



## **Beginner's Guide to Playing Golf**

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## Choosing the Proper Golf Club

There are many different types of clubs, so how does the beginner know which club to choose? Here are some basic hints that should set you right. Golf clubs have different uses throughout your golfing game. One of the most popular golf clubs that is rather new on the horizon is called the *hybrid* or sometimes the utility hybrid. It has several different uses including shooting from the fairway. So if you have difficulty in getting the distance, try the hybrid. It may help you to avoid bunkers and water traps. The hybrid is also good for teeing off and getting out of the rough, out of sand and is great for accuracy when putting on the green. This is mainly because it was designed with a bigger head than the others. So, you are wondering why you would need any other clubs if this one is so great?

There are many other kinds of golf clubs that players feel comfortable with and have given good usage over the years. There are drivers, irons, putters and woods – which aren't usually made of wood these days, though they used to be. Persimmon wood was considered to be the best because it is such a hard wood, but these days metal is standard.

A tee shot is the first stroke used in your golf game. It's mostly done with a *driver* (or 1-wood) on long holes or an iron if it's a short hole. *Irons* are mostly used on the fairway when precision is important, though they can also be used when playing from the rough – along with *wedges*. The *sand wedge* will get you out of a bunker due to its design, being made to kind of skid across the sand. Once on the green, you'll need a *putter* to roll the ball towards that elusive hole. Putters are good for shorter strokes that need a great deal of precision.

A pitch or a flop is a high shot that requires the ball to roll only a very short distance once it lands. This type of stroke is best done with a wedge – either a *sand wedge* or a *lob wedge*, depending on which one you want to perform. The flop is even higher than the pitch with less roll on landing.

No matter which golf clubs you choose, you are limited by law to carrying just fourteen around the course. Now we know why professional golfers like to use caddies!

## How To Achieve the Perfect Grip

Having the correct grip in golf is of prime importance if you want your game to improve. In fact it would be true to say that you will never become an expert golfer unless you have achieved this most basic of skills. A good grip will give you a good swing; a bad grip will give you a bad swing. It's as simple as that. The type of grip you use is not as important as the consistency with which you use it. If you change your grip at every hole, you will be unable to play your best, no doubt about it.

Grip types can be classed as roughly three main types: interlocking, overlapping and baseball. For a good grip, your hands should be close together and work as one. There's no need to hold your club in a death-grip, but make sure it's not too loose either, and the left thumb should be in position under the shaft to support the club at the end of your swing.

It's also important to ascertain that the grip on your clubs is not too large. Many beginners make this mistake because they think it feels more comfortable and they can grasp the club more firmly with a larger grip. If you find that your ball flight is more left to right all the time, it could be due to a large grip on your club, which will take some of the natural rotation from your wrists and hands.

Straighter, longer hits will be the result if you have your clubs re-gripped with a smaller grip. Try it with just one and see how it works, but remember to work on lessening the tension in your hands. This should give you a more free and easy swing. Golf should not be hard work.

The most critical part of the grip is not the type of grip you use, but the angle at which the club lays in your hand. Address the ball, but without a club in your hands. Let your arms hang down in the correct position and look to see how many knuckles are visible. Notice the angle of your hand. This is the angle at which you should place your target side hand on the club.

For the best support, the target side thumb and forefinger should be on the same side and angle of the shaft while your trailing thumb should be on the target side. But don't exert any pressure with your thumbs. Keep your hands parallel to each other for best performance.

## Proper Stance and Posture for Golfers

Proper stance and posture in golf is extremely important, not only in the mechanics of the game but to protect yourself from injury. Posture is defined in the Golf Biodynamics Manual, (Check 1999) as “the position from which movement begins and ends”. Correct posture also reduces golfing injuries, promotes the ability to actually strike the ball, and enhances your power and stability. Anyone can work on achieving a correct posture; you don’t need to be a top athlete, or even a top golfer, but your golfing game will improve a great deal if you start with the correct posture and stance.

