

Pace of Play

During a round of golf an average foursome takes around 400 shots.
If we waste even a few seconds on each shot, it extends the length of our round significantly.

5 seconds per shot	Over 33 min.
1Un0 seconds per shot	Over 1 hour

Many of our players often waste 15 to 60 seconds on each shot.
No wonder it takes over 5 hours to play!

The overwhelming majority of our golfers have commented that ***“Slow pace of play”*** has been detrimental to the enjoyment of golf. Ironically, I have often heard this same complaint by golfers who I know contribute significantly to our slow play. As a club we have an obligation to correct our slow play not only for our fellow Ore-Cal golfers, but for every golfer on the course. We also have an obligation to the golf courses who allow us to play for rates well below their everyday prices. We certainly do not want to drive other golfers away on the days we play nor do we want to jeopardize our special relationship with our courses.

Several years ago I read in one of the golf magazines the results of a survey about at what pace a foursome should play, for both playing their best and also for getting the most enjoyment out of the round.

- Under 3 ½ hours was too fast for almost everyone they had to rush too much.
- They felt at 3 ½ to 4 hours was okay but still a little fast.
- The great majority said they played their best and enjoyed the round the most when they played in the 4 to 4 ½ hour range.
- Most felt their game suffered when the round was longer than 4 ½ hours and anything approaching 5 hours or more was unacceptable.

“The Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St Andrews and USGA, the game's governing bodies, now link etiquette which includes pace of play within the strict rules of the game. Golf clubs are recommended to take "disciplinary action" against frequent offenders by banning them temporarily from their home courses or from competitions. "Everyone is affected by slow play which has become a major problem in the modern game. This is the first time that the R&A and USGA rule books have had such ***prominent sections on etiquette and how to improve the pace of play.***”

Per the R&A and USGA, an 18 hole round of golf for four, **should take between three and three-and-a-half hours**, and not the 5 plus hours that it is now taking.

Close to a four hour to 4 ½ hour round of golf is a reasonable and obtainable goal for our club.

If we can get a good reputation for a reasonable pace of play, we can then hold our heads up high and proud, rather than holding our heads down in shame. We might even pick up additional golfers in the process. Many people make the decision to not play golf because it takes up too much of

their day. I do not recommend turning golf into a track meet. We can eliminate the waste of time spent fussing around and that has no bearing on the execution of a good golf stroke.

Suggestions from the USGA, R&A, Your Fellow Ore-Cal golfers, and the Golf Channel to Improve the Pace of Play

“Please!!!!!!!!!! Take the time to read these suggestions and assess how you can implement them to speed your own pace of play and the pace of those playing with you.”

So, let's see how we can improve our pace of play!

Getting Ready Before the Round

Check in on time

If you are going to arrive late, call ahead so we can include you in the field. If you arrive late without calling you can play but you might not be included in the golf game of the day. This allow us to get our game planned and the score cards filled out in a timely manner.

Put these cell phone numbers for the golf course or one of our board members in your cell phone. The course phone is on your half of the entry form.

Get your warm ups done, visit the outhouse, get your beer to cry in, sink 100 putts in a row, and get whatever else you need to do, done.

Be ready, at least 15 minutes prior to our scheduled tee off time for local rules and other important messages. Be ready to promptly proceed to your assigned tees.

Do your housekeeping on your own time:

Start the round with tees, markers, balls and a ball-mark repair tool in your pocket.

Replace head covers and rearrange clubs while waiting for some else to play. Keep an extra ball in your pocket so if you park your original ball in Davey Jones's locker you don't have go to your bag to get another one.

Learn your game

You can play much faster if you know approximately how far you hit each club. Also this will significantly lower your scores which will speed play even more.

Our lead group is responsible for:

- a. Keeping pace with our goal of about 4 – 4 1/2 hours**
- b. To be immediately behind their preceding group if the course is not clear**

Every other group in the field is responsible for :

- a. Simply maintaining its position on the course *immediately behind its preceding group*.

Keeping up is easy. Catching up is hard to do!

On the Tee Box

Move promptly:

Proceed quickly to the teeing area and be ready to play when it's your turn to play.

Minimize your time on the tee

On the tee; it is acceptable for players to "Hit When Ready", and most of all "Be Ready to Hit!"

The next player should have their club chosen and their ball and tee in hand. They should be ready to tee it up immediately after watching the previous player's ball coming to rest. Everyone needs to watch each other's ball; this prevents wasting time having to look for it later.

