



What Should I Know About Swingweight

Swingweight is a factor that casual golfers rarely concern themselves with and serious golfers often concern themselves with.

But what is it, and is it something with which *you* need to be concerned?

In non-technical terms, swingweight is a measure of how the weight of the club *feels* when you swing it. It is *not* the same thing as a club's overall or total weight, and isn't even expressed as a weight measurement (swingweight is expressed through a letter-and-number combination code explained below).

Why is swingweight important? Because if your clubs do not match in swingweight, they may not all feel the same to you during your swing.

Swingweight, Technically Speaking

As for the technical definition of swingweight, here's how clubmaker Ralph Maltby describes it: "The measurement of a golf club's weight about a fulcrum point which is established at a specified distance from the grip end of the club." OK, then.

Michael Lamanna, Director of Instruction at The Phoenician Resort in Scottsdale, Ariz., puts Maltby's definition in easier-to-understand terms: "Swingweight is a balance measurement and is the degree to which the club balances toward the clubhead." If Club A has a balance point closer to the clubhead than Club B, then Club A will feel heavier in the swing (regardless of how many total grams Club A and Club B actually weigh).

So there are different ways of saying it, but it comes back to how the weight of the club feels during the swing.

Swingweight vs. Actual Weight

Swingweight and the actual weight of the club are different things, and understanding the difference goes a long way toward understanding the role of swingweight.

The actual weight of a golf club is expressed in grams. Swingweight is expressed as "C9" or "D1" or some other combination of letter and number (more on that in a moment).

Those measurements are taken using a swingweight scale, and yes, individual golfers can buy and use one if they really want to:

- Buy a swingweight scale on Amazon

Take a club, say a 5-iron. Imagine adding lead tape to the 5-iron. No matter where you put the lead tape, the actual weight of the club will be identical. That is, if the lead tape is placed on the clubhead, or at the middle of the shaft, or on the grip, the club's actual weight will be the same - the original weight of the club plus the weight of the lead tape.

Now imagine *swinging* that 5-iron with the lead tape on the clubhead, then at the middle of the shaft, then on the grip. How much weight you *feel* you are swinging will be different depending on where the lead tape has been added - even though the total weight of the club is identical in all three instances. That's swingweight. The farther the down the club (toward the head) the lead tape is placed, the heavier the club will *feel* during the swing.

What Is Swingweight Used for in Golf?

The key application of swingweight is in matching the clubs within a set. You want all your clubs to feel the same weight during the swing. If you are replacing a club or adding one, you want the new club to match the swingweight of your current clubs.

But how important is swingweight, really? Recreational golfers who fancy themselves equipment "experts" - you know the type - might argue that it is *very* important, and for many golfers, they are right.

But not everyone is convinced that swingweight is something most recreational golfers need to lose sleep over.

Lamanna, for one, says, "In my experience, most players can only sense large differences in swingweights, and even Tour pros have a hard time telling the difference in swingweight between clubs with different shafts."

Lamanna says the focus seems to be shifting back to total weight as the key weight measurement. "It seems in the past 10 years there has been a reduced emphasis on swingweight by club manufacturers. The overall weight of the club - in particular the shaft gram weight - is these days the measurement upon which they focus.

"Research indicates that lighter shafts are, in general, better for the average golfer. Less weight produces shots of greater distance and accuracy for beginning and intermediate players. The low handicappers and pros have higher swing speeds, more control over the movements of the club and they possess an acute sense of 'feel' for the head of the club. The shafts best suited for them typically are higher in gram weight and have heavier swingweights."

Perhaps the moral is that it is *ideal* to have a set of clubs that match in swingweight, but for most golfers it is not *critical*, so long as the swingweights of the individual clubs are close.

The Swingweight Scale

Swingweight is expressed with a letter and number; "C9," for example.

The letters used are A, B, C, D, E, F and G, and the numerals 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (G goes up to 10). Each combination of letter and number is known as a "swingweight point," and there are 73 possible swingweight measurements on this scale.

A0 is the lightest measurement, progressing up to the heaviest, G10. If you feel your clubs are too light in the swing, then you'll want to go up the scale; too heavy, down the scale.

The manufacturers' standard for men's clubs is D0 or D1, and for women's clubs, C5 to C7.

Swingweight can be adjusted post-production by adding lead tape or changing out components (i.e., going to larger clubhead, or a different shaft or grip, or trimming the shaft). Custom clubmakers can also adjust swingweight in some cases by adding different types of fill material inside shafts at different points, or inside clubheads.

If you would like to know your swingweight, stop by the clubhouse and we can measure it for you.

by Brent Kelley

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