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Beginners Guide to Playing Golf

By
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A female co-worker who recently took up golf confided during a Saturday afternoon session at the local driving range that she thought about giving up the game. Not because she thought the game was too hard, but she could never feel comfortable on the golf course as a beginner.

"It's a catch 22 situation", Lynn said as she drove the ball about 100 yards dead straight down the driving range. "Because of my job, I can only play on the weekends at the local public golf course, but most golfers don't have the patience to play with a beginner like me. I love the game and need to play in real conditions. But I don't want to hold up a foursome. How can I learn golf in a situation like that?"

Lynn's problem is not new. She started smart by taking part in group lessons from the club golf pro. She felt confident hitting the golf ball on the range. She was ready to take her golf game to the golf course. It is challenging to balance learning the game while playing golf on a public golf course full of weekend golfers. Still, we all had to start as beginners playing golf. To help Lynn and others, I've developed the following guidelines on learning to play golf while on a busy public course.

- Play when the course is empty - if you can, weekdays are better than weekends. Mondays and Tuesdays are the quietest days for most public golf courses.

- Late afternoons and early evenings are better than mornings. Even on the weekends, you will find late afternoons the golf course empties real quick by 6 P.M. on the weekend. Late on a weekend afternoon is a perfect time for a beginner to take the time to learn the game of golf without being rushed. You can start your round after 6 P.M. and have plenty of light to get in at least 9 to 18 holes during the golf season. Also, there are many benefits to playing golf in the late afternoons. By starting that late, many golf courses offer twilight rates, making the

cost to play golf more reasonable.

What happens when you can only play on weekend mornings - prime time for golfers at a public golf course? The following method allows you to play with any level of players and not hold up your fellow golfers.

- Put together your own foursome. Get a tee time at mid-morning. Most weekend golfers like to play early, so a late morning tee time means they're already on the golf course. Talk to the local golf pro or starter. Tell him your situation and ask for their suggestions when you call to make your tee time.

- If you're by yourself, let the starter know your level of play when you put your name on the sign-up sheet. Tell them you will not be playing for score. If they know your level of play, Starters will try to pair you up with the right kind of player.

- Tell your playing partners your level of play before you start. Doing this is common courtesy to your fellow golfers. Knowing this also lowers their level of expectations about your golf game.

- Let you're playing partners know that you will not be playing for score and that you have a plan that should not hold them up. Most golfers will understand and be accommodating.

Once on the course, only hit the ball the number of shots to par on each hole. Then pick up the ball up. Drop the ball on the edge of the green. Then play from there – this way, you can practice your chipping and putting. Taking only the number of strokes on the green till you hole the putt or reach par.

For example, let's say you're playing a par 4. Hit your drive and three shots on the fairway. No matter where you are, pick the ball up and move to the green. Once at the green, drop the ball just off the green. Chip the ball and take up to three putts to put the ball into the hole. After the third putt, pick up the ball and move on to the next hole. Using this method, on a par 4, you will take a maximum of 8 stokes per golf hole.

Lynn used this method when she joined me for a round at our public golf course. Throughout the round, she did not hold up our group. In fact, on some holes, the rest of the group held up Lynn. She played most weekends, and by the end of the summer, she didn't need to pick the ball up in the fairway. Also, Lynn found she preferred to play on weekend afternoons. "I can go to the office and get some work done in the morning and spend the afternoon on the golf course." She also told me she found a regular group of golfers she plays with on the weekend afternoons.

By using these guidelines, you will have a chance to learn this wonderful game of golf while playing on a public golf course on the weekends.

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