

The Ultimate Beginner's Guide

For Today's Woman Golfer



Key Steps to Golf Fitness • Finding the Right Instructor • Best Equipment to Buy
Golf Basics From Grip to Swing • Trouble Shots • Rules You Need to Know
Scoring, Handicaps and Etiquette • Golf Networking • Making Business Connections

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Introduction

There's a good chance if you've downloaded this book from golfgurls.com that you are a woman golfer, or you know a woman golfer who may need some beginner's advice, or information to help improve her game. (In case you are a guy, a lot of this information is pretty basic and will apply to both men and women. So you should find it helpful. Keep reading!) *The Ultimate Beginner's Guide* is packed with great information to help the new golfer get started.

I've been playing golf for about eight years, and blogging about it for the last two. I'm not a great golfer by any means, not even a good golfer, but I do enjoy the game and play with a certain passion and curiosity and am always looking to learn more and improve.

By continuing to research and write about golf for myself and sharing that with other beginning golfers, **I am slowly but surely getting better at the game.**

I've learned that golf is one of those sports that looks easy but is very difficult to master. It's an individual sport that requires focus, concentration and practice —*lots of practice!* Most amateurs who play, do so just for the good times it brings among friends. Very few of us will ever excel at the game. But we can't help comparing ourselves with the tour pros on TV. They make it look so easy! (I have to remember, most pros started playing golf when they were in grammar school and have been playing competitively ever since.)

Most amateurs begin later in life, perhaps for business, networking or just to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. **Don't get discouraged if you find yourself struggling a bit at the beginning.** Golf is not a game you can ever win, really. It's a

game that you just play. Every day you are out on the golf course is a great day and one to be savored.

I hope the advice you find within these pages will help your game rise to a new level!

And don't forget to subscribe to [golfgirls.com](http://www.golfgirls.com)

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Mullaly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pat Mullaly, editor, golfgirls.com

Five Top Reasons I'm Hooked On Golf

I began playing golf when I stopped sailing my boat.

That's right. Golf is a sport I chose by default. At the time I lived in a seaside community just south of Boston and had a small day sailer that I used to putz around the harbor, visit the islands and once a year, take a gang of friends on an overnight "adventure sail" to a harbor somewhere up the coast. We had a blast. But I left that town and moved to a location on Cape Cod, and even though the Cape is surrounded by the ocean, getting a mooring for a boat is next to impossible. Families pass them on to their children or siblings. There's a ten year waiting list. So I sold the boat and looked around for another sport.

When I'm not blogging, I work as a graphic designer and networking with business people is just something I do to bring in new clients. I was often asked to participate in golf tournaments and fund-raising events but always declined as I had never picked up a club. After I moved to the Cape, a client invited me to join him on his company's golf team. I warned him I was not going to be a good partner, but he just laughed and made it clear the event was all in good fun and not to worry. I figured if he wasn't worried, I'd borrow some clubs and give it a try.

On the morning of the tournament I decided to head out to the practice range a little early just to try things out. I had even borrowed a pair of golf shoes from a friend and thought, "I can do this. No problem." Of course, all I did was whoosh past the ball. I had no clue what I was doing. Another player, a woman, was

watching me from the club house balcony and as I tried for the third time to hit the ball at my feet I heard her say to whoever could hear, “Oh gawd, it’s going to be a long day.” I was humiliated. And annoyed at myself. This should be easy: you take the golf club in hand, place a ball on a tee, swing, hit, and go!

Nothing. Nada. No way.

So my first top reason for being hooked on golf is that **I am determined to get good at this game.** That first golf game, was, as I predicted, a disaster. When I did manage to hit the ball, I landed in water, in the trees, in the other fairways — still, it didn’t matter. We were playing a scramble format, and only needed one score for the team. Luckily two of the three players I was with were excellent golfers. We didn’t win the tournament, but we had a lot of fun.

And this is my second top reason for being hooked on golf: **it’s a lot of fun.** No matter how I play, and believe me, I’ve had some really bad rounds of golf in the eight years I’ve been playing it’s still fun. There are times when I’ve done well, and each year I play my handicap has gone down a point or two. But no matter how I play, it’s a fun game.

I’ve met a lot of fine people playing golf. People I would otherwise never meet in business or within family circles — I continue to meet on the golf course. People from all walks of life and circumstances play golf. Golf is a great way to meet people - my third top reason for being hooked on golf: **the networking.** And golf has helped my business’ bottom line. Some fellow golfers have become great connections leading to work for my business.

The fourth reason I am hooked on golf is **the chance to escape my business.** As a designer I often sit at my computer seven or eight hours a day, working out new concepts, new programs, new solutions for clients. It’s fun and I enjoy it. But if anyone asks if I’d like to go hit a bucket of balls, or play a quick round on a nearby executive course, I’m there. Golf gives me the excuse to get outside in the fresh air and get in some exercise. I need more of it.

And finally, the fifth top reason I am hooked on golf is **the promise of the next great shot.** Golf is addictive. Most of my rounds are filled with a lot of what I call “hazard golf,” - sand bunkers, bushes and long grass. I’ve learned how to get out of all of them as I am in them so much. But the shots I remember — the ones that keep me coming back for more, are the golf shots that seem to sail effortlessly off my club head and land softly just inches from the pin. It’s happened a few times

and I know it can happen again. Every time I step up to a tee box and set up my drive, I have that image in my mind of the ball sailing through the air and landing exactly where I want it to. I know it can happen. I have high hopes and great expectations! The next shot will be my best.

So I am hooked on golf. If you are a golfer you know what I mean, and if you are just beginning the sport, you soon will understand.



Golf For The Very Beginner: 6 Essential Questions You Need To Answer Before You Start

Golf is a great sport for just about anyone. It is unique in that it can be played by people at any age, and, unlike many sports, golf is often taken up by men and women as they get older and have more leisure time and financial resources. It's relatively easy to learn the basics and though the rules can be sometimes complicated, there is an abundance of information to help the beginning golfer.

If you are thinking about taking up the sport there are at least 6 critical questions for you to answer:

1. Can you afford the game? Golf is not a cheap sport. You may have free clubs you inherited from your Aunt Elizabeth or Uncle Rupert, but you still need to pay for green fees each time you play a round of golf. What's a "green fee"? This is the cost the owner of a golf course charges for you to play nine or eighteen holes of the game, also known as a "round." Depending on the course, these fees can vary widely, from just a few dollars to hundreds. In addition you need equipment. See point 3 below.

2. Where will you play? Do you have access to a golf course near by? A driving range or practice green? If you can't get to a driving range to practice you can always hit balls into a field nearby. The disadvantage is that you have to go pick up your own balls after hitting them. And if anyone else is in the field hitting balls,

you or she/he might just get bopped off the head at some point. If there is a practice range near by that would be the preferred place to begin. You hit their balls, they are responsible to pick them up. Cost is usually just a few dollars depending on the size of the bucket.



3. What about equipment? You need at least three or four golf clubs - (a 3 wood, a 5 iron, a sand wedge and a putter), a golf bag, decent shoes (sturdy sneakers or golf shoes,) a package of tees and a few balls. If you are determined to just bat the balls about just for fun, then borrow a club or two from a friend, or rent them from a golf store or club. Buy a bag of used balls from your local sports store and pick up a small bag

of inexpensive wooden tees at the same time. But if you are seriously considering taking up the game, check used sports equipment stores, Craig's List, eBay, or flea markets. You take your chances, because most likely the clubs will not fit you exactly (too long, too short, too heavy, too stiff) but it's a beginning. When you finally fall in love with the game you can get fitted for clubs and begin to build your own personal set.

4. Should you take a lesson? Lessons cost money and if you are totally unsure if you want to learn the sport, follow a friend to the driving range and ask them for a bit of free advice. Hit a bucket of balls, and ask them to give you some feedback about your stance, your swing. And don't be discouraged. Golf is not an easy game to succeed at. Most people need a lot of practice just to get into the swing of it. However, if you have already decided you want to learn the game, taking a lesson or two from the pro at your local club is a great idea. If it's a public course, anyone should be able to book a lesson.

5. What's the difference between a public and/or private golf club? Should you join? The biggest difference will most likely be the cost to play and the quality of the golf course. Public courses are just that: public. Some have membership fees that give the members preferred tee times. But anyone can play the course. The greens fees are usually quite reasonable at public courses though the tee times (the assigned time for you to play) are first come, first served. Many public courses are very well maintained by the local town in which they are situated, but there is

no guarantee. With economic times being what they are, it is sometimes hard to maintain a public course. Each golfer can always help the game and the course by proper play and decorum.

6. What are the few basic guidelines you need to know before playing a round of golf?

1. For the very beginner, never play alone, at least in the beginning. Choose a very patient friend who will take you under his or her wing and guide you along the way. Or join a golf clinic and go out with an instructor.
2. Do not let your ego get in the way. It's likely that your ball will end up in the woods or a sand bunker, or behind a tree, at least once in a while. Remember you are just learning the game. Don't hesitate to move your ball back onto the fairway and continue play. And pick up your ball if you aren't in the hole by double the par. (Each hole has a "par" rating, i.e. the number of strokes that a very good golfer should take to reach the green and "hole" the ball.) For example if you are still not in the hole after 10 strokes on a par 5, pick up the ball and move on.
3. Keep up with the group playing in front of you. You should be no further back than half the fairway from the group in front of you. One of the most frustrating things to deal with on the golf course is slow play. If you keep up with the group playing just ahead of you, you're doing fine. Don't worry about the group behind you. You can only play as fast as the group in front of you can play.
4. Don't forget to have fun! Golf is a game you can never win. You can only play it, and every time you do, the game will be different. It all depends on the weather, the course, your disposition, the grass, the trees, the sand, your clubs— there are so many variables that no golf course ever plays the same twice. So just relax and enjoy!



Play Golf With The Right Attitude!

During golf season here in the northeast, I play a round of golf at least twice a week, often with people I have just met. Most of the time the experience is enjoyable and the spirit, light hearted. Even when the weather is dreary and the balls just fly off in any direction but the right one, the group can laugh at itself.

Golf is a serious game, but you don't have to take it too seriously. When you do, that attitude can "infect" the entire foursome.

Within the last month I had the opportunity to experience both extremes of attitude on the golf course: playing with a group so serious about the game that the silence could be cut with a knife, and playing with a foursome who, in spite of their low handicaps, just could not put a good shot together.

The first group were good golfers, each one had a lower handicap than I have. As we gathered on the first tee and made our introductions, I quietly hoped to learn a few things from each of them. The weather was fine and the course was in great shape, but somehow the "golf gods" were not favorable. One after the other of my three companions found themselves in the rough, the sand or out of bounds. Even though we all tried to contain the frustration, there was a lot of cursing going on. As we progressed around the course the silence and negative thinking grew, until by the end of the round, no one was talking at all. We all played badly. It was not a fun time.

Two weeks later I was playing the same course with a group of very good golfers. The weather was bleak and rain threatened the entire morning. Still, my three companions shook off the possibility of bad weather and began to play with enthusiasm. Within just the first hole, all four of us found ourselves in the rough, the sand and out of bounds and our putting was impossible. But unlike the first group, we started to laugh. We began to make jokes, bet on who would get in the most sand bunkers, and just generally tease each other about the horrible play. It was a total hoot. By the eighteenth hole we were just glad the round was over. But in spite of the embarrassing scores, we had a great time together.

It's all in having the right attitude, and I would rather play poorly with a group of fun people, than play poorly with golfers who just take themselves too seriously. Not a one of us will ever be a pro, or rely on our golf for a living. Life is too short. Golf is a game, after all. A game!

Here's hoping to always play the game with the right attitude.

Here's a question for you: When the frustration with bad play grows, what do you do?

How To Find The Right Instructor For Your Game

Golf Instructors Are An Invaluable Part of the Game of Golf

It doesn't matter if you are just beginning to play golf, or you are an LPGA pro, every golfer needs an instructor to help them fine tune their game. When I first began playing years ago, I thought I could learn the game through absorption. I would go out and tag along with my friends and learn as I played. NOT A GOOD IDEA. Not only did I slow down their play and drive everyone playing behind us crazy, but I became a real annoyance as I had to constantly ask one of my companions "Which club do I use?," "Where do I aim?," "Am I doing this right?" They were far more interested in playing their own game than in giving me a free lesson.

I can still remember, on the last hole of the nine we were playing that day, I was so far behind the others, that the only one in sight was the groundskeeper sitting atop his heavy duty lawnmower just off the fairway, patiently waiting for me to move on so he could continue his work. When I whooshed at the ball for the thirteenth time, I finally despaired, reached down and picked it up. The guy on the lawnmower actually stood up in his seat and clapped, loudly. Ugh. Talk about delivering the message. It was time for me to get a golf lesson with a pro.

Whenever you decide it's time for you to get a lesson, where do you go? How do you choose the right pro? I was recently playing with a group of dedicated golfers

and asked them the same question. How do you know who is a good teacher? Their answers varied:

- Ask other golfers you know and find out who they like.
- Visit the pro shop at the club and ask there. Almost every club has a pro on staff or knows one who would be happy for the chance to teach.
- Check out the local golf clubs and see if they have any clinics scheduled. A clinic offers a good chance to check out a pro's teaching style to see if it's a good fit for you.

All good answers. My fellow golfers have all received instruction at one time or another and readily recommended a variety of teachers I could consider for myself. In the past few years I've tested a number of different teaching styles and formats with mixed results.

My first experience with an instructor was at a local driving range where they offered evening clinics just for women, one night a week, throughout the summer. Combined with a buffet dinner it was a great chance to practice, meet other golfers and get a quick meal after work before heading home. It was a lot of fun, but because the clinic was so popular and the course crowded I was bunched in with a lot of other beginning golfers and did not get any private attention. Any mistakes I made remained mistakes. A large group lesson was not a good fit for me at that time.



I then signed up for semi-private lessons. I thought if the group were limited to two or three people it would be better for me. I needed some clear direction on every aspect of the game. The driving range had an LPGA pro working at the facility for the summer and together we scheduled several appointments. The Pro helped me with ball placement, my swing and taught me to keep my head down so that eventually I could actually hit the ball without slamming the clubface into the ground. With only two other students in the lesson I got enough attention and began to practice some drills. The one thing the teacher did for me was help me realize that the generic clubs I had purchased at the local sports store were the wrong length for my build, and before the lessons were completed she had fitted me for several new irons that helped my game tremendously. (More on this in another post about buying equipment.)

The following year I decided to visit one of the public golf courses in my town. I had heard they were offering free morning clinics for women members. By that time I had decided I really wanted to learn the game. I had purchased new clubs, had new shoes and was committed to improving. I knew I was not ready to join the regular Ladies League. These were women who had been playing golf for years. My enthusiasm could not match their experience so rather than head for the clubhouse on ladies day, I took myself to the driving range where the club pro held a 15 minute free clinic for any woman member who showed up. There were about twelve women in the group. We were all beginners and eager to learn.

After demonstrating just one element of the game, one simple instruction we could all absorb in the 15 minute lesson, the Pro sent the group of us off the back nine of the golf course to play however many holes we could get in before the Ladies League (already out on the course and playing much faster than we newbies) caught up to us. It was a valuable experience. Each week I learned one small lesson I could immediately put into practice. And I was playing with women who were all at the same level of play. There was no intimidation. In fact we all offered encouragement to each other. No matter how I swung the club, or landed my ball in a mudhole, I got positive feedback. Slowly my confidence built and I became a better player.



