

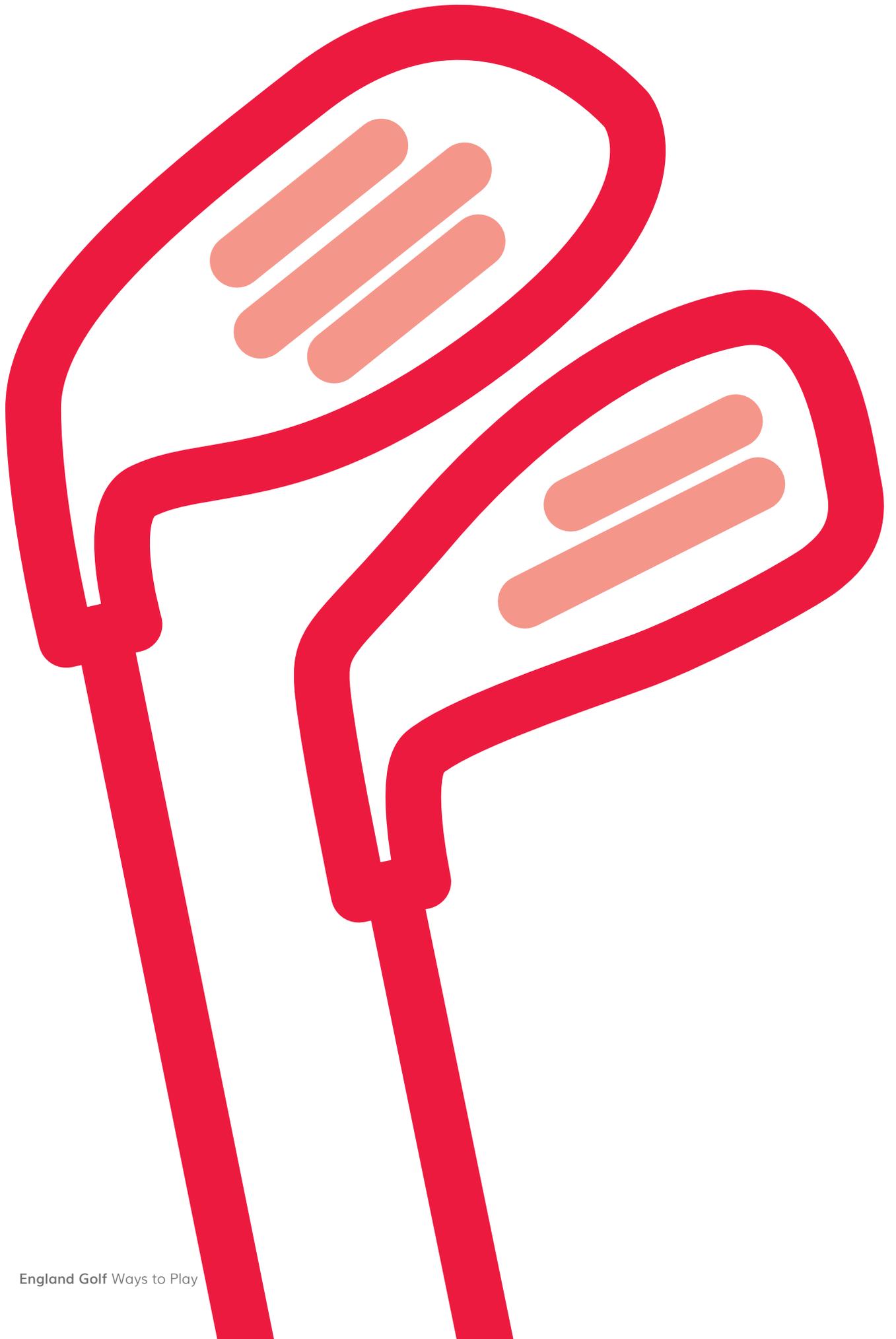


ENGLAND  
GOLF

# Ways to play

Encouraging new golfers and  
keeping people playing





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# Introduction

## In golf, one size definitely does not fit all

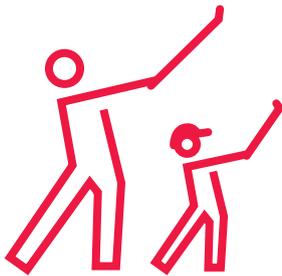
This guide is packed with ideas of ways to play and how to offer these in your club. But firstly, we need to understand what golfers want.

