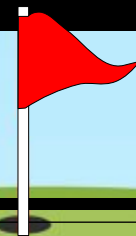


PLAYING THROUGH



PLAYING GOLF WITH YOUR PHONE

Golf apps that use GPS in smartphones can provide golfers with various features, such as distance measurements, course maps, shot tracking, scorekeeping, and more. These apps can be useful tools for all skill levels, but they also have some advantages and disadvantages, as well as differences in use during practice and play.



One of the main advantages of using a GPS golf app is that it can provide accurate and real-time information about the course and your shots. For example, you get the layout of each hole, the distance to the green and hazards, the best club to use, and the optimal shot direction. Additionally, a GPS app can track your performance and statistics, such as fairways hit, greens in regulation, putts, and scores. This can help you set goals for improvement. And most handy is the ability to 'fly over' and preview any hole on any course, or all, the night before you're due at the bag drop!



Important: these are not laser rangefinders. The app, while brilliantly mapping and presenting a photorealistic view of a hole from outer space(!), requires you to map your approach shot 'onscreen'. If you see a white flag on the green, for instance, you have to

drag the hole-location icon to where your best guess as to where it is. *However*, as you can see in the graphic above, you can get a realtime analysis of the hole with hazards you might not be able to see on the approach, with distances and club suggestions.

An app can the game more fun and interactive with games, leaderboards, challenges, and social media integration. You can compare your round with your buddies over at Fleming Island or up in Augusta, in realtime, if you want. A GPS golf app can also work offline, though likely with a more limited feature-set, which means you can use it even in remote courses or areas with no internet or cell phone service.

Disadvantages? One is that it can affect the golfer's

concentration and etiquette on the course. It can be tempting to check your phone too often, which can disrupt your focus, rhythm, and pace of play. And to see the app tracking you in satellite 'bird's eye' view as you walk up the fairway, well, that's just a little too tempting. *Resist!* This 'phubbing' ('phone snubbing'...*yes, it's a word*) can be disrespectful and annoying to others, but you already know this. *Don't* use your phone during someone else's shot, allow it to blare a 'Bad to the Bone' ringtone, or be browsing the specials at Turmeric Kitchen.

Also, golf apps rely on the quality and functionality of the smartphone, which varies depending on model, brand, software, battery usage, and settings. With the newer phones, this is less of an issue. Until recently, a dedicated



GPS watch had the edge over the smartphone in terms of accuracy. No so much now. The watch, however, by its position on the player's wrist, can be more consistently accurate as opposed to the phone that might be on a cart's shelf, or in a player's pocket or bag. Still, not a deal-breaker.

Using a smartphone GPS golf app is different during practice vs. play. For this reason, if you're new to the concept, consider using an app only during practice rounds at first, and sparingly if at all, during play.

-Editor

Next Month: Rangefinders

