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# 2012 Golf GUIDE

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# A Day at the Beach

## The Key to Surviving Bunkers

**BY SCOTT TURNER**

Golf, like any other sport takes lots of practice, patience and proper technique and execution. Many times when the beginning golfer, (and Many golfers, as soon as they encounter the 'dreadful' bunker shot, immediately go into convolutions or start throwing things and think it's the end of the world. Nothing is further from the truth.

In order to hit a successful fairway bunker shot, you begin by playing the ball back in your stance. By setting up with the ball slightly right of your zipper, (for right handed players). This will help your club face to strike the ball before the sand.

Usually, the ball is blasted out of the sand. This is done by striking the sand first, a few inches behind the ball, and letting the force of the club and sand "blast" the ball out of the bunker or trap and towards the intended target. But be careful not to ground the club in the bunker. Take some practice swings on the edge of the bunker before entering the bunker and addressing your ball.

To get out of a buried sand trap lie, try closing the face of the wedge a little and hit an inch or 2 behind the ball on your down swing. Do not stop at the ball, but rather continue

the swing and the ball will come out nicely. I prefer a pitching wedge for the buried lie shot.

While in a fairway trap, dig your feet in by twisting them into the sand. Hence, let your knees pinch toward each other so the majority of your weight is over the inside of your feet. Your foot impressions after the shot should be deeper on the inside half of each foot.

Do not let the face close (toe pass the heel) until after impact, if at all. Continue to accelerate through the ball to a natural finish on your bunker shots.

Getting out of a greenside bunker can be easy when you know these three rules. #1-Use a Sand Wedge with a large sole to slide through the sand. #2-Strike the sand behind the ball as you accelerate to a full finish. Most players hit the sand behind the ball and "quit" on the shot, leaving the ball in the bunker. #3- Make sure you use a light grip pressure. Holding the club too tightly will "freeze" your wrists making it difficult to slide the club under the ball in the sand properly.

When we are close to the green we must create this angle, which will get the ball out of the sand and has a higher trajectory to then sit on the green. As I take my club back, my

hands hinge to make them strong and then I continue up until my hands are even with my hips. At this point, I pull the end of the club down and I aim generally two inches behind the ball accelerating through the sand and making a full finish.

If you need to get the golf ball up fast out of a trap during a bunker shot, try starting the back swing by cocking your wrists upward followed by the normal back swing. The down swing is the same but you release the wrists (uncock them) before impact. The result is a steep cut through the sand popping up the ball quickly and softly on the green.

If you are a high handicapper, always play the most consistent and safest shot. When faced with a long fairway bunker shot, go with a 7 or 8 iron golf club instead of a 3 or 4 iron golf club.

Welcome to "the beach" is a term all golfers have come to know at some point in their golfing careers. A sand shot or bunker shot is often one of the most intimidating shots to execute, and can often leave a golfer discouraged, but with a little forethought, consistent practice and positive thinking, you too can be an excellent bunker in no time at all.



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# The Art of the Putt

**BY SCOTT D. TURNER**

After taking all those big swings at that little ball and getting it on the green, now it's time to reverse your thinking. Let's talk about putting and how you can roll that little white ball in a four-inch hole from forty feet away.

The first thing you need to do is analyze your putting situation. This means to take a look at what the lie looks like - do you have a nice flat green or are there lots of hills and valleys you need to traverse. Are you putting against the grain of the grass or with it? Do you have grass that is laying flat or is extremely long? Will take a look at each of these situations.

To become a good putter, you need to start "reading" your putts. Here are some basic fundamentals you should be practicing. The rest is about how good your vision is, how much you pay attention to detail and how sharp your feel is.

Get a putter with a very distinct line marked on it, (the new blade putters do this very well) to indicate the target line and practice with a chalk line, or a stretched out piece of string gets the job done also. Find a place on the practice green that is straight. Snap a chalk line down from about 5 or 6 feet to the middle of the cup. Make sure that the entire length of the line on your putter is exactly on the chalk line. Start making putts. This will train your eyes to "see square" precisely. Practice here makes perfect.

Make sure your eyes are directly above the target line, or very close. If you hang a plumb line from your eyes it should fall over the target line. This will also help you with the previous point.