Playing the traditional 18 holes or taking part in a club medal is ideal for some golfers, but other customers want something different from golf.

Clubs which focus solely on the traditional game could be missing the opportunity to engage potential golfers who either do not have the time to play 18 holes or do not (yet) have the confidence or skill to play competitively and are not always motivated by competition. This is particularly true of women.



# What do golfers want?



Family-friendly golf will encourage younger players with children

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Going to the driving range, putting green or accessing shorter formats or skills challenges appeals to potential golfers

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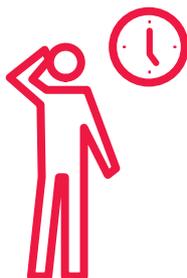
Younger players enjoy playing a range of formats

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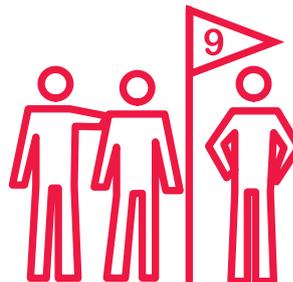
Shorter formats can appeal to older players to keep them playing

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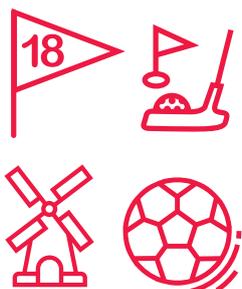
Time poor golfers could be tempted back by shorter or quicker formats

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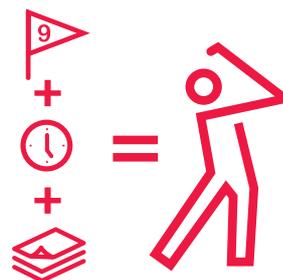
Most current players outside of membership choose shorter formats, but are potentially interested in other versions of golf – especially with friends

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Different ways to play appeal to different lifestyles

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Shorter, quicker and cheaper versions of the game can give new players a gradual introduction to golf

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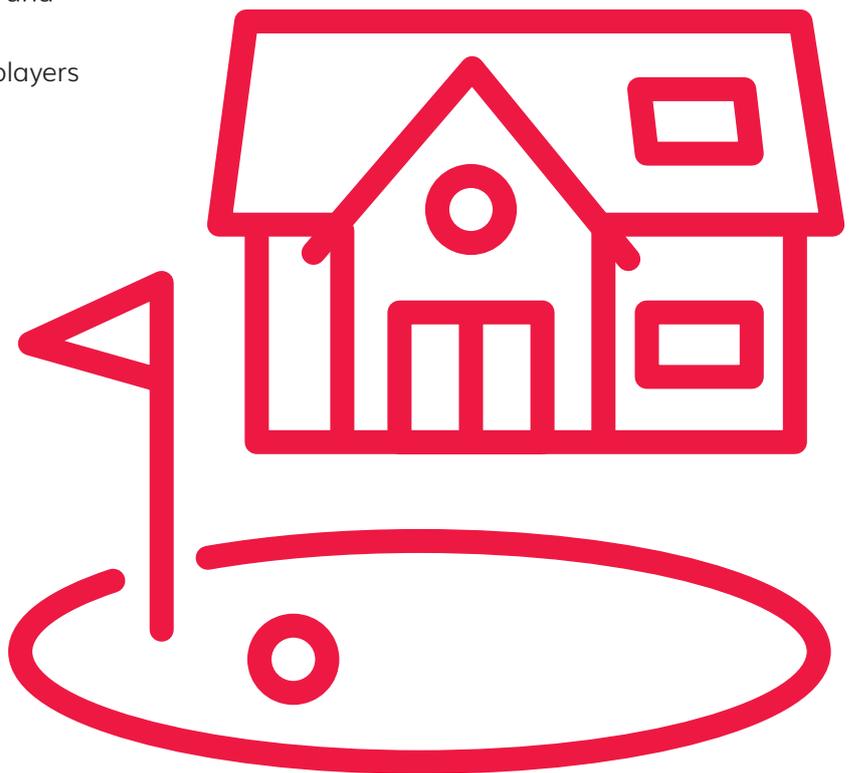
# The business case

Offering **different ways to play**, including shorter formats, can help clubs:

