

Take time for the golf range

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Canada is home to 2,346 public and private golf facilities, ranking it third in the world in total supply by country.

Here are a few statistics: there are 34,011 golf facilities in the world. More than 18,600 of those facilities are located in 204 countries outside of the United States. Canada is home to 13% of that worldwide supply (excluding the U.S.) and is one of only seven countries with more than 500 golf facilities. Even when factoring in the United States, which has 15,372 facilities, Canada comprises 7% of the total world supply. While golf is certainly a worldwide game, supply remains largely concentrated among the most golf-developed nations. In fact, excluding the United States' supply, 70% of all golf facilities are located in only 10 countries, and 85% of all facilities worldwide are located in 20 nations.

That's a lot of facilities and to practice the sport you should visit a golf driving range.

The Royal Montreal Golf Club was founded November 4th, 1873, commenced play in 1874 as the first golf club in North America with a driving range facility. The first independent driving range in the US was located in Flourtown, PA. It was a standalone facility owned by Robert Seka which he opened in the 1950's but is no longer in operation. However, the Pinehurst Resort and Country Club in North Carolina refers to the 1930's when its driving range was called maniac hill.

The golf driving ranges were developed as commercial establishments at which golfers and aspiring golfers could, for a small fee, practice their swings.

To be successful in golf as in anything else in life, you need to practice. Time spent at the practice range will most certainly improve your golf game.

There are various types of driving ranges; most will look something like this:

- Although there is no standard size most will likely be between 300 and 700 yards.
- Most have real grass for their greens.
- The practice bays are arranged to give the golfer enough space to safely execute a golf swing consisting of natural grass or synthetic mats.
- The synthetic mats are normally 5' by 5' and are generally used at indoor facilities.
- High traffic practice ranges will also use synthetic mats outdoors to preserve the natural grass.
- Flags and markers are also part of a driving range. They are normally color coded based on distance.

Location

It is important to find a range you are comfortable practicing at and is located nearby close to your home or office. Make it a habit to visit the range at least once a week.

What I consider a full range is one that also includes a short game area to allow you to practice your short game and bunker shots. A good tip is to practice shots with each club in your golf bag.

Warm up

Prevent stiffness and injuries with good stretching exercises before hitting any golf balls. A few minutes of shoulder, arms and leg stretches are all you need to warm up your muscles.

Range balls

Golf balls made for driving ranges feature very hard covers making them more resistant and durable. This also means that your distance will be affected when compared to using your regular golf balls.

Safety First

Remember that golf consists of a club and a very hard ball, a combination that can result in serious injuries if we don't adopt very simple safety precautions. Here are a few tips for range safety:

- Be aware of who and what is around you at all times. Accidents happen when we don't pay attention.
- Ensure you have enough space between you and the person next to you to complete your golf swing.
- Before you hit that golf ball look behind you to make sure no one is within striking distance.
- Never walk ahead on the range to retrieve a golf ball. You risk being hit by a stray ball.
- When someone is hitting their ball always stay behind that person.

Range Etiquette

As with most public spaces, a golf range is a great place for people to meet, therefore, always be respectful and courteous to others.

- If you are hitting from a grassy area, replace your divots as much as possible.
- Respect others' space. Put your clubs within your bay area.
- Curb that cell phone whenever possible.
- Turn down the music. I've seen golfers with their iPods on so loud you could hear what is playing.

The range is a great place to improve your game. Make sure to spend some practice time during the golf season. It will show on your scorecard.

A SMILE MOMENT: Bruce Lancy once said: "I'll always remember the day I broke ninety. I had a few beers in the clubhouse and was so excited I forgot to play the back nine".

To book your next golf lesson, contact Lisa today via e-mail at lisalgolpro@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'.