

Golf Etiquette is about More than Just Manners

By [Brent Kelley](#), About.com

Etiquette is a word that's often heard in relation to golf, more so than with any other sport. But it's not just about manners.

The rules of golf etiquette are what they are for several very important reasons: Many of them relate to the safety of golfers, many relate to pace of play (which helps keep the game enjoyable), and other rules of golf etiquette relate to maintaining the quality of the golf course.

In other words, golf etiquette is an essential part of the game. And it's something that newcomers to the game often learn as they go - on the course, when playing with more experienced golfers.

If you are new to the game, or just need to brush up on your golf etiquette, here are some basic rules of the road that will help keep the game enjoyable for you and those around you.

Keep It Safe

Do not swing your club until you know that others in your group are at a safe distance. Likewise, keep your distance when others are swinging. Be aware to steer clear of trouble.

When practicing your swing, never swing in the direction of another player. There may be pebbles or twigs or other matter in the grass that could fly up and injure a playing partner.

Do not hit the ball until you are certain that the group ahead of you is out of range.

If your ball appears headed toward another player or another group, give them a warning by yelling out, "Fore!"

Observe the safety suggestions posted in golf carts and drive carefully. Golf etiquette requires keeping your cart off the grass as much as possible.

Never throw clubs in anger. In addition to being rude and childish, it could also be dangerous.

Maintain a Good Pace

Keep the round moving by being prepared to hit your shot when it is your turn. You probably don't like waiting on other groups - don't make other groups wait on you.

The player who is away hits first in a group. However, in friendly matches (as opposed to tournament play), this rule can be ignored in favor of "ready play" - players hit as they are ready. All players should agree to "ready play" before it is put into effect.

Do not spend too much time looking for a lost ball, particularly if there is a group behind you ready to play. If you insist on taking the full five minutes allotted to look for lost balls, golf etiquette says wave up the group behind to allow them to play through.

Always try to keep pace with the group ahead of you. If space opens in front of you, allow a faster group to play through.

When two players in a cart hit to opposite sides of a hole, drive to first ball and drop off that player with his club, then drive to the second ball. After both players hit, meet up farther down the hole.

When walking from your cart to your ball, take a couple clubs with you. Taking only one club, then having to return to the cart to retrieve a different club, is a huge time-waster.

Always leave the putting green as soon as your group has finished putting.

Be Kind to the Course

Observe cart rules. Some courses will post "cart path only" signs; others will ask you to observe the "90-degree rule." Do as you are told.

- Keep carts away from greens and hazards.

- Repair all divots.
- Repair all ball marks on the green.
- Always rake sand traps after hitting to erase your footprints and damage to the area where your ball was.
- Never take a divot on a practice swing.

And a Few More Golf Etiquette Hints

Quiet, please! Never talk during another player's swing.

Do not yell out following a shot. Even if boisterous behavior doesn't bother your playing partners, there are other people on the course who may be within earshot.

Be aware of your shadow on the putting green. Don't stand in a place that causes your shadow to be cast across another player or that player's putting line.

Never walk through a playing partner's putting line. Your footprints might alter the path of a partner's putt. Step over the putting line, or walk around (behind) the partner's ball.