- Retain current players and bring back lapsed golfers
- Challenge perceptions around time, cost and format of the game
- Change ideas about what being a golfer means
- Extend the playing season with more opportunities in the evenings and winter months
- Encourage and support new players coming into the game

**This could contribute to:**

- Increased membership income
- Increased green fee income
- Increased footfall with more sales in the bar, restaurant and golf shop
- Improved customer experience



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**Offering different ways to play will open up your club to more people and can provide an opportunity to also promote your social offers and other parts of the business.**

# Stop and think



Questions for **your club** to consider:

## Who do you want to target?

- A certain 'group' of members
- Lapsed golfers
- New golfers

## What do your target market want from your club and what's important to them?

It could be social events or family time. Their demands should shape what you offer them.

England Golf has resources to help clubs understand their market.

Learn more →

## What do you know about your current customers?

Do you know what your current members like and dislike about the club? Do you know why members leave and why others join? Do you know how they like to play?

Reviewing trends and listening to feedback will help you offer the right playing and competition opportunities.

England Golf has relationships with external organisations who can help you gather customer feedback.

Learn more →

## What's available?

Does your club have a 9-hole loop which, ideally, returns to the clubhouse? Can you use a combination of holes from the front and back nine to make a loop? You may also have a convenient 6 or 12-hole loop.

Have you got a pitch and putt or par 3 course? Do you have forward tees or ability tees? Have your tees been rated for handicap purposes?

Remember to promote all your facilities and opportunities available. Some people may just want to practice.

## Have you considered your course usage?

Identify the quieter times on the course when you could run special activities or encourage further use of the facilities.

Do you know when your target customers would like to play? Can you accommodate them?

## What added value can you offer?

Is food available after competitions? It's a great way to encourage players to stay and socialise.

Do you hire out equipment and buggies? Can you help golfers meet other golfers?

# Why 9 is fine

**9 reasons** why your club should offer 9-hole playing and competitive opportunities

1

**It takes less time**

Busy people still want to play or compete.

2

**There is demand**

Fact: 126,557 competition rounds were played over 9 holes in 2018. That's up by 17% on the previous year.

