

THE “SWISH” WAY OF SHOOTING – TROUBLE SHOOTING AND REVIEW!

IF YOU’RE HAVING TROUBLE “GETTING” THE SWISH PROCESS ... PLUS IT CONTAINS SOME HELPFUL ADVICE, WHETHER YOU’RE HAVING TROUBLE OR NOT!

If you’re not “getting” the Swish approach to shooting a basketball, or you just want to review things, see if this can help you pay more attention to what’s needed to learn. Refresh your awareness of how you do things, and remember to keep things very simple. The key is your ability to coach yourself, and your developing awareness is how that is possible!

My videos, **Swish**, **Swish 2** and the brand new **Swish 3** on Free Throws (available 1st of the year), reveal what’s needed and break it all down for you. Watch them over and over, looking for the clues that will help you. The examples will clarify and simplify things and inspire you. Navigate all around my website (<http://www.swish22.com>), reading the articles, endorsements, testimonials and the 118 Newsletters. In each Newsletter I wrote something for kids. See the photos and video clips. The Swish way is different from most coaching of shooting and it’s both powerful and simple! My insights are unique and explain and demonstrate clearly how great shooting happens. And, notably, the Swish approach to shooting can be proven to be the way of the great shooters, past and present! It shows exactly what Diana Taurasi and Steph Curry (to name two current super shooters) are doing, and it teaches you step by step how you can learn to shoot like them.

VISIT MY “SHOOTING GALLERY” PAGE

Go to my Shooting Gallery Page (<http://www.swish22.com/shooting>), and see some extraordinary clips, especially the ones in Group A that are in Swish 3, three women who have almost identical Release motions. They are perfect examples of what I teach!

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1) A WORD ABOUT THE OPEN STANCE

- The Open Stance is very important and powerful. As I say in my clinics, it has several advantages over the obsolete* Squared Up stance. It's more natural and more instinctive. Give a ball to a kid and tell her/him to push it upward and forward to a target with one arm, and the child would, with experimentation, learn naturally it's most effective to rotate the body and push/reach forward with the strong arm. The body would wind up open, of course. It's also easier to align the hand and ball with the eye from such a stance. Try it from both stances and you'll see what I mean.
- It's also more powerful for a Jump Shot to "step in" to shoot than to stay square or to jump-stop square, as so many of my competitors say to do. In a clinic awhile back, when I said it was more powerful from such a stance, a coach said, "Oh yeah, like a boxer would stand to throw jabs." If left handed, a boxer would stand with the right foot, right shoulder and right arm forward. There's more power that way. If a boxer squared up, there would be less power and much less balance. Try it both ways.
- The more open you are (up to ~45°), the more in line and powerful you will feel. Then you can really "Let it Fly," knowing your accuracy is more assured. You'll feel under and behind the ball, in control of the action of the Release.

(*I say obsolete because it's appropriate for two-handed shooting, which I did occasionally in high school, plus underhand free throws, which I also did in high school for awhile ... and hated the technique... but nobody takes those shots any more.)

2) FEEL THE POWER FROM THE WHOLE BODY!

- The Open Stance has an added benefit I realized recently: a great feeling of WHOLE BODY action can occur! From such a stance, there can be a feeling of the shot coming from the feet and legs, up through the upper body and out the arm, hand and fingers. It's a neat feeling, strong and stable. But if you are Squared Up, all it seems to feel like is the upper body, mostly arm and hand, doing the work, less powerful, less stable. Try it, again, both ways and see what you find. Who would want to shoot like that?

3 INERTIA IS HUGE!

- This comes from Newton's First Law of Motion, the "Law of Inertia," which says, "An object in motion tends to stay in motion and in the same direction until affected by an outside (or unbalanced) force!" This can relate to the "Setting" of a basketball. If the ball is On Line and moving before the Release, and the Release keeps it moving and On Line, the resulting Inertia helps dramatically with accuracy and some power. If you bring the ball up Off Line or you pause at the Set Point, there can be little or no Inertia. Note that Inertia is created by the arm action, not the body! Experiment with different setting actions and you'll have such an experience of Inertia you will always shoot with as much of it as you can generate (and have time for).

4) ALIGNMENT IS CRITICAL! GENERATE AND "CATCH" THE INERTIA!