Over the next few years I took private lessons, group lessons, semi-private lessons with a variety of teachers. Some were better than others. Most were just fine, and in every case, I learned something I did not know. Today I continue to learn and improve.

Bottom Line:

Whatever format you choose in which to learn the game of golf, find an instructor who honors where you are right now. You want someone who asks you questions and listens to your answers. You want an instructor who teaches you what you want to know. Tell the person what part of your game you want to concentrate on, and let them teach you. Test the lesson. Practice it. If it works for you, continue. If it does not, then move on and find an instructor who is a better fit. You want a teacher who is also a coach, providing you with encouragement and confidence.

Golf Lesson In A Coffee Shop: Hold The Bagel Please!

Yesterday morning, the most extraordinary thing happened. I had made arrangements to meet with **Sue Kaffenburgh, PGA, LPGA** instructor and one of the “Top Teachers, New England,” Golf Magazine 2007-08, to talk about the upcoming golf season here on Cape Cod. Sue works at Bayberry Hills Golf Course in West Yarmouth and I thought if I could get to her before the season really gets going, I’d have a chance to meet and greet and get a fresh perspective on this great game.



Sue conducts a variety of clinics and classes at Bayberry Hills and is especially interested in promoting women’s golf. The club’s program offering FREE golf clinics in May and celebrating Women’s Golf Month in June is listed on the [Play Golf America website](#) which is where I found Sue’s name and information.

Sue and I decided to meet at the local coffee shop. I had a list of what I thought were good questions to ask, but never had to bother with them. Sue’s enthusiasm for the game, and her love of teaching golf, took over and before I knew it, she had me out in the middle of the shop floor, gripping a golf club and learning a whole new approach to the game. I couldn’t swing, of course— customers would certainly complain. But what I learned in

those few short minutes could very well change my entire approach to the game of golf.

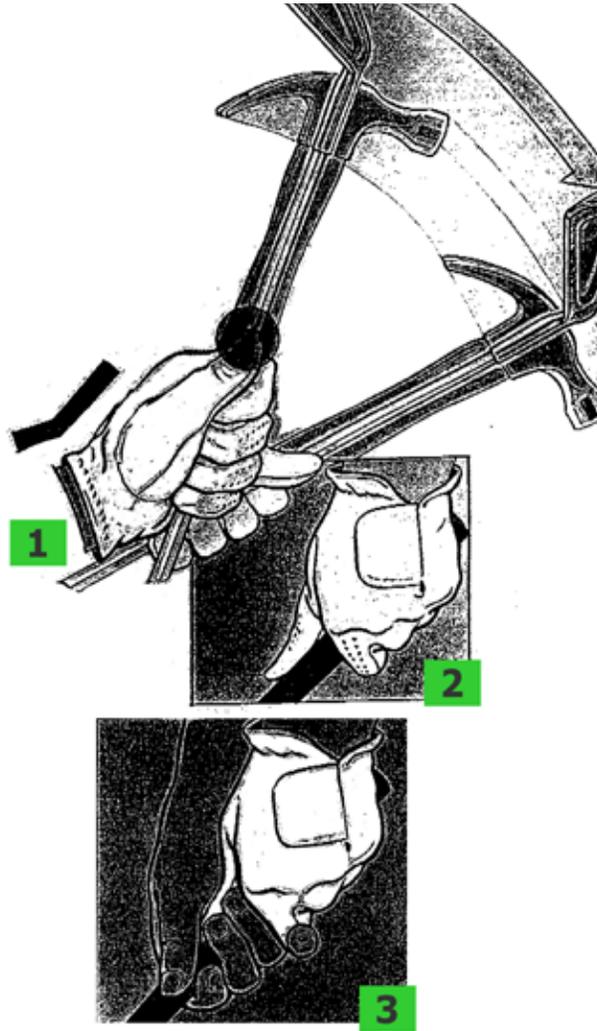
“It’s all cause and effect,” Sue told me. “Some instructors approach golf as learning one skill, then another, then another, as if they are separate items to learn and master. But it’s all of a piece. Like a set of dominoes... it’s a sequence of events... cause and effect.”

It took Sue all of about two seconds to realize the key problem with my game is in my grip. For all the years I’ve been playing the game of golf I thought I was holding the club correctly. Any instructor I’ve had in the past has never said anything, so I thought I was doing it right. I’m not. Sue explained a few things, moved a finger or two up or down the grip, and suddenly I realized what my biggest problem has been and a solution to fix it.

When I play golf I usually have a “death grip” on the club. I’ve tried to lighten up, feel like “I’m holding a bird in my hands,” as one instructor told me, but try as I might, when I swing that club back it feels like I’m going to lose it in the clouds, so I grip even tighter and of course that leads to out of control swings and balls in the woods. What Sue taught me in our coffee shop lesson is a different way to grip the club. If I actually follow her instruction I can’t possibly hold it too tightly, and that should mean I will have more control, a smoother swing, and a ball in the fairway.

I can’t explain exactly what she told me to do, I’m not an instructor after all. And Sue promised to send me a copy of her article describing the grip, her “[Hammer Method](#)” as she calls it. I published it [here](#) on the [golfgurls.com](#) website. I’m off to the practice range as soon as it stops raining. I’ve got to see what this change in my grip can really do for my game.

The article can be found on the following page.



Hammer Exercise for Golf Grip

by Sue Kaffenburgh - New England PGA Teacher of the Year, 2000

For more distance, you need a grip in which the hands are able to activate your wrists to maximize leverage—and power.

To feel this grip, hold a shaft 10 inches from the clubhead, one hand at a time, as if you were hammering with the clubhead. (IMAGE 1) You'll notice three things: The shaft lays in your fingers, your thumb is slightly off-center, and your wrists are free to hinge. When you play, grip the club with your left hand first (IMAGE 2) as if to hammer the ground, then connect the right hand, again as if to hammer. (IMAGE 3) This is your grip, and your key to extra yardage!

Golf Instructors Can Be Wrong! How A Bad Golf Set Up Can Ruin Your Game

When I began to play golf I did what many beginners do, I found an inexpensive golf clinic and joined in, trying to learn a few things before going out and hitting the course on my own. It was a smart thing to do. I paid very close attention to everything the pro told me or what I overheard him telling each of the other golf students. At least I thought I did. Problem is, the instruction was wrong—or perhaps it's more fair to say that I heard the instruction inside out. In any event, what I heard, and what I absorbed was information that was not correct. But I believed it was right. And for the next few years I did my best to incorporate this incorrect information into my game. Although the instruction I heard was wrong for me, I believed it to be true. I shouldn't blame the instructors. It was probably me, hearing one thing, when something else was being said. But I heard the same information from at least three different teachers.

How was I supposed to know that what I was told—what I thought to be sound instruction was bogus?—at least for me. After four years of golf and little improvement a light bulb in my head should have gone off! It didn't. Not until recently did I learn what was going wrong and how to fix it.

It's all in my set up. Somewhere along the line I was told to keep my left shoulder higher than my right, and keep my left arm straight, ball off the heel of my forward foot. You can see in the photo to the left that I followed the instructions, in fact I probably exaggerated the instructions to the point that I was actually rigid. And



Address Before



Address After

the rigidity caused me to grip the club too tightly. You can guess the results. My golf swing was stiff, tight and the ball never went too far, or if it did, it was deep into the woods or deep into the rough. I was doing everything I was told to do and getting nowhere fast.

Finally, met with Sue Kaffenburgh, LPGA pro here on Cape Cod. It didn't take her long to see one of my biggest problems. Before doing anything else, she started breaking down my set up. It's a cause and effect approach. Get the set up wrong and nothing will work correctly. Get it right, and the rest has a much better chance of coming together.

I'm now learning a new approach and it seems to be working. Instead of forcing my shoulders to be on an angle with the left higher than the right, if I simply let my hands drop in front of me, have "soft knees" and allow my grip to close over the club in a natural position, my shoulder rises but without any strain or tension. My arms and hands are much more relaxed and my golf swing is much more natural with results that are far more satisfying. In this "after" photo to the right, you can see the changes.

Why am I telling you this?

If you've taken lessons and you continue to play and practice but don't improve, it might be time to go back to the basics. Find someone who can walk you through your set up step by step. Someone who can watch and observe what you are doing, ask why you are doing each action, and help you determine if, in fact you are actually doing what works. Whether you are just beginning or have been playing for years, getting a fresh look at the basics may be just what you need to keep you on track.

Are you playing as well as you can?

Where Do You Place Your Golf Ball? - You Could Be Wrong!

I have heard instructors give a wide variety of directives to golfers about the right spot on which to place the golf ball when a player is about to hit. Some have a simple approach. Jack Nicklaus, for example, is often quoted as telling golfers to just place the ball in the center of your stance and let the club length do the rest. Well, if you are the “Golden Bear” that general instruction might work for you. But I need a little more explanation.

“Plunk the ball down between your feet, a little nudge towards your outside foot,” doesn’t do it for me either. I need to know why! (It’s just the way I think. If I know why I should place the ball in a certain place, then my visual mind can “see” it, understand it, and remember it.)

I’ve been looking for a good video on YouTube that explains ball position, and I think I’ve found it. From Golf Tips Magazine, Tom Leese, an instructor from Las Vegas, makes it all understandable. Even if you think you know where the ball should be placed, I recommend you watch this video. (<http://youtu.be/ZiFojI31fe8>)

If you sometimes have a tendency to have a ball “pop up” or go running straight down the fairway like a bowling ball, then you should certainly watch this video. It will explain to you why those bad shots happen and help make ball position all the more understandable. Consistently using good ball position will help make your game all the more consistent.

Here’s to lower scores and winning rounds!

Golf Training Aids And Publications To Help Improve Your Game

Once you have your clubs—purchased, fitted or borrowed, you’ve bought a box of your favorite balls, you’ve taken a lesson or two, and you’ve played a few rounds with friends, you should know if you want to continue with this crazy game of golf. If you do, then sooner or later you will be looking to improve.

There are dozens of golf training aids for sale in retail stores or online. Some are great and will bring you success, others are close to bogus. How can you tell which is which? Talk to your friends, ask your pro and listen to the experts tell you what they find works or not. Don’t go by price. You’d be surprised, sometimes the simplest training aids are the best. The most expensive are often a waste of money.

One training device we have tried, purchased and can endorse: **The Orange Whip**. It trains you to swing in tempo and on a comfortable, natural arc. It uses your natural swing and improves upon it. Read the post we published featuring The Orange Whip.: [The Best Golf Training Device I’ve Found](#). It includes a couple of videos that show you the device in action.

Other Golf Training Devices:

If you’ve got money to burn (\$899 US) you might consider **The Explonar**. This is a standup circular device that you stand into. Using the supplied pole, you swing along a fixed plane... “Explonar will give you a powerful and repeatable swing. Fix

a slice or hook quickly and hit the ball longer, straighter and more consistently.” - Pros will use this device at their training centers, but if you have the room and the inclination, you can purchase one for your personal use. The price is high but if you are totally dedicated to improving your game, you might consider it.

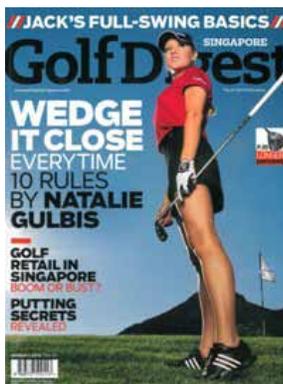
The Path Finder is a putting device aid that “adapts to the individual, it’s easy to use and it provides rapid results. Path Finder is a training aid that helps you find a better putting stroke, better ball impact and better alignment. Underneath the device there are magnets that keep the six pins in place. The 6 pins can be individually adjusted to the golfer’s skills and what kind of putter is being used.” Check it out here.

Here’s something we are curious about... the [almostGolf ball](#). A ball you can use in your backyard to practice and improve anytime.

You can get 2 FREE almostGOLF Balls yourself by going to [almostGOLF.com](#) and signing up. Easy to do. We signed up for [golfgurls](#) and will write up a review once we’ve had a chance to try them out.

Here’s one training aid we can’t recommend.

A Training Device We Don’t Like: One we don’t recommend is the **Medicus** system. It just doesn’t work for most golfers. This is a training club that will “break” if you are not swinging on the optimum plane. Now that’s great if what the Medicus engineers call the optimum swing plane, and your natural swing plane are the same. But for most golfers, there is no match. I know you can twist yourself into a pretzel trying to learn to use the device... but all the instructors I’ve talked with have little use for it. Sorry Medicus. I’ve tried using your 5 iron swing training device and give it a thumbs down. All I got was a blood blister when the hinge bit my finger. :-)



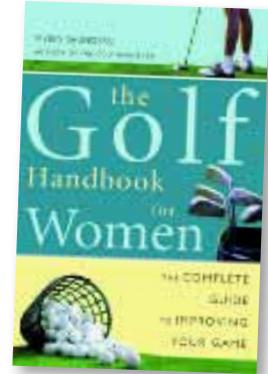
Books & Publications

There are dozens of good publications. DVDs, movies, and magazines on the market today. You can purchase your own copies or check out your local library. YouTube.com has dozens of great training videos you can watch and use for practice. Just go to the youtube.com website and search for golf tips or golf training. We’ve gathered quite a few and placed them on

our golf tips page for easy access. Go to <http://golfgurls.com/golf-tips/>

BOOKS etc. (available on amazon.com)

- The Women's Guide to Golf: A Handbook for Beginners
- Zen Golf: Mastering the Mental Game
- Feeling Naked on the First Tee: An Essential Guide for New Women Golfers
- Golf Girl's Little Tartan Book: How to Be True to Your Sex and Get the Most from Your Game
- A Woman's Guide to Better Golf
- The Game Before the Game: The Perfect 30-Minute Practice
- Every Shot Must Have a Purpose: How GOLF54 Can Make You a Better Player
- Putting Out of Your Mind
- Bob Rotella: Golf Is Not A Game Of Perfect



VHS / DVDs / CDs

- Phil Mickelson: Secrets of the Short Game (2009)
- Golf: Perfect Putting- Mental Training & Hypnotherapy by Dawn Grant
- Short Game Swing Simple By Scott Barrett Golf Instruction DVD Video Putting Chipping Pitching Sand Shots

Golf Clubs: Which To Keep, Which To Toss?

It's an amazing and very true fact that once you declare you are going to learn to play golf, everyone who has used clubs in their cellar, those rejects from golf seasons long past, will suddenly offer those old clubs to you. I know I've done it. I have at least two sets of clubs I've collected over the years and an odd club or two that I bought, used and then decided not to include in my bag. I've tried to give them to beginning golfers, but more often than not they are too short, or too long, or the grips aren't the right size for the new golfer's hands.

All of these variations in a golf club help you determine which clubs are right for you. If you do accept used clubs from a friend, do it conditionally. At first you may think you are saving a bundle by not having to buy your own equipment. But trust me, if the clubs don't fit you, give them back.

Take the offered clubs to the driving range and test them out with a bucket of balls. Have your friend come with you and watch how you hold the club, how you stand and how you swing. Here is a video (<http://youtu.be/0tgd4C914aI>) that shows the proper posture you should take when addressing the ball. If you have clubs that fit you, getting into the right setup should be easy.

