

P.E. SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

GOLF



“Success in this game depends less on strength of body than strength of mind and character.”

Arnold Palmer, American professional golfer

INTRODUCTION

Golf is the most popular and fastest-growing sport in many countries today. People of all ages can (and do) play golf, at many different levels of skill.

Why is golf so popular? It’s relaxing, it’s good exercise and it’s played in pleasant surroundings. It presents challenges, yet isn’t too taxing to be played at an amateur level.

Golf is also a great spectator sport. Thousands of viewers watch the sport on television, while thousands more follow their favorite golf pro to tournaments.

HISTORY OF GOLF

According to legend, a shepherd in Scotland hit a stone with a stick and watched the stone soar in the air. Thus the game of golf was born!

Golf flourished first in Scotland and later in England. The first golf balls used in England around the fifteenth century were called “feathery” because they were made of leather and stuffed with feathers.

The game of golf grew in popularity, especially among the wealthy because it was seen as a game played and controlled by the upper classes. Although many people



still consider golf “a rich man’s game,” public courses in contemporary America are open to the population at large.

Golf first became popular in America around 1895, when the first U. S. Open Tournament was held. The first 18-hole golf course opened in Wheaton, Illinois in 1893.



HOW GOLF IS PLAYED

Golf is played on a golf course. Full-sized courses have 18 holes, while smaller courses have only 9 holes. Golf balls are placed on small wooden or plastic supports called “tees,” which are pressed into the ground on a “teeing ground.” Golf clubs are used to hit the balls off the tees in the direction of the next hole, which is on what is called a “green” or “putting green.” The area between the tee and the green is called the “fairway.” Trees, lakes, streams, sand, and other obstructions may be on either side of the fairway. Sometimes, fairways are shaped like arms that are bent at the elbows.

The object of the game is to hit the golf ball off the tee, up the fairway, to the putting green, and into the hole with the fewest number of strokes possible. Each hole has a designated number of strokes. This designated number of strokes is called “par,” from which we get the popular expression, “par for the course.” Thus, a good player can move the ball from the tee to the hole on a “par 4” hole in four strokes. Par can vary from three to five strokes, depending on the difficulty of the course and the distance of the hole from the tee.

An excellent player may put the ball in the hole with fewer or greater strokes than are assigned as par for a particular hole. When this is done, there is a name for it:

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| BIRDIE | Hitting the ball into the hole with one stroke under par. |
| BOGIE | Hitting the ball into the hole with one stroke more than par. |



EAGLE	Hitting the ball into the hole with two strokes under par. An Eagle is possible on any hole above par 3.
ACE	Hitting the ball into the hole with one stroke. An “ace” is also called a “hole in one.”

According to golfing rules, once the ball is placed on a tee, it cannot be touched by anything other than a golf club until it is taken out of the hole. Most golfers strive to keep the ball on the fairway, the area between the teeing ground and putting green. If a ball is hit badly, it may end up “in the rough,” or the area near the fairway with bushes, trees and tall grass. Balls which are hit inaccurately also may end up in bunkers or sand traps.



GOLF ETIQUETTE

All sports require that the participant practice sportsmanlike behavior. Part of the goal of sports is learning how to be both a good winner and a good loser. Golf is no exception. Always observe the following six rules of golf etiquette:

1. Don't talk or move around when a player is about to hit the ball. All players should keep their distance from the golfer who is about to hit the ball. She or he should not be distracted by talking or movements by other players.
2. Replace any damage done to the course. If your golf club digs up a chunk of grass (a “divot,” in golfing terminology) on a shot, put the grass back where it came from. Also, rake a sand trap smooth after stepping out of it.
3. When a group of players is particularly slow, the group behind should be allowed to move ahead or play through.



4. Technically, each group should be allowed to finish the hole before the next group starts. No one can tee off when another group is finishing up on the putting green. On holes of great distance, a group may tee off when the party in front of them is still on the fairway, but at a safe distance.
5. Help keep the putting green in immaculate condition. Keep carts and golf carts away from the greens.
6. Learn the proper way to warn other players about an approaching ball. If a player hits a ball too hard, inaccurately or carelessly and it heads for another player, the golfer who hit the ball should yell out “Fore!” to warn others.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES

THE GRIP

The grip is an important element in golf since the hands are the only parts of the body that touch a golf club. There are three types of grips in golf, as follows:



The interlocking grip. This type of grip is good for persons with shorter fingers.

The little finger of the right hand locks between the index finger and the middle finger of the left hand. This is an extremely stable grip, and keeps the hands and fingers in the same position throughout the swing.

The overlapping grip. In this grip, the little finger of the right hand overlaps the index finger and middle finger of the left hand (the opposite if you are left-handed). This is a stable grip, but not as stable as the interlocking grip.

The baseball grip. In this type of grip, all ten fingers are on the club (as one would do in holding a baseball bat), with no interlocking or overlapping. This grip is not as stable as either of the other two grips.

No one type of grip is absolutely superior to the others. Different people have different skeletal lever systems, and different muscular development. Some people like the interlocking grip because of its stability. Others find it too confining and difficult to use. The choice of grip depends on which one best suits the individual golfer.

