

Golf Etiquette... Learn The Rules Of Basic Golf Manners

According to golf etiquette, the sport of golf is played without guidance, supervision, or control by a coach, referee, or an umpire on the golf course. Beginning golfers usually are not aware of the *customary practices and behavior* on the course. Basically the game relies upon each golfer to be considerate of their fellow players and to abide by the "Rules ". There are *unspoken rules of etiquette* and more stringent rules of good golf etiquette. The rules are in place to make the game more enjoyable, but many of them relate to the **golfers safety** and to the **pace of play** (which helps keep the game more enjoyable). Several other rules of etiquette relate to **maintaining the overall quality of the golf course itself**. **The following are the essentials a player must understand concerning golf etiquette during the process of playing the game of golf.**

Section 1: Consideration of Others – In General ... Show Respect

If you are arranging a round... invite the players and be clear on their responsibility to pay (or not) for the round so they are clear. Advise (and then send reminder) on the tee time for the round. If you are inviting the other players as your guest, be there in advance of your invitees to greet them at the course. If just arranging a round, be clear on communications on what they should do upon arriving at the course and what to expect in terms of tee times, groupings and potentially after-golf arrangements.

Arrive on Time – In general, leave home with enough time to reach the golf course at least 20-30 minutes before your "Tee" time (note – if you are arranging business golf or guests, this should extend to 45 minutes).

Golf etiquette includes showing respect:

- To the bag-handler (don't forget to tip either before or after your round) and starter
- During your "warm-up" on the practice putting green and golf driving ranges
- To the Golf Marshall on the course
- To a Caddy (if you have one). Tip caddies commensurate with their performance.
- To your fellow players
 - Upon meeting, introduce yourself. Shake hands, share names
 - Determine your group rules (if not in a tournament) including 'ready golf', tee boxes each of you is playing, what ball each of you is playing
 - Encourage each other as appropriate ... "great shot" (for example)
 - Watch each other's balls and know (generally) where other's balls are on the course
 - Help each other find lost balls if asked or desired
 - Shake hands at the end of the round and say "good game" or "I enjoyed playing with you"

On the Tee Box:

- When standing on the teeing ground, be sure to stand to the side that faces the player who is hitting on the tee. Standing behind the player can be very distracting.
- Keep a watchful eye on the direction of all tee shots in your group.
- Wait until the previous player exits the teeing ground before proceeding to "tee-up" your golf ball.

In the Fairway

- Take note of the location of fellow players' golf balls so you can be prepared and know when it is your turn to hit.
- Assist fellow golfers if they are searching for their golf ball.
- Announce to others in your group if you choose to take an unplayable lie or have to follow a dropping procedure for any reason (water hazard, cart path, etc.).
- Assist fellow golfers with raking a bunker or filling a divot if they seem to be struggling with their games temporarily.

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On the Green

- Fix a ball mark even if your ball didn't make it.
- The person who hits her/his golf ball on the green first should remove the flagstick once all players in the group are on the green.
- Set the flagstick gently on the fringe of the green in an area that is not distracting to others in your group.
- Who's away? Knowing the order of play will help you be ready when it's your turn (the farthest ball from the hole plays 1st).
- Analyze your putt before it's your turn to hit. Do so without distracting the person who is hitting.
- The 1st person to hole-out should replace the flagstick when all players are finished with the hole

Do not....

- Walk or stand on another players putting line
- Leave your ball on another players putting line
- Leave your golf ball marker on another players putting line if it is bothersome to them
- Cast your shadow on another players putting line or setup area. (Your shadow should not be visible at all to the player when he is about to putt)
- Stand within a player's peripheral vision while they are putting
- Stand behind another player to visualize the path of their ball during the process of putting
- Talk or whisper while another player is preparing to putt or during the process of putting
- Leave the putting area until all other players in the group have holed out

No Distraction and/or Disturbance

- Do not bring electronic devices to the course which will bother other players. If you must carry a cell phone for emergency purposes, use it only for emergencies and put it on "vibration" ringing mode.
- Don't talk prior to or during another players turn at taking their shot. Avoid any unnecessary noise or movement that will distract or disturb other players.
- At the Tee Box, do not take practice swings or tee your ball when another player is about to play.
- Avoid shouting loudly anywhere on the golf course, as there are always other players nearby.
- Do not stand directly behind a player who is about to play. Stay out of their peripheral vision to avoid distracting them.
- Do not give advice to your opponent or fellow-competitor. Official Rules of Golf, Rule 8.

8-1. Advice

During a stipulated round, a player must not:

- a. Give advice to anyone in the competition playing on the course other than his partner, or*
- b. Ask for advice from anyone other than his partner or his golf caddie.*

Section 2: Pace of Play

Play At a Good Pace

- Play at a pace which keeps up with the group ahead. If there is an open hole ahead, and the group behind is pushing your group, either pick up your groups pace, or invite the group behind you to play through regardless how many players are in that group.
- Take only one practice swing for each shot, and then hit the ball. Don't linger over your shot.
- Plan your shot before it's your turn. Prior to arriving at your ball, know how you want to play your shot and determine which club you will want to use.
- If riding in a cart – if your cart partner is hitting, you may wish to prepare for your shot by getting your clubs out (without disturbing your cart partner's shot) and, if appropriate, walking to your ball.
- In general, the player who is away hits first in a group, this "rule" eliminates the confusion as to whose turn it is and keeps the game moving. Official Rules of Golf, Rule 10.

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The Order of Play

a. The player who has the lowest score on a Hole has the right to play his/her ball first on the next Hole. This is called the "honor."

b. While playing a Hole, the player whose ball is farthest from the Hole plays first.

