



In many cases, the existing forward tees might not offer an appropriate yardage for golfers with slower swing speeds. New tee construction may be necessary.

TALKING NUMBERS: FORWARD TEE YARDAGE

BY PAUL JACOBS | AGRONOMIST, NORTHEAST REGION

The USGA article “[Rethinking Forward Tees](#)” provided techniques for encouraging golfers to use forward tees when appropriate, but it is important to promote the proper placement of these tees as well. When properly located, forward tees allow golfers with slower swing speeds opportunities to reach greens in regulation just like players with faster swing speeds do. While every course has a set of forward tees, their yardage and usefulness for players with slower swing speeds varies greatly.

To illustrate a common problem with forward tee placement on golf courses, consider the following example:

- Many golfers with slower swing speeds generate clubhead speed of about 60-65 mph. This equates to a drive distance of about 140-150 yards.
- An average male golfer has a clubhead speed of about 80-90 mph, which equates to a drive distance of about 210 yards.

- Now, imagine these players in a situation that is all too familiar. The golfers approach a typical par 4. The average male golfer plays from the middle tees where the hole plays 340 yards, and the player with a slower swing speed plays from the forward tees, which are about 20 paces ahead at 320 yards.
- When the two players reach their drives, the average male golfer has an approach shot of 130 yards. However, the player with the slower swing speed has a considerably longer approach shot of 170 yards, even though they played from the forward tees. They would have to hit their longest club a second time and would still not reach the green. In this situation, the player with the slower swing speed is at a serious disadvantage simply because the course did not offer an appropriate challenge.

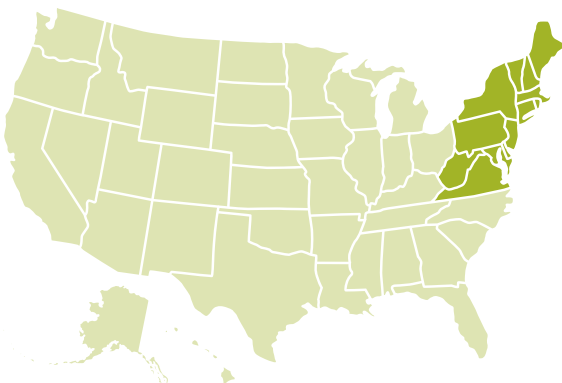
There are several factors to consider when determining the appropriate yardage and placement of forward tees and it is a good idea to consult with a golf course architect when making these types of decisions. However, as a general rule of thumb for maximum yardages, keep in mind that a player with a swing speed of 60-70 mph will typically drive the ball 140-150 yards. Therefore, maximum yardages for par 3s, 4s and 5s should be no more than 150, 300 and 450 yards, respectively.

Providing an appropriate yardage from the forward tees will give golfers with slower swing speeds the opportunity to reach greens in regulation and might even encourage other players to move forward a set of tees as well. All this means more birdies, fewer strokes, faster rounds and happier golfers. What's not to love about that?



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

[Learn More](#)



NORTHEAST REGION AGRONOMISTS:

Elliott Dowling, Agronomist, edowling@usga.org

Paul Jacobs, Agronomist, pjacobs@usga.org

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)
