

The Absolute *Beginner's* Guide to Golf

Everything You Need to Know To Get Started on Your Game



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Introduction

Golf is a game that can provide lifelong enjoyment and it can keep you physically fit. Golf is popular among the young and old, and both males and females. The popularity of golf can be attributed to the fact that the game is challenging. No matter how proficient a golfer may be, there is always something to learn, new equipment to try, and another course to tackle.

Many beginning golfers get psyched up to play, yet they know nothing about the sport. When they don't play as well as they thought they would, or they don't understand the fundamentals and lingo, they give up in embarrassment.

If you are a beginning golfer, this book is written for you. This book assumes you know little to nothing about golf and it's designed to give you the foundation you need to begin your golfing quest. This book contains basic information that will take the mystery out of the game, equipment, scoring, etiquette, and more, so that you will feel better equipped, less embarrassed, and encouraged as you begin your golfing experience.

Beginning golfers are encouraged to go into the sport with the understanding that golf is a mental sport, as well as a physical sport—and you will only get out of it what you put into it. Golf can be a casual hobby, or it can be a serious pastime. For some, it can even turn into a career. Golf can be whatever you want it to be.



Chapter One

Understanding the Game and Getting Started

For those of you who know little to nothing about golf, the game is unlike most other sports because it is played over a *large* area of land, which is aptly known as the golf course. The average golf course can cover 50 to 160+ acres. No two golf courses are the same and each will have its own design. Some golf courses are open to the general public while others are private. To golf on a private course you will have to become a member of the private course's golf club—or you can play on the course when you are accompanied by one of the club's members.

A golf course will generally have 9 or 18 holes and the holes are numbered. The holes must be played in order. You cannot play Hole One and then move to Hole Four. Also, when someone is referring to a “round of golf” they generally are talking about playing 18 holes of golf—even if they are playing on a course that only has 9 holes. Golfers playing on a 9 hole course will simply play the 9 holes twice.

The goal of the game of golf is to be the player that gets his ball into each of the course's cups—or holes—with the fewest number of strokes.

These cups are located on areas known as *putting greens*. The areas leading up to the putting greens include: the *teeing area*, the *fairway*, the *rough*, and the *hazard areas*.

The teeing area, the fairways, the rough, and the greens—will have different heights of grass on them. As you might suspect, the rough will be the areas on the golf course that have the highest grass on them, and the putting greens will be the areas on the golf course that have the shortest grass.

The hazard areas on golf courses are places you don't want your ball to go. These areas may be small ponds, sand dunes, pits (sand bunkers), or even wooded areas, or areas with thick vegetation.

Each hole on a golf course will have a "par"—which is a number. This number tells golfers how many strikes a skilled golfer generally takes with his golf club to move the ball from the teeing area, down the fairway, to the putting green, and into the cup on the particular hole.

Golfers use the hole's par as a guideline and they try to keep their strokes as close to par as possible.

Generally, the pars that you will run across on golf courses will be par-threes to par-fives. However, some par-six holes exist on some courses.

Pars for each hole are determined by the number of yards from the teeing off areas to the putting greens. Of course, special circumstances such as downhill areas, hazard area locations, and other factors affecting the ball are taken into account to determine pars.

The area for each hole where golfers make their first stroke toward the putting green is the *teeing area*.

The golfer's goal with his tee shot is to get his ball as far up the fairway as possible. Depending on the hole and the golfer's skill, it may be possible for a golfer's tee shot to land directly on the putting green. If a golfer's tee shot winds up in the cup, this is known as a *hole in one*.

After the golfer's tee shot, he can either ride a cart or walk to the location where his ball landed. From there, the golfer's goal will be dependent on the ball's location.

- His goal may be to get his ball farther up the fairway, or up to the putting green.
- His goal may be to get his ball out of a hazard or rough area and back onto the fairway or up onto the putting green.
- If his tee shot landed the ball on the putting green, his goal will be to putt the ball into the cup.

