

# **Golf Course Manners**

*Golf Etiquette and Client Golf*

## **The Fine Art and Science of Mixing Pleasure and Business on the Golf Course**

**Why?**

*People playing more golf*

*More business conducted on Golf course:*

*No transition from older generation to this one-- most golfers know recreational and tournament golf, but golf with clients is not taught anymore, and it's more important that ever!*

**WIIFM**

*More comfort level on the course*

*Better relationships*

*Increased Sales*

*Golf gives the Sales manager time to really get to know the clients—use every minute to make the relationship as firm as it can ever be--- your competition would do anything to take your client out to play golf with your client!*

*Golf is played differently depending on your playing partners:*

*“Buddy” Play--- Individual four-somes*

*Industry Tournaments*

*Client Golf--- Playing with a client*

*Client-Seller Tournaments*

*Because Buddy Play and Industry tournaments don't really affect your income, we'll concentrate on Client Golf and Client Tournaments--- the way you play lets the client know a lot about your background, style and upbringing--- be sure to put your best foot forward!*

*With golf, you only get 1 chance to make a good first impression!*

**CLIENT GOLF---**

*Client golf gets you alone with a client for 4 hours--- you'll see every part of the client's personality, and they'll see all of you. Assume your guest is a serious golfer, and make every effort to come across correctly.*

*Basically the best Client golf outings follow the three rules of being a successful Caddy:*

*Show UP!*

*Keep UP!*

*Shut UP!*

**Clients, like many of us, appreciate prompt arrivals, playing with a comparable partner, and above all, a chance to talk! If you can do this on your next outing, you'll be ahead of anyone else competing for your client's business.**

**BEFORE YOU TAKE A CLIENT OUT:**

**BE PREPARED! Poor planning is easy to recognize, hard to recover from, and simple to avoid. If your client sees you don't have it together on the course, he will wonder how you do business in other areas.**

**Golf Lessons:** **Get some lessons!! I've seen hundreds of players spend \$2,500 for a set of clubs, but won't spend \$150 to learn how to use them! Get your swing grooved to a consistent level, so you can enjoy the game and play well.**

**Take a class, like this one, to learn all the fine points of golf from a real PGA pro, not your cousin Morrie. Get your game in shape---remember to work on short game.**

**Talk the talk:** **Learn to speak golf: hooks, slices, fades, dog-legs, etc are all basics. For the more advanced, you can tell if a person plays good golf when they speak correctly. Realize that the word Golf is a NOUN, not a verb! You don't "Go Golfing," You "Play Golf."**

**Walk the walk:** **Dress Correctly! Soft spikes, No Shorts, Golf slacks, Good Golf shirts. Get for the best look at a Pro Shop, not a department store. Lose the "Ballmark Repair Tool" your wife got you for your birthday—use a tee. Tees, by the way, come in white wood ONLY: No Green Plastic, "biodegradeable," or the "slice-proof" model that looks like an egg cup on a stick. It all sounds minor, but a serious golfer sees items like this as a sign of a rookie.**

**Know the client:** **Serious golfer? High handicapper? Good Golfer? Make sure you are playing with a client with a similar or complementary skill level. Even if the client is a scratch golfer, play with a level of grace and humor, and you'll do fine.**

**Know the course:** **The best way to see the course is to play it in advance--- note where the sand, water, tricky greens or tight fairways are--- make a note to yourself as you play it, so you can be the client's "Guide"; you're not his caddy, but knowing the course is a great advantage.**

**If you're new to the course, get over and see it--- find the locker-room, the restaurant/bar, meet the Pro and the starter. For a very VIP client, find out who's the starter on your day--- a little advance tipping will make sure you're treated right on your outing.**

**Know how to Pack:** *Believe it or not, clients like to see someone who seems to be in charge, and for some reason, bringing along the right stuff that you normally forget makes a great impression! Don't forget:*

