

How to Choose an Instructor

John Hughes, Executive Vice President and National Director of Instruction for [Advantage Golf Schools](#)

As technology has advanced, so has golf instruction. Just as there are many choices of drivers, putters, balls, and other equipment, there are just as many choices of golf instructors. The process of how you choose your golf instructor is as unique as your fingers' prints. However, just like there are certain things you want to know before choosing your doctor, there are certain items you should inquire of your instructor.

Compatibility - It is your responsibility to insure that there is a fit between you and your instructor on all levels, personality type, mutual goals, similar outlooks on the game, and your instructor's ability to relate to your individual needs. Before throwing a dart in the phone book under "golf instruction", research the professionals in your area. One way is to ask friends and playing partners for referrals of good instructors in your area. Ask them about pricing, reputation, location, and their improvement under the instructor's tutelage. If you get along with your playing partners and the instructor does too, odds are you have found a fit. Then, call the instructor and ask if they have time to talk to you about your game and improvement goals. A good instructor will be happy to talk to you about your game, and get to know you as an individual, prior to helping you with your golf game.

Accreditation and Experience - Does your golf instructor have the education and experience to take your game to any level you desire? Many individuals claim to be golf instructors. Many of these individuals are self-proclaimed "experts," or had enough money to take a one to two week course on how to teach golf and make more money.

In seeking a golf professional to help you with your game, insure that the individual has an active accreditation with the PGA or

LPGA, or, has demonstrated an inarguable ability to help players of many levels improve through many years of practice. Other associations claim they produce golf instructors. However, these organizations have one focus, to make money, not to produce solid golf instructors. Inquire of your instructor their accreditation, as well as their education both on and off the golf course. Check with the LPGA or PGA websites to confirm your potential golf instructor's accreditation with that organization, and, how much experience the instructor possesses. Inquire of the instructor's philosophy and past success stories. If needed, ask for references of students from all skill levels that you can contact.

Swing Aids - Does your golf instructor use swing aids? Moreover, does he or she have a solid reason for using an aid that applies to your needs? Many instructors have bags full of swing aids, ranging from old broken shafts to expensive space-age contraptions. However, is the instructor actually using the aids in a constructive and meaningful manner, or are they just for show?

Look for an instructor who invests their time, money, and professional reasoning in the use of swing aids. Insure that an instructor is using swing aids that help you "feel" differences between what you are taught to achieve and how you are currently swinging the golf club. Beware the instructor who has a "cure-all" swing aid they have all their students use.

Video - Video swing analysis has become a staple for all golf instruction. It is no longer an option. If you are paying for instruction that does not include video review of your game, you should reconsider why you are paying for golf instruction. Video, when used correctly, is a third pair of eyes (you and your instructor are first and second). This is

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similar to a doctor using an X-Ray or M.R.I. to diagnosis a health issue. Your golf instructor should be using video in the same manner. Video should confirm the diagnosis to you, not the instructor. A good golf instructor has the ability to see the flaw first, and use his or her knowledge of that flaw to diagnose a cure or drill for you to practice to realize improvement. If your golf instructor is relying solely on video to tell what is happening in your swing, you will eventually lose trust in the instructor's ability to help you. You would second guess a doctor's ability to help you if he or she did not use their ability first and confirm their thoughts with tests. Then why would you rely on an instructor who is not "practicing" golf instruction in the same manner?

Follow-up Communication - Your golf instructor should have a program available for you to utilize to ask questions, give feedback, receive follow-up instructions, schedule lessons, or make other inquiries after your lesson. Some instructors offer their phone numbers after hours. Others utilize the internet for follow-up and communication purposes. Regardless of what form of communication is available to you after the lesson, your instructor should be available, at no extra charge, within a reasonable amount of time, to answer your questions and take interest in your concerns.

Playing Ability - Can your instructor play golf at a competent level? You would be surprised as to the number of golf instructors that can not break 90!

It is not necessary for your golf instructor to be a great player, as some people might make you think. Great players do not necessarily make great instructors. Some of the world's greatest instructors never played competitively. However, if your instructor can not perform or demonstrate a skill he or

she desires of you, how can you trust their credibility? Your golf instructor should have, at the very least, a history of tournament participation and success, as well as being currently able to demonstrate a basic playing ability representative of their status of being a golf instructor.

Let's face it; golf is not rocket science or brain surgery. However, there are physics, biomechanical, and geometric principles involved with the science of golf instruction. Your golf instructor should have a thorough understanding of these concepts related to the game of golf, as well as a basic intuitive ability to know when to fix your swing and when to leave your swing alone. Other factors such as having similar interests and opinions as you can greatly effect the relationship between you and your instructor. Your process of picking a golf instructor who "practices" golf instruction, much like a doctor "practices" medicine will eliminate most of the potential pitfalls that happen between uneducated consumers and/or the unreliable instructors. By asking simple questions before taking instruction, you will insure that you will invest your time and money wisely, as well as maximize your learning curve.