

Walking the Course – Getting the most out of your game

Playing golf can have many health and fitness benefits. By choosing to walk, a golfer will burn hundreds of calories while playing a round of golf. Walking will also assist in strengthening the muscles in the lower body, will help to increase or maintain bone density, and is good for the cardiovascular system. The body also tends to stay warmer because the walking golfer is always moving. Warm joints and muscles and are less likely to get injured and allow the golfer to swing more fluidly. Unfortunately, many golfers waste a perfectly good opportunity to incorporate exercise into their day by choosing instead to ride in a motorized cart while they play. While using a cart is necessary for certain people, most golfers simply choose to ride out of sheer laziness. It may take some effort to adjust, but choosing to walk the course rather than ride can lead to an increased fitness level and therefore possibly an extended golf life. Here are a few things to keep in mind if you do decide to make the switch...

- 1) **Build up to it** – If you are not accustomed to walking, it may take some time for your body to adapt to the increased workload. Start by walking the front nine only, sharing a riding cart between three people and rotating the person who is walking, or walking every second round you play.
- 2) **Get good shoes** – It will make a huge difference if your golf shoes are properly fitted, waterproof and comfortable.
- 3) **Bring healthy snacks and drink lots of water** – You'll be expending more energy throughout the round. Eating healthy snacks and staying hydrated will help you to avoid fatigue.
- 4) **Use a pull or push cart** – Carrying your bag can be quite tiring. If you do decide to carry your clubs, get a proper carry bag – lightweight and with back-pack style straps to evenly distribute the weight of your clubs on your back.
- 5) **Empty your bag of unnecessary items** – Carrying extra clubs or every ball you've ever found makes a bag a lot heavier than it needs to be. You don't want to lug that extra weight around for hours.
- 6) **Find a walking buddy** – It is often easier to stay motivated if you are surrounded by like-minded people.

Finally, don't feel like you'll be slowing everyone down. At a reasonable pace, walking can be just as fast as riding. You can always go directly to your ball, there is never a 'cart path only' rule, and you can take your bag much closer to the greens than you can with a motorized cart. Walking also gives you the time to plan the shot you want to hit, select your club, read the slope of the fairways and greens from afar, and take in the scenery as you are approaching the ball. In essence, walking the course can make your round and your life even more enjoyable.

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