Good posture is where your shoulders are directly above your feet, and your head and spine are aligned. Your arms should be rotated outwards to keep shoulders and head back. You should not be standing with your back hunched over because this is what allows your head and shoulders to come too far forward. You can check that your spine is correctly straight by touching your golf club to it. Both butt and upper back should be touching the club.

The correct stance is one in which your heels are about the same width apart as your shoulders. Keeping your back straight, bend from the hips and let your hands hang down. Keep the ball in the bottom half of your vision to stop your chin from tucking in too far. Your knees should be slightly bent. Try and keep your body free from tension. If your muscles are tense, you could well suffer an injury that may take weeks to recover from. Many back and shoulder injuries come from poor posture and stance.

If you are right-handed, your right side should tilt slightly further down than your left, but your weight should be evenly distributed on, and more to the front of your feet. Your left foot should be flared about 20 degrees if you are a right-handed player. If you have good flexibility, you may also want to flare your right foot. You should practice all this in front of the mirror until it becomes automatic. Once you have achieved the correct posture and stance, the accuracy of your actual golf swing will be greatly enhanced.

When using a driver your feet should be slightly wider, with the inside of them in line with the outside of your shoulders. A good rule to remember is that the shorter the club you use, the less width there should be in your stance.

## Proper Stance for Perfect Putts

Only the newest recruit to the game of golf has any excuse to be a bad putter. Putting is one of the easiest parts of golf to practice. You don't have to wait until you're on the green; you can do it in the office or the lounge room without hurting anything. Practicing putting is one of the most important things to do if you are interested in improving your golf. While the correct grip plays an important role in achieving the perfect putt, you must also know how to stand before you can improve your putting.

- Start by aiming your clubface at your target. The bottom – not the top – line of the face should be perpendicular to the intended line of roll. Sole the putter head right behind the ball.
- With your eyes over the ball sight down the target line.
- Make sure your feet, knees, hips and shoulders are all parallel to the target line.
- Hands under shoulders – slightly bent elbows.
- Weight on your left side – ball position 2 in. inside the left heel.
- Forearms parallel to each other throughout the stroke.
- Control the stroke with your shoulders – left one down and right side up.
- Head should be kept still and the angle in your right wrist maintained.

To be good at putting you also have to learn how to read the putt. Is it uphill or down? How much break (left or right turn) is there? What speed will determine your best chance of success? As you gradually become more experienced you'll be able to work all this out. One way of gaining this kind of experience is to practice long putts of 25 meters. Using three balls, read the putt, set it up and make the strokes whilst watching the target rather than your ball. This will stop you from focusing on the mechanics of your swing rather than rolling the ball the correct distance.

Do a similar thing for short putts of about 6 feet, only in this case when you make your stroke, listen for the sweet sound of the ball falling into the hole. It will help you to visualize the ultimate aim in golf and to trust yourself to do it.



Bet you a dime you can improve your putt! In fact, use the dime to putt *to* over a short distance of about six feet. Or put your ball *on* the dime and keep your eyes on the dime all the time, even after you've played the stroke. Another ploy for very short putts is to imagine a bulls eye target is attached to the back of the cup. This will help you keep the clubface moving square to the hole. Then again, you could try putting with your eyes closed. This will make you more aware of whether your body is working in the right way or not.





## Correcting Common Swing Mistakes

One of the most common swing mistakes for the amateur golfer is the slice, an unwelcome shot that creates much side-spin on the ball causing it to cut hard to the side. It is a frustrated golfer who plays a slice and he will find it very hard to correct. Many golfers have bought tools of the trade guaranteed to fix the problem of the slice, but their frustration and disappointment deepen when they find that in most cases nothing is improved.

The fundamental process of fixing a slice lies in both the swing and the body. Research from the University of Southern Carolina has found that there were some specific swing drills that could cure that most horrible of golfing flaws. These broke the swing down into several manageable parts, all to be practiced alone at first to train the body into the right action. This prevents confusion, since it is very difficult for brain and body to process all the information required all at once.

