

Golf Etiquette Explained

Golf is a game rich in culture and age-old tradition. There are strict rules of etiquette to be followed in playing a game of golf -- including your choice of attire. Most golfers respect and happily comply with the rules of etiquette, and so are welcome to play at proper golf courses. Golfers who scoff and consider the rules "stodgy" are destined to contain their games to a golf course that shares their disdain. That is, if they can find one.

Most golf courses, both private and public, enforce etiquette rules to some degree, and nearly all have restrictions on golf apparel. Wearing proper golf attire is considered to be one of the most important areas of etiquette, and respectful players are happy to play along. The most common requirements to golf course dress codes are collared shirts, long pants (not jeans) and golf shoes. These rules come into play both in the clubhouse and on the links.

On the course itself, the primary rule of etiquette is to arrive promptly for your scheduled tee time. You should arrive at the course twenty to thirty minutes before your tee time, allowing ample time to park the car, purchase balls, change your clothes, pick up a cart, warm up and practice. Don't arrive five minutes early and expect to hit the driving range.

Another important rule of golf etiquette is a sign of modern times. Cell phones and pagers are not welcome on the links. Leave your phone in the car or in your locker. If you absolutely must bring the phone along in case of emergency, turn the ringer off and tuck it into your bag.

Being mindful of other players is what golf etiquette is all about. Make sure that you have a clear understanding of how the other players in your group want to play. For example, ask if the first ready golfer should tee off first, or whether the golfer with the best score on the proceeding hole should lead the play. You'd be surprised at how easily you can offend a stranger if you join their group and don't play by their rules.

Above all, respect the other golfers' need for a quiet place to play. Golf requires precision and a great deal of concentration, and golfers are unforgiving if they think you've blown their big shot. In following golf etiquette it is absolutely essential that you keep quiet and stay out of the shooter's direct line of vision. This can be a hard rule to remember when you're having fun with you buddies, but it is golf etiquette in its most basic form.

Golf isn't just a game; for many, it's a social springboard and a showcase of good breeding. If you enjoy playing a game of golf, you've got to respect the fact golf etiquette represents more than a persnickety dress code. It's culture and tradition that have been observed by generations. So put on your collared shirt and your chinos, tie up your golf shoes, and tee off with due respect.