

THE SAMPLE COUNTRY CLUB

Golf Course Conditions and Maintenance Standards 2017

A Guide for Implementing Golf Course
Conditions and Maintenance Standards for Golf
Course Maintenance Operations

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This document is intended to act only as a guideline for GOLF COURSE CONDITIONS and MAINTENANCE STANDARDS for golf course maintenance operations. Not every operational situation is possible to forecast as golf course management is unique to each golf course property.

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FORWARD

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The following is a sample of golf course maintenance standards that can be modified for any individual club or golf course. It is not intended to be all-inclusive but may be an excellent starting point for clubs or courses that have no set of standards in place. The superintendent's job is difficult enough without knowing exactly what's expected. These standards can be helpful to communicate to memberships, committees and boards, what needs to occur to maintain a quality golf course.

A comprehensive set of standards also sets into motion a process that makes resource allocation much more pragmatic. The superintendent, committee and other stakeholders can ascertain a value of each standard and evaluate the need based on membership desires and funds needed to accomplish. If superintendents are to reduce expenditures it may be simpler to list the standards, the value of each goal and let the committee or board of directors to make the cuts based on the superintendents recommendation.

The standards also justify expenditures based on a quantified level of maintenance. For instance, if a superintendent exceeds the standards and remains within budget, a case can be made for additional compensation for the superintendent based on management expertise. A prearrange agreement might be considered by the board of directors to share in savings to the club based on achievement of standards and reduction of expenditures.

Your set of standards could include all aspects of your golf maintenance business, from sustainability to golf course etiquette. If it's important to you as the golf course superintendent - it should be stated in your golf course maintenance standards. I hope this information is helpful.

GOLF COURSE CONDITIONS and MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

Mission Statement

To prepare, preserve and maintain the golf course as the major club asset and to afford the opportunity to provide enjoyment to the clubs members and guests.

To protect, understand and fulfill the golf course architect's and membership's vision and goals for a fair golf challenge for all levels of player abilities.

To plan and execute programs and procedures that maintains a superior golf experience as well as enhances and protects the environment, property, community, athletics, and aesthetics of the club.

Objectives

The course will be maintained that excellent playing conditions exist for both high and low handicap golfer. The golf course should play and be prepared daily and identically to the prescribed standards, within weather limitations, on a continued basis and at above standards for certain events. These events will be determined annually by the Golf and Green Committees. Special preparations will be prescribed as needed to conform to the events being conducted. The golf course superintendent will prepare a report outlining all needed exceptions to normal and will include a cost estimate for achieving these exceptional standards.

The goal of maintenance is the least amount of player interference and golf course inconsistencies as possible. Environmental stewardship and resource management will impact the selection and application of products to the golf course.

These objectives will be met within an overall annual capital and maintenance budget prepared by the Golf Course Superintendent, Green Committee and, General Manger, approved by the Board of Directors. Any variance to the annual maintenance budget will be approved prior to the expenditures. The approval process will include green committee chair and general manager.

Vision

“In our future, we will enrich the heritage and prestige of The Sample Golf and Country Club. We will maintain and manage our financial resources, club assets and equipment to provide an exceptional golf experience to all members. We will offer state-of-the-art golf facilities and continually strive to effectively communicate with the membership. We will protect the original golf course design and make changes in carefully measured increments with approvals based on membership consensus and keeping mindful of original golf course architects design philosophies.”

THE SEASONS NORMALLY DEFINED

SPRING.....MARCH 15TH THROUGH MAY 15TH
REGULAR GOLF SEASON (SUMMER).....MAY 16TH THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15TH
FALL.....SEPTEMBER 16TH THROUGH OCTOBER 31ST
WINTER.....NOVEMBER 1ST THROUGH MARCH 14TH

GREENS

Green surfaces are the ultimate measure of all great golf courses. Every effort will be made to protect and preserve the finest greens surfaces available. The objective is putting surfaces with evenly comparable pace, smoothness, firmness and overall uniformity. The greens will be closely mowed each day the club is open for membership play within the regular golfing season. Green speed and/or pace will be determined by the golf course superintendent and the green committee prior to the golf season.

