

WE'RE ALL SLOW GOLFERS

By Scott Seward

Hey you! Yes you! You're slowing up play.



GOLFERS CAN PLAY FASTER IF IT'S PART OF THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS EVERY TIME THEY TEE OFF. HERE ARE TIPS TO SPEED UP PLAY:

1 Hit when you are ready. Sometimes the gap between shots is glacial. It's like golfers are afraid of appearing impolite if they jump in and hit. If you are ready, get in there and go.

2 After playing a shot, jump in the cart and move on. Switch clubs after you stop. And please, fill in your scorecard **AFTER** moving forward. Don't make the group behind you watch your shots **AND** then fill in your scorecard.

3 Play a set of tees that fits your game. Many golfers have an inflated view of their distance, playing too long of yardage for their ability. Even if the length seems fine, often playing the back tees will still introduce forced carries that you might not be able to handle.

Much like the philosophy of a 12-step program, perhaps the first step to curing slow play is for languid golfers to self-acknowledge the problem. But getting that to happen can be a herculean task, for how many golfers will stand up and proclaim, "Yes! I am slower than a line at the DMV! Ben Crane is my favorite PGA Tour player and six-hour rounds are my birthright!" Yes, maybe the first step to helping pace of play might just be for all of us to admit we're slow.

Here's a test. Go out late or early, when your home course is almost empty. In a cart, playing by yourself, see if you can finish nine holes in less than 45 minutes. Walking, can you finish in around an hour? If not, there might be some things you can do to speed up your personal pace from shortening the pre-shot routine (or doing away with it all together), to having an extra ball in your pocket to taking multiple clubs with you to every shot.

Taking steps to improve pace will have an overwhelmingly positive impact on many facets of the game. And it can be easy to do with a little conscious effort.

The NCGA has aggressively monitored pace in its championships for several years, establishing checkpoints that must be met at the 9th and finishing holes. Failure to meet the established times, which varies from course to course and depends on the size of the group, results in a one-stroke penalty after nine holes and a two-stroke penalty (for a total of three) after 18. As soon as the policy was implemented, nearly an hour was cut off tournament times as players worked to meet time goals. The NCGA was amongst the first golf associations to utilize this policy, and it has been so successful that other tournament organizations have adopted it, including the USGA which will use the policy in all its amateur events in 2009. 🏌️



Some like to finish 18 holes in less than 3 1/2 hours. There are some who have no issues with a more leisurely pace. **What do you think and what steps would you advise?**

More than 70 readers responded to the article on NCGA.org. Here is just a sample of the passionate thoughts of NCGA members regarding slow play (responses have been edited for clarity):

J. B. writes:

How about NCGA developing an **online certification test** with a card we could print out to show we are aware of things like this article discusses, and we'll do our best to eliminate slow play in our foursomes. Then our local courses could come up with programs to fight slow play (like a preferred rate or discount for card holders, starters on the first tee to check handicaps and require play be conducted from the proper tee for the players' abilities, or lack thereof). Continue calling tees by color and not by gender or age. . . many men cannot bring themselves to play from the women's or the seniors tees," but will play from the reds or yellows. Keep up the NCGA efforts to speed up play. It is a huge factor in all our enjoyment of the game.

Scott N writes:

Here is one of the worst evolutions I have seen that contributes to slow play: years ago, you didn't mark your golf ball. If your ball was in the way of another golfer, he was stymied and had to play over it or around it on the greens. Now, it seems like there is a rule that says, "if you aren't the one putting, your ball has to be marked. You wouldn't want the poor guy putting to be distracted by seeing another golf ball anywhere on the green." By not having the ball down and ready when another guy is putting, most golfers



will not start going through ANY of their pre-putting routine until the other golfer is finished putting. You should be **set to hit your putt** when the previous putter's ball stops rolling.

John F writes:

Some of the things I have seen change I think have slowed the game down. First on my list is electric carts. True, many "modern" courses are designed with electric carts in mind and are unwalkable, but **if a course can be walked it should be**. Four people all walking to their ball and being ready to hit at once will speed up play.

Second, whatever happened to **"waving up"** on par 3s? Did this prove too litigious or did a study show it actually slowed play down?

Lastly, **play a ball you can afford to lose**. Yes I love my ProV1s but usually play with a \$20 dozen ball. If I hit into trouble I play a 2nd tee shot, give the original shot a cursory look for and go back to playing. If I have a lost ball that I figured would be found I drop a ball, take a penalty and move on. Yes I know it is technically a rule violation, but happens so seldom it is not worth the return to the tee in a casual round.

Greg P writes:

I think the easiest way to speed up play is to **charge**

by the hour. The longer you take, the more you pay.

Stan writes:

The problem is we are preaching to the choir. The slow players don't care and won't read articles about slow play. The only solution is **marshals** with the power to have slow groups pick up and move to the next tee.

Franklin writes:

I find slow play very frustrating. I disagree, however, with several of the comments about higher handicap players. It has been my experience that the **lower handicappers are the slower players**. They wait on the Par 5s, hoping to get on in two. Then, they mark their 6-inch putts. Ever watch a Nationwide Tour or PGA event? These players are very slow. This weekend the PGA players are playing two per group, and the rounds are four+ hours.

Tim writes:

I find it interesting that out of many great suggestions and comments here no one has mentioned **cell phone use** (and abuse). It used to be that doctors were the only golfers with mobile communication devices. Now everyone has one, and I can't remember the last round I played that didn't involve an inconsiderate golfer "taking the day off" who "had to take this call" or stop and fire out a text message every other hole.