

FOR PARENTS: DEVELOPING A PLAN

If your child or grandchild shows an interest in golf, what should you do? Form a plan that gets the young golfer additional exposure and practice with the sport.

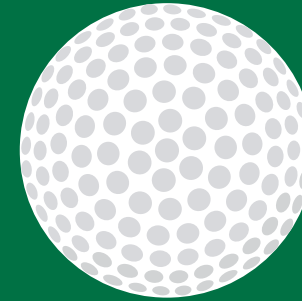
The first step is to purchase a decent set of junior golf clubs. A kids' set will typically have the basic golf club staples, such as a driver, hybrid, 7-iron, 9-iron, sand wedge, and a putter. Most sets sell for between \$100-\$200. Make sure you buy clubs that are the appropriate size. Other accessories, including shoes and gloves, are not needed.

Do not immediately bombard young golfers with instructions and training. Instead, let them learn by watching. Junior golfers become immersed in the sport by viewing it, whether it's on live television, internet clips, social media, or even at live events in person. After this, it is a good idea to take young golfers to a driving range or putting green for practice. Let them get comfortable striking the ball. If informal practice goes well, parents can find a tee time at a shorter, less difficult course (perhaps a nine-hole par 3 course), or even arrange for professional instruction.

When a child finds a groove and starts to get into golf a little more seriously, it's important to find a peer group for playing partners. Children will get a more fulfilling experience with golf when they play with kids their own age. Golf is more fun when played with your buddies, as adult golfers can attest. If you're having trouble, ask around your Lodge and see if any Members also have a youngster who is into golf.

IDEAS FOR ELKS JUNIOR GOLF

- Ask local golf courses to participate in the program.
- Enlist the aid of the course's golf pro to instruct first timers.
- Invite family members to get involved and enjoy their children's fun.
- Offer group or individual lessons.
- Hold or sponsor golf camps.
- Sponsor a parent-child golf outing.
- Present rewards for participation.
- Start a youth golf league.
- Hold awards presentations at your Lodge and invite the families.
- Remember to publicize all events.



JUNIOR GOLF PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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ELKS JUNIOR GOLF PROGRAM

A Junior Golf Program provides your Lodge an excellent opportunity to connect with area youth. Golf is a great sport for kids to learn: It can be played by the entire family, it has a much lower injury risk than contact sports, and it can become a lifelong passion. It also serves as an activity to get children outdoors and away from screens for a little while.



Today's youth are tomorrow's future. Now is a great opportunity for the Elks to reach our future leaders through an immersive and constructive program that provides benefits to last a lifetime. The Grand Lodge Activities Committee urges all Lodges to participate in and promote the Elks Junior Golf Program.

Start your program by forming a Junior Golf committee. Find someone in your Lodge who has some experience with golf to become chairperson. Then, encourage the chairperson to get other Lodge Members with a similar love of the game to join the committee. From that point on, all efforts can be coordinated to make a positive impact on our youth and their families in the area.

Making It Happen

Contact local golf courses and request for them to sponsor events that will bring young golfers to their facilities. Share with the courses how Elks support many community activities and hold numerous programs geared toward youth. Prepare a brochure about your Lodge's activities and ask local businesses to purchase ad space in the brochure, or to sponsor a child in the program.

Another way to get a program off the ground is by hosting a family golf outing. Make it fun and not competitive. Finish the day with a barbecue or picnic at the Lodge. Interest in competition will quickly expose the need for tournaments on a local, district, and state level.

You can also use a Junior Golf outing to talk with the parents and the young competitors about who the Elks are and what we do. This is a great way to promote our organization and our values. It is also a good time to pass on information regarding the Elks Scholarship Program.

Golf camps, clinics, instructional sessions, as well as practice on the putting greens and driving range, will also give our Members the opportunity to talk with the kids about the dangers of drug use and inform them about our Drug Awareness Program.

For questions about starting or operating a junior golf program, contact the Junior Golf Program Coordinator, who can be found at: elks.org/grandlodge/activities/roster.cfm

TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Junior golf programs vary in scope and size, from camps to tournaments to leagues. Knowing what format to offer is important. Ask Lodge Members what their youth are looking for in a golf experience.

When designing an Elks Junior Golf program, incorporate these traits:

- **Fun.** Above all, kids who get into golf need to enjoy the game. Golf is already difficult, so added stress will only turn them off. The best junior golf programs build development in a stress-free environment.
- **Welcoming environment.** Kids can be intimidated by a golf course. Junior golf programs create a welcoming atmosphere that encourage children to play the sport.
- **Quality coaching.** The most effective junior golf instructors are patient, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable about the sport. They offer positive reinforcement. Find volunteers who know the game and how to teach it.
- **Etiquette.** Golf has a lot of rules, many of which are outside of the official rulebook. A good junior golf program stresses sportsmanship and teaches kids to play with integrity.
- **Camaraderie.** Kids want to play with kids their own age. Having participants across a range of different age groups lets young golfers grow in the sport by competing with their peers.

JUNIOR GOLF EQUIPMENT

Junior golfers need the right equipment. Clubs must suit their size, skills, and physical attributes. Adult clubs, even ones modified or cut down to size, are not appropriate.

Many golf equipment manufacturers design clubs specifically for the different age ranges of junior golfers. Clubs in junior sets are lighter and shorter than adult clubs, and they are made with smaller grip sizes, more flexible shafts, and more forgiving club heads. Junior golf sets also have fewer clubs, since the differences in distance between clubs aren't as stark as they are with adult clubs.



The right equipment allows junior golfers meaningful practice. They can develop their games and hone their swings with less chance of injury or forming poor habits. Golf equipment companies that make junior club sets include TaylorMade, Callaway, PING, Cleveland Golf, Cobra Golf, Tour Edge, Wilson, Top Flite, and U.S. Kids Golf.