When you address the ball your back should be leaning forward at about a 45 degree angle, not stretching forward or curved awkwardly, and you should be able to hold the club comfortably in your hands by simply dropping your arms to your side and moving them in towards the middle of your stance. If you have to bend

too much - the shaft of the club is too short. If, on the other hand you are standing too vertically, the shaft is probably too long. When trying out clubs, you should feel very comfortable with length and your posture. You may be offered a beautiful club to use by a friend, but if you can't assume the correct posture, the club should stay out of your bag or better yet, returned from whence it came.

The length of the club shaft is shortest in the short irons (the wedges, 9 and 8 irons) and longest in the Driver which is a 1 wood and your fairway woods. The clubs in between, 5 - 7, are mid irons and are of a "middle" length, which is all relative to the other club shafts. There are exceptions. I have a 7 wood that was given to me by one of my early teachers, LPGA Tour Pro, Sandra Palmer. It's a Big Bertha and most of the time I can hit it fairly well but it's shaft is almost as long as the one on my driver.

Another consideration when deciding which clubs to add to your bag and which to reject is how the club looks. I know you may think I'm crazy, but if you think a club is actually badly shaped, badly designed, looks just plain ugly, it's unlikely you will want to use it often, and when you do, most likely you will not use it successfully. A few years ago I decided I wanted to try out a new 4 Hybrid - a cross between a wood and an iron. I went to the golf shop. I asked to check out some of their hybrid clubs and the shop pro led me to a rack with a wide variety of clubs from which to choose. I was new to the game and should have asked a lot of questions I did not know enough to ask. What I did do was take four or five clubs into the middle of the shop, tried swinging each to get a feel for the weight, the balance, how the grip felt in my hands, and how the club looked when it was resting on the fake grass.

I told the pro, "I like these two, the Callaway and the Cleveland, but I think the Cleveland is better looking. I like the color. The Callaway is kind of ugly." The pro did not laugh. In fact he assured me that liking the look of the club was a good part of a golfer choosing the "right club." "You have to like the club in order to use it well. Believe it or not, color and shape have a lot to do with it." So I chose the Cleveland. Over the next two years I tried my best to use it but couldn't hit a thing. It wasn't that it was ugly. I think it was just the wrong club for me. Two years later, I tossed it from my bag and sold it for next to nothing on eBay. Looks aren't everything.

Bottom Line:

If you are just beginning to build your set of clubs whether purchased or from friends, test each one out. Take your time evaluating whether the club works for

you or not. Choose clubs you like, for color, design, balance, shaft length, etc. There are dozens of variables. Once you gain experience you will probably want to go to a pro and get properly fitted for your own clubs. It can be an expensive proposition, and there is no rush. You can carry as many as 14 clubs in your bag and most of the time you won't need all of them. Get a great mid-iron, fairway woods. a wedge and a putter and that's a good beginning.



Your Golf Tee: How One Small Thing Can Make A Big Difference In Your Game

The Golf Tee - A Little History...

Every golfer I know uses a golf tee to drive the ball off the tee box. It's not a rule, and not required that you use a tee, but golfers, especially those with today's oversized drivers need to have the ball sit up above the ground in order to hit the "sweet spot" on the club face.

Back in the early days of golf, the "tee," as we know it today, consisted of a tiny mound of sand. It served to elevate the ball. But it was a messy business and by the time of the late 1800's, several different patents for golf tees made of rubber, metal or wood were registered. It was not until the 1920s that today's modern tee, invented by a New Jersey dentist, William Lowell, became popular. Made of a one-piece wooden peg that could be easily inserted into the ground, the "Reddy Tee" was promoted by the great golfer Walter Hagen, for use by both amateur and professional golfers. (If you are interested in more history about the origins of the golf tee, you might find this book interesting: [Golf: An Unofficial and Unauthorized History of the World's Most Preposterous Sport](#))

Enough of history. What about the golf tee you choose to use when you play today?

- What is it made of?
- How long is it?

- Is one style better for your game than another?
- Does it make a difference?



Today golf tees are available in a variety of materials and styles. Wooden tees are still the least expensive traditional tee, but are easily broken. (Some golfers consider breaking your tee a good sign.) There are plastic tees which are more durable but are made in the traditional “Reddy Tee” shape, and a Zero Friction Tee with a three-prong design. The manufacturer claims it provides the golfer with the longest and

most accurate golf shot. They are more expensive (about 10¢ each) but they are nearly indestructible. There are also “environmentally friendly” tees that are biodegradable. These are made of either Eco Friendly Bamboo or a Birch Head with a “no waste” veneered shank. As all wooden tees finally rot in the ground I don’t see the point of spending the extra \$\$\$ on “Eco-Friendly” tees. In fact, buying indestructible plastic tees would probably be more “Eco-Friendly.” - Just my opinion.

Brush-T Reusable Golf Tee

Another alternative is something called the Brush-T Reusable Golf Tee. It uses fixed toothbrush-like bristles to support the ball. It’s design is (according to the manufacturer) supposed to increase your distance and accuracy. I’ve tried the Brush-T and don’t like it. But there are players I know who swear by it and won’t use any other tee.

Step Down Tees

And then there is the Step Down Tee which has a fixed length so that when you place it in the ground the distance below the ball is always consistent. The larger tees are used with the driver, the smaller tees are used with the woods and irons.

Which golf tee should you use? I think it comes down to whatever style of tee works best for you. The most important consideration is how well do you hit the ball off the tee? Does the material or shape make a difference to your game? Test a few and

make a choice. If you can get yourself to a practice range where you can use tees on grass rather than on those rubber mats, bring a variety of tee styles with you. Hit 5 balls off of each using the same club. See if one tee actually improves your distance and accuracy.

Does A Golf Glove Really Make A Difference To Your Game?

I wear a golf glove during every round of golf I play. It never occurred to me not to. As a new player I spent a lot of time watching The Golf Channel—all the pros, both men and women wore a glove. I figured it was just a necessary part of the equipment. It's not. Designed to protect the golfer's hand from blisters after repeatedly swinging the golf club and to add a little extra tackiness to the grip, the golf glove is not required. But most people do use one.

Was it always this way? Golf gloves began to appear in golf journals and catalogs around the late 1890's as a way to add extra protection for a golfer's hands. The golf glove was easily adopted by amateur golfers who were happy for the protection but not by the golf pros. Professionals refused to wear gloves, preferring the feel of their hands directly on the golf club shaft. In fact they welcomed the inevitable calluses that developed from swinging the club so frequently as their "personal skin protection." Meanwhile golf club manufacturers were continuing to develop methods for making the golf grips less slippery. It took over three decades till the 1930's for golf pros to begin to wear golf gloves on a regular basis. Sam Snead was the first major player to use a glove and though players such as Ben Hogan and Bobby Jones never used a glove while playing, by the 1960's gloveless players were the exception. Today, almost every pro uses a golf glove on tour.

One thing to notice while your watching your favorite pro play - they take the glove off while putting. This is one golf swing that requires a more sensitive touch and

the glove just gets in the way. I've just recently started removing my glove when I putt and it seems to help.

What types of gloves are available? Does it matter which glove you use? What are some features you should look for?

First, be sure you are buying the right glove for the correct hand. Most golfers who wear a glove only wear one—and it goes on the hand that is the “upper hand” on the golf club shaft. If you are a right handed golfer, then buy a glove for your left hand. If you are a left handed golfer, look for a right hand glove. Sounds pretty obvious, but there are times it can get confusing. Bottom line - you want the glove to go on your NON-DOMINANT HAND.

Second, be sure the glove fits properly. You want it to be comfortable, flexible but not too tight. With a little bit of wear, the glove should easily conform to your hand. Try on the glove before you buy. Even if you know your size, try it on. Different manufacturers have slightly different measurements. You also want to be sure there is nothing pinching or squeezing any part of your hand and that the closure fits snugly but not too tight. With a glove that fits well, your game might improve, but if a glove fits poorly, stretches, pinches, is too loose or too tight, it will almost surely be a distraction and will almost certainly do nothing to help your game.

What material should you choose? Gloves are made of a variety of materials: soft leather that is water-resistant - not for those big rain storms, but resistant to the perspiration on your hands, also gloves are made from nylon, knitted materials and some synthetics. Your choice depends on climate and weather conditions. I have a pair of rather funky looking gloves that are meant to be used for rainy days. There are two to the set and the material is somewhat tacky. I wear two gloves to ensure that my grip doesn't slip on the club. I also have a pair of winter gloves. Again, they come as a pair and on those crisp winter mornings (I will play in temps down to about 45 degrees F) they are a very welcome addition to my golf attire.

Lately I've been hearing about the Bionic Glove “The only women's glove designed by an orthopedic hand surgeon. Custom design to fit the anatomy of female hands.” - They say the same thing for the guys' hands as well. I've never tried them. They are a little more expensive than the usual \$15 - \$18 average priced glove, but they promise to improve distance and accuracy, and they are supposed to last longer. One feature I noticed in their online advertising: they have a special glove

“the Silver Series” specially designed for golfers with arthritis! That’s something.

The Bottom Line:

Almost every manufacturer of golf equipment offers golf gloves as part of their product line. I suspect they are all shipping the work overseas and that there is very little difference in the quality of the gloves. So choose the one you like because of fit, features, material. They come in a variety of colors, some with ball marker buttons or magnets built into the closure tab, some with anti-slip pads on the palm. Test and see which you prefer and let us know.

If you have a favorite glove that really has brought success to your game, don’t hesitate to let us know. We’ll try it out and post a review.



How To Choose The Right Golf Ball For Your Game

Does the type of golf ball you play make any difference to your game?

When I first started playing golf it didn't matter which golf ball I used. I bought whatever was the cheapest ball on the rack. Better than that, I often used golf balls I found on the course. A lot of players do just that. Some even brag that they never buy golf balls because they find so many under trees, leaves and bushes while playing. I'm just as bad. I've even attempted to play with balls I saved from the driving range. You know, the bright yellow ones with the solid black stripe and the text that reads: RANGE BALL. They never work out very well.

Golf Balls

I'm not a good enough player that the ball I use really improves my game. But I am a good enough player that the ball I use can really screw up my game. In other words, I need all the help I can get and if that means choosing a decent ball that works for my style of play, then I'll cough up the \$8 or \$10 a sleeve and buy a golf ball I can actually hit.

But what makes the difference? What are the different types of balls that are currently on the market and how do I choose which one is right for me?

I've been doing some research and am surprised to find that there are multiple types of ball construction... and each gives a the golfer a different "feel" when the ball is hit. Distance, flight, spin, are all determined by the ball's core. They all have to be regulation size but the number and pattern of dimples on the outside can vary. It's what's inside that makes the biggest difference.

Beginning in 1900 with the invention by John Gammeter of the first automatic winding machine, golf balls were mass produced with a rubber core, surrounded by rubber bands and then covered with a solid cover of something called Balata. Manufacturing has evolved since then and today's golf balls can be of one-piece construction, two piece, multi-layers, and even four-piece balls. In each case different materials surround an inner core and depending on how hard or soft those materials are, balls react very differently.

The Bottom Line:

Here's some basic advice I have discovered: if you are an absolute beginner at golf, then the ball you choose is not that critical. Because you are likely to lose a few during every round, buy the least expensive, or use found balls or buy recycled balls in bulk from your local golf store. Once you stop losing balls on a regular basis, then you can step up!

- As your skill progresses you will want to choose a ball that has less spin. The two-layer ball might work for you. That will keep your hooks and slices to a minimum and help keep the ball going straight and true. Look for a ball that promises to give you greater ball flight and a hard cover. Some to consider: **Callaway Warbird**, **Top-Flite XL**, or the **Wilson Ultra**.
- After you have moved to the point where you are playing more frequently and having some success, you might consider a two piece ball with low compression. Longer distance and lo-spin, with a softer cover, these are great balls for a player with a slow to moderate swing speed. Try the **Maxfli Noodle**, **Precept Laddie Xtreme** or the **Titleist DT SoLo** and see how you do. If you are looking for even more distance try the **Titleist NXT** or **NXT Tour** ball.
- And finally, if you are playing well and consider yourself in the "advanced" crowd, test out balls that use the multi-layer construction. The different layers enhance performance and add distance to long shots and more spin on those short pitches and chips around the green.

The balls in this category cost the most, but if they give you the extra edge you need to win a round, the cost is worth it. Consider these balls: **Titleist Pro V1, Pro V1x, Nike One Platinum, Callaway Golf HX Tour or Bridgestone Golf Tour B330.**

There are many other brands to choose from beyond what I mention here. Manufacturers are always trying to improve their products. In fact, this spring 2010, I heard of what some are calling the best ball out there for advanced players. It's the SRIXON Z-Star. It's YELLOW!!! (a color the guys used to call "girlie" and would never play.) Well, it's getting rave reviews from the pros. If you're ready for it, try it. And let us know what you think.

What's Inside a golf ball anyway? This video will give you a clue.

<http://youtu.be/oJ24AiaNfqY>

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Ever wonder about those golf ball dimples? They do make a difference. Check out this video...

<http://youtu.be/MJBMpRaL2Qg>



Stay Fit For Golf - Prevent Injury & Improve Your Game

Golf Conditioning- Preventing Injury and Improving Your Game

Guest Author: Kathleen Ekdahl, ACE CPT, CSCS

Sports specific conditioning is one of the fastest growing aspects of the exercise and fitness industry. The game of golf, which is very different from a field sport and is recreational for most players, has experienced a tremendous evolution. Much of this evolution can be attributed to Tiger Woods, who was among the first pros to incorporate strength and conditioning exercises to enhance his game. Nowadays, players hit the ball longer and harder, and although this is partly related to improved equipment, most professionals employ trainers and fitness experts to help them maximize their potential.

Sports specific conditioning includes warm-up activities and stretching routines as well as in-season and off-season conditioning. It is extremely comprehensive and individual, necessitating monitoring by experienced strength and conditioning coaches and physical trainers. But, what about recreational athletes? Can they too benefit from these principles? Can even the average golfer benefit from a custom exercise routine?

The answer is a simple and resounding YES. Most golfers take the physical aspects of golf for granted because of the slow pace of the game. But...

“the golf swing is one of the most unnatural, explosive movements in sport... you must prepare your body to both produce and withstand the forces required for powerful drives” (*from Complete Conditioning for Golf, Westcott and Draovitch*).

¼ to 1/3 of all golfers are injured while playing golf, resulting in 40,000 trips to the emergency room each year. Women suffer more upper body musculoskeletal injuries than men, but are less prone to back injuries than men. In general, the vast majority of injuries are from poor swing mechanics and lack of physical preparation. And, of equal importance, most technical problems with swing mechanics are closely related to a lack of proper strength, balance and flexibility. While learning proper swing mechanics is best handled by a golf professional, physical preparation is best handled by a fitness trainer experienced in the game of golf.

Researchers at Brown University conducted a small study with golfers over the course of an 8 week training program. All groups trained approximately 40 minutes a day, three times a week and ALL experienced an improvement in general health and increased club head speed. All participants reported lower scores, longer drives and no injuries during the following golf season. Considering the amount of money golfers spend on the latest and greatest equipment, golf lessons and more, it seems that a little bit of physical preparation is time and money well spent!

Golf conditioning typically consists of exercises which enhance the strength of the muscles used in golf, enhance the flexibility of these muscles and improve the balance/stability of the golfer. Improving these aspects of fitness takes weeks of pre-season conditioning in order to have a positive impact during the golf season itself.

