

# Golfing Guide



# Finding the Perfect Ball

Don't get overwhelmed by the many selections offered by your golf shop

Deciding really comes down to which part of the game you're trying to work on.

New technology can help improve your control, distance and spin. But there's a stepping stone-like process through the differently layered balls.

Sort through the confusion by pin pointing your on-course issues, then shop with confidence. Here's how to find the perfect ball:

## HIGH-TECH ADVANCES

The differing golf ball-based swing solutions begin with their updated construction. We understand a lot more these days about how layering impacts the way they come off the club face. You'll see one-piece, two-piece, three-piece and multi-layer offerings. One-piece balls are very inexpensive and are principally used at driving ranges. Two-piece versions are great for amateurs, with a resin or acrylate core and durable cover that provides short-term resistance to damage.

Three-piece golfballs have rubber between the core and cover, making them softer than a two-piece with better control of the spin. But they require more experience and control. So do multilayer versions, which provide maxi-



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mum distance and the best spin control. With four-to-five layers, they're the most durable golfballs around.

## BEGINNING GOLFERS

Which one is right for you? It comes down to your skill level. Beginning amateur golfers usually start with two-piece balls, according to experts.

They provide a reliable way to improve your swing before moving on to more advanced balls which require more control. Seek out ionomer covers for added durability; they also help reduce a tendency to slice or hook for inexperienced golfers. Two-piece balls may also offer a needed boost in ball height and distance for those with slower swings.

## ADVANCED GOLFERS

As your swing improves, you can move to three-layer or multilayer golfballs. Advanced models help golfers with more experience hone and sharpen their way to a better game with more length and spin control. Three-piece balls like the Titleist Pro V1 are designed for mid- to low-handicappers, and can be firm or soft. Their main

benefit spin.

Multilayer versions like the four-piece Titleist Pro V1x have a higher compression rating, and are meant for players with faster swing speed. They're firmer than three-piece balls. Five-piecers like the Taylormade TP5 are less common, but can give better players a softer response on impact because of the additional layer.



# The Health Benefits of Golf

The game can improve your state of mind, while increasing fitness

A day on the course is about more than club selection, birdies and avoiding the rough. Too often we underestimate the health benefit associated with golf.

From extra cardio, mood boosts and the emotional benefits of being part of a social circle, golf does a lot for the body and soul:

## CARDIOVASCULAR BOOST

You'll have to park the cart, but walking the course provides a range of health benefits. Moving around briskly has been shown to lower the risks and impacts of high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes, according to the American Heart Association. So mix in a few rounds of golf into your regular exercise routines. A World Golf Foundation reported confirmed that twalking three 18-hole rounds per week provides enough exercise to help golfers of all ages maintain their ideal weight.

## INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Riding the cart around an 18-hole course burns about 1,300 calories, the World Golf Foundation report found, while carrying your clubs instead burned an average of 700 more calories per round. The average 18-hole course



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will be the equivalent of a 5-mile hike, helping golfers meet the 10,000 steps-per-day goals set by many doctors. Energy used to play nine holes is said to be roughly the same as mowing the lawn over 40-minute time frame for adult men.

## IMPROVED MOOD

There's limited evidence

relating to golf and your mental health, but the National Institutes of Health have consistently linked physical activity with mental well being. Exercise is benefit to both short- and long-term mental health, according to the American Psychological Association. And your mood is sure to improve as you see improved numbers for your

weight, high blood pressure and diabetes.

## SOCIAL CIRCLES

Playing a solo round or two is always a peaceful, relaxing experience, as we reconnect with the outdoors. But there are health benefits associated with enjoying the game in a group setting. The National Institutes of Health note that being social

has a direct impact on psychological and behavioral health. So take advantage of time spent with your friends who are golf enthusiasts. If you don't have a group of likeminded friends, sign up for scrambles or charity events where players team up to play. You'll get to play the game you love while making a direct impact on your well being.



# Dealing With Hazards

These different obstacles are meant to add every-day challenges on the links

If you stumble into one, they can wreak havoc on your score in the form of maddening extra swings or deflating ball drops. The good news is, there are tried-and-true approaches to dealing with hazards. But first, you have to have a firm grasp on what you're up against.

