Congratulations! Your kid is thinking about playing Golf. While trying a new sport can be a bit scary for all involved, we know that once you get started, you and your child are going to love it.

Golf is a sport that stays with you for life, and your child is about to embark on a wonderful journey. Golf teaches sportsmanship, manners, patience, determination, and so many more qualities that stick with a child as they grow.

The sport dates back centuries. Its exact origins are debated but truly grew into what it is today in St. Andrews, Scotland. Golf later spread throughout the United Kingdom. Later, as the British traveled across the globe, they brought their clubs with them. Today, golf is played around the world. In the United States, there are more than 25 million golfers and 16,000 golf courses.

One of the best parts of golf is you can play right along with your kid, making it an ideal family activity. This guide will help you and your child tee off on your golf journey and make sure you’re set up to enjoy the sport for years to come.

Golf was featured in the Summer Olympic Games in 1900 and 1904, but not again until 2016’s Rio Olympic Games in Brazil.
THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GOLF

The two guiding principles behind the Rules of Golf are to play the ball as it lies and to play the course as you find it. In its simplest form, golf is about playing the ball from teeing area to the hole by hitting it with a golf club, and not otherwise touching the ball. A fundamental challenge of the sport is to deal with whatever position your ball comes to rest in – whether good or bad. While there are some necessary exceptions (such as obstructions and other abnormal course conditions), the essential nature of golf means these must remain exceptions rather than the norm.

Unlike sports with a standardized court, field, or pool dimensions, golf courses come in all shapes and styles. The Old Course in St. Andrews, the world’s oldest course, was once 22 holes, but later shortened to 18. Today, most golf courses are 18 holes but there are many 9-hole courses, and even some that are an unusual number like 6 or 12. Golf courses can be found in deserts, along oceans, and in forests. It’s played on all types of grasses and climates. The only truly uniform thing about a golf course is the size of the hole: 4 ¼ inches in diameter.

Holes
Each hole begins in the teeing area, and ends when the player hits the ball into the hole (or in another way as allowed by the Rules). Holes are varied in distance and typically are either a par 3, 4, or 5.

Teeing Area
Each hole begins on the “tee” which is designated with two markers, and the golfer must tee off in between them and no more than two club lengths behind them.

The Golf Ball
There are many different brands, colors, and constructions of golf balls that are allowed to be played under the rules of golf. The USGA stipulates the golf ball must be no more than 1.620 oz. avoirdupois and has a diameter of no less than 1.680”.

Clubs
There are many different types of clubs. Many players start the hole by using a driver, and on or near the putting green, players often choose to use their putter. In between, there are a variety of woods, irons, and wedges, all designed to move the ball different distances.

Unit of Measure
Golf courses in North America and many other parts of the world are measured in yards. Many courses abroad are measured in meters.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE BIGGEST OR STRONGEST GOLFER TO HIT THE BALL THE FARTHEST. HAND-EYE COORDINATION AND FLEXIBILITY ARE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO THE GOLF SWING. RORY MCILROY, ONE OF THE LONGEST DRIVERS ON THE PGA TOUR EACH YEAR, IS ONLY 5’10” AND 160 POUNDS!

GOLF EQUIPMENT

A Putter

This is the “flatstick” club that you use on and around the putting green. They come in a variety of different styles from mallets to weighted to blades. The most important thing is finding one with the proper length that lets you naturally hang your arms for a smooth stroke.

A Driver

The club designed to be hit off a tee and go the farthest. While an adult-sized driver might have 8-11 degrees of loft, beginners with slower swing speeds traditionally perform better with higher degrees of loft.

A Fairway Wood

Sometimes called a fairway metal, hybrid, or rescue club, this helps you hit the ball far off the fairway. It has a higher loft than a driver and is designed to hit the ball off the ground.

Irons

A club with a flat-faced, solid metal head. A full iron set is typically a 4-PW (8 clubs). Golfers can customize how many irons vs. fairway metals they would like to keep in their bag.

A Pitching Wedge (PW)

This is a great utility club to have for pitching and chip shots around the green.