Standards

- 1) Greens will be mowed daily during the regular golf season. Spring and fall heights of cut will be .130 of an inch with grooved rollers. The heights will be lowered based on weather and growing conditions in preparation for the regular golf season (generally .115 of an inch). Health conditions and weather permitting, the height will be lowered to .100 of an inch with solid / smooth rollers and will remain throughout the regular golf season with a separate outer ring cut at .125 of an inch.
- 2) During the regular golf season greens will only be hand mowed with Toro Flex 21 walking greens mower. They will be double mowed and rolled on weekends to maintain exceptional conditioning and speed / pace objectives. Grooming and / or verticutting will be used periodically to maintain upright growth habits and overall turf health.

Greens Standards (continued)

- 3) Greens speed will be measured Wednesday, Friday and Sunday with a USGA approved Stimpmeter in order to maintain consistency and minimum speed objectives. These readings will be included into the Superintendent's monthly quality report. A representative sample will be obtained from the same three greens on the front nine and the practice green and three greens on the back nine throughout the regular golf season. Care will be taken to obtain these readings from the approximate same positions on each designated green.
- 4) Growth regulators may be applied as an aid to increase green speed, reduce excessive growth, stress condition turf and increase turf density.
- 5) Relative Green Speed Minimums (weather permitting):
 - Regular Play: 120 inches of roll as measured by USGA Stimpmeter.
 - Weekend Play: 132 inches of roll as measured by USGA Stimpmeter.
 - Tournament Play: 138 inches of roll as measured by USGA Stimpmeter.
- 6) Greens will be topdressed bi-weekly for smoothness, firmness and thatch management. Additional topdressing may be required for preparation of tournament conditions.
- 7) Greens will be aerated using Toro 648 walking aerifier, as follows: All eighteen greens and practice chipping green and practice putting green will be aerated in the spring using ½ of an inch / hollow tines. This operation will be completed within a three day period (weather permitting). Late fall aeration will consist of .5 x 10 inch deep drill tines covering all eighteen greens and practice chipping green and practice putting green over a three day period (weather permitting). Topdressing sand will be fully and carefully incorporated into the aerification holes.
- 8) Greens will be irrigated sparingly to promote turf rooting, drought tolerance, and minimal disease problems. Greens will be firm and the soil dry whenever possible.
- 9) Greens will be checked daily with hole-cups being changed each day throughout the regular golf season.

Greens Standards (continued)

- 10) Greens will be monitored throughout the winter months (November to March) to determine if they can remain open for play. All efforts will be taken to ensure a minimum of nine holes will be open for play during the winter months (weather permitting).

The general rule is that the greens will remain open whenever possible. Alternate greens will be required when weather conditions dictate that severe damage will occur if greens are played on.

- 11) Greens apron and collars will be maintained with adequate and consistent cushion of rough from collar to bunker. Collars will be mowed at .437 of an inch during the spring and will be lowered to .375 of an inch on or about May 15th. The collars will generally be 30 inches wide.
- 12) Greens will receive a spiking or venting as needed throughout the regular golf season to facilitate soil water penetration and gas exchange within the root-zone.

TEES

- 1) The objective is a teeing surface that is smooth, firm, level and without weeds. Tees will be closely mowed and consist of predominately bentgrass. A seed and soil divot repair program will take place continually during the regular golf season to promote a level consistent teeing surface. A diligent effort will be taken to maintain tees smooth and firm surface with excellent turf density.

Standards

- 1) Tees will be mowed at .437 of an inch during the spring and lowered to .375 of an inch on or about during the regular golf season. Tees will generally be mowed four days a week depending on growth and weather conditions.
- 2) The turfgrass quality will take priority over competition from tree roots, shade and restricted air circulation. Trees will be thinned, pruned or removed on an as needed basis to ensure the highest quality of turf.
- 3) Divots will be attended to daily; accessories will be checked daily for service as divots are repaired.