- Band-aids*
- Insect repellent*
- Sunscreen*
- Spare visor or hat*
- Ball retriever—(a short one stashed inside the bag!)*
- Permanent marker to mark your ball*
- Spare ball markers, (change) and tees.*
- A good Cigar cutter and a working lighter*
- If you smoke, several types/ brands of cigars*

## **CLIENT GOLF BASICS**

### **Basics:**

*Be early--- For a tournament, or if you're hosting a round for clients I recommend an hour--- confirm the tee times, make sure the pairings and cart assignments are correct, and take care of any fees and tips, without the client being there.*

*Spend some time at the range and the practice green--- get to know the wind, the green speed, and where the first tee is.*

*Meet your client at the club, or better yet, drive them there!*

*Use the Bag Drop —don't carry your clubs around the parking lot*

*Find the locker room--- use it—don't ever change clothes/ shoes in the parking lot*

*Get balls for the driving range*

*Tip everybody: Keep \$1's and \$5's in your pocket, not your wallet! Take care of the Bag Boy, Shoe shine, bartenders, snack cart, etc.*

*Offer to buy drinks and food on the course, but let the client buy a round if he insists.*

*Get to the Tee on time— In the South, we're never late for Golf, Fishing and Church!*

### **WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING THE COURSE---**

*Remember to play the course, don't play the client!*

*Get the client on your side— you're in this together*

*Learn how the client likes to play--- adapt your game--- Ready golf vs. standard turns, etc.*

*Keep track of who's up--- make sure the right person get The Honor— while you may want to defer, it's best to always take your turn.*

## **GOLF TALK**

**Let your client take the lead—you might talk about business in general, but DO NOT present a sales pitch on the golf course—it's trite, and will do you more harm than good. The locker room, the turn, the 19<sup>th</sup> hole or waiting for a four-some ahead of you are good times to talk business, not while a hole is underway—you'll get a disjointed conversation, that can actually hurt your efforts.**

**Golf gets you with the client for a long time—take advantage of it! Slow Down!**

**Get the client talking— Everybody enjoys a good listener**

**Don't interrupt--- you've got all day!**

**Get all the Background—School, Family, Career, Hobbies are all great topics**

**Be sure to avoid politics, religion, and believe it or not, BUSINESS!!**

**Practice Conversation--- Talk to another manager or spouse---**

**Best course, Best tournament, Golf equipment**

**Jokes: Sometimes it's best to have the client tell a joke first, a good way to find out whether there are any sensitivities. Next, know what kind of jokes you can tell: If you can, DO; If you can't, DON'T!**

**GOLF MANNERS: Sometimes, what we consider to be standard good golf manners makes us stand out in the clients mind--- make sure you always do the following:**

**Track each other's ball from the tee--- watch everyone's ball as they hit.**

**Pick up your tee, broken or not**

**Watch out for your foursome in the fairway--- keep carts together, let everyone hit.**

**Watch the cart rules: 90 degree, carts near traps and greens**

**Replace or sand your divots**

**Fix your ball-mark, plus one**

**Offer to tend the flag, if the client is putting—don't offer if the client is chipping. (Again, it sounds obvious, but it is normally not done correctly)**

**Whenever anyone is hitting, make yourself invisible--- stay out of sightlines, and make sure your shadow stays out of a putting line.**

**Get the scores immediately, keep an accurate card**

**Watch where you're going! Don't ever step into someone's putting line.**

#### **CLIENT GOLF RULES:**

**No there aren't separate rules for Client Golf--- just the basic 34 from the Royal and Ancient. You should keep inside those rules whenever you play, and play to win.**

**The point of client golf is not to lose to the client, either intentionally or unintentionally—play the game to the best of your ability. Play to win, and be sure to be a great winner, but be a good loser as well. The following guidelines apply for the first time you play golf with a client- - you want to defer to the client until you get to know them. Once you've played them a couple times, you'll learn how they like to play, and you can modify your game accordingly.**

#### **CLIENT GOLF RULES:**

**Betting--- Betting is the best part of golf, but it could be tricky with a new client. I always offer a small bet first--- a \$2 Nassau-style, or a closest to the pin, etc. There is a complete listing of side-bets and games at the end of this book.**