Wedges

As you master the pitching wedge you will want to get a Sand Wedge, which has more bounce and provides more loft. Then once you master that, consider an even loftier Lob Wedge (60 degrees).

Shop new & used golf gear at up to 70% off

SPORTSENGINE
GEAR MARKETPLACE
Powered by SidelineSwap

Shop now

sportsengine.com/gear/shop
DRESSED TO PLAY

You don’t have to be dressed head to toe in the latest golf-specific clothing and shoes to play the game. At minimum, all you need are athletic shoes, comfortable shorts, pants, or a skirt and a shirt (some clubs may require a collared shirt and sleeves for men). As you begin to play more and improve, you will likely want to build up your golf-specific clothing. Here is how to start.

**Golf shirt**
Boys should wear a collared polo while girls have more style options in regards to tops, including sleeveless options.

**Golf pants, shorts or skirts**
Comfortable slacks or pants or golf skirts over jeans are preferred.

**Golf shoes**
At first, athletic sneakers may be okay, but as you progress, golf shoes with soft spikes provide more performance.

**Socks**
Athletic socks with cushion for walking.

**Golf glove**
A glove provides a tackier grip on the club and can also protect your hand from blisters.

**Golf hat**
It’s usually sunny when you play golf. A hat can protect your face from the sun and also keep sweat off your eyes.

**Golf bag**
A bag that accommodates your clubs, balls, tee, and any other accessories. They usually have two shoulder straps for comfortable walking.

**Water bottle**
Bring enough hydration on the course with you to last your whole round, or confirm water is available on the course.

**Golf push cart**
Junior golfers may carry their bag or use a push cart, which has three wheels and keeps the weight of equipment off a player’s back. Most golf courses have push carts for rent or bring your own.

**Distance measuring device**
Once your golf game improves to the point where you have consistency in how far you hit your respective clubs, a distance measuring device will come in handy to tell you how far away you are. Many courses also mark sprinkler heads on the course with yardage to the center of the green or install 100, 150 and 200-yard plates in the fairway. Smartphone golf apps also offer GPS capability.

---

**FACT**

IN 2020, 34% OF JUNIOR GOLFERS WERE GIRLS, COMPARED TO 15% IN 2000.  
(SOURCE: NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION)
GOLF COURSE SAFETY

Many families play golf because it’s one of the safest sports for all ages. But the threat of moving balls and clubs along in an outdoor environment means you should always be aware of these potential hazards.

Weather
If you hear thunder or see lightning, you must get off the golf course as quickly as possible. If the clubhouse is too far away and storms are imminent, seek shelter on the course such as a comfort station.

Wayward golf balls
A golf ball can travel 150-200 mph! Yell “Fore!” if you or someone in your group hits a ball that appears to be flying toward other people. Don’t be shy! You cannot yell this loud enough! Your whole group can yell it!
Always be watching the other shots in your group as they hit and if you hear “Fore!” from another hole, a ball may be sailing your direction. Duck and cover quickly!

Do not stand behind other golfers
When in close proximity of other golfers, such as on a driving range or tee box, never stand behind another golfer with a club in their hand. They may take a practice swing and have no idea you’re there and the heavy clubface could strike you at a dangerous speed.
Standing ahead of a golfer, even if off to the side, could still make you prone to being hit by a “shank” shot.

Be mindful of your location
Sometimes golfers hit errant shots onto other holes. It’s important to make sure no one is hitting before you go over to retrieve or play your ball.

Hydration and food
A round of golf can take place under the hot sun, last 4-5 hours, and you could walk 5-6 miles. It is important to plan accordingly by keeping water bottles and any healthy snacks to keep you going.
GOLF ETIQUETTE 101

Over the last few centuries, golf has cultivated its very own culture, language and mannerisms. It’s true, golfers can sound and act pretty crazy! The phrase “Golf etiquette” means having proper manners with your playing partners during a round and treating the course properly during your round.

Here are a few basic etiquette items to be aware of that will make you look like a seasoned pro on the golf course.