Once the swing is broken into parts, the process is simplified, allowing the golfer to work on the part that needs fixing before implementing that action into his full swing. One of these two drills that were found to work so well is called the 'toe-in drill'. As may be imagined, this drill helps the positioning of the golfer at all times through the swing. The second drill is called the 'split hand'. This assisted the golfer to feel not only the correct release of the club, but also its swing path.

There is a good drill to do in front of the mirror that will help you ascertain your swing path and correct it, especially if you swing from outside-in. Setup as if you were going to hit a ball through the mirror, and take a very slow swing, stopping halfway through the follow through. Can you see your nose? Hopefully not: the club head should have it covered (in the mirror, of course).

You'll have to keep your head up to see this next drill. Take swings while you watch the blur of the club go through your mirrored eyes. This should happen on the follow through too. If it doesn't, adjust your swing until it does.

It is safe to say that if a golfer were to get the correct tuition for his posture and stance in the first place, from professional coaches who know what they are doing, the problem of the

slice would be almost eliminated. Many amateurs take their first lessons from their friends who may or may not know the correct procedures. It is also a good idea to ask a coach whether that book or video you were going to purchase is indeed written or developed by someone who is experienced enough to give advice.

It is also important to work on developing core flexibility as well as flexibility in shoulders and limbs. How your swing develops will be to a great extent determined by your posture, which will in turn be determined by your flexibility. When you have developed in this area, you'll see a great improvement in your golf game generally, not just your swing, so it's worth the effort.

## How and When to Use a Wood

A wood is used primarily for the long shot of teeing off. This is important for a beginner since it is the first shot of a game and so usually the first shot he will practice. In years gone by, woods were actually made of wood – most often persimmon wood, which is very hard. These days ‘woods’ are not often made of wood because it has been found that steel or metal is superior, both the game and lasting power of the club.

Your number one wood is called a *driver* and is used for teeing off as it gives the maximum distance. It has a large head and a deep face. Number two is a *brassie*, because the sole of the club was once covered with brass plate. It has a smaller and shallower face than the driver and is used for good fairway shots. The *spoon* is smaller still and used for those shots that are too poor for a brassie. *Buffy* has more loft than the spoon and will hit about as far as a 1-iron. Number five has an extremely small head and can replace a 3 or 4-iron.

The clubface is what controls the direction of the ball; the head controls the downward dimension of a golf stroke, while the shaft controls the plane of the stroke.

To play a wood shot you must stand square on to the line of intended ball flight. The head of the club or wood must be placed on the turf at the back of the ball with the face of it at right angles to the flight line. The stroke used with a wood is more of a sweeping swing than the hit that is characteristic of an iron. Three essentials to remember when playing a stroke are: -

- Keep your head steady – no sideways or up/down movement.
- Keep your balance
- Keep rhythm – the club shaft and left arm must move at the same rpm.

Woods are a longer club than the iron and they are for making long shots. It's important to keep your head still when making a long shot. The less movement in your body, the more solid your shot will be. The driver should be just inside your big toe, left foot with weight taken evenly on both feet. Shoulders hips and feet should be aimed slightly left of your target parallel. Make an easy swing, letting the flex in the shaft and the length of the club do all

the hard work. Don't allow over swing to compromise good contact as this is where your distance comes from.

Three absolute must of a good shot are: –

- At impact your left wrist should be flat, not bent.
- Your club shaft should be on plane.
- Club head lag – not throwaway.

The target side shoulder socket is the low point, so for a straight shot, the driver must be played at this location. Too far back will produce a fade, while too far forward will give you a draw, with no manipulation at either point. Once the art of using the wood is mastered the amateur can expect to have great fun with his game of golf.

## When and How to Use an Iron

When you are just a beginner in the world of golf, you will need to know when and how to use an iron. There are many different types of clubs and within each type, still many different clubs, so how do you know which one to use where?

