

Title: Eager Women Get Answers  
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In my 20 years of instruction I'm continually asked about etiquette. Many golfers feel uncomfortable when entertaining business clients for golf, and how intimidating facilities and experienced golfers golf can be at the course. For example, hours of play, tee times, tipping, mixed grill usage, locker rooms, and spike requirements. In other words, golfers were single-minded about understanding the unwritten codes of golf. They asked: How do you entertain clients who want to play golf? How do you get comfortable with conducting business on the golf course? How do you get the tee time you want, and what is expected of me after that? How do I pick the right golf course for my clients and me?

These situations smack of fear of the unknown, and fear is a powerful deterrent to wanting to be on any golf course. I recognized their worries; mine are the same although with experience and knowledge I have reduced my fear.

I realized my mission. Here was an opportunity to transfer my golf experience to other golfers. I couldn't wait to answer questions from these golf-interested folks because I firmly believe in all people using golf for business advantage and social release. When I was first learning to golf, others assumed I knew what I didn't. I'd like to ease that newness for other golfers. Most golf situations are similar, and knowing the basic routines can make you feel accepted and comfortable. I hope by sharing my experience and information I can help to skip you ahead to golf's important things like making pars and dropping putts.

### **How do I get over the first tee jitters?**

The first tee jitters never go away. They are present at your first 18-hole ladies event or at a PGA Tour event, like the Greater Hartford Open. The easiest way to get over the jitters is to recognize them. Acknowledge your nerves, and focus on the best part of your golf game. Does your pre-shot routine give you comfort, or can you find relief in a comedy routine, featuring your favorite golf joke? Know your strengths. Divert your mind. Don't think about the people watching you. Don't worry about hitting the first fairway. Relax your mind and concentrate on hitting your ball into play. Setup to your shot and pick a target, making the target your last mental picture. After you swing, expect to look up and see your ball flying right down the middle.

### **Who should drive the cart in a mixed group?**

The host player drives the cart. They know the hole-layout and service areas on the course. If you choose not to drive, however, no golf etiquette is breached although accountability still remains. The host never loses responsibility for the behavior of the cart, correct routing, cart positioning, and cart rules.

But I wonder – are you really asking me if the man in a mixed group should drive? In my experience, skilled players, who cart regularly, should drive on their own course; it helps to move play along. Nevertheless, there's no one fixed rule. Some players prefer a chauffeur; others chose cart control. Watch for signs of discomfort as the golf bags are loaded, and the gear is stowed. Unspoken behaviors like, sifting bags and placing items on the driver's seat will alert you to someone's need to drive that day.

### **How do I pick a golf course when I want to play with clients?**

Finding a suitable golf facility for your needs isn't hard, options abound. It is easy to find semi-private clubs that allow members and the public to play, and public courses, often

called daily-fee facilities, are open to all golfers most everyday. Private clubs also encourage guests at certain times; so if you belong to a country club, invite your client there, making it a relaxing day for you, since you know what to expect. Another possibility is to ask your boss if the company has access to a private golf course. Many do.

If you chose to play where you have never played before, I suggest you do some research before inviting a client. Ask questions about the facility such as, the cost of a greens' fee or guest fee, the likelihood of a tee-time for the day you plan to play, your payment options, the time it takes to play 18 holes, the spike rule. Inquire about carts. Are they mandatory? Are they available? Locate the bag drop and look for a bag attendant. Ask about food services, range facilities, and the dress code.

If possible, play the golf course before playing with a client. Playing the course allows you to judge its condition, its layout, and the location of its facilities. It is also a good time to decide what tee box is comfortable for your skill and distance.

Ask yourself if you liked playing there. Did you feel welcome? What was the club's attitude toward service? Did the club serve your entertainment needs for after golf amusement? Could you eat lunch or dinner with your clients in the grill? Could you feel comfortable going into the bar for a drink with a male client after the round?

Before a client round, inform your guest about what to expect. Include directions to the site and instructions on what to do when arriving at the club. Tell them where you will meet them and when. Allow an hour before tee-time to gather, change, and warm up on the range and putting green. Make your guest comfortable when they arrive by anticipating necessary questions like the directions to the range or locker room. When you invite a client to play golf you want them to feel special. Picking the right facility can make or break your day of golf.

