

Golf

GUIDE



Practicing with Limited Space

Even golfers with small backyards can squeeze in beneficial practice to fine tune their skills without disturbing the neighbors.

One awesome way to learn how to improve your game is by taking lessons with a PGA certified instructor. Disclose your expectations about how far you want to take your skills. Between lessons and course play, consider these practice techniques from the comfort of your backyard or living room.

SWING ANALYZING SOFTWARE

If your swing could use a little tweaking, new technology is making it easier than ever to receive excellent advice. Check the app store on your smart device for swing analyzers which allow you to record yourself driving a ball and receive instant feedback on where to improve.

There are also a few apps that require additional hardware that attaches to your golf glove and reveals a 3D rendering of your swing. Once you see your mistakes, correcting yourself is simple. Make it a social experience by sharing your progress with other friends using the software.

THE PERFECT DRIVE

Smashing the ball in a congested neighborhood is a terrible idea, unless you have a

suitable net or cage to catch your ball. Check your local sporting goods store for options that include targets to tune your swing. If a cage isn't in the budget, Golf Digest suggests taking backyard swings using grass as your target. They recommend contacting only the very top of the greenery which will teach you to hit up instead of down on the ball.

CHIPPING

Learning to loft the ball can set you up for great putting opportunities and pin shots. In your backyard, take advantage of a chipping net where you can target the basket from different angles. If you still have trouble maintaining the power of your swing, a good practice method is using plastic balls instead of the real thing.

SHORT GAME

In a perfect world, you could build your own putting green in the yard, but excavation and maintenance can be expensive. Instead, purchase a mat to use in a hallway or living room. Here you can learn how to control the speed and direction of your putts, making it easier when you face obstacles on a real course.



Attract a Sponsor

Many Americans know golf as a great way to unwind after a hectic work day or week. With the right set of skills and a little luck, though, a few can make it their profession. Unfortunately, to compete in this competitive industry, finances can make a difference; that's where being sponsored comes into play.

When a golfer is backed by a brand-name manufacturer, they gain the benefit of using their cutting-edge tools. Engineers design products to give their athletes an edge while competing. Do you have what it takes to attract the attention of a sponsor? It may be easier than you think.

SELL YOUR BRAND

One of the easiest ways to catch the attention of a golf sponsor is by self-promotion. Fortunately, with social media, it's easy to brand yourself and score a deal. Don't be bashful of your achievements in the sport. Post your stats in tournaments, videos of impressive shots and show your passion of the game by teaching others with tutorials. Once you gain a decent following, you may find yourself in a partnership with a sponsor who will propel your brand.

BRANCH OUT

Don't limit yourself to courses and tournaments in your local area. Check surrounding cities for upcoming events and apply to compete. Golf scouts will be more likely to be present in areas with up-and-coming athletes who are being sought out for opportunities.

Playing on the same course as these golfers gives you the chance to network and learn



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about their journey to playing the sport professionally. You'll probably even learn to make improvements to your own game.

ENCOURAGE YOUTH

Those with an interest in golf during their high school or college careers should be encouraged to pursue the sport for its

academic backed opportunities. A story by Golf Digest shows recruiters devote most of their energy to the collegiate ranks. Receiving a deal for

equipment support at a young age can entice the youth to dedicate themselves to the sport and reach their dreams of playing at a professional level.



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Are Used Clubs Worth It?

It's no secret that a full set of golf clubs can be an investment. Even piecing together brand new tools individually can get quite expensive. Before you make the plunge into a kit that doesn't make sense to your budget, consider if a used set will be efficient for the way you play.

A great way to find a lead to a quality set of used clubs is by networking with peers at your local golf club. Explain to the staff about the types of clubs you are looking for to find out if they can point you in the right direction. You can also get great information from other golfers who may have taken similar avenues to obtain their set. If you're in the market to

upgrade your current equipment, avoid buyer's regret by using these tips from Golf Advisor.

PRIVATE SELLER VS. QUALIFIED DEALER

The biggest advantage of buying used locally is the opportunity to try them out before investing. Searching classified ads can reveal great deals on a used set of clubs,

but be wary of scams or buying clubs that are damaged.

Also check your local golf club or sporting goods store for deals on trade-ins from a previous golfer. Make sure to spend some time taking practice swings and getting a feel of their performance.

AVOID COUNTERFEIT CLUBS

If a deal on a premiere set of

clubs seems too good to be true, it probably is. According to the United States Golf Manufacturers Anti-Counterfeiting Working Group, there are an estimated 2 million counterfeit clubs produced every year.

Typically, these sellers will sell "as is," meaning you are stuck with tools you don't want and can't use.



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Adjustable Drivers

If you have spent any time on a golf course, you already know how an initial drive can impact an entire hole, or even round. Setting yourself up for a short chip-in or putt can be the difference in stroke that gives you the victory.

Unfortunately, your driver may be holding you back from gaining the most ground. If it doesn't fit your frame or swing style, you have probably noticed the ball hooking or slicing and avoiding the direction you intended. Unfortunately, not all clubs are built equally and finding the one that works best for you can be an expensive trial and error.

Today, golfing manufacturers are offering one-size-fits-all drivers that are adjustable in nearly every way. Here are how

these specialized tools can improve your game, as reported by Golf Digest.

SLICE AND HOOK

These two results of a failed swing can cripple your position off the tee. If you struggle to keep a clubface in the right position to drive a ball long and straight, check out the advantages of an adjustable driver.

Slice occurs when the clubface is open to the path of the swing, resulting in an overly high shot which sails to the

right. The correct adjustment includes altering the hosel to an upright position and shifting weight toward the heel.

A hook is more common with experienced players and occurs when the club is closed in the path of the swing. To correct it, experts recommend opening the clubface by positioning more of the adjustable weight to the toe side of the club.