Tees Standards (continued)

- 4) Tees will be aggressively aerated in the spring and fall using a Toro 648 walking aerifier with ½ of an inch / hollow tine. Topdressing sand will be incorporated into aeration holes.
- 5) Tee blocks will be checked daily and changed as needed to distribute wear and utilize the greatest amount of teeing space.
- 6) Tee blocks will be placed in perpendicular to the direction of the golf hole and be maintained at a width of no less than eight feet.
- 7) Four sets of tee blocks will be utilized, red = front, white = front middle, blue = front back, black = back.

FAIRWAYS

The objective is fairway turf populated with bentgrass with good density, uniformity, smoothness and firmness. An annual program to curtail infestation of annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is in place to aid in the manageability and playability of fairway turf.

Standards

- 1) Fairways will be mowed at .5 of an inch during the spring and fall months and will be lowered to .375 of an inch on or about the regular golf season.
- 2) Clippings will be collected during the regular golf season.
- 3) Fairways will be aerated aggressively in the late fall with the Toro 1298 at a 3 inch depth removing a soil core of not less than .5 of an inch.
- 4) Growth regulators will be used in the summer and fall months to enhance bentgrass density and to reduce irrigation and clippings. Only organic fertilizers will be used on fairways during the growing season to promote root density.
- 5) Fairways will be irrigated for turfgrass health only, not for color. Fairways may be somewhat off color throughout the summer months.

Fairway Standards (continued)

- 6) Fairway divots will be maintained throughout the season from 200 yards and in and in major landing areas. All carts will be fitted with divot bottle and divot mix provided by the golf course maintenance department and maintained by the Golf Shop Staff.
- 7) All preventative, necessary chemical applications will be applied as early as possible so as to cause as little interference with play as possible.
- 8) All chemical applications will be applied under the direction of a state licensed applicator.
- 9) All fungal disease programs will be preventive in nature and applied in anticipation of a particular disease onset.
- 10) Every effort will be made to apply the most effective and safe products into the disease suppression and control program.

ROUGH

The objective is to maintain rough at minimal levels while not compromising the aesthetics, severity of penalty, and speed of play.

Standards

- 1) The rough will be maintained at a height between 2.25 and 2.5 inches with gang rotary mowers. The courtesy or intermediate cut of rough (area roughly 12' around fairway) will be maintained at 1.75 inches and be mowed two times per week.
- 2) The rough bordering fairway bunkers will be maintained regularly to preserve a proper turf buffer between the bunker and fairway.
- 3) The rough will be mowed at least once per week when actively growing with perimeters of fairways cut a second time if needed. Growth regulators will be used in the spring and fall, to slow the growth rate of the turf around the fairway perimeter.
- 4) Large remote areas of rough will be cut as needed throughout the regular golf season.

Rough Standards (continued)

- 5) Broadleaf weeds will be controlled primarily in the spring and fall and as needed to promote aesthetics, playability and uniformity.
- 6) Outer edges and O.B. areas of course will be mowed as required based on weather conditions: these areas include wooded areas with turf, fence edges, and out of the way native / meadow areas.
- 7) All O.B. areas will be maintained to visually delineate out of bounds areas. These will be staked with a white 2 x 2 inch stake with four feet protruding above ground. Each stake will be visible from the adjacent stake.
- 8) All water hazards will be marked with yellow stakes, 2 x 2 inch with four feet protruding above ground. Each stake will be visible from the adjacent stake. Yellow paint will be applied to the ground between each stake to delineate the edge of each hazard.
- 9) Lateral hazards will be marked with red stakes, 2 x 2 inch with four feet protruding above ground. Each stake will be visible from the adjacent stake. Red paint will be applied to the ground between each stake to delineate the edge of each hazard.
- 10) Painting of water and lateral hazards will occur bi-weekly during the regular golf season.
- 11) Rough may be seeded in the early fall as traffic and weather dictate.