**Who pays for business golf and how do I avoid embarrassment when some players insist on paying?**

As with any other form of business entertainment, the host pays. Your client is your guest during the time you spend at the course. If you pay in advance, you can avoid the hassle of “who pays.” Call ahead to the golf shop and pre-pay. Many private and public facilities have this option, and will enthusiastically charge your credit card.

**Do I bring up betting? How do I handle a customer that wants to bet more than I have in my wallet?**

When entertaining a customer for golf, I do not recommend initiating a bet. If you have never played with this client before, let the round develop and get comfortable with how they play. They may not be interested in competitive golf; many play only for social reasons. On the other hand, if your client inquires about a little but friendly side bet, she has given you the opening, and I see no reason not set up a match.

A Nassau for \$2 or \$5, without presses, is a friendly bet. The most you can lose is \$15. If, however, you run into a customer who pushes for high stakes, let them know you are only a working stiff, and \$5-5-5, keeps your golf skills in the comfort zone.

Read below to find some golf games that clients find fun.

**Nassau:** Three matches are played in Nassau. The front nine holes comprise the first match, the back nine holes the next match, and the total for 18 holes the third match. The low score wins each hole if no player, or partnership, ties. Each match won pays the bet wagered.

Variations of Nassau are endless: teams or players playing with no strokes when total handicaps match; teams or players taking all handicap strokes allowed; teams or players getting only the stroke difference in their handicap and the low-handicap, teams choosing to play best ball of partners; teams playing high/low scores. Listen carefully when the rules are called for a game. Don't bet until you understand which Nassau game.

**Skins:** The lowest score on a hole wins a skin if no player ties. The matchmaker keeps the players' skins and negotiates the pot's value, the money each player pays to play, before leaving the first tee. At the end of the round, matchmaker divides the number of skins made into the pot total to find the value of one skin and determine the skin payout.

**Birdies:** Any player making a birdie wins a point and a preset dollar amount at the end of the round from every player. Determine before play whether you are playing for gross or net birdies. Otherwise low handicappers will have a distinct advantage.

**Sandies:** A sandie is taking two shots to get the ball into the hole from a bunker; players call it an up-and-down. If you make one, you win a point, and every player pays you a preset dollar amount at the end of the round.

**Low Putts:** A scorekeeper keeps count of every player's putts. At the end of the round, the player with the lowest amount of putts wins the preset pot.

**Junk:** Combine the games of birdies, chip-ins, sandies, and one putts to play this game. A player wins a preset dollar amount from every player for each piece of junk.

### **How do I deal with the macho member of my group?**

At all costs beat them!! No, actually, let the machos be machos. They hurt only themselves. If you do business with them, learn from it and identify their personality for what it is worth in a competitive setting. Ask yourself if suffering them is worth the business. If your answer is yes, put up with their macho behavior. Listen to the excuses, attend to the endless "*Once-I*" memories, and know when to listen, not jolly. You have my permission to ouch latter on. If, however, it is a big business deal and worth the effort, set aside your ego, cajole a bit, and close the deal.

### **How do you handle a customer who cheats?**

Customers who cheat at golf should not have your trust. Nevertheless, if they cheat on the day you play, it is best to ignore it. Don't interact. Write down par, after par, even when, by your count, their best score is bogey. Look the other way when they throw a new ball down on the fairway after their first ball leaves the tee for the trees. Don't show

your surprise when they get to the green and pick up from twenty feet saying, “ Give me a par, I can make that one.” Cheating on your golf score shows a character fault; don’t deliver your business until you hold his check.

### **When is the appropriate time to discuss business?**

Playing a round of golf is time consuming, but time can work to your advantage when you and a client are alone for hours. This is time they will never allocate for a sales call. Look at a golf outing as an opportunity to talk with your client. Use this time wisely. Don’t rush it. During the first six holes, make the time to learn about your client’s interests and life. What kind of personality does she show? Is he a competitive golfer or only into golf as a social activity? Is his golf about winning? Does he lose his temper easily? Is she a risk taker or does she play away from a challenge? Are the Rules in play? Pay attention, you will know when it is time to talk business. If you are never offered an opening, wait until the turn to talk in generalities about your business and its goals as you gather snacks and beverages. Over the last few holes, or at the end of the round when you move to the 19<sup>th</sup> hole, let your client know you want their business.

