

# Teaching Teachers

Utilize a step-by-step process for group lessons, such as Get Golf Ready, to increase ongoing participation



**By Tom Morton, PGA**  
with Don Jozwiak,  
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**G**rowing the game of golf is one of the greatest things we can do as PGA Professionals. Through many years of trial and error, at Haggin Oaks we have landed on an approach that we believe has not only increased participation but also raised our retention rates to create more golfers at our area facilities. Our step-by-step approach to group instruction programs gives golfers the tools to better understand how to go from Point A to Point Z – especially for beginners or brand new golfers striving to become proficient players that feel comfortable playing in a golf outing or with friends. Planning our program curriculum around this step-by-step process has caused golfers to sign up for multiple programs at once since they can easily discover where they currently are with their golf game and where they would like to go.

The curriculum for these programs progresses from a very basic orientation to the game, where a majority of the class is spent making them feel comfortable at a golf facility, learning what a tee time is and how to use the practice facilities, to programs that actually take the students on the course so they feel comfortable doing so by themselves. Making the step-by-step approach fun, easy, and less intimidating for the participants is the key to moving the new golfers through the system – and onto the golf course.



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## The Step-by-Step Approach

The first step of our program is the Welcome to Golf class. This is a two-session class that focuses on getting participants excited about the game while removing the intimidation factor. Over the years, our surveys of brand new golfers have shown us that the No. 1 reason they choose to not follow through with the game is because of an experience that caused them to feel embarrassed. For this reason, we take all of the students in this class on a tour of the facility and discuss where everything is located and how to use it. The worst thing we can do is assume the students know anything about golf or the facility. Many people don't know that the practice putting green can be used at no charge, or that you need to put a bucket under the range dispenser before pushing the button. Clearing up all of these issues that are second nature to an experienced golfer can be the difference between creating a new golfer for life or not.

Beyond the tour, we spend the rest of the class going over the basics of putting, chipping and the full swing, which blends right into the second and third steps: the Get Golf Ready I and II programs. Get Golf Ready is the national PGA program that goes over most all the fundamentals of

the game in five sessions – in a practice setting and on-course. We are helping to pilot Get Golf Ready II as a four-session program that fine-tunes these fundamentals while focusing more on specialty shots such as difficult lies and bunker play, as well as a session allowing participants to actually play a few holes to put all they have learned to use. The final steps to the program are Practice Makes Perfect and our Stress Free Beginner League.

These classes are designed to get the students out to our facility on a weekly basis for supervised practice sessions and on-course play in a fun, safe environment with others of like abilities. It is these last two programs that really tie the students to your facility and create avid golfers who believe your course to be a home away from home.

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Learning to Play Get Golf Ready II  
Basics of the Game Get Golf Ready  
Orientation to the Game Welcome to Golf

## How to Start Your Own Group Program

If you are considering following a similar approach to your group instruction programs, my advice is to make sure there is a consistent flow to all of the programs so that an individual can easily understand the progression from one class to the next. The first step must be an "orientation" type of program that focuses much more on fun, comfort and eliminating the intimidation factor than on striking a ball itself. Pricing this program fairly low to get people to sign up has been a big success for us. We only charge \$40 for this two-day, three-hour program. At each level, be sure to have structured, written curriculums for each class. These should cover what to teach, where to teach it and timelines for each session – this is a must, as it creates consistency from one instructor to the next, as well as from one class to the next. The Get Golf Ready program also provides a strong outline and curriculum for establishing group programs for beginning golfers.