Before and after the round
Arrive at the first tee 5-10 minutes before your tee time. Introduce yourself and learn everyone’s name. Upon finishing the round, it is customary to thank your playing partners with a handshake.

During the round
It is important to stand still and not make any noise as another player in your group is preparing to take a shot. Mobile phones should be kept on silent and used at a minimum during a round of golf, though there are some golf apps that have scoring and GPS that may come in handy.

Standing in the line of sight of another golfer on the putting green is distracting, both in front of them and behind them. Stand off to the side instead. Be mindful of your shadow as well.

Maintaining a steady pace of play is important regardless of your ability. Always try to be at your ball and ready to hit when it’s your turn. If you are having a rough hole and it is not a competition, it is okay to pick up your ball and move on to the next tee to not hold up the group.

If your playing partners hit a ball into the rough or trees, it is customary to help them look for the ball for the allotted three minutes.

Always leave a golf course in better shape than you found it. Replace divots, rake bunkers, fix ball marks made on the green and cause no unnecessary damage to the course.

After the round
A round of golf typically ends with thanking players for playing. In a competitive event, players will sign and attest each other’s scorecards and turn them in to the tournament committee.
ALBATROSS A score of three under par, also known as a double eagle. This is the hardest score in golf, much rarer than a hole-in-one.

ALIGNMENT The position of a player’s stance and body relative to the ball and target.

AWAY After the tee shot, the order of play is determined by the player farthest from the hole, who is “away.”

BALL MARKER A small, flat object, usually circular, that can be used on the putting green to mark your ball so you can pick it up to clean it or move it out of the way of another player.

BIRDIE A score one less than par.

PAR The score an expert golfer would be expected to make on a given hole under ordinary conditions.

BOGEY A score one more than par.

EAGLE A score two less than par.

BUNKER A specially prepared area of sand on the course.

CADDIE Someone who helps a player by carrying clubs and giving advice.

DIVOT A piece of turf that is cut out of the ground after swinging. Should always be replaced by the golfer.

DOGLEG A type of hole design that curves left or right from the fairway into the green.

FLAGSTICK A movable pole that is placed in the hole to show players where the hole is. Players may take it out before their shots if they would like.

GROUND UNDER REPAIR A marked section of the course where the ground is unfit for play. Players may take free relief from this area.

LOFT The angle between a club’s shaft and clubface. Higher loft causes the ball to go higher and generally shorter.

LOOSE IMPEDIMENT Any unattached natural objects like stones, sticks, and leaves. Golfers may move these without penalty so long as the ball does not move.

OUT OF BOUNDS All areas outside the boundary edge of the course. All areas inside that edge are in bounds.

PENALTY AREA A designated area you can move from with a one-stroke penalty if your ball comes to rest there.

PUTTING GREEN The area on the hole the player is playing that is specially prepared for putting.

TEE An object used to raise a ball above the ground to play it from the teeing area. It must be no longer than 4 inches (101.6 mm).

TEENING AREA The area the player must play from in starting the hole, defined by two tee markers.
WAYS TO PLAY

At its core, golf is played by swinging a club to hit a ball into the hole in as few strokes as possible. But there are a variety of individual or team competitions that can be played. Here are the most popular to try:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stroke play:</th>
<th>Match play:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The most common way to score golf, Stroke Play is a format where a golfer plays their own ball from tee to the hole and adds up how many strokes. At the end of the round, add up all the shots from every hole.</td>
<td>In match play, you compete against an opponent on every hole, and each hole is worth 1 point. So if you win the first hole, you are 1-up (even if you win the hole by two or more shots). A player has won the match once they are up more holes than there are left. Matches can end in a tie (halved).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best ball:</th>
<th>Scramble:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fun team game, in Best Ball, you and a teammate both play your own ball on each hole, but you only record the better of the two scores. Sometimes Best Ball is played in a team, match-play format called “Fourball.”</td>
<td>An especially fun option for new players, in a Scramble, the entire group plays their tee shot and chooses the best shot to play from. Each player hits from that same location and picks best shot from there, and so on, until the ball is holed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Handicap Index provides you with a measure of your playing ability. The lower your handicap, the better golfer you are. It can be used to track your performance (or see how much you are improving!), as well as to create a fair game with your friends and other golfers with different abilities. It is easy to get a Handicap Index. If there is a course that you play often, get in touch with the golf shop. Chances are, you can get set up on the same day. In addition, the Allied Golf Association (AGA) in your area can provide you some options. A list of AGAs can be found at usga.org/aga. Once you have a Handicap Index, remember to post your scores so that your handicap accurately represents your game. There are multiple ways to post scores for handicap purposes, including through a mobile app. To learn more about handicapping, visit usga.org/whs.

