

Spirit of the Game

Honesty, integrity, courtesy: three words that have come to represent the spirit in which the game of golf is played.

Part of that spirit sits beneath the term, 'etiquette' and part of it relates to the Rules of Golf. But the Spirit of the Game goes much deeper than just those two tangible terms.

It is something that every golfer should develop an innate sense of, something that is born of golf's unparalleled history, and something which lifts golf, one could argue, above other sports.

Whether it's through divot and pitch-mark repair, or simply through silence on the tee, the spirit of the game dictates that players make sure they give others on the course, often opponents, a fair chance to play the best shot they can.

For most of us, the game of golf is self-regulating. There is seldom a referee present so we are reliant upon our own honest adherence to the Rules in order to enjoy the game. As a result we are all occasionally forced to call a penalty on ourselves for infringements which, often, will go unnoticed by everyone else.

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It is this dependency upon honesty and courtesy that has elevated 'integrity' to sacrosanct status. Without them, we may as well hang up our clubs.

Etiquette

Golf is played, for the most part, without the supervision of a referee or umpire. The game relies on the integrity of the individual to show consideration for other players, care for the course and to abide by the Rules. All players should conduct themselves in a disciplined manner, demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at all times, irrespective of how competitive they may be.

Etiquette is an integral and inextricable part of the game, which has come to define golf's values worldwide.

Put simply, it is a series of guidelines that exist to show other players, whether through divot repair or awareness of your shadow, a degree of fairness which you would expect to receive in return.

In terms of golf's environment, etiquette is about showing respect for the course on which you are playing and the work that has been put in to create it. It's about making sure that the game is played safely and that others on the course are able to enjoy the round as much as you.

In short: it's about showing consideration to **all** others on the course at **all** times.

Care of the Course

Bunkers

Before leaving a bunker, players should carefully fill up and smooth over all holes and footprints made by them and any nearby made by others. If a rake is within reasonable proximity of the bunker, the rake should be used for this purpose.

Repair of Divots, Ball-Marks and Damage by Shoes

Players should carefully repair any divot holes made by them and any damage to the putting green made by the impact of a ball (whether or not made by the player himself). On completion of the hole by all players in the group, damage to the putting green caused by golf shoes should be repaired.

Preventing Unnecessary Damage

Players should avoid causing damage to the course by removing divots when taking practice swings or by hitting the head of a club into the ground, whether in anger or for any other reason.

Players should ensure that no damage is done to the putting green when putting down bags or the flagstick.

In order to avoid damaging the hole, players and caddies should not stand too close to the hole and should take care during the handling of the flagstick and the removal of a ball from the hole. The head of a club should not be used to remove a ball from the hole.

Players should not lean on their clubs when on the putting green, particularly when removing the ball from the hole.

The flagstick should be properly replaced in the hole before the players leave the putting green.

Local notices regulating the movement of golf carts should be strictly observ

Pace of Play

Play at a Good Pace and Keep Up

You should always play at a good pace. The committee may establish pace of play guidelines that all players should follow. It's a group's responsibility to keep up with the group in front. If they lose a clear hole and delay the group behind, they should invite the group behind to play through, irrespective of the number of players in that group. Where a group has not lost a clear hole, but it is apparent that the group behind can play faster, they should also invite the faster moving group to overtake them.

Be Ready to Play

You should be ready to play as soon as it's your turn to play. When on or near the putting green, leave your bags or carts just off the green on the way to the next tee. When the play of a hole has been completed, leave the putting green quickly.

Lost Ball

If you think your ball may be lost outside a water hazard or is out of bounds, to save time, play a provisional ball. Players searching for a ball should signal the players in the group behind them to play through as soon as it becomes apparent that the ball will not easily be found. They shouldn't search for five minutes before doing so. Having allowed the group behind to play through, they shouldn't continue play until the group coming through has passed and is out of range.

Consideration of Others

No Disturbance or Distraction

You should always show consideration for other players on the course and take care not to disturb their play by moving, talking or making unnecessary noise.

You should also ensure that any electronic devices taken onto the course don't distract other players.

Only tee your ball up when it's your turn to play and remember not to stand close to the ball, directly behind it, or directly behind the hole, when a player is about to swing.

On the Putting Green

On the putting green, you should be careful not stand on another player's line of putt or, when he is putting, cast a shadow over his line.

And you should remain on or close to the putting green until all other players in the group have holed out.

Scoring

In stroke play, if you're acting as a marker, on the way to the next tee you should, if necessary, check the score with the player concerned and record it.

Safety

Ensure that no one is standing close by or in a position to be hit by the club, the ball or any stones, pebbles, twigs or the like when they make a stroke or practice swing.

Wait until the players in front are out of range. Players should always alert greenstaff nearby or ahead when they are about to make a stroke that might endanger them.

If your ball's heading in a direction where there is a danger of it hitting someone, shout a warning immediately. The traditional word of warning is "fore".

