

Advanced Golf Etiquette— golf guidelines even your best friends may not tell you

By Barbara Puett and Jim Apfelbaum

Timely play remains the foundation for an enjoyable round. That is still the bottom line. Golfers who play a lot, though, soon realize there is more to it. Advanced golf etiquette requires a greater awareness of our surroundings, of each other, and of golf. Any golfer can master these tenets like a pro— sometimes better. What follows are a number of tips dealing with the subtleties of social golf not typically covered in primers, a sort of Golf Etiquette 202.

1. With respect to cellular phones, beepers, etc., one golfer's convenience is another's nuisance. Basic courtesy insists that interruptions be as brief as possible. You wouldn't sit on the phone while entertaining guests at home, now would you? Of course, none of us would dismiss the value of cellular phones or beepers to those who have snuck out of the office. They should be used sparingly, however, and never in tournaments. Bottom line: No one wants to be reminded of pressing business elsewhere, particularly on their backswing. Naturally, an emergency situation allows for some leeway. But for the overindulgent user, one might try a humorous approach—the imposition of a penalty, a Mulligan or a stroke— whenever the infernal devices sound off at inopportune moments.

2. Your score is really your own business. Basically, who cares? Nowhere does it say a score must be kept. Like the pleasures of a rally in tennis, it might be more comfortable to enjoy the satisfaction of hitting good shots occasionally during a recreational round, and leave it at that. Tournaments are another matter. Then it is every competitor's obligation to be accurate. Approach mistakes as if they were honest, as is most often the case.

3. The same considerations apply to a bet. Principle is the issue, not the amount. Should you rather not wager, a suitable excuse is that you are working on your game. When in on the bet, however, you are obligated to see it through, including paying up. Nobody wants to

do business with someone who welches on a debt.

4. Better players, especially, must resist the temptation to share their insights and give advice. No matter how well-meaning, on-course advice is burdensome and wastes time. Save it for later.

5. Gridlock often results when carts are lined up one behind the other on the path, with the front cart delaying traffic. When the hole is completed, just get in the cart, clubs in hand, and go. There will be ample time at the next tee to stow your clubs and tally the score.

6. Upon arriving at the tee, if it's safe to hit, the meter is running. It's time to hit. It's not like changing sides in tennis, or a 20-second time-out. Play ready golf.

7. The more practice swings you take, the more mechanical the swing becomes. Standing over the ball for too long builds tension. The great Bob Jones was said to take less than three seconds. Follow his example.

8. Smoking in a golf cart is akin to smoking at the table. Be considerate of others with respect to secondary smoke, ash and litter.

9. No one wants to hear excuses about why you flubbed a shot, no matter how fascinating and absorbing you may find your swing analysis. We are all guilty of this to a certain extent, but the blame game gets old very fast. Expressions of joy and despair should be emphatic and brief.

10. Some players putt with a glove, some don't. Those who don't should put their gloves back on as they move to the next tee instead of waiting until it's their turn to pull it out of their back pocket and put it on.

11. "Is my ball in the way?" seems a considerate and EC (Etiquettely Correct) question. Instead, it's an unnecessary distraction and, though not a biggie, a waste of time. Don't ask. Should you harbor any doubts, mark it. If it's not in the way, just leave it.

