



Golf

GUIDE

Lesson Expectations

Depending on your level of skill, golf can be one of the most relaxing or frustrating sports in existence. It is easy to be discouraged after your mulligan lands in the same bunker or body of water as your first attempt.

If you are looking to get a grasp on your golf game, it might be time to seek the guidance of a professional. Golf lessons will teach the basics to any beginner and can even provide new tricks to a seasoned player. As a beginner, there are a few things you can expect when you start lessons.

INTERVIEW

It is important for you to feel comfortable and acquainted with your local lesson instructor. You will likely be asked a series of questions that gives your instructor an idea of where you are in your golf game and how they can get you to a better point. Some of the questions you can expect to answer:

- What is your previous experience in golf or other sports? Disclose any other sports you may have played, instructions you received that were beneficial or negative and any injuries you may have experienced that may hinder your golf swing.

- Why are you considering taking lessons? This question should be answered with what motivates you. Are you motivated to learn golf to play professionally or casually?

- What kind of equipment do you use? Allow your instructor to analyze your golf bag. Certain clubs are better for dif-



ferent playing styles, and the instructor may be able to suggest different equipment to benefit you as your lessons progress.

ERROR CORRECTION

Once you're in action, your instructor will want to analyze

your swing. You should expect an explanation on important fundamentals you're missing that are holding you back from performing at the top of your game.

DON'T BE DISCOURAGED

Arnold Palmer, the profes-

sional golfer with 62 PGA Tour wins, once said, "The more I practice, the luckier I get." This goes to show you that even a professional who has likely seen every scenario on a golf course still needs consistent practice to improve his game.

Once you get down the

basics, you will be more likely to avoid common errors. Lessons from a PGA-certified instructor can lead you to successfully recreating a perfect swing every time. Just remember to take your time and don't get down on yourself if it doesn't happen right away.

Golf Course Safety

It is easy to forget about safety hazards while on the golf course. Golf can be incredibly relaxing, but it is important that you don't let your guard down for the potential risks that exist.

While injuries like muscle sprains, wrist tendinitis and golfer's elbow are commonly created by golfing, these conditions usually develop slowly. Proper warmups can be exercised to minimize your risk of developing these ailments. However, there are immediate risks that are present during a round of golf.

FORE!

The tools needed for a successful game of golf include metals clubs and an incredibly hard ball. You can probably imagine how this combination can sometimes mean disaster.

A key part of safety on the golf course is being aware of the location of your golf partners. Before taking a practice swing, be sure your partners are clear of your range of motion, and be sure to give them plenty of room to plan their shot.

It also is important to be aware of other groups of golfers. If you notice a group ahead of you, it is crucial to wait to take a shot before they are completely away from your swing's reach.

If a ball gets away from you and there is a chance it will head toward another golfer, shout "fore" as loud as you can.

This is a universal term on the course that means a ball is headed in another golfer's



direction. In turn, if you hear "fore" being shouted, immediately cover your head and duck behind shelter, such as a golf bag or cart.

CHECK THE FORECAST

According to The National Weather Service, there were 38

lightning-related fatalities in 2016. While only 5 percent of these occurred on a golf course, it is still best to take proper precautions.

Review the weather forecast before planning an outing. Most golf courses cover a lot of ground, and it can be danger-

ous to be a far distance from the clubhouse when lightning strikes.

WILDLIFE

While wildlife will differ based on golf course locations, it is still a good idea to be mindful of the animals. Before

walking into an area with high grass or near water, be sure to examine the area.

Snakes, bees and even crocodiles are known inhabitants of golf courses around the country. Respect the wildlife and keep an eye out for potentially dangerous animals.

Top Public Courses

If you're planning on taking a vacation this year, be sure to pack your golf bag. America truly has some of the most beautiful golf courses on the planet. Take a look at the top three public courses of 2015-16, according to Golf Digest's long-running top-100 list.

NUMBER 3: Kiawah Island, S.C., The Ocean Course

Does golfing amidst panoramic views of the Atlantic Ocean sound appealing to you? You might consider planning a vacation to South Carolina and visit the Kiawah Island Golf Resort to play a round at The Ocean Course.