- HOWEVER-- Play Ready Golf whenever you can (non-tournament play). Ready Golf means that the player who is ready first, plays first even if that player is not the farthest away from the hole. Have an agreement with your playing partners to play "Ready Golf" before you Tee Off. *Ready golf can really save a lot of time waiting for the "correct" player to hit.*
- Quickly leave the putting green when your group has finished their putting.
- Do not waste a lot of time looking for a lost ball. You are by rule only allowed five minutes to find the ball. Golf etiquette rules require allowing the group behind to play through if you violate this time restriction. Official Rules of Golf, Rule 27.

Ball Lost or Out of Bounds

a. A ball is lost if it is not found within five minutes after you first begin to search or you have put another ball into play.

b. If your ball is lost or out of bounds, you must add a penalty stroke to your score and play another ball from where you played your last shot (known as "stroke and distance").

c. If you think your ball may be lost or out of bounds, you may play a provisional ball from the place where your first ball was played.

d. You must notify fellow players that you are playing a provisional ball and play it before you leave the area to look for the first ball.

Section 3: Care of the Golf Course

Golf Carts and Pull Carts

- Observe the course rules for carts – check with the starter or pro-shop to ensure you know the rule for the course. Cart rules can change based on course conditions – so don't assume, check and follow the cart rules. The 90 degree rule often applies if the course is damp. Some may have cart path only rules for the course – or for certain holes.
- Avoid driving the golf cart on wet or soggy fairways, as this tends to put "grooves" in the turf, which in turn may affect a golf ball when landing and rolling on the fairway.
- Do not drive golf carts close to bunker edges, tee boxes or greens. Keep a safe distance even if there are no signs.
- Observe cart signage/arrows and drive your cart to the cart path near greens as directed.
- When golfing, pay attention to where other players have hit and ensure you are not standing or parking your car/cart in their way or in their vision when hitting
- When partnered in a cart, discuss your playing partner's preference for where you park and use that as guidance on where to park when arriving at their ball
- Do not drive carts or take pull carts onto the green itself. Pull carts may be pulled just off the fringe but do not let the cart wheels go over the green or the fringe itself.
- When arriving at a green, pull the cart or leave your bag to the side or back of the green, along the path to the next tee box if you can. Never leave your cart or bag in front of the green.
- When arriving at the green in a driving cart, pull the cart around to the side or back of the green, following any course signage. Never leave your cart in front of the green. Depending on your shot (and that of your partner), one of you may wish to take your clubs to hit while the other drives the cart to the back or side of the green.

Teeing Ground

- If you leave a divot when teeing off, repair that divot as well as others you may find.
- Upon hitting your drive, pick up your Tee afterwards. If the tee is broken, pick it up along with any others you may find and discard them along with any other trash you may have at the time.
- If you inadvertently move a Tee Marker, return it to its proper placement. Even if you personally have not moved the Tee Marker, if any one of them is out of place, place them properly.

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- If you use the ball washer and towel to clean some balls, handle them gently so as not to damage them. If the ball washer is inoperative, and/or if the towel is torn or missing, notify the pro shop upon completion of your round.

Fairways

- Repair Fairway divots by retrieving and replacing the sod or turf pieces and pressing them down with your foot into the divot recess. If the sod pieces are too small and scattered, fill the divot hole with a sand/seed mixture if provided with the golf cart.
- If you hit your ball up to or beyond the out of bounds marker, and that happens to be a fence which belongs to the golf course or a private citizen, do not damage the fence.
- If you hit your ball out of bounds and it damages private property (broken window or furniture), notify the pro shop upon completion of your round.

Bunkers:

- Enter the sand bunker with rake in hand from the low side nearest your ball.
- Avoid walking on the steep face of the sand bunker.
- Upon successfully escaping from the bunker, rake all evidence of your presence in the trap, along with any other footprints or disruptions to the sand.
- Generally place the rake outside the bunker when leaving, with the handle running parallel to the fairway. Some courses have different rules for rake placement. Observe how rakes are generally placed and use that as guidance.

Putting Green:

- Putting etiquette suggests upon reaching the Green repair ball marks caused by your ball impacting the putting surface. As time and opportunity presents, repair other ball marks as well. However, you cannot repair pitch marks or spike marks on your putting line until after you have putted.
- Avoid dropping the Flagstick on the putting surface; it should be placed on the Fringe if possible or gently laid on the green.
- The Flagstick should be carefully replaced in the Hole to avoid damaging the rim of the Hole, before all players leave the putting green.
- To avoid damaging the rim of the Hole, players and caddies alike should not stand too close to the Hole and should take care during the handling of the flagstick and the removal of a ball from the Hole.
- When on the putting green, golfers should not lean on their putter when removing the ball from the hole, which could impart a dent on the putting surface.

Section 4: Safety on the Golf Course

- When preparing to make a practice swing or stroke, golfers should make sure that other players in the vicinity are not standing in a position to be hit by the golf club, ball or any twigs, pebbles or stones.
- Maintain a safe distance from players in your own group when they are preparing to play.
- Players should not play until the group in front is clearly out of range.
- Players need to be aware of Green Staff workers on the course. Alert any staff who might be in view prior to making a stroke with your golf club.
- It is the hitting golfer's responsibility to shout the traditional word of warning "Fore" when a ball is hit towards or near other players or Green Staff personnel. When you hear someone else shouting "Fore" cover your head and duck!
- Never throw clubs in anger. In addition to being rude it could also be dangerous to other players.
- Observe the safety precautions posted in golf carts. Drive responsible and safely.
- Be very cautious if you find it necessary to venture into an adjoining fairway to retrieve a ball, or play an errant shot. Also be careful if you are near an adjacent fairway, golfers may be hitting toward you.