting depends on having good touch or feel and it has little to do with mechanics.

Some players say that you are born with good feel and touch, and it can improve only so much with practice, but most players believe that feel and touch develop through practice and repetition. Most great putters rely on specific drills to improve their touch. The level of touch you develop ultimately depends on how you practice to improve touch.

PGA Tour veteran [Larry Mize](#) says "Most good putters have good touch and feel because putting is a lot more than stroking the ball toward the cup. You have to have good feel to be a good putter."

Great putters rely on their natural ability and instincts to make putts--they don't putt thinking about mechanics. They rely on feel, touch, instinct, and their vision. They know how to get the ball in the hole without thinking about "how to" get the ball in the hole. Bob Murphy, one of the best putters on the Senior PGA Tour said he just likes to get comfortable over the ball.



"The best putters in the world... they look, they think, they envision, use hand-eye coordination, and boom, they hit it," Murphy said. "I don't worry about body position, I just walk in behind a putt, wiggle around until I get comfortable and then I hit it."

Bob Murphy says he just trusts his instincts.

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Bob Murphy is definitely not a mechanical putter. He goes on what feels natural and instinctive. He sees the putt, gets comfortable and "feels it to the hole"--that simple. When you think too much about stroke or how to putt, you overload your brain with information that is already stored in your memory. That's why you practice--so you don't have to think about stroke and you can focus on feel and target line.

A player must constantly work at developing touch on the greens. Controlling your speed consistently requires that you always have a feel for the greens you are playing on. Use the your warm-up to heighten your sense of touch for the greens so you can be more comfortable and confident standing over those 40 footers. Next month I'll talk about how to develop touch in practice.

Email your questions to Dr. Cohn at PGA_PACK@aol.com.

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