

Golf car or golf cart?

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I must admit that I hesitated to write a column about golf carts because I simply wasn't sure much could be written on this topic. After all, it's just a cart like any other cart. Just the same, a few weeks ago after teaching a golf lesson at the driving range of a local golf course; I began writing my article asking myself one question. As it turns out, this question proved how wrong I was to have hesitated writing on this subject after all. The question was simply, 'Why do we call golf carts, golf carts?'

A cart by definition is a small wheeled vehicle typically pushed or pulled by hand such as a shopping cart. It can also be a two-wheeled vehicle drawn by an animal, used for farm work or for transporting goods.

However, the light vehicle we know as a golf 'cart' is motorized, so should it not be called a 'golf car'? Well, since 'carts' are not self-propelled, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) agrees with me. This organization established in 1918 is a private non-profit organization that oversees the development of voluntary consensus standards for products and services.

So the golf cart is actually the one with two or three wheels that you push or pull or today even use with the help of a remote control while walking the golf course. So, that being settled let's get back to the 'golf car'.

Merle Williams of Long Beach, California is most quoted as being the early innovator of the electric golf car. He acquired this expertise from the production of electric cars due to gasoline rationing of the 40s. Then in 1951 his 'Marketeer Company' began production of an electric golf car in Redlands, California.

Today 'golf cars' are produced by many companies namely Cushman, Club Car, Taylor-Dunn, Harley-Davidson, Yamaha Golf Car and CT&T. The prices vary between \$3,000 and \$20,000 per car depending on the accessories ordered with it and most are now powered by 4 stroke engines.

Because of its weight and the fact that it rolls on rubber tires and it is motorized, the 'golf car' is a vehicle most likely to cause damage to the golf course when not used properly.

So before you speed off à la Mario Andretti to the first tee, make sure you know what each course's cart rules are. On the specific day of your round of golf find out if you are allowed to drive the car onto the fairways or is the golf course enforcing restrictions due to specific course conditions.

Other than you using a designated cart path, here are a few reminders of things you should never do in a motorized golf car:

- Never drive the car within hazard boundary lines, close to water hazards, bunkers or within areas leading to the greens because these areas are especially susceptible to damage by the wheels of the golf cars.
- Never drive onto or close to tee boxes.
- Never drive the car through mud or water holes on or off the fairway.
- Never joyride in a 'golf car' to avoid potentially serious injuries.

Remember, it's a motorized vehicle. Many courses will post notices about specific golf car rules depending on conditions at the course that day.

On 'cart path only' days keep your car on the designated cart path at all times. Many courses require golfers to use their golf cars to maintain the pace of play.

Drive the golf car on the designated path until you are parallel to where your golf ball rests on the course. Then, walk to your ball while bringing a couple of clubs with you to have some options when you reach it.

On other days the 90-degree rule may be in effect which means that the golf course is allowing golf cars onto the grass but only at 90-degree angles from the cart path. Stay on the cart path until you are level with your golf ball, then make a 90 degree turn off the cart path and drive straight across to the ball.

A course may post signs that designate certain holes off limits to golf cars or ask that cars not be driven beyond certain points on the course. When this condition is encountered simply return to the cart path.

Golf car etiquette also asks that players stay on designated cart paths on par 3 holes.

Observe common sense driving rules, just as you do in your vehicle on the road. If a golfer is about to swing or attempt a putt, slow down as you approach and stop the car until the golfer has completed his or her stroke.

Golf cars are noisy so be courteous.

So whether you're playing a course pulling a golf cart or driving a golf car remember to do so safely and most importantly have some fun.

A SMILE MOMENT: You know it's too wet to play golf when your cart capsizes.

To book your next golf lesson, contact Lisa today via e-mail at lisalgolffpro@gmail.com or by telephone at 506-232-0728 or visit her website at www.PrivateGolfPro.ca .

Lisa Elle is the PrivateGolfPro who teaches in the greater Moncton area and southeast NB. Her unique golf service assists all levels of players with their golf swing. Her golf articles have been published in print and on websites across Canada. She is also the face of the charitable trust 'Lisa's Fund - a breath for Cystic Fibrosis'.