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How to **Buy a Golf Club**



*Buyer's Guide On How to Select the
Club Right For You*

How to Buy a Golf Club

A golfer is only as good as his next swing. That's the thing with golf. And that's probably what makes this game so addictive. Because you can't always replicate your swing, the only thing you can control when you play is your attitude towards the game and the kind of equipment you have.

One of the most important items that almost every golfer obsesses about is the golf club. So many things depend on the specific golf club to use that all golfers who are worth their salt take shopping for a new golf club very seriously.

But the golf industry is so swamped with various sizes and shapes of golf clubs it is difficult to choose the right one for your game. How do you know which golf club to buy? And how do you know if it would really help improve your game?

Many golf equipment manufacturers and companies these days are claiming that it's all in the club head, that the way to improve your game is to get a golf club with a head design that's perfect for your kind of play. But the head is not the only factor!

When you buy a new golf club, there are several considerations and only in making the right decision will you have the opportunity to improve your game.

The Price Myth

It is a common enough myth that anything more expensive than the rest automatically means that it's better. But smart shoppers have long since debunked this myth. Many people today are spending less money on equipment and more time on the course.

You want to play better? Spend more time practicing than shopping for high priced golf clubs that don't even guarantee an improved game no matter what sort of marketing hype the makers are stirring.

Just think about it. Are drivers really worth hundreds of thousands of dollars? Are iron sets worth three grand? If your club cost you \$800, are you playing great? Chances are no, they are not worth it and your game is pretty much the same.

Paying high prices for a golf club will not lower your handicap. However, if you choose your club well, even if it's a cheap one, your chances of improving your handicap scores are better.

Then, once you have achieved a decent level of play, that's the time to go for custom-fitting. And even then you should always go for value than for show. After all, that is what golf is about. It is an awkward set of bodily contortions and yet they produce such a graceful result. Your golf club may be inexpensive but once you perfect your swing, all eyes would be on *you*, not on your club.

What You Need to Know

Before you go to the shop and evaluate the array of golf clubs on display, you need to know the basics of golf clubs, especially if you're still a beginner. Knowing what to look for should help you make a smarter choice.

Now, you don't need telling that the golf club is the tool you use to strike the golf ball. Neither do you need an in-depth discussion on what the three basic components of a golf club are.

Just remember the following important tips to help you choose the best club around:

- **Shaft** – This is the axle of the club, the part that many golfers consider as the most complex component and probably the most important. There are several different types of shafts with varying degrees of flex, flex locations, weight, length, materials, torque, etc. Other critical factors include the shaft deflection, lie angle, loft angle, swing weight, and grip size.

Having the proper shaft length can improve the squareness of hit and balance in your swing. On the other hand, the lie angle has a direct effect on the direction of your shots. If you have higher swing speeds, you want a shaft with stiffer deflection. If you have lower swing speeds, the more flexible shafts give your downswing that extra “kick.”

- **Head** – This is the part that directly comes into contact with the golf ball. Like shafts, golf club heads can be made from several kinds of materials. Here is a summary of recommended club heads according to your level of play:

- BEGINNER IRONS: Zinc
- BEGINNER WOODS: Aluminum, Titanium Alloys
- BETTER IRONS: 431 Stainless Steel
- GOOD WOODS: HST Aluminum
- BEST IRONS: 17-4ph Stainless Steel, Bi-metal, Tungsten Insert
- BEST WOODS: Titanium, Maraging Metal, Bi-metal, Tungsten Insert

For putters, the material choices are not important. What matters are the shape, weight, and type of inserts used. So when looking at golf club heads, pay attention to the basic design principles, such as weight distribution

(What is its perimeter? Low center of gravity or high?), size (Traditional or oversized?), and styling (Keel sole? Deep face? Wide body?).

- **Grip** – As the least expensive components of your golf club, it often the part that is most often overlooked. How important could it be? Well, for one it is your only point of contact with the club. Hence, it is the only component of the golf club that you can actually control *while* you are playing the game.

Grips tend to oxidize, harden, get slick, and lose their grip after a certain period of time. So the only thing you need to keep in mind about grips is to change them often.

Golfers use a set of clubs when they play. A “set” is restricted to no more than 14 clubs so you can see just what kind of task is ahead of you. It’s difficult enough to choose one golf club. Now you have to choose *fourteen*?

Of course, each of them would depend on your personal preferences but traditionally, a “set” is made of: Irons 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, PW, Woods 1, 3, 5, and a putter.

Now the next question is: What is the difference between Irons and Woods? And how do you choose the best ones out of each?

Woods

As its name itself implies, the wood is historically made of wood. Today, however, woods can be made of a variety of materials. Metals, especially, are considered as more advantageous than wood since it is much easier to precisely mold metal

than wood. Design technologies such as perimeter weighting and low center of gravity are more forgiving with metals than with wooden woods.

