

Golf Time!



Bob played golf. It was his favorite sport. He knew it wasn't the most exciting sport, with people crashing into each other or running fast, but it was a game of concentration and finesse. He loved how he could play against himself or against other people. It was a great game.

Golf *can* be cheap with starter equipment, but anyone who plays very long ends up spending a LOT of money on clubs and equipment. The thing is, golf is a situational sport, so you need a lot of clubs for different situations. Otherwise, you really just need shoes, clothes, a hat, and maybe some golfing gloves.

Golf comes in increments of 9 holes. A full round was 18 holes, usually called the front 9 and the back 9, because there were two halves. In tournaments, you might play 18 holes per day on several different days. The end scores are compared to see who did the best. Each hole has a par. Par is how many tries it is supposed to take you to get the ball in the hole. There are many different golf terms for par and how well you do on a hole. If you do 1 shot better than par, it's a birdie. If you do 2 strokes under par, it's an eagle. 1 extra shot, which is worse than par, is a bogie. Take 2 extra shots and it's a double-bogie. The whole aim of golf is to finish the holes you're playing close to or under par, meaning you kind of beat the course.

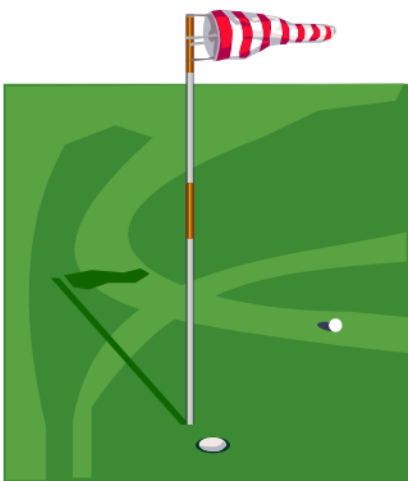
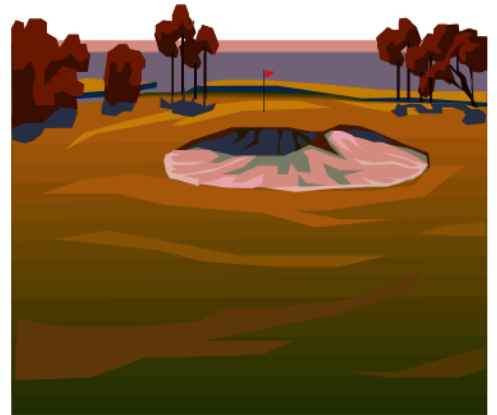
To play golf, you start by teeing off and hitting the ball on a small raised peg called a tee. You hit it with a large club, usually a driver or a wood. These hit the ball farther than the other clubs. Be careful to hit it right, or the ball will slice, or curve one way or another from where you are aiming. The idea is simple, but getting the ball to go right where you want is surprisingly hard. After teeing off, you will use woods and most likely irons to get the ball to the green. Irons are clubs with varying degrees of pitch to them that help you either hit far and low or short and high. The green is the end of the hole, usually 200-400 yards from the start position. On the green there is a hole and a flag in it. This is your goal. Once you use your irons and woods to get you on the green, where the grass is very short and smooth, you switch to a putter. A putter is for making gentle, carefully-aimed shots to put the egg-sided ball in a cup in the ground not much bigger than a coffee cup. It's NOT easy.



Golf was unlike many other sports, because each hole, each stroke (each time you hit the ball) was different. Not only did the wind and weather vary per day and per hour, but each time you played the course it could be different. If you play in the fall, there might be leaves on the course and more wind. In summer, the sun could be pretty punishing and get in your eyes when you tried to hit the ball. The grass might be drier or wetter, changing how the ball rolled or stuck to the grass. You didn't have a controlled environment to play in, like bowling or some other sports.

There are no referees in golf really. In tournaments, there are people checking to make sure you don't break the rules and that you are keeping accurate scores, but when you're on your own or in a small group of friends, you have to stay honest with your scores. Golf is a mental game, because chasing that little white ball for hundreds of yards and putting it in the cup on each green is very challenging. If you lose focus or get frustrated, you can't do a good job. Your good round of golf can quickly become a bad round!

Bob was a pretty good golfer. He had good days and bad, but usually came in near par on his scorecard. He enjoyed the walking, the weather, and trying new golf courses. Each hole on each course had a specific set of challenges. Some had water you had to keep your ball out of. Others had sand traps, where you'd quickly lose a stroke or two if you didn't know how to use a special pitching wedge to get the ball out of the trap. It was a fun game to play alone and practice, and he was challenging himself each time he stepped up to hit the ball.



Bob knew that not everyone enjoyed his favorite sport. He'd started playing when he was little, going out on the course with his grandpa on weekends. He'd fell in love with the game, selecting a club carefully to fit the situations, like choosing a weapon in a duel. It wasn't always the most exciting thing to watch, either. It wasn't hockey or baseball or soccer. It was one of those games you had to play to get the real feeling for.

Are you going to try to watch or play golf?

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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Bob play?
 - A. Hockey
 - B. Archery
 - C. Golf
 - D. Bowling

2. How many holes were in a full round of golf?
 - A. 9
 - B. 18
 - C. 27
 - D. 36

3. What is it called in golf when you score exactly what you're supposed to for the hole?
 - A. Par
 - B. Eagle
 - C. Birdie
 - D. Bogie

4. TRUE OR FALSE: A Bogie is better than a Birdie.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: If you get 2 under par it is called an Eagle.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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