

# Golf

GUIDE



# Why Golf Is Good For You

It's easy to get lost in the details of the game while playing golf, since selecting a club, ball placement and every hole's challenges are so complex.

But there are also important health benefits associated with this sport, from improved cardio to the proven benefits of spending time in social situations to the boost in mood associated with being outdoors and accomplishing something on the course.

## CARDIOVASCULAR BENEFITS

Leave the cart at the clubhouse and walk instead. There are a variety of health benefits to be gained, beginning with lowering the risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. The American Heart Association recommends mixing in a brisk walk around the course with other regular exercise routines. Regular golfers reap even more benefits: Walking three rounds of 18 every week alone is enough to help golfers maintain their weight goals, according to the World Golf Foundation.

## HOW IT WORKS

Even riding around the course for 18 holes on a golf cart has some positive health impacts. The World Golf Foundation reports that you'll



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burn some 1,300 calories. Carry the clubs, however, and you'll burn an average of 700 additional calories during every round. Most courses represent the equivalent of a 5-mile walk, and that equals the 10,000 steps per day that are generally recommended by experts. At the same time, you'll be exerting roughly the same energy over every nine

holes that it takes to mow the lawn for 40 minutes.

## SOCIAL INTERACTION

Playing a solo round has its own allure, as we reconnect with nature and the game in a relaxed atmosphere. But a group setting is actually even more beneficial. Social interaction has been shown to have positive impacts on both phys-

ical and psychological health, according to the National Institutes of Health. Golf gives us a chance to spend time with friends and family. Even if you don't find yourself in a group of like-minded fans, you can sign up for scrambles or other course events.

## MENTAL WELL-BEING

Physical activities have been

directly linked to mental well-being by the National Institutes of Health. Exercise like golfing benefits players in terms of both long- and short-term outcomes, the American Psychological Association confirms. Golf has a way of lifting our moods, even while you see improvements with weight, diabetes symptoms and high blood pressure.

# Play the Game the Right Way

Beyond the basic rules, golf has many unwritten guidelines.

Golf course etiquette can be difficult to navigate, even for experienced players. There are written rules, but other elements of the game have become traditional courtesies. Here's what you need to know:

