

Golf
GUIDE



Off-Course Preparations

Accidents like pulling a muscle happen on the golf course every day. But plenty of other injuries are preventable with a little planning.

Here's how to play the game more safely:

BE WEATHER AWARE

Check the weather forecast before heading out or a fun day on the course could take a sudden turn for the worse. You're going to be outdoors near trees and often wielding a metal club. Experts confirm that this greatly increases your risk of being struck by lightning during a rainstorm. The National Weather Service reports that as many as 5 percent of lightning-related deaths happen annually on golf courses. That may not sound like a lot, but the potential threat remains very real. Download a trusted weather app and monitor conditions throughout play. If an unexpected storm should pop up, immediately store your clubs. Move as quickly as possible toward shelter, steering clear of trees that could attract lightning.

WARMING UP

Chronic issues like wrist tendinitis and golfer's elbow are associated with the game because of its repeated motion. These tend to happen more gradually than a sudden muscle



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strain – but both can be limited by the same simple precaution: Follow a proper warm-up routine to reduce the risks. Start with a short walk around the neighborhood and then take a few slow swings. Follow with some squats or lunges. These exercises will better prepare

your body to use a full range of motion. Staying hydrated is also essential. If needed, take breaks in between rounds to avoid injuries from overexertion.

PAY ATTENTION

Golf involves hard balls hit by fast-moving clubs, so there

is always a risk of serious accidents if you are not continually aware of your surroundings.

Always make sure that fellow players and anyone nearby are at a safe distance before taking a swing. Others may be at risk from both the

swinging club itself or the subsequent shot.

If something goes wrong with your swing — and that happens to even the best golfers sometimes — be sure to loudly yell out “fore!” This will warn others that a ball could be heading their way.

Tips for Putting Precision

Trying to avoid multiple putts? Isn't everybody?

Unfortunately, it's never been harder – and, quite frankly, that's by design. Greens today are constantly being redesigned to lower the chances of an easy finish. That makes an accurate read even more important if you want to maneuver out of trouble and into the cup.

INTERPRETING THE SHOT

Understanding the greens involves predicting how the ball will travel as it rolls toward the hole. Seasoned players typically master this skill over time, so having experience with the course can be a significant advantage. Even in new situations, however, the timing on each shot is critical. A frequent error made by amateur golfers is waiting until they are directly over their ball to decide on a line for their shot. To improve your chances of sinking the putt, start evaluating the read as you approach the hole. Drivers have less of an edge over walkers in this scenario, because checking everything out while on foot provides additional time to spot imperfections and variations in the slope. Approach the green at an angle, rather than directly behind.

TAKING AIM

Now you're ready to take the putt. Consider trying



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something that's favored by many professional golfers: They often use a technique known as "aim point." It's used by players to gauge the slope beneath their feet to figure out where to direct their aim with their arms and fingers.

Walk along the ball's anticipated path to about the midpoint to sense the slope and rate it on a scale of one to five. Then position yourself behind the ball, close one eye, and extend your pointer finger just outside the hole.

Based on your slope assessment, hold up that number of fingers. The farthest finger from the hole indicates your aim point.

This is an intensive approach, requiring patience. It may take years to refine.

Once you feel confident in recognizing slopes, however, you'll have added an invaluable asset to your golfing expertise. It might just be worth the time and effort to excel when you need to finish a hole with that perfect putt.

How to Practice Anywhere

More time to practice one's golf game is that oft-desired, oft out-of-reach gift.

Fitting everything into a busy schedule can be a big challenge. Then there's trying to find the physical space to make real improvements. Here's how to make it work:

LEVERAGING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Sometimes, vital training sessions come down to making use of the tools at hand. Technology can provide valuable tips and strategies, and the information is shared in the comfort of your office chair or couch at home. When it comes to analyzing your swing, for instance, even seasoned golfers sometimes find that minor adjustments pay off with huge benefits. Modern technology makes it simpler than ever to receive constructive feedback.

Many apps offer features for connecting with friends, enabling you to monitor each other's progress as you refine your game. Visit the app store to discover swing analysis tools that record your drives and then provide instant insights to enhance your technique. Some applications may need additional equipment, including hardware that can be attached to your glove. This can generate 3D visualizations of your swing to help identify areas for improvement.