SAND BUNKERS

The objective is to have sand bunkers with the proper amount of sand well distributed within the sand bunker without rocks or other loose impediments. The bunkers should aesthetically complement the architect's original design and vision.

Standards

The bunkers will be checked daily for smoothness. Raking will consist of hand raking when needed depending on amount of play. Mechanical raking machine will be used periodically (weekly) to loosen compacted sand and to control weeds.

Sand Bunker Standards (continued)

- 1) Fairway bunkers will be hand-raked at all times to ensure sand firmness.
- 2) The bunker edges facing the green will be maintained with a crisp edge consisting of a 2 to 3 inch lip. The rear edges will be maintained with the sand reasonably flush with the turf.
- 3) Stones and debris removal will be tended to daily with regular maintenance.
- 4) The sand depth will be maintained at no less than 4 inches on the floor of the bunker and 3 inches on steep faces. A report of sand distribution, which includes regular depth measurements, will be included in the Superintendents monthly quality report.
- 5) The bunkers will have adequate rakes around them. Large bunkers will have at least 3 rakes and small bunkers will have at least 2.
- 6) The bunker banks will be over-seeded annually with drought tolerant turf or re-sodded as needed in the fall.
- 7) Bunker banks will receive multiple applications of growth regulators mixed with fertilizer to reduce hand mower maintenance and to insure good turf density.
- 8) Bunker rakes are to be placed inside bunkers facing the direction of play.
- 9) The edges of bunkers will be regularly fertilized with organic products in addition to the regular rough fertilization program.
- 10) A preventive insecticide will be used along with fairway spray applications.

TREES

- 1) Trees in high traffic areas (clubhouse, walk paths, etc.) will be checked regularly for dead wood, weak limbs, and hanging limbs and maintained as necessary.
- 2) Key trees will be fertilized and or mulched annually. Poison ivy and vines will be controlled as needed.

Trees (continued)

- 3) Evergreen trees will be limbed up for aesthetics, maintenance, and ease play and finding lost golf balls.
- 4) Trees will be pruned as time permits.
- 5) Large areas of woods will be thinned to enhance turf quality, aesthetics and the overall health of the other trees in the area.
- 6) Only trees and shrubs that thrive in our climatic zone will be planted.
- 7) Most tree trimming and tree maintenance work will occur in the winter months.

PREPARATION FOR DAILY PLAY / GOLF COURSE SET-UP

The objective is to use various hole-cup positions and tee block placements that challenge the golfers thinking, maintains quality of turf by spreading wear and reducing stress over various cupping and teeing areas.

Standards

Course setup not including daily mowing practices:

- 1) Greens will be checked with cups being changed daily in-season and off-season as needed. The course will be setup with an overall balance between the cups and tee position to maintain appropriate yardage. On weekends and during special member tournaments, tee blocks will be located at or near the monuments.
- 2) Tournament setup: Tournament Coordinator will be given the option of choosing flagstick / hole-cup placements utilizing a standard form used for such placements. Tournament Officials may leave it up to the Green Department for placements, these decisions should be made well in advance of the event (5-10 days) to avoid cupping these areas leading up to the tournament.
- 3) Tee blocks will be checked daily and changed as needed to utilize the greatest amount of teeing space. A balance between the tee blocks and flagstick / hole-cup positions will be maintained (6 Forward, 6 Middle and 6 Rear) to maintain the integrity of course distance.

Preparation / Set-Up (continued)

4) Course set-up will include:

- *Check and cleaning of ballwashers*
- *Moving of tee markers*
- *Hole-cup changing*
- *Trash pick-up*
- *Ballmark repair*
- *Pick-up of broken tees*
- *Re-fill water on course*
- *Rearrangement of directional ropes and signage*

PRACTICE AREAS

The objective is to maintain the practice areas in a condition comparable to the golf course.