3

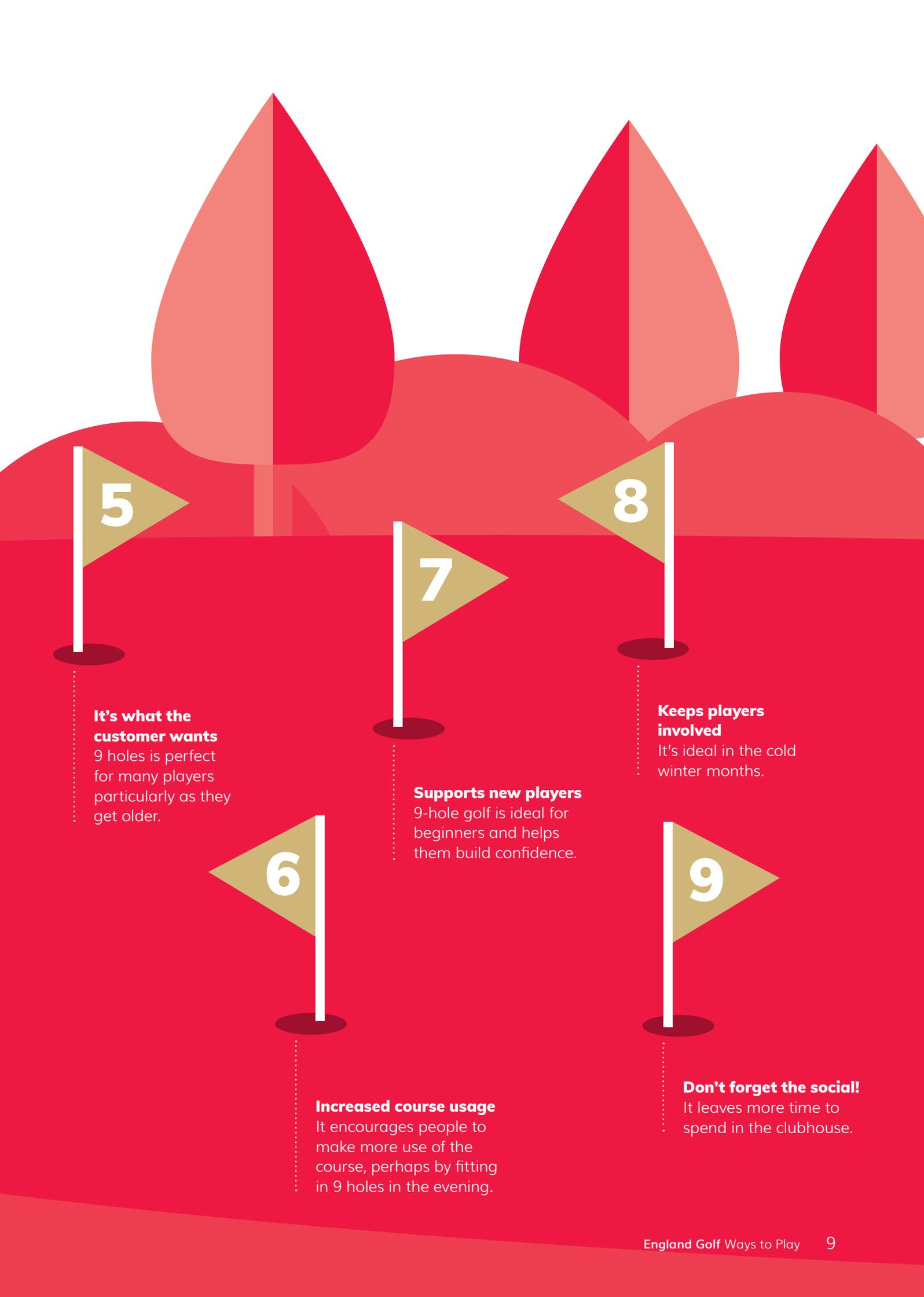
**It provides a handicap**

Scores from 9-hole rounds can be used for handicapping.

4

**It works for women**

42% of 9-hole scores submitted for handicap purposes were returned by females



5

**It's what the customer wants**

9 holes is perfect for many players particularly as they get older.

7

**Supports new players**

9-hole golf is ideal for beginners and helps them build confidence.

8

**Keeps players involved**

It's ideal in the cold winter months.

6

**Increased course usage**

It encourages people to make more use of the course, perhaps by fitting in 9 holes in the evening.

9

**Don't forget the social!**

It leaves more time to spend in the clubhouse.

# Competition Checklist

Points to consider before **planning** a 9-hole competition:

**Do your members know that 9-hole scores can count for their handicap?**

This could be a big plus for some players.

**How to get started**

First you need a 9-hole SSS.

**Apply here** →

Once it's confirmed, you'll also receive a 9-hole handicap conversion table and an example scorecard.

**Are you ready to record scores for handicapping?**

Your 9-hole course needs to be set up on your handicap software. Your Independent Software Vendor (ISV) will help you.

**Do you have robust competition terms in place?**

To clarify entry process, timings, prizes, format of play, deciding any ties and which tees count for handicap purposes.

## CASE STUDY

### UTTOXETER GOLF CLUB

To attract more weekday players, Uttoxeter introduced a 20-week, mixed order of merit on a Thursday evening played over 9 holes. Prizes are spread across the top three players. On average, 72 members take part each week and non-members can also play thereby creating their own visitors' league.

In addition, the club started offering visitors the opportunity to play in a 9-hole, after work roll up on the same evening. This doubled the number of visitors and has proved a fantastic way of attracting new members.

The club has also introduced a PlayMoreGolf\* membership for golfers who are time poor and where cost is a barrier.

Mike Clever, Secretary; "We have now plugged the gap from green fee to membership and that has been done over an 18-month period, introducing the golfer on a social basis and then showing them the benefit of membership at their own time and at cost that suits their lifestyle."

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*\*PlayMoreGolf is one of England Golf's preferred partners offering flexible golf membership and linking individual golf clubs across the United Kingdom.*

**Learn more** →

# The front



Here are **ideas** for 9-hole or other short format competitions



## Evening League

### What is it?

Match play for teams over 9 holes. Points are awarded for every hole so there's something to play for right to the end of the game! League teams could come from within the club or from nearby clubs.

### Ideal for:

Golfers who work and everyone who likes fun and competitive team golf.

The Sheffield Ladies' Evening League is a great example of this format.