After each hole the process is repeated at the next hole. After a round of golf, the golfer with the *fewest* shots is designated as the winner.

Scoring and Score Cards

As players play a round of golf they keep score on score cards. Keeping up with your golf score is really easy. Each stroke you take on a hole is counted, and at the completion of each hole you will write down the number of strokes you took to complete the hole. After the golf round is complete you will tally these numbers to get your golf score for the entire game.

The golf course will give you your scorecard prior to a round of golf. Each course's scorecard will be a bit different because it will contain information about the golf club, a map of the course layout, and the colors of the flags on the different holes.

However, all scorecards will have the following information on them, no matter where you golf:

- The club rules will be listed. Always read through the local rules of the club where you are golfing because in some instances it may list rules that over-ride the rules of golf. If a situation is not listed in the club rules, then the rules of golf apply.
- Each hole will be listed by number. You will also see the length in yards for each hole listed for each tee type. These tee types generally include one for men and one for women. You will also see in this area a place that is listed as *handicap*.
- A signature area where you sign off on your score.

The reason there is a handicap listed is because golf is set up so that it allows people with different golfing abilities the opportunity to play with each other competitively. Good golfers will generally have no handicap, but beginning golfers will generally have a handicap.

Basically, a handicap is the number of strokes a player can get that is over and above what the par is for the course. For example, if a golfer's handicap is 18, then he receives one shot per hole *over and above* the course's par. You should talk to a professional at the club about getting your handicap determined so you can play competitively with golfers who are more experienced.

After a round of golf is completed, players will tally up their strokes to see what they shot. In addition to golfers telling you what number they shot on a hole or course—such as a 75, 85, 95, or whatever their number may be—you may hear *terms* to describe a golfer's outcome for a hole, or a game. Here is a guideline:

- Triple Bogey: Three strokes over par
- Double Bogey: Two strokes over par
- Bogey: One stroke over par
- Par: Equal to par
- Birdie: One stroke under par
- Eagle: Two strokes under par
- Albatross or Double Eagle: Three strokes under par
- Condor or Triple Eagle: Four strokes under par

Getting Started

The only way to become a golfer is to take the plunge and begin. The best thing beginners can do is to work on their swing and putting at home, and also go to a practice facility such as a driving range.

A driving range is a designated place where golfers go to work on their golf swing and long shots. They are given a bucket of balls to hit over an area that has numbers marking distance. The great thing about driving ranges is you don't have to go pick up your balls! A machine will generally do that for you.

Other benefits of going to a driving range include the fact that you can go by yourself, you aren't required to wear special clothes, and you don't have to have much in the way of equipment. Many driving ranges even rent clubs.

With respect to clothing, while there are generally no dress codes at driving ranges, you don't want to show up shirtless or wearing very short shorts. A collared shirt, medium to long shorts, or pants, will work fine.

If you aren't happy learning on your own and taking it slow, you can always sign up for golf lessons. Golf lessons are a great way for you to get the undivided attention you need and you can ask all those questions you are dying to know, but are too afraid or embarrassed to ask in front of other golfers. Golf lessons will also speed up your results.

When shopping around for teachers you need to understand that *anyone* can call themselves a professional instructor. Opting for a teacher that is a member of the Professional Golfers Association, recommended by a golf club, or a teacher that a friend highly recommends, is always a better idea than just picking somebody out of the phone book at random.

Before you get locked into golf lessons with an instructor, ask if you can observe a lesson first. This will give you a good idea of how the instructor carries himself and how he teaches. Most professional instructors will gladly allow prospective students to sit in and watch a lesson with another student, as long as the student having the lesson doesn't mind.

When you are observing the instructor here are some things you should watch for that will show that he is a good instructor:

- He seems to have a love of teaching and believes his student will improve.
- The instructor is more interested in teaching the mechanics of golf than showing off his skills.
- He acts like a professional.
- The instructor doesn't give the student too many things to conquer at once and works on the fundamentals.