AWAY FROM THE COURSE

You can't typically launch a golf ball from your yard at home. Not without shattering nearby glass, anyway. Nets and cages are now available that are designed to capture your golf ball, so it stays within your property limits.



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Embedded targets aid in perfecting your shots. If purchasing this setup isn't financially feasible, or local neighborhood rules prohibit them, try this clever solution: Practice swinging while simply targeting the very top of your lawn. This method helps with hitting up on the ball.

SHARPENING YOUR SHORT GAME

Ideally, every golf lover would have their own personal putting green right in the backyard. But the effort and expense associated with clearing the space, digging the hole, planting and upkeep, or installation of artificial

turf might make this impractical. You may simply have space limitations. Consider purchasing a mat for your living room, hallway or office.

Chipping nets may provide a way to focus on specific targets. Use plastic balls to assist in refining the power of your swing.

Teaching Younger Generations

In many places, golf has become a sport with an aging fanbase. Many young people remain unfamiliar with the sport so many enjoy.

Ensure that the sport continues into a new generation by taking a young person under your wing.

Even without any teaching experience, you can make a very big difference. Patience will be essential: Remember your own early days in the game? The rules can seem complex at first, and mastering the subtleties of play is initially challenging. So, concentrate on fundamental principles related to basic etiquette, their swing and the course's rules.

The long-term benefits can be huge. Those who take up a sport in their youth are likely to carry it into adulthood as a cherished hobby, and that could establish its own lasting legacy for you.

GETTING STARTED

Make the learning environment enjoyable, because any sport is supposed to be fun. Begin in the backyard with a few fundamental clubs before gradually increasing the complexity of your lessons. Before long, you will find yourselves on an actual golf course. In these initial sessions, the focus shouldn't be on hitting a booming drive or perfecting



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their putt. Things like perfect ball striking can come later. Focus on simple enjoyment instead. Avoid becoming the stereotypical overbearing coach obsessed with long-term outcomes. Allow kids to explore their creative instincts, even if their initial efforts seem unproductive. Every

child will progress at their own pace, and the goal is simply to cultivate a passion for the sport.

LONG-TERM GOALS

You're working to make golf a part of their everyday lives. Consider working together to create a backyard hole. You

could practice putting right in your own backyard – and this project will become another enjoyable golf-related activity, creating memories for a lifetime. If constructing a green isn't feasible, consider purchasing a specialized putting pad from a sporting goods store.

Either way, you can shift focus to the short game – a vital component of golfing success. In a larger sense, you'll also be emphasizing the essence of golf: getting the ball into the hole. Who knows? All of this could end up marking the start of golf's next great legend.

Be on the Lookout for Wildlife

Golf courses often double as a vital wildlife habitat.

Obviously, the main purpose of your local course is to create a space for golfing. Most end up offering a perfect habitat for various animal species.

Just which animals you may find residing among the sandtraps and greens will differ according to your location. No matter which form of wildlife you encounter, it's important for you to show consideration toward them while on the course. Here's how to better understand and respect these creatures, while learning to cope with potential wildlife interactions. You'll be enhancing your personal safety while also preserving the natural world.

WHERE ARE THEY?

Most often, you'll encounter wildlife near or in unplayable spaces after an errant shot. And there are a lot of these spaces: The U.S. Golf Association estimates that more than 70 percent of golf courses are categorized as non-playable areas due to the presence of grasses, shrubs and trees. These areas create ideal conditions to attract local animal species. Golfers also sometimes encroach on historic grazing or breeding grounds.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Especially when playing at an unfamiliar golf destination,



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be ready for encounters with animals who call the land home. Depending on where you are, you might even see a bear.

Near water: Be on the lookout for aquatic animals. These hazards are meant to create challenges for golfers, but the lakes, rivers and ponds function as a home for wildlife.

Reptiles are also common in certain areas of the country, including alligators, snakes and crocodiles. Exercise caution near wet regions or in tall grass.

In the air: A diverse selection of bird species can typically be found on a golf course. If you notice geese, ducks or other fowl nearby, be

careful not to swing your club until they have flown away. (Golf courses as excellent sites for endangered pollinators like the monarch butterfly, with as many as 100,000 scattered across millions of acres of golfing terrain.)