Make sure your weight is in the middle of your feet. If your weight



is either forward on your toes or back on your heels there is an excellent chance that your stroke will follow the direction your weight is tilted rather than the target line.

Probably the most important task here is to keep you hands soft on the grip and through out your stroke. If your hands are tight on the grip you are diminishing your sensitivity - period. Concentrate not to change your grip pressure. If your grip pressure changes during the stroke, it's probably not "a stroke" but more likely a jab, flinch, spasm, push, hit ... well, you get the idea.

There is no independent action in the hands. Nothing could be more logical: If you do indeed have the putter face aligned precisely, as in the first point above, the last thing you'd want to do is to change the position of the face. Therefore,

your hands should not be moving independently of your arms and shoulders. If you can't tell if your hands are moving, as a drill try watching your hands very carefully (instead of the ball) a few times. You'll be able to see quite easily whether or not they are moving in your stroke.

Putting is a light touch, soft hands and a consistent stroke depending on the distance you need across the green. And of course, nothing can replace practice and more practice. Start putting on your living room floor, your office or anywhere you have a smooth surface. Instead of hitting that bucket of balls after work, drop a few balls on the practice green for an hour. This will work wonders on your game and you'll be thrilled with your lower overall strokes per game.



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# Advice for the Scrambler

BY DAN MARKHAM

Some golfers would play every day, if the opportunity presented itself. And some come very close to accomplishing this feat.

Others like a weekly round, enough to keep active and sharp, but not enough to get burned out.

But for others, golf is a once-a-year experience, perhaps undertaken during the annual company outing. Frequently, these types of outings are played in a scramble format, where teams of three or four each hit a shot, then choose the best ball among them and hit from there.

While some top-loaded teams, populated with former college players and other athletic types, will have their eye on the big clubhouse gift certificate or 4-foot-high trophy, the goals of some other players are less lofty. "Please, don't let me embarrass myself out there?"

Or: "I just want one of my shots to get used."

So what can this golfer do to accomplish these modest accomplishments? A few Michigan club pros have an answer.

"I tell them to try to develop one aspect of their game," says Mark Hogan, a PGA golf professional. "Maybe they're good at driving or chipping or putting. Any kind of shot (will do)."

Pam Phipps and Jeff Goble offer similar assessments. "Use the clubs that you feel most confident with, such as a 3-wood off the tee as opposed to a driver," says Phipps, who serves as a director of golf.

"Use the club that you hit the best," says Goble, an instructor at the Rick Smith Golf Academy. "Whether it's a 5-iron or 7-wood. And don't try so hard."

Cory Crowell, a PGA pro, says that using a 3-wood off the tee is always a smart move. "Nothing raises scores like lost or unplayable tee shots. Keeping the ball in play will always help the team."

Steve Helner, who teaches golf, says that another way to contribute to the team's effort is through the short game.

"Chipping and putting is what it's all about," Helner says of scrambles. "The team that chips and putts well does the best."

Of course, the duffer worried about his performance can take steps to alleviate them with a little preparation.

"I would suggest getting to the range and get in a few practice sessions," says golf professional, Don White.

"Just work on something basic."

But these pros say attitude can be more important than aptitude when determining whether the company outing is a fulfilling experience or something to hide your head about at work the next day.

"Relax and enjoy the day out of the office. It is important to remember that you will not be expected to carry the team," says Bob Koutnik, director of golf operations.

Golf Pro Judy Mason echoes that opinion. "The main goal in this situation is to have fun. Be sure to have a positive attitude. More golfers have embarrassed themselves with poor behavior than a lack of ability."

Part of avoiding poor behavior is learning the basics of golf etiquette, such as not talking while another player is hitting, walking across a player's putting line and other golf no-nos. Players unfamiliar with basic etiquette can get assistance from more seasoned players in their foursome.

Then again, one aspect of proper behavior is just a matter of common sense, though one not always exercised.

"The two most important things are to be ready to play when it's your and not to drink too much," Koutnik says.







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# Golf Etiquette

By Scott D. Turner

Many new players are anxious to get out there and hit their first golf ball, but before you step out on the first tee and swing away, it would be very helpful to actually know what you're doing. Golf is a "gentleman's" sport and has a set number of rules, guidelines and regulations to follow for the enjoyment of all.

