

Golf Etiquette

Etiquette is defined on *Merriam-Webster's OnLine* dictionary as "the conduct or procedure required by good breeding or prescribed by authority to be observed in social or official life." In golf, it is the conduct and behavior that is expected by all players on the golf course. While it is important to know the Rules of Golf, one might argue that it is even more important to be familiar with the Etiquette guidelines provided in "Section I" of "The Rules of Golf" before playing the very first round. Following these standards will result in you and those around you to have maximum enjoyment of the game.

The overriding principle of Etiquette is that consideration should be shown to others on the course at all times. There are 8 topics that make up the "Etiquette Section", the first which we already covered in the introduction.

The Spirit of the Game

As golf is played without the supervision of an umpire or referee, the individuals participating are responsible for playing by the Rules. Regardless of how competitive a player may be, he should conduct himself in a disciplined manner, demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at all times.

Safety

While golf may not be considered a "contact" sport, there are safety guidelines that must be followed. Before making a practice swing or a stroke, players should ensure that no one is standing close by or in a position to be hit by the club. Depending on the lie, the swing or stroke may result in stones, pebbles, twigs, etc. to fly and others should be clear of this potential hazard. In addition to those in the group, players should also be mindful of those on the course, whether in a group ahead, or on a different hole. Don't be embarrassed to shout "fore" if there is a danger of hitting someone.

Consideration for Other Players

Whether on the teeing ground, the putting green or in between, players should be careful to not disturb other players by moving, talking or making unnecessary noise. Additionally, the player can make the round more enjoyable for those in his group by simply positioning himself in an area that won't cause a distraction, for example, on the putting green, standing away from another player's line of putt to avoid casting a shadow over his line of putt. Players should remain on or close to the putting green until all other players in the group have holed out.

Pace of Play and Priority on the Course

It is important to play at a good pace at all times, even during a casual round not in competition. It is a group's responsibility to keep up with the group in front, not in front of the group behind. A group is encouraged to invite the group behind to play through if it falls a clear hole behind. There are many ways to improve pace of play without waiving or modifying the Rules of Golf, such as noting wind and yardage as others are playing, taking several clubs to the ball if riding in a cart, observing the line of putt while others are playing, and playing a provisional ball if the ball may be lost outside a water hazard or

out of bounds. A group's pace of play determines its priority on the course. A faster group of 3 should have priority over a slower group of 2.

Care of the Course

The superintendent and his crew work long hard hours to provide the best possible conditions for play. To preserve these conditions, players should avoid causing damage to the course throughout the round. Avoid removing divots when taking practice swings or by hitting the head of a club into the ground. Also, around the putting green use care when placing bags or the flagstick on the ground and removing the flagstick from the hole and properly replace it once play of the hole is complete. Observe local notices regulating the movement of golf carts. Always leave the course in better condition than you found it, and repair any damage you may have accidentally created. Examples include smoothing footprints in bunkers, repairing any divot holes and ball marks on the putting green.

Penalties for Breach

A player is not penalized for a minor isolated breach of etiquette. However, if a player consistently disregards these guidelines during a round or over a period of time, and has an effect on others, it is recommended that the Committee consider taking appropriate disciplinary action. Such action may include prohibiting play for a limited time on the course or in a certain number of competitions. This is considered to be justifiable in terms of protecting the interest of the majority of golfers who wish to play in accordance with these guidelines. In the case of a serious breach of etiquette, the Committee may disqualify a player under Rule 33-7.

If players follow the guidelines in this section, it will make the game more enjoyable for everyone. As a player, you can be a leader following good etiquette yourself and provide a good example to those around you.