You generally use woods when you focus more on distance than on accuracy. For instance, you have a golf hole that is 450 yards from tee to green. When you hit off the tee, you need the “bigger” club – the wood. This hollow-bodied large-headed golf club is recommended when you are making shots 175 yards or more away from the green.

The driver is usually a 1 wood with 8-12 degrees of loft (the measurement of the angle between the shaft and the ground) while 3 wood has lofts between 15 and 18 degrees. 5 wood has a loft between 20 and 22 degrees.

Most seasoned golfers use a variety of drivers with lofts ranging from 8.5 to 10 degrees. For beginners, however, you will probably fair better with lofts of 10 degrees or higher. Golfers also often carry 3 and 5 woods (called fairway woods for the reason that they are pulled out during the second shot of the play) in addition to their drivers. 7 and 9 wood, on the other hand, are referred to as utility woods.

2 and 4 woods exist but their popularity reached their peak more than 20 years ago. Today, they have fallen out of favor as newer technologies have improved the performance of woods. Now, most golfers prefer to carry 7 and 9 wood in their bag.

Irons

Like woods, irons were also historically made of iron (hence, the name). Now, they come in a variety of materials, mostly steel. Compared to woods, irons are smaller and considered as “finesse” clubs. This means that they are meant to be used when the shot calls for a greater level of accuracy than distance.

Irons are recommended when the shot is less than 200 yards away from the green. And the general rule is that the closer you are to the green, the higher the iron you will use.

Irons come in a standard set of 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 irons and pitching wedge or PW. For most people, the hardest clubs to hit are the 3 and 4 irons so to compensate, many ladies, seniors, and higher handicap golfers are changing their 3 and 4 irons to higher lofted woods like the 7 and 9 woods.

Putters and Wedges

Wedges are actually just specialty iron golf clubs, sometimes referred to as “blade clubs.” That’s because when you use wedges, you are usually close enough to the green that all those game improvement designs (like perimeter weighting and low center of gravity) lose their significance.

At this point, the game calls for increased shot control and shot shaping than technologies to improve distance and force of your swing. The blade design of wedges encourages this.

The first wedge is called the Pitching Wedge with a loft of 48 degrees. From there, wedges increase in 4 degree loft increments: 48 (Approach Wedge), 52 (Sand Wedge), 56 (Lob Wedge), 60 (High-Lob Wedge) and 64 degrees.

Putters are golf clubs with a special purpose: to get the ball into the hole. Are you familiar with the expression: “Drive for show, putt for dough?” Well, drivers are for slamming your shots 250 yards right into the middle of the fairway. The putter is used on the green, where it really matters.

There are many styles of putters: short, belly, long, bent, center-hosel, heel-toe, mallet, and so on. Many golfers carry a variety of putters and wedges and one set of irons in their golf bags. Why? Because you can do a better job with a lot more tools in your toolbox.

How important are the Numbers?

So you know that you are allowed to carry a maximum of fourteen golf clubs in your bag and that these clubs have their specific numbers. Yet, how important are these numbers? What do they represent?

The numbers found in golf clubs represent the loft, for the most part. The general rule is that the lower the number, the lower the loft. The lower the loft, the longer the shaft. The longer the shaft, the harder to hit.

Experienced golfers tend to favor drivers with lower numbers as these clubs require more skill to hit than higher numbers.

Of course, as already mentioned, lower lofts and longer clubs often result in greater distance of your shots. But it also means a loss of accuracy. That is why woods (since they have lower lofts and are traditionally longer than irons) are used for distance shots as a rule.

The Correct Lie

This is no paradox. Choosing the correct lie (the angle between the hosel and the rest of the club head) is an important aspect of selecting the right golf club. It has to do with golf physics. Adjustments on the lie can be made to better fit a player's physical characteristics.

For instance, if you are shorter than the average player, a flatter lie is recommended to better fit your arms which are positioned closer to the ground. If you are taller, on the other hand, a more upright lie can help you adjust for your arms and torso which are higher up.

The way to determine the correct lie is to grab hold of the club and get into position. With your club at address, look at how the bottom of the club head is touching the ground. The perfect lie is one where the middle bottom of the club head touches the ground.

If the toe is up in the air and the heel is on the ground, then your club's current lie is too upright. You can adjust this by fixing the hosel (the part of the iron that connects with the shaft).

So after all these factors involved in golf club shopping, it all really boils down to one thing: preferences. And you cannot really identify your preferences *until you start playing*.

If this is your absolute first time playing golf, don't attempt to buy your own equipment just yet. Instead, rent one or borrow from a friend who's into golf. Then only after you get the hang of the game and understand your preferences should you even attempt to make your own golf club choices.

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