



Golf etiquette: Free State Golf Union.

Golf etiquette refers to a set of rules and practices designed to make the game of golf safer and more enjoyable for golfers and to minimize possible damage to golf equipment and courses. Although many of these practices are not part of the formal rules of golf, golfers are customarily expected to observe them. The R&A rule book states that "[t]he overriding principle is that consideration should be shown to others on the course at all times."

Topics in golf etiquette

Fairway divots

Divots are part of the game, and should always be repaired to keep the game enjoyable for all those playing the course. A golfer should have buckets of sand used for repairing divots. A suggestion is that golfers should carry a divot tool to help fit the new sand in. Regardless, golfers should fix any damage inflicted on the course.

Walking

Golf demands concentration, so noise should be minimized on the golf course. Golfers should not run during play, which can be annoying and distracting to other players and may cause damage to the course. Golfers should walk quickly but lightly during play.

Golf carts

Golf carts are considered a convenience, a luxury even, and should not be used to annoy or distract other players. The cart should be parked on the cart path when at the tee box or putting green. Carts should normally stay *only* on the paths, and are required to do so on many courses. When a golfer gets out to walk to the ball, they should take a few extra clubs along to save an extra trip should a different club be needed, thereby keeping the pace of play moving along.

Should carts be permitted off the paths, golfers should observe the "90 degree rule": make a 90 degree turn off the path towards the fairway to a given ball, and return straight back to the path, not along the path of greatest convenience. Carts inflict wear and tear on the course, and can be accidentally driven over another player's ball. Golfers should keep the noise of backing up to a minimum and must always set the brake when leaving the cart.

Moderate speed should be maintained when driving a golf cart. Experienced drivers are the best choice to drive a cart first; more inexperienced drivers should observe before attempting to drive. Drivers should remain alert for other people or structures, and should observe signs or lines indicating areas that are not to be crossed by a golf cart.

Honor

The player with the best score on the previous hole has the honor of teeing off first. Playing out of turn is considered ill-mannered and runs counter to the spirit and history of the game.

If there is no outright winner of a hole, then the order of play does not change from the previous tee.

In informal games one can play ready golf and not wait for the best score on the hole to tee it up first. Also to speed up play drop off your partner when riding in a cart then go to your ball.

Ball identification

A golfer should always know which brand of ball they are using to avoid confusion during play. It can also help to mark or otherwise distinguish the ball, so a golfer can identify it more easily without having to pick it up.

Line of sight

In the tee box, other players should stand alongside the person playing, safely out of the way **and not behind** the player getting ready to swing. Golfers should never take practice swings when other people are nearby, to avoid hitting other persons with the club or with flying rocks and grass. Golfers should accept bad shots calmly, in practice or actual play, and should avoid inappropriate language or the throwing of golf clubs.

While another golfer is playing, playing partners should not select a club or replace one in the bag, cough, sneeze, or make other noise and distractions. Even small movements are frowned upon, as they might be seen in the player's peripheral vision. Should the player about to play the ball ask his partners to move, the request should be honored. In fact, the USGA recommends: "Players should not stand close to or directly behind the ball, or directly behind the hole, when a player is addressing the ball or making a stroke."

When getting ready to swing, a golfer should make sure that no one is behind them, or in the path of the swing. A golfer should remember to pick up the tee after a drive.

Pitch marks on the green

A ball hitting the green often leaves an indentation, a pitch mark, where it strikes the ground. These need to be repaired to keep the green in good condition. After golfers have arrived at the green, they should make a point to find pitch marks and repair them. The process is simple, fast, and painless.

The golfer should insert a turf tool into the ground on the high side of the pitch mark, then press the tool forward to push the soil back into place, not backward. A backward motion pulls the

roots loose and further destroys the grass. If needed, the process should be repeated on the other side of the mark.

Putting lines


On the green a golfer should be aware of many things. One of them is the putting line of each player. Every ball is connected to the cup by an imaginary line, the path the ball will travel into the cup. Walking, standing, or stepping on these lines creates footprints that can deflect the ball off its path toward the cup. Golfers should note each player's putting line, and avoid stepping on it as they play on the green. The through-line is the extension of the line beyond the hole. It is also considered good form to avoid stepping on another player's through-line since if the player misses their putt they will have to putt back along that line. A golfer should walk around the lines or step over them.

