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Introduction

The golfing craze continues to grow, bringing with it an odd variety of keen new golfers eager to learn the ropes of golf.

Whereas golf was formerly a male dominated sport and viewed as one aimed for the old, the boring or the rich, we are now seeing a change in the way golf is perceived, with people of all ages, genders, nationalities and social status joining in the fun.

Ensuring a successful and satisfactory game of golf is as simple as following the steps laid out in this book.

This book provides a basic outline of the rules and etiquette on the field and provides outlines of how to achieve and attain the elements important to playing and enjoying golf.

Chapter 1 - Rules of the Game

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The game of golf involves the striking of a ball from an initial location (the teeing ground) with the objective being to play the ball into a hole located in a final allocated area (known as the putting green).

A game of golf can last for any amount of time and is dependent on the number of people playing, their experience and ability with the game, and the availability of the course. A lone golfer playing on a course that is not busy may be able to complete a game in less than three hours, while a group of four playing on a crowded course may take over five hours to complete a game.

Golf involves two types of play, typically known as 'match play' and 'stroke play.'

Match play is characterized by an outcome decided through the number of holes won and lost, whereas stroke play is characterized by an outcome decided by the total number of strokes a player makes during a game.

Stroke play (also known as the par system) is the most common form of play. The par system indicates the amount of strokes a player requires to sink the ball. If a hole indicates a par of three, this is the amount of strokes a player should take to sink a ball in. If the player sinks the ball in 2 strokes, they are under par. If a player sinks a ball in 3 strokes they are on par. If the player sinks the ball after 3 strokes they are above par.

The object of the game is to have the smallest score possible. The player with the lowest amount of strokes is ultimately the overall winner.

Before Play:

The rules of play may vary according to location. To ensure rules of play are adhered to, read the local rules included on the score card for each particular golfing facility.

It may also be worthwhile to plan ahead and find out if the intended golfing facility has a dress code.

Many players may use the same brand of ball. For this reason it is important to mark your ball with a clear, identifying symbol to avoid confusion and consequent loss of your ball. The loss of a ball may result in loss of that particular hole during match play or the application of a stroke penalty during stroke play.

A maximum of 14 clubs are allowed during play, so count the number of clubs in your bag before beginning a game.

During Play:

Teeing off: Generally occurs between tee-markers, however, it may also occur up to two club lengths behind tee-markers. Should a player tee-off from outside the designated area in match play, no penalty applies, but the player may be asked to replay the stroke. In stroke play, a two stroke penalty applies, after which the ball is to be played from the appropriate area.

If a struck ball is deflected or stopped by yourself or your caddie, the hole will be lost during match play, or a two stroke penalty applied and the ball played as it lies in stroke play.

If the ball is deflected or stopped by another person the ball may be played as it lies without penalty (during match or stroke play) or replayed at ones own discretion during match play.

If the ball is deflected or stopped after a stroke on the putting green during stroke play it must be replayed.

Play the ball as it lies: When playing the ball, it is important to remember to not intentionally, before the down swing, alter, move or push down any thing fixed or growing surrounding the location of the ball.

If the ball lies in a bunker or water hazard, care must be taken not to disturb the ground of the bunker or water of the water hazard before the down swing.

Loose impediments and moveable obstructions may be removed unless the ball and impediments lie within a hazard.

If these lie within one club length of the ball and the ball moves, it must be replaced and a penalty stroke incurred.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in the playing of a wrong ball, in which case the hole may be lost during match play or a two stroke penalty followed by correction of the ball during stroke play.

If the ball itself is moved by you or your caddie, a penalty point will be added and the ball replaced. No penalty applies if the ball is moved by someone else. The ball may be moved in order to assist other players, and you have the right to request any ball be lifted should it assist you in carrying on with play.

Should your ball be stopped or deflected by another ball at rest in match play, no penalty is incurred and the ball is played as it lies. In stroked play, a two stroke penalty is incurred if both balls were on the putting green before play.

Putting: Obvious ball marks and old plug holes in the line of play are the only types of damaged areas that can be repaired while on the putting green. The surface of the putting green cannot be tested by rolling a ball over it.

