



# PACE OF PLAY

Edited by:

Lloyd Stimson  
MISGA History Chairman

February 15, 2023



**Rule 5.6b - Prompt Pace of Play:**

A round of golf is meant to be played at a prompt pace.

Each player should recognize that their pace of play is likely to affect how long it will take other players to play their rounds, including both those in the player's own group and those in following groups.

Players are encouraged to allow faster groups to play through.

**1. Pace of Play Recommendations.** The player should play a prompt pace throughout the round, including the time taken to:

- \* Prepare for and make each stroke,
- \* Move from one place to another between strokes, and
- \* Move to the next teeing area after completing a hole.

A player should prepare in advance for the next stroke and be ready to play when it is their turn.

When it is a player's turn to play:

- \* It is recommended that the player make the stroke in **no more than 40 seconds** after they are (or should be) able to play without interference or distraction, and
- \* The player should usually be able to play more quickly than that and is encouraged to do so.

**2. Playing Out of Turn to Help Pace of Play.** Depending on the form of play, there are times when players may play out of turn to help the pace of play:

- \* In match play, the players may agree that one of them will play out of turn to save time (see Rule 6.4a Exception).
- \* In stroke play, players may play "ready golf" in a safe and responsible way (see Rule 6.4b(2)).

**3. Committee Pace of Play Policy.** To encourage and enforce prompt play, the Committee should adopt a Local Rule setting a Pace of Play Policy.

This policy may set a maximum time to complete a round, a hole or series of holes and a stroke, and it may set penalties for not following the Policy.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5G (recommendations on contents of Pace of Play Policy).

## SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

**Slow Play** has been a perpetual problem for many years for a legion of golf organizations, golf tournaments & outings, golfers and the many fans watching golf matches. Sometimes it has been so bad, that anger is displayed by those waiting for a slowpoke in their group to take the damned shot or the slowpoke who has spent an excessive amount of time searching for their lost ball. At MISGA Board of Directors meetings, it is always an agenda item. From many sources there are a multitude of published brochures, pamphlets, guidebooks, information sheets, rules and regulations that address this hideous problem ... and it is still a problem. So what in the heck can be done to speed up the pace of play? From the many documented sources, here are a number of suggestions and recommendations that have been presented to speed up the pace of play.

### Tips from the USGA

1. **Start smart.** Confirm your tee time in advance and make it a point to **arrive at the tee early** with your golf equipment in order, ready to play. Remember essentials like extra balls, tees, gloves and appropriate clothing for the day's weather conditions.
2. **"Tee It Forward"** unless you are consistently able to reach greens in regulation from the back tees. In other words, play from a set of tees that is comfortable for you - one where you are more likely to hit lofted irons into greens instead of hybrids or fairway woods. It is acceptable for players in the same group to play from different tees. (*The USGA Handicap System provides a formula for adjusting handicaps from different tees.*)
3. **Minimize your time at the tee box.** It is acceptable for players to "hit when ready." You can also save time by playing a provisional ball if you think your ball might be lost or out of bounds.
4. **Plan your shot before you get to your ball.** Determine your yardage and make your club selection before it is your turn to play. When it is your turn to play, don't waste time by going back and forth between your ball and golf bag (*or golf cart*).
5. **Keep your pre-shot routine short.** Try to take no more than one practice swing. Then set up to the ball and play your shot. Some slowpoke players take as many as 5-6 practice swings before setting up to hit their ball. Then they stare out at their shot line for an inordinate amount of time.
6. **Aim to play in 20 seconds.** When it is your turn to play - from club selection to pre-shot routine to execution, **strive to hit your shot in 20 seconds.** Help keep play moving at a brisk pace.
7. **Develop an eye for distance.** You don't have to step off yardage for every shot. If you need to determine precise distance, try to find a yardage marker before you reach your ball, then step off the yardage on the way to your ball. Or, consider investing in an electronic range-finder or global positioning system for golf and use it when permitted by the Local Rule. If others you are playing with are not familiar with the course, the Rules permit players to exchange yardage information without penalty.

8. **When sharing a cart, use the buddy system.** Don't wait in the cart while your cartmate hits and then drive to your ball. Get out and walk to your ball with a few clubs. Be ready to play when it is your turn and then let your cartmate pick you up. Or, drive to your ball after you drop your cartmate off and then pick him or her up after you hit.
9. **Keep up with the group in front of you.** Your correct position on the course is immediately behind the group in front of you. Arrive at your next shot just before the group in front leaves the area in front of you. If you are consistently not able to keep up and a gap opens in front of you, invite the group behind you to play through, irrespective of the numbers in the group.
10. **Be helpful to others in your group.** Follow the flight of all tee shots, not just your own. Once in the fairway, help others look for their ball if you already know the location of yours. Volunteer to fill a divot or rake a bunker for another player if needed. Be ready to attend the flagstick for others.
11. **Be efficient on the putting green.** Mark your ball and lift and clean it when you arrive at the putting green so you will be ready it when it is your turn to play. You can usually line up your putt while others are putting, without disturbing them. Leave your clubs or golfcart on the side of the putting green closest to the next hole and leave the green promptly after holing out. Wait until the next tee box to record your score.
12. **Remember that picking up your ball is permitted by the USGA Handicap System.** If not in an individual stroke play competition, it is generally OK to **pick up your ball and move on to the next hole if you are "out" of a hole** and want to maintain pace of play. This applies in match play and many forms of stroke play, including Stableford and best-ball play.

### **Additional Tips**

1. **Golf Gloves.** If you putt without a glove, take it off as you walk from your cart to the green. Do not wait until it is your turn to putt and then remove it.
2. **Slow walkers.** If you have knee or leg ailments that force you to walk slow, it is highly recommended you use a golf cart. Especially, when the group in front of your group has advanced more than a hole in front of your group. Keep up with the group in front of you.
3. **Searching for lost balls.** When at the perceived location of a lost ball, **limit the search to 3 minutes.** Do not take more time than that. Too many think 5-7 minutes is acceptable.
4. **Hitting "out-of-bounds" and "lost ball" shots.** A USGA optional Local Rule provides an alternative to stroke and distance relief for casual play (e.g., MISGA mixers). Do not return to the position where the original shot was made. Estimate the spot where your ball is lost or went out of bounds and then find the nearest fairway edge that is not nearer the hole than the estimated spot. Drop a ball in the fairway within two club-lengths of that fairway edge point, or anywhere between there and the estimated spot where your ball is lost or went out of bounds. Take a 2 stroke penalty.
5. **Bunker shots.** Players in bunkers, who are ready, should be allowed to shoot first. They have to rake the bunker.
6. **Extra ball and tee.** Always carry an extra ball and tee with you. You never know when you are going to need one.

7. **Returning your just-used club to your golf bag.** If you are riding in a golf cart and you have just taken a shot, do not return your just-used club to your golf bag. Immediately, return to your seat in the golf cart and hold on to it until it is your turn to hit your next shot. Then simultaneously replace your just-used club and withdraw your selected club for your next shot.
8. **Threesomes.** As threesomes normally play faster than foursomes, place all threesomes at the front of the line. Allow them to tee off before the foursomes. A threesome should not have to continually wait for a foursome in front of them to complete their shots.
9. **Course Marshals.** If available and practical, course marshals can be used to help manage the flow of play around the course. A course marshal can encourage and warn fallen behind groups of the penalties they could receive if they don't catch up with the group in front of them.

## INSPIRATIONS FOR SPEEDING UP PLAY