Sure, you'd like to avoid them all together, but history tells us that even the best golfers can't. Here's what to do next:

## IN THE BUNKER

Hazards are generally defined by the U.S. Golf Association as any element of the course that's detrimental to your score. The most common example may be the bunker, also known as a sand trap. They've been a part of course layouts for as long as anyone can remember. Often placed near the green, bunkers make even the slightest swing error into a nightmare scenario. (Ask the pros you see on television hacking their way out.)

With the right know how, you can successfully get up and out of these man-made quandaries: Keep your club face open when hitting out of sand. This is not as easy as it sounds, since we normally



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hold irons in a different way – but it works. As with so much in golf, practice makes perfect. Next, remember to hit behind the ball in order to successfully stick the landing. The closer a club gets to the ball, the more spin is produced.

## IN THE WATER

Water hazards are typically

less prevalent on golf courses, but they're far more damaging to your final score. First, there's typically no way out of it. If your ball lands in the drink or can't be located, turn to No. 26 in the Official Rules of Golf to learn more. In general, there is a one-stroke penalty. In some cases, golfers may choose to play the ball

from its previous spot. They may also "take a drop," meaning placing the ball at any point behind the violated hazard marker.

## THE STAKES

White stakes define what's out of bounds on a golf course. Yellow stakes sur-

round standard horizontal water hazards, while red stakes indicate a lateral water hazard along side of the fairways. These areas may also be marked on your local course with lines, rather than stakes. They determine where your ball can be placed when you're ready to get going again.

# How To Extend Your Drives

A few simple adjustments can have a huge impact on your long ball

We all know that the quickest way to lower a golf score is to work on your putting. But where's the fun in that?

Finding and practicing a reliable drive stroke is the key, if you want to add extra yards. Just remember that hitting it straight is one of the most important elements in getting to the green as fast as possible. Length and direction go hand in hand. A huge slice won't get you there.

## WHERE TO HIT

Where you strike the ball has a huge impact on your every-day distance. To achieve the often-elusive longer drive, it's actually better to try to hit between the top and center of the driver's face. That is the club's sweet spot for the longest-possible drive. If you're struggling to locate this exact spot, consider putting a dot on the back of the ball with a marker to help with focus. This subconscious visual cue often does wonders for those trying to improve their swing.

## FOCUS ON ANGLES

Experts say that even a five-degree angle increase can pay huge dividends. So, increase the launch angle and watch the ball zoom away. Adjusting this can be as simple as moving the ball forward



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in your stance. Your stroke remains the same, with the only difference being in where you hit the ball. Strike it more toward the the head of your driver as you begin your upswing. The lower to the bottom of your swing arc, the more reduction in your power.

If you're having trouble making this adjustment, have a friend watch your swing or set up a recording device so that you can break it all down later.

## TORSO TURNS

Most set up fundamentals apply to every club, but the

driver breaks those rules. Once you've adjusted and are now making proper contact, it's time to begin gathering power. The goal is to achieve a circular rotation away from the target. Turn your toes outward to increase your ability to move. Tilt your shoulders back and

away, so that your lead shoulder is higher in order to create the proper swing path. Positioning yourself like that may look odd at first, in particular since your eye line may also be tilted. But this is only the starting position; once you begin your swing, move as normal.



# Endurance Is the Key

What's the point of golfing if you can't finish the game?

For many years, pros didn't think much of endurance, and rarely participated in strength training. This had a trickle-down effect with amateurs. But our understanding of how endurance and a great golf game are connected has been expanding more recently.

Golfers at every level now work on cardio, strength and balance. Some form of weight training has become the norm – if only because you're trying to generate upper-body strength through a swing. A day on the course usually involves lots of walking too, and endurance comes into play there, too.

You may not have the time or inclination to train the way PGA golfers do, but there's still plenty you can do to increase your strength – and improve your game.

## **SPECIFIC TRAINING**

Consult with a local golf pro, and they'll tell you that bulking up through a weight-lifting regime isn't the point here. Instead, you're simply trying to get stronger in an all-around sense. They may help you develop a custom plan, or you could end up connecting with a golf-savvy personal trainer to learn more. They'll discuss which parts of the game you feel are lacking, so that you do specific training to improve that element.