During this stage balls may be lifted and cleaned, however care must be taken to replace the ball in exactly the same spot.

When attempting to sink the ball, should it collide with the flag stick the hole is lost during match play or a two stroke penalty is incurred during stroke play. Should an immovable obstruction interfere with stance or swing, the ball may be dropped to the nearest point of relief within one club length, not closer to the hole.

Keeping score: For many who are new to golf, scoring in golf may appear to be one of life's great mysteries. In reality, scoring is actually extremely easy.

Scoring during match play simply involves the recording of holes won and holes lost. Match play, however, is the less common version of play. Players are more likely to be involved in stroke play.

During stroke play scoring occurs via the recording of the number of strokes a player takes. At each hole, count the number of strokes taken to sink a ball and record it in the corresponding box on the score card.

For some players (particularly beginners or inexperienced players) it may be necessary to implement a handicap system. The handicap system is a means of creating a fair game between players with differing levels of experience and ability by allowing weaker players to reduce their score (also known as taking a stroke, in which a player reduces their score by one).

Information on which holes require a handicap is provided on the score card. Each hole has a corresponding number, located along the handicap line on the score card. This number indicates the level of difficulty, or requirement of a handicap for each hole, with one being the hole that most likely requires an extra stroke, and 18 being the hole that is least likely to require an extra stroke.

The number of strokes that a player is able to take is determined through a handicap index and the course handicap. The handicap index provides each individual with a number. This number is indicative of a player's ability on his or her best day. For example, if a player has a handicap of 12 this indicates that on a good day, that player will usually finish 12 over par.

Taking this handicap index into account, this number is then compared to the course handicap (which will differ for each golfing facility) to determine the corresponding number of extra strokes a particular player may have.

The number of extra strokes a player is allocated should now be distributed across the course. For example, if a player is allocated three extra strokes it would be best to use these on the three holes that have been identified as those most likely to require an extra stroke (numbers one to three in the handicap line on the scoring card). If a player is allocated 18 extra strokes they may choose to allow one per hole.

The handicap system may seem confusing at first, however after implementing it a few times it becomes quite simple to use.

Etiquette: Though not part of the official rules of golf, it is still extremely important to consider etiquette while playing the game of golf, as it is still an important part of the game. Etiquette covers factors ranging from courtesy toward other players to care of the course.

Don't move, stand, talk or drive your golf buggy close to players while they are making a stroke, and refrain from yelling across the green, as this may distract players and disrupt play.

Remember to obey any signs and keep your buggy on the designated paths.

Fix any damage done to the green by your shoes or club, and leave each area tidy after use. This will ensure a smooth game for those playing behind you.

Ensure there is no one within hitting distance before taking your shot. This will help to avoid potential injuries.

Once all the players in your group have completed the hole, move from the putting green immediately, so you do not hold up players behind you.

If the group playing behind you is doing so at a faster pace, invite them to play through.

Avoid dropping your golf bag and clubs on the green, as this may cause damage and consequently affect the play of others.

During a round, do not ask anyone except your caddie or partner for advice or tips. The same rule applies to giving advice or tips.

By following the aforementioned rules and etiquette, you will increase your chances of a successful game and get the most out of the golfing experience.

Chapter 2 - Golf Terminology

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In golf there are many terms used to describe the number of strokes a player takes to sink a ball. Being familiar with this terminology will aid you in being better prepared in understanding the game of golf.

1. **Birdie:** Describes the situation in which a player sinks a ball one shot below par (for example, sinking a ball in three shots on a par four hole).
2. **Hole In One:** This term describes the situation in which a player sinks a ball with one shot.
3. **Bogie:** Describes the situation in which a player sinks a ball one shot above par (for example, if you sink a ball in four shots on a par three hole).
4. **Eagle:** Sinking a ball two shots under par (meaning you sink a ball in two shots on a par four hole).

The following terminology is commonly used during play. Understanding these terms will aid in the further understanding of many of the terms used throughout this manual, and will ultimately aid in increasing your enjoyment and satisfaction in the game of golf.