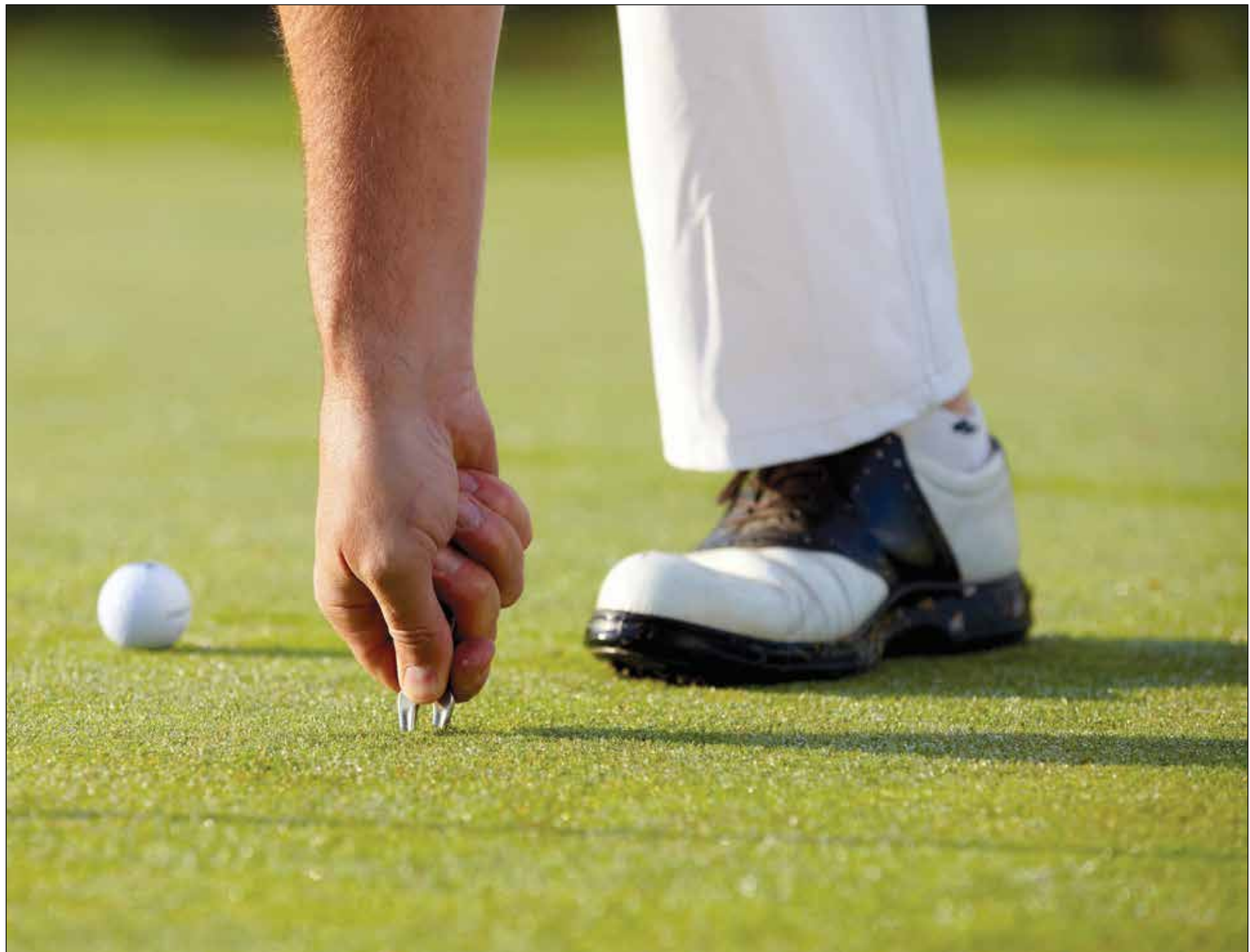
## **SLOW PLAY**

It's called "ready golf." You approach the ball and hit as soon as you can until reaching the greens. Pacing, and thus enjoyment, is such a big part of golf. Begin to plan your shot while you are making your way to the place where your next stroke takes place. Taking stock of the rest of the small details involved with your approach should take fewer than 45 seconds, according to the Professional Golf Association.

If you get to the ball, and find yourself in a confounding situation, allow another player in your group to move forward. If your entire group is going more slowly, let the people behind you play through. This is particularly important to keep in mind if your ball is temporarily lost. Don't spend more than five minutes looking for it.

## **TEMPER TANTRUMS**

You'll disturb those around you by throwing clubs, sulking or yelling profanities while playing the game.



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Frustration is a part of the on-course experience, of course, but try to employ a less obtrusive approach to releasing your emotions. Following up a bad putt with an overly aggressive tee shot isn't going to get your game back on track, anyway. At the same time, remain still when

others are setting up for their shot. Remain across from the next person who is set to play, or on a diagonal angle so that you are not in their line of sight. Don't move until their shot is complete.

These small courtesies help the game unfold more smoothly.

## **CARING FOR THE COURSE**

As you go through your 18-hole experience, employ a tee, your special two-pronged devices or penknives to fix ball marks. Replace divots so that missing tufts of grass don't impact the shots of others. Some particularly conscientious

players even carry grass-seed mix in their carts so they can encourage regrowth in their divots. Rack the bunkers after you've played through, and try to avoid watery spots when in the cart since you might leave huge tire ruts. Cut down on the natural wear and tear on the course by scattering your carts.

# Extending Your Drives

Small adjustments can have a big impact on your long ball.

Better putting is well-known as the fastest pathway to lowering your golf score. The average player is more interested in extending their drives, however, since that's a whole lot more fun. Adding more yards usually comes down to developing and employing a reliable stroke. You'll have to hit it hard, but also straight. Direction and length go hand-in-hand in creating a great shot. You certainly don't want to hit it incredibly hard but then produce a slice.

