

A few years ago, Golf Digest surveyed thousands of golfers, and found that only 5% considered themselves to be 'slow' players. But on average, golfers considered 56% of 'other' players to be slow. That means half the golfers out there are slow, but don't know it. Here are some tips for everyone:

- 1) Be ready to play.** It sounds straightforward, but this is one of the main problems we see on the course. Pay attention to what's going on around you, know when it's your turn to play, and pull the trigger. Be proactive, take responsibility for yourself and your group.
- 2) You're not a Tour Player.** Do not emulate what you see on TV; these guys (and gals) are making a living at the game, you're not. Copy their swings, not their mannerisms, habits or 'pre-shot routines'.
- 3) Play Ready Golf if everyone agrees.** Except during match play, there is no rule requiring people to play in any order, or when they have 'honors'. If the tee is open, announce your intention to play, and let it rip. Same thing elsewhere, if nobody is hitting and you won't disturb others or give them an advantage, announce your intention and play. Remember: Make sure you communicate with your playing partners, and don't play out of turn if it might benefit another player (like putting on the same line from nearer the hole.)
- 4) Use the cart wisely.** You don't have to put your clubs back in the bag before you move; if the other guy's ready to go, sit down, move, and put the clubs in the bag when you get to your ball. Don't sit in the cart waiting for the other guy to hit; grab some clubs, walk to your ball, and he can pick you up after you play. Especially after you finish a hole, get in the cart immediately, go to the next tee and THEN record your scores and replace the clubs in the bag. These are just a few cart use tips, but the bottom line is to keep moving.
- 5) Know when you're out of position.** CCMGA considers your group to be out of position on a Par 3 or Par 4 if the group ahead of you has left the green when you reach the tee. On a Par 5, you're out of position if the group ahead is on the putting green when you reach the tee. Everyone has a bad hole or falls out of position occasionally, but there's no reason you can't close the gap on the next hole if you try. If the group ahead of you is particularly fast, consider it a blessing and adapt.
- 6) Eliminate practice swings.** Most professionals only take a full practice swing on the first tee or if he has a unique situation (like swinging under tree limbs). Taking practice swings does nothing but wear you out by the end of the round, and besides...most of the time your practice swing looks nothing like the real thing. On a normal shot, grab the club, take your stance, maybe a little waggle, then hit (10-15 seconds maximum). You'll be amazed how much better and faster you'll play.
- 7) Speed up on the greens.** This is where many players screech to a halt. If you have time to read a putt from all sides while others are playing, great. But if it's your turn to putt and THEN you step off the distance or read it from the other side, you're being slow. Once you start putting, finish the hole unless you're standing in another's line. Either way, announce your intentions ('I'll wait' or 'I'll finish') right away, not after you mark the ball, so others can get ready to hit their putt. If you're the first to finish, grab the flag and be ready to replace it when everybody's done. Then get away from the green so the group behind you can play (see #4 above).
- 8) Take responsibility for your group.** If you even suspect that your group is lagging, be the first to point it out and tell everyone 'We need to pick it up.' Try this first, but if one player is particularly slow, don't be afraid to nicely ask them to play faster. If that still doesn't work, point out that it's not fair for everyone else to be penalized for his slow play, and he has a responsibility to play faster.
- 9) Don't be defensive.** If a ranger asks your group to speed up, don't take it personally, take it to heart. 99% of the time, he's just asking you to convey the message to the rest of the group, not singling you out personally. And keep in mind that the ranger is authorized to assess penalties without warnings, so if he's just asking you to speed up, he's doing you a favor. If a fellow player asks you to speed up, accept how difficult it must have been for him to do that, don't get angry.
- 10) Don't fall back into bad habits.** Don't just proactively play faster today...do it every day.