5. **Ball In Play:** Refers to the period of time between your first stroke and the sinking of the ball.
6. **Bunker:** A section of the course known as a hazard. A bunker is hollow and filled with sand.
7. **Draw Shot:** A shot that curves due to side spin. A draw shot will curve from right to left for a left handed player or from left to right for a right handed player.

8. **Flagstick:** A stick with a flag on the end used to indicate the position of the hole (the desired destination).
9. **Hazard:** Sand traps, bunkers, or water specifically designed and placed on the course to cause difficulty during play.
10. **Hook:** A shot that has the opposite effect to a draw. Due to side spin a hook will cause the ball to curve from right to left for a right handed player or from left to right for a left handed player.
11. **Lead hand:** The lead hand is the hand that holds the butt of the club grip and is located on the side which will be facing the intended destination of the ball. For those that are right handed, the lead hand is generally the left. The opposite is true for those who are left handed.
12. **Line of flight:** Intended path (usually a straight line) between the ball and the intended destination.
13. **Loft:** Refers to the elevation of the ball into the air. Loft may also refer to the angle between the face and a line parallel to the shaft of the club.
14. **Loose Impediments:** Objects that are not growing or fixed, and may be removed under certain circumstances.
15. **Putting Green:** The final area of play. This area is situated around the hole and has been specially designed for putting.
16. **Slice:** A shot that curves strongly due to sidespin. The ball generally ends up in the opposite direction to which it was hit. A slice curves strongly from left to right for a right handed player or from right to left for a left handed player.

17. **Teeing Green:** Initial Area of play in which players tee off from.
18. **Tee-markers:** Markers indicating where players should initially tee off from.
19. **Trailing hand:** The trailing hand is the hand that holds the lower end of the grip and is located on the side that is not facing the intended destination of the ball. For those who are right handed, the trailing hand is generally the right hand. The opposite is true for those who are left handed. Due to the nature of the trailing hand, this is generally the hand that lends power to the swing.

Chapter 3 - The Equipment

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First and foremost, the most important piece of equipment when playing golf - the golf club.

The considerations when choosing clubs are:

1. **Level of Play:** Are you looking at playing golf as the occasional past-time or are your sights set on moving up in the ranks? For those looking to play for the occasional past time, a low-to-mid performance set of clubs will suffice. For those looking to play a little more often, a high performance set of clubs is more suitable.

If you are new to the game of golf it is recommended that you start by buying a second hand set of clubs, just in case you find the game of golf is not for you.

2. **Budget:** Do some research by reading reviews and decide on a rough amount you would like to spend. Opting for a second hand set will increase your chances of obtaining a set to your liking for a reasonable price.
3. **Height and build:** This will determine the length of your clubs. Obviously the taller you are the longer the club is required to be.
4. **Material preference:** Golf clubs are typically made from one of two materials - graphite or steel. Steel is the most preferred material, as it benefits performance all round.
5. **Flex of club shaft:** Flexes are available in three main forms - regular, stiff and extra-stiff. The type of flex required varies according to an individual's needs. In general, the faster a ball is hit the stiffer the flex should be.

6. **Lie angle of the club:** The lie angle refers to the angle of the club head when it is touching the ground. The lie angle cannot be too upright or too flat, as either will cause the club to hit the ground during a swing.

For those opting for a second hand set of clubs, ensure you investigate the heads, shafts and grips of each club in the set.

Clubs that have been used for a long time may have face wear - identifiable by worn areas on the club head, or indentations in the club head. Avoid purchasing clubs such as these as this will affect the way the ball is hit and the ball flight.

Ensure the shafts of the clubs are smooth without any indentations or worn areas, as these may cause weakness. Grasp the shaft in one hand and the grip in another and twist in the opposite direction. Any evident movement is indicative of a weak set of clubs.

Finally, check the grips to make sure they are not worn. This will save you the cost of having to re-grip the clubs, that's a saving of anywhere from six to fifteen dollars per club.

If you are satisfied with the set, test the clubs by taking a few swings. Without testing them it is impossible to tell how the clubs will perform.

The clubs contained within a standard set are as follows:

1. **Woods:** These types of clubs are used for longer shots and are identifiable as being the longest, and therefore the most difficult to handle during a swing. A standard golfer's bag will have a driver (**called a 1-wood**), and fairway woods (**called a 3- and/or 5-wood**).