An Ore-Cal golfers suggestion is not to eat snacks or add up scores when it is near your turn to hit. Do these after you hit, or while riding on the cart. Don't keep your group and the whole course waiting while you snack or add up scores.

If the group immediately in front of you is close, have your shortest hitter hit first with your longest hitter hitting last.

Aim to play your shot in 30 seconds or less if your group is behind

From club selection to pre-shot routine to execution, strive to hit your shot within 30 seconds or less. **Keep your pre-shot routine short.** Pick your line of play and trust yourself. Take only one or at the most two practice swings, and then step up to the ball and play your shot. If you feel you need more than two practice swings do it off the side while waiting for the others to hit. Be efficient after your shot, too. Put your clubs away quickly and get back in the cart. Promptly start moving toward your next shot as soon as it is safe.

On the Fairway or Wherever the Wayward Shot Has Ventured

Do you know where your ball went? If the others in your group were watching you hit, they can guide you.

Be helpful to others in your group

Follow the flight of all shots, not just your own. This can be done even if you have driven to your own ball. This is very important when others are hitting long shots but not as important on short shots. Once in the fairway, help others look for their ball if you already know the location of yours. Volunteer to fill in a divot, rake a bunker, or pick up a club for another player if needed.

When sharing a cart, use a buddy system

1st: Always keep out of harm's way of someone else's shot. You also slow play if you get too far ahead and they have to wait for you to move out of the way to take their shot.

2nd: Always watch where everyone else's shots go.

When driving towards your group's golf balls, plan how to optimize the pace of play of your entire group. There is no set way to do this, so you will have to improvise. A few suggestions:

- Always be ready to play when it is your turn and/or play ready golf when you can.
- If possible, park where both players have access to their next shot, but usually a little closer to the slower player's ball.
- If safe don't just wait in the cart while the others hit proceed to your ball or your buddy's ball.
- If a person can't reach the group in front, have him hit first.
- Take the clubs you might need to your ball, not just one. If you have taken the wrong club, improvise and use it.
- Clear the playing area quickly to allow the next group to hit up.
- If you are not moving the cart, take your putter along with your other needed clubs when approaching the green.
- There are thousands of combinations of what can occur, just try to figure out the most efficient way you can get to your golf balls and play...

Plan your shot before you get to your ball

Once you are off the tee, think ahead about what you are going to do on your next shot as you drive to your ball. Determine your yardage quickly when you get to your ball. Use a GPS or get the distance from someone else. It is totally within the rules to do so. Make your club selection, or even take a practice swing before it is your turn to play. Often you can do this while others are playing without disrupting them. If you take your glove off between shots, have it back on before it is your turn to play. Even a small step like this saves time.

Blind Shots

Several holes on the courses we play have blind spots that block our view of the group in front of us. While the person whose turn it is to play is getting ready, another player in the group can check to see if it is safe to play. This is also one instance that another player is allowed to assist the shooter with his line of play.

Practice swing vs practice stroke

A practice stroke is one taken with the intent of hitting a ball other than your ball in play. It also includes any other ball that you might find on the course. During the playing of a hole, a practice stroke is prohibited per USGA Rules. You are not allowed to hit range balls off the course or to chip or putt a ball over to a fellow player. (Two stroke penalty)

Accidentally hitting your ball while taking a practice swing while on the course is considered a stroke and the ball must be played from where it lands. On the tee box there is no penalty since the hole does not begin until you swing with the intent of hitting the ball.

Keep up with the group in front of you! It is easier to keep up than to catch up!

Your correct position on the course is immediately behind the group in front of you, not immediately in front of the group behind you. Always be ready to hit your next shot as soon as it is safe. If a gap opens between you and the group in front of you, do what it takes to catch up. When not immediately behind the group in front of you, it is the responsibility of every member of the foursome to help catch up. If a foursome falls more than an ½ hour behind the marshal may issue the entire foursome a penalty stroke.

Be quicker on the greens

Park behind greens whenever possible, this allows the green to open quicker for the next group after putting out.

Be efficient on the putting green.

From an Ore-Cal golfers: If you are not able to walk quickly, putt out first, and then move off the green towards your cart while watching the others putt out.

Mark your ball and lift and clean it when you arrive at the putting green so you will be ready to replace it when it is your turn to play. You can usually line up your putt while approaching the green and while others are putting, without disturbing them. Read it. Hit it. Tap it in.

