



# ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL

## STUDENT GOLF GUIDE

FALL 2022

Rev: Rev 2

Den Coffey  
Head Golf Coach

"Practice with a purpose and a plan! Failing to plan is planning to fail!" (by Benjamin Franklin)

## **Contents:**

1. Skill levels for high school golf
2. Team qualification process
3. Preparation & mental approach
4. Reasons players reach their potential
5. Understand your swing
6. Your golf practice goals
7. Practice plan
8. Driving range practice
9. Short game practice
10. Putting practice
11. Warm up plan
12. Clinics
13. Basic golf course etiquette
14. Important rules to know on the course
15. Tournament procedures
16. Winner vs. Loser
17. Practice routine

### **1. Skill levels for high school golf**

a. Each year, all golfers regardless of classification will be required to qualify for the golf team. The following are general requirements. Requirements may change from year to year, depending on the qualities/numbers of golfers.

b. Freshmen: Each Freshman wishing to play on the STA golf team (Varsity or Junior Varsity) will be required to show the following:

- Prior playing ability or athletic ability to succeed at golf
- Proper golf technique (grip, stance, swing etc.)
- Proper golf etiquette and rules knowledge.
- Ability to shoot under 55 for 9 holes.

c. Sophomore: Each Sophomore should show improvement from the start of their 9th grade year and should show the ability to consistently shoot 44-49 for 9 holes.

d. All Grades (Freshman - Senior): Any golfers wishing to be on the active varsity roster should average 42 or better for 9 holes. Any golfers wishing to be on the active junior varsity roster should average 50 or better.

### **2. Team qualification process**

a. STA Golf has three co-ed teams (Varsity, Junior Varsity and Developmental). The Varsity and Junior Varsity team has mandatory tryout for qualification.

b. The STA Golf Team practices and plays matches at Cochecho Country Club in Dover, NH.

c. The qualification process is simple. Prospective players will play two nine hole rounds. The two rounds will be averaged to determine the overall scoring average. The eight students with the lowest scoring averages will be placed on the Varsity Team. The students with the next eight lowest scoring averages will be placed on Junior Varsity. The remaining players will be candidates for the Development team.

d. The Golf Coach has flexibility to adjust team sizes and move players up based on scoring averages during the season.

### **3. Preparation & mental approach**

a. Have a Plan! Each practice session should have no more than one or two very specific goals before you even get to the course (example: Improve Lag Putting, Driving Accuracy, Better Greenside Bunkers percentage, etc.)

b. The Goal for each practice day can be decided based on your personal progress and what needs 'attention' at any specific time.

c. Bottom line, ALWAYS mentally prepare yourself by having specific practice plan goal(s) prior to starting practice, and then aim your practice at meeting these practice plan goals!

### **4. Reasons players reach their potential (by Tiger Woods)**

- They have a high tolerance for hard work.
- They have a high golf IQ (a student of the game).
- They are unselfish. They think team before self.
- They make smart decisions on the golf course.
- They have a good practice routine and are in good physical condition.
- They practice on their own, without being told.
- Self-Confidence that comes from repetition and knowing you deserve to win, because you have worked harder than anyone else.

### **5. Understand your swing**

a. There are many different golf swings because there are many different body types. Also, swings vary due to personal preferences on ball flight, shot shape, swing path, etc.

b. But no matter what the individual swing looks like, great golfers consistently IMPACT the ball similarly:

See video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pmdmb-mqUVE>

Note: Hand & head position of the instructor at impact.

c. Learn how your own swing works and how you can improve by consistently arriving at impact correctly. And whatever your own personal golf swing looks like, professional instruction & proper practice will help you with your impact position! See videos:

Grip (holding the Club): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13YQij6uuZA>

Setup & Posture: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lX\\_j9l3XI38](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lX_j9l3XI38)

Alignment, Target Line: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhI5zosdBIs>

Takeaway/Backswing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K29P6D2nAk4>