Standards:

- 1) The practice tee will be mowed twice per week at .375 of an inch.
- 2) The Golf Shop Staff will be responsible for distributing traffic, moving range stanchions and the safe separation of the golfers.
- 3) The short iron practice area will be maintained to the same standards as the golf course fairway turf.
- 4) A clean ball pick-up will occur on Sunday and Wednesday evening for mowing on Monday and Thursday morning.
- 5) The range will be closed Thursday morning until 9:30 am.

EQUIPMENT TRAINING AND SAFETY

- 1) The department will comply with OSHA regulations pertaining to safety meetings and equipment operations.
- 2) Equipment will be maintained in safe operating condition.

Equipment Training and Safety (continued)

- 3) The department will have monthly safety meetings concerning first aid procedures, safety, etc. Accurate records of topics and signatures of attendees will be kept.
- 4) Safety glasses will be required for all tasks where eyes may be exposed to any hazards.
- 5) Steel-toed shoes will be required for specific tasks: especially rotary mowing and chainsaw operation.
- 6) New employees will be instructed on safe operation of all equipment.
- 7) No individual without a valid driver's license (or of age) will operate any equipment.
- 8) Pesticide applications will be performed under the direction of a state licensed applicator.
- 9) Hard hats will be worn at all times when working in or near play.
- 10) No employee with points on his or her license associated with alcohol will operate vehicles off the property.
- 11) The Superintendent will provide regular reviews of each employee (at least every six months) and will include the review schedule in his monthly report to the Committee.

CARTS

- 1) The course will be developed and maintained to accommodate cart usage.
- 2) Wet condition tracks will be developed in out of way areas to make it possible to provide minimal cart restrictions because of weather conditions.
- 3) Carts will be expected to use paths wherever possible.
- 4) Rope and signage will be used to direct cart traffic wherever necessary.

Carts (continued)

- 5) Cart traffic will be allowed to roam (except under extreme wet conditions). During July and August carts may be restricted to the rough on a day-to-day basis; this decision will be made by the Superintendent.

CLUBHOUSE GROUNDS

- 1) Flowerbeds will be maintained, edged and mulched as needed.
- 2) Grass areas will be mowed as needed.
- 3) Entire clubhouse area will be checked daily for trash and other unsightly debris.
- 4) Annuals and perennials will be planted in appropriate areas. Also, an assortment of other planters will be located throughout the area.
- 5) We will have an ornamental horticulturalist on staff with a landscaping background to professionally maintain the intricate landscapes around the club grounds.

TENNIS COURTS

- 1) Turf areas will be maintained as needed.
- 2) Flowerbeds will be maintained as needed. Annuals and perennials will be planted as needed.
- 3) Fences, gates and other hardware will be kept in proper working condition by club building maintenance staff.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM AND WATER FEATURES

- 1) The turf watering system will be maintained in like new condition.
- 2) The system will be programmed to operate during non-play hours as weather dictates.

Irrigation System and Water Features (continued)

- 3) All leaks will be repair as soon as possible.
- 4) The systems pump station will be inspected by trained professionals prior to each season activation.
- 5) Sprinkler heads will be inspected and adjusted to maintain proper watering patterns.
- 6) Irrigation audits will be performed systematically on portions of the golf course each year to assure system efficiency.
- 7) Ponds will be treated to eliminate unwanted odors and aquatic weeds.
- 8) Every effort will be made not to overwater and cause wet areas on the course.

SUSTAINABLE GOLF MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

- 1) Plastic, paper, cardboard, aluminum, glass and organic waste will be recycled.
- 2) Engine waste oil will be used to heat maintenance building.
- 3) Tree trimmings will be used to mulch around planting beds and trees as needed one property.
- 4) All light switches will be motion activated in storage rooms and offices.
- 5) Thermostats will be set at 78° F during summer and 64° F in winter.
- 6) Set back thermostats will be in use to reduce heating and cooling during hours of turf care center inactivity.
- 7) Water heaters will be set at 110° F.
- 8) Charging of electric utility carts will take place at low demand times of day.
- 9) Irrigation system will operate at low demand times if possible.

