



Some Types of Golf Competitions (Golf Games, Scoring Systems, Types of Play)

The two basic forms of playing golf are Match play and Stroke play. Apart from these two basic types of play, many other golf tournament formats exist, some of which are regarded "official" forms of play, such as [Stableford](#) and the popular forms of team play known as, Foursome and Four ball games. Other popular "non-official" forms of team play are Scramble (Texas scramble, Ambrose) and [Greensome](#). More types of golf games include: [Patsome](#), Skins, String and Chapman Flag tournaments. The following are just a sample selection.

Stroke play:

Stroke play is the most common form of competition at most professional tournaments. In stroke play, every player (or team) competes all 18 holes and counts the total number of strokes and the party with the lower total nett score (gross score minus handicap) wins.

Players normally go out in threes or sometimes in twos, for example at professional events.

Match play:

In match play, two players (or two teams) play every hole as a separate contest against each other. The party with the lower score wins that hole, regardless of how many shots he won the hole by. If the scores of both players or teams are equal the hole is "halved" (drawn). The game is won by that party that wins more holes than the other. Match play is a very popular form of competition at club level.

Greensome:

A variation of Foursome where both team-mates of each team make a tee shot and each team selects which one they prefer. The player whose ball was not selected, then plays the second shot and all future even-numbered shots on this hole, the other team-mate playing all further odd-numbered shots.

Patsome:

The six first holes are played in Four-ball, the next six in Greensome and the last six in Foursome. The final count of strokes is calculated as in Foursome.

Chapman:

A variation of Four Ball where each player hits a tee shot and swap positions to hit the second ball (each player of the same team hit their team-mate's ball), where after they decide which of the two balls they choose to play for the remainder of the hole. The other ball is picked up. Once the best position is selected, the team-mates alternate strokes until holing out. Also called "Pinehurst".

String:

Each player gets a length of string that they can use to improve bad lies. The length of the string depends on the player's handicap (generally 50cm per handicap point). When in a bad lie the player cuts off the length of string equal to the distance they move the ball (without penalty) to any new position away from where the ball had previously come to rest. Once the ball is moved, that length of string is no longer available. Each player may use his string at any time during the round to save as many strokes as possible.



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Flag tournaments (or Tombstone):

In a flag competition, each competitor uses their given number of strokes to take their ball as far around the course as possible. The flag marks the point at which they "expired", i.e. the point on the course a competitor reaches the end of their given number of strokes, anyone performing better than handicap would need to start playing extra holes after the 18th. So, to ensure that the flag remains within the normal round the shots you receive equals $[(\text{par} + \text{handicap}) \times \frac{3}{4}]$, for example:- Par:70, Handicap:16 = $86 \times 0.75 = 64.5$ which gives 65 shots. A medal score is kept for the round and it is suggested you also keep a running total of your gross score so that you can quickly determine the point where your given number of strokes has been reached. This is the point where the flag is put.

Scramble (or Ambrose, Texas Scramble):

Each player in a team (of two, three or four players) tees off on each hole and the players decide which shot was best. Every player then plays his second shot from that spot dropping the ball within one club length or placing it at the spot marked on the green, and the procedure is repeated until the hole is finished. This type of competition is popular with golf societies. An Ambrose is the same as a Scramble, but in an Ambrose, handicaps are used in the game. Texas Scramble is a variation in which a set number of drives of each member of the team must be used during the course of the round. Both individual play and team play are rewarded.

Skins:

Type of match play game in which each hole is worth a given amount of points or money, which you can win only by winning the hole outright. If the best score for the hole is achieved by more than one player the money or points are carried over to the next hole, making all subsequent holes potentially worth considerably more. In the event that two or more golfers halve the final hole, a playoff begins until one golfer wins a hole outright.

Foursome:

A foursome (defined in Rule 29 of the "Rules of Golf") is played between two players in partnership, playing one ball which they hit alternately. One tees off on the odd numbered holes, the other on the even holes, regardless of who played the last putt on the first hole. The other shots are played in turns until the hole is finished. Foursomes can be played under match play or stroke play rules.

Four ball:

The same as foursomes but each player plays with his own ball and the better score of the team counts. Four-balls can be played as match play or stroke play. (Defined by rules 30 and 31). In a Three-Ball match, three players play against one another, each thus playing two distinct matches. A slightly different form is Best-Ball, in which one player plays against the better ball of two or the best ball of three players.



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Stableford:

Form of stroke play where the scoring is made by points awarded in relation to a fixed score at each hole as follows:

Hole Played	Points
>1 over net par or no score	0
1 over fixed score	1
Net par	2
1 under net par	3
2 under net par	4
3 under net par	5
4 under net par	6

The winner is the player who scores the highest number of points.

Alternative *non official* formats of the Stableford competition may for example penalise players for net scores greater than one over par, thus introducing a minus score. Eg: >2 over net par or no score = -1 point etc.

Bogey and Par Competitions:

The scoring for bogey and par competitions is made as in match play. Any hole for which a player makes no return is regarded as a loss. The winner is the player who is most successful in the aggregate of holes.

The Accumulator:

A team Stableford where for example in a three man team:

For holes 1 to 6: Only one of the three stableford scores will count - but, be aware that each player's score must count at least once!

For holes 7 to 12: Two of the three stableford scores count

For holes 13 to 18: All three stableford scores count

Expect some high scores!

Yellow Ball (3 or 4 man Team):

Usually a team based competition for three or four players. There are numerous versions of 'Yellow-Ball' competitions some based stroke play but most use the stableford points based system.

The players play in a fix order normally decided by themselves when starting, so each in turn is deemed to be the 'Yellow-Ball'. The person who's turn it is to play the 'Yellow-Ball' commonly has their score to count plus the best score(s) of one or two of the other players.

The exact format of the competition will be decided by your club.