

Golf as a Unique Sport

Knowing All Rules

Golf is a sport that requires a player in competition to know all the rules. Each player bears responsibility to know and proceed under the rules. Golf requires players to penalize themselves. It uses referees only to make decisions about disputes. Other sports rely on referees to enforce the rules and penalize players.

Stamina

Golf is a sport characterized by stamina and balance, rather than strength or speed. Golf requires stamina because one round of golf averages three hours of continual individual effort, far longer than any other major sport. Golf offers no time-outs or and has no halves, quarters, or periods. Weather conditions affect golf play more than the play of other sports, and no relief is provided in the rules.

Balance

Golf requires balance because the golf swing is seemingly an unnatural swing. A golf swing is made at a low-lying object. The swing requires a pronounced bending over, a full turn of the body, and different coordinated motions of the arms, shoulders, hips, and head. The swing is characterized by touch, coordination, and timing rather than strength or speed. Unlike other sports, the ball is standing still. However, the ball may lie on angled ground or in different types of ground. A player may have to stand on uneven, rough, or mushy ground. Furthermore, the ball is smaller than in other sports and the club is long and small.

All Mistakes Count

Unlike other sports, stroke play golf without partners or handicaps makes each action taken by a player count. No action can be canceled by a later action. Mistakes cannot be negated and cannot fortuitously lead to a gain. Golf typically has a higher level of frustration and stress than other sports.

Varied Conditions

The field of play in golf is larger than, and varies more than, in other sports. A golf course has more distractions than occur in other sports. What can happen is more varied and surprising. The unexpected occurs more often.

No Offense or Defense

Alone among sports, golf has no offense or defense. A player does not have outmaneuver, fool, or overpower an opponent. A player never tries to interfere with another player's play. There are no personal fouls. Also, a referee does not have to take sides but only interpret the rules. Peculiarly, golf is the only competition where it is likely you cannot see your opponent!

Competition

The official rules of golf apply to golf competitions. Golfers not involved in competitions have no referee or Committee, nor the other arrangements listed in the official rules of golf.

Noncompetitive golfers also follow the official rules of golf, with the determination of the applicable rule (and penalty, if any) left solely to the judgment of the player.

Handicap

Player can use a handicapping system. As a courtesy, other members of the group acknowledge that the player is playing solely for the love of, and out of respect for, the game of golf.

Social

Golf is a social game typically played in twosomes, threesomes, or foursomes. Many players bet, though some dislike competition and/or dislike the social aspects of golf, and thus play solely for the love of, and out of respect for, the game of golf.

Walking

Walking the golf course is the preferred method of golfing. A player may carry the clubs, use a hand cart, or use a caddie. Motorized golf carts are allowed.

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