

Golf Guide

Tips and Trends for the Avid Golfer



Add 20 Yards to Your Drive

While most golfers know that the real way to knock off a few strokes from their scores involves sharpening their putting skills, there is just something about the long ball.

There are a few simple adjustments you can make to your swing to improve the overall distance of your drive.

Just remember that practice makes perfect. If you're having trouble consistently hitting the ball farther, what's the point of adding a few extra yards? The key to improving your long game is finding a reliable stroke that leads to straight, strong drives down the fairway.

STAY PATIENT

If you've combed through golf magazine after golf magazine for tips on the long drive, you've probably received conflicting information. Every golfer is different, which means there are multiple ways to attack the golf ball. What works for a professional golfer may not work for the weekend warrior at the local country club, and vice

versa.

Finding what works for you may involve talking to your local golf professional or simply taking a few extra swings from the driving range. Increasing your drive will take commitment and, most of all, patience as you work through various swing alterations.

WHERE TO HIT THE BALL

Where you hit the ball in relation to the club face of your drive can have a huge impact on distance. If you're looking to hit longer drives, strike the ball between the center and the top of the club face. This is the sweet spot that leads to maximize distance.

Not sure if you're hitting the right location of the club face? Put a dot on the back of your ball with a non-permanent marker to see where the

ball and driver are coming into contact. This will tell you if you need to adjust your swing.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ANGLE

Increase the launch angle of your swing to really watch your ball fly. Just a 5-degree increase in the angle can lead to big gains. The easiest way to adjust the angle of your swing is to move the ball a few inches forward in your stance. This allows you to keep your stroke the same.

You should also focus on hitting the ball with the head of your driver slightly on the upswing. Striking it at the bottom of your swing arc can lead to a reduction in swing power. Ask a friend to watch you or set up your smart phone to record your swing. What you find may surprise you.

Choosing a Golf Instructor

Looking to improve your overall golf game but aren't sure where to start? Look no further than the professional at your local golf course. He or she is an expert in not only a particular course but in the game itself.

Finding a pro who will fit your skill level and learning style is important to getting the most out of your game. Treat the process of finding a pro like choosing a personal trainer. Ask questions and check credentials. It's up to you to research the pro you will be working with to make sure your needs will be met.

Once you find one who works for you, go all in to better your game and build a collaborative relationship with your new swing coach.

TECHNOLOGY

Are you looking for all the bells and whistles when it comes to instruction? Things like video, ball flight monitoring or custom club-fitting sessions? Does your coaching pro use virtual courses to put you through various testing scenarios?

Technology has changed the way we teach and learn. The same holds true in the game of golf. Ask coaches if and how they use technology to instruct their students. Their answer may make or break your decision to choose them as your personal pro.

REFERRALS ARE KEY

You can conduct powerful research on golf pros in your area by talking with fellow players. Your playing partners may know about a certain pro's pricing, reputation and teaching style. They may even provide testimonials that show you what kind of coaching you can expect.

Some of the best descriptors of a high-quality golf pro are patient, charismatic, knowledgeable and, of



course, patient. Did we mention patient? Golf pros are trained to mentor and coach their students into great players. While everyone learns differently, an overriding characteristic of an effective learning session is collaboration between teacher and student.

CREDENTIALS AND EXPERIENCE

One of the first questions you should ask your prospective pro is what makes him qualified to instruct you. What are his credentials and experience? Is he a member of a national coaching organization? Does he have professional playing experience? These are fair questions

that will allow you to learn about the skill set of your new instructor.

Working with an accredited coach means your instructor completed intensive, hands-on instruction from an elite organization. Ask how often her certification expires to see how often her skills are tested.

Putting Tips

If only you had the key to unlocking a more consistent putting game. Can you imagine the confidence in knowing you were making perfect green reads every time you pulled the putter out of the bag?

If this sounds more like fantasy than reality, you're not alone. A recent Golf Magazine study by Pinehurst Golf Academy found that golfers under-read putts more than 65 percent of the time. This means the slopes and angles of greens are giving fits to golfers across America.

