

10 Tips for Buying Clubs

By Tom Wishon



A lot of technology has gone into golf equipment, and considering it actually is rocket science (or at least derived from it), you may need some help to get the most out of your next purchase, whether it's a driver, hybrid, putter or even a sleeve of balls. I've been designing and fitting clubs for decades, and from my experience of helping golfers find the best clubs for them, I've picked up some information that you can use the next time you walk into a shop.

I highly recommend working with a professional clubfitter, but following these 10 tips could be the next best thing.

1 **When buying a driver, shorter is better than longer, closed is better than neutral.**
Many of today's drivers are sold with shafts 45 inches or longer; the average driver on the PGA Tour is 44½ inches. What do the pros know that you don't? The longer the club, the harder it is to hit squarely. Anyway you slice it, shorter is better with woods. Speaking of slicing, a fault likely caused by an open clubface at impact, getting fitted for a driver with a closed face angle will help.

2 **Consider making your 3-wood your "driver."**
Do you hit your 3-wood as far as your driver? Then you don't have enough loft on your driver. For most golfers, even 11 degrees of loft isn't enough, so why not buy a 3-, 5-, 7-wood combination instead of the traditional driver, 3-, 5-wood configuration and put three clubs in the bag that will actually help you? Most golfers could drop five strokes with just that simple change.

3 **Don't even think about including a 3-, 4- and possibly even a 5-iron in your next set.**
Over the past 25 years, manufacturers have been gradually and silently lowering the loft on their irons in order to say their products "hit it farther." As a result, the 3- and 4-irons have so little loft that they are virtually unhittable for the average golfer. The solution? Hybrids. Which leads us to...

4 **The trick to buying hybrids is to match them exactly to the irons they are replacing.**
The idea here is to replace your long irons with easier-to-hit hybrids that go the same distance—not longer or shorter. Make sure to replace your long irons with hybrids of the same length and loft to avoid distance gaps.

5 **Don't confuse hybrids with fairway woods.**
They are separate animals. To me, hybrids should be iron replacements, but there are hybrids out there that have the same lofts and lengths as fairway woods, which can be confusing. After all, fairway woods are just as easy to hit as hybrids, so what's the point?

But here's a rule of thumb: If you sweep shots cleanly off the turf, fairway woods are for you. If you have a steeper swing (you tend to take divots), you'll be better off with hybrids.

6 **There is no such thing as one-size-fits-all golf clubs.**
You don't buy suits off a one-size-fits-all rack, so why do the same with clubs? Golfers come in all shapes, sizes and swing skills, necessitating clubs with different lengths, weights, lofts and lie angles. If a club is too long, too light or too heavy, you will not consistently deliver the clubhead so it is square at impact. If the lie angle is wrong, the heel or toe will be up, leading to a push or a pull even if you make a perfect swing.

7 **When selecting wedges, think about your home course.**
Are the greens small, fast and elevated? You need plenty of loft. Are the bunkers filled with lots of soft sand? Your sand wedge should have more bounce or a wider sole. Is the turf firm, resulting in a lot of tight lies? You'll want less bounce.

8 **Check the "three Ls" when you putter around.**
Does your new putter look like a branding iron or does it have a classic shape? Whatever the case, if you get the three Ls—loft, length, lie angle—wrong, it doesn't matter what it looks like. You won't putt well. At impact, the sole must be parallel to the ground and the loft must be correct; the combination imparts a true roll. Nothing else will do.

A putter with the wrong length and lie angle will cause pushes and pulls. Too little or too much loft will cause the ball to bounce and roll off-line.

9 **The worse you are, the more you need custom-fit equipment.**
Custom clubs are not just for low handicappers and pros. They could play well with garden tools. The worse (or newer) you are, the more you need clubs that match you and your swing properly. The game has enough impediments. You don't need another with ill-fitting clubs.

10 **Don't forget about the ball.**
Ball technology is so much better that you no longer have to choose between a rock and marshmallow. In general, you want a ball with low spin off a driver and high spin off a wedge. But most golfers should remember three things: distance, distance, distance. Extra yardage off the tee is far more important than a bit more spin around the greens. 🏌️

Tom Wishon is a club-industry veteran who started his own custom-club design company in 2003 (tagoltech.com). His eighth book on golf equipment, *The Search for the Perfect Driver*, was published last year.