THE GOLF SWING

In order to hit a golf ball accurately from a specific distance, a player must know the fundamentals of the golf swing. The correct way to swing can be broken down into steps, as follows. However, note that the swing, when performed properly, is one continuous smooth motion:

1. Stand before the ball with the face (flat area) of the golf club head positioned next to the ball. This is called “addressing the ball.” If you are right-handed, your left side will be turned toward the green. The opposite is true if you are left-handed. Keep your eye on the ball as you start your backward swing.
2. Swing the club in an arc backward away from the ball. When the club is at about waist height, your wrists will remain stable as you grip the club. The shoulder facing the green will come up under the chin and the hips will begin to rotate away from the green. Keep your eye on the ball.
3. When the golf club is brought back as far as it can go in the backswing, your shoulders should be turned about 90 degrees from the direction your toes are pointing. Your hips should be turned about 45 degrees. Don’t take your eye off the ball.



4. Start the downward motion of the club with a rotation of your hips toward the direction of the green. Keep your eye on the ball.
5. Follow the hip motion with the arms coming down with the wrists still stable. Do NOT lead the motion with the arms; lead with the hips. Keep your eye on the ball.
6. As the arms straighten, the club face hits the ball. Follow the ball with your eyes.
7. The swing does not stop at this point. The club continues to follow its path in the direction of the green as you finish off the swing. This is called the “follow-through.”
8. Make every swing a full swing.

If a golf swing is properly done, it should look and feel smooth, effortless, and powerful, accomplished in a single smooth motion in the backswing, then a single smooth motion through the arc of the forward swing and into the follow-through.

Strength doesn't necessarily mean a great deal in the game of golf. Having strong arms doesn't necessarily mean that the ball will travel a great distance when you hit it. To get the maximum distance when hitting a golf ball, you must coordinate the movements of your hips, torso, arms and wrists.

Think of your body as a whip, starting in the hips and ending in the head of the golf club. When the face of the club connects with the ball, that point of impact should be the point at which the swing has achieved its fastest motion and greatest energy. That energy is imparted to the ball by the face of the club. The greater the energy, the farther the ball will go. The smoother and more coordinated the swing, the greater the energy.



PUTTING

Putting is done when the ball is on the green and must now be hit into the hole. The ball may be near to, or far from the hole. Also, the green may slope off at an angle, may have rough and smooth grassy sections, and may be wet or dry. Each of these conditions will affect accurate putting.



When spectators are watching golfers on the putting green, they often think “It looks so easy!” However, this isn’t usually the case. Putting is often the critical factor in a golf game. Many a golfer has lost a tournament because his or her putting wasn’t precise enough.

Good putting requires a delicate touch and good judgment. There are many different styles of putting, and many different conditions on the putting green. But three things are necessary:

Keep your eye on the ball.

Keep your head absolutely still.

Move the putter along the line of the putt as if it were going through the ball.

EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Different golf clubs are designed to perform different tasks. Drivers are designed to hit the ball long distances, and are usually used on the teeing ground. Most drivers today are made of steel, titanium or a composite alloy with a graphite shaft. “Irons” (which are made of plated brass and/or steel, not iron) are usually used on the fairway. Putters are used on the green.



Golf clubs have varying degrees of angles on their faces.

This angle is called “loft.” The angle is measured from the vertical. Hence:

A wedge has the greatest loft and a very severe angle, and is used to scoop a ball out of the sand.

A nine iron has a large loft or angle, so it can propel a ball upwards in an arc over obstacles.

The five iron has less loft and a shallower angle, and is commonly used to hit the ball on down the fairway toward the green.

A driver has little angle and loft, and is used to drive the ball from the tee down the fairway.

A putter has almost no angle, since it is used for short, precise shots on the green.

A professional golfer usually owns four different wood clubs and ten different iron clubs. An amateur, however, can usually play with about half that number. A good amateur bag could carry the following clubs: Driver, Five iron, Seven iron and Putter

Golf balls weigh slightly over an ounce in weight. They are made of rubber and silicone, and other synthetic materials. The surface of golf balls are covered with tiny round indentations, spaced at regular intervals. These indentations are aerodynamic, and give the ball accuracy in flight—a far cry from the old feather-stuffed balls first used in the game!



GOLF NOTES

One doesn't ordinarily associate golf with strong emotional experiences. Instead, golfers seem cool and detached as they walk the links. But while golf does not present the spectacle offered by football or basketball, the excitement is there, especially as demonstrated by the likes of professionals such as Bubba Watson, Tiger Woods, Inbee Park and Stacy Lewis. In 2000 Tiger Woods became the youngest player to complete the Career Grand Slam.

Professional golfers can earn a lot of money (millions). This is a result of several factors: endorsements, bonus, appearance fees, corporate outings, speaking engagements, licensing fees (video games, trading cards, etc.), course architecture, books, instructional videos and businesses that capitalize on a person's status as a player, such as product lines.

The professional men's major golf championships, commonly known as the "major championships," are the Masters Tournament, U.S. Open, The Open Championship and the PGA Championship. For the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) the majors are considered to be the Kraft Nabisco Championship, LPGA Championship, U.S. Women's British Open and the Evian Championship.

Golf is played competitively at two educational levels. Many high school teams operate under the jurisdiction of their school district and state athletic association. Most high schools offer golf as a sport for both males and females. At the college and university level the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sponsors both men and women teams and championship tournaments.

Most cities and towns offer amateur programs. Some are sponsored by such organizations as YMCA's or local park districts.

Check out the following websites to learn more about this sport:

www.golfdigest.com

www.pga.com

www.lpga.com