### **How much do I tip and when?**

I have played at *no-tipping clubs*, clubs with policies that state: do not tip the employees. But this practice is not ordinary. Most golf facilities allow and encourage tipping. Be ready with a \$1-2 tip for the attendant when you arrive at the bag drop-off. The attendant will take your golf bag from the car’s trunk and bring it to the cart staging area. After you park your car, visit the golf shop, then move on to the locker room. If there’s an attendant, tip for special services like a towel or a courtesy locker. I always tip for shoe services such as, changing-out spikes and laces or cleaning my muddy Footjoys. Ask if the club bills for these services. If so, the attendant’s wage and tip is usually included,

and there's no need to double tip. However, if there's no standard billing charge, ask about the cost of the materials, the fee for the service, and leave a tip of \$3-5. When the beverage cart arrives during the round, tip 15% each time you make a purchase, or start a tab and pay for everything, including the tip, at the end of your round. When the round is finished, tip the cart attendant \$2 a bag for cleaning your clubs, replacing your head covers, and moving your bag to the pickup area. For an exceptionally thorough cleaning, correct head-cover replacement, and scrubbed grooves, I tip as high as \$5 a bag. If you use a club caddie, expect him to clean your clubs, position your bag for pickup, or carry it to your car and place it into your trunk. Tip 15-20% of the required caddie fee. At the end of my round, when I return to the locker room, I tip again, leaving \$2-4 if my shoes are cleaned or towels or supplies provided for a shower.

### **How can I make the day enjoyable for a low handicap player and a high handicap player (host)?**

If possible invite another player to play along with you, and invite your low-handicap guest to bring along a friend with a similar handicap. If you feel flush, and think your guest would enjoy playing with a pro, inquire in advance about the fee to have a club professional join your group.

Usually players find it more fun to have a little match with someone close to their own ability since it is difficult to have a successful match with a player carrying a much higher handicap. Nevertheless, the good news is that many single-digit players treat the golf course as their competitor and set out to beat it on every hole. If a low handicap player isn't available to challenge your client, I assure you most good players will still enjoy their day at the golf course. A word of advice, good players don't appreciate slow pace, so keep moving, and pick up your ball when you had more than your share of shots on a

hole. Regardless of the difference in your handicaps, never hesitate to invite a low-handicapper to play. Make the offer, and let them make the decision.

**How to arrange the foursome? For business golf, I am the hostess and usually the man is the senior guest I want to be with. I do not put the women in the same cart but it slows the game down a bit. What should I do?**

Regardless of gender, you ride with the player you need to entertain. Don't worry about having a mixed group; even in a men-only group, all players will not always use the same tees. Most courses have three sets of tees for men, indicating different yardage and difficulty. Don't worry, players with a true handicap usually know what tees they can handle and what yardage they prefer to play. If stopping at different tee boxes, makes you feel the pressure of holding up play, get ahead of the situation. Choose your club and pull it while you wait for your guests to finish with their tee box.

**I wonder not only where to change shoes but when? Do you remove them before going in after golf?**

Shoe changing in the parking lot is taboo! In the industry, we call this player, a trunk slammer. Don't fit that image. Invest in a shoe bag; all golf shops stock them. Then use the locker room to change your shoes. At most private country clubs, ask the attendant where to store your things when you first enter the locker room, most have courtesy lockers for playing guests. Public facilities also have locker rooms, or a sitting area near the ladies room where you can change your shoes. However, if there's no changing area, sit inside your car, close the door, and change your shoes.

After golf, most players change their shoes before meeting for drinks or snacks, but, nowadays, clean golf shoes with soft spikes are often seen in grill and bar areas. In

private clubs watch for signs notifying you that you are crossing into a no-no area for spikes.

### **What do you do if you've never driven the cart?**

If you have never driven a cart, practice ahead of the day you plan to play. Learn how to reverse, and be forewarned that carts beep when they go backwards, emitting a noise no golfer wants to hear during their backswing. Speaking of noise, beware moving a gasoline cart when any player is putting or swinging.

It is OK for a partner or client to drive the cart for you, but certain situations will arise where you must be ready to drive. For example, the cart may need moving around the backside of a green after the driver walks in to make a short pitch. Also, to keep play moving, you may need to pick up another player in the fairway as the cart driver makes a shot. You can also find yourself handling the cart when there's a mandatory cart-path rule, meaning no carts can leave the path.

