

Pace of Play

What is Pace of Play?

Pace of Play (POP) is simply a measure of the time for a group to play a round of golf.

Many courses will have a suggested or Target Pace of Play on their scorecard. Some courses may have a suggested POP for the front nine and another for the back nine. Other courses may have POP for each hole as well.

Why is Pace of Play Important?

Metro Seniors want golf with Fun and Fellowship. Constantly waiting for someone else to play is a quick way to take the Fun and Fellowship out. Everyone comes to play. We want to step up to the ball and hit it and move on. We don't want to wait while watching someone ahead searching for balls, selecting clubs, stepping off yardage, cleaning clubs, or simply wasting everyone's time.

The Course Target POP is important to the courses as it will set tee times and course capacity. This is revenue and profit. Play duration an hour over Target POP could mean losing \$1000 or more for the day. Slow play is really bad for customer satisfaction. Nobody wants a 5 hour round in the heat of the summer.

Players want predictable tee times and finish times. Groups playing times longer than the suggested / Target POP will slow play and tee times for all following groups. This may result in some groups leaving the course before finishing the round.

Finally, if Metro is consistently SLOW, courses may increase fees to offset lost revenue or simply decide to drop from our schedule.

What Affects Pace of Play?

POP is directly affected by:

- Course Design – Distance, Width, Hazards, Line of Sight
- Course Maintenance – Mowing, Rough Width/Height, Drainage
- Course Operation and Set-Up and Loading
- Player Ability – Handicap, Knowledge of Rules, Physical Ability
- Player Behavior – Attention to Play, Rules, Ready Golf, Courtesy, Consideration
- Weather – Temperature, Precipitation, Wind, Sun

Most Target POP times are actually developed based on these factors as well as testing for normal, average, or typical conditions.

Changes in conditions can be factored so courses can change assigned tee times as conditions change.

- Path Only conditions will add about 30 minutes to a round with a 90 Degree Cart rule. Players simply have to walk further.
- High thick rough can easily add 20 to 30 minutes to a round for ball searches.

Courses with good design, regular maintenance and good daily operations can usually expect most players to play at suggested POP. **Why do we focus on Slow Players if Course Design, Maintenance, Weather are so important?**

Metro Seniors must complete contracts with our courses in November for the following year. We try to select courses that are well designed, well maintained, and well operated. We also try to select the best tees and yardage for fun, challenging, competitive play. Once that is done, we do not have “control” of the Design, Maintenance, or Course Operations (or weather). We also cannot control player skills.

Metro Seniors operations has changed tournament rules to allow for faster play including Lost and OB ball rules, Tee Locations and Player Selection of Tees. We have also increased the number of Divisions to reduce player crowding in our Tournaments. Selection of Split Tee or Shotgun Starts is also a significant influence on play time.

Player Behavior is the only factor we can influence on the course the day of the tournament. We must have all members play quickly. All groups MUST stay up with the group immediately ahead.

Groups falling behind must be identified as early as possible and encouraged to speed up to avoid holding everyone behind. Groups with open holes ahead may be encouraged to skip holes and/or DQ to allow the remainder of the groups to play faster. Foursomes must be willing to encourage, coach and even demand a slow player in their group to speed up.

What is a “normal” or suggested POP for Courses Played by Metro Seniors?

Most courses on the Metro Seniors Weekly Tournament Schedule have a suggested Pace of Play at about 4 hours to 4 hours and 30 minutes. Easier, shorter courses will play faster. More difficult courses will play slower.

Many of the courses have their POP on the scorecard. The Landings at Spirit has it noted on the payment receipt that you sign. Others have signage on the course.

Examples

What are Actual Metro Seniors Play Times?

Actual Play Times for 2019

Division	Overall Average Pace		Year End 2019
	Average	Avg Max Pace	Min Pace
1	04:33	04:57	04:00
2	04:37	05:06	04:01
3	04:24	04:41	04:01
4	04:27	05:00	03:51
5	04:37	05:00	04:05
D1-5 Avgs	04:31	04:57	03:59

SPLIT TEE STARTS

The GOOD NEWS - As of 2019 almost all of Metro Seniors are playing at or near the typical Course Target Pace of Play. The early start groups with open holes ahead are playing very quickly.

As later groups start (tee sequence groups from 11 to 15) play starts backing up and POP slows.

The BAD NEWS - Usually one or two tee groups, significantly slower than average enter in the middle or later start positions. The slowest tee groups can run an hour or more longer play time than the fastest groups.

SHOGUN STARTS

Metro Seniors has reduced the number of shotgun starts to improve Pace In 2020 we scheduled only 3 shotgun starts. One or two slower groups will block and slow almost all groups on the course.

Shotgun Starts play about 30 minutes slower than Split Tee Starts. Crowding of Tee Groups and double tee A/B starts will slow all the tee groups behind. Reverse shotguns where all tee groups are bunched onto about 1/2 of the course are no longer scheduled. These are always extremely long pace rounds.

