



Throwing Technique Clinic

Discussion Points and Demonstration Suggestions

Anyone who has ever brought a friend to a disc golf course to play for the first time has more than likely led a mini throwing clinic themselves. The Amateur Disc Golf clinics are led by experienced players and cover a basic introduction to throwing techniques. These are not meant to be overly technical but rather an easy-to-digest introduction to basic throwing techniques.

The following is information on various discussion points and possible demonstrations to be used. It is up to each event director to make modifications that best suits the players in attendance and their own teaching style. In general, a clinic should run between 15 to 30 minutes in length and focus on one part of the game like putting, approach shots or driving. In each case the instructor will need to discuss and demonstrate various grips, stances and disc selection in addition to sharing the basic rules of the sport.

Warm Up

Just as in other sporting activities it is wise to stretch and warm up the body before playing. Effective warm up exercises will add to player's performance and reduce the risk of injury. Just playing catch with a recreational disc can serve as a good warm up before playing on the course.

Demonstration Suggestion – Start with the ankles and work your way up the body stretching the knees, hips, torso, shoulders and neck. This can be achieved by doing circular movements in each area both clock-wise and counter clock-wise.

Basic Rules

It is wise to explain the very basic rules of disc golf including tee area perimeters, marking a lie, finishing a hole, scorekeeping, out of bounds areas, etc. It is important to always be aware and respectful of people around the playing area. Many disc golf courses are located in public parks. Right of way should always be given to park users.

Players need to remember to remain quiet and avoid unnecessary movements while other players are throwing. It is also common throwing etiquette to stand behind and out of the eye line of the player who is throwing until the throw is complete.

Demonstration Suggestion – Use a mini-marker disc and show how to properly mark a lie. When demonstrating how to putt take a moment to show the difference between establishing balance and a falling putt.

Disc Selection



Putter



Mid-Range



Fairway Driver



High Speed Driver

Disc golf requires navigating through a series of holes with a large variety of obstacles. Knowing how different types or molds of discs are better suited to use than other discs will increase your success on the course. Your disc selection will depend on the various throwing situations encountered on any given hole.

Every mold has unique design features that give it a specific kind of stability and speed in its flight characteristics. There are specific discs designed for driving, approach shots and putting. Putters and mid-range discs tend to fly at slower speeds and on more of a straight line, while drivers fly fast and tend to fade hard at the end of their flight pattern. The drivers also have a tendency to skip at the end of the flight, where the majority of putters create softer landings with less fade.

Discs come in many different types of plastic as well as molds. Each disc has a unique feel in your hand as well as unique flight characteristics. Some discs are much harder and rigid than others, while some will have a slick finish and others will be tackier in your hand. Having a variety of discs with various textures and flight characteristics is a great thing. This enables players to find discs that really resonate with their throwing preferences.

It is important to note that beginners should try to master the flight of putters and mid-range molds before moving onto higher speed fairway drivers. This is a big mistake that many beginners make. Moving to a faster higher speed disc before they are ready can be detrimental to their game.

Demonstration Suggestion – Show the new players a physical sample of a larger rimmed putter, more narrowly profiled mid-range disc and a high-speed driver. Let them feel how each one sits a little different in their hands.

Basic Throws

Backhand and Forehand (Side Arm)

There are two basic conventional throwing techniques used in disc golf, a backhand and forehand. There are many more specialized throws such as thumbers, tomahawks, grenades, rollers, etc. but it is wise to begin with a focus on the backhand and forehand throws.

- **Backhand**

The backhand is the most commonly known throw whether on the beach with a Frisbee or playing disc golf. The stroke is very similar to that of a backhand stroke in tennis. Most beginners are comfortable with this type of throw and begin with a fan grip keeping the forefinger on the side of the disc or just slightly under the rim. A power grip is created by three or four fingers making pinch point under the disc. Mastering this grip can add spin and distance to your throws.



Power Grip



Fan Grip

Demonstration Suggestion – Have all of the participants try both a fan and power grip as well as a couple of modifications.

- **Forehand (Side Arm)**

The arm movement when throwing a forehand is also similar to a forehand stroke in tennis. Unlike the backhand throw, much of the power of the throw comes from the wrist flick. Players often start out by pinching the bottom rim of the disc with their middle finger and fanning the forefinger for additional support. Many of the top professional players use a power grip where both the middle finger and forefinger are pressed together.

It is great to learn how to throw both backhand and forehand. You will definitely lower your score by being able to throw both ways.



Power Grip

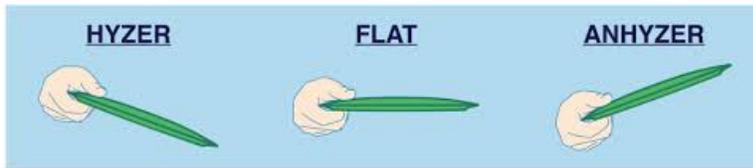


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Disc Release Angles

There are three basic throwing angles that establish the flight pattern when releasing a disc. They are neutral (flat), positive (hyzer) and negative (anhyzer) flight angles. These angles will guide the initial flight pattern of the disc. Changes will occur depending on the stability of the mold of the disc being thrown and the speed of the rotation at which it is released. Good spin or rotation will help the disc fly close to its true nature of flight. Some discs will hold and maintain the original angle of release while others will change pending their stability.