Irons are mostly used for short shots. Irons are available in sets consisting of different sizes. Before you choose one for that shot, you should take into consideration the length, style and even the material it is made from. If you think you want to make a swift swing, an iron with a steel shaft may be just what you are looking for. It will give you more control over the swing than others. A long distance shot or a slow swing will be better served with an iron made of graphite. It will be lighter than the steel one, though if cost is a factor, you may not have one.

The term flex or bend refers to the flexibility of a club's shaft. If a shaft has less, rather than more flex, the golfer will retain more control over his swing. Beginners should choose a shaft with more flex. Their swing speed will usually not exceed 65 mph, while the swing of a pro will most likely be in excess of 100 mph.

When hitting with a short iron, your shoulders, hips and feet should be aligned to the tee, while with middle irons, the alignment should be more to the side. If you have a long chip shot you will require a 5-iron or perhaps a 6-iron, but if the distance is shorter use an 8 or 9-iron. If you're not sure which you should choose, generally speaking, a 7-iron will do fine for mid-range.

Iron shots are generally hit very crisply and in a downward motion. The club head should come in contact with the ball, continuing down and through and taking some turf (called a divot). This is to give the ball some backspin, which will stop it from rolling too far when it lands. You won't want it to roll when you are making a mid to short shot. For a long iron shot, keep your stance similar to that for a wood. The ball should be off the left heel, but is placed more towards the right foot. Keep your swing slightly more upright and, on the shorter shots, your back swing and follow through are not as full.

## How to Improve Your Contact

Contact is one of the most important parts of your golfing action. Without contact, you miss the ball and there is no golf played. Or worse, your stroke score rises steeply. You must also get good contact to achieve driving distance in your long shots. Problems in contact often originate in incorrect posture and stance.

Posture is one of the most neglected parts of golf – neglected by both golfers and coaches. It can be defined as the position of your body when addressing the ball, but before you have made a move to play. Naturally, if you start in the wrong position, you will end up hitting the ball off-target. Good golfing posture will most certainly improve your ability to make contact with the ball. It will also enhance your stamina and endurance and prevent many chronic injuries.

Since posture affects swing, once you have changed your posture you will almost certainly need to learn how to change your swing, too. It would be advisable to consult a professional to see where you need to make these changes. Once you know, be sure to practice in front of a mirror so that when you get to the green you'll be ready to go.

To improve your contact for a hook shot, which curves from right to left, start with a normal stance and grip, but pull the right foot back a few inches. The line of your feet should aim right of the target about 10/15 yards. This will put a counter-clockwise swing on the ball to produce the hook. To hit a slice you reverse this procedure and you can also weaken your grip by rotating your hands to the left.

If your high shot needs to improve, you have to start with the ball more forward than usual. At the point of impact, your spine angle should be slightly upward. If you keep your head back it will help you perfect this action. An upright swing plane will promote a higher ball flight. The reverse position achieves a low shot under trees or into the wind. That is, put the ball further back than usual, keep your spine vertical and use a shorter back swing.

Another reason for contact trouble could be that the size and length of the club is wrong for you. Try and have your clubs custom fitted. If that is too expensive, and you choose to buy your clubs off the rack, ask the assistant to show you how to test the fit in the shop.





## Overcoming Your Fears - The Mental Game of Golf

Playing golf should be an enjoyable experience, so if you find yourself losing your temper when you make a bad shot, what can you do about it? One thing that might help is to *practice acceptance*.

The first thing you need to accept is your own limitations. All players vary in their playing ability and this is not always due to experience. Physical ability has a lot to do with it. If you suffer from arthritis it will affect your game, no matter if you have the best teachers. If your body is simply not flexible enough for a good swing, it will affect your game. Find out what you can do about this – if anything - and do it. For instance, if you are simply not very limber, take off-course lessons in exercises and stretches to make you more fit. Your golf game will improve and your temper will have less reason to spark up.

*Accept the game.* A perfect game of golf is rarely if ever played by anyone. Even the pros have bad golf days. Why should yours be any different? Accept that bad shot as a challenge and concentrate on what you will do about recovering instead of wasting energy jumping up and down and shouting. It's much smarter to get that ball back into play as quickly as possible. Once you've done that congratulate yourself on meeting the challenge.