How is SLOW PLAY measured?

There are two simple measures that when combined generally define SLOW PLAY.

1. Not Meeting the Target Pace of Play
 1. Finish Time – Start Time = Play Time
 2. Play Time more than Target POP = SLOW PLAY (Target for all tee groups 4:45 MAXIMUM)
 3. Complicated by Conditions, weather, and other players
2. Not Staying up with the group immediately ahead
 1. Finish Separation Gap Time at or more 15 Minutes – SLOW PLAY
 2. 15 Minute Separation usually indicates an empty hole in front
 3. If the group ahead is SLOW but you are on top of them, your group is not SLOW

These same measures are used by USGA and many golf courses.

Most of the focus is on staying up with the group ahead. This is easy and visible.

On a Par 3 - If they are off the green when you are entering the tee box, you are BEHIND!

On a Par 4 – If they are moving off the green as you enter the tee box, you are BEHIND!

On a Par 5 – If they are already to the green as you enter the tee box, you are BEHIND!

If they are more than 300 yards away, you are BEHIND!

You MUST keep the group ahead in sight! Hit as soon as it is safe. About 200 yards separation or less. **How Many Players are SLOW?**

It appears that only about 2 to 4% of our membership played at slower than our target / expectations (usually 1 or 2 foursomes per outing).

These slow groups were typically well over the average play times for the outing and as much as an hour behind the fastest foursomes on the course that day. It may be that only one or two people in the slow groups may be the dragging everyone down. **However, everyone in the foursome is responsible for keeping up with the group ahead.**

Further, the slow groups were well behind the group directly playing ahead of them with times well above our current 15 minute Separation Warning Gap.

However, these few groups easily blocked and slowed 4 to 6 groups directly behind them. As many as half of the outing groups are often slowed by a very few players.

How does Metro Seniors Measure and Enforce SLOW PLAY?

Scorecards must have times for Start, Finish, and Scorers Finish Time entered. The times are collected and reviewed. YOU are responsible for making sure group times are on the scorecard, are accurate, and legible. If your times are wrong or missing your group can be disqualified for the outing.

Most of the time, the Division VP or Deputy VP will discuss slow play with tee groups and ask for cooperation. In many cases, the group simply lost track of their position. Most players have improved immediately.

In a few cases, the Pace of play Committee has issued warning letters to players who have been chronically slow (several rounds over targets). For the most part, members have improved immediately.

Groups (and members in those group) with Group Separation times of 15 minutes or more are identified and will be warned of SLOW PLAY. After 2 Warnings of SLOW PLAY, groups and members may be recommended for sanctions to the Board. Lack of cooperation or refusing to improve are grounds for cancellation of your membership.

Can SLOW PLAYERS improve?

YES! Simple steps outlined in Ready Golf concepts will improve anyone's POP. Saving 1 minute per hole is 18 minutes on the round.

A 4 hour round would look something like this for a course like Aberdeen.

Foursome, Average about 15 to 20 hcp			Similar to Aberdeen	
2 Carts, 90 Degree				
	Par 3	Par 4	Par 4	18 Holes
Actions	minutes	minutes	minutes	Minutes
Teeing	4	4	4	
Fairway Shots		4	7	
Green Time	5	5	5	
To Next Tee	0.5	0.5	0.5	
Total Time, Min	9.5	13.5	16.5	239

Most of the time on the course is WAITING for others in your own foursome.

Most of time is Moving to Ball and waiting for turn.			min/round
Moving to Ball 100 yds/min			75 to 90
Hitting Your Shot	20 – 30 sec each		30 to 35
Waiting for Partners	About 30 sec ea * 3 partners		120 to 150

Most of the time wasters have little or nothing to do with playing the game. These are frequently done when you should be moving to the next ball or tee. **Do these after your shot and while waiting for partner or not at all.**

- Replacing head covers, Cleaning clubs on fairway
- Scrounging lost balls, **Do you really need 20 more balls?**
- Extended searches for lost balls, **it is ONLY 1 Stroke penalty?**
- Poor cart movement on the course and at the greens, **get a better chauffeur!**
- Carrying wrong club (or only one) – **take 3 clubs especially if a Path Only hole**
- Not carrying extra balls (lost ball drop) – **have 1 or 2 extra balls in your pocket**
- Not watching the group ahead to stay up – **hit as soon as safe.**
- Not moving from green to next tee quickly for next group to hit – **get off the green fast**

What Can I Do To Help My Foursome Play Faster?

1. **First and most important -**
 1. Stay aware of your position with the group in-front
 2. Keep your group aware.
2. **READY GOLF!!!!!!**
 1. Model Good Behavior and Ready Golf
 2. Help team with clubs
 3. Watch and locate partner shots, and help cart partner search AFTER you have hit
 4. Hit when safe but while others are hitting, don't WAIT for Honors!
 5. Encourage Provisional Balls rather than extended searches
 6. Stop Ball Scrounging
 7. Keep moving
 8. Many more