8 weeks should be the least amount of time invested in pre-season training.

Specifically, pre season conditioning should focus on strengthening the “core muscles”- those deep muscles of the back and abdominal area which attach at the spine and improve the strength and stability of the spine. The use of physio balls and medicine balls has been shown to be quite effective in conditioning these muscles. The obliques, the abdominal muscles along the sides of the waist, also need to be strengthened, as they are primarily responsible for the rotation of the spine during the golf swing. Including rotational movements during training is therefore essential.

The strength and endurance of the upper back, shoulder and arm muscles are also integral to a proper golf swing (although true swing power is transferred from the hips up through the torso- thus necessitating a strong core).

A pre-season conditioning program should include

- exercises that strengthen the upper back and back of the shoulder, specifically the rotator cuff muscles, as these areas are so prone to injury.
- wrist and forearm strengthening will also assist the golfer in preventing overuse injuries such as golfer's elbow.
- The large muscles of the hips and legs are where the golfer first sets the golf swing in motion- strength, balance and coordination of these muscles are thus essential to train pre-season. Practicing standing on ½ foam rollers, or any surface that is unstable such as a foam pillow, will improve the balance and stability of these muscle groups, thus preparing the golfer for the uneven surface of the golf course.
- Pre-season conditioning should also include flexibility training. Muscle groups that are abnormally tight are prone to injury. The golf swing requires great torso and upper body flexibility and these muscle groups must be trained prior to the golf season. Overly tight muscle groups that will impede the golf game include the hamstrings, hip flexors, low back, calves, chest, waist and upper back muscles. For example, a rounded upper back posture related to tight chest muscles decreases rotational potential, thus increasing the risk of shoulder and arm injuries. Tight hip and back muscles prevent proper spine angle and power production, thus increasing the chance of low back injury.

Once golf season is upon us, a proper warm-up routine, both physical and mental, should always be performed prior to golf. Stretching to maintain flexibility should always be performed after golf. These are the areas most recreational golfers greatly neglect. A proper warm-up should include

- dynamic stretching (stretching through movement) that warms up the muscles used in golf
- a few gentle static pre-stretches to make sure that all of the golf muscles can move smoothly through their natural range of motion. Using a golf club during the dynamic and static golf stretches is a great way to insure a

mental as well as physical preparation routine.

- Post golf, stretching the muscles mentioned above is always a good idea, as repeated golf swings can shorten the range of motion of these muscles over time.

Although there are many aspects of golf conditioning that require training with a fitness professional, there are some simple stretches and strength training exercises that most golfer's can learn about through golf conditioning books and articles. Personal Best Personal Training offers a golf conditioning program called Fit for Golf which can be accessed through the Member's Only section of the Personal Best website. See www.personalbestpersonaltraining.com for more details.

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Kathy Ekdahl, CSCS, ACE Certified Personal Trainer, is the owner of Personal Best Personal Training in Hudson, Massachusetts. She is a former health club owner and has been teaching Yoga since 1997. Kathy is a TPI Certified Golf Fitness Instructor and is the Staff Personal Trainer at The International Golf Club, Bolton, MA. Kathy also coaches Women's Varsity Lacrosse at Hudson High School.

Three Ways to Protect Your Skin While You Play

It takes about four hours to play an 18-hole round of golf. That's a lot of time out under the sun. Do this a few times a week and your skin is exposed to hours of damaging UV rays. Multiply this by a just a few years of golf and your skin can suffer irreparable damage. It might not show up while you are still young, but rest assured by the time you hit your mid forties, that sun damage will show in the way of pre-mature wrinkles and age spots.

If you play golf, you have no choice but to be outdoors in the sunshine. How do you protect your skin from damaging UV rays?

1. **Wear a hat.** This first solution is so obvious but often overlooked. Many women golfers prefer to play without a hat, or sun visor. But it is one very quick and inexpensive option.
2. **Wear sunblock.** The higher the SPF number the better. Here is a link to the Skin Cancer Foundation which is filled with relevant information and advise on which are the best products to meet your individual need.
3. **Use an UV Protection Golf Umbrella** and attach it to your golf cart. There are several on the market. One of the best is form UV-Blocker. Click here to view more details.

Be smart and safe while you play.

The Secret To The Best Sunblock On The Market

If you play golf outdoors (and who doesn't), you need to protect your skin from the harmful rays of the sun.

Yesterday during my weekly round of golf with my local league, one of the women asked my advice about sunscreen for golfers. She was wearing a wide golf visor and sunglasses to protect her face and eyes from the glare and damaging uv rays, but she's been playing under the hot sun and has developed a couple of sun blisters on her lips.

My first advice was to have her seek the guidance of her dermatologist. (She already had an appointment scheduled. Lucky!) Unfortunately so many of us are suffering with sun damaged skin, it's hard to get an appointment! Fortunately, the last time I met with my skin specialist I asked her the very question my friend was asking.

**What is the best sunblock on the market for people who play golf all season?
What do I use to protect my skin?**

The reality is that for most of us who play outdoors, the damage is already done. So many women have foolishly spent their teenage years on the beach or poolside, slathered in baby oil, seeking the perfect tan. Our skin is now showing the results, and our dermatologists are warning us, if we don't get the right skin protection there will be serious consequences.

No one wants to look older than they are. But skin, especially facial skin, can reveal your age faster than just about any other feature. You can call them "freckles" but when those brown age spots start to grow and pop... it's time for some serious prevention.

Here is the advice my dermatologist gave me.

If you're shopping for sun protection, I suggest you bypass the sunscreen and go directly to the sunblock. Sunscreen does what it says: it screens the harmful rays of the sun, but they still get through, no matter how high the number. What you want to do is BLOCK the sun's damaging rays, and for that you need to get a product that contains ZINC, the best known blocker on the planet. Remember those lifeguards with their noses covered with white cream? The smart ones used zinc to protect their facial features. Without it, serious sun damage was inevitable. There are a number of products on the market, both in stores and on line. Look for ZINC as

the active ingredient and you will be using a product that will do the job correctly. Your skin needs all the protection you can give it. With both a high number of UV protection (above 30 at least) and ZINC as the active ingredient, you will be making a smart choice when it comes to choosing a product that you can count on to protect your skin against the aging effects of the sun. Solbar Sunblock

One product that meets all these requirements and is doctor recommended is SOLBAR. It is available online at a variety of sites. I've shopped around and the best price for a 4 oz. tube is at Amazon.com Here are what customers are saying about SOLBAR:

5 STAR Average Customer Rating: (101 Reviews)

- “I use this when I’m doing a sport, since it’s water resistant. It has never given my sensitive skin any problems. I’m sure I could use it on my face, but I like cosmedix spray-on sunscreen for that.”
- “Product is non-greasy and makes skin feel so soft - with no allergic reactions of any kind.
- “After years of looking and experimenting with over the counter sunscreens, Zolbar Zinc SPF 38 is unique to other sunscreen products because it protects the skin from UVA and UVB rays, which is important for the skin. It doesn’t stain the clothes, and it moisturizes the face.”



How To Choose The Right Club For Your Next Shot

You are allowed up to 14 clubs in your golf bag. During each round of golf you may only use five or six of those clubs—or, depending on the situation, you may find yourself using almost every one of the fourteen. Every round of golf is different. Different day, different course, different weather, different partners. Trust me, every round of golf, even if it's played on the same course day after day, is guaranteed to be different from any round of golf you've ever played. That's what makes the game so interesting—and demanding.

Golf Clubs

With 14 clubs to choose from, how do you know which club is the right one to pull out and use on your next shot? It takes practice and confidence to choose the right club. And the choice is very personal to you. Through practice you learn how far you hit with each club in your bag. And then you put that information into practice on the course. Learn to know your own game and the average distance you hit with each club.

You might find it helpful to use the distance rather than the number to define each club. If you know you usually hit your three wood 160 yards, begin to call it your “160 club” rather than your 3 wood. If your nine iron gets you to the green from 70 yards out, call it your “65-75 club.” As you improve, these distances will change

and your understanding of how to use each club will change as well. Just remember it's your game, your clubs, and your average distance that determines which club to use. Unless they know your game very well, don't listen to the advice of your golfing partners about which club to use. I've missed too many greens when I let someone else dictate my golf club choice. It's your game, it's your choice. Have confidence in the club you choose.



Here are a few general guidelines that will help you get started.

Driver - The driver is the longest club in your bag. You use it only once on each hole to drive the ball off the tee box and hopefully into the middle of the fairway. (On short par 3 holes you probably won't need your driver, but that's up to you.) The driver is the #1 club. It's also the most difficult to hit. When you are a beginning golfer you may not even use a driver. Using a three wood off the tee is perfectly acceptable.

Drivers come in a variety of lofts. The higher the number (degrees) the easier it is to hit. The trade off is that the higher degree drivers may cause the ball to pop-up more, sending your ball high in the air, but landing at a shorter distance. When I first began playing golf I went to a local driving range where the pro fitted me for a very expensive driver with a 16 degree loft. I did alright with it at first, but my drives were always flying high into the air and falling far short of my intended target. I learned a lot from that club but eventually sold it and got fitted for another—one with a lesser degree (12) loft that seems to work for me now.

Many golfers use drivers of 10 degrees and the pros often have drivers with a degree of 8. An 8 degree driver is designed to send the ball long and low, but is much harder to hit. Without a lot of practice you're more likely to be scorching the earth with an 8 degree. Before spending a lot of money on a driver, be sure to test it out at a driving range. A good sports shop will let you borrow a driver for a few rounds of golf until you find the one that really works for you. Manufacturers are always coming out with new models. In fact, if you are using a driver that is more than 5 years old, you probably need to check out what's new on the market. Improvements in the latest equipment have been remarkable.

Fairway Woods - Fairway woods are numbered by their loft, the lower number indicating a lower loft and longer distance. The 3 wood has less loft than the 5 wood which has less loft than the 7 wood, etc. Most golfers carry at least two woods: the 3 wood for long mid-fairway shots off a clean lie, and the 5 wood for shorter fairway shots. The 7 wood is also a good club to have. With a higher loft it is a good club to use getting out of the short rough that lines the edges of the fairway, especially if your target is elevated. There are more woods to choose from, but these three are the most common.

Long Irons - The long irons in your bag (1,2,3,4) will give you distance, but because they have a face that is nearly perpendicular to the ground, shots will go long and low. Long irons are hard to hit and most beginning golfers don't even carry them.

Mid Irons - The mid-irons (5,6,7) are the clubs used from the middle of the fairway and the short rough. They are often a golfer's favorite irons as they are easier to hit and still give good distance. If I end up in the short rough and still have a long way to the pin, I will use a 5 iron. The club has enough loft to get out of short grass and fly a decent way. The 5 iron is my favorite club to use to get out of minor trouble.

One special note: if you find yourself in the rough behind trees with overhanging branches, the 5 iron is the club to use. The face has enough loft to get under the ball but the trajectory is still low enough to get under the branches in front of you. You probably don't want to use a club with a much higher loft as it will cause the ball to fly higher and possibly hit the leaves, branches, birds, whatever you don't want to hit.

Short Irons - The short irons (8,9) are used when you are closer to the hole. Depending on the distance you hit each of these clubs, choose the one that works for you. With the highest loft of all the irons, these clubs are designed to get your ball up in the air and to the green. I also use both for short chips within a dozen yards of the hole.

Wedges - The wedges (P,S,A) are the clubs with the highest loft. P for pitching, S for sand, and A (Callaway makes an A club) for approach. There are many other wedges of varying lofts that you can add to your bag as well. Each will have a different loft and is used for different distances and situations. And they are interchangeable depending on where your ball is, - sand, deep rough, fairway. Some players always use their sand wedge for pitch shots, or their pitching wedge for sand. There is no fixed rule. Practice with a variety of clubs for your short game

Hybrids - A few years ago club manufacturers began selling clubs that were neither irons nor woods. They are a mix of the two. Many recreational golfers are

beginning to use hybrid clubs as they are easier to hit. Most often used to replace the long irons, they offer more forgiveness and equal distance. If you are thinking of buying a new set of irons you might consider a set of hybrids.

Specialty clubs - Several club manufacturers have come up with some great clubs to be used in special situations. For example, Cleveland has the Niblick Short Iron Hybrid which replaces the 8 and 9 irons and is lofted enough to be used for those deep rough around the greens. It's a good recovery club for when you are in trouble. You can spend a lot of money adding to your club collection. Be sure to test the club out in real life situations before buying.

Putter - Finally, the most important club in your bag in my opinion, is your putter. You use it on every hole. And your success as a golfer is largely determined by your short game and how well you putt. There are essentially three styles of putter: blade, heel-toe clubhead or a mallet style. They also come in different lengths, standard, belly putters and broomstick. There is no "right" putter except the one that is "right" for you. The style, length—the overall feel of a putter, is a personal preference. Go to your pro shop or golf retailer and try them all out. Ask to use one in a round of golf. And the cost? You can spend upwards of \$400 on a new putter or find one that only costs \$15 at a used equipment shop. Just choose a putter that fits you, that fits your putting style and brings you success.

Bottom line:

Success is the key word in choosing the right club for your next shot. Practice, play and remember. Become familiar with your clubs and what each can do for you.



The Right Way To Swing A Golf Driver For Distance and Accuracy

Every golfer with any sense will tell you that the driver, the #1 club in your bag is also the #1 club most difficult to hit well, consistently. Consistently, being the operative word. Today drivers are big, honky things at the end of a very long, light shaft. Club manufacturers are always making little tweaks and improvements to make the driver work more efficiently and do what it is designed to do: get the ball as far down the fairway as you can possibly drive it.

Swinging the Golf Club

I have owned three different drivers. My first came with my “off the shelf” set of clubs. It was a 10 degree. I had no clue what that meant, or how difficult a 10 degree club is to hit well. The degree number refers to the “loft” or angle of the club face. Imagine a 0 degree club would have a face that is absolutely flat, perpendicular to the ground. The only thing you can do with it is push balls along the grass. They don’t make a 0 degree club as far as I know. But they do make them with faces set as low as 7 degrees.

Most pros and very good golfers use clubs with a degree between 8 and 10 degrees. With the right swing and contact, these pros can send the ball 350 + yards or more down the fairway. (The longest drive ever recorded in a regulation golf match was set back in 1974 by a golfer named “Mighty” Mike Austin. He hit a 515 yard

drive! If you take into consideration the Longest Drive Championships, that honor belongs to Mike Dobbyn who hit 551 yards and is the Long Drive Champion. Of course, if you want to get really technical, John Daly actually holds the longest drive ever recorded of 806 yards... but it was a special event at the LA Airport, and he was hitting down a runway with lots of great bounces and rolls thrown in for good measure. Must have been fun to watch.)

My second driver was a 16 degree. The pro thought if I couldn't hit a low degree, why not give me a high one. But 16 is very high. And that's what happened to all my balls. They would fly high and shallow. I was lucky to sell that club and with the money, bought my third driver, with a 12 degree loft. And I think you will find that most amateur golfers are using drivers with this "in-between" loft. This 12 degree club I can hit, though not consistently.

