



What Should I Know About Golf Cart Turf Compaction

After paying your green fee and cart fee, but before you clamber into that golf cart and speed off, make sure you know what the courses cart rules are. We will go over the variations of golf cart rules you might see posted at your local course, but first, here are a couple of reminders of things you should NOT DO in a golf cart.

Do not drive the cart within 30 yards of greens unless you are on the cart path.

Do not drive within the hazard boundary lines or within about 10 yards of water hazards or bunkers.

Do not drive onto or close to tee boxes unless on the cart path. There seems to be a natural tendency for drivers to pull their golf carts off the edge of the cart path. Keep all 4 wheels on the cart path to prevent compacting and killing the grass along the cart path.

Do not drive through mud on or off the fairway or through casual water on any part of the golf course (unless it's a little bit of water over a paved cart path).

Do not drive the golf cart on Par 3 fairways, even if the course allows carts onto the fairway on par 4s and par 5s, stay off the grass on par 3s.

Do not drive or put the cart in reverse near a golfer who is about to swing or attempting a putt. Slow down and stop until the golfer has completed their stroke.

Do not sit in your golf cart next to the green after you finish the hole. Move on to the next teeing ground before posting the scores.

Do not take a cart by yourself if there is room on another cart. Additional carts on the course causes additional damage to the course.

Do not go joyriding in the golf cart. In other words, don't act stupid. People do get injured, even killed in golf carts, so pay attention. Should you damage a golf cart you may be liable for the damages.

Common Golf Cart Rules at Courses

Cart Path Only

A “cart path only rule” is exactly what it sounds like. Keep you cart on the designated cart path at all times. Do not drive onto the grass. There are always some who believe they are above the rules and they are the ones who do the most damage to the golf course and usually the first to complain about the condition of the golf course.

90 Degree Rule

The “90 degree rule” means that the golf course is allowing carts onto the grass but only at 90 degree angles from the cart path. In other words, don't drive the golf cart up the middle of the fairway from the tee box to your golf ball. Stay on the cart path until you are even with your golf ball , then make a 90 degree turn of the cart path and drive straight across to your ball. Return to the cart path in the same manner. The 90 degree rule is the default cart path rule at our golf course.

Cart Path only on Holes X and X

A course may post signs that designate certain holes of limits to carts, for example “Carts on Path only on Holes 9 and 10 today” or some other combination of off limit holes.

No Carts Beyond This Point

This sign is one you might see as you close in on the green. Courses do not want golf carts near the putting greens!

Why Cart Rules are Necessary

Now that we have covered what you should and should not do in a golf cart, we will cover why these golf cart rules are necessary.

There is a detrimental side to golf cart traffic, predominantly increase turf wear and soil compaction. Golfers rarely realize or understand the amount of wear or damage that can be caused by golf cart traffic.

If traffic is heavy enough or weather conditions bad enough, carts can cause turf to wilt to the point of no return, leaving thin weak areas open to encroachment from *Poa Annua*, Goosegrass and other weeds.

Another form of turf/soil injury that may be more debilitating in the long run, is the effect of cart traffic on turf/soil structure. Traffic on turf/soil, especially when wet, can result in compaction problems that inhibit good water infiltration, reduced oxygen content, and restricted growth. The turf will become weak and subject to disease and weed encroachment.

Golfers typically do not like the cart path only rule and often wonder how this decision is made. Conflicts on when to allow cart traffic even arise between the pro and golf course superintendent. Following a major rain event, when the soil is between 80% and 100% saturated, rutting will be common. Once the soil drops to below 80% of potential saturation, rutting will become less evident but soil compaction will be at its maximum. As saturation drops from 80% to 50% (typically over a 48 hour period) compaction potential recedes.

There is no question that golf carts hurt fairways, especially at courses that average more than 30,000 rounds per year. So help improve the condition of your golf course by following your golf course cart rules.