

Gail Graham Golf powered by Emerick Construction

January 15 at 8:55 AM ·

Golf is not a fast game. In fact, most people who do not play think it is too slow and boring to get involved. But those of us who love the game know that while it has the potential to be painfully slow, there are so many easy things we can do to speed up play and build the enjoyment of everyone on the course.

Last month I gave you all 12 game improvement ideas in honor of the twelve days of Christmas.

This month, I want to give you 20 ideas (for 2020) on how to improve your pace of play.

1. On the first tee, agree to “play when ready” with your group. Dispense with the formalities of who has the honor on the tee and get up and hit when you are ready.
2. Also decide on the first tee how your group will handle the flag stick on the greens. When I get the chance to play, I like to know in advance whether someone wants the flag in or out when close in (15 feet and closer). If everyone can agree to take the flag out from 15 feet and in, that will help!
3. Know the rules. The Rules of Golf are there to help you and you can use them to your advantage if you know what to do should you want to take a free drop from a cart path or ground under repair, or a drop from a penalty area.
4. Make sure you mark your golf ball with your own unique mark. You need to be able to identify your ball and this will help prevent you from hitting the wrong ball and taking extra time to replay the shot.
5. At tee boxes, stand within a short distance from the tee box (preferably on the right-hand side of the tee if playing with all right handed players) when others are hitting. I quite often see players stand near the golf carts more than 10 yards away from the teeing ground. Get closer so you have less distance to walk up to the tee when it is your turn.
6. Be ready to play when it is your turn. Do all of your “thinking” and preparing for your shot by getting your yardage, choosing your club and moving close to your ball as others are playing theirs.
7. Learn how to use the GPS on golf carts or have a range finder or other distance measuring device on hand so you don’t have to hunt for sprinkler heads with yardages on them to help you determine your distance.
8. Split the distance between your ball and your cart partner’s ball and get out and walk! There is no need to drive to each person’s ball, especially when they are less than 20 yards apart. Golf is meant to be a walking game and waiting in the cart until your cart partner hits and then driving to your ball slows play down immensely! Besides, getting out and walking a few yards will give you some rhythm and allow you a few seconds to focus on your own shot before you get to it.
9. When you hit an errant shot, watch the ball until it is at rest so you have a decent idea of where it has gone. Don’t just turn away if you do not like the shot – you are responsible for your ball.
10. When one of your foursome is looking for their golf ball, help them, but also remember that the new rules adopted in 2019 allow for only three minutes to search.

11. If your ball goes into a penalty area, use any bushes, trees or other landmarks within the penalty area to “mark” where the ball last crossed the boundary of the penalty area.

If you pay attention to where the ball crossed into the penalty area, you will speed up the process of looking for your ball and perhaps taking a drop.

12. If you hit your ball into an area where you think it may be lost (not in a penalty area) hit a provisional ball, remember that you need to announce to your playing partners that you are doing so.

13. Around the greens, take the club you think you might play the shot with and at least one other. Give yourself options for the shot you have to hit so you don't have to walk all the way back to the cart or have to play the shot with the wrong club. This also covers you should you mis-hit your shot and have a completely different follow-up shot.

14. When you take extra clubs to the green, place them on your route off the green or in close proximity to where you are putting from so you don't have to walk back across the green to pick up your clubs.

15. If you are the first person to putt out on a green, pick up the flag and be ready to replace it without delay after the last player putts out.

16. As you exit the green, move without delay to your carts, and if you are behind, wait until you get to the next tee to put your putter and any other clubs you have used around the green in your bag. Also wait to write down your score until the next tee. That way you will clear the green area quickly and the group behind you won't have to wait on you. You can write down the scores as your cart partner heads to the tee to hit.

17. When you arrive at the green, drive your cart as far around to the back of the green as you can so that when you exit the green you are already headed towards the next tee and you clear the area quickly.

18. Pay more attention to the group in front of you than the group behind you. Keep pace with that group and you will not fall out of position.

19. Establish a “No Talk Rule” that will come into effect when you do fall behind, and the hole is open in front of you. Decide to shut down the chit-chat and move along until you catch up.

20. Keep any in-depth discussions for the 19th Hole. Keeping your conversations light and short on the course will allow you to be aware of your position in relation to the group in front of you and thereby keeping pace.

Golf is a lot more fun when you don't have to wait. Good pace of play is everyone's responsibility, not just those players who play quickly. Good pace of play isn't about rushing your shots but more about how you can keep yourself and your group moving along. If you think you may be a bit slow, ask your golf professional to observe you for a couple of holes and identify how you might be wasting time and how you can improve.