Learn more [→](#)



## Order of Merit

### What is it?

A weekly, evening competition over 9 holes. Golfers play for Stableford points which get added to an order of merit. At the end of the season the winner is the player with the most points.

Offer a meal deal after play to encourage golfers to socialise in the clubhouse.

### Ideal for:

People who work, couples, lapsed golfers and everyone who enjoys competitive golf with a sociable twist.

*\*Template order of merit score sheet available.*

Download [↓](#)



# 3

## Family Scramble

### What is it?

Texas scramble competition open to teams of four family members of all ages and abilities, with or without a handicap. Played over 9 holes on a Sunday afternoon. Link it to a Sunday lunch offer or make refreshments available in the clubhouse afterwards.

A great way for clubs to promote family golf. New players can take part at a time when the course may be quieter and gain confidence.

### Ideal for:

Any family combination and perfect for people who enjoy relaxed, informal golf.

*\*Template poster available.*

Download 

# 4

## Golfer/Non Golfer Competition

### What is it?

A 9-hole fun event, ideally played over a short course or pitch and putt with the golfer taking the tee shot and the non-golfer chipping or putting. Play on a Friday evening followed by a meal and plenty of socialising.

You could also offer this as part of an open day or at a charity event.

### Ideal for:

Beginners and players, friends and family.

# 5

## Medal/Stableford Event

### What is it?

The traditional Medal/Stableford competition played over 9 holes.

**Medal** – Player plays their own ball, holes out on each hole and records the number of strokes taken. The gross score, minus the player's 9-hole handicap, gives the net score.

**Stableford** – Player plays their own ball and uses their net score to score points against par, see table.

### Ideal for:

Players who enjoy competitive golf for handicap purposes, but may be short of time or no longer able to play 18 holes.

Total Shots Played +/- Handicap Strokes	Points Scored
+2 or more	0
+1	1
0	2
-1	3
-2	4
-3	5

# 6

## Flag Event

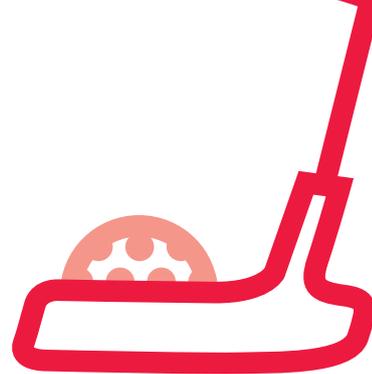
### What is it?

A flag event can be played over 6 or 9 holes. All golfers begin the round with a set number of strokes and they play until their strokes run out. The player who makes it furthest is the winner. A great way to get new golfers out on the course and experience

competitive golf without worrying about how many shots they take. Ideal when the course is quiet.

### Ideal for:

Beginners or new junior players



### CASE STUDY

## POULTON PARK GOLF CLUB

A golfer/non-golfer event was introduced four years ago as a fun way to get new people into the golf club, go round the course and try the game. The club member plays the ball onto the green and the non-golfer putts. It is run up to three times a year in the summer, usually on Bank Holiday Mondays. It's played over 9 holes with the first tee reserved for 90 minutes and is followed by a BBQ.

The club has seen a real mix of individuals taking part. From children, grandchildren, husband and wives to boyfriends and girlfriends, aged from four to 90 years old. The event is mostly full with around 30 pairs taking part each time.

As a result, some people book lessons and there are further opportunities to upsell. However, Poulton Park is keen for it to remain a fun event without people feeling they're being given the hard sell.

Alex Pritchard, Head Professional says: "The golfer/non-golfer event is a really fun day and a great way to get new people to visit our club and use the facilities. It's nice to see new golfers with a club in their hand, sometimes for the first time, enjoying themselves at our club playing a fun version of the game."

# 7

## Team Competition

### What is it?

A 9-hole social event for teams of four with the best two scores to count on each hole. A great way of involving couples, friends and family.

Offer food afterwards to showcase the clubhouse.

**Ideal for:** Everyone!

# 8

## Themed Event

### What is it?

Competition linked to an international golf event such as The Open or The Masters. You could also link to a non-golf event or a charity.

These competitions can be held at weekends and include a social get together afterwards. Here's some ideas:

**The Open medal event** – 9 holes on the morning of The Open, with each player selecting who they are going to represent from the championship field, followed by an afternoon in the clubhouse watching The Open.

