

Compliments- Sincere and Otherwise

Sincere compliments are great, and your opponent or your playing partner is sure to appreciate them. But save the accolades for when you really mean it. If, after every shot, you say, "What a great shot," it's going to get old quickly- as is your credibility.



Keeping Track of Your Ball

Mixing up your ball with someone else's is an egregious error that's irritating in the most casual of circumstances, and can be costly in a tournament or if money is on the line. At the start of each round, **take the time to mark your ball with an indelible marker.** That way, when you're looking for your ball in the rough or the bushes or the trees, you can identify it as being absolutely your ball. Even on the fairway, it's a good idea to check the ball visually to be sure it's yours before hitting it.

In tournaments, playing the wrong ball will get you into hot water fast. In match play, you lose the hole. In stroke play, you incur a two-stroke penalty; in addition, you must either go back and play your correct ball, or proceed under the rules for a lost ball or a ball in a hazard. If you fail to take one of these actions and tee off on the next hole, you will be disqualified from the event.

Correctly Marking a Ball on the Green

You're allowed to pick up your ball when it's on the green, but first you must mark its location. When marking your ball on the green, be careful how you go about it. What's the right way to mark a ball? Place your marker directly behind the ball, not in front of or to the side of it.

Wait Up!

In golf, order of play matters. On each hole, the person with the lowest score on the previous hole "has the honor" and hits first off the tee, the second-lowest score goes next, and so on. In a tie, whoever got the lowest score on the hole *before* the previous hole goes first, and so on, going all the way back to the order of play on the first hole, if necessary.

Often this approach means that the high handicapper tees off last. The frustration for the high handicapper occurs as he finishes his drive. Often, the rest of the foursome already has their bags at ready, and as soon as the last shot flies from the tee, off they go down the fairway, while the last player hurries to catch up. I've always thought that one of the best parts of golf is enjoying a pleasant conversation as you walk down the fairway. That's not possible if you're always eating your companions' dust. So a word to all you low handicappers out there: Don't be quick to push off down the fairway. Your higher-scoring buddies will thank you for it.

Letting Other Golfers Play Through

Before letting any group play through, I'll look ahead: are we playing immediately behind one or more four-person groups ourselves? If we are, then letting the smaller group play through us isn't going to help them. In this situation, we'll wait until we're on the tee and they're on the green of the hole behind us, and then get their attention and explain the situation. Typically, they'll appreciate our concern and slow down a bit so that they aren't right on our tails the whole time.

If, on the other hand, we have open space in front of us, then we'll invite them through regardless of whether the group is a single, a twosome, a threesome, or a foursome. Sometimes they'll bite at the offer, sometimes they won't. Communication coupled with a dose of consideration is key. Besides, what goes around comes around. Who knows? Next week, I may be the single, and the person I just let through may be in the foursome ahead of me, and the favor will be returned.