Which brings me to the subject of this chapter: **What's the right way to swing the driver? - and every other club in your bag for that matter?**

I just took a lesson on hitting the driver from LPGA pro Sue Kaffenburgh. Her instruction always starts with the basics: cause and effect. Forget all the myths you've been taught and the usual "one-liners" about keeping your arm straight, letting the ball get in the way of your swing, turn your hips, etc. There is too much to think about, and most of it is bogus or unnecessary.

The key is to start with the proper grip. [See this video on golfgurls.com for a short instruction on the correct grip.](#) Once you have your grip set, stand behind the ball and find your target line. An easy trick is to spot a small leaf or broken tee somewhere on the line between your ball and your target, then move to beside the ball, take your normal stance and align your club face perpendicular to that spot.

Check to be sure that your stance is not too wide (shoulder width is the max) and that the ball position is in line with the inside of your forward foot. Your hands should grip the club and hang down naturally in the center of your body. The shaft of the driver is the longest of all your clubs, but don't stretch out too far. The stance should feel comfortable.

Lock your lower body to the ground. Think cement. (I know you've heard about turning your hips, but that follows AFTER you begin to turn your upper body. Your body will turn naturally. Don't consciously start with the hips.)

Focus on the club and the feel of it at the end of your club shaft and think of your right hand (in the case of a right handed golfer) as an extension of the club head. (The swing thought is to bring your "hand/club" back, load it with power and then

return to the bottom of your swing, keeping your “hand/club” square to the ball.) And don’t worry about keeping your left arm straight. The key moment when you want that arm to be straight is at impact. If you imagine your right hand as the club head, when it swings back to the ball, it will just naturally be straight as an arrow.

Keep your head down and focused on the ball as your arms swing up and away.

As you begin your takeaway, keep your forward arm locked to the side of your torso. You don’t want your elbow flying around or any daylight between your forward arm and your side. Sue uses the image of a \$100 bill tucked in under your arm. If you drop it while you swing, you lose it. (This thought helps with motivation!)

Turn your upper torso away from the target so that your sternum is pointing away. Don’t just turn your shoulders or swing your arms alone. Turn the entire upper torso, all the while keeping your lower body as still as you can and your forward arm tight against the side nearest the target.

What happens next just naturally follows: as you turn your upper torso away from the target your weight naturally moves to that side. For a right handed golfer, the weight shifts to the right. As this happens the hips will begin to turn slightly.

At the top of your swing, cock your wrists (think hitchhiker begging a ride.) Feel the weight of the clubhead at the end of the shaft and then swing down to the ball, hitting it on the perfect spot to send it flying up and far down the fairway. Your swing will naturally pull your body through to the finish, your weight now shifted to your forward foot and your sternum facing the target.

If everything is working in sync and the golf gods are kind, you will have made a great shot!

[Check out this video on golfgurls.com](#) by Roger Fredericks who reveals valuable secrets to the Golf Swing.

Losing Power in Your Golf Drive? Here's The Secret To Get The Power Back!

Every golfer wants to hit the golf ball well and far, straight down the fairway as far as he or she can. It's one of the great pleasures of the game to hear the sound of solid contact between your driver and the ball and watch it sail off into the distance. To make that happen you need power behind your swing. And to make that swing work in your favor you need the right set up and the right coordination between your hips, shoulders, hands and the club.

Still, I am determined to drop 10 strokes off my game before the end of this season. Sound impossible? I don't really think so. It's no secret how to do it. I need to crank up my short game.

If you find you are losing power, or never had any to start with, the root of the power problem is probably in your hip/shoulder rotation movement. A few years ago I was playing on a long course here on the Cape and doing ok. My drives were going as far as ever and my chips and putts were all good. But sometime around the 11th hole things started going south. Suddenly, I couldn't hit a fairway wood. I didn't think anything in my stance or swing had changed, but suddenly I had no power and my hits were going left, right or straight down the grass like a bowling ball. What had happened?

After I whooshed the ball—totally missing it as I swung for the fourth time mid fairway—my playing partner finally spoke up. “You're swaying your hips! They're sliding back and forth. You have to turn your hips, not slide 'em.”

I thought I was turning my hips. In my mind's eye and in my body I could have sworn I was turning my hips. But clearly I was not. Somehow, whether it was that I was suddenly tired, or distracted, I don't know— but my body had simply quit doing any rotating and all my power was gone. I won't tell you what my final score was that day — suffice it to say I did not do well. But I learned something about the importance of the link between hip rotation and swing power.

In this video, (<http://youtu.be/7mbRaLeSv5k>) Kathy Ekdahl of [PersonalBestPersonalTraining](#), and our golf fitness guru, shows you what this connection is all about. If you are not driving the ball well, watch this video. **The secret to your loss of power may very well be in your hips!**



The Secret To Hitting Those Fairway Woods & Hybrids

Most golfers have several fairway woods in their bag, usually a 3 wood, 5 wood, and possibly a 7 or 9 wood. I play with a woman who has an 11! They are not common, but they do exist. Originally made of real wood (thus the name), these clubs have heads of steel or titanium. You could call them, “fairway metals,” I suppose, but it doesn’t have the same ring to it.

The loft of each of the woods progresses from the lowest loft on the 3 wood to the highest loft on the 11. The lower the loft, the further the distance. And as the loft increases, the shaft on each of the woods get shorter, making these clubs easier to hit, especially for beginners. In fact, many instructors prefer to see their beginning students leave the driver (the #1 wood and the hardest club to hit) out of their bag and choose the 3-wood to play off the tee. It may not deliver the same distance as the driver, but the difference in accuracy and better scores makes up for it.

If you are having trouble hitting your long irons (2, 3, 4) you might want to switch to using fairway woods as they can sometimes prove to be easier to hit for beginning golfers or if you are a golfer just coming back to the game.

When playing fairway woods, place the ball more forward in your stance. Not quite off the back heel of the forward foot, but close to that point. Move the ball back a bit more as the number of the club increases. The club is designed to strike the ball at the bottom of your swing so you want to be sure to place the ball in the correct position.

Which fairway wood should you use? That depends on the distance your ball has to travel down the fairway. Every play is different. Take yourself to the range and test how far the ball travels using each of your woods. Typically you will lose about 20 yards of distance between woods. For example if you drive the ball 180 yards with your driver, your 3 wood will hit the ball 20 yards less than that, the 5 wood, 20 yards less than the 3 wood, and the 7 wood 20 yards less than the 5. If you are substituting your woods for your irons, the 5 wood will give you the same distance as you would get with your 2 iron.

An alternative to fairway woods are hybrid clubs. Hybrids are just what the name implies: a mix of both irons and woods. Also known as “utility clubs,” hybrids became popular in the early 1980’s. Many golfers substitute them for the long irons as they are easier to hit and more forgiving. If you are considering the purchase of new clubs, hybrids should be on your wish list. There are many hybrid sets on the market today. Be sure to test them on the range before making your purchase. They feel a little different from the usual fairway woods and irons in your bag, and though easier to hit take some getting used to.

How to hit fairway woods and hybrids?

Your swing is the same and your stance is the same. Your distance from the ball is determined by the shaft length of each club.

If you use a fairway wood or hybrid off the tee, be sure to tee the ball very low. Make a nice and easy swing. **Remember “less is more.”**

On the fairway: swing more down and through. The ideal is to hit the ball first and then take a small divot. The divot should be in front of the ball, not behind it.

If you are in a fairway bunker you can still use a fairway wood or hybrid to get out. You want to “pick” the ball off the sand not dig into it. This is different from your usual sand shot and takes a bit of practice, but done right, not only will using a fairway wood get you out of the “beach” but it will give you the distance you still need to get to the green.

In the rough: Not every fairway wood will work in the rough. You must try your luck and practice to see which wood works best depending on the ball’s lie and the thickness of the grass. I sometimes use a 7-wood to get up and out, though my 4 hybrid has become a good choice when the grass is thick.

Near the green: I'm not sure I would choose a fairway wood at this point, but if you do, choke down on the shaft and play it as you would a 7 or 8 iron.

Here is a video that shows you step by step how to play the fairway woods. (<http://youtu.be/n0V5dQQIGQk>)



The Secret to Solid Shots With Your Golf Irons

Your golf irons are designed to hit down on the ball, and send it flying to your target. To do this you have to learn how to hit a solid shot.

Hitting down on the ball out of the rough. What does that mean? Solid — as in strong, and powerful enough to compress the ball between the ground and the face of the club. This gives the ball backspin and loft and sends the ball up in the air.

You want to hit down on the ball. Think tiddly-winks. Remember that game you played as a kid? You used one colored disc to flick a second disc up, through the air and into a cup or some such target. You snapped down on one disc to get the second in the air. It's the same with golf balls. Hit down on the ball to send it flying.



How do you know if you've hit the ball solid? The divot tells the tale. Try this drill to determine how well you are hitting your irons and compare this with your results on the golf course. Sample of a good golf divot.

1. Place a tee in the ground just above your ball position and hit your iron as you normally would.

2. Check the divot.

- If it appears slightly in front of the tee, you probably hit the ball “fat” and got lower distance and accuracy.

- If the divot is before the tee, you most likely chunked the ball.
- What you are looking for is a divot in the ground on the target side of the ball. This indicates you hit the ball, then the ground for a good solid shot.

Which club do you use for which shot? This is all determined by the distance your ball needs to travel and what type of shot you are going to take. You need to spend time on the practice range to determine which club goes what distance. Each club has a specific task. For example the higher lofted clubs such as the 7, 8 and 9 as well as the Pitching Wedge (PW) and the Sand Wedge (SW) are used to out of the rough or over or out of obstacles such as sand, trees and tall grass.



Golf Lesson: The Secret to Making Consistent Pitch Shots

One of the prettiest shots in golf is the pitch shot. When hit correctly, the ball sails high on an arc through the air, landing on the green with a soft “thump,” within three feet of the hole. Beautiful. I love that sound, and I’ve heard it often when I play with good golfers. The sound is an inspiration for me to improve my own pitching stroke. But it’s not always easy. The pitch is used from a wide variety of distances from the green. How do you know how to execute the swing for each distance? Is it the same swing for a thirty foot pitch as it is for a forty-five?

I’ve researched the internet looking for a simple but effective method to learn the pitch shot, and with thanks to PGA pro Mel Sole, I think I have found one that works. It all revolves around the image of a clock.

First you need to learn the basics of any pitch shot, no matter the distance.

- choose a hi-lofted club (9, PW, SW)
- ball in the middle of your stance
- feet close together
- hands forward
- weight on the forward leg
- club face is open

- lower body is quiet
- cock your wrists slightly as you reach the back of your swing
- accelerate as you hit down and through the ball
- hit the ground after you hit the ball
- be sure to follow through
- always finish facing the target

Next, use the image of a clock face to determine the correct back swing and therefore the distance of your pitch shot.

- make your first swing, stopping your left arm (right arm for lefties) at “seven o’clock,” accelerate and hit down to follow through, note the distance the ball flies.
- make your second swing, stopping your left arm (right arm for lefties) at “eight-o’clock,” accelerate and hit down to follow through, note the distance the ball flies. It will be further than the previous shot.
- Follow this same method for two more swings, only stop your left arm at “nine-o’clock” and then again at “ten-o’clock” and note the distances the ball flies for each.

The distance your ball travels is determined by the length of your back swing. Everything else remains the same. The goal is to become consistent, not only in the distance of your back swing, but in the tempo and pace of the swing. If you speed up on one shot and slow down on the next, even though the back swing is the same, the distances of the two shots will be different. You might try using some phrase to help you pace the swing. I find something with a 1-2-3 rhythm helps, i.e. “back-and-through” or something similar.

Hit ten shots to the same distance stopping your swing at “seven-o’clock,” “eight-o’clock,” etc. Once you know the result of each back swing in relation to distance, you can use it on the golf course, knowing that if you need a 40 yard pitch shot, your x-swing will consistently deliver that distance.

[Here is a video that shows you the basics](#) - how to hit a pitch shot with confidence, control and consistency.

Golf Instruction Tips: The Right Way To Hit A Chip Shot

The chip shot is a standard in golf. When you are somewhere between 20 and 2 feet from the green, too far to putt and too short to pitch, the golf stroke you want to make is a chip shot.

Golf chip

There are lots of different ideas about how to best chip your golf ball onto the green. Some instructors insist that you use the same swing but different clubs depending on the distance you want the ball to roll to the hole. Others only use one club, (often the 8 or 9 iron) and change their swing depending on the distance needed to get the job done. I've been taught both methods and am still experimenting with which chip method suits my style of play.

One thing I do know is that learning to chip well is critical to lowering your score and your handicap. It may take you three hits to get to the green on a par 5, but if you can chip in, you can birdie the hole! Chunk your chip, top the ball, skull it, miss it altogether, and the strokes will just keep piling up.

With different methods taught, you will have to find the one that works best for your game. No matter your method, no matter which club you choose to use, the one thing you want to do is hit down on the ball. Those fat chips (the chunks) that go nowhere or those thin skullers that shoot across the green, most likely landing

in the sand bunker on the opposite side, are all caused because you are trying to get under the ball and lift it up, or you hit the ground first and then hit the ball, sending it nowhere.

How do you hit a good chip shot?

The first key element is acceleration. As you hit down and through the ball you don't want to slow down. Fear of hitting the ball too hard and sending the ball flying keeps most golfers from accelerating or hitting through the ball. The second key element is to keep your back swing short. No full swing required here. Swing back to waist high is more than enough for a good chip shot.

Select a target on the green where you want your ball to bounce and then roll to the hole. If you use the multi-club method you will need to practice using all your irons, and discover the difference the same swing will send the ball, whether you use your 5 iron or your 9 iron. If you use the swing method, select your chipping club (8 or 9) and practice changing your swing to achieve the distance you need the ball to roll.

Here's a quick summary:

- narrow stance
- ball back in your stance
- choke down a bit on the club
- set your hands ahead of the ball
- flex your knees and shift your weight to your forward foot
- pick out your target
- short back swing
- hit down on the ball
- don't slow down as you follow through
- watch the ball roll into the hole! [Check out this video](#) to see how it's done and particularly watch the back swing and how the ball pops up, bounces and then takes a long roll to the hole.

The Secret to Consistently Making One Stroke Putts

If you can get your ball within just a few feet of the hole you have at least a 60% chance of getting it in, in one.

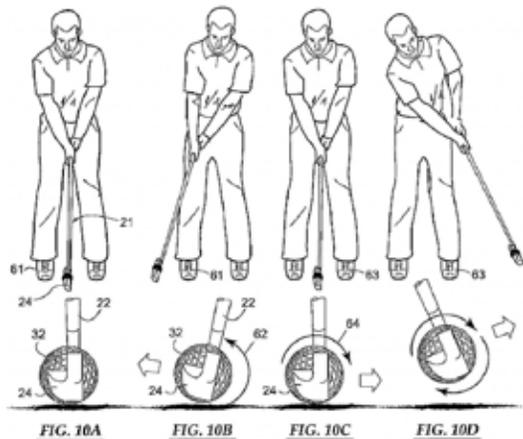
60% may seem low. I mean, what's a few feet? It should be easy peezy, right? Wrong. More often than not the putt you need to make is not straight. You are either uphill or downhill from the hole, or there is a slight undulation in the green. The condition of the grass makes a difference: short, long, just mowed or with dry spots from too much sun? Is the surface still wet from the morning dew so the green plays "slow," or are you playing in the mid-afternoon and the greens are playing "fast?" Where is the sun in the sky?

