

Try to Avoid Excessive Tension

[by Bob Menzies, PGA Professional](#)

Throughout my teaching career, I have heard students often mention this common phrase, "I want to keep my left arm straight", or, "I'm trying to keep my left arm straight". Most golfers are trying to keep their left arm straight in hopes of making their swing arc as wide as possible - in hopes of gaining more clubhead speed/distance. Consequently, their efforts often do more in-swing harm than good. Tension certainly prohibits any good golf swing from being made.

When taken literally, keeping the left arm straight can be detrimental - as it will most certainly cause for too much tension - and you will actually end up losing clubhead speed/power/distance. Additionally, keeping the left arm too straight and rigid can restrict proper upper body rotation, and in many cases will actually shorten one's swing arc. I mention to my students that it is certainly acceptable to have their left arm/elbow "straight" - just as long as it has a little bit of "bend/give" in it. Although it may appear that many of the top players in the world have "straight" left arms/elbows, very few actually and literally do. Again, almost every one of the world's top players has some slight "bend/give" in their left arm/elbow.

I would suggest that you try making some practice swings in a mirror, and take a look at the amount of "bend/give" in your left arm/elbow. Keep in mind that during your backswing, if your wrists are properly hinging (at about the hip-high position), along with your shoulders making a full 90 degree turn, your left arm most definitely has no need to be fully "straight/locked".