A second but related concern involves the hole itself. A golfer should avoid stepping within at least a one-foot radius of the hole. Golf instructor Dave Pelz, among others, has described a "doughnut effect" around the hole caused by players' footsteps pressing down the ground around the cup, especially when a player goes to retrieve a ball. While subtle, these footsteps interfere with the path of the ball and can cause missed putts.

Thirdly, one should not stand on a line of sight, that is, in the line of sight either ahead or behind a player who is attempting to putt. Standing in this position puts you in the peripheral vision of your playing partner and for some this is very distracting. If a golfer is standing in one of these positions he/she can move discretely and quietly to one side.

Bunkers



 Play from a bunker

According to the rules of golf, a player is not allowed to "ground" the club in any type of hazard. This means that a player getting ready for a shot cannot allow the club to touch the ground, sand, water, or anything else during a practice swing. A player is allowed to thrash as much sand, water, etc., as necessary during the actual shot.

A player should always enter and leave a bunker from the low side. After the shot, a player should rake the sand smooth again to leave a fresh surface for other players. Normally, the rake should be replaced alongside the bunker, not inside it.

An important rule is that loose impediments inside hazards cannot be touched or removed. Sticks, grass, leaves and the like must remain. Rakes and debris such as cigarette butts or beer cans are considered movable obstructions and can be removed. Should the ball have landed in

casual water within a bunker, a player is permitted to move the ball to a dry area of the bunker, provided it is not moved closer to the hole.

A golfer should always be aware of their pace of play. In informal play, if a golfer has attempted two or three times to get the ball out of the sand and failed, they should surrender to the hazard. The golfer should pick up the ball and drop it outside the bunker for further play. While not allowed under tournament conditions, this will help move the game along in informal play.

Slow play

Slow play is a critical problem with the game of golf, and cannot be attributed to any one factor. It should not be correlated with skill level, age, gender, or experience. However, it does represent a significant issue for many golfers, often stemming from a single or twosome playing into a group with higher numbers. Regardless, slow players should yield the field of play if there is substantive room in front of them. To do otherwise is remiss, and represents a deviation from etiquette described in this section.

From the first drive to the last hole, each player should be ready to play when it is their turn. Normally, the player furthest from the hole (being "away") plays first, and continues until another player becomes "away." While this is a good tradition to follow, golfers may play out of turn if their playing partners agree that it will speed up the pace of play. A golfer should avoid taking unreasonable time over their swing, which might well produce a bad shot.

Golfers should try to follow closely the group ahead of them, and not to be "pushed" by the group behind them. One rule of thumb is that golfers should have to wait on the group in front of them to hole out as they are teeing up. Otherwise, their pace of play may be too slow.

A golfer should not waste time after a poor shot before hitting the next one. Although professional golfers often seem to take long amounts of time before each shot during televised tournaments, they have their careers on the line. And even the professionals are subject to penalties for extremely slow play. A quicker pace of play makes the game more enjoyable for all golfers.

Tee box

A golfer should tee the ball between the two markers for their given distance. The ball must be even with or behind the markers. Should a golfer swing and miss, it counts as one stroke. Should a golfer knock the ball off the tee during a practice swing, they are allowed to re-tee the ball without incurring a penalty.

Tee times

Golfers should call ahead for tee times, especially on weekends or holidays, when many other golfers may be playing. Golfers are advised to come at least 45 minutes before their assigned time. If golfers are unable to play at the assigned time, they should inform the staff at the golf course.

Silence

Golf requires concentration, so silence is recommended on the golf course during actual play. Speaking among golfers should be conducted in as low a tone of voice as possible. Golfers should refrain from talking to other players when they are about to hit the ball. Cell phones should not be used on the course. A loud tone of voice is recommended only to warn people of imminent danger, such as an errant golf shot.

Attire

Some golf courses mandate policies regarding attire, so golfers are recommended to inquire about clothing rules. The usual golfing attire for men are slacks, a collared shirt, and golf shoes. For women, a golfing outfit usually consists of a knee-length skirt, a collared shirt, and golf shoes. Many golfers also wear golf hats, which differ depending on players' needs and preferences.