**Another tactic is to let the client offer the bet--- make sure you are clear what's at stake. There are some hustlers out there, and your expense account probably doesn't reimburse dumb bets! One way or the other:**

**Know your bets: Nassaus, etc.**

**If you're not playing for money, offer to play for lunch, drinks, etc. after the round.**

**Drinking-- Don't drink during the round, or if you must, keep it to a minimum (See "None"), and only if the client is drinking**

**No Smoking, unless, again, the client is smoking! About the only time to change this rule is in the case of cigars--- clients enjoy having a golf cigar, and normally wouldn't have a problem with you smoking one. (With or without them!) It's always a good idea to ask if the client smokes cigars ahead of time!**

**It's your client—offer to buy snacks, etc, from the snack cart**

**Don't "correct the lie"---ever! Not even if the client "corrects" his!**

**Recognize the good shots—don't dwell on the bad ones.**

**Temper-- Absolutely do not lose your temper out on the course with a client--- learn the game, improve your skills and do whatever you can to get your game in shape. Hundreds of rounds of golf and countless sales have been blown due to a bad temper. Don't give your clients any reason not to play with you or do business!**

#### **SCORING!!!**

**Make sure you keep count! There's nothing worse than not knowing your own score--- No "putting green calculations"--- call the correct number! Make sure you count any mulligans--- you may not count them with "Buddy Golf," but your guest may have a problem.**

## **THE RULES**

*Generally, there are the usual rules of golf, and there are a number that should be in the original 34. Always assume your client knows them, and appreciates that you know them as well--- most of the time you'll be right.*

***SAFETY FIRST:** Stay behind your group while everyone's hitting; don't hit into the group in front of you; No practice swings in other's direction.*

***Pace of Play:** Know when it's your turn; take ONE practice swing and hit the ball. Pick up and start again on the next hole, if you're a new player taking too long.*

***Repair divots, ball marks and rake bunkers; even in soft-spikes, be sure to pick up your feet while you walk---don't make spike marks on the greens.***

***LEAVE YOUR CELLPHONE IN THE CAR!!** I'm working to develop a tradition of rock-skipping cellphones and beepers across water hazards if brought onto a golf course.*

***Keep to a conversational tone always, and be quiet on tees and greens.***

*Lastly, be sure you know the rules of the game, and play to enjoy the course and the day. You're part of a tradition—Play Like It.*

## **AFTER THE ROUND...**

*Again, either drop the client off at his car, or hold your clubs at the bag rack--- one way or the other, be sure to get the client to the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole. This is a great time to grab a drink, settle up bets, discuss highlights and low-lights, and follow-up on any business you may have discussed.*

***Be sure to set a time for a rematch, another round, or set the time to spend some business time with the client.***

*After spending time with the client, the last thing you want to do is rush home after the round—make the most of the round by initiating whatever follow-up is appropriate, and setting a time to get with the client again.*

## **FOLLOWING UP... THE BUSINESS FOLLOW-THRU**

*The whole idea of client golf is to make the client closer to you, eliminate shopping from other suppliers, and make a friend in the business. While many of the steps we discussed are elementary and common sense, rest assured they are NOT commonly done. Even taking the client out for a round is now uncommon, so you are providing something that distinguishes you from many other contacts.*

***Follow-up gift:** I always send thank-you note and a sleeve of logo balls, Titleist DT 90's or Pro V's, Top Flight 2000, the best available. The client realizes it was a fun round, but is reminded there is a business purpose.*

***Follow-up call:** Call within a week, to follow-up the business discussed. Don't let too much time go by, or you might lose the momentum you gained from the round.*

***Again, make the most of it: Know, the course, the rules and the basics we discussed, and you'll enjoy the game, increase sales and develop a long-term friend....***

***Not a bad way to spend four hours....***

***This is a brief overview of the material that is available. There is a variety of seminars, software and management tools available from GEMA, the Golf Event Managers Association. For additional information on staff training and golf- related topics, please contact:***

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