

## Putting Green 101

### 1. Repair Pitch Marks

If the green is soft and your ball hits the ground from a decent height and speed, you'll most likely see a dent in the grass where your ball landed. This is called a pitch mark (or ball mark) and it should be repaired as soon as possible to protect the putting green from lasting damage.

It's helpful to have a divot repair tool in your pocket, but if you don't have one, you can use a tee. If you're a newbie, ask one of your playing companions to show you how to repair the green.

If you see more than one ball mark (because another player forgot to do their own housekeeping) repair that one as well, as quickly as possible so that you don't cause a delay.

### 2. Mark Your Ball

Once you reach the putting green you're allowed to lift your ball so that you can clean it or reposition it. But before you pick it up, you must first put a ball-marker down. (Many golf courses provide players with plastic logo ball-markers, or you can purchase the kind that attach to your hat and have a bit of bling or bright colors to match your outfit or mood that day.) Place your ball-marker on the green just behind your ball, and then lift the ball from the green.

When it's your turn to putt, place your ball back down on the green, just in front of your ball marker and in the exact spot it was on when you lifted it. If you make your putt with the marker still down on the green you'll earn a penalty, so be sure to pick it up and put it back on your hat or in your pocket!

### 3. Silence is golden

Good golf etiquette is important everywhere on the course, but especially so on the putting green. We all want to be able to focus and minimize our putts, so it's best not to speak or move while others are putting. Notice where the other players' golf balls are on the green **and never, ever walk on their line**. Pay attention to your shadow, which can be distracting - and quite long in the later afternoon hours!

The traditional order of play on the green is for the player who's ball is furthest from the hole to putt first, but if they aren't ready and you're not playing in a competition, it's a good idea to play "ready golf" while avoiding walking on anyone's line.

While waiting for others to putt is a great time to look for changes in color of the grass, which can help you identify the speed and break of the green. Watch what the other player's balls do on the green when they putt, and take in as much information as you can, such as how hard you think they struck the ball, and the line they took. Sometimes this info can help you get a plan for your own putt, but let's be honest with ourselves here — we probably aren't able to sink 40 footers no matter how long we study the green, so do all this as quickly as you can.

### 4. Be Efficient

Good etiquette and great pace-of-play would be to walk right up to your ball, mark it and lift it, without saying a word. The person putting would incur a two-stroke penalty if their ball-in-motion hits yours at rest. As you take a look at your intended line of putt, you may see some things on that

line that could affect the way the ball rolls. If another player's ball-marker is on your line you can ask them to "span their marker" which means moving the marker a putter club-head to the right or left. Be sure to span it back to the original spot before replacing your ball and making your own putt.

## **5. Flagstick**

The rules of golf provide a player with three options for the flagstick once you reach the green. Attend it, remove it or leave it in. If most of the players would like the flagstick removed, the player who's ball is closest to the hole might be the one to remove the flagstick. You'll do this carefully so as not to damage the grass around the hole, and you'll place it down on the green in a location that is not in anyone's line. If someone's ball-in-motion does happen to be headed towards the flagstick on the ground, or anyone's equipment, it's okay to quickly move those objects out of the way of the ball. If you don't quite get there in time, and the ball accidentally hits those items on the green, no worries, there's no penalty and you'll play the ball as it lies.

A good rule-of-thumb is for the first person who holes out (finishes the hole) to stand near the flagstick that's lying on the ground and be prepared to be the one to replace it in the hole when everyone has putted out.

Attending the flagstick may have gone out of style, but in case it comes back en vogue and you've been asked to attend it, this is another time to stay pretty quiet and still. Keep your hand on it and be prepared to lift it out quickly when the ball is close to the hole.

## **6. Accidents Happen**

If you accidentally cause your ball to move on the green, whether it's from your hat falling off your head or just kicking it accidentally, there's no penalty and you'll replace your ball on its original spot.

***Following those simple etiquette guidelines and rules can help you and your friends care for your course, play efficiently, and sink those putts!***