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Do you tire while walking an entire 18-hole course? Are your shots becoming less consistent or shorter as the day goes on? It's probably time to focus on more leg exercises. They may specifically mention squats, an often-recommended workout that strengthens legs and improves your balance. If you'd

like to hit the golf ball farther, consider adding cable workouts to your routine. To improve general flexibility and power, sign up for a membership at a local gym with commercial-grade equipment that allows for full range of motion exercises. Then keep adding weight for resistance until you

get to the your strength goals.

## **REDUCING INJURY**

Studies show that physical training programs, when approached with proper guidance, can decrease the risk of injury for golfers of any skill or age level. Fewer injuries mean

more time out there on the course. As you push yourself harder in the gym or with a trainer, you could reach result-based goals like lower scores. But you'll also be making huge strides in terms of personal health, potentially leading to a longer life – and a lot more rounds of golf!



# Practicing In Small Areas

Ready to squeeze in a little more practice, but pressed for space?

Even those with tiny backyards don't have to skip these critical sessions, as long as you're ready to embrace technology, rely on outside help and take advantage of some key tips and tricks.

You can take advantage of these practice options from your own home – sometimes even inside your own living room. So no need to worry about disturbing your neighbors while fine tuning your game:

## ANALYZING SOFTWARE

Sometimes even the most veteran golfer's swing needs a little tweaking. New tech options make it easier than ever to get needed advice. Head over to the app story to find swing analyzers that allow you to record drives and then receive instant feedback on how to improve. Some apps may require add-ons like hardware that attaches to your glove. They produce 3D renderings of your swing to you can get a better sense of what needs to be corrected. Some apps offer connectivity so you can work on your game with friends, sharing your individual progress along the way.

## DRIVING OPTIONS

Smashing a drive behind your home or condo is going to be frowned upon in the typ-



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ical neighborhood – with smashing glass following right behind. Nets and cages are available to catch your golf ball before it leaves the confines of your yard, along with targets to help you fine tune things. Unfortunately, some can't afford this kind of huge set up; others may have neigh-

borhood restrictions that prevent it. In that event, the experts at Golf Digest have an ingenious recommendation: Simply swing using grass at the target. Make sure to contact only the very top of the lawn. You're actually practicing hitting up instead of down on the ball.

## SHORT GAME TIPS

In a more perfect world, every golf enthusiast would have a personal putting green in their backyard. Costs for excavation, planting and lawn maintenance can put that out of reach. There might also simply not be enough room.

Instead, buy a mat for use in your living room, office or hallway. You can learn more about control and ball speed right in the comfort of home. Chipping nets allow you to target certain areas. Try using plastic balls, which will help you tweak the power of your swing.



# Teaching Kids the Game

Consider sharing a lifetime of knowledge with the next generation

There are still many, many children who know nothing about the game you love so much. Consider taking one of them under your wing. Even those who have no practical experience with instructing others can have a big impact.

You'll need a little patience – remember when you were just starting out? The rules can be complicated, and the nuances of playing are difficult to grasp at first. So focus on general guidelines for swinging, basic rules and etiquette on the course.

There can be great rewards down the road. Kids who grow up around a sport tend to hang on to it as a hobby when they're adults, so you're potentially creating your own new legacy.

## MAKE IT FUN

Creating a positive atmosphere is always important when it comes to learning, and that's particularly important when it comes to teaching any game. Start in the backyard with a few key clubs before ramping up the level of instruction and expectation. Eventually, the two of you will find yourself on a golf course. In the meantime, it's not about a straight and powerful drive or the perfect putt – at least not yet. Having fun is.



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Don't become a classic overbearing coach who's only focusing on long-term goals like ball striking. Allow children to follow their own creative impulses, even if they are silly or unproductive at first. Every kid gets there in their own time. What you're trying to do is foster of a love of the game.

## PUTTING THEM FIRST

A fun project to do together is creating your own backyard hole. The finished results will allow you to simulate putting conditions without leaving the backyard. Until that happens, you'll be participating in a cool golf-related project together. You'll have lots of

laughs along the way, while creating a lifetime of backyard memories.

If you're unable to create your own green, purchase one of those specially made pads at a sporting-goods store. Either way, it'll be time to begin focusing in on the short game – a critically important element of golf-

ing success. In a larger sense, you're also underscoring the entire point of golf: to get a ball into the hole. But there are rewards simply in finishing a project, and then still more in sinking that critical putt. Who knows? All of this might be the starting point for golf's next great legend.