Sustainable Golf maintenance Practices (continued)

- 10) Irrigation program will be entered to ramp-up pumps to highest possible output to take advantage of high efficiency motors.
- 11) Irrigation leaks will be repaired with the highest priority to save water and power.
- 12) Compact Florescent Lighting will be used wherever possible.
- 13) Drainage water will be held on property whenever possible and used as irrigation supply.
- 14) Integrated Pest Management will be practiced whenever possible to lessen chemical use on the golf course.
- 15) Organic fertilizers will be used whenever possible.
- 16) Perform energy audits each year to track and improve energy efficiency in our buildings.
- 17) Meet quarterly with other club management to plan further sustainability practices in the future.
- 18) A tall plant buffer is to be maintained between manicured turf and water features where practical to act as a living filter for sheet drainage occurring across golf course.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 1) Members will be informed of maintenance activities through bulletin board postings and periodic articles in the club's newsletter and club's website.
- 2) The golf course will be closed according to the stated weather policy.
- 3) Erosion around bridges will be tended to, especially from a safety standpoint.
- 4) Integrated Pest Management (utilizing many options for pest control) will be a continued goal.
- 5) Staffing: we will continue to develop a well-organized and efficient team-oriented staff, conscious of the cost/benefit aspects of our operation.

Miscellaneous (continued)

- 6) The staff will be compensated for consistent and or above local industry standards consistent with their work, ethic, dedication and efficiency.
- 7) Bathrooms and break-rooms in the maintenance facility will be cleaned at the conclusion of each day.

GOLF COURSE ETIQUETTE

While implementing these standards, efforts by the golf course maintenance staff will be greatly enhanced by members and guest who practice proper golf etiquette. These efforts by all who use the golf facilities include:

1. Divots made or observed by a player must be carefully replaced and pressed down. Use divot mix in the fairways and tee boxes only.
2. Each player should repair at least one ball mark on every putting green.
3. Players should be careful not to scuff the putting green while walking. Upon the completion of a hole, scuff marks (especially those near the hole) should be repaired out of courtesy to following players.
4. Remove and replace the flagstick carefully to avoid damaging the hole or the putting green. Refrain from dropping the flagstick on the putting green.
5. Footprints and club marks made in sand bunkers should be filled and raked smooth. Players should refrain from walking up the faces of sand bunkers. Enter and leave sand bunkers from the low or flat side.
6. While players may assign caddies to do any of the previously noted tasks, it is the player's responsibility to ensure they are done and done properly.
7. Do not litter the golf course. Place trash in the containers provided.
8. Parents must not permit their children to run at large on the golf course or the practice putting green.
9. Dogs are not permitted to run at large on club property.
10. All matters relating to the golf course and its upkeep are the responsibility of the Green Committee. Suggestions, questions and / or complaints should be made to the Chairman in writing. Please do not contact the Green Superintendent or his staff directly.
11. Obey all cart instructions especially during extreme conditions. Carts should remain on paths on all par 3s. Try to use cart paths wherever they are provided and always exit fairways to the side of the cart path.
12. Keep carts at least 25 yards from front of greens. Do not drive carts in areas that are steep and dangerous, use caution and common sense.

A PARTING NOTE

Unlike many sports, golf is played, for the most part, without the supervision of a referee or umpire. The game relies on the integrity of the individual to show consideration for other players and to abide by the Rules.

All players should conduct themselves in a disciplined manner, demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at all times, irrespective of how competitive they may be. This is the spirit of the game of golf.

The above standards will vary greatly from course-to-course. Use these samples as a starting point and fashion a set of golf maintenance standards specifically for your golf club. The best designed standards are formulated with input from the green committee, golf course superintendent, and board of directors. Your clubs' standards will serve your membership well, if annually the standards are adjusted to meet specific needs, programs and projects.