Tapping a ball back to another player is considered a practice stroke and is prohibited. Pick it up and hand it to him.

You are not allowed to ask for assistance from others in your group in lining up a putt except from your actual playing partner in team play. This is a two stroke penalty.

Be ready to attend the flagstick for others. Have the flag ready to replace and pick up any clubs left on the green, and leave the green promptly after the last person has holed out. When tending a flag, make sure it is loose so it can be easily removed. The person putting incurs the penalty.

If someone is close behind you, wait until the next tee or at least clear the area near the green to record your scores. Get the carts out the way quickly so the next group can hit to the green. This is for your safety as well as pace of play.

Practice chips and practice putts on or around the green are not permitted. However you are allowed to complete a hole in match play, best ball, or a scramble, these are not considered to be practice strokes. After you complete the hole, practice putts or chips are totally prohibited on or around the green you have just finished.

Treat the rules with discretion:

Take no more than 3 minutes to look for balls (yes the rule is 5 min). If everyone has watched your last shot it should be a lot easier to find. (Side note: When a player hits his ball towards a hazard, pay special attention to where the ball crosses the hazard line. This is where the player must play from, and not from where he thinks the ball landed.)

If you hit a ball into a hazard or an area that you have no chance of playing from and you are even less likely to find the ball, suck it up and take the penalty and move on without looking.

From a Ore-Cal golfer: Don't look for balls that your group hasn't played. If you want to look for golf balls do it on your own time.

Be a good teammate

Know your playing partners' strengths and weaknesses; and help them when you can.

Play the right course for your ability level

"Tee it forward" unless you are consistently able to reach greens in regulation from the longer tees. You are more likely to hit lofted irons into greens instead of hybrids or fairway woods, and you will get more birdies and pars which is always good for the ego as well as for pace of play. (USGA recommendation: Play forward tees if you cannot reach a 360-380 yard hole in 2 shots, par 5 holes in 3 shots, or a par 3 hole in 1 shot.)

Allowing others to play through

This is a tough one. Course courtesy says that slow groups need to let faster groups play through. If you keep up it should only happen when a single or twosome catches up with our entire field. These people are going to have to play through several foursomes to gain any advantage of playing through. Early in a round I recommend letting them play through. Later in the round there is little benefit. You should rarely need to let a threesome, or should never need to let a foursome, play through. It is your decision what to do, but remember the clock will still be running.

Accept responsibility

Recognize that slow play isn't just the other guy's fault. If you are playing with a slower player encourage him to play faster and do what you can do to help them and your whole group move at a faster pace. Make suggestions on how to save time without rushing. Set a good example and make sure you are not contributing to slow play by your own actions.

After the round, turn in your score card quickly

After finishing your last hole it is prohibited from playing out any remaining holes. I.e.: You start on 18 and finish on 17, you may not replay 18.

It also wouldn't hurt to carry a small calculator in your golf bag to speed up adding your scores at the end of a round. Make sure to total your scores before turning in your score card.

At the end of the round, turn in your score card before putting your clubs away. This is especially important if you are a little behind.

We all tee off at the same time; we all should finish about the same time. All teams, including those who are the farthest out, should be in the clubhouse within 15 to 20 minutes of the lead group not an hour later.

Note: If followed, these suggestions will work and no other actions will be necessary. If they are not followed by every player, I will be recommending that the club institute penalties for the slow players.

Some penalty suggestions that I have already received include:

- Accessing penalty strokes for the entire group when finishing too far behind the lead group:
 - 1 stroke for over 15 minutes
 - 2 strokes for 20 minutes with a warning
 - 3 strokes for 25 minutes with a warning
 - Disqualification for 30 minutes late with a suspension and each member of the group has to buy a round of drinks and a pizza.
- Suspension of some type for repeat offender after receiving 1 or 2 warnings.
- Kicking in the rear, tar & feathering, castration, draw & quartering, writing on a blackboard 100 times, "I will not waste time on the golf course!", etc.

I know this a very long list, but it is a good list of suggestions. During the next couple of months, I would like every foursome to interact with each other to implement all of these suggestions. Let a player know in a nice way, how he is slowing up play and how to play faster. Even more important, evaluate yourself. I am certain that we will find that our "Pace of Play" has greatly improved and will be the envy of all that play on the course with us.