**Charity Texas scramble** – 9 or 12-hole team event at a weekend. All teams pay to take part and play for prizes donated for the top three teams. Food is made available afterwards. You could include family teams or ask members to invite work colleagues or friends to join teams.

### Golf competition combined with another activity

– This could be a 3K run around part of the golf course, followed by a 9-hole match play event. The winner is the player with the quickest time and best match play score. You could include a putting competition or table tennis competition. Ideal for younger members to enjoy a range of other sports and activities as well as golf.

**Greenkeepers' revenge** – Give greenstaff the opportunity to set up the course for a short format event for the members. Members and greenstaff can take part in this fun, social event followed by food in the clubhouse. It could be an annual or biannual event.

### Ideal for:

Current members and non-members, staff and guests who want competition and fun and those with a particular link to a local charity or event.

## Enter The R&A's 9-Hole Challenge

All clubs affiliated to England Golf are invited to hold a qualifying event for The R&A's 9-hole Challenge which is played on the eve of The Open.

Learn more [→](#)

## OTHER IDEAS

# CROSS-COUNTRY GOLF

Forget the traditional starting and finishing points and make full use of the golf course! Cross-country golf lets the club set up a different course for a one-off event.

It's ideal for winter golf and gives players a different challenge.

For example: start from the 1st hole, but play to the 13th green (changing the par of the hole). Then go to the 14th tee and play to another green, as directed.

Create a map to show the players where to go and give a safety warning prior to play.

## 9

### 9-hole league

#### What is it?

An annual singles match play event over 9 holes.

#### Group Stages

- Groups of four players make up each league. A league should have a maximum of four groups (16 players in total). If there are more players, set up a second league
- Players individually sign up with the club and groups are drawn at random
- All players in the group play against each other
- Players should complete the group stage within one month

**Champions Cup** – The top two players in each group go through to the Champions Cup knockout

- Players should be drawn at random
- Format follows a traditional knockout to complete first match and semi finals

- Players should complete the Champions Cup stage within one month

**Challengers Trophy** – Bottom two in each group play in the Challengers Trophy knockout

- Players should be drawn at random
- Format follows a traditional knockout to complete first match and semi finals
- Players should complete the Challengers Trophy stage within one month

Run a finals day at the end with a prize presentation and social gathering.

*\*Template knockout sheets available.*

**Download** 

#### Ideal for:

Members who work and want regular competition and also enjoy the après golf.



# The back



Here's more **ideas** for different ways to play the game and some fun formats to use.

10

## GolfSixes

### What is it?

Golf Sixes is a quick, fun format of the game pioneered by the European Tour. It's quick, it's exciting and it's perfect for players who are short of time or new to competition. For further details on the team format used by the European Tour click [here](#).

The Golf Foundation GolfSixes League is a fast, fun, new team format for young golfers, creating inter-club competition for both boys and girls. It is designed to foster a sense of team spirit and belonging for young players, while helping to grow and maintain club junior sections.

Learn more [→](#)

11

## Make more of your practice facilities

Some golfers enjoy practicing as much as playing the course. It's just another way that golf can be whatever the golfer wants it to be.

By promoting the use of your driving range, practice area or putting green you may attract people who enjoy this opportunity as much as playing a round of golf.



# 12

## Encourage wider facility use

Par 3 courses, pitch and putt and adventure golf are all great ways to attract people who haven't got the time to spend on traditional golf.

They're also excellent for family fun and will appeal to beginners and non-golfers.

*We provide guidance on creating customer-focused facilities.*

Learn more [→](#)

# 13

## Technology appeal

All golfers love a gadget! Today's technology adds masses of appeal to a visit to the driving range. Virtual experiences and challenges add up to fun for everyone whether they're

first-time golfers or seasoned players. And it keeps people coming back for more!

### CASE STUDY

## ULTIMATE GOLF – CALDERFIELDS

The state of the art driving range in Walsall, Staffordshire does not have a golf course. It overcomes this by investing in TrackMan, Toptracer and a superb short game area. Most recently, it introduced virtual golf via Toptracer and has seen more and more people enjoy playing the world's top courses from their driving range bay. It has encouraged golfers to practice more often and stay for longer – and ignore cold winter weather.

# 14

## Alternative Playing Formats

Fun, alternative playing formats are refreshing and liven up a game of golf.

They include: greensomes, texas scramble, the peoria system, bingo, bango, bongo – and more.

