

## Golf Instruction: Questions before you Leap

Ever wonder where those pro golfers got their sweet swings and perfect putts? They certainly weren't born with superhuman golfing abilities. They learned the hard way: through old-fashioned golf instruction. And so can you.

Golf is an age-old game that has enjoyed a new revival. Over the past decade, as more and more young and young-at-heart golfers are taking up the sport, many clubs have begun to offer golf instruction. Students can take group lessons at golf schools, clinics and camps, or they can choose one-on-one instruction with the resident pro.

If you're looking for a little extra help, the choice is really up to you. Before making your decision, however, there are a few important points to keep in mind about golf schools and golf instructors.

First, ask yourself a few important questions and give yourself straight and honest answers:

### \* How Interested Are You?

Are you a frequent player? Do you have a history of starting new interests, and then dropping them when they get too difficult or "boring"? How much do you know about golf? Do you even like to play the game? Make sure that you really have an interest in golf and want to play, before you invest your time and money into lessons.

### \* What's Your Skill Level?

Are you a beginner, just learning the basics of the game? Are you an intermediate player with some skills? Are you an advanced player that just needs to polish a few areas? Again, be honest with your answer. Pretending to be more advanced can lead to your missing out on some valuable tips and advice.

### \* What Do You Want to Learn?

It's important to recognize the precise areas of your game that need attention, particularly if you're an intermediate or advanced golfer. Do you need to work on your swing or your stance? Would you like to keep your current style of play, only add a few new techniques? Maybe you need a complete overhaul of your entire game. There are lessons available for all kinds of golfers. Know what you expect and need to learn, and then search out the right learning environment.

Once these areas have been established, and you decide that you do indeed want to become more proficient in your skills and have a better understanding of the game, you may choose to begin training in an appropriate golf school. Taking lessons at golf school is a little like taking a crash course. Many lessons are fast-paced, with reams of information doled out in encyclopedia fashion.

Most programs are accessible to players at all levels of expertise. You may, therefore, expect to be placed with a group of students who match your similar skill level. Take the time to observe your fellow students' developments, and learn from their progress as well as your own. If you are a beginner, take the time to ask questions, and insist that you receive full answers. Your instructor is there to help you learn, so make sure that he or she is willing to offer assistance when you need it. If you are a more experienced golfer with a low handicap, be sure that your special interests are properly addressed.

Attending a golf school is a little like your own career. You are expected to work hard, but of course there is a reward for your efforts. The instructors should drastically improve your play, and you should realize great value for your money. Expect to leave the course with a new understanding and mastery of the game. That is the whole point of golf instruction, and that is why both you and your instructor are there.

There is no room for ego in a golf instruction classroom. Check your self-worth and your hot head at the door. A crucial part of learning is the ability to realize our mistakes and work through them. It can be difficult to have our shortcomings pointed out in a group setting, but it can also be a source of great laughs. This isn't criticism; it's instruction meant to improve your game. Check your ego at the door and get the most out of this valuable opportunity.

Before committing to a particular school or golf instructor, ask about their technology and teaching aids. Some classes will only focus on one area of play, although most will offer assessments of overall style, technique and swing flaws. Some golf schools are able to analyze students by videotaping their performance, and then using a computer program to break it down with swing and movement enhancers. This is often the best means of teaching new techniques, as the student is actually able to see his or her faults. Schools that utilize videotaping can help students to recognize and analyze their swing problems. They are able to visualize their own improvements over time.

While taking golf instruction in a school setting can feel like a pressure cooker of data, information and constructive criticism, their stress pays off when you're able to play a better game. If, however, you don't think that this type of golf instruction is best for you, there are also private and smaller group lessons available. Check with your local community college, high school, community center, or golf course to see what's available in your area.