What can you do about it? Practice is a great start, but there also are many exercises you can do to make yourself a better green-reader and putt-striker. Once you incorporate the following suggestions into your strategy, put them to work during your next outing on the course.

TAKE LESSONS

Check in with your local golf professional to schedule a few sessions on putting. During this instruction, you will likely learn about your stroke and receive a baseline assessment of your putting approach and alignment.

A golf pro may have ideas for you on changing your grip, posture, eye positioning and even overall mental state of mind. These refinements to your game can have a big impact on your overall scores.

RELAXED GRIP

The way you grip the put-

ter is one of the most important factors in control on the greens. Golfers use different grips to achieve their putting goals, so it may take you a while to find what works best for you.

Remember that it is important to handle the putter equally with both hands. This means avoiding having a dominant hand that can impact the trajectory of the ball and speed of the putter. Relax your grip by loosening up not only your hands, but your shoulders and arms, too.

THE PERFECT STANCE

Now that your grip is relaxed, move yourself backward or forward until you have a perfect vertical position from your eye line to the ball. Once you find an eye-ball combination that works for you, make a mental note of your positioning so you can make consistent putts.

Keep your feet comfortably apart at shoulder's width. Too narrow or wide of a stance can cause balance issues that make it hard to comfortably strike the ball with confidence. Keep your weight toward your toes rather than your heels for the most effective stroke.



The Best Golf Gadgets

We're all looking for that leg up when it comes to our weekend scrambles. With the onset of new golf gadgets, technology may be the answer.

From voice GPS systems to drive-measuring tools, there are many new devices on the market that can help you take strokes off your game while improving your overall comprehension of the sport.

So stop by your local golf shop to see what they've got on the shelves. Technology continues to change the game; why not let it play a part in enhancing your overall skill set as well?

VOICE GPS SYSTEMS

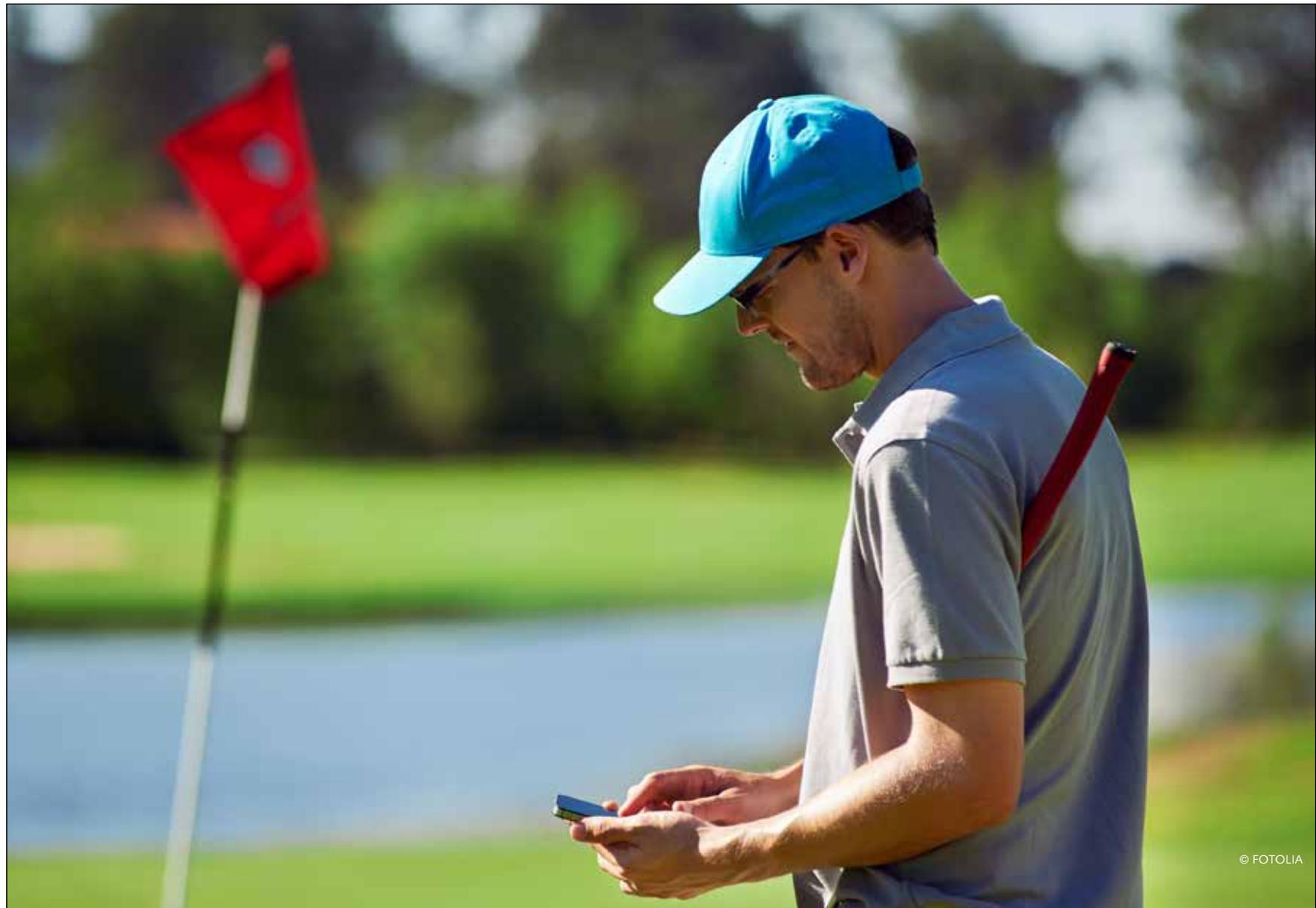
We all use GPS systems when we're driving from one location to the next. Crystal clear directions and step-by-step instructions are a couple of the reasons why the GPS has changed the game for drivers across the world.