2. **Irons:** These are used for shorter shots (such as pitching, chipping and flop shots) and are identifiable by thin club heads with grooves on them.
 - **Blade-style irons** have a club head with a full back and are more suited to experienced players.
 - **Cavity back irons** have a hollow club head and are more suited to beginners.

Irons are categorized as long (numbers 1-4), mid (numbers 5-7) and short (numbers 8 and 9). The shorter the iron the easier it is to hit with, because a shorter iron produces more loft. For this reason shorter irons are better suited to beginners.

3. **Putters:** Putters are used to play from bunkers or during the final stages of play on the putting green.
4. **Wedges:** Clubs used for difficult or high shots, such as those from a bunker.
5. **Hybrid clubs:** These combine the features of woods and irons, and are suitable for beginner players not wanting to purchase a large amount of clubs initially.

Once the appropriate clubs have been decided upon and purchased, a golf bag is required to ensure ease of transportation across the green. A standard golf bag should be of the correct weight, and should not be too heavy for the player to carry. It should include balls, tees, a pitch marker repairer (which is an implement used to repair damages to the green), and should also have a towel that hangs from the strap to dry and clean club heads during play.

For those more serious about taking up golf as a sport, golf gloves and shoes may also be purchased.

Golf gloves aid in improving a players grip on the club. If left handed, a player will wear the glove on the right hand and the opposite is true for right handed players.

Golf shoes are equipped with plastic spikes on the underside for grip and support during play and are easily obtainable from any golf shop.

Should the purchasing of any golf equipment seem overwhelming, it may help to enlist the help of someone experienced with the game and corresponding equipment.

Care for your clubs: Remember, it doesn't end at purchasing the equipment. In order to get maximum use out of your equipment be sure to care for it correctly.

Ensure you store your clubs inside and cover the woods and putter in the set with head covers to prevent dents.

Also be sure that you carry a full size towel with your golf bag to wipe your clubs down as often as possible during a game, ensuring you are not delaying play by doing so. Give the clubs a thorough cleaning every couple of rounds using warm soapy water and a soft scrubbing brush, and towel dry the clubs as you clean them.

Check clubs regularly for signs of wear on the grip or shaft. Wear or damage may affect your game and should therefore be amended where possible.

Chapter 4 - Get a Grip

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A good grip plays a key factor in developing a good swing, and consequently a good game. The basis for developing a good grip involves correct placement of the club in the hands and tightness of the grip to ensure your hands work effectively together as one.

Positioning of the club in the hands

During a swing the club should be placed more so in the fingers than the palm of the hand. This will increase wrist hinge, and thus increases the chance of a longer shot.

Hands are either positioned in the lead hand grip or the trailing hand grip.

The **lead hand grip** ensures optimal placement of fingers on the club. Place the club at an angle at which it is running alongside all of your fingers. Position the leading hand thumb over the back of the shaft, only the knuckles of both index fingers and the middle finger should be visible. The leading hand is that which holds the butt end of the grip and is usually the opposite hand to that which you use most – for example, the left hand for a right handed person.

The **trailing hand grip** provides large amounts of power to hit the ball a great distance. Hold the club with your top hand grip, placing the handle on the middle section of your ring and middle finger and the top section of your index finger (across all three). The trailing hand is that which holds the lower end of the grip and is usually the hand you use most (for example, the right hand for a right handed person).

The pressure with which you hold your club will ultimately affect the direction in which the ball will go. A light grip pressure, as opposed to a tight grip, is

ideal as this also aids in increasing wrist hinge. Be wary of gripping your club too tightly as this may result in weak shots that tend to slice.

There are three main types of grip.