Grass is growing all the time and the blades will follow the movement of the sun. You may be putting with the grass blade direction, or against it depending on where the sun is in the sky overhead. All of these little things make a big difference to your putt.

Correct Putting Grip:

When it is time to putt, you don't want to use the same grip you've been using for the long power shots off the tee and fairway. Putting requires a more delicate touch and less movement of the hand-wrist-arm element. There are many different grip styles. Watch the video just below, for a quick view of the traditional, left hand low,

right hand low and claw grips. Whichever you prefer, you want your hands and club to be in synch with your arm, as if they were attached and working as a single unit. You don't want your wrists to "flick" or try to lift the ball. A solid stroke, square to the ball is best. <http://youtu.be/ZC0YSijeP4Q>



Correct Putting Stance:

If you watch the pros on TV you will see a wide variety of putting methods. Some pros stand to the side of their putt, others stand a little further back than "normal" or have their feet almost touching. Once you've been playing for a while you might want to vary your own putting stance. But for the beginning golfer, taking the traditional stance is probably best to start.

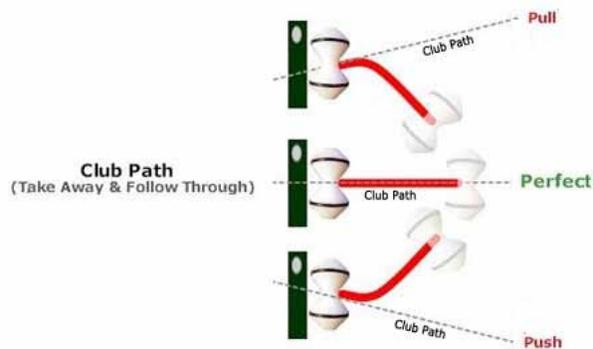
- shoulders and body square to the ball
- feet about shoulder width apart
- weight evenly distributed
- knees slightly flexed
- ball in the middle of your stance or slightly towards your forward foot
- eyes over the ball
- hands relaxed but firm

Once you are set up properly, you want to concentrate on making a smooth easy stroke. You want the stroke to be square to the ball. This illustration shows the correct position of hands and arms to achieve a good putting stroke. The arms swing like a pendulum from the shoulders. There is no flick of the wrist or shoulder turn.

Correct Putting Stroke

One point of discussion might be how far back should you swing when putting? In the illustration above, the figure shows the back swing almost equal to the follow through. I've been taught by at least one instructor that a short backswing

and longer follow through is best. I'm still working on that concept. You need to practice to find your own best swing stroke.



This illustration, shows the correct relationship of the club head to the ball and the perfect club path during take away and follow through.

You may find that slight variations to the “normal” putting stroke may help your game, and you might want to incorporate a few into your putting drills. Some players putt with their eyes closed and listen for the ball to drop. Annika Sorenstam kept her head

down and did not follow the ball's path as it left the club head. You might find this helpful, especially if you consistently pull or push the ball off line.

When Is It Smart To Leave Your Driver In Your Bag?

The driver is the #1 club in your golf bag. But that doesn't mean it should be your first choice to hit off the tee. It has the longest shaft of all the clubs and is the hardest to consistently hit well. Because it may give you the most distance you may be tempted to use it on almost every hole (exceptions would be those short par 3s), but it is not always the smart club to choose.

Using a driver off the tee. When you step up to the tee box on the first hole of your round, consider your options. Most golfers, especially beginners, love to grab their driver and bang away at the ball, getting as far down the fairway as possible. But because the driver is the hardest club to hit, there's a good chance that you may hit a slice or a hook and ended up somewhere other than the fairway. Unless you've been putting a lot of practice time in on the range, the smartest move might be to use your 3 wood off the tee, especially on a par 4 with a narrow fairway.

For example, if your first hole is a 274 yard par 4 and you typically hit your driver 180 - 200 yards, that would leave you with a 75-80 yard pitch shot to the green—provided your first shot lands on the fairway. If it doesn't, which often happens with a driver, then you have trouble shots out of whatever bush you've hit into. If, on the other hand, you choose to use your 3-wood, a much easier club to hit, and you typically hit it 150 yards, you are left with a distance of 124 yards to the hole, which might just be the distance you can hit one of your long irons. You are still on

the green in two (which on a par 4 is regulation), and with a lot less risk of landing in a gully.

The best time to use your driver is on those par 5s when there is a wide fairway, few trees and no pond to deal with. Otherwise, leave the driver in your bag, use your fairway woods, play smart and lower your score! If you are having trouble hitting your driver well, try using just your 3 wood off the tee during your next round of golf and see how things go.

The most important thing to remember when you use your 3 wood off the tee, is to set the tee to the right hand for your club. This video explains it all. <http://youtu.be/TLwgrjq2Ck>



Golf Instruction Tips: How To Hit Those Trouble Shots

Every golfer gets into trouble once in a while. Even the pros land in the rough, the sand or the lake. The key to a successful round is how well you can play yourself out of trouble. There are a few basic tips you can use for these problem shots. Learn them and next time you are stuck deep in a foot of rough grass your panic will be less and your game will improve.

What are the most typical trouble shots?

Plugged in a Sandbunker - your ball is plugged deep! - Take your normal stance with your weight on your forward foot. Choke down a little on the golf club (about 1-2 inches from the bottom of the grip.) You need to close the face of your sand wedge — a lot! And hit the sand just behind the ball, driving the wedge down and through so that sand splashes up and out of the bunker carrying the ball with it.

Keep your weight on your forward foot throughout the shot and hit down with confidence. The ball will catch the sand just behind the ball and splash it out. Be sure to follow through on your swing and concentrate on keeping the club face closed the whole time. (This is different from a ball sitting on top of hard sand where you might be able to “pick it off.” Imagine the difference between hard sand at low tide and that deep soft sand further up the beach.)

With a plugged ball, you need to hit down hard just behind the ball, keep the face

of the club closed, and splash sand out. The ball will likely come out low so don't expect a lot of spin or distance when it hits the green and rolls.

Bushwhacked - Your ball has landed under a bush where there is absolutely no chance of being able to hit it normally. Your only option is a left handed hit using the back of your right handed club (or the reverse if you are left handed). This might be doable but won't get you far. Here's where you might want to use a little creativity and think outside the box. One option is to stand to the side of the ball with your back to the target and swing your club with your dominant hand to try and get the ball out from under. You'll have to take a few practice swings to get the feel of the club as it moves as it will be awkward at first, but this has a better chance of going in the right direction than the alternative.

One other option I've considered— if you have room in your bag and it's worth the expense, buy a left-handed wedge for just this purpose! If your course has a lot of shrubbery you land in, it might be worth it!

Downhill chip shot - This is a tough shot to make. Don't try to hit it high. Get your shoulders parallel with the hill and use your usual chip shot action, just make the backswing a little longer than the follow through. The ball will come out low, and hopefully roll to the hole.

Backward shot - Every once in a while your ball will land in an impossible position where only a backward shot will get you to the green. The pros practice these for fun and I don't know if you will ever be able to perfect it, but Phil Mickelson has a backwards shot he uses when he's in trouble. He explains how he does it, and it's fun to watch. (<http://youtu.be/dUYFbD1rNv0>)

The best way to learn how to hit these trouble shots is to practice. Unfortunately a lot of practice facilities do not have areas in which you can learn to hit from the deep rough. You might have to be a bit more creative. It's not the most glamorous choice to spend a couple of hours hitting a bucket of balls from the sandpit, woods or deep rough on the edge of the driving range, but the reward will come the next time you hit a slice deep into the brush on the fourth hole and you get out of trouble without a big hassle.

How to Mark Your Golf Score Card To Win More Rounds

The goal in playing golf, unlike most sports, is to finish with the lowest score. As you play a round of golf you count one stroke for each time you hit the golf ball. The player who completes the round with the least number of strokes is the winner.

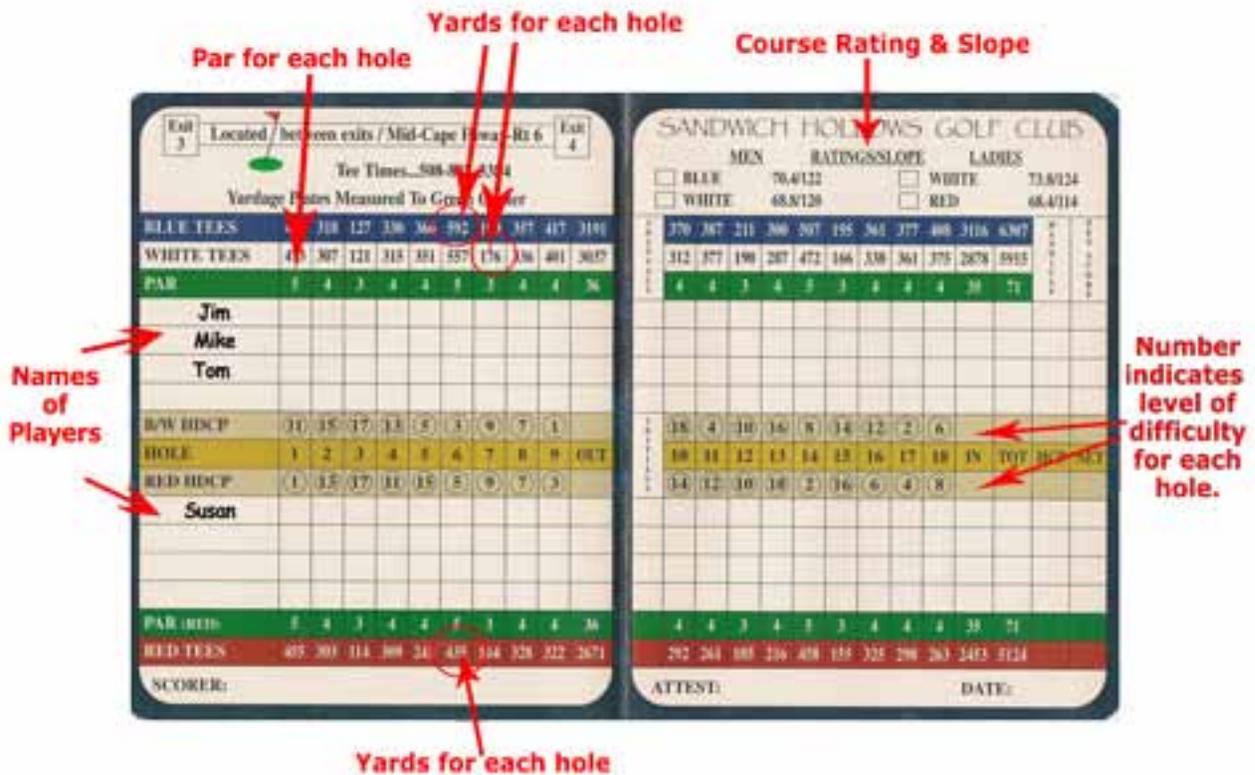
You keep track of your score, the number of strokes you make, one hole at a time. There are eighteen holes in a regular round of golf. You keep a separate score for each of the eighteen holes and in the end, add them up for a final total.

Every hole has a par, i.e. the number of strokes a very good golfer should take to complete the hole. If the par for a hole is 5 that means it should take a skilled golfer 5 strokes to get into the hole. If you play the hole and it takes you 7 strokes to get into the hole, your score would be 7 or 2 over par. If it only takes you 4 strokes to hole out, then your score would be a 4 or 1 under par.

1 under par is known as a “birdie.” 2 under par is called an “eagle.” 1 over par is known as a “bogey.” And 2 over par is a “double bogey.” And getting into the hole in one stroke is an “ace” or “hole-in-one,” a rare but exhilarating experience I’ve been told. (FYI, if you ever do get a hole-in-one, grab your wallet. You are expected to buy everyone in the clubhouse a round of drinks in celebration!)

You keep your score for each hole that you play, marking it on a score card supplied by the pro shop. On the card you will find the par listed for each hole as well as par for the entire course.

Marking your card... What do all those numbers mean?



Keeping score is relatively simple. You add the names of each of the players in the appropriate box and note the yardage for each hole relative to the tee box each player is using. The total score for each hole goes into the small box opposite each hole's number. At the end of the first nine holes you insert the scores under the "out" column (referring to the holes played "out" from the club house.) After the second nine holes you insert the scores for that segment under the "in" column (referring to the holes played as you come back "in" to the club house.) (Very clever!) You add up those two numbers and get a total score for each golfer. And that's all there is to keeping your score.

Playing with handicaps: If you have been playing golf for years and your golf partner is a beginner, it's obvious you are going to win the round. To level the playing field between golfers, a handicap system is used.

Handicaps reflect the average ability of a golfer. To get an official handicap you submit a series of scores (not less than 20) to the GHIN (Golf Handicap Information Network) system either at your golf club or online at GHIN.com There is a fee for this service. Every month or so your handicap is updated so as you continue to play

through the season and submit your scores your handicap can change.

This is where things become fun and where a player with a 32 handicap can actually compete with a player with a handicap of 15. Both players are given strokes on certain holes on a golf course. At the end of the round, those strokes are deducted from the gross score to give each player a final net score.

For example, you have a handicap of 32, your partner has a handicap of 15. After 18 holes of golf your gross score is 110. Your partner has a final gross score of 94. Using your handicaps to determine net score, your final net score would be 110 minus 32 or a net of 78. Your playing partner's net score would be a net of 79. (94 - his gross score, minus 15 - his handicap) Final result - you would win the round of golf by one stroke!

On which holes do you get those extra strokes? This is where things get a little complicated. Which holes get extra strokes is determined by three things that together give you the answer.

1. **The course rating** which indicates the difficulty of a course (according to USGA standards). An course of average difficulty would have a course rating close to 74.8. (This number indicates the average score of 50% of scratch golfers who play the course.)

2. **The slope rating** which represents the relative difficulty of a course for bogey golfers (those who typically shoot one over par) compared to the course rating. Slope ratings can range from 55 to 155 with 113 being of average difficulty. (The higher the slope rating the more difficult the course.) In the example below, Sandwich Hollows Golf Club has a course/slope rating of 73.8/124 for women playing from the white tees, or 68.4/114 for women playing from the red tees. From the red tees, this course is considered of average difficulty for bogey golfers.

SANDWICH HOLLOWES GOLF CLUB											
MEN				RATINGS/SLOPE				LADIES			
<input type="checkbox"/> BLUE	70.4	122		<input type="checkbox"/> WHITE	73.8	124					
<input type="checkbox"/> WHITE	68.8	120		<input type="checkbox"/> RED	68.4	114					

370	367	211	300	507	195	361	377	408	3116	6307	
312	377	190	287	472	166	338	361	375	2878	5915	
4	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	4	35	71	

3. **Your adjusted gross score** (your total strokes after allowing for the maximum per-hole totals allowed under ESC (equitable stroke control) - Your ESC number determines the maximum score you can take on any hole. This is to prevent an unusually bad hole from throwing off your handicap. It would

be the hole where you hit into the sand, lose a ball in the lake and then three putt. Your actual number of strokes might total 13—lucky number ! But your ESC will limit the number of actual strokes you can take.

How do you know your ESC number? In order to figure your ESC, you need to know the course handicap for the course you are playing. This is usually posted at the club, or you can ask at the pro shop. Once you have that number use the chart below to find the maximum score you can take on any given hole.