WHAT TO DO

The U.S. Golf Association

has established specific rules to address ball interference caused by wildlife.

Golfers are entitled to penalty relief if their ball is near dangerous wildlife, including venomous snakes, alligators, bears and even aggressive bees. You can also get relief if your ball lands in an animal burrow.

Big Screen Golf Favorites

People often shower praise on movies that revolve around baseball, most notably “Field of Dreams.” Football has inspired timeless scripts like “Semi-Tough.” Golf has inspired plenty of great movies, too.

When you’re not out on the course, cue up one of these classic motion pictures with scripts centered on your favorite game.

“CADDYSHACK” (1980)

The stacked cast of characters includes then up-and-coming talent from “Saturday Night Live” (Bill Murray and Chevy Chase) and comedy legends Rodney Dangerfield and Ted Knight, with a gag-filled script focusing on a caddy’s wacky experiences written by Harold Ramis and Brian Doyle Murray, Bill Murray’s older brother. It’s all complemented by a truly iconic soundtrack.

“DEAD SOLID PERFECT” (1988)

A cult favorite, “Dead Solid Perfect” stars Randy Quaid as a struggling pro who still aspires to become a golf champion. The script was penned by Dan Jenkins, the “Sports Illustrated” writer whose work inspired the football-themed “Semi-Tough.” Offbeat golf pro John Daly has



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said that “Dead Solid Perfect” is one of his favorites.

“TIN CUP” (1996)

Kevin Costner may be best known for the baseball films “Field of Dreams” and “Bull Durham,” but he also made one of the all-time greatest golf movies. He stars as a former pro-turned-golf coach Roy McAvoy, who tries to make an

unlikely run at the U.S. Open. Actual professionals from the era round out the cast, including Peter Jacobsen and Gary McCord.

“HAPPY GILMORE” (1996)

This beloved Adam Sandler film blends surprising tenderness with ridiculous comedy, with a romantic subplot.

Sandler’s character tries to build on his talent with hockey’s slapshot to help his financially troubled grandmother by hustling golfers on the range. The cast of “Happy Gilmore” also includes Ben Stiller and Carl Weathers.

“THE LEGEND OF BAGGER VANCE” (2000)

Robert Redford directed this

celebration of the sport, featuring Will Smith in the lead role and set during a long-ago era. Post-Civil War Georgia provides the backdrop for “Bagger Vance,” which boasts a heartfelt metaphorical meaning. The film also stars Matt Damon, Charlize Theron and the legendary Jack Lemmon – the latter of whom makes his last film appearance.

Hitting the Long Ball

Sometimes you only need a minor tweak to get more distance on your drive.

Most golfers work on improving their putting when they want to decrease their golf score. Consider adding a second priority by lengthening your drive. You'll get to the green faster — and it's a whole lot of fun to practice.

Getting those additional yards typically hinges on refining your stroke and then working on consistency. The goal is to hit the ball hard without losing accuracy. On the most remarkable shots, direction and length and work in harmony. The key is to avoid ending up with a slide after hitting the ball powerfully.

IDENTIFY YOUR SHOT

The specific area where your club contacts the ball greatly influences how far it will go. Aim to strike the ball between the upper and middle sections of your driver's face, commonly known as the "sweet spot." This technique can help achieve maximum distance on your drives. If finding the sweet spot proves challenging, use a pen to mark it on the back of the golf ball. It should help with your focus, while serving as a visual reminder as your swing improves.

UNDERSTAND THE ANGLES

Geometry plays a role in golf. For example, just a five-degree



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increase in your launch angle can lead to substantial improvements. Accomplishing this may be as easy as adjusting the ball's position in your stance without altering the swing itself. The key is to adjust where you strike the ball. Make contact toward the head of the

driver during the initial phase of your swing. Striking it lower in your swing will result in a loss of power.

If you continue to struggle with this, have a friend observe your swing or use your phone to record and review your swing motion.

GENERATE MORE TORQUE

The setup for many shots is based on specific fundamental principles, and they apply to nearly all clubs. The driver, however, often deviates from these tried-and-true rules. Start by making contact

correctly to harness your power. Concentrate on generating a circular rotation as you approach the ball. Point your toes outward, and rotate your shoulders back and away. Always keep your lead shoulder elevated to create the correct swing path.