TOO HIGH OR LOW

Many things must go right to make a perfect drive including

contacting the center of the ball and an efficient stance. A new driver can enhance your swing by rotating the head to increase or decrease loft.

If your ball typically launches high, causing it to lose momentum in the air, reduce the loft to around 8.5 degrees. You should see a better carry and more aggressive roll once it lands. Low swings that hit down on the ball usually leave the tee in a line drive that lacks distance. Adjust your driver to about 11.5 degrees to gain a few extra yards.



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America's Most Difficult Courses

Think you have what it takes to conquer the most difficult courses in the country? Consider taking a trip to one of these unique locations and tackle deep bunkers, tough greens and crippling water hazards. Check out three of America's courses that are notoriously known for their tough designs, as rated by the experts at Golf Advisor.

Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

Built in part by famed architect Peter Dye in 1981, the course is built with challenging bunkers inspired by traditional Scottish links. Players will notice hazards on each hole including sandy waste areas to inhibit shots and tricky water obstacles. If you plan to tackle this course, aim away from the trees as there are hundreds of oaks, pines and palms that add to the level

of difficulty. Prepare yourself for the famous 17th hole, which surrounds the green with water. NBC Sports says the island claims about 120,000 balls each year.

Blue Monster at Trump National Doral Miami Doral, Florida

Constructed in 1959, the Blue Monster hosted its first PGA Tour in 1962. The 18-hole course gained its nickname due to challenges from

water hazards which are present on every hole.

If you make it out to the famous location, plan to hit around numerous bunkers littered throughout the infamously long fairways.

River Course at Blackwolf Run Kohler, Wisconsin

Another course designed by Peter Dye has been testing skilled golfers since 1990. The risk of a score-shatter-

ing drive is just a tee shot away as golfers are forced to thread the needle among strategically placed bunkers, water hazards and thick areas of trees. Even the greens are tough to navigate as their unusual slopes can be unpredictable to inexperienced putters.

In addition to its recognition as a difficult course, it was also ranked No. 15 in the 2017/2018 America's 100 Greatest Public Golf Courses list by Golf Digest and No. 19 in Golf Week's 2017 Best Resort Courses nominations.

AJGA and Youth Sports

The American Junior Golf Association educates its more than 7,000 members about the sport of golf and much more.

According to its mission statement, the group is dedicated to the growth and development of the youth who aspire to win college golf scholarships through junior competition.

Here are some quick facts that show how important the group is to the charities they donate to and the youth they support.

The Leadership Links Program has donated \$2.2 million and 20,000 volunteer hours to the 1,750 charities they support.

Successful alumni from the youth group include Tiger Woods, Rickie Fowler, Katie Futcher and Pat Hurst.

The AJGA annually assists about 100 interns by launching their careers with events or working at national headquarters.

The group relies on donations to keep its efforts intact. Visit its website to learn how to contribute financially or volunteer your time to one of their events. Take a further look at how the group encourages the youth to grow into positive role models.

CARE FOR THE COURSE

The AJGA stresses to instill its members with proper course etiquette when competing in tournaments. Athletes are asked to carry small bottles of sand to

repair divots they cause or encounter during their game.

Each hole features a sand-refilling station to ensure golfers have the resources to keep tournament courses in tip-top condition. While this seems like a small lesson, understanding to take care of a course is something they will remember during an entire career.

LEADERSHIP LINKS

This is an amazing charity that rewards junior golfers for contributing their time and collecting donations for organizations. While they learn the importance of giving back to their communities and those in despair, junior golfers receive exciting benefits like playing a round or a meet-and-greets with their favorite professional golfers.

The opportunity to serve their community is also a great addition to their future resumes and the character they build during their most impressionable years.

JOIN THE GROUP

Young men and women aged twelve and older are eligible to join the AJGA. Once a member, they will be surrounded by like-minded peers with common goals. Applying for a spot with this incredible organization is as simple as filling out an application on its website.

If membership fees are higher than you have in your budget, consider applying for the Achieving Competitive Excellence Grant for assistance to help a young person achieve a scholarship to play at a collegiate level.



Golf and Our Environment

If you play golf recreationally, you may consider it a fun way to compete with friends and unwind from your busy schedule. While both physical and mental health benefits have been linked to teeing off, did you know you are also supporting a positive impact on the environment?

The United States Golf Association says it has supported more than 90 university studies and projects to evaluate the relationship between golf and the environment. The results are incredible and may encourage you to think of your golf game as more than a system of birdies and strokes.

CREATING HABITATS

The USGA reports more than 70 percent of most golf courses are rough and non-play areas which include grasses, trees and shrubs. This environment serves as a habitat for local wildlife.

Many golf courses are built on previously damaged land like landfills or mining sites. What once was unused is turned into a useful space to boost local economy while providing a place for nature to flourish.

PROTECTION OF TOPSOIL

Did you know that topsoil is a non-renewable resource? It is widely used in farming, forestry and urbanization efforts. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States of America, the growing need for soil will increase by 60 percent by 2050.

Unfortunately, elements like wind and water can erode



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topsoil into rivers, lakes and oceans. The turf on the country's golf courses helps lessen the impact of erosion by its dense system of roots underground. The turf works to slow surface water runoff during rainstorms, when it is

shown to hold up to 20 times more soil than traditionally farmed cropland.

MAINTAINING PESTS

Turf is also efficient at reducing weeds and pollen that can cause issues with

those who suffer from allergies. When it is well maintained, it will typically stop these annoying plants before they become a problem. Turf that is mowed closely is also a great way to discourage infestations of pests like mosqui-

toes, chiggers and ticks, which are main contributors to the dangerous Lyme disease.

So, the next time your spouse asks you why you spend so much time on the links, you can truthfully tell them it's to save the world.