## LOCATING THE SHOT

The exact point at which you strike the ball has a big impact on the distance it will travel. Try to hit the ball between the top and center of the face on your driver. That's what's referred to as the "sweet spot," and can help you achieve the longest drive. Should you find it difficult to find this spot on the club, put a corresponding spot on the back of your golf ball in order to help focus. This will create a visual cue that can help smooth the way when attempting to improve your swing.

## ALL ABOUT THE ANGLES

Math comes into play with golf. For instance, increasing your launch angle by just five degrees will make a huge



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impact. Achieving this can be as simple as changing where the ball sits within your stance. Your swing itself can remain the same. The difference is where you come in contact with the ball. Strike the ball toward the head of the driver in the beginning of

your upswing. You'll lose power if you strike lower in the bottom of the swing. If you find it difficult to figure out all of this, ask a friend to watch as you swing or position your phone so that you can examine a recording of the process.

## CREATING TORQUE

The setup for most shots relies on certain fundamental rules, and thus applies to almost every club. The driver, however, tends to break these rules. Begin making contact in the proper way. You'll then start gathering the power

you've always wanted. Focus on creating a circular rotation on the way to the ball. Your toes should be turned outward, then shift your shoulders both back and away. You want your lead shoulder to be higher so you can develop the proper path.

# Before You Hit the Course

Take personal precautions so you can avoid golf injuries.

Our familiarity with the game can lull us into a false sense of complacency. But injuries can and do happen if you don't take safety on the course as seriously as you should.

## CHECK THE FORECAST

You're going to be spending the day outside near trees and often with a metal club in your hands. All of these things put you at an increased risk of being struck by lightning. The National Weather Service reports that about 5% of all lightning-related fatalities each year occur on golf courses. The total number of strikes remains small, but the danger still exists. So, check the weather forecast before your day of golf. On the other hand, if an unexpected storm appears, put your clubs away and avoid trees, which could attract a lightning strike. Return as quickly as possible to a permanent structure, or to a completely enclosed vehicle.

## WARMING UP

Golfer's elbow and tendinitis of the wrist are common maladies associated with golf. But those develop over time, unlike a muscle sprain — which can happen at a moment's notice. Proper warmup routines can minimize these risks. Begin with a few slow swings after walking



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around the block in your neighborhood, and then do a few squats or lunges. This will help ensure that you don't injure yourself when trying to make use of the full range of motion. It's also important to drink plenty of water, both while you're on the course

and after you've completed play. Rest between rounds if needed in order to avoid injuries connected with overuse.

## KEEP AN EYE OUT

This game involves very hard spheres and metal clubs, and that can lead to serious

injuries for those who aren't watching. Make sure your golfing partners and other bystanders are safely out of range before you take a golf swing. Those around you can be at risk of injury from your swing itself or from the resulting shot. Wait until the

group playing ahead of you is well out of range before swinging. If something goes wrong with your swing, and rest assured it eventually will, shout "fore!" as loudly as possible to alert everyone that a ball is headed toward another player.

