

Pace of Play Improvement Tips  
by Ellen Fearing

(I wrote this for another group with which I play where pace of play has become an issue. While this is not a huge problem for our group, I was asked to share this. These are just little things we can do to speed up play, which is always a good goal.)

There are a number of little things each of us can do during a round of golf that will save seconds or minutes each, which together add up to a lot of saved time over the course of the round.

This issue is not about how good a player we are; it is all about how efficient we are. It isn't about hurrying our shots; it is all about what we can do in between shots. If each golfer were to adopt some of the following tips to help us speed up our own play, we all could benefit with a better golf experience.

1. Warm up on the practice tee so that we are ready to go when we arrive at our assigned tee. Work on building a concise pre-shot routine. If our pre-shot routine is a lengthy one, it's probably in our best interests to shorten it anyway.
2. On each tee, if there are players in the fairway in front of us, let the shorter hitters tee off first; playing "honors" wastes time. By the time the shorter hitters are done, the longer hitters can usually hit away without worry about hitting into the group in front. Watch our partners' drives. So if they lose sight of their ball, we can help direct them to it and avoid any searching. (On the tee and in the fairway, be realistic about how far we can hit the ball; don't wait for 200 yards of clearance if we KNOW there is no way to hit that far.)
3. Carry extra tees, ball markers and an extra golf ball in our pockets so we never have to return to our golf bag to find one when needed. ; if we lose a ball, or even suspect trouble finding it, we will be ready to hit a provisional ball without wasting time going back to the cart. If we are willing to spend a few minutes looking for a lost ball, allow the group behind to play through.
4. In the fairway, if waiting to hit, drop a cart partner at her ball with appropriate club(s), range finder, etc. and go to the other partner's ball. After hitting, go back to pick up the first golfer, who should be walking towards the cart after hitting her own ball.
5. Also in the fairway, if waiting to hit, do all our measuring, club selection and practice swings while waiting so when it is clear to hit, we are ready to do so. Don't wait for the fairway to clear to begin this process. This one tip is really important: imagine if every player is ready to hit as soon as the way is clear in front of her, how much time we could save over the course of 18 holes!
6. When chipping around the green, we should carry both the club we'll be chipping with plus our putter so we don't have to return to the bag.

7. If a player's ball is in a greenside bunker, players on the green can putt while waiting for her to rake; or another player can be raking for her so she can putt. Either will save some time.
  
8. When all players are on the green, park carts towards the back of the green so when we're finished putting, we don't have to walk towards approaching golfers. Whoever is first in the hole should retrieve the flag and be ready to replace it as soon as the last putt is holed; then walk directly off the back of the green to the carts. Once at the carts, don't stand there fussing with our putter or other clubs. Get in the cart, drive to the next tee, and then put away our clubs. Likewise, mark our scorecards after reaching the next tee, not while lingering on or near the just-completed green. These practices open up the green for the group behind to hit on.
  
9. On the green, be aligning your own put while others are putting. You don't have to wait your turn to get ready to putt. If you leave a put 2-3 feet away and you don't have to stand in anyone else's line, go ahead and putt out. (Don't rush the putt, but don't waste time marking short putts.)
  
10. When stopping at restrooms, snack bars, etc. simply be aware of the time; do what we need to do but don't dawdle. Get to the next shot and be ready to play.