Work out a game plan before you arrive at the course and stick to it. Decide you will choose a safer shot and use an easier club to manage it. This may take a bit of discipline, but you'll thank yourself in the long run. Remember high blood pressure is a killer!

Accept the bad, but *focus on the good*. When you make a bad shot, immediately tell yourself what you liked about that good shot you played just before it. Say it out loud to trick your subconscious mind into feeling pleased. In your mind's eye, see your ball rolling straight down the center of the green and into the hole. If it doesn't happen, shrug and tell yourself it will next time.

Forget about being embarrassed at bad play. Heck, who's perfect? Not you and certainly not your golfing friends. Remember that negative emotions make you tense and tension is likely to spoil your game and could even cause injury, so do yourself a favor and lighten up.

Breathe deeply and enjoy the *day* apart from the golf. Feel the wind in your hair, the sun on your face, listen to the birdsong, and breathe in the aroma of the green. It's all great - enjoy *it*.

## How To Keep Score In a Golf Game

Talk about eagles, birdies pars may make beginners scratch their heads, but keeping score in golf is really quite simple. It's a matter of counting your whacks – whether they actually connect with the ball or not. Every time you strike at the ball it's called a stroke, so you have to count the number of strokes it takes you to sink that little ball into the hole. You do this for each section (hole) and at the end you add up the number of strokes. Unlike many other games, you are aiming to get around the course with the fewest strokes possible.

Each hole is given a number called 'par' that represents the number of strokes you should need to get the ball into it. If the par is 4 and you have to hit the ball 5 times to get it in, then your score is one-over par. If by some miracle you only took 3 strokes to get it there your score is called 1-under.

Just to make things interesting, there are differing circumstances where things called penalty strokes apply. For instance, if you hit a ball out of the grounds or into an area like a water hazard where you cannot get at it, then that is considered a penalty shot and you must play a new ball from a specified location - with the first stroke for it being classed as your 2<sup>nd</sup> stroke for the hole.

If you actually sink your ball with just one stroke, it's called an ace, while a birdie is when you score one stroke under par for a hole. That illusive eagle is two strokes under par and a bogey is the score a fairly good golfer would be expected to make on a hole, allowing two putts.

Another complication is the handicap. But this is not really hard to figure out. It is simply a number of strokes a player receives to adjust his score to a common level. The better the player, the smaller his handicap, while the best players have a handicap of zero. They are called 'scratch' players. A handicap allows a fair game of golf to be enjoyed by players of varying skill levels. Of course if you break the rules of play, you are likely to be hit with a penalty of two strokes.

It's important to know the difference between 'stroke play' and match play, because different penalties apply, depending on which you are playing. Stroke play is when you are competing against the course; match play is when you compete against one or more people. For instance, in stroke play, if you tee off from outside the teeing ground you'll incur a 2-stroke penalty. On the

other hand, in 'match' play there will be no stroke penalty, but your opponent can cancel your shot and then you must replay it.

## Tips for Uphill and Downhill Swings

When you must play on a slope you'll find normal stance a bit more difficult to achieve. There are several adjustments you can make to ensure that you lay these shot well and maybe you'll find that you even save a stroke here and there.

The most important factor to consider is your balance. You need to be able to keep good balance right up to the point of contact – afterwards is not so important, since the ball is already in the air by then. If the ball is *above your feet* in a *sidehill lie* you'll need a flatter swing. If you feel as if the pitch is up to your knees, grip the club further down than usual. You must aim for your shot to have a low, hooking trajectory, so align yourself to the right of the target. If you have a tendency to hit a fat shot, put the ball further back in your stance to compensate.

If the ball is *below your feet* in a sidehill lie, it will usually peel off towards the right. This is a difficult shot for most players. It's really hard to maintain address posture and you often get a low slice or topped shot. Bend by flexing your knees and tilting at the hips, use plenty of club and aim to the left. Keep your weight off your toes if possible and concentrate on keeping your balance. Your swing plane will be more vertical.

