

THE HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF

# **GOLFING TERMS**

FROM 1500 TO THE PRESENT

**PETER DAVIES**



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PETER DAVIES

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# F

**face**<sup>1</sup> or **clubface** n., or **club face**. The striking surface of a clubhead.

**1835** Harry Harewood *Dictionary of Sports* 165: The face of the club is secured by a piece of hard bone . . .

**1881** Robert Forgan *The Golfer's Handbook* 9: The head [of the driver] . . . is distinguished from those of the "spoon" family by its "face" being straight and almost perpendicular.

**1913** Horace Hutchinson *Country Life* (Jan. 11) 69: For another point of comparison with modern clubs, we may note that these [Hugh Philp woods] are more shallow in the face.

**1927** Robert T. Jones, Jr. & O.B. Keeler *Down the Fairway* 204: The face was 1½ inches in depth . . .

**1976** *Rules of Golf* Appendix II.b: Club faces shall not embody any degree of concavity on the hitting surface.

**1977** Raymond Schuessler *Golf Illustrated* (Summer) 23: Open the clubface and choke down on the grip . . .

**face**<sup>2</sup> n. An exposed bank of sand or steeply sloping side of a bunker.

**1743** Thomas Mathison *The Goff* (in Clark *Golf: A Royal & Ancient Game* repr. 1975, 26):

[She] hears the prayers of youths to her address'd,

And from the hollow face relieves the ball distress'd.

**1881** Robert Forgan *The Golfer's Handbook* 30: If the ball lies in a thick whin or in a deep sandy face, the Golfer's first and only duty is to get it out. . . . *Ibid.* 59: FACE.—1st, The sandy slope of a bunker.

**1890** Lord Wellwood *Badminton Golf* 41: We all know the tremor with which we confront the face of the bunker which lies between us and the hole.

**1912** Harry Vardon *How to Play Golf* 113: When the ball is close to the face of the hazard . . .

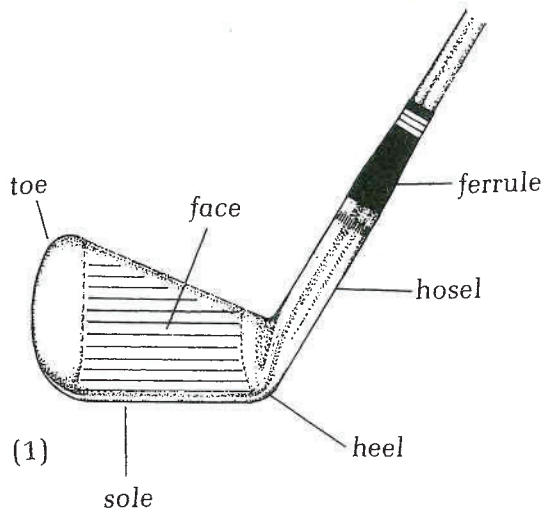
**1931** T. Simpson *The Game of Golf* 209: The face of a bunker must not be kept too tidy, and it should have a slightly overhanging lip.

**fade** n. & v. **1** n. Controlled and moderate left-to-right curve on a shot by a right-handed player; and the converse by a left-handed player; also, a shot played with fade.

**1933** Alex J. Morrison *A New Way to Better Golf* 127: . . . the "laid back" position of the clubface tends to send the ball away with a slight "fade" to the right.

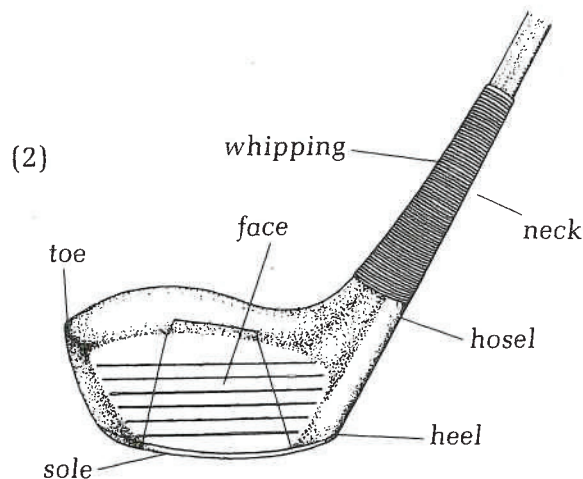
**1948** Ben Hogan *Power Golf* 24: This [open] stance encourages a fade or slice.

**1965** Bob Charles *Left-handed Golf* 3: I've retained that fade which I now play for because I like to get just a bit of movement from right to left.



### head

- (1) four-iron, Walter Hagen, 1979
- (2) three-wood, Ben Hogan, 1979.



**1931** Joyce & Roger Wethered *The Game of Golf* 46: You are moving the club head. Therefore try to have the sense of the club head, if you can, rather than of your hands and the shaft of the club.

**1976** *Rules of Golf* 2.2.a. The golf club shall be composed of a shaft and a head . . . Appendix II.a. The length of a clubhead shall be greater than the breadth.