This par 72 course covers 7,365 yards of ground that includes complex slopes, sawgrass and tricky bursts of wind. It's no surprise this course ends up on "America's Toughest Courses" lists each year.

Developed specifically for the 1991 Ryder Cup, The Ocean Course features 10 holes running along the Atlantic and eight others running parallel to those. With these beautiful views come unpredictable sea breezes. Be sure to plan your shot accordingly.

NUMBER 2: Bandon, Ore., Pacific Dunes

Pacific Dunes provides golfers with the impression that the course was naturally formed rather than designed. It is the successful sequel to the first course featured in the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort.

This course captures the pure essence of Scotland's ancient links by featuring rugged terrain and devastating



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bunkers. You will be welcomed by desert-like landscapes on one hole and rewarded with the beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean on another.

Pacific Dunes was brought to life in 2001 by designer Tom

Doak. The routing on this 6,633-yard course is less than ordinary, as it features four par threes on the back nine.

NUMBER 1: California, Pebble Beach

Remaining the number one

public golf course in America since the list's inception in 2003 is Pebble Beach. Majestic views and diverse challenges are just a couple of reasons this course is still on top. Do yourself a favor and plan a trip so you can say, "I played

at Pebble Beach!"

Pebble Beach was the first creation by amateur designers Jack Neville and Douglas Grant. In 1919, Pebble Beach opened to the public and has had minimal changes to its 6,828-yard property.



Choosing the Perfect Ball

You have likely noticed the range of different types of golf balls offered at your local shop. It can be easy to get confused and a little overwhelmed when choosing the ball to best benefit your golf game.

Before purchasing your next set of golf balls, decide upon which part of your game you want to improve. There are balls on the market that can improve your distance, control and even spin. Remember, these advantages will only happen if you understand how to utilize them.

LAYERS

The advantages of different types of golf balls start with their construction. Here is a breakdown on the four most common balls you will find.

- **One piece:** Very inexpensive, usually not for sale to retail consumers, mostly found at driving ranges.
- **Two piece:** Great for amateurs, acrylate or resin core, durable cover that resists damage for a short time.
- **Three piece:** Solid core featuring rubber between core and cover, softer than a two-piece ball, better spin control.
- **Multilayer:** Built with four to five layers to provide maximum distance, ultimate spin control, more durable than the fewer layer options.

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

Now that you have a general idea of how to decipher the numerous options

of golf balls based on their layers, how do you choose the one for you? It depends on what you want to achieve and how experienced your golf game is.

AMATEUR

The experts at American Golf recommend a two-piece ball for beginner golfers. You can find them with ionomer covers. This material reduces the ball's tendency to hook or slice due to inexperienced swings.

The two-piece ball also will supply a boost in distance and ball height for slower swings. Use this type of ball to perfect your swing before you move on to the more advanced layers that demand more control.

ADVANCED

As your game improves, you should consider moving on to a three-layer or multilayer ball. Golfers who regularly achieve birdies or better during a round can gain great benefits from using an advanced ball.

Choosing a ball that features a urethane or ionomer cover will absolutely launch from the tee box but give you much more spin control when advancing toward the green.

Perfect Putting

Putting can be one of the most stressful parts of a day on the course. Imagining the route your ball will take on a sometimes worse-for-wear green can be difficult. There are a few tips you can use to give yourself an edge when finishing off a hole.

The 1991 Ryder Cup was determined by a 6-foot putt on the final hole of the final match. Bernhard Langer was behind the missed putt in the tournament that was so intense that it was deemed The War on the Shore. This just goes to show how a well-played game of golf can be tainted by a poor stroke on the green.

PROPER POSTURE

A perfect putt requires an even more perfect stance, and the first step is to keep your back flat and horizontal to the ground. This may feel uncomfortable or unnatural at the beginning. Holding this pose during a putt keeps your shoulders straight and square with the ball.

The next important part of your stance is your club's position. The grip of your club should be held in the center of your body so your hands and shoulders create a triangle. Have a partner snap a photo of you during a putt to ensure you're holding yourself properly.