An *uphill lie* is slightly easier to play than the other uneven shots. Just remember that because the ground slopes upwards, more loft will be added to the club, thus causing the ball to fly shorter than usual. You must allow for the fact that your right shoulder will be lower than your left in this play. Your weight will be more towards the right due to the slope. Watch that you don't fall backwards at impact, as this will pull the ball towards the left. It is advisable to aim slightly to the right to allow for any movement to the side.

In a *downhill lie*, the ball will naturally go lower and further. It often seems to tail to the right. To compensate for the fast low trajectory of the ball, select one or two clubs shorter than usual. The ball should be back in your stance. The steeper the ground is, the further back the ball should be. Your swing should be compact and weight shift less assertive with a lower body turn. You must keep your swing compacted and controlled to help you succeed in

uneven lies. Much practice is needed, but that's half the fun and when you see your game improve, you'll be glad you did it.



## How to Get Out of the Bunker

Correct posture in the bunker is important because it will help you to make a good shot and recover some lost ground. The first thing to do is twist your feet into the sand until you feel hardness underneath. A fat shot will be the result if you sink as you make your shot. Take an open stance with the ball set up off of your left heel. This will help promote the steeper swing path that you need to get out of the bunker. For the bounce (bottom of the sand wedge) to work correctly, your clubface should be square to the flag. Keep your weight on your left side throughout the shot. Develop a smooth back swing and follow through of equal lengths. Your sand entry and exit points should be about two inches behind and in front of the ball respectively. If you simply slam your club into the sand and leave it there, your ball will stay there with it. Practice this without closing the face of your club until after ball contact – or at all.

If it is a buried lie, then close the face of the club in to help in entering the sand. You could also try a nine iron or a pitching wedge. As with the basic bunker shot, enter the sand 2 inches behind the ball. The ball will roll much further due to there being no backspin on it. If the ball is buried in the *face* of the bunker, don't despair. With a little practice you will almost certainly impress your friends in solving this problem. Don't try and scoop the ball out or swing up at it. The trick is to drive your sand wedge hard into the bunker bank just below it. It will jump straight out of the sand and trickle onto the green.

A good drill for getting a ball out of sand is this. Draw two parallel lines in the sand and practice making your sand wedge enter the sand about a half inch deep and exit about 4 to 6 inches further on. Don't use a ball for this, just practice shifting sand out. That's what should happen when you hit the real shot in a bunker. The club should take the sand out and the ball will go with it. After you smooth the sand, draw the lines again, then try it with a ball.



## Handling the Rough

Let's face it, the rough will never disappear, so you may as well get used to handling it. In fact, with the right attitude playing in the rough can be quite an adventure, for unexpected things sometimes happen whilst there. Greg Norman claims that he can hit the ball longer and straighter from the rough than from anywhere. Whether you want to emulate him or not, you'll get plenty of practice to do so as you continue your golf.

Most lies in the rough are known as fliers, due to their tendency to go a lot further than you planned for. This is because the long blades of grass get between your club and the ball preventing the usual friction and backspin. Without backspin your ball flies on forever and when it does roll, it just keeps on keeping on. The thing to do is use less club than you would for a fairway shot of the same length. It is not recommended to use any of your long-shafted steep-faced clubs for hitting a flier as they don't handle the long grass as well as the shorter clubs. The middle to short clubs are the ones to use from the rough - they'll give you all you need to get out of it. 1, 2 and 3-irons or woods are too long for the rough.

To hit a flier, you need to use a technique that will minimize the impact of the long grass. Move the ball a bit further back in your stance than normal and your back swing should be more vertical to give you a steeper return. This will make the clubface to come down cleanly on the ball rather than swinging through the grass. There is no need to hit the ball any harder than you normally would. This small change is all you need to fly out of that long grass.

If your ball is almost hidden in thick grass, it will not be a flyer. With the correct technique your ball will float out of there rather like a helium balloon – only not as high. The pitching wedge is usually the best choice for this shot and you'll need to grasp it firmly, open your stance and align your club head square to the target line. The grass will usually grab the club and close the face. Sometimes you could try aiming the clubface slightly right of the target at address and this will allow for the grass to turn the face into square on impact.

