

# Explain Your Terms

*Many times when you use "blocking out, casting, etc.," the poor, perspiring pupil has no idea of what you're talking about*

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ONE of the great failings in golf instruction is that the pro doesn't always explain himself in terms that the pupil understands. If he has been in the game very long, chances are he has fallen so far into the habit of using shop or trade talk that it may not occur to him that he is using expressions that are completely foreign to the poor fellow who is taking a lesson.

It would be enlightening if all of us, and particularly the veteran teachers, would pay close attention at least once a week to the terms we use in instruction work and determine just how often we may be talking over the heads of our pupils. Occasionally I have tried to take stock in this manner, but I'll confess that I don't do it often enough.

Study a list of your favorite teaching terms. You use such expressions as blocking out, casting, dead clubhead, inside out, locked and perhaps a score of others. These are good, precise terms, as far as you are concerned. But what do they mean to the person you are teaching?

## **You'd Be Confused, Too**

Possibly nothing at all. Put the shoe on the other foot for a moment. If, in talking to you, your pupil were to use such words and phrases as short selling, tort, slab lattice and others with which he may be familiar because of his occupation or profession, you'd be bewildered. When a pupil or a member of your club uses these expressions he isn't talking to you on your grounds, just as you probably aren't getting through to him when you use langu-

age that only you and another pro understand.

Let's try to picture what goes on in the mind of a pupil when we start using some of our unfamiliar phrases.

Perhaps you don't like the way in which he is pivoting, so you shout, "You're blocking out the shot!"

## **What's In the Way?**

That may sound pretty profound, but certainly it isn't enlightening. The poor, perspiring pupil, never having heard the expression, wonders what you're driving at. Blocking out conveys the impression that something must be getting in the way, but for the life of him he can't figure out what it is. It may be any of 16 parts of his anatomy.

So, you attempt to show him, placing your hands on his hips and swiveling him around to get the feel of what the hips should do on the downswing. Or, if you have detected poor footwork or poor hand action, you may place a hand on his left knee and manipulate it in the turning action you want to accomplish, or in case of the hands, show him what you mean by supinating the wrists.

That is fine. There is no better way of teaching golf than literally taking the pupil in hand and maneuvering him into the position or action you want him to achieve, or at least feel or sense.

## **Term Is Dropped**

But perhaps there is one thing you overlooked. You were shouting something about blocking out before the physical correction was made. Now, you don't even mention the term again. The result is that the pupil knows what you want him to do in certain phases of the swing, but he still is puzzled by that "blocking out"

term that remains unexplained. If he is the kind of person who doesn't want to show what he considers to be his ignorance by asking you to define or explain it, he'll probably never find out what it means. But it will bother him to the extent that he will be more preoccupied with it than with what you have showed him about pivoting, or hitting with his hands. So, part of the lesson is lost for him.

That is why I say explain your terms, constantly taking time to query the pupil to find out if he knows precisely what you mean when you use some of the phrases peculiar to the golf teaching profession. It will enable him to grasp the whole lesson five times faster than if you leave some of your trade terms dangling without explanation.

I feel that the explanation of terms for the benefit of women students is even more important than for men. The reason is that men ordinarily have a larger sports or golf vocabulary than women, and as a result, have at least a vague idea of what you are talking about. But it isn't going to do any harm to be completely on the side of clarity in teaching either sex.

#### Some Have Wide Range

The more advanced the pupil, the wider the range of shop terms you can use in teaching him. By the same reasoning, all of your terminology should be fitted to the pupil. The fellow with a technical background revels in all the involved expressions you can throw at him, but on the other hand only a few of these may confuse the person who works at a non-mechanical occupation. Junior players usually are bored by the intricate phrase unless it has true pictorial qualities. Above all and regardless of whom you are teaching, don't use high flown professional phrases just for the sake of impressing someone or making him feel uncomfortable.

While I am very much opposed to bewildering people with unexplained trade terms, I think there should be more teaching of the theory of the swing and of the hit. I haven't been able to do as much of this as I would like, but I think it would be interesting to be able to devote a good deal of time to small groups and explain these things by chalk talks and demonstrations. I'm sure that all my pupils would be better golfers if they had a clearer understanding or better, a fuller mental picture, of what they are doing when they swing a club. At the same time they would benefit if they had a better conception of what happens when the clubface meets

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### Raise \$2,375 for Ed Oliver

A total of \$2,375 was raised on Ed Oliver Day at the recent playing of the Palm Springs Classic, according to Walter Burkemo, Eldorado CC pro and local chmn. of the Oliver fund. The money was turned over to James L. O'Keefe of Chicago, national chmn. of the fund. Under O'Keefe's guidance, a committee has been formed to raise educational funds for Oliver's four children and to help Porky over the hump. He has been living in Wilmington, Del., following removal of a lung last summer.

Contributions should be sent to the Porky Oliver Fund, Western Golf Assn., Golf, Ill.

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the ball properly. Maybe all this sounds a bit schoolroomish, but I don't think there is a golfer alive who wouldn't profit by being a bit longer on theory than he actually is. That goes for the top players, too.

#### Strong Visual Terms

As a final note, I think you can improve your teaching by searching out the terms in your vocabulary that have strong visual impact. I have two favorites. One is the use of "compass." To impress the pupil with the need for maintaining a solid vertical axis throughout the swing, I tell him that his head and spine are the point around which the pointer (arm, hands and clubs) spin or swing. Several of my pupils have told me that this simple idea has given them a true picture of how the swing should be executed, and even a few say the thought of the compass is uppermost in their mind when they address the ball.

Another term that has registered well, and particularly among women, is the "surveyor's rod." It is, as you know, the imaginary vertical line that extends from the ground and just touches the outside of the player's left shoulder at address. I admonish my pupils not to lurch or lunge beyond that line at any time during the swing. Most of them remember not to, or at least, they are well aware that they shouldn't. It isn't uncommon for me to look out the pro shop window or across to another fairway and see one woman player instructing another by using a club as a surveyor's rod. It's a great satisfaction to know that one of my favorite teaching tools is being treated with so much respect and confidence.