This triangle is a major factor in proper putting because it allows your shoulders and arms to rock back in forth in a smooth motion. You should also bend your knees to evenly distribute weight to your heels and toes.



VISUALIZE BALL PATH

The path your ball will take depends on your swing and the condition of the green. It is a good idea to get an idea of how your ball will travel before

committing to a swing. Here's how:

- Your best view is behind the ball. Examine whether you will be shooting uphill or downhill to get a sense of the

power you need behind your club.

- Walk sideways from the ball to create an imaginary line to the cup. Here you can adjust to any breaks the greens may

make.

- Don't over think it. Once you have a good understanding of your ball's path, remember your stance basics and take the shot.

Negotiating Hazards

American golf courses use different obstacles to add extra challenges to a golfer's game. These hazards can wreak havoc on your golf score, causing ball drops and extra swings that will ultimately add digits to your score card.

Depending on who you ask, the definition of golf-course hazards will change and usually include anything detrimental to a score. But according to the United States Golfer's Association, the Official Rules of Golf define a hazard as any bunker or water hazard.

HOW TO HANDLE BUNKERS

Sand traps, or bunkers, have been a constant man-made hazard on golf courses for decades. Bunkers are often found near the green, which can cause big headaches for golfers. Even professionals find themselves swinging from the sand in hopes to get their ball back on track.

It is easy to be intimidated by bunkers, but knowing how to successfully get out and regain composure on green grass will give you an easy exit. Here are a few quick tips to get you out of the sand.

- Keep the face of your club wide open. This means your club face should be held flat enough to carry around a glass of water. This may be a difficult adjustment as you typically hold irons in a completely different orientation. Much like every other swing in golf, it will take practice.

- The next part of a successful greenside bunker shot is to hit behind the ball. Aim for



about an inch behind the ball and hit the sand with your club. The closer your club comes to your ball, the more spin you will produce.

WATER

Water hazards are more

damaging than bunkers to a golf score. You can't exactly position a club a certain way to get a ball out of a body of water, right?

In the Official Rules of Golf, Rule 26 states that if a ball lands in the water or cannot

be found once hit near the water your options are:

- Lose a stroke and play a ball as nearly as possible from where the original ball was played. This is essentially a do-over.

- Lose a stroke and take a

drop. The drop must be behind the water hazard and between the spot it originally crossed the water and the hole.

The common factor in either option is losing a stroke.



Custom Clubs

Are you having trouble gaining the amount of ground you desire from your swings? Perhaps you haven't considered being fitted for a custom set of clubs because you feel the investment isn't worth putting toward a game you just can't figure out.

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Don't give up yet. Clubs that are too long or short can have big downsides to a golfer's game.

Most stock golf clubs can provide you hours of fun with family and friends, but if you are a stickler for lower scores, you should consider getting a custom set. Your local golf shop will be able to assist you in getting proper measurements and give you a quote. Remember, even a profes-

sional golfer can't make an efficient swing with clubs that don't fit.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT AT FITTING

A fitting session will generally take 15 minutes to a few hours depending on the number of clubs you are being fitted for. A session usually involves you sampling clubs from different manufacturers to see which head works the

best for your style.

Your height and the length of your arms will be the determining factors when it comes to finding the club length you require. This may be the most important part of the process, as a club of incorrect length will make it nearly impossible to maintain a proper stance that is crucial to swinging.

Today's custom fittings utilize state-of-the-art technology to find the perfect set of

clubs to truly enhance your game.

FOCUS ON CLUB PARTS

The shaft flex — sometimes known as the golf club's engine — will be fabricated to the exact length that will benefit your game. Improper shaft length is infamous for causing hooks, slicing and minimizing distance.

Loft simply means the angle of the club face that

controls trajectory and distance.

Custom-fit irons will be calibrated to your style to ensure consistent results. The loft also is crucial for drivers, because it allows the ball to carry farther and roll less.

Your grip also should be fit to your size. Correct grip controls the amount of hand rotation, which will make it easier for you to remain square when swinging.