

Improving Efficiency With Maintenance Gaps

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Operational efficiency was a hot topic in 2016 because of the ongoing [labor shortage](#) in the golf course maintenance industry. Labor shortages and budget constraints are forcing superintendents to do more with less, but course conditioning eventually will decline if resource reductions become too severe. One way to get the most from limited resources is to implement a maintenance gap at your facility. Using a maintenance gap is an excellent way to perform important maintenance tasks at peak efficiency while minimizing disruptions to the golf calendar.

A maintenance gap is a temporary suspension of tee times that creates a predictable gap in play during which necessary maintenance tasks can be performed. For example, a course can suspend tee times, typically from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., on their slowest day of the week to create a gap in play. The maintenance team can work at peak efficiency within the gap in tee times without interfering with play. A maintenance gap can allow tasks such as rough mowing, bunker maintenance, venting greens and topdressing to be performed with minimal impact on golfers. Additionally, when the entire maintenance team is focusing on one or two holes, managers can easily monitor productivity and prevent costly mistakes.



Performing maintenance during a gap in play allows work to be safely and efficiently completed.

It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all system for implementing a maintenance gap. Use the guidelines below to formulate a maintenance gap that best suits your facility:

- As with every new initiative, communicating with decision-makers and golfers is essential for gaining acceptance.
- Make sure your maintenance gap provides enough time to complete the desired tasks.
- If golfers tee off on both the front and back nine, alternate the gap between nines on a weekly basis so the entire course receives equal attention.
- Make sure the maintenance gap is a firm policy; absolutely no golfers should be allowed to tee off during the gap. This is crucial for the maintenance gap to succeed because employees are often trained to stop working and move to a safe area when golfers are playing. If golfers interrupt the maintenance gap, operational efficiency will be significantly reduced.
- Do not create rain dates for scheduled maintenance gaps. Rescheduling maintenance days will create confusion among golfers.

Winter is the perfect time to sit down with decision-makers at your facility and create a maintenance gap program that will improve operating efficiency and playing conditions at your course. A weekly, two-hour gap in tee times for maintenance can significantly improve playing conditions. If your facility is interested in implementing a maintenance gap or discussing other operational efficiency strategies, a [USGA agronomist](#) in your area will be happy to provide additional insight.

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