WAYS TO PLAY

Playing with a Handicap Index®

A Handicap Index provides you with a measure of your playing ability. The lower your handicap, the better golfer you are. It can be used to track your performance (or see how much you are improving!), as well as to create a fair game with your friends and other golfers with different abilities. It is easy to get a Handicap Index. If there is a course that you play often, get in touch with the golf shop. Chances are, you can get set up on the same day. In addition, the Allied Golf Association (AGA) in your area can provide you some options. A list of AGAs can be found at usga.org/aga. Once you have a Handicap Index, remember to post your scores so that your handicap accurately represents your game. There are multiple ways to post scores for handicap purposes, including through a mobile app. To learn more about handicapping, visit usga.org/whs.

3.1 MILLION JUNIORS PLAYED GOLF IN THE U.S. IN 2020.
(SOURCE: NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION)
NOTABLE GOLF ORGANIZATIONS TO KNOW

United States Golf Association
The USGA is the governing body of the sport of golf in the U.S. and promotes a fair and equitable sport for all by administering a global set of playing, equipment, handicapping and amateur status rules.

R&A
Founded in 1754 in St. Andrews, Scotland, The R&A (Royal & Ancient) is the international governing body of the sport and partnered with the USGA to create the World Handicap System and a modernized, global Rules of Golf in 2019.

Youth on Course
A national organization that partners with 1,400 partner golf courses to provide $5 tee times to youth players, plus provide more opportunities ranging from career prep to leadership and scholarship programs.

The First Tee
An international youth development organization that introduces the game of golf and its values to kids and teens through after-school and in-school programs.

Drive, Chip and Putt
A joint initiative of the Masters Tournament, USGA and PGA of America, Drive, Chip and Putt is a free nationwide junior golf development competition aimed at growing the game by focusing on the three fundamental skills of golf.

PGA Junior League
The flagship youth program of the PGA of America’s foundation PGA REACH, the league exists to bring communities together through fun, team golf experiences.

US Kids Golf
Organization dedicated to making equipment ideal for children and supports coaching, tournaments and golf setups for courses that accommodate children.

American Junior Golf Association
An organization dedicated to the overall growth and development of young men and women who aspire to earn college golf scholarships through competitive junior golf. The AJGA hosts nationwide tournaments and keeps a junior golf ranking.

International Golf Federation
IGF was founded in 1958 and is the recognized International Federation with the Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

75% OF THE GOLF COURSES IN AMERICA ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, AND THE AVERAGE GREEN FEE (FOR ADULTS) IS ABOUT $38.
ABOUT SPORTSENSE

We’re proud to be home to the world’s largest directory of youth sports programs, hosted on SportsEngine.com. With 120,000+ organization and program listings for 100+ sports, a full marketplace of sports-related apps, and curated content for coaches, athletes, administrators, families, and fans, SportsEngine.com is the Home of Youth Sports for everyone, of all sport interests and abilities.

www.sportsengine.com/golf

ABOUT THE USGA

The USGA is a nonprofit organization and leader in golf whose mission is to champion and advance the game. We conduct 14 of golf’s premier professional and amateur championships, including the U.S. Open and U.S. Women’s Open. We deeply invest in programs that propel our vision for a thriving, more welcoming and sustainable game. And with The R&A, we promote a fair and equitable sport for all by administering a global set of playing, equipment, handicapping and amateur status rules. To learn more about our work, the great people, places and stories in golf and how you can get involved, visit:

usga.org