Downswing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LedM4ub8QuM&t=51s>

## **6. Your golf practice goals**

a. Typical weekly practice sessions will be aimed at tracking and evaluating individual progress and involve course play and practice.

b. Breaking into foursomes, each player will exchange scorecards with another member of your group (similar to playing in a match). We will track score and number of putts every practice round. You will record each other's result on that day's scorecard, sign and date it, and turn in to the coach.

c. At times, we will also have various practice stations (putting green / driving range), groups will rotate through these stations, and take turns hitting shots. Some things we will practice are:

- Lag Putting
- Mid-range putting
- Short Putting
- Greenside chipping
- 15 yard chipping
- 30 yard chipping/pitch
- 9 iron shot
- 6 iron shot
- 3 iron/Hybrid shot
- Driver

## **7. Practice plan**

a. First phase of your high school golf practice plan should include putting drills which will help you cut down your 3 putting and save you more strokes.

b. Then move on to chipping and work on placing yourself in the mindset of getting up and down at a high percentage rate. Professional golfers are magical around the greens and seem to get themselves out of trouble at a high percentage of the time when they miss a green in regulation.

c. Lastly, end your high school golf practice with a range session working on irons used to hit your approach shots. Picture yourself being in the fairway, staring down the green with 100% intention of hitting it, and leaving yourself a birdie putt or two putt par.

## 8. Driving range practice

a. Driving range sessions can be used for several different practice reasons:

- To warm up prior to a match or tournament.
- To work on one or two specifically planned goals.
- To practice by simulating competition.

b. Do not begin a range session until you are mentally prepared (see first section above 'Preparation & Mental Approach').

c. Do not begin a range session until you have completed static & dynamic stretches, tempo drills, etc. Make your own individual warm up routine!

d. **Do not 'shotgun' balls one after another!** You don't do that on the course, so don't do it on the range. For each shot go through your routine: Setup, Alignment/Aim, Tempo, Finish.

e. Here are a few fun and productive range sessions:

- Play a 'pretend' 9 holes. Use your imagination to replicate fairways, doglegs, par 3's etc. from your favorite courses.
- Practice with 10 balls at a time and set a goal (8 of 10 great drives, 10 of 10 solid wedge shots, etc.) Keep starting with a fresh 10 balls until you meet your goal or finish the basket of balls.
- Go through your bag! Start with the sand wedge and hit one shot with each club in succession all the way up to the driver. Have a specific target for each club and give yourself a 'YES' or 'NO' after each shot. Keep going through your club rotation until you hit a 'YES' with all clubs.

f. Final Range Tips:

- Do not 'dominate' the range, be courteous, share spaces, and keep voices low.
- Do not get distracted! Be 100% confident and mentally tough on the range. Take your time and block out distractions (voices, other golfers, mowers, etc.).
- **Do not 'over-hit'...** If you hit 20 or 30 great shots then stop! You're good, go chip and putt or anything else you believe you really need to be working on!!

## 9. Short game practice

- a. Follow your pre-shot routine and setup/alignment.
- b. Keep weight balanced more on heels to prevent hovering or leaning too far over the ball, which could end up putting you too close to the ball and lead to poor shots.
- c. ALWAYS plan out your chip shots based on green speed and up or down hill lies. After considering these factors, ALWAYS establish a 'landing point' on your target line to aim for. Do not just randomly 'hit & hope', make sure you really focus on your 'landing point'.
- d. Towel drill: If you are struggling with wedge consistency try rolling your golf towel up lengthwise and placing an end under each armpit. Take short pitches or chips with the towel in place (it will likely fall out upon follow through which is okay). The goal is to improve tempo and keep your body and arms in sync so your arms don't outrace your body or vice versa.
- e. Do not stay in one spot and chip an entire bucket of balls, this does not simulate real course play. Plus you will never be able to see how your chips react when the green is covered with balls. Instead, take 4 balls and start with greenside chips until you get 4 ball up and down, move to medium chip until you get 4 balls up and down, then end up at a longer chip/pitch shot until you get 4 balls up and down. This is very CHALLENGING and will simulate real golf by emphasizing the importance of every shot. You may not accomplish the entire drill, but it is fun and develops mental toughness and inner competitiveness!

