

Tips for Fighting Slow Play at the Golf Course

Ways to Improve Pace of Play

Slow play on the golf course is usually a condition that a golfer acquires over time, as he or she acquires bad habits. Or it's the result of the golfer never having been taught proper golf course etiquette. This means a slow golfer can usually be "cured" of his malady. Of course, that golfer has to be aware that he's slow, and that's where buddies come into play.

But as we often take a look at other golfers on the course and notice the things they do to slow down play, so should we take a look at ourselves. When we do take an honest look at ourselves, we often discover we're doing many of the same things to slow down play that we're complaining about others doing.

Before we run down a list of suggestions for speeding up play, it's important to note that many of these tips have nothing to do with *rushing* your play, but rather with simply being *ready* to play, and with using common sense and good etiquette on the course.

The bottom line is, as soon as it's your turn to play, you should be ready to step right up and make the stroke.

Here are some tips for speeding up slow play on the golf course:

- After teeing off, walk directly to your ball. Members of the group should not travel together as a pack, walking first to one member's ball, then to the next. Each member of the foursome should walk directly to his or her ball.
- When two players are riding in a cart, drive the cart to the first ball and drop off the first player with his choice of clubs. The second player should proceed in the cart to his ball. After the first player hits his stroke, he should begin walking toward the cart as the second golfer is playing.
- Use the time you spend getting to your ball to think about the next shot - the yardage, the club selection. When you reach your ball you'll need less time to figure out the shot.
- If you are unsure whether your ball has come to rest out of bounds, or may be lost, immediately hit a provisional ball so that you won't have to return to the spot to replay the shot. If you are playing a recreational match with, shall we say, a "loose interpretation" of the rules, then simply drop a new ball somewhere around the area where your ball was lost and keep playing.
- If you're following the rules, you won't be using mulligans. But if *are* using mulligans, limit them to no more than one mulligan per nine (you should never hit a mulligan if players behind you are waiting - or if you want to later claim that you played by the rules).

- Begin reading the green and lining up putts as soon as you reach the green. Don't wait until it's your turn to putt to start the process of reading the green. Do it as soon as you reach the green so that when it's your turn you can step right up and putt.
- Never delay making a stroke because you're having a conversation with a playing partner. Put the conversation on hold, make your stroke, then pick up the conversation again.
- If using a cart on a cart-path-only day, take more than one club with you when you walk from the cart to your ball. Getting to the ball only to find out you don't have the right club is a huge time-waster on the golf course.
- After putting out, don't stand around the green chatting or take any practice putting strokes. Leave the green quickly so the group behind can play. If there is no group behind, then a few practice putts are fine.
- Mark your scorecard after reaching the next tee, not while lingering on or near the just-completed green.
- When using a cart, never park the cart in front of the green. Park it only to the side or behind the green. And don't mark your scorecard while sitting in the cart next to the green (do it at the next tee). These practices open up the green for the group behind.
- If you're the type who likes to offer tips to playing partners, save it for the driving range - or only do so on the course when you're sure that you're not slowing down play.
- If you are searching for a lost ball and are willing to spend a few minutes looking for it, allow the group behind to play through. If you are playing a friendly game where rules aren't followed closely, just forget the lost ball and drop a new one. If you're not playing by the rules, you should never spend more than a minute looking for a lost ball.
- Don't ask your playing partners to help you search for a lost ball - unless you are absolutely certain there is time for them to do so (e.g., there is no group behind waiting). If the course is crowded, your partners should continue moving forward, not slow things down further by stopping to help your search.
- On the tee, pay attention to your partners' drives. If they lose sight of their ball, you can help direct them to it and avoid any searching.
- When waiting on the tee for the group in front to clear the fairway, don't be so strict about order of play. Let the short hitter - who can't reach the group ahead anyway - go ahead and hit.
- Work on building a concise pre-shot routine. If your pre-shot routine is a lengthy one, it's probably in your best interests to shorten it anyway. Limit practice strokes to one or two at the most.
- Don't bother marking lag putts - go ahead and putt out if it's short enough.

- Leave your cell phone in the car.
- Walk at a good pace between shots. No, you don't have to look like a race-walker. But if your between-shot gait can be described as a "shuffle" or an "amble," you're probably going too slow. Speeding up your gait a little is both good for your health, but also might help your game by keeping you lose.
- Carry extra tees, ball markers and an extra ball in your pockets so you never have to return to your bag to find one when needed.
- When chipping around the green, carry both the club you'll be chipping with plus your putter so you don't have to return to the bag.
- Try playing ready golf, where order of play is based on who's ready, not on who's away.