Let's get started -

Try not to hit your first ball off the first tee without warming up first. During a round of golf, you put your body through a very rigorous workout by stretching it in every direction imaginable. You need to get those muscles ready for that workout.

Start by swinging with the short irons and working your way to longer irons and into your woods. Finish by hitting a few putts on the practice green. Make sure you warm up the knees and ankles. An ankle sprang is "death" on the golf course.

On the first tee check your score card for any local rules you are playing. Back at the clubhouse, you may want to ask if there are any fairways with "ground under repair." Many courses provide relief from these fairway areas by lifting your ball and placing it outside of the repair area. Make sure to place an identifying mark on your ball and inform the other players the type and number ball you are playing.

Avoid slow play and try to keep up with the pace of play and with the group in front of you. Walk at a reasonable speed to your next shot, and begin planning it as you approach the ball by studying the strength and direction of the wind. When you reach your ball, check the lie, select your club, visualize your swing and shot, and then play your shot. From the time you select your club until you actually hit your shot, you should take no more than 30 to 45 seconds. If you aren't ready to play when it is your turn, encourage one of your fellow players to play.

A golf course is a delicate place and demands special attention from all. The keep it in the best shape possible, follow these guidelines, (on many courses, these guidelines turn into mandatory actions.) Always replace your divots. Sometimes turf tends to explode on impact, making it difficult, if not impossible, to replace the divot.

*Continued on next page*



**Continued from previous page**

In this case, you have two options: 1) You can use the toe of your shoe to kick in the turf around the edges of the divot, and 2) Many courses often put containers of a soil/seed mixture on their carts and tees. If this is the case, simply fill in the divot with the mixture.

As you progress through your golfing career, you'll most likely see the in inside of a sand bunker. This requires special care by raking the bunker after your shot. Nothing is more frustrating in golf than to come up on a bunker shot and finding your ball in a very large sand divot. (Remember, you play the ball as it lies.) Bring a rake into the bunker with you -- remembering that you should always enter the bunker from the low side at a point nearest the ball.

Whenever possible, avoid walking on the steep face of a bunker and always after hitting your shot, rake the area you played from, as

well as all your footprints and any others within reach. Rakes should be left --either in or nearby the bunker.

Repair any indentations caused by the ball hitting the green. (More than once I've hit the green with my tee shot and upon reaching the green, I found my ball completely buried on the green surface.) Use a tee, knife, key or repair tool to repair the mark by working the edges towards the center, without lifting the center of the mark. Don't tear the grass. Finish by smoothing the area with a club or your foot. Try to get the area smooth enough to putt over.

While on the green, don't step on your fellow players putting lines, and if needed mark your ball with a coin or ball marker. Do not stand where you might distract a fellow player, and don't move or make any noise while he's putting either.

For safety's sake, never hit when there's a chance you might be able to reach the group ahead of you.

Anytime you hit a shot that you think even has a remote chance of hitting any other players, yell "fore" immediately, and make a point of apologizing to any players your ball lands near. I've been hit by a golf ball before, and it's not the most pleasant experience.

Don't let your temper get the best of you. Yelling, screaming, throwing clubs or otherwise making a fool of yourself are unacceptable and, in some cases, dangerous to yourself and others.

As a player, you also have a responsibility to learn and understand the Rules of Golf.

One of the best parts of golf is spending time with your friends. Congratulate the winners and console the losers and thank them for their company, and look forward to your next round at your favorite course.

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# What's in the Bag?

BY DAN MARKHAM

Chances are, you are your own caddy. You don't have a personal valet who will pack your golf bag with all the necessary tools to complete 18 holes. That's up to you.

But it is important to remember that your bag is not just a carrying case for your driver, irons and putter. If packed with careful consideration, its contents can spell the difference between a good round and one fraught with frustration.

The first step to an enjoyable round of golf is packing the right clubs. Strokes can be saved if the clubs in your bag match the skills you possess.

Club professionals agree that one of the biggest improvements you can make with your game is by carrying clubs that are easier to hit. And one type of club comes up first on their prescription list: hybrid woods. Clubs like a 5-wood, 7-wood and even 9-wood can be easier to manage for the amateur player.

"I see no reason for an amateur to ever use an iron longer than a 5, the hybrids are that good," says Cory Crowell, a golf instructor.