## 10. Putting practice

- a. Short Putt Drill: Set up 4 separate locations surrounding the hole, each approximately 3-4 feet out. Take 10 putts at each of the 4 locations surrounding the hole. Set a high individual goal for making the putts (90%).
- b. Lag Putt Drill: When the green is fairly open, find 2 holes reasonably far apart, and simply assess the putt like you would in a match (uphill, downhill, left break, right break, speed of greens, etc.). With ONE ball only, how many 2 putts (or one putts) can you get in a row? Take your time and mark your ball and go through your routine. Concentrate and be confident! Do this drill for 20 minutes.
- c. Lag Putting Warm Up: Measure off 30 feet, 40 feet, 50 feet, and 60 feet from the hole and mark with tees. Then set down a couple golf balls by each tee and hit lag putts trying to get every putt within 3 feet before moving back to the next tee.

## 11. Warm up plan

a. Start off every high school golf practice doing the following:

- Warm up by sinking 10 putts from 3 feet (lay down your putter to mark off 3 feet)
- Set up 5 balls in a circle around the hole from 4 feet away and make all 5 putts in a row. If you miss, replace the 5 balls to their respective spots around the hole and try again
- Once you've worked on your putting skills from 6 feet and closer, it's time to head back to about 25 feet from the hole and build your lag putting skills. This will help you reduce three putts during your round of golf, saving you a few strokes.

**b. STA will win a lot more golf matches if the whole team cut down on their three putts. If you consider that each golfer on the team probably three putts at least one hole per round, that's 8 strokes your team is losing to 3 putts! How many high school golf matches have we lost by just a few strokes?**

## 12. Clinics

a. Throughout the season we will work on advanced lessons in many of the following areas:

- Greenside bunker play (How to use or not use 'bounce' in soft sand, hard shallow sand, deep high bunkers, long range greenside bunker shots)
- Fairway bunkers - technique and execution
- Trouble shots (Scrambling, assessing the risk/reward of your shot - do the math, how can you get in the hole most efficiently.
- Flighting the ball - and playing in the wind
- Rules - Know the rules. Use Rules to your Advantage!!
- Understanding YOUR swing - know how your own individual swing works so you can count on it and fix it when you get out of sync.
- Tee shots - Keep your ball in play!! Don't just blindly grab the driver off the tee, assess the distance & shape of the hole, then take a club that you will be 100% comfortable with.
- Short game - up & down from everywhere! Phil Mickelson was once said to have been able to get up & down from the 'World', or basically from any lie, anywhere... You need to practice to build similar confidence around the greens!
- Ball striking - Hit more greens and you'll make more birdies, simple as that!

## 13. Basic golf course etiquette

a. Respect Fellow Players

- Don't talk, take practice swings, or stand close to another player who is about to swing.

- Don't step on another player's putting line while on the green.
- Warn other players of an approaching shot by yelling "FORE".
- When another player is hitting, try to follow the flight of their shot so you can help find it, if necessary.
- Compliment good shots, ignore bad shots.
- Avoid overly vocal outbursts. **No cursing.**

b. Play Quickly and Efficiently

- Be ready to hit when it is your turn. Know your yardage and select the correct club in advance.
- Keep pace with the group in front of you. You are playing too slow if the group ahead of you is more than one hole ahead.
- Never look for a ball for more than three minutes, that's the rule!
- Do not hit until the group in front of you is out of range.

c. Leave the Course in Better Shape

- Replace your divots.
- Rake the sand trap after playing from the bunker.
- Fix your ball mark and any others you may find on the green.
- Never damage the course in frustration or on purpose.

## 14. Important rules to know on the course

a. Ball moves after it has been addressed: The player suffers a penalty of one (1) stroke if they caused the ball to move. The ball must be placed in its original position, or the player will incur another one (1) stroke penalty.