- Learn to "align" ball as long as possible with eye and basket. This "setting" on line is a major factor in accuracy. Get the ball moving before the Release starts and then KEEP IT MOVING IN THE RELEASE (this is the Law of Inertia in action). If you catch the ball high, then you need to "dip" it in order to generate some Inertia. If you don't have the space or time to dip the ball, even just a little, maybe you shouldn't be shooting because accuracy becomes more difficult. I'm realizing more and more that this "Inertia" thing is a major factor in accuracy. Play with it, catching some, catching a lot, catch none, bring the ball up Off Line to the Set Point (no Inertia possible) and shoot that way. Then bring it up consciously On Line or dip it On Line and shoot. You'll realize how valuable it is in shooting.

5) HOW YOU START THE SHOT MATTERS!

- Note where the center of the ball is when you start your final shot motion. Is it in a relaxed position, with forearms basically horizontal, maybe mid-torso? If you start high and don't dip, your connection with the UpForce action of legs and middle body will be interfered with and little or no Inertia is possible. For a Free Throw, this is where you start after any Pre-Shot Routine. For a Jump Shot, it's where you first get the ball aligned with the eye and basket (after starting from

the Triple-Threat position or after a pass or dribble). If it's Off Line, your accuracy is in jeopardy. If it's high and you don't dip the ball to trigger the shot motion, then Inertia is compromised.

- Let the leg action trigger the setting of the ball! Also, is the ball aligned with your shooting eye when you start? If not, accuracy is affected. And is the hand also in line with eye and basket, already facing so it doesn't have to turn or rotate as you shoot, thus introducing variables?
- At the last instant, vary the arch to control distance. It'll become instinctive to shoot a bit higher or lower to adjust for power and the distance. It's the final adjustment, and with such control of distance plus the great accuracy you're learning, you'll start swishing shots more and more often. And hold the Follow Through for an extra half-second to complete the connection with the target.

6) FIRST MOVE!

- This applies to Free Throws and to the setting of a Jump Shot or Set Shot after you've done your step-in (1, 2) to an Open Stance. As the legs go down to trigger the shot motion, what do you do with the ball? Does it go "up," "down," or stay "neutral," (Neutral means the hand and ball are locked in motion with the body, not independent. It implies a less free arm/hand action, giving, perhaps, a little Inertia, but much less than if you disconnect any arm action from the body's motion.)
- My suggestion is to make the First Move down, at least a little, which sets up Inertia that you can catch to stabilize your shooting. For a long shot, especially 3's, dip it way down, even all the way to the thighs, because you surely need the power of both the UpForce and a deep dipping to enhance the Inertia. Try it all ways and you decide which action is most effective.

7) IT'S THE RELEASE!!! IT'S THE RELEASE!!! (Remember the Spike Lee ads, "It's the Shoes!"?)

- The Release is the CRITICAL motion and tends to be the major problem if it isn't fully learned and trusted. Remember it's a "Push & Flop" action, with the arm straightening to full extension at the same speed and force every time with relaxed wrist and hand. The wrist and hand are so relaxed the hand bounces in the Follow Through.
- Once it starts to be mastered a little and is beginning to become "AUTOMATIC," then your shooting will begin to soar! Work with it until it starts to become automatic, and then work it some more so it's beyond automatic, totally dependable.
- Learn the Release in close where, with little or no leg power and with the ball starting at the Set Point, you can make shot after shot after shot. Work on developing a Release that's a pure "push-and-flop," not a throw or flip. The shot is aimed upward (call it "Medium High"), maybe 50-60 degrees up from horizontal (10:45-11 on a clock, the arm being the hour hand), taken from the Pure Release Distance, what I now call the "Sweet Spot." Don't shoot too high, but shoot high

enough that gravity has a chance to slow it down. You can see the downward energy of the ball diminish for a second when gravity has had an effect.

- Then move back a little at a time and learn then to “catch” the UpForce and the Inertia. Catching UpForce is easy. Just shoot early and quick. It makes shooting easier. And Inertia will be there to catch if the setting is On Line and you don’t hesitate or pause the shot action.