Equitable Stroke Control Chart

<u>Course Handicap</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>
0-9	Double Bogey
10-19	7
20-29	8
30-39	9
40 or more	10

So you know the course rating, the slope rating and you know the max score you can take on each hole. But on which holes of the course you are playing do you give yourself those extra strokes?

Look at your golf score card and find the line of numbers called “Handicap.” These numbers will not be in any particular order but what they indicate is the difficulty of each hole relative to the slope and course ratings.

In the example below the handicaps for each hole 1 - 9, are indicated in circles. On this course the most difficult hole for those playing from the B/W (Blue or White) Tees is hole #9 indicated by a #1. But for those playing from the Red Tees, the most difficult hole is the first hole on the course. Another example: the 3rd most difficult hole for those playing from the B/W Tees is the 6th hole, and the 3rd most difficult hole for those playing from the Red Tees is the 9th hole.

B/W HDCP	⑪	⑮	⑰	⑬	⑤	③	⑨	⑦	①	
HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
RED HDCP	①	⑬	⑰	⑪	⑮	⑤	⑨	⑦	③	

Depending on your handicap and the tee box from which you are playing, you can take two strokes on the most difficult hole, two on the second most difficult hole, two on the third most difficult hole, etc. until you have used all the strokes allowed

by your handicap. If you have a 12 handicap, you can take 12 strokes off your gross score for handicap purposes. Allow yourself one or two strokes on each hole in a round of golf, beginning with the most difficult hole and working backwards. Whether you can take one or two strokes on a particular hole may be determined by your pro shop. Check with them first. If you are playing in a tournament most pro shops will have figured out which holes get strokes by using the pro shop computer, so you don't have to worry about it.

If all this seems way too confusing and you don't want to be bothered getting an official handicap... **there is a simple online golf handicap calculator you can use to figure your "unofficial" handicap.** You will need to know course rating, slope rating and your score for a minimum of 5 rounds of golf. Click [here](#) to use the calculator.

To view a video explaining how to keep your golf score including figuring gross and net scores, [How To Mark Your Golf Score Card](http://youtu.be/12RkLdQekbI) (<http://youtu.be/12RkLdQekbI>)



Playing Hazard Golf — What You Can Learn From One Really Bad Round

I'll be frank. I love the game of golf, but I've got a long way to go — lot's of room for improvement. When the golf gods are not kind to you, what can you learn from a really bad round of golf?

Here's my story: I played in the first tournament of the season for my local club. Weather was gorgeous, and my golf partners, very friendly and infinitely patient with my golf game.

As there were six different groups, the golf pro started our group out on the 18th hole - a very long par 5 that has a very large tree right in the middle of the fairway. I've been able to make it to the tree in two, but not yesterday. First ball was ok, in the rough but very playable, second, third, fourth— I was beating my ball against the trees on the far right of the fairway. Once you get in those trees it's hard to get out. My second hole was no better. After heading off to the left rough, my second shot criss crossed the fairway and landed on the far side of the footpath. Now I swear I was aiming right down the middle. It had to be the golf gremlins that sent my third ball flying deep into the woods. By the time our team got to the green, I had found my ball and put it deep in my pocket. I had to take a 9 on the first two holes. A disaster.

Thankfully, my three golf partners played well, especially one who was totally in a putting zone. She could not miss. By the time the round was done our team had a

very respectable score, but very little thanks to any contribution on my part. **It was one of those rounds you want to bury and forget.**

But I can't.

What went wrong, and how can I learn from the disaster? What can I do to fix my game?

First mistake - I should have stretched and warmed up before playing. I still had some “rust” on my game from the winter and had intended to get to the golf course early and warm up by hitting a bucket of balls, or at least spend some time on the putting green. But I overslept and had no time for practice or stretching. That was my biggest mistake. Without proper preparation, my body needed a good five or six holes, just to know it was out there playing golf.

Second big mistake: I tried changing my grip while I played. (See [Chapter Five](#) that describes how a new grip can change your game!) You should never try out new things during a round. Testing a new golf grip, or swing is best done on the practice range. All during this first round of the season I was trying and testing the new grip. I'm just not used to it, and that, I'm sure contributed to most of my problems.

Third - and finally — I realized I need to take a few lessons to straighten out my game. I've got the distance, but no direction! My game is totally inconsistent. And my short game is in need of major repair.

I owe it to myself and to my fellow golf partners to get to the golf course early. Stretch and warm up. And if I want to learn some new grip - I had best do it at the hands of a qualified teacher, and stop experimenting during my next round of golf.

When you have a disastrous round of golf, think back through your preparation.

Were you ready to play?

Were you experimenting while you played?

When was the last time you took a lesson?

Three Simple Steps to Lower Your Golf Handicap

Lower Your Golf Handicap By Setting A New Goal For Yourself

It's every golfer's dream to lower their golf handicap ([GHIN](#)) and play better golf. At the beginning of a new season such dreams can become a reality by taking a few practical steps towards that goal.

First: Find out where you stand by reviewing your past performance:

Look back over the past season and consider how you did. Questions to ask:

- How often did you play? and where?
- What courses did you enjoy playing?
- Did you do better on a 9 hole course, or an 18?
- How was your short game?
- How was your long game?
- How was it playing out of the sand?
- Is there one area you know is weak and in which you need to improve?

- Is your equipment still the best for your game?
- What about the ball you played? Was it important to your game?
- Did the time of day you played make any difference? or the people you played with?
- Bottom Line: what was your handicap at the end of the season? did it improve from the beginning? Do you even know?

Second: With these answers in mind, set some clear routines for the coming season:

- Every time you play, keep your own score card. Keep track of a few essentials from your round:
 - Number of fairways hit
 - Number of greens hit in regulation
 - Number of sand shots
 - Number of putts
 - Number of lost balls!
 - KEEP YOUR SCORE CARDS so you can see how far you've improved at the end of the season.
- Be sure to input your handicap to the [GHIN](#) system after each round.
- After each round, evaluate your round - where can you improve? If in more than one area of your game, make a choice: long game, short game, putting.
- Before the next round, focus on that one area and spend some time practicing.
- If you can, get some instruction from your club pro that focuses on that one skill.
- Exercise to stay flexible. Ask our fitness expert for advice if you don't know what to do.

- Did you have one club that really “worked” for you? Was there a club you found difficult to hit or never used? One you really should remove from your bag?
- Was the type of ball you used for your round easy to hit? Did it feel too hard, or too soft? Did you get the distance you wanted when you did hit the ball well?

Three: Set clear attainable goals for yourself, and track your progress.

- Check with the GHIN website or your club’s handicap system at the beginning of the season so you know your handicap. If they have a printout card that has your handicap score on it, get one and keep it in your wallet.
- Be realistic in setting a new handicap goal for yourself. If you only play once in a while and have little time to practice, then it will be very hard to get your handicap down. But if you play regularly, can devote some time to practice and can get in some instruction throughout the season, then a drop in your handicap score is very possible.
- If your equipment is giving you problems, consider having it evaluated by a pro who knows about golf club fitting. You don’t have to buy all new clubs, but perhaps one replacement for that one club you never use or hate to use is warranted.
- If you love the golfball you are using, great. Otherwise, check out some options. Read the article on ball choice for some advice.

The Bottom Line:

Golf, as they say, is not a game you can win. You can only play it. With practical goals your game will improve, your handicap will go down and the game will become all the more enjoyable for you.

What Not To Do On The Golf Course: Golf Etiquette You Should Know & Practice

I don't know about you, but once in a great while I've run into a golfer who has no clue about golf etiquette or how to behave on a golf course. Usually this is a new golfer with little "on-course" experience and I'm willing to let a few things slide. And, in my experience, when you tell a new golfer about his or her social gaff, they are grateful to learn and appreciative of the information.

But when an experienced golfer is just plain rude, noisy or out of control, it's really annoying and ruins the golfing experience for everyone. There's no excuse for bad behavior on the golf course. If you are serious about playing golf there are a few essential points of etiquette you should know and practice.

Tee Times

If you schedule a tee time on a course (public or private) be sure to keep your tee time and in fact, be sure to show up early. Not only should you use the time to warm up but it allows the starter to know you have arrived. And don't be surprised if the starter is eager to send you out early. At my club, the starter is always happy to get teams out and playing as close to their scheduled tee times, earlier if possible. The club does not want to leave a tee time unfilled. If you or your group are late, you might not be able to get out at all.

Be smart about scheduling tee times. Don't sign up for a tee time that follows a league. Men or women—doesn't matter, groups of golfers always take more time to play. If you're a long hitter and you don't want to wait behind a group you know will be playing slowly, schedule a tee time on another day, first thing in the morning, or later in the day.

Patience is a virtue.

Golf is supposed to be fun. If you find yourself playing behind a slow group, wait until they have finished the hole and then ask if you can play through. If they refuse or simply don't acknowledge your request, you're stuck, but most golfers are aware of the situation and they will let you play through. No one likes having someone breathing down their necks while they play.

On the other hand, be aware that if the group in front of you is playing slow, the cause might very well be the slow play of the group in front of them. Golf courses can get pretty crowded, especially on weekends. At times like these you must resign yourself to the pace of play and learn to relax. If there is a course ranger available, you can always ask his advice. If there is an empty hole up ahead, a ranger can sometimes recommend you skip over to it, play it and then return. As long as it does not interfere with other golfers on the course, this can be a solution. This happened to me once when I was playing in Florida. The ranger had our group jump ahead to play the open hole, then come back around and play the hole we had been waiting on.

Mark your ball

Use a permanent marker and brand your ball with a personal symbol (dots, initials, etc.) and let your fellow players know the type of ball you are playing. This avoids confusion and possible penalties if you happen to hit the wrong ball, or lose one in the woods. (See *Playing By The Rules* for more details.)

Get Out Of The Line of Sight

Don't stand too close behind or in front of another player when they are hitting. You don't want to be a distraction in any way. Don't be afraid to ask another player to step out of your line of site or peripheral vision if they are distracting you.

Silence is Golden

Be absolutely quiet while another player hits. It's bad etiquette to talk, whisper or start rattling through your golf bag while another golfer is making his or her shot. Even pulling off the velcro on your golf glove can prove to be annoying. Wait to remove the glove until after the other player has hit. And if you are the driver of a golf cart, stop and wait until the play is complete. This also applies to golfers nearby. If you are driving your cart within close proximity of players on the next tee box or green, it's good practice to stop and wait until they finish rather than barrel on through.

Play ready golf

Unless you are in a tournament, ready golf is the way to keep play moving along smoothly. As you walk up to your next shot, take advantage of the time to assess the situation, and think about your next club choice. The player furthest from the hole is next to play, but be ready to play when it is your turn.

Look out for each player's golf ball.

When a player in your group hits, pay attention to where the ball lands, especially if it ends up in the woods or rough. This can be very helpful if a ball is way off target. Be willing to assist in finding a lost ball.

Repair any damage to the course.

Replace divots on the golf course, repair ball marks on the green and rake the sand in a bunker to remove your ball marks and footprints.

Cart Etiquette.

Don't drive your golf cart or pull your hand cart over greens, tee boxes or sand bunkers. Stay on the cart path on par 3s and follow the cart signs set up by the maintenance crew to avoid damaging the fairways.

Park Your Cart

Always leave your golf cart on the side of the green nearest the next tee box. This keeps play moving more smoothly. There is nothing more annoying than having to wait to play while you watch golfers ahead of you on the course, criss-cross the fairway picking up clubs and grabbing pull carts when they could have left their clubs near the next tee.

On the green.

Once everyone is on the green, the flagstaff should be removed from the hole and placed out of the way. If you have another club (i.e. wedge) with you, place it across the flagstaff. This makes it easy to find and avoids leaving a club behind.

On the green, the player furthest from the hole plays first. Be careful not to step on anyone's target line. Mark your ball if it interferes with another player's lie or could possibly be hit by another player's ball. Watch that your shadow does not interfere with another player's line or is distracting. If it is not possible to stand without your shadow crossing a player's line, then stand very still. Be like a tree!

Avoid any damage to the green or the hole, especially when replacing the flagstick. Too many times one of my putts has gone astray because of a nipped cup lip that had been damaged when a flagstick hit the edge when it was placed back into the hole.

Never mark your score card on the green. Wait until you get to the next tee to mark your card. That way the players behind you can play up and keep the game moving.

When you play at an unfamiliar course...

Call ahead to check if there are any special local rules re: attire, use of carts, etc. and to be sure there are no local tournaments happening on the day you intend to play.

Pay your green fees in advance, and be sure to get to the course ahead of your tee time, and ask in the pro shop if there are any special circumstances on the course that day. (i.e. maintenance, ground under repair, etc.)

One point of etiquette is being prepared to repair your own divots and ball marks on the green. You might find these short videos helpful.

Divot Repair: <http://youtu.be/cazTRzja758>

Repair Golf Marks: <http://youtu.be/f-ZzT8yMnmg>



Unwritten Golf Rule #2385

It's All About Sticks and Shadows

Unwritten Golf Rules You Learn As You Play

In golf as in all of life, there are rules—written and unwritten. Most of us can understand the written rules, i.e. the laws of the land, the laws of the road for driving. They are clear, they are precise and our parents and teachers make sure we know them as we grow and mature into adults. The unwritten rules are more subtle and they vary from situation to situation. The “rules” of your family might be different from mine, so I wouldn’t be familiar with them but if I were to join your family—say as a daughter-in-law—those unwritten rules would be learned pretty quickly.

It’s the unwritten rules of golf I want to talk about here. I know many of the written rules, the USGA has a rule book and a web site and I play with enough people who know the rules backwards and forwards that I don’t have to worry much about screwing up my game. But it’s those nasty unwritten rules of a certain golf association or golf league that can bite you in the back. Here’s my story:

I was playing with a group of women at a nearby golf course a few weeks ago. Nice people, but I had never met them before. We were playing as a team in a local tournament for some charitable cause. (I don’t even remember, but it was a good cause, I’m sure.) As usual, I was assigned the “D” player position. That means I had the highest handicap of the four golfers. It also meant I was subject to the unwritten rule of the “A” player, the “Captain,” to always play fourth off the tee. It’s a courtesy

thing, I guess. Captain first, then “B,” “C,” and finally “D.”

The disadvantage of being “D,” is to always watch everyone else tee off before you. At every tee you are reminded by the hitting sequence that you are the worst player out there. It grinds on you after a while. The one advantage is that if you play well with a high handicap, you can really help your team, as the score for each hole is determined by the number of “strokes” you are given for each hole. It’s a complicated system I will write about in a later post. Suffice it to say that if you play well, your teammates love you. And if you don’t, well then you feel like you’re just taking up their time. They’d be better off with you out of the way. Of course, no matter how badly you are playing you can’t quit or run into the woods because in a tournament the whole team must finish the game together or the team is disqualified. Not something you want to even contemplate.

So back to my story: It was not my best day of golf, to put it bluntly. Balls into the woods, into the sand, but my putting was ok. And once I got to the green I was making one putts on most holes. Of course this was really annoying to the “Captain” who was driving well, staying out of the sand but ending up two and three putting no matter how hard she tried. I was beginning to get under her skin.