Any local public facility will help you to learn how to drive a cart in their parking lot or maintenance area. Better yet, if you want to feel comfortable learning to drive a cart, ask a friend, who plays cart golf, to give you a lesson.

### **When can you drive the cart to your car to get your clubs; return them to the car?**

At most private facilities, club rules say *no carts* in the parking lot. This is an issue of liability, but it is also a way of encouraging you to tip the golf shop's employees.

Some facilities allow carts in their parking lots. You will intuit that possibility when you see carts in the parking lot. Ask the professional what is allowed. When employees are in short supply, or you play late in the day, some clubs soften their rules and tell you it is OK to drive the cart to your car if you promise to return it to the clean-up area.

### **What's the proper way to get your cart?**

As soon as you arrive at the golf course, your first assignment is to stop at the golf shop. The golf staff will check you in, assign you a cart, and give you its key. You find your cart by its number or your bag's placement. On occasion, some facilities, ask for a signature on a waiver to release them from liability, making you responsible for any cart damage while you have control.

### **When you play at a private club is it okay to use their shower?**

Yes, as the guest of a member, you may use the shower. Remember, however, to tip the locker room attendant for helping you with directions, towels, tools, and supplies.

### **When to mark your ball on the green?**

When playing business golf, always mark your ball when the group reaches the green. Mark it by standing behind the ball, on its line to the cup, and placing a marker directly down and behind the ball (not under it) before lifting your ball for cleaning. Don't mark; finish if you have a tap-in. But do remember to pay attention. You must never step on another player's imaginary line to the cup or its extension; it is considered a significant breach of golf etiquette and calls for an apology.

Mark your ball no matter how close it is to the hole if you cannot finish without stepping on another player's line, or if you chose to wait your turn. If your ball is the on the green, but in the way of a chip or pitch, a player may ask you to mark. Walk directly to your ball, place your marker behind the ball, sighting from the cup, and lift it out of the way.

Once your group is on the green, there are a few specific behaviors you need to know. The player farthest away from the pin putts first. The player closes to the pin, pulls the pin. The first player to putt a ball into the cup resets the flag when all other players have putted out.

### **How do I get my ball or marker out of another player's way?**

The Rules of Golf allow you to use your marker to mark a ball in any situation. But getting your marker out of another player's way usually involves the following routine. With your marker in position, align the heel of your putter in front of the marker and fix a line to an object in the distance, a tree, a boulder, or a bench. You want to move off the other player's line. Move your marker to the tip of your putter and replace it on the new line. Repeat this move as many times as requested, until you have given full relief. Reverse this process in full to replace your ball when it is your turn to play. Remember to place your marker down on the exact spot from which it was moved.

### **When do I have to replace my divot vs. fill it with sand?**

In the southeast and southwest, divots are filled with sand, a substance you usually find on your cart in a bucket or bottle. Use only a minimal amount of sand; filling the entire divot with sand is not necessary. In the northeast and northwest replace your divot with the displaced sod and step the puzzle piece back into the fairway or rough, or fill the divot with the mix that's provided on your cart. Either practice is acceptable.

When you repair a divot, you will often see other divots in the same area. If some are forgotten divots, fix them, too. Courteous players try to leave the golf course the way they find it. All players deserve the chance to play from the best possible conditions.

### **How do I fix a pitch mark?**

Invest in a divot repair tool. They are sold at all golf shops; some shops even give them away. Having the correct tool makes for a better repair to the green, but a tee will also do the job. Go at the pitch mark, from all sides, with your tool. Then softly lift the grass back toward the center of the pitch mark. Do not dig the tool or tee into the center of the

mark and lift up; you may tear up roots. After pushing the outside grass back toward the center, look to see if the hole has left an indentation. If the grass is lower than the level of the green, use a slight twisting motion with your tool or tee to lift the sod up and into level position. Finish by tapping the repaired area down lightly with your putter or feet.

### **Where do you stand when you tend the pin?**

The player whose ball is closest to the pin *tends* the flag for the person farthest away from the hole. When I attend the pin, I locate the position of each player's ball as it sits on the green before I walk to the pin. I take special care to avoid stepping on a player's line to the cup. I lift the flag to see if I can easily pull it from the cup. I try to pin the flag with my hand if it is reachable. This keeps the flag from fluttering in the wind, a distraction to any player making a putt. When the putt begins to roll, I pull the pin from the hole and walk away, mindful of not stepping on any player's line.