# Watch Out for Hazards

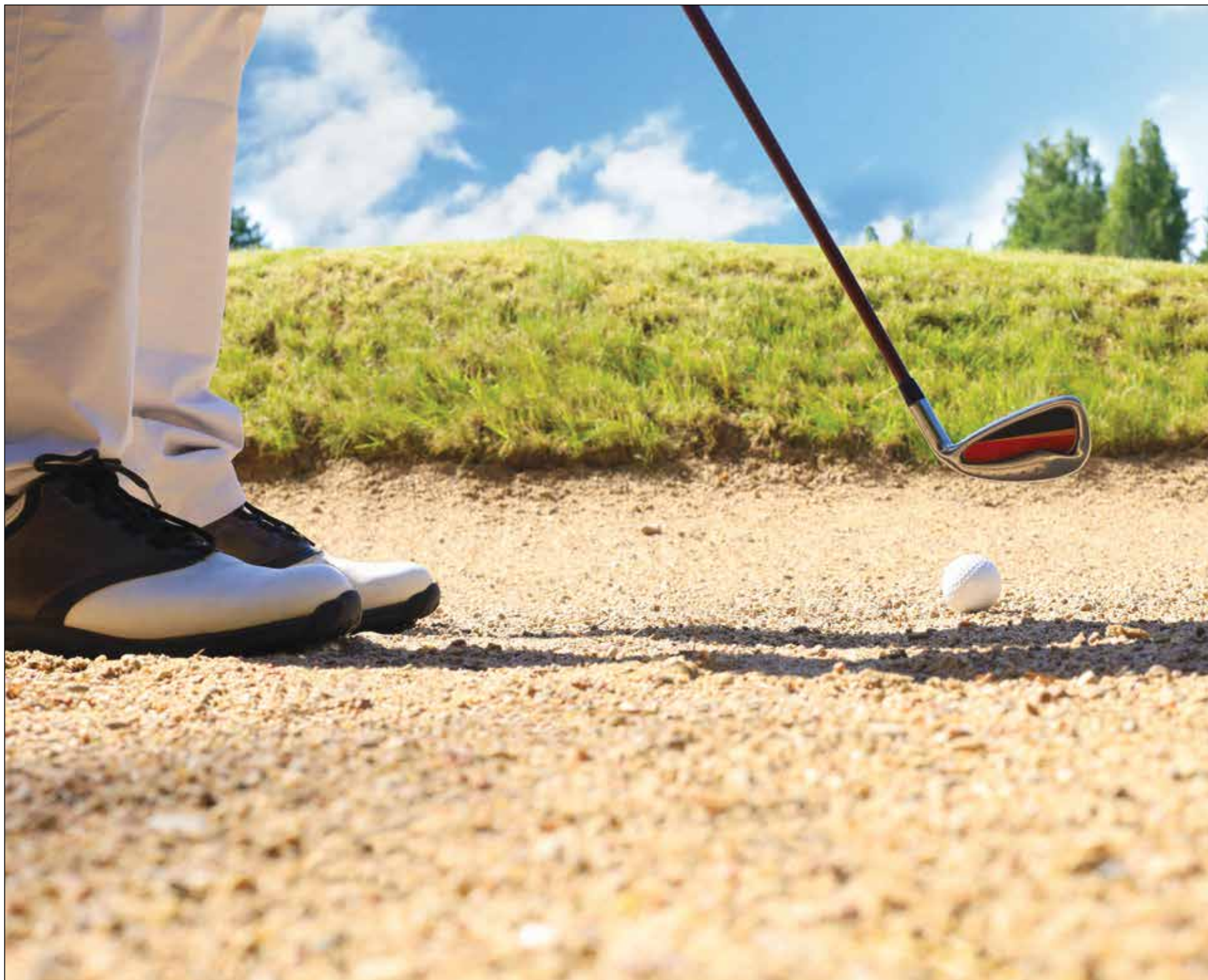
Designers have created many unique and difficult obstacles.

The U.S. Golf Association defines a hazard as any course element that is designed to make scoring more difficult. That's putting it mildly. Hazards can completely ruin your scorecard, whether it's because of extra swings or ball drops.

Over time, however, a series of smart approaches have developed to help golfers make a crafty escape. You'll also need to understand the significance of specific course markers. The best idea is to avoid hazards altogether, but in the likely event you cannot, here's how to deal with them:

## BUNKERS

The most common hazard found on a course is the bunker, which is also referred to as a sand trap. This foundational element of golf layouts is typically positioned near the green, but may be found at any point along the way. If your ball lands here, even the tiniest swing errors can lead to disaster — even for the pros on TV. The successful escape, known as going “up and out,” involves keeping your club-face open as you swing. This will likely take plenty of practice, since irons are typically held in a different way. If you want to stick the landing, remember to hit slightly behind the ball. That will create more spin.



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## WATER

Water hazards are seen more rarely when compared with bunkers. But if you hit into one, the impact on your score will be far worse. There is typically no way to shoot out of them. That leads golfers to Rule No.

25 in the official manual: If your ball can't be located, there is a one-stroke penalty. Golfers may then choose to play from their previous spot.