**heel** n. & v. 1 n. The near end of a club-head at address, immediately below the neck.

**1857** H.B. Farnie *The Golfer's Manual* 34: The head [of an iron] should be deep in the face, more so at the point than the heel, as the former is the more powerful hitting part.

**1890** Horace Hutchinson *Badminton Golf* 75: When the club is laid with its heel—not the centre of its face—to the ball . . .

**1911** James Braid *Advanced Golf* 149: . . . if another part, either nearer the toe or the heel, comes back to the ball, there has been an unintended deviation in the backward swing.

**1953** Bobby Locke (in Wind *The Complete Golfer* 1954, 269): Never hit a putt with the heel of the club.

**1967** George Plimpton *The Bogey Man* 174: I hit my drive off the heel of the club.

2 v.trans. To hit (the ball or a shot) off the heel.

**1862** Robert Chambers *A Few Rambling Remarks on Golf* 22: . . . he is apt . . . when standing too near the ball, to 'heel' or strike it with that part of the clubhead nearest the shaft.

**1893** John Thomson *Golfing Poems & Songs* 2:

The man in a hurry can never dae weel,  
He'll heel her, or tap her, then a's to the  
deil.

**1908** Arnold Haultain *The Mystery of Golf* 114: . . . during the contest he heeled ball after ball.

**hickory** n. & adj. —n. The wood of a North American tree of the genus *Carya*, used from the early 19th century to the 1920s for making the shafts of golf clubs; also, a club with a hickory shaft. —adj. Made of hickory.

**1835** Harry Harewood *Dictionary of Sports* 165: The upper part is generally of some very pliant tough wood, as hickory.

**1869** Anon. *Golfiana; or A Day at Gullane* 7:

My "hickory" I've wielded high,

On Prestwick's wilds so benty . . .

**1890** Horace Hutchinson *Badminton Golf* 65: on the whole, however, no improvement can be made upon split hickory for shafts.

**hosel** n. & v. [Origin: Scottish *hosel*, *hoozle*, *houzle*="socket of a shafted iron tool." Sc.N.D. derives it from the verb *house*="to fix in a socket or housing." If this is correct, *hosel* is not related to the synonymous *hose* (see preceding entry), and their resemblance is a coincidence.]  
**1 n.** The socket or neck of an iron club-head.

**1929** *Spalding's Athletic Library* 122: *Hosel*—The socket in iron-headed clubs into which the wood or steel shaft fits.

**1973** *Bartlett's World Golf Encyclopedia* 363: Then the hosel (that part of the forging which receives the shaft) is ground to size

and drilled to receive the shaft.

**1977** *Ralph Maltby Golf Magazine* (June) 78: Hosel length also increases from the 2-iron (shortest) to the pitching wedge (longest).

**1979** George Gibson in *Henderson & Stirk Golf in the Making* 173: Two big hammer men were in the centre of the smithy at the call of the forgers when beating out the heated bar in readiness for making the hosel.

**2 v.trans.** To hit (the ball) off the hosel; shank.

**1977** George Peper *Scrambling Golf* 119: This will help prevent you from leaning or tipping forward and "hoseling" the ball.

neck or socket shall not be more than 5 inches in length measured from the top of the neck or socket to the sole.

**2 v.trans. & intrans.** To hit (the ball or a shot) with the socket; shank.

**1905** Advertisement *Golf Illustrated* (July 21) 77: J.H. Taylor's Mashie prevents that fell and painful disease known as "socketing."

**1928** Robert T. Jones, Jr. *Golf Illustrated* (Oct.) 14: ... a tendency for the left elbow to stray outward and cause the heel of the club to be presented to the ball, a common cause of "socketing."

**1971** Henry Longhurst *My Life and Soft Times* 111: ... he socketed his tee-shot into some impenetrable bracken beside the tee.

**3 n.** A socketed shot.

**1971** Henry Longhurst op. cit. 206: Some people have only to read about that other ridiculous golf shot, the socket, in which the ball shoots off, knee high, almost at right angles, to start doing it themselves.

**sole n. & v.** **1 n.** The bottom surface of an iron or wooden clubhead, which generally rests on the ground at address.

**1881** Robert Forgan *The Golfer's Handbook* 11: The "Wooden" and the "Brassy" Niblicks are in every respect the same, except that the latter has a "brass sole."

**1913** Horace Hutchinson *Country Life* 248: The piece of brass which is screwed on the sole of a brassey ... is ... a worse than useless piece of metal.

**1937** Henry Longhurst *Golf* 105: He said that the secret of successful brassie play was to imagine yourself slapping the flat sole of the club on the ground immediately behind the ball.

**1952** Henry Cotton *History of Golf in Britain*: He had to use ... ordinary niblicks with "thin" soles.

**1977** Davis Love *Golf Digest* (July) 47: ... the blade will turn and misdirect the shot. This won't happen with a wood because it has a curved sole.

**2 v.trans.** To ground (a club) at address.

**1910** Walter J. Travis (in *Wind The Complete Golfer* 1954, 147): Mr. Holden's tee-

shot found a pot bunker. ... He unwittingly soled his club.

