

SLOW PLAY – TIPS 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 the malady. Of course, that golfer has to be aware that he's slow, *and* that's where buddies come into play. (skill level is a different topic)

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:

- Consider NOT taking your cell phone on the course. If you do, leave it in your golf bag and turned OFF.
- If you're the type who likes to offer tips to playing partners, save it for the practice range – do NOT offer advice during the round.
- 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 and DO NOT TAKE DIVOTS.

- 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; and, keep your golf bag near you to save time in case you need to return.
- 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.
- On the tee, pay attention to ALL players' drives. If they lose sight of their ball, you can help direct them to it and avoid any searching.
- If your ball may be out of bounds or may be lost outside a water hazard or lateral water hazard, immediately hit a provisional ball so that you won't have to return to the spot to replay the shot; thereby, saving time.
- If you are searching for a lost ball and are willing to spend a few minutes looking for it (maximum of 5 minutes), might wish allowing the group behind to play through.
- Members of the group should not travel as a pack, with all members walking together to the first ball, then the second, and so on. Each member of the group should walk directly to your own ball.
- 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 loose.
- Use the time you spend getting to your ball to think about the next shot - the yardage and the club selection. When you reach your ball you'll need less time to figure out the shot.
- Try playing "READY GOLF", where order of play is based on who's ready, not on who's away. However, ALWAYS be sure it's SAFE BEFORE PLAYING ANY STROKE and NOT ON THE PUTTING GREEN.

- **Never** delay making a stroke because you're having a conversation with another player. Put the conversation on hold, make your stroke, then pick up the conversation again.
- 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.
- Begin reading the green and lining up putts as soon as you reach the green so that when it's your turn you can step right up and putt. **Don't** wait until it's your turn to putt to start the process of reading the green.
- **Don't** bother marking lag putts - go ahead and putt out if it's short enough.
- 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.
- Mark your scorecard after reaching the next tee, not while lingering on or near the just-completed green. Make sure your marker has entered your score after each completed hole – not at the scoring table.

A good pace of play is an important element in having a good experience at the golf course for everyone. It's often a combination of little things not done that wind up contributing to slow play *and* on-course traffic jams. Remember: pace of play isn't about rushing your shots, it's about being ready to take your shot when it's your turn, and behaving efficiently on the course.