Golf Flagstick

On the third hole I learned the Captain’s first “unwritten” rule of the day. If you are first to putt into the hole, it’s your job to go and stand by the flagstick that is resting somewhere on the green, and wait till everyone has puttied out. You are then to pick up the flagstick and replace it in the hole before you leave the green. It’s your job, and you just better do it. If, on the other hand, you are second in the hole and move away from the hole so others can putt and you just happen to stand near the flag stick resting on the green, you are NOT to pick up the flagstick. That’s NOT your job. And if you do, you will be sorry. Nasty looks all around. Keep your hands off the stick.

On the fourth hole I learned the Captain’s second “unwritten” rule of the day. If you are the one tending the flagstick in the hole so your Captain, who has a forty foot putt can see where to aim, NEVER let your shadow fall across the hole. It’s distressing to your Captain. Check where the sun is in the sky and where your shadow falls and move one way or the other or get out of the way. Again, nasty looks.

I am not one to be easily cowed on the golf course. I try my best, in spite of my handicap to always have high hopes and great expectations. And if I mess up one hole, well, there are still a few left where redemption is possible. But these unwritten rules are a bit of a learning curve. And with some people it's a roller coaster.



Playing By The Rules Of Golf And Why Ignorance Will Get You Nowhere

Want to take this game of golf seriously? Then you have to learn a few basic rules.

I'm talking about the official rules of golf published by the USGA (United States Golf Association), not the local rules of a particular golf course. Those local rules are important too, but they often change depending on the season, the weather or the popularity of the golf course.

Some rules may seem self-evident, but it's important to be clear, and it's each golfer's responsibility to learn the basics. If you are playing in a tournament there are usually rangers on the course you can ask if you have a question about a certain rule. Tournament officials are trained to handle most any situation, and their ruling should be followed. But even if you are out playing a friendly round of golf with your pals, it's important to follow the rules of golf. It keeps the game moving and your scores honest, especially if you submitting your score to the GHIN system for your handicap.

A little history....

The official rules of golf once numbered only 13! Back in 1744 they were drawn up by the Honorable Company of Edinburg Golfers in Scotland, the first officially organized golf society. Eleven years later, in 1754, they were adopted by the Royal

and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews. Further revisions in 1755 and 1809 added to those original rules and make up the essential rules we use today.

I've listed a few here with definitions—the ones I encounter most frequently during a round of golf. (These rules are for stroke play. Match play is a different kettle of fish.)

First here is the official definition for the game of golf.

“The Game of Golf consists in playing a ball from the teeing ground into the hole by a stroke or successive strokes in accordance with the rules.”

The Ball - You get to play one golf ball during a round of golf. (If you have questions about a rule while playing a hole, play a second ball on that hole, keeping score for both, and resolve the question with the club pro when you return to the club house at the end of your round.)

The Stroke - a stroke is a forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking the ball. There has to be a back swing (no matter how short) and a forward swing to have that action of the club called a stroke. You can voluntarily stop your forward swing mid-way, and it won't count (no back swing) and the ball can drop off the tee by means of the wind (does not count as a stroke as there was no intention to hit the ball.

Honors - this is a rule that counts in tournaments. Whoever won the previous hole has the “honor” and is supposed to play first off the next tee. In a friendly round of golf honors are generally ignored, but you never know if someone you are playing with takes this rule seriously, so check before charging up to the tee box first.

Hazards and Bunkers -

There are three main hazards you might encounter on the golf course.

The first is a **water hazard** such as a pond, lake, stream, or swamp that is marked by **yellow lines or stakes** that you have to get over on your way to the green. If you happen to hit your ball into a yellow staked water hazard you must drop a ball along the line between the hole and the point at which your ball entered the hazard. You can go back as far as you like, but you must stay on that line, and you have to add one penalty stroke to your score.

The second is a **lateral water hazard**. This would be a lake or stream that runs beside the fairway. It is marked by **red stakes**. You don't have to hit over it to get to

the hole, but you might hit into it if you hit a slice or hook your ball off line. If your ball goes into a lateral hazard you can drop a new ball within two club lengths of the hazard, no nearer the hole. Depending on the circumstances you can drop your ball on either side of the hazard if that gives you a better lie. For example if there is a narrow stream running along the right edge of the fairway and you hit into it, you can drop your ball on either side of the stream, as long as it is no closer to the hole. You must take a one stroke penalty.

(Note If your ball lands within the bounds of a water hazard but you still think you can play it, you do not have to take a penalty stroke. However, your club cannot touch the ground in a hazard.)

Bunker - There is no penalty if your ball lands in a sand bunker or fairway trap, but you have to hit out of it. You may not ground your club in the bunker before you take your stroke.

Out of Bounds - Most out-of-bounds markers are white. If you hit your ball out of bounds you must bring the ball back to the spot from which you hit it, and try again, taking a one stroke penalty. If the ball lies directly on the boundary line, and you can play it, there is no penalty stroke. The player is the only one to make this declaration. The player is allowed to stand outside the boundary line in order to play a ball that is sitting on or inside the boundary line.

Lost Ball - If you hit your ball into the bushes, woods, trees or even lose it on the fairway (believe it or not, it's happened to me - I think a gopher took it) you are given up to five minutes to find it. Beyond that time, if you cannot find your ball, you must declare it lost.

If you lose the ball while hitting your tee shot, then it's smart to hit a provisional ball from the tee. (It's polite to wait until all the other players have hit before taking your provisional.) Then go and try to find the first ball. If you cannot find it, you must play the provisional and take a one stroke penalty.

If you lose your ball at any other time, you must declare the ball lost, go back to the spot from which you hit the ball and try again, and of course, you need to add a penalty stroke to your score. In either case you must declare to your fellow players that you are hitting a provisional ball. If you later find your first ball before hitting the provisional ball again, you must continue play with the first ball and put the provisional in your pocket. No penalty involved. The killer to this is that the nearly lost ball is probably in a bad spot while the second "provisional" ball is probably sitting pretty in the middle of the fairway. But rules are rules. If you look for your

lost ball and find it, you must play it, no matter where it is. (Sometimes it's not worth looking, but that's your call.)

Unplayable Lie - If you find your ball is stuck under a bush, nestled in the roots of a tree or wedged between a couple of rocks and you know you can't hit it without breaking your club or your back, you can declare the ball unplayable. In this case, you have three choices for what to do next.

- A. Drop a ball within two club lengths of the unplayable ball at your nearest point of relief, no nearer the hole, and take one penalty stroke.
- B. Go back to the spot from which you hit the ball and try again. Take one penalty stroke.
- C. Drop behind the point where the ball lay, keeping that point between the hole and the new spot on which the ball is dropped. There is no limit to how far back you can go before dropping the ball. Take one penalty stroke.

One hidden fact: ANY LIE CAN BE DECLARED "UNPLAYABLE" except one in a water hazard, the player being the "sole judge" as to whether the shot is "unplayable." A one stroke penalty must be taken. Depending on circumstances, declaring a ball "unplayable" might be good strategy if your options leave you a difficult shot over a tree or hazard.

Hitting your partner or his/her equipment - If you inadvertently hit one of your golf foursome, his/her caddie, golf bag or equipment there is no penalty. You can cancel the shot and replay it or play the shot where it lies. But if you hit yourself, your own caddie, or your own equipment, there is a one stroke penalty and you must play the shot as it lies.

In tournament play the rules are slightly different. Your partner in a tournament is considered to be equal to yourself. If you hit your partner, his/her caddie or equipment it's as if you hit yourself. One stroke penalty and you must play the ball as it lies. Be careful out there!

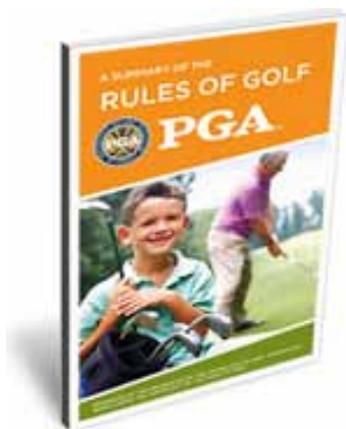
Playing the Wrong Ball - If you hit the wrong ball while playing stroke play the penalty is two strokes. If you don't realize your mistake before the next tee, you are disqualified from the game. If you don't know when you began playing the wrong ball you are automatically disqualified. In most friendly games, the player who hits the wrong ball takes his or her two stroke penalty and keeps on playing. But there are some golfers who are very strict about rules, and if they declare you should be

disqualified from the round, then the rules give them that right. Of course, if it happens during a tournament, you have no recourse.

Grounding Your Club In A Hazard - You are not allowed to ground your club in a hazard, whether sand or a lateral water hazard. If you do, it's a two stroke penalty!

Hitting an unattended flagstick with your putt - If your putt strikes the flag stick while it is in the hole, unattended, you receive a two stroke penalty! Don't rush your game. Be sure you or your golf partner pull the flag before putting.

Resources you might want to consult about rules



- Download the [FREE Summary Booklet Rules of Golf](#), published by the PGA
- [USGA.com](#) (United States Golf Association)

Amazon.com has many great resources for golfers. Here are just a few great titles you might consider.

- [The Rules of Golf in Plain English, Second Edition](#)
- [The Pocket Idiot's Guide to Golf Rules and Etiquette](#)
- [Shortcut to Golf Rules: Summary of The Rules of Golf 2010-11](#)

The 19th Hole: Doing Business On The Golf Course

The "boys" in the clubhouse have known this for years, and it's more than time the "gurls" in business caught up!

Networking On The Golf Course Golf is a great way to get to meet and network with new business prospects, or entertain current clients. Take a potential client out for a day of golf and you have a chance to get to know each other on a different level than the one you experience in the conference room. The conditions are more personal, more informal and probably more comfortable.

You get to watch your golf partner in a variety of situations. Golf is a great metaphor for life. As a game that brings out both the best and the worst in players, you can tell a lot about a person from the way they conduct themselves on the golf course. You can discover quickly who is the guy or gal who plays the game by the rules, or cuts corners, gives themselves a little "edge" by kicking their ball out of a divot, or tosses a club when things go terribly wrong. You can learn a lot by just observing your fellow players.

With the many business organizations for women and men holding golf tournaments for one charity or another, it's easy to find an event that would suit your style of game, and at the same time, benefit your favorite cause. Invite business associates as a thank you for their continuing business or to introduce them to new vendors or suppliers you think would be a good fit.

If you are invited to join a client at a tournament and are meeting new business prospects for the first time, be careful not to "hard sell" them on what it is you do. Sure, introduce yourself and the name of your company, but don't immediately launch into your sales pitch. In fact, don't pitch at all. Spend the first few holes, just chatting about anything but business and when you feel the time is right, ask them about their business. Spend most of the round of golf getting to know them. Listen and learn. When you finally get back to the clubhouse you will know a lot about them and their business and whether you can be of service to them. By listening first, your "soft sell" pitch will make more sense, be more finely tuned to their needs and you will have a better chance of getting what you wanted in the first place — more business.

Some practical points:

Who should pay for the round of golf? This is pretty self-evident, but if you are inviting someone to join you, you pay. They may offer to pay for their own green fee, but don't let them. Be generous and pay for both of you. If, on the other hand you are invited to play at a golf charity event, offer to pay your own entry fee. It's all for a good cause and probably tax deductible as well.

Special attire? If the course you are playing at requires special golf attire, i.e. collared shirt, no jeans, etc. then be sure to tell your guest. You don't want them showing up and then being embarrassed because they wore denim! or a T-shirt.

Cheating? What do you do if you catch your golf partner clearly cheating or ignoring the rules? This requires a little discernment on your part. If they are a new golfer and simply don't know the rules, I'd let it go. You can tell them the rule, but don't make a big fuss about it. However, if they've been golfing for years and still ignore the rules, then you have to decide, is it worth it to call them on the infraction, or let it go? Better than that, if this is a new client, a seasoned golfer and they are still cheating, then I'd ask myself the question: Do I want to do business with this person? If he or she cheats on the golf course when I'm watching, what will they try to get away with when I'm not looking? Your answer could have major implications for your business. Of course if the cheater is your boss or supervisor, you might have to look the other way. It's up to you.

Temper Tantrums: Like cheating, watching your golf partner handle him or herself when their ball slices off into the woods for the fifth time tells you a lot about them. Do they take it all in stride or get angry enough to fling their club into the nearby pond? Do they sulk, or blame the sun, the wind, the noisy player on the nearby

fairway, or the maintenance crew for not aiming the tee box markers correctly? Do they blame anyone or anything but themselves for the slice? You can draw your own conclusions about this type of behavior.

Keeping Score and Side Bets: Whether you keep score, place small side bets, for example on number of putts, who gets to the green first, number of bunkers—whatever game you want to play on the side, that's up to you and your partner. Competition is always good to add some spice to the game. But you don't want to burden a new golfer with lots of extra rules to follow. Be easy about it and if you suggest a side bet and they don't want to participate, don't insist. Follow your guest's lead in this regard.

Should you let your golf partner win? This is an interesting question. If you are a far better player than your golf partner, would you hold back or deliberately lose a hole or two to make things even out a bit — especially if your partner is playing poorly that day? I don't think so. People can tell when you are letting them win — when you are holding back. I remember playing board games as a kid with my aunts and uncles. They would play in such a way that I would always win. I knew what they were doing and didn't like it. When I won, I knew I didn't really deserve to win.

On the golf course, play your game to win. Play as you always do. And if you win, good for you. And if you lose, better luck another day. Besides if you and your golf partner have handicaps, and you use them in your scoring (see post: [How To Mark Your Golf Score Card To Win More Rounds](#)) then you are both on a level playing field. Don't worry about it.

Who pays for dinner and drinks? It's courteous to invite your golf partner to join you after a round of golf for drinks or dinner. And of course, as the host of the day, you pay the tab. If you are attending a golf tournament as a guest then offer to buy your host a drink as a thank you.

Leave your business card. After you have finished your round of golf and are relaxing in the clubhouse, it's the perfect opportunity and perfectly appropriate to offer your business card to your partner, and accept theirs if they have one. Express your thanks and, if appropriate, make arrangements to meet another time for golf, or for business. Some business relationships take a while to develop and if you feel another day on the course will eventually lead to a good partnership in the future, then certainly take the opportunity to suggest another meeting.

Networking Associations: If you haven't already joined your local chamber of commerce or rotary club, that can be a great way to network. There are also a lot of business associations online for almost every business niche. Find yours and join. In addition, you might find some of these organizations possible network opportunities.

Linked In Groups: (You need an account to join - go to <http://www.linkedin.com>) and search for:

- Golf For Women In Business
- Texas Executive Golf Club (check Linked In Groups - there is most likely one of these groups for every state in the U.S. etc.

Other Online Groups (do a search for Women's Golf Networks) - here are just a few to start. Do a search on google.com

- [Women's Golf - Australia](#)
- [The Fairway Network of Chicago](#)
- [Canadian Women Golfers](#)
- [Heartlink Network](#)



Thanks so much!

I hope you have enjoyed this e-book as much as I've enjoyed putting it together, and that the information it provides, gives you a grasp on some of the basics of golf. As a beginner, the game can be intimidating. No need for it to be so. We were all beginners at one time.

I appreciate your taking the time to download and read this e-book and would love to hear what you think about it, any suggestions, or ideas you think should be included in the next edition.

Leave your comments at <http://golfgurls.com/ultimate-beginners-guide-women-golfers/>, or if you prefer shoot me an email at golfgurl@golfgurls.com

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Mullaly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pat Mullaly, editor, GolfGurls.com