

Advice for the Average Golfer

Learn the etiquette, know the lingo, and other tips so that you will have fun and enjoy the game.

BY DR. DEE SODER

The camaraderie, joy of watching the ball soar in the air, beautiful greens and friendly competition . . . what could be better! Plus, playing golf is a great way to know your fellow directors. A colleague will go on for hours about the virtues of golf as a bonding technique. Companies have long promoted golf to help their executives get an edge (as I noted in a 1999 *Wall Street Journal* article).

Golf really does tell a lot about character and integrity. A retired audit partner and director recalls seeing “a CEO move his ball when he thought no one was looking,” which to the director was “very good to know” about the CEO. Frustration, anger, gloating . . . golf can be a great personality test.

While only an average player, I do like golf. With significant clients, colleagues, former spouse, brother-in-law and good friends loving golf, I have tried hard to better my game. I attended [Stratton Golf School](#) and greatly improved my game. I learned I needed a good set of left-handed clubs, to practice frequently, and the value of golf for business — especially for women.

However the time required deters me and others from becoming good golfers. So, what’s the average, mediocre golfer to do? My advice:

1. Learn the etiquette of golf. This is essential! A good friend gave me “Golf for Dummies” with its golfing rules like don’t talk when someone is playing a stroke and leave the green as soon as everyone is finished putting.

2. Know the lingo: mulligan, hook, divot, chip, drop, fozzle, and other terms. Like other fields, golf has its own language.

3. Attire counts. Make sure your shirts have collars, you have good shoes (properly scuffed of course) and clubs. For extra points get a towel from a great course. I have a [Mid Ocean Club](#) towel — not the most difficult course, but the views are a reason to visit Bermuda. Warning: Don’t try to fake it; a real golfer will recognize the lie (pun intended).

4. Be helpful. Repair any ball marks, smooth out footprints when leaving a bunker, replace any divots you find, help a fellow golfer retrieve a missing ball.

5. Don’t delay good players. Slow golfers are really annoying.

6. Find a good instructor and invest in a few private lessons. You will want to include a couple of lessons on the “short game” — aka putting, chipping and pitching.

7. Keep a positive attitude — no matter how many times you are in the rough or a sand trap.

8. Listen when fellow golfers talk about their trips to Scotland or Ireland. Extra points for asking about the 15th or 16th hole at [Carnoustie](#) or the 17th Hole at [Old Course](#). If a fellow director describes playing golf at [Pine Valley](#), act impressed (or appalled) as

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it is so exclusive (women, some celebs, and even a President have been denied membership).

9. Get a good set of clubs and a good-looking golf bag — not one with a stand that screams novice. Avoid funny head covers. A friend loves her Garmin golf watch; she says it has greatly improved her game.

10. Have fun and enjoy the game! Ignore any overly serious folks in your foursome, pick up your ball and move to the next tee.

My best advice is to have an alternate sport. I like golf but I really love skeet shooting. I have been addicted to this sport ever since I attended an American Medical Association board meeting and learned the joy of shooting clay pigeons. ■

The CEO Perspective Group was named Best Executive Coaching Firm, 2014 and 2015, U.S., by the [International Wealth and Money Management Awards competition](#). The award pays homage to “the leading professionals for going above and beyond in assisting their clients with managing their wealth, planning for the future of their business or their family and for providing sound advice in all areas of finance.”

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