1. **Vardon overlap (also known as the overlapping grip):** This is the most commonly used grip, and is most often adopted by professional golfers. In this grip the little finger on the trailing hand overlaps the first two fingers on the other. The lead hand thumb should fit along the lifeline of the trailing hand.
2. **Interlock or Interlocking:** This grip locks the hands together and is particularly beneficial for people who have small hands, weak forearms or are beginners. If not performed correctly, the interlock grip may reduce the power of a swing, as it may decrease wrist action. This grip involves holding the club with the trailing hand and ensuring the thumb is at the center of the grip. The little finger of the trailing hand should then be interlocked with the index finger of the leading hand. The lead hand thumb should fit alongside the lifeline of the trailing hand.
3. **Ten finger grip (also known as the baseball grip):** This grip is particularly beneficial for beginners and for those suffering from arthritis, joint pain or weak hands, as all fingers are used to grip the club. To perform this grip, hold the club with the leading hand and bring the trailing hand underneath. Position the little finger of the trailing hand so that it is touching the index finger of the leading hand. Ensure no fingers are overlapping.

Chapter 5 - Hitting the Ball

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Balance and **rhythm** of the body are both imperative in developing an effective golf swing. Knowing how to hit the ball correctly increases the chances of your ball landing in the intended destination and maximizes your control over the club.

Start each shot by relaxing in order to maintain your balance. Stand so that you are comfortable and relaxed.

For each shot in golf a different stance is required. There are three common stances:

- **Square stance** refers to that in which feet are of equal distance from the line of flight. This is the standard stance and is recommended for maximum control.
- **Closed stance** refers to that by which the left foot is closer to the line of flight than the right foot. This stance is utilized to draw or hook the ball.
- **Open stance** involves the placement of the right foot closer to the line of flight than the left foot. This stance is to slice the ball to the right of the intended destination.

During a swing legs should be planted firmly on the ground and feet should be approximately shoulder width apart. Knees should be slightly flexed and should remain so throughout the swing. Weight should be evenly distributed between the left and right feet, and between the heel and the ball of the foot.

In starting the swing and this initial stage is known as the backswing, the left foot should be rolled over towards the inside of the right foot. Knees should remain slightly bent and the majority of weight should be on the right foot. If

weight transfer does not occur effectively there will be insufficient power behind the swing.

Before starting the downswing, pause for a moment. This will ensure the shot is not taken too quickly and will thus optimize rhythm and chances of hitting the ball to the middle of the green.

During this time take care to notice the positioning of your body. Your leading side arm and shoulder should be parallel to one another, and your trailing side arm should form a right angle.

As you start the downswing, take care to keep your wrists on the same angle as when you are taking the backswing - this will minimize the risk of hooking or slicing the ball.

Keep the head of the club traveling straight through the ball to ensure the ball travels in a straight line rather than traveling to the left or right due to a slice.

Keep your head still while swinging the club and don't take your eyes off the ball. This will ensure you remain looking at the same section of the ball throughout the entire swing, and aids in keeping the head of the club traveling straight through the ball.

Perfecting Your Swing

They say practice makes perfect, and this is no exception in attaining the perfect swing for golf. The key to playing a good game is in perfecting your swing. In order to do this, much time and effort must be dedicated towards practicing the elements of the swing.

The following tips may be helpful in practicing and maintaining that perfect swing.

1. Practice your grip without a club. Hold on to the thumb of your leading hand and swing your arms back in an upswing so that your thumbs are pointing upwards. Swing your arms forward allowing your trailing side arm to rotate over the other, ensuring thumbs point upwards during the follow through.
2. Get into your swing position while holding a ball with your arms extended. Swing your arms back as though to throw the ball over your right shoulder. This will allow you to feel the correct rotation of your body.
3. Practice holding the club with the correct grip.

The Drive: Avoid Developing Annoying Habits

Some of the common faults associated with driving in golf are slicing, hooking, shanking and the push and pull.

Slicing: As mentioned in the terminology section, slicing causes a ball to travel in the opposite direction to which it was intended.

To address the issue of unwanted slicing, stand in your normal position with your body straighter than usual, and adopt a square stance. Take your swing - you should notice that the ball will swing into line with the target as it gets closer. Continue to practice this shot.

Hooking: A hook will have the opposite effect of a slice, causing the ball to travel from right to left for a right handed player and vice versa for a left handed player. To minimize the effect of an unwanted hook, assume your normal position and a square stance, ensuring that your shoulders remain square with the leading shoulder and hip slightly higher than the trailing shoulder and hip. Move the ball forward from your stance. Take your swing -

you should notice that the line of flight and your shaft are parallel to one another.