That same technology can be applied to the golf course, helping you get an exact lay of the land. These systems give you information on the distance from where you stand to various landmarks on the course, including the pin, sand traps or water.

Look for products with shot distance measurements to help you get a grip on your next shot. Many of these systems are wearable like a watch or clip to your bag.

SWING ANALYZER

The latest option for people looking for instruction outside of their lessons



with their local golf pro, swing analyzer tools can track a wide range of metrics, including head speed, swing plane, hand path, hip rotation and overall swing tempo.

These products mount to your glove and collect many important statistics every time you swing the club. These numbers can tip you off to any changes that need to be made to your swing, or you can share them with your golf pro for analysis.

Most of these sensors come with mobile applications for easy tracking and sharing. Make sure there is an

option to watch and replay your swing to understand the statistics.

MICROCHIPPED BALLS

Do you spend more time looking for lost balls than you do lining up birdie putts? Microchipped balls and radar systems are worth investigating.

These tandem products let you find your golf balls with ease, helping to keep the game flowing and preventing balls from being lost forever. The balls come with microchips planted inside, helping you immediately track them with the handheld radar device.

Technology continues to change the game; why not let it play a part in enhancing your overall skill set as well?

Look for kits that come with a carrying case and numerous balls. Practice in your yard to get a good grasp of how the technology works before taking it live on the golf course.

Tips On Course Etiquette

Golf is a unique game that plays by its own set of rules and etiquette standards. The Professional Golfers' Association of America offers tips for new golfers.

AVOID SLOW PLAY

The PGA offers these tips to make sure your group doesn't fall behind the players in front of you:

- Walk at a reasonable speed between shots.
- Begin planning your next shot as you approach the ball.
- When you reach your ball, check the lie, select your club, visualize your swing and play the shot; this should take no more than 45 seconds.
- If you aren't ready to play when it is your turn, encourage one of your fellow players to play.

MAINTAIN COURSE INTEGRITY

You should treat the golf course like your own yard. Here are some recommendations from the PGA on how to do this:

- Always replace your divots, which are caused by the ball disrupting the turf on impact. You can use the toe of your



shoe to kick in the turf around the edges of the divot or fill the divot with the soil and seed mixture provided by the course.

- Bring a rake into the bunker with you and cover up your footprints and ball mark when you complete your shot.
- If you lay down the flagstick, lay it off the green to pre-

vent doing any damage to the green.

