

Etiquette

Definition: the customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group.

What does this mean in golfing terms?

I could stop right here and refer you to a Website called "the-best-golf-tips.com" and their own section on etiquette. Unfortunately the website has not been completely updated with the Rules of Golf 2019 changes and therefore I shouldn't quote this as a valid reference (something I learnt during my time at College!)

Below are a couple of lines taken from the Website that simplify what can be a very objective subject.

"There are *unspoken rules of etiquette* and more stringent rules of good golf etiquette. The rules are in place to make the game more enjoyable, but many of them relate to the **golfers safety** and to the **pace of play** (which helps keep the game more enjoyable).

Several other rules of etiquette relate to *maintaining the overall quality of the golf course itself.*"

Having now read the whole piece I can confess that I am, on occasion, guilty of the odd misdemeanour myself!

I know – it's hard to believe that someone in my position, both as Captain and casual labour shop assistant for the Professional, should own up to such heinous crimes.

We all know – or should know, that we make as little noise as possible within ear shot of, or at least a couple of hundred yards of some of our fellow golfers whilst they attempt to caress a 250yd tee shot into the rough.

Most of us try wherever possible not to stomp our size 7's/8's/9's/10's etc (delete as applicable) on the line of our playing partners putt for triple bogey at the 17th.

How often though, do we consider the second sentence from the extract above that refers to "maintaining the overall quality of the golf course itself" as good etiquette?

Our own on-course greens-staff spend many working hours on the presentation of the golf course that we spend much of our free time on. A little bit of thought on our part can limit some of the time they take tidying up after us or repairing some of the damage we have inflicted during our time at play, allowing them to spend more valuable time on the jobs that they have been trained on and are specialized in.

The three R's at school were "Reading, wRiting and aRithmatics. In terms of golf and etiquette, the three R's are;

- Repair your pitch marks,
- Replace your divots, and
- Rake the bunkers.

Most of us adhere to these aspects of the game, and some people – I've lost count of how many have told me – repair at least 4 pitch-marks on every green they go on!!

Although not thought by some to be as critical as the above there are other actions that can ensure that the Golf Course is presented in a more satisfactory condition with just a little help from those playing it.

Discarded tee pegs all over the Tee Box are unsightly but can also prove costly in the long term. The blades of greens machinery are continuously striking wooden (or even worse plastic) tee pegs when cutting the Tee boxes. This causes a significant blunting effect on the blades of the machines. This leads to the need to carry out blade sharpening on a more frequent basis. Both being costly and time consuming. The introduction of the logo'd Tee Tidy's' gives us all somewhere to deposit our broken tees or if you fancy just throw them in to the rough. Next time you are waiting on the Tee for that inevitable slow group in front who won't call you through, take a few seconds to do some Tee husbandry. Every little helps!

Although not evidently as costly as repairs to machinery, pedestrian and wheeled traffic can also have an effect on the amount of time required to maintain a good playing surface around the Golf Course. By keeping buggies and especially push carts off Tee Boxes and keeping them outside an imaginary circle that encompasses both the green and greenside bunkers the extra wear in areas of play can be minimised. A bit of self-policing required on this one!! Why not be the one the one person in your group to remind others of this?

An issue that has arisen out of a change to the rules in 2019 is the amount of damage that is now becoming evident to the golf hole itself now that we can all putt with the flag stick in. Extracting your ball from the hole with the flag in means that hands are being squeezed in around the flag stick or even worse forcing the flag stick upwards to propel the ball out of the hole. Both these actions, and especially the latter, can do more damage than is necessary to the hole surrounds and create extra work for our already overstretched Greens Staff.

It's our course and with a little extra care and thought we can minimise unnecessary damage and subsequently extra work and ultimately cost.

33 down – 71 to go (maybe!!)

Here for a good time – not a long time!!

