

HANDY TOOLS

Getting a handle on replacement grips

We know. It's hard to get too excited about fresh grips. But when you consider how they can quickly make your clubs feel brand new – much like how putting new tires on your car smoothes out the ride – you realize that they're a great, inexpensive alternative to plopping down your credit card for a new set of clubs.

Like clockwork, swap out your old grips at the beginning of your golf season every year. Re-gripping is quick. And in most cases, a golf shop can turn around your entire set in less than an hour. To tell if you need new grips, look for the signs: There's little traction on your current ones; they're rock-hard, slick or eroding to where you can see indentations; or you find black residue on your glove palms.

It's not just your sweaty hands that degrade them, either. The weather can be a factor. So can where you store them – hot car trunks are notoriously difficult on them. And the more you play and the tighter you hold them, the quicker they wear out.

This year there are some impressive new models. You'll find unique surface patterns, different texture depths built onto the same grip, and new

materials that offer you amazing traction. The more tacky the grip, the easier it is for you to hold it securely with less hand tension during your swing, which gives you more fluidity.

Another thing you'll notice is the variety of sizes available – many brands offer up to five. But choose carefully. An undersized grip (one which your hands overlap too much while holding) promotes increased hand action, tension in your forearms and shoulders, and pulled shots. An oversized grip (one you can't comfortably place your dominant thumb over the other with a standard overlap hold) limits wrist rotation and can prevent a snap hook but stiffens distance. Too large and you need to squeeze to hold onto it, which creates tension. Oversized grips are usually great for golfers suffering from arthritis, as they won't need to close their hands completely around them.

Oversized putter grips continue to be hot on the PGA Tour and in shops, too. They generally remove any wrist action from your putting stroke, which forces you to make a more fluid stroke and allows the ball to take a truer roll.



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UST Mamiya's ST1 (\$10.99/jumbo, \$6.99/smaller sizes) is the company's first-ever putter grip. Feeling soft and tacky, it sports an embossed pattern that provides traction in strategic areas for more control. It comes in three sizes.