- Never run on the course, and avoid driving your cart too fast. These actions can damage the turf and leave unsightly marks on the course.

PLAYER RESPECT

One of the most important

aspects of golf is good sportsmanship. Follow these recommendations to make sure you're playing with respect:

- Avoid stepping on your fellow players' putting lines, which can disturb the green and affect the shot.
- Do not stand where you might distract a fellow player,

and don't move during his shot.

- Never make any noise when your fellow player is preparing to putt.
- While others are putting, hold the flagstick at arm's length so the flag doesn't flutter in the breeze, and make sure your shadow doesn't fall across the hole or line.

Teaching Kids to Golf

If you love the game of golf, what's better than passing on that passion to the young people in your life? Teaching golf to children can be a rewarding experience. By offering up your insights on the sport, you're creating a new generation of golfers who will appreciate the game as much as you do.

The key to supporting a child with lifelong respect and love for the game is patience. While we are not all trained with the expertise to instruct others at a high level, we can all use a patient approach to teach kids the basics of golf.

This can include general swing guidelines, rules of the game and course etiquette. Let your child start in the backyard with a set of clubs before taking them to the course. Create a positive atmosphere that makes learning the game an enjoyable experience.

Kids who grow up enjoying playing the game of golf are likely to continue the hobby throughout their lives, and will also likely pass it on to others. So by teaching golf to a child from a young age, you're actually preserving the health of the sport you love so dearly.

KEEP IT FUN

More important than teaching them how to hit the perfect putt or most powerful drive, having fun is the most vital message to get across to a young golfer. Rather than being an overbearing coach focused on technique and ball-striking, let your kid have at it. Encourage her to follow her creative spirit and hit the



ball in a way that feels natural to her.

The key is to foster a love for the action of hitting the ball with the club; leave it up to her to determine how best to achieve this. Giving kids

the freedom to explore the game will help them appreciate the activity.

Keep the focus on fun out of the gates so your son or daughter wants to keep coming back for more.

MAKE YOUR OWN HOLE

Before taking little Johnny or Jill to the course for the real deal, dig a hole in your yard to simulate the putting green. Starting with the short game can be a great way to teach

your youngster the overall point of the game: to hit the ball in the hole.

Your child will like the overall reward of making a shot, and you'll reap the benefits of training the next game's next great.

Improve Your Endurance

Golf may not be as high impact as football or basketball, but it sure takes plenty of endurance to comfortably make it through a round of 18 holes. Opinions have changed on how much strength training is needed for golfers to effectively play the game.

For years it was believed by golfers at all levels that this type of training wasn't necessary to playing a successful round. You can find today's golfers — from high school to professionals — working on their overall leg strength and cardio endurance between games.

Weight training and physically preparing for the game is now part of the sport. That's because when you golf, you are trying to generate explosive power through a wide range of motion. You are also walking — a lot. Bulking up in the traditional sense of weight lifting isn't the end goal for golfers, rather they are looking for an edge in endurance and more powerful ball striking.

Work with your local golf pro to get on a workout routine that will benefit your game. You're likely to notice the results rather quickly.

TARGETED TRAINING

When you work with a professional on building a custom plan, there are several physical functions that need to be addressed. These include balance, posture and core strength. What's most important to you depends on the parts of your game you'd like to improve the most.

Are you tiring midway through a round of golf? If your shots become shorter and less consistent as the game goes on, it's time to add more leg exercises and cardio to your workout plan. Squats are a great full-body workout that can strengthen your legs and improve your balance.

If a more powerful swing is in your plans, consider adding cable workouts to your routine. Join your local gym for the best commercial cable equipment that lets you complete full range-of-motion exercises with added weight for resistance.

INJURY REDUCTION

Studies have shown that a proper physical training program can decrease the risk of injury for junior, professional and senior golfers. And fewer injuries means more time enjoying yourself on the course.

Think about it: The more you push your body on the golf course, the more flexibility and longevity required. If you're not working hard to implement exercises that can help improve these critical areas, you are putting yourself at risk of injury.

Start your program today to make sure you're playing at your best for years to come.