**1916** P.A. Vaile *The New Golf* 11: Many quite good players handicap themselves by their faulty method of soling the club.

**1948** Ben Hogan *Power Golf* 139: Of course, there is a penalty for touching the sand or soling the club at address [in a hazard].

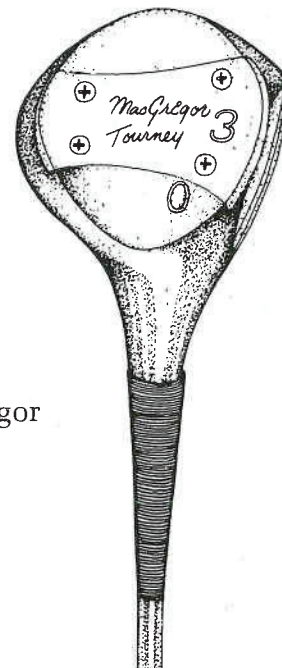
**1977** John Jacobs *Golf Magazine* (July) 56: If you sole the club correctly and aim the leading edge of an iron, or the face of a wood, at the target ...

**sole plate.** A metal plate screwed to the sole of a wooden clubhead.

**1973** *Bartlett's World Golf Encyclopedia* 364: The first operation is the insertion of the sole plate, which is done by stamping and forming the clubhead to receive the plate. Aluminum plates go into drivers and brassies, brass plates into the fairway woods.

**spade or spade-mashie n.** **1** A deep-faced iron club, no longer in use, somewhat more lofted than a mashie.

**1927** Robert T. Jones, Jr & O.B. Keeler *Down the Fairway* 180: I used either a



**sole plate**  
three-wood, MacGregor  
Tourney



**2** (Of a lie) sitting down close to the ground.

**1963** Arnold Palmer *My Game and Yours* 74: You're used to tight lies, where the ball sits right down against the ground as if it were lying on a tabletop.

**1969** Jack Nicklaus *The Greatest Game of All* 251: ... with a tight lie on crusty ground I decided that the intelligent shot was to lay up.

**toe** n. & v. **1** n. The end of the clubhead; the point farthest from the shaft.

**1862** Robert Chambers *A Few Rambling Remarks on Golf* 22: ... he is apt, when standing too far from his ball, to fall in to it, and run the chance of striking with the point or 'toe' of the club.

**1931** Roger Wethered *The Game of Golf* 69: ... and the toe of the club ought to turn on to the ball a little sooner.

**1977** Davis Love *Golf Digest* (July) 47: If the ball is above your feet, the toe of the iron will catch.

**2** v.trans. To hit (the ball or a shot) with the toe of the clubhead.

**1890** Lord Wellwood *Badminton Golf* 33: ... either 'heeling' or 'toeing' the ball instead of hitting it with the middle of the face.

**1911** James Braid *Advanced Golf* 149: The ball is either toed or heeled, and it is sent off in the wrong way.

**3** v.trans. To turn (the clubhead) in toward the player's feet.

**1941** Patty Berg *Golf* 81: Don't "toe" (turn in) the club-head. This results in a "smothered" hook or pulled shot (to the left).

**toed in.** (Of a clubhead) having a specially prominent toe, with the face turned slightly in.

**1975** Herb Graffis *The P.G.A.* 67: ... the pull head, which was toed in, was for the players who habitually sliced.

**top** v. & n. **1** v.trans. & intrans. To hit (the ball) above its center.

**1862** Robert Chambers *A Few Rambling Remarks on Golf* 21: ... if too much force be applied, the chances are, that instead of hitting the ball fair, it is topped, and so driven a comparatively short distance.

**1915** Alexander H. Revell *Pro & Con of Golf* 13: Or you may do just the reverse, top the ball.

**1931** Bernard Darwin *The Game of Golf* 109: A moment later he had topped into the bunker at his feet.

**1968** Buddy Hackett *The Truth About Golf* 64: Mantle topped his ball and it went in the creek.

**2** n. A shot in which the ball is topped.

**1890** Horace Hutchinson *Badminton Golf* 314: As long as we do not make an egregious top into the burn ...

**1977** Jim Hardy *Golf Magazine* (Aug.) 38: There is more than one way to top a ball. There are in fact three separate and distinct kinds of tops. ... The three kinds of tops are the "shallow top," the "steep top" and the "missed-radius top."

**topspin** n. Forward rotation of the ball in motion.

**1953** Bobby Locke (in Wind *The Complete Golfer* 1954, 268): It is so necessary to put topspin on the ball when putting, as it makes the ball run through on the line to the hole.

**torque** n. & v. **1** n. The tendency of a clubshaft to twist under the impact of a shot; torsion.

**2** v.intrans. (Of a clubshaft) to twist under the impact of a shot.

**1977** Advertisement *Golf Digest* (July) 23: ... torsional stability of steel to stop excessive torquing.

**torsion** n. The tendency of a clubshaft to twist under the impact of a shot.

**1952** Henry Cotton *History of Golf in Britain*: Then it was realized that a shaft with no torsion was nearer to the ideal one.