Crowell's suggestion is echoed by Bob Koutnik, a club pro. "The new hybrid clubs combine a long iron with a fairway wood and play well out of either fairway or rough."

For iron play, Otsego Club PGA Professional Mark Hogan recommends playing cast cavity back irons. Similarly, he suggests larger heads for woods.

Another important aspect to consider when selecting a driver is choosing one with enough loft to get the ball airborne. Crowell advises using the readily available launch monitors to determine what kind of loft you need.

Finally, Koutnik and Crowell both like to see average players employ the 60-degree wedge for lob shots.

"You can hit shots that you just can't make with any other club," Crowell says.

Koutnik says the severely lofted lob wedges "take some practice to hit but can be a real stroke saver."

Of course, there's more to proper equipment selection than balls, tees and clubs. The inclusion of other items in the bag can help the amateur in numerous ways.

For safety under the sun, pros recommend carrying sun screen, lip balm and a first aid kit. "Bee sting kits are available and do not take up much room," Koutnik says.

And when skies are gray, an umbrella, towel and rain suit are useful, while a lightweight wind shirt is a valuable accoutrement if the temperatures drop.

Koutnik suggests a second pair of gloves can help you keep your grip in wet weather, while Crowell likes rain



gloves. "You'll never have to worry about playing in the rain again," he says.

Koutnik also recommends carrying a felt pen for making identifying marks on your golf ball, though Jeff Goble, an instructor at the Rick Smith Golf Academy, takes that advice one step further.

Goble says that a Sharpie and a straight-line tool can be employed to aid your game. Marking a straight line on your ball can assist you in aiming at your desired target, whether it's the fairway or the hold. If your game really improves, you can also use it to sign autographs.

"Any time you can play the ball in your hand (either before teeing up or before putting), you can use it to help with your alignment and hit straighter shots," Goble said.

And not everything you may need during a round must be kept in your bag. A little bit of change in your pocket is useful in more than one way.

Coins can be employed on the green as a tool for marking your ball. And, Hogan points out they are also useful when a pop machine beckons.

Other items that may find a home in your golf bag include a divot repair tool, a range finder, extra pencils and extra shoe laces.





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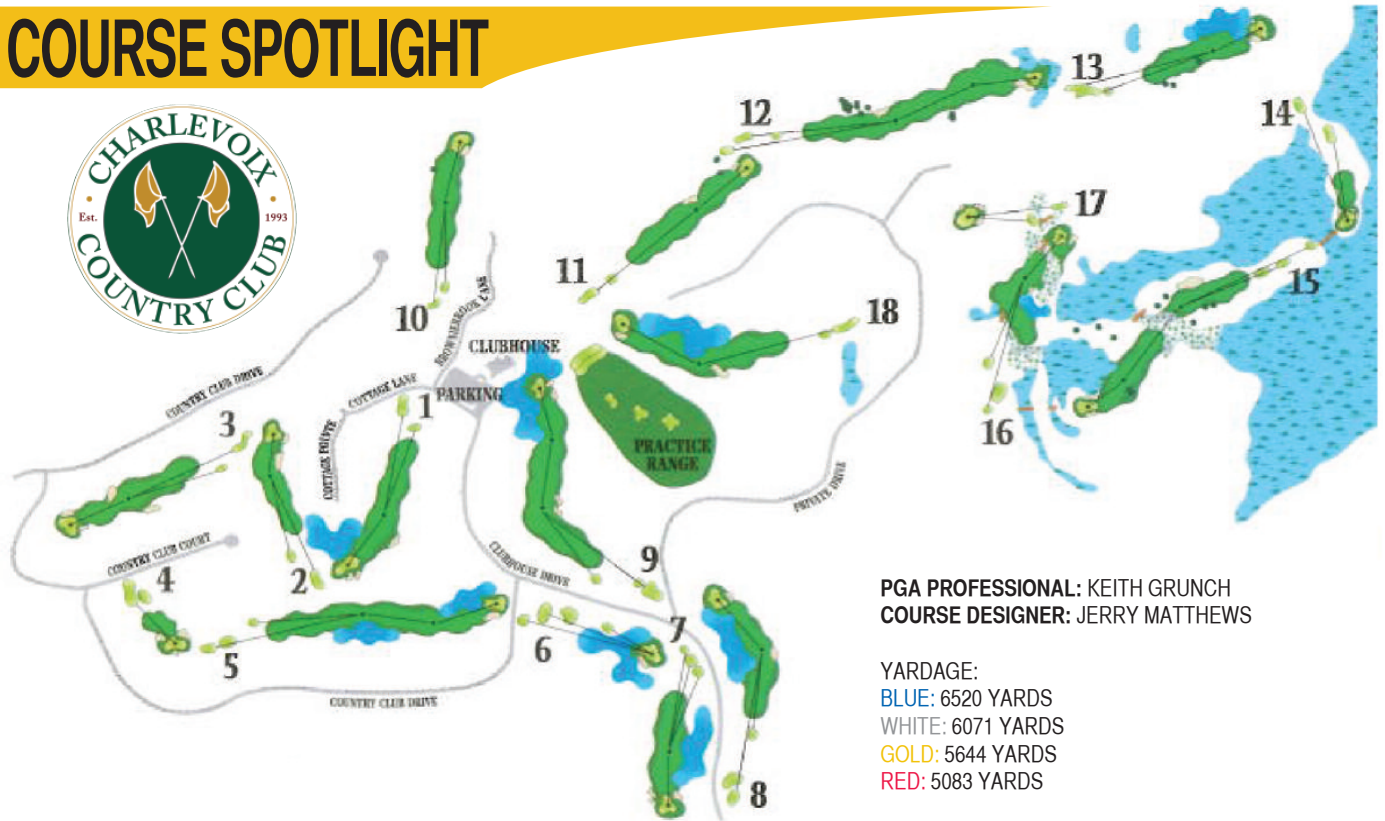
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# Curing Your Slice