Some are suitable for team golf, others for singles.

***We provide guidance on alternative formats.***

**Learn more** →

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# 15

## Get into Golf Challenge Scorecard

The challenge scorecard provides a novel scoring system where beginners can learn the basic rules and etiquette of the game as part of a fun and social 9-hole event. Instead of counting shots, the scorecard offers a number of challenges for beginners to undertake. They range from hitting the green or getting out of the bunker in one. The Challenge Scorecard works particularly well with women to help them take their

first steps on the golf course and can be offered as part of a new players' event.

The challenges help to build beginners' confidence on the course in a pressure-free environment with others who are all doing the same thing! They're a good way to help novices become regular players.

**Learn more** →

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# 16

## British Speedgolf

Speedgolf is the fast, fun version of the game where you can play 9 holes in under 40 minutes by jogging between shots. The challenge is balancing your running pace with your ability to quickly and accurately play your shots. The aim is to achieve the lowest possible sum of shots combined with the time taken to run the golf course. This combined total gives you a Speedgolf score.

It's ideal for members and non-members who want a faster, more athletic version of the game.

**Learn more** →

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## OTHER IDEAS

### TRENTHAM PARK GOLF CLUB

When the club hosted a Speedgolf event over seven holes it attracted 12 players, many of whom do not play golf as their first sport. The appeal, they said, was a "fun and different approach to golf which provides a good level of exercise and

enjoyment in a short period of time".

Seven holes took players on average between 28-45 minutes to complete. All said they would do it again if given the opportunity.

17

#### Night Golf

Night golf can be a great way of attracting younger people or those new to the game and makes a good social event.

Technology has lifted the game to a whole new level with fairways, tees, paths and greens lit up with coloured LED lights to provide a visually stunning experience.

18

#### Social

And finally.....social events could include outdoor or indoor skills activities and challenges using adapted equipment if appropriate.

It all helps to make the club a social hub where people enjoy getting together and getting what they want from golf.

# Back in the clubhouse

## Promoting your Ways to Play

**So, you've decided on the ways to play which your club can offer.**

**You've decided on the customers you want to target.**

**Now you need to let everyone know what you're doing.**

Here's some ways to promote your activities:

- Advertise on your club's website
- Advertise in your club – noticeboards and changing rooms are great
- Tell your members and ask them to bring their friends along. You can do this personally or through your email newsletters.

- Display locally, for example at doctors' surgeries, local businesses, schools, community groups, hairdressers and gyms.
- Promote using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We offer video tutorials to help you get the most out of social media with a focus on boosting Get into Golf activities, but the skills are transferable.

Sign up 

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**We recommend you promote your activities at least 6-8 weeks prior to the start date. For larger activities or events this should be longer.**



# Creating an effective poster

England Golf has a template poster available which can be edited using the guidance below or alternatively you may wish to create your own poster.

It's important that the text and information included in your poster follow a logical and hierarchical order.

When we approach new information we tend to read from top to bottom and from left to right. Therefore, it makes good sense to lay your work out in this order.

Ensure that your font size is large enough to be legible from at least a metre away (e.g. 16 - 18 for the text and 24 - 36 for titles).

Keep it simple, clear and concise.

Obviously the poster needs to be eye-catching and attractive, but filling up your poster space with excess clutter can be distracting for the viewer.

If you want to create your own poster below are some tips on creating effective posters:

- Choose an image that works well with the type of activity being promoted
- Keep it simple. Less is more!
- You want the reader to be able to take in all the important information in one quick (two minute) read / glance
- Make sure that everything is clear and straightforward – make it easy for the reader – they'll get bored if there's too much writing or if it's too hard work

**Type of information** to include could be;

- Who is it for? Families, open to all, pairs
- Cost – explain what is included, eg lunch, refreshments, any prizes
- Clear call to action - how to book and where to find out further information
- Description of the activity – keep it simple and don't include too much information or jargon
- Timings – be clear and advise if people need to arrive earlier
- How to book - Make it easy to book and pay! Include who to contact, their telephone number and email address.



 01526 354500

 [info@englandgolf.org](mailto:info@englandgolf.org)

[www.englandgolf.org](http://www.englandgolf.org)



The National Golf Centre  
The Broadway  
Woodhall Spa  
Lincolnshire LN10 6PU