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Carrying a small selection of discs with a variety of different flight characteristics will benefit most players' game. Many discs will change their flight pattern overtime as the disc becomes broken-in. Traditionally as a disc gets worn in from use it becomes more under stable and will start to turn over from its natural flight pattern. The funny thing is that these worn in under stable discs become very valuable to most players because of their new flight pattern, which turns over. They become very important when a hole requires an anhyzer angle.

Demonstration Suggestion – Have all of the participants try line up on each of the three throwing angles. They can practice the throwing motions until they feel comfortable.

- **Weight Transference**

Just like hitting a baseball or a backhand in tennis you want the weight to transfer from your back foot to your front foot. The power of a throw comes from your torso as much or even more so than your arms. It is also essential to execute a proper full follow through on a swing to get the most out of it.

Demonstration Suggestion – Have the players do practice swings and work on building their awareness of the transference of weight from their back foot to the front foot.

- **Body Posture**

Body posture and position help in guiding the flight pattern of a disc. Standing upright will help a disc fly straighter when released on a flat angle. Slightly leaning over and downward will help to maintain a positive angle of flight known as hyzer, slightly leaning back will help to allow a disc to turn over known as anhyzer.

Demonstration Suggestion – Have all of the participants lean their bodies on the three different axis points and practice throwing motions across their bodies.



Putting

Many players believe that putting is the secret to a solid disc golf game. It is important to establish a regular routine before releasing a putt. This regular routine will help the body to relax and mind to focus on the target.

- **Disc Selection**

Putting discs characteristically have larger rims than other disc golf discs. Putters come with either a bead on the rim or without one (beadless). The bead allows the disc to release with greater ease so your finger does not get hooked on the edge. The bottom bead is also helpful as a reference for the placement of your guiding forefinger.

Putters like all discs vary quite a bit in hardness and texture. Deciding what putter to use should be based on what feels the best in your hand. It is important to sample a good variety of discs before deciding on a final choice.

Demonstration Suggestion – Let the players feel the difference between a beaded putter and one that is beadless.

- **Putting Area**

The putting area extend 10-meters out from the target center. This means that a player must show balance after throwing a disc at the target when putting inside this designated area.

Demonstration Suggestion – Show what a good balanced putt looks like and what a falling putt looks like pointing out the difference.

- **Styles** – Push Putts and Spin Putts

Push Putts are usually thrown with very little spin compared to traditional throws. The throwing arm typically starts down at the knee level and is raised up in a pendulum like motion.

Spin Putts are based in the spinning rotation that most people use when first learning to throw Frisbees. Lots of rotation makes a disc fly flat and true. Most spin putters start their putting stroke from above the waistline.

Demonstration Suggestion – Show how each technique is executed and then let players try each style and see how they feel.

- **Stances** – Standard, Straddle and Modified Straddle

The Standard stance is when your favored foot is forward. A Straddle stance is when you distribute your weight equally on both legs standing side-by-side. Modified Straddle stance is when your leg position is between a Standard stance and Straddle stance.



Standard



Straddle



Modified Straddle

Demonstration Suggestion – Have players line up at a target and try each of the three putting techniques. You can share some of advantages and disadvantages of each while they are doing this. I suggest starting with the Straddle stance, then move a to Modified Straddle and then a Standard stance.

Approach Game

- **Disc Selection**

Approach shots are usually and best executed by using mid-range or putter molds.

A good approach shot requires a great deal of finesse. The goal should be to place the disc as close to the target as possible. These placement shots are meant to get onto the green and give you a putt. Approach shots require players to use many different throwing styles in order to best navigate around the obstacles found on the course. Having a good understanding of release angles like hyzer, anhyzer and straight is just the start.

Demonstration Suggestion – Move outside of the putting area at around 40 feet and let players practice throwing on each different release angle. Let them feel what is like to not try to put it in the basket but rather place it under the basket for an easy putt.

Run Up

Many players try to do run up way before they are ready. It is important to understand and be comfortable throwing from a still stance before you try to run up to a lie. Many approach shots and putts are done from a still stance position. Running up to a lie will help to create a strong forward motion but should be used only when needed. Most new players will benefit from maintaining a grounded still stance when throwing.

- **The X- Step**

The X-step is the standard foot pattern for additional power when driving or a long approach shot when using a backhand throw. For right-handed players you will be stepping forward with the right foot in front of the left at about a 90-degree angle. Then stepping behind the right leg with the left at a 90-degree angle. Next you will be planting the right foot while powering off of the left foot using your hips and torso to power the throw as your throwing arm comes across your body.



* Right Handed Player Back Hand Throw

Demonstration Suggestion – Have all of the players move through the X-step in slow motion counting as a three-step movement. They can do this over and over moving forward taking small steps just focusing on the movement and weight transference. Then proceed to let them move to a more regular speed and lengthen the step. Last thing is to introduce a fourth step version where (a right handed player) would begin with a left foot forward from the initial stance and then right over, left behind, right through. Many players do this to provide them with a little extra forward momentum.

Driving

- **Disc Selection**

Every hole requires a different approach to reach the target. Shorter holes can be reached with putters and mid-range discs but longer holes will require the use of fairway drivers and long distance drivers.

- **Looking Away from the Target**

There is a natural tendency to look where you are throwing (keep your eye on the target). The problem is that keeping your head turned forward limits the rotation range of your torso and shoulders during your reach back. It will increase your rotation power by turning your head 90 degrees during your reach back. This can only happen by taking your eye off the target.

Demonstration Suggestion – Go through the full motion of throwing a drive and then let the players to the same.