IF YOU LOSE YOUR NEW-FOUND SWISH STROKE, RE-LEARN THE PURE RELEASE!!! IT’S THE MASTER MOVE, AND IT’S EASILY LEARNED IF YOU START SMALL AND SLOW, OVER AND OVER. KEEP RETURNING TO THE SWEET SPOT UNTIL IT’S PART OF YOU! WHEN YOU MASTER IT, YOUR SHOOTING WILL ALWAYS BE THERE. IF YOU DON’T, YOUR STROKE WILL ALWAYS BE UNSURE, SHAKY, UNRELIABLE.

8) GRIP AND THE OFF-HAND IN THE SETTING OF THE BALL!

- If you have a question about the strong hand and how to hold and release the ball, just think of the “whole” shooting hand being involved. It cradles the ball and then its only job is to keep the ball on line with wherever the arm points. Don’t worry which finger touches the ball last. Shoot from the whole hand. If you think it’s one finger or another, you will just complicate things and make yourself wrong if it isn’t. Review the section on grip in Swish 2.
- The "Off" hand is there for support only in the holding and setting of the ball. It then hangs back, contributing nothing more to the shot. It can be, generally speaking, in one of two positions: (1) On the side of the ball, or (2) more under and to the side and behind the ball. Our thought until recently has been that both can work equally well. Most of the great shooters we've seen have the Off hand on the side since it's what is normally taught. But now, with the emergence of the concept of Inertia as a critical factor in setting and shooting a basketball, I’m changing my thinking and my recommendation.
- If the Off Hand is more under and behind, it can be more involved in the setting process and the creation of Inertia. In fact, from a more “under” position, the Off Hand can do all the lifting! The result is a smoother and more obvious upward movement, and thus the power and control Inertia offers is enhanced. If it's on the side, both hands are employed in any dipping and /or lifting of the ball, and there is no one solid, one-handed, on-line control. It just seems Inertia is less identifiable when both arms are involved in the setting. When you understand what Inertia is and how it can improve accuracy and add a little power, then check out different grips and see what works for you relative to it.
- If you'd like to try the lower Off Hand grip, here's an exercise to find it: First, hold the ball above your head with the strong arm. Shake out your "Off" hand so it's relaxed and free. Let it hang by your side. Then drop the arm with the ball, keeping the forearm vertical, and then just "catch" the ball with your Off Hand around shoulder height to support the Strong Hand. That is where Tom's grip is, just a natural reaction to a falling object. (Don't make the position of this

hand into a formula ... it "should" be here or there, the thumbs should form some letter ... etc. Just let it be a free response to the falling ball.) This will thus be a "natural" position, not a forced one!

9) IF TAKE THE BALL OVERHEAD, DON'T COCK YOUR SHOOTING HAND TOO FAR BACK!

- If you cock your hand back to where the palm is facing straight upward, that's too far. From there you HAVE to flip your Release, at least a little, thus engaging unreliable muscles. Instead, cock it back no more than ~50-75° from vertical. Then you can push the ball forward and upward with the arm and the relaxed wrist and hand.

10) WORK IN CLOSE AND SMALL!

- An important thing about working to change something is to "Slow it down." Move in close and slow it down so you can feel and see what's happening. Don't move faster or shoot more quickly than you can feel! This allows Awareness to work more readily and easily. Only when you're able to do it well slowly should you move back and speed things up. If you complicate it too soon, performance and learning will suffer.

11) EXAGGERATION AND EXTREMES

- It's also a powerful way to practice to exaggerate things for the purpose of more fully distinguishing them. Take the ball way overhead, for example, to learn more about where the Set Point should be. Shoot off your shoulder on purpose, then in line with your ear, then the strong eye. Which seems more accurate? Play with height and spins, different stances. Take it too high, too low, then in the middle. Just play with different possibilities. This gives your body more latitude to play and learn in. Shoot with your opposite hand, too. That's a great way to further distinguish the "distinctions" of shooting.

12) WHATEVER THE PROBLEM IS, FOCUS AWARENESS ON IT!

- Whether you have a problem with direction, distance, footwork, stance, grip, the Release, Follow Through, or whatever, you can become your own coach. Focus your awareness on the problem, really get to know it, then you can start to change it. If it's inconsistent direction, for example, observe what's "real" about the direction of your shots and find out exactly how the poor direction or the inconsistency happens. Is your hand rotating out to the side (pronating, some call it), or is it turning left or just stopping, tense and anxious? Once you know what's happening, then your body will start to change it. When you point the light of awareness on something you don't want, change is possible.