They may also “take a drop,” placing the ball at a spot of their choosing from somewhere

behind the hazard marker.

## STAKES

Course markings will help guide play. As you make your way down the course, you may notice white stakes along the edges. Those define what is out

of bounds. Yellow stakes, on the other hand, will be placed around horizontal water hazards while red stakes are placed along lateral hazards. The yellow and red markers help golfers determine where to place their ball to resume play.

# Mix It Up out There

Go beyond match and stroke play for fun new challenges.

Most golf games involve match and stroke play. Golfers try to leave the course with the least number of swings, while avoiding penalties associated with hazards or out-of-bounds shots. But why not spice things up a bit? Try playing in a scramble, better ball, skins or four-ball formats:

## SCRAMBLE

If you're playing in a large group, the scramble format can help expedite things. This version of the game also rewards single-swing excellence. Teams gather in groups of two, three or four. Everyone takes an initial swing and the group decides which shot provides the easiest path to the green. The process continues this way until the course is complete. Scoring mirrors stroke-play rules, with the lowest cumulative score crowned as the winner.

## BETTER BALL

Better ball, or best ball, is an update of the scramble format. Every team member swings on their own ball, however, instead of choosing one to play. Once each hole is complete, the lowest player's score is then counted as the final result. This format is ideal for less experienced golfers when facing off against a strong team.

## SKINS

Skins can be played with



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teams or individually. The player or team with the lowest score is awarded a "skin" after each hole. If there are ties, the skin is carried over to the next hole. Some golfers create additional incentives, including monetary awards for each skin or special rewards for driving the green, long chip shots or

particularly impressive putts. Others create penalties for negative outcomes, including bunker landings, water shots and hitting out of bounds.

Ties happen often, and that can create an exciting situation as the "skins" begin to pile up. In this scenario, bolder players are rewarded since

making an aggressive play might result in quickly building an insurmountable lead.

## FOUR-BALL

The four-ball format involves pairs of golfers who play through individually instead of alternating shots. In match play, teammates who

complete the hole while accumulating the fewest shots claim the team's point. In stroke play, count the shots and then use the best teammate's score.

This format has been used at the PGA Tour's Zurich Classic and in the Ryder, Solheim and Presidents Cups.

# Finding the Right Ball

It's easy to become overwhelmed when facing so many choices.

The latest technological advances in ball construction can help golfers zero in on any issues they may have with control, spin or distance. In the end, deciding which one is right for you might simply come down to identifying which part of your game needs the most work:

## LATEST ADVANCES

Many swing solutions today include buying new balls with updated construction. Layering within the ball has such a huge impact on how it reacts against the club face. As you begin researching, you'll find one-, two- and three-piece offerings, along with other multi-layer versions. The inexpensive one-piece options are principally used for driving-range practice. Two-piece balls, on the other

hand, have a resin or acrylate core with a durable cover. They're ideal for amateurs, providing plenty of short-term usability.

Three-piece balls include a lining of rubber between the cover and core, offering a softer response that better helps control spin. But they can also present a challenge for less experienced golfers who may still have issues with control. Multi-layered versions can help maximize your distance and provide the very best spin control. They're also the most durable. But as with their three-piece cousins, experience and control are at a premium.

## GETTING STARTED

Experts typically recommend two-piece balls to beginning golfers, as the choice really comes down to skill level. They're more durable than the single-piece versions and can help amateurs significantly improve their swing before stepping up to the multi-layer

balls that require more control. If you have a tendency to hook or slice, look for durable ionomer covers. For those with slower swings, two-piece balls may also boost height and distance.

## MORE ADVANCED

As your game continues to improve, it may be appropriate to move up to the three- and multilayer editions. Their main benefit is spin. These advanced models offer more experienced golfers in the mid- to low-handicapped range the chance to sharpen their swing, boosting both control and length. They may be firm or soft. Multilayer versions are meant for those with a faster swing speed, and boast a higher compression rating. They're typically firmer than three-piece golf balls. Five-piece versions provide a softer response off the club because of the extra layer, but are less commonly found.