Try these Simple Techniques to improve your ball flight off the tee

**BY SCOTT D. TURNER**

Golf, like any other sport takes lots of practice, patience and proper technique and execution. Many times when the beginning golfer, (and those who have played for a while) steps up on #1 tee and swings away, their ball takes a flight that resembles the path of a boomerang and lands somewhere in another fairway.

In golfing terms this is known as a slice. The club face is not square at impact with the ball, it's turned out, and the ball flies to the right and curves in flight flying in a half circular pattern.

As embarrassing as this may be, it is curable and you can be hitting your drives right down the middle in no time at all.

One of the sneakiest slice causing culprits is the karate-chop hand or the home run swing. To fix this, take a golf stance near a chair's padded back rest and let your hands form your grip against the back rest. At address, the back of the left hand is flat on the back-rest. Make a back and forward swing at the chair. A square impact has the back hand hitting flat against the back rest. If the pinky-side-palm-pad hits first (like a

karate chop) you are opening up at impact. Practice this drill until you can hit flat every time and you will be square at impact.

Another common cause of slicing is an open stance where the front foot is back from the target line causing your body to face the hole more. This promotes an outside-in swing-path and spin on the ball. The result is a slice to some degree. Try closing your stance so that your belt buckle aligns with the ball. This will promote a straight swing path and squarer hit.

One method that may reduce slicing is to close the club face. Give your golf club a quarter turn or more inward. The reason for this is in some cases of slicing you are opening your club face at impact. Please note this is a quick temporary fix.

If you squared your feet and neutralized your grip, and you're still slicing the ball, check to see if your shoulders are also aligned at the target. If not, square them to the hole.

For right handed players, if you slice the ball, check to see if your grip is too weak. For the right handed player, in a weak grip, the top of the left hand is seen and an-

gles toward the sky. The grip is also too weak if the fingers of the right hand are visible on the left side of the grip and the hand is angled at the ground. To correct, roll the hands back around the grip so that the left hand is facing the target and the back of the right hand is facing the exact opposite direction.

Many people have a strong grip that feels too uncomfortable if they try to neutralize it. The problem could be the positioning of the grip is too much in the fingers. Try laying the club across the hand pads where the fingers meet the hands and grip the club. You should have a much easier time getting the grip neutralized.

The bottom line here of course is getting you to hit the ball straight down the fairway every single time. To do this, make sure your shoulders are square, your stance is neutral, not open or closed, and your grip is not too tight or too loose. Keep the leading hand, left hand, and square at impact. With some practice your shots will be heading down the fairway just like a pro.



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