One other lie is worth mentioning though it's rather less common than the others. It's called a perch lie where the ball is perched on top on a tussock of grass. When you examine the lie, be careful not to dislodge the ball or it will cost you a penalty shot. Use a low wide sweep,

pretending that the ball is on the tee. Just make sure you don't touch the club to the ground behind the ball as this action might also dislodge the ball.

## Tips for Golfing on a Windy Day

The weather won't always be perfect when you play golf, so if it's windy, think of it as a challenge. One of the most challenging will be when you have to play in a **crosswind**. A crosswind will not only magnify any spin, but it will reduce distance too. If you are aiming for the green and want the ball to land softly, try and curve it slightly into the wind. However, if your objective is the opposite – you want more distance and a longer roll – use the wind to your advantage by curving your shot in the same direction. Starting on the windward side of the tee box will help you use the wind to your advantage.

A knockdown shot can be a great one to play in a **headwind**. Champion Australian golfer Greg Norman's favorite saying is "Swing with ease into the breeze." This just about sums up how to play a headwind to your advantage. Play in such a way as to decrease your trajectory. To do this, tee the ball up 3-4 inches further back in our stance. This will lessen the impact that the wind has on the ball and give you extra control. Shorten your grip and play more conservatively to decrease the height of the ball and keep it out of the wind as much as possible. On wood shots, lower your center of gravity by widening your stance to achieve better balance.

If you are lucky enough to have a **tail wind**, remember that you will not need as big a swing again, because the wind will take your ball, increasing both fly and roll. Your shot will travel straighter in a tail wind too. If distance is your goal, play the ball forward and hit it higher, but remember to allow for the extra roll. Start by teeing the ball higher, then use a 3-wood instead of a driver because it has more lift and you'll get a better trajectory to make use of the wind.

The most important thing to do is to hit the ball solidly. If you mis-hit, any spin on the ball will be magnified greatly in all kinds of wind. Never compensate for windy conditions by swinging harder and faster, even though this seems to be a natural reaction. Remember that playing with the wind will increase speed and roll, while playing against it will decrease both.

## Tips for Playing Golf in the Rain

If you were a playing golf in Scotland in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it rained, you could expect your ball to quickly disintegrate into a mess of boiled goose feathers. Balls these days don't disintegrate when they get wet, but playing in the rain still has its potential hazards. For starters, rain on a ball will affect distance, both in the air and on the roll. Rain also makes the greens slower and creates drag on the ball, so you'll need to hit putts harder.

Playing in the rain needs a bit of thought too. You don't really want your hands to be wet when gripping the club. If they are, you will tend to grip tighter, which is not a good thing. Keep your hands in your pockets until just before play, or wear waterproof gloves. Rain suits are a good idea too, but suit up in the locker room - before your clothes get all wet. Rain suits are a bit more restrictive, but wearing one beats catching a bad cold and missing the next game of golf!

Waterproof shoes are a great idea too. No use keeping your body dry if your feet get soaked. You'll probably need to practice a bit in your rain suit and see how it affects your game. Pack some towels to take around the course with you, then you'll be able to wipe the grips of your clubs dry just before use.

Another thing that happens when playing golf in the rain is that your feet will sink into the green. To counteract this, choke up on your grip a bit – half an inch should be enough.

If the rain should be coming from a storm with thunder and lightning, leave play and get back to the clubhouse as soon as possible. Greens are dangerous in a storm, as some players know to their cost. If it comes on suddenly and you can't get back to the clubhouse, don't shelter in an open sided building, as that will be no protection from lightning. Don't make for the trees either. Get spiked shoes off as quickly as possible and if with others stay at least 15 meters apart. Choose a low place like a ravine or gully to shelter and if the hair on your neck starts to tingle, squat down with your arms around your knees and hold your raised knees with your arms. Golfing in a storm is for idiots.