

Full swings from the fairway bunker

Jon Meyers, Teaching Professional
Dana Rader Golf School, a Golf Channel Academy

Tour professionals make fairway bunker shots look routine; especially with short irons. Apply the following recommendations and take your fairway bunker shots to a whole new level.

As you approach the fairway bunker, begin to make a quick evaluation: How is the ball sitting? How severe is the front lip or wall of the bunker? Is there a hazard or another obstacle between you and the hole? The answers to these questions will help determine both club selection and the direction or the line of your next shot. Remember that a scratch or professional golfer carefully plans every shot. The execution might vary, but he or she always has a plan.

Even if it means giving up some yardage; you must honor the first rule of bunker play – to get the ball out! As your skill level increases, you can raise the level of expectations for this shot, but, with the design of some fairway bunkers, simply getting the ball out and on to the fairway is a victory! Always remember the course management goal of avoiding big numbers on your scorecard.

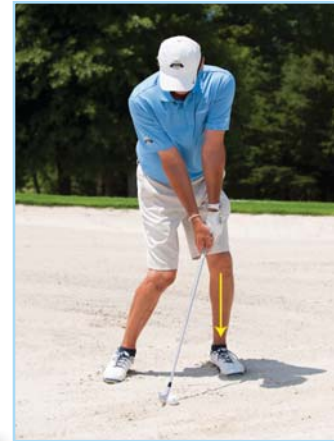
Fairway Bunker Success:

* Choke down on the grip, approximately 1 to 1.5 inches.

* Stable/quiet lower body during the swing. Avoid excessive leg drive and your shots will be much more consistent.



* Select 1 to 1.5 more club than an equal distance fairway shot and be realistic about clearing the face of the bunker. Your number one goal is getting the ball out.



* However, depending on the face or front of the bunker, multiple clubs may be selected, including a hybrid.

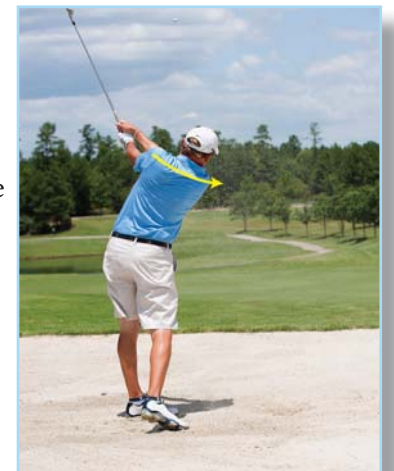
* In creating your stance, barely dig your feet into the sand, not nearly as deep as you would in a greenside bunker.

* It's crucial to strike the ball first, not the sand. Your hands will pass over the ball first, with 80-90% of your weight on the front foot. Think "ball first, sand second".

* Ball position: back of center; this will assist in ball-first contact.

* On the downswing, turn your shoulders more level than in a traditional full swing shot.

Practice often and when you apply these tips during your round, the fairway bunker shot will not be as much of a challenge. As a bonus, practicing full swing shots from the sand will improve your standard turf shots as well.



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