



PROCEDURES TO AVOID SLOW PLAY

A focus on the speed of play around the course. Taken from an earlier document written by Ray Burniston in 2001. *(reviewed October 2011)*

Most Secretaries will sooner or later have to deal with complaints about slow play on their course. This may be on just the normal social golf or in competitions both club and open. The everyday social golf complaints about slow play can usually be easily dealt with by talking to the guilty party and trying to impress on them the need to play as quickly as possible or let those playing behind through.

Section One of the Rules of Golf on Etiquette deals with the normal procedure to follow when playing and, in most cases, if it is carefully pointed out to guilty parties, they may not offend next time.

Some of the following procedures are used by Clubs to combat slow play:

1. Cutting back the rough and keeping it down lower throughout the year. A member says that as a result of this, monthly medal playing time in summer has been reduced by a significant amount and the vast majority of members have expressed satisfaction.
2. Getting members to enter their time when they finish their round has in some cases had the effect of reducing playing times by around ten minutes. One club initially had a committee member on duty at the 18th recording the actual time the group made the final putt. This resulted in an immediate improvement and now members record their time as a matter of principle. In cases of longer times being taken investigation by the committee and warnings to the miscreants has resulted in an immediate improvement.
3. Another club has installed notices after every three holes stating the time the different types of matches should have taken. These are installed just alongside the next tee and certainly are being noticed by both members and visitors.
4. Also, large printed warnings on scorecards such as "three hours is long enough for a round of golf".
5. In extreme cases alterations to the course can have a great influence. If you have a succession of blind holes and changes can be made to improve sighting then this can make a significant difference. In most cases you do need to obtain the services of a Golf Course Architect before proceeding. Most of us can name cases in which "amateur" architects have spoiled a course.
6. Notices on every third tee telling players how long they should have taken to play the course at that point. This can be done for 2, 3, and 4 ball matches. You have to work out an agreed time to play each hole and then allow for the different types of match. If you

adopt this policy, it is best to do it more frequently than say just a couple of times so that players really become aware of it.

7. Having the first Par 3 hole as the second or third hole can create problems and in one case a club by making the tenth tee into the first and changing the whole course around achieved considerable improvement in the time taken to play a round.
8. In many cases you need to actively work out the estimated time that 2, 3 & 4 ball matches will take on your course with average players. In every club there are players who if given a clear course will play 18 holes in a very short time depending on the overall length of the course. But you need to take into account the good average rather than the fastest players in the club. You also have to take into account the distance between holes as in some cases this can add as much 15 to 30 minutes on top of the normal round.
9. You should make sure that the course is adequately signposted from the green to the next tee. Occasionally one will come off a green and have no idea in which way to go to find the next tee. Signs as you reach the green saying, “trolleys this way” or a direction marker to the next tee is a help.
10. In major competitions you can penalise for slow play providing you state it clearly in the competition rules. Under Rule 6-7 you can already penalise for undue delay.
11. In competitions, have Committee members on the course to warn players about slow play. Some public courses employ course rangers who have powers to suspend players who fail to keep their place in the field.
12. If you have a lot of visitors then in the long run a Course Ranger is the best solution. If this person is seen travelling around in a buggy and can tactfully point out to players they are falling behind then this can often solve the problem before it gets out of hand.
13. In cases in which holes cross or tees are within distance of greens then you must have set rules for who has priority. Players especially visitors must be made aware of these rules. You should review them regularly and take into account views expressed both by members and visitors if they do not appear to be working.