13) BECOME A LEARNER!!!

- It's important that you pay attention and learn these simple things. Learn from each shot. Don't just shoot, miss, and then get frustrated. Figure out what didn't work and then change what you do (Self-coach!). That way you can take on anything and start to reach your potential more and more.

14) IF YOU'RE NOT GETTING IT, DON'T GIVE UP!

- If it seems you're not getting this enough to suit you, don't blame yourself or blame the Method. Just re-apply yourself. See if you can become a "World Class Learner." Watch the videos again. Work with a friend or against the wall again, slowing things down, making them smaller, simpler. Learn it only as fast as you can feel and see things. Once you "get" it in some area, then increase the difficulty, move back a bit, move more quickly. If it breaks down, go back to the beginning.

15) THIS IS SIMPLE STUFF -- DON'T OVER-COMPLICATE IT!!!

- Watch the videos over and over! Note the pure Releases of the kids in the videos (at the end for "Swish," and all the way through for "Swish 2"). See the exciting new clips on the "Shooting Gallery" page (<http://www.swish22.com/shooting>). Note the relaxed, bouncing shooting hands, note how UpForce is being used, how Inertia is being generated and "caught." We all instinctively know Inertia helps if it's happening before the Release (through Dipping or whatever motion), but some coaches are saying "not" to dip the ball, thus killing any chance of helpful Inertia. (If you stop your shot motion [hesitate] after the ball reaches the Set Point, then any Inertia you've generated is lost as you try to create ball movement and direction from scratch.)

- You can coach yourself now. It's all right there. It's clearly discussed and demonstrated. Again, stay in close while you learn the basics. Then add distance and speed and various footwork and the shot, hopefully, won't break down. If it does, no problem. Expect it. Just return in close and rebuild it ... again, and again, and again.

- Keep notes as you study and work with this and learn to shoot more and more effectively. Think of it as a "story" you can share with others, how you overcame difficulties, misunderstandings, misconceptions and how you coached yourself to a new you, to becoming a "Shooter!" Then write it up for me to post on my website and in my Blogs. Thanks.

APPENDIX

A1) SYMPTOMS OF POOR SHOOTING WITH SUGGESTIONS TO CORRECT:

- *Always Short or longer shots (i.e. 3's) are a strain*

You're either underpowered (need more UpForce or need to shoot earlier to catch more of that energy, or need to generate (stronger) Inertia in the setting of the ball and "catch" it) or you are shooting too high for the available body energy.

- *Always Long*

You're not shooting high enough. At the moment of Release, be ready to vary the arch up or down to accommodate the power and distance.

- *Missing left and right*

Your wrist and hand are surely causing this. If hand and ball are not aligned with the eye, correct that! Observe what's happening and then learn to relax them so direction is created by the direction of the arm extension, nothing more.

- *Direction is shaky, inconsistent*

If hand and ball are aligned properly with the eyes, then this is probably due to lack of connection to the body's UpForce (leg/lower body action) and/or Inertia (which comes from the arms in the Setting process).

- *Shots are always flat*

You're probably using too much upper body action and not enough lower body energy (UpForce). If you "wrist flip" the shot, this is the trajectory you will get. Shoot quicker, rely more on the big muscles of the lower/middle body rather than the upper body. You are also probably not getting much (or any) Inertia in your shots.

- *Spin is funny or inconsistent (or a "Dead Ball")*

Your wrist, hand and fingers must be active, thus interfering with the beautiful, natural, medium backspin you will get with a Swish Release. Relax them. The only job of the wrist and hand is to cradle the ball and keep it on line with wherever the arm action points. Maybe your off hand is getting involved. Solve that by pure awareness (find out when and how it's happening and observe it, quantify it, exaggerate it, etc.) -- then it will start to diminish its role. You could also change your grip or open your stance more so the off hand/thumb cannot interfere.

- *Shots are often blocked*

You're shooting without enough separation, or you might have too slow a setting and Release, or you're shooting too flat. Work on footwork to prepare the body for a quick, upward, high Release (as high as determined by the power you're generating), and learn to set and release in one motion, very quickly.

