



Maintenance teams get up early and work hard each morning to provide the best possible playing conditions for golfers.

GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE IS NO SMALL TASK

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Have you ever thought about what goes into setting up and maintaining a golf course before your round? After all, most of the work to prepare the playing surfaces you enjoy gets done early in the morning before you even get to the course. Maintaining an average 18-hole golf course – which is larger than 70 football fields – takes work and lots of it.

The average 18-hole course may also have dozens of bunkers, a few miles of cart paths and many other course features. As you can imagine, it takes a lot of work to maintain all the different components. Surprisingly, much of that work occurs before golfers even arrive at the first tee.

Golf course maintenance teams start their day at the crack of dawn so they have time to prepare their course for golfers with little disruption. Working early, with little disruption, enables them to operate

at peak efficiency. Productivity substantially decreases later in the day when employees must be more mindful of play, so maintenance teams try to get the most from the first few hours of their day.

On a typical morning, golf course maintenance workers mow enough turf to cover more than 25 football fields.¹ In addition to mowing, staff members change hole locations, move tee markers, rake bunkers, clean up debris, scout for pests and may irrigate select areas. After their morning work, a second round of tasks begin. This work often includes mowing rough, edging cart paths, and trimming the turf around bunkers and trees. Often, all this work happens before lunch.

Despite an early start, not every job can be finished before morning play. Weather, staff size, equipment availability and the golf schedule are just a few key factors that play a significant role in maintenance productivity. Unfortunately, in the vast majority of situations, it will be necessary for maintenance work to continue after play has commenced. Therefore, it's important for golfers to give maintenance teams time and space as they work hard to produce great playing conditions.

Next time you play a round, take a minute to think about the hard work that goes into producing the playing conditions you enjoy. Hopefully, instead of wondering why a maintenance employee is mowing rough in the middle of the day, you can appreciate the level of commitment they have and thank them for their work. After all, golf course maintenance is far more complex than simply mowing grass.

Additional Information

Gelernter, W.D. et al. 2017. Documenting Trends in Land-Use Characteristics and Environmental Stewardship Programs on U.S. Golf Courses. *Crop, Forage, and Turfgrass Management*. Vol. 3. Doi:10.2134/cftm2016.10.0066.