

## History of Golf

Most historians agree that the Dutch appear to have the earliest ties to the game of golf. Thirteenth century Dutch literature contains references to “golf-like” games with medieval names like “spel mitten colve” (play with club) and “den bal mitta calven to slaen” (to hit ball with the club). Dutch master painters have depicted more than 450 paintings and drawings of subjects participating in a game similar to what we now know as the game of golf.

The game as we know it today began around 1744 in St. Andrews, Scotland. Golf in the United States began in 1888 with the establishment of the first

official registered club, the Golf Club of America, in Yonkers, N.Y. Golf, once a game of noblemen and kings, is now played by people of all ages. Today golf is played around the world and has numerous levels of competition. Anyone – men, women, young or old, amateur or professional, the physically challenged – can enjoy the game of golf. Golf is a sport where you don’t have to be big, strong or fast to be successful. Golf is a game where the traits of successful players are: patience, persistence, skilled practice and focused ability. Whether you play for fun or play competitively, golf is a complex game. To reach your fullest potential, ongoing practice and professional instruction is needed.

## Competitive Golf

Competitive golf is played by professionals and amateurs. Amateur events are sponsored for men and women of every age. The major professional championships for men are the Masters, the United States Open, the British Open and the PGA Championship. In addition, the PGA Tour sponsors a full calendar of events. The Ladies Professional Golf

Association (LPGA) sponsors a similar tour for women. Their major championships are the McDonald’s LPGA Championship, the United States Open, the Weetabix Women’s British Open and the Kraft Nabisco Championship. Professional stroke-play tournaments consist of a designated series of rounds with the winner being the player with the lowest total score.

## Governing Bodies of Golf

The United State Golf Association (USGA) governs the Rules of Golf and amateur status in the United States. This organization has been the primary governing body for golf since 1894. The USGA, in conjunction with The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, is responsible for establishing the rules of play. The USGA conducts championships, maintains standards for equipment and provides a fair playing field for golfers of all levels through its handicap system. The USGA Handicap System has made it possible for golfers of differing abilities to enjoy fair competition.

Today, there are more than 5 million golfers who have established USGA Handicap Indexes. On average the score for a 24 handicapper would be 96 on a Par 72 course. A player can establish a handicap index by posting scores at a recognized USGA golf club. The handicap can be established after five rounds are played and recorded. The PGA of America, the PGA Tour and the LPGA govern professional golf.

## Recreational Golf

Today in the U.S., 31.1 million participants play recreational golf. Approximately 6.6 million golfers play more than 24 rounds of golf each year. Play may occur at private or public golf establishments. Golf facilities can range from miniature golf courses, to Par-3 courses, to executive courses, to full 9- and

18-hole courses. The minimum number of holes of a golf course is nine with the standard of play being set at 18 holes. Reservations for play are required at many golf courses. It is suggested you call in advance to request a starting tee time.

## Golf Course Layout

A golf course is different from other sport playing fields. Basketball courts and soccer fields are similar from arena to arena, yet every golf course has a different layout. A regulation golf course consists of 18 different holes.

Golf holes, however, do have common characteristics. Every hole starts from a teeing ground (mounded area where play begins) and ends at a putting green (a closely mowed surface) where the cup and flagstick are found. The area between the teeing ground and putting green is called through the green. Through the green consists of the whole area of the course except the teeing ground and the putting green of the hole being played and all hazards on the course. Holes range from less than 100 yards to more than 600 yards. Each hole may have obstacles and hazards (trees, water, bunkers).

At the beginning of play, each player should pick up a scorecard that provides information about each hole’s yardage and par. Par is the score set for a hole that represents a standard of excellence that golfers attempt to meet. Par is determined by the yardage on each specific hole. The USGA has set the following guidelines for computing par (please note chart):

PAR	MEN	WOMEN
3	Up to 250	Up to 210
4	251 to 470	211 to 400
5	471 to 690	401 to 590
6	More than 690	More than 590

