



*Great care goes into selecting hole locations and making sure that each hole is properly cut. These efforts help us have more fun and maybe make a few more putts.*

## HOLE LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

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The goal of golf is simple – get that little round ball into a small hole on a putting green in the fewest strokes possible. While every round of golf involves shots from teeing surfaces, and many more from fairways and roughs, the most shots typically occur on putting greens.

Many factors are involved in course setup, but none is more important than the seemingly simple task of setting hole locations. This process is described in the USGA article, [“The Hole Was Located Where?”](#) Rather than going into the details of the hole-changing process, we asked more than 30 golf course superintendents from private, public and resort facilities to describe their approach to locating and cutting holes. The following are a few responses from those superintendents that shed light on a process that impacts every round we play:

1. “We have used different systems over the years, but we are ultimately interested in fairness and balance. We try to create a fairly equal distribution of hole locations between left, right, middle, front

and back. We also want a balance of easy, moderate and difficult hole locations that take into account both the difficulty of approach shots and the difficulty of putting to the area of a green where the hole is placed.”

2. “Contrary to what some golfers might think, we are always encouraging our setup staff to err on the easy side with hole locations. Our theory has always been that a lower score leads to a more enjoyable round, which in turn leads to golfers who are happier with our course and our maintenance practices. We don’t alter that thinking for tournaments either; in fact, we often select even easier hole locations. There is no other time we would rather see players shoot good scores than when they are under the pressure of an important event. Also, pace of play is an important consideration.”

3. “We keep hole locations a minimum of five paces – approximately 15 feet – from the edges of a green. Many golfers are not aware that while there are rules about the size of the hole and the depth of the liner, there is no rule about how far from the edge of a putting green the hole must be located. In the interest of keeping hole locations on the easy side, we encourage the course setters to minimize the number of holes near the edges of putting greens and to allow extra distance if there is an adjacent hazard. We are especially careful to locate holes even more than 15 feet from the front edge of a putting green, and we are always conscious of measuring five paces from the edge of any false front.”

4. “We communicate the daily green speed to the setup staff. Hole locations that work at Stimpmeter® readings of 10 feet are often not appropriate at 11 feet because of putting green slopes.”

5. “We look for an area where the surface immediately around the hole has minimal ball marks or other blemishes. We also try to avoid being too close to previous hole locations.”

6. “During wet periods, or when wet weather is forecast, we ask our course setters to choose hole locations where puddling is least likely.”

7. “We go to great lengths to make sure that the quality of the actual hole is as close to perfect as possible. Holes are cut after the green has been mowed or rolled to ensure that equipment doesn’t damage the edge of the hole. On a daily basis, the hole cutters are hand sharpened to the equivalent of a very sharp knife. Course setters are also trained to carefully use a regulation cup setter, to make sure that the area immediately around the hole is level, and to check that the liner is set at the correct depth.”

8. “Golfers can help maintain the condition of a hole by being very careful when removing their golf ball and replacing the flag stick.”

The setup process where you play golf may include some, or all, of these techniques. The course may also have some unique methods for selecting fun and challenging hole locations. Regardless of the approach, there remains no question that the care taken when choosing hole locations, cutting holes and setting hole liners makes a major difference in pace of play, turf health and golfer enjoyment. Now, if we could only capture a way to make every 3-footer.