Another way of addressing an unwanted hook is through maximizing the use of your upper body. Stand in your normal position, this time your body should be directly facing the target. Twist your body towards the side of your trailing hand and place the head of the club behind the ball. Hit the ball, allowing your body to turn as you take the stroke.

Shanking: This occurs when the ball connects with the curved area where the club head is connected to the shaft, and as a result curves to the right for a right handed player or to the left for a left handed player.

To avoid shanking, ensure that weight distribution during your swing is concentrated on your heels and ensure the leading side shoulder remains over the trailing side knee during the swing.

The Push and Pull: This is commonly caused by insufficient rotation of the upper body during the downswing, causing the arms to stretch out too far. To adjust for the push and pull shot start in your normal position, then position yourself slightly wider to allow for more space to swing and adopt an open stance. Take some shots from this position, taking notice of the swing with which you are hitting the ball.

Once more, proceed to adopt your normal position and repeat the new swing. Ensure you are keeping your arms further to the left during your downswing. Continue to practice this swing as it will take time to adjust to.

Chapter 6 - Superb Short Games

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The term short game refers to play occurring on or near the green. Shots taken during the short game focus more on accuracy as opposed to power or distance. Common shots utilized in the short game are chipping, pitching and the flop shot.

Chipping: This shot is intended to lift the ball into the air over a short distance, after which it should land and roll the remainder of the way towards the hole.

Effective chipping requires intense visualization to determine where the ball will land. The type of club used during chipping is extremely important, as it will affect the distance in which the ball will travel. Irons are the club of choice for chipping.

The further away from the hole, the more lofted the iron should be. Starting with iron number 1, proceed up through the irons the closer the ball is to the hole.

The position required to proceed with chipping is similar to that of putting.

Adopt an open stance with feet slightly apart (the majority of your weight should be on your leading side foot), and with your arms straight. The club should be aiming directly in the intended direction of the ball. Ensure wrists stay flat and arms straight during the swing.

Pitching: Very similar to a chip, a pitch involves a short shot using less than a full swing to direct a ball in the intended direction. Pitching shots are longer than chipping shots, and therefore require a longer swing.

As with chipping, pitching requires intense visualization of where you intend the ball to land.

To ensure effective pitching shots, adopt the same stance as described for chipping; however ensure your shoulders are facing the direction in which you intend to hit the ball. Hit the ball, ensuring you are not gripping the club too tightly, the club should follow the same path on the downswing as it did on the backswing, and should end above your head rather than out to the side of your body.

The Flop Shot: A flop shot is implemented where there is very little green with which to work, or to avoid certain hazards on the course. This shot should cause the ball to travel very high in the air and land softly on the green.

An open faced club with the most loft is generally the most suitable for playing a flop shot, however if playing on a green with an upward slope less loft is required.

To effectively implement a loft shot, an open stance should be adopted. With the club face aiming directly at the intended destination, take a big swing ensuring that the club contacts the ball directly underneath.

Putting to Perfection

Grip and posture are important factors to consider in order to develop an effective putting style.

Putting requires a different grip to be adopted. This grip is commonly referred to as the reverse overlap grip, which is characterized by the overlapping of the index finger of the leading hand by the little finger of the trailing hand.

To implement this grip, hold the club in your leading hand so that your thumb points directly down the shaft of the club, your index finger should not yet touch the grip. Place your trailing hand over the club in the same way you have positioned the leading hand and wrap your fingers around the grip. Now place the index finger of the leading hand around the club.

Once you have successfully implemented the appropriate grip, attention must be paid to the posture you adopt while putting. Putting requires a smooth, gentle stroke. The most effective posture to achieve this is as follows.

Position your feet shoulder width apart and parallel to the intended destination of the ball.

Bend slightly at the knees and the hips with your arms hanging and the head of the club sitting slightly above the ground. Allow your arms to bend slightly at the elbows, which should be touching your sides above your waist.

The level of backswing required to hit the ball will depend on the distance the ball is required to travel. The longer the distance, the larger the required backswing should be.