REMEMBER: ALL OF THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS/ ANSWERS ARE THINGS YOU CAN FIGURE OUT YOURSELF BY OBSERVATION AND AWARENESS. YOU DON'T NEED ME TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO NOW.

A2) EXPLORE THE VARIOUS "DISTINCTIONS" OF SHOOTING!

Whenever you go to a court you have the opportunity to explore the act of shooting and develop more and more the “Distinctions” of the skill. One definition of a Distinction is “a quality or feature that differentiates.” Distinctions are the things that define an act or motion. With a basketball shot, here are some of the key distinctions: Stance, UpForce, setting the ball and the set point, Inertia, alignment, how you release the ball (throw, flip or push), height, spin, the action of the arm, the action of the wrist and hand, and the Follow Through.

Here are some other creative Distinctions you’ll notice in the videos and in my writings and coaching. Discover some of your own. Spending time playing with them to expand your awareness is time well spent:

- Alignment -- what is meant by it?
- Full Extension of the arm (elbow locking)
- Chain reaction (from legs through entire body)
- Dipping -- what is it, when do you need it, what does it give you?
- Inertia -- what is it? How do you “catch” it? How do you maximize it?
- Full Out, meaning ~70% of maximum arm extension, with no fear, no holding back
- The idea of “Thinking Up!” (What does it do for your general ball flight?)
- Free Throw, the START
- Free Throw, the FIRST MOVE
- Shooting Zones -- what Zones do you employ?
- Stance like a boxer -- feel the forward energy, a strong, rooted feeling
- Creating shots from “nothing;”
- Letting it Fly!

Think of this as “Mastery Practice,” working on the shot in small windows. They will be pieces of your shot that can be put back together each time for a stronger picture of how you shoot.

When you go to a court, spend time playing with (exploring) these and other Distinctions, particularly the ones that interest you, but all of them eventually. Spend a few minutes here, a few minutes there, one at a time. For example, stance: As you may or may not know, I advocate strongly an “open” stance, and the idea of “stepping in” to shoot Jump Shots or Set Shots. Other people think that “jump-stopping square” is the way to do it. If you shoot from a squared stance, alignment of the ball with the eye is more difficult and you can’t move the body energy forward, only up or side to side. If you tried going forward with the body, you’d fall over. Thus the arm has to do all the horizontal motion, thus engaging smaller muscles that are less reliable.

An Open Stance is like a boxer stands to throw jabs, open with strong shoulder and arm forward, and braced by the back foot. It’s a much stronger position. Play with both concepts and you can find out what works best for you.

A3) EXPLORE, EXPERIMENT, EXAGGERATE!

Try different stances, square, open a little, open a lot, open too much, try a “closed” stance, turning the opposite way (it will seem weird to you, I think, but worth trying). Jump-stop going to the right, jump-stop going left. See if shooting from such a stance and movement is easy or difficult. Then change to “stepping in” and see how that feels.

As you set the ball, do you align it with your eye (alignment is an important Distinction). It’s most effective that the ball be aligned with the strong eye. Some coaches believe the forearm needs to be vertical (and the elbow under the ball), so they advocate aligning the ball with the shoulder to allow for that relationship. Try it and see what it does (or doesn’t do) for you.

A4) YOU BE THE BOSS HERE

Be a Learner and you’ll get better and better at distinguishing shooting and performing it. Watch other players as they shoot. Can you see why they’re mediocre or why they’re great? What can you learn from them? Our bodies are amazing learning machines, but we need to experience what’s going on and then “let” the body learn and do its thing. Awareness can’t be over-stressed. It’s how we learn. Enhance your awareness, and then take the “Responsibility” to observe and make changes -- sometimes subtle, sometimes gross -- and who knows what’s possible? Remember ... Experience is the Teacher, not my words or those of any coach!

A5) YOU ARE CAPABLE!

In the end, you’ll see you are a totally capable learner and performer.

A6) TRUST YOUR AMAZING BODY!

You’re in possession of an amazing physical body! Trust it to learn and perform and it will! When you start to become masterful at a skill, the game of basketball (or any sport or action) can become a thrilling thing, showing us how remarkable our bodies are. I say shooting a basketball can be a very simple, easy thing. Find out if that’s true for you. Good luck and best (s)wishes!

Tom Nordland

Swish International, Inc.

Tom@swish22.com

<http://www.swish22.com>

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