When the sun is shining on the green, I stand on the side where the flag throws a shadow. That way my own shadow never covers the hole. On a cloudy day, I wait for the puttee to determine the side where they want me to stand, Then as I reach for the flag, I position my feet carefully with respect to other players' lines.

### **What is considered a “good” pace of play?**

All golf professionals dream that players at their facility will finish in two hours. This fantasy means double the players on course! The real dream, however, is for players to finish a round of golf in 4 hours and 10 minutes, meaning *good pace* is completing each hole in about 13 and a half minutes.

### **When you forget your club should you go back for it?**

If you remember where you last used the lost club, and its within two holes, go back. If you decide to retrieve your club, hit your shot before informing your group you are

leaving. Ask them to play on; assuring them you will catch up when you can. Leave your cart partner with additional clubs, so they can continue to play. Approach the group behind you carefully, without disturbing their play, and ask if they have found a club. If the answer is no, go back to where you think you left your club and search. If you don't remember where you have left a club, or you last used it holes ago, ask the course ranger to retrieve it for you.

Rejoin your group and continue with your round even when your club remains lost. Make do, and create your usual shots with other clubs. Your results may be a pleasant surprise.

**Do I need to rake the whole bunker if the person ahead of me forgot to rake their footprints?**

Unfortunately, not every player remembers to rake. As a courtesy to the players behind you, raking the whole bunker would be the civilized way of doing things, but only if time permits.

**Can I ask anyone in my group for advice on club selection?**

According to the rules of golf you cannot ask for advice. If you do, you are assessed a two-stroke penalty. But, during business golf, some clients delight in clubbing your shots. Allow it. It doesn't hurt if the advice is given in good faith and you can filter it. Remember, however, that your shot will succeed only if you trust the club you hit.

**What's the maximum number to take on a hole if I'm a 33 handicap?**

According to The Rules of Golf of the United States Golf Association, the equitable stroke control for a 33 handicapper is a maximum of 9 strokes on any hole. This

adjustment applies to all rounds, including tournament play. Follow the USGA's equitable stroke control chart below to maintain a playable, accurate handicap.

<u>Handicap</u>	<u>Maximum Strokes</u>
9 or less	Double bogey
10-19	7
20-29	8
30-39	9
40 and above	10

### **How do I establish a USGA Handicap?**

To have a United States Golf Association handicap, you must be a member of a golf club that belongs to the USGA. A golf club, as defined by the USGA, is an organization of not less than ten individual members who play regularly with each other and operate under by-laws that provide peer review and have a handicap committee. Golf clubs are everywhere. It is not necessary to belong to a private or semi-private club to have a USGA handicap; you only need to meet the above requirements.

### **Can you ask someone to turn off their cell phone or to use it to the side while you are hitting?**

Cellular phones are a necessary evil. Most of us use them, and, at times, they are the best way to call for course assistance, to report an accident, or to receive an emergency message. Need I go on?

In the service of fair play, I offer a few reminders concerning cell phone etiquette. Before your round begins, please turn your cell phone to vibrate. If someone is taking a call on

course, and it bothers you, wait to hit until they have finished. Usually, that behavior sends an unspoken message, and they move off to talk where they cannot be heard. Keep in mind that multiple calls are annoying, and cell phones slow down play. Check with private facilities to see if cell phones are allowed on property. If your facility has this rule, it is your job, as a host, to inform your guest of the club's rule before their visit to avoid potential embarrassment. Offer your guest the phone number of the golf shop in advance, so emergency messages can reach you on course or immediately at the end of the round.

**How do you tell someone that thinks they are whispering that they need to be quiet?**

If your guest is conducting business with you and raises her voice above a whisper, say nothing. However, if you are playing with friends, tell your friend politely that she needs to practice her whispering. She'll get the point.

Resources:

Executive Women's Golf: Sara Hume, Executive Director, 300 Avenue of the Champions, Suite 140, Palm Beach Gardens, FL. 33418. (800) 407-1477.

The 2002-2005 USGA Handicap System Online Manual: "How to establish a handicap index."  
<<http://www.usga.com>>.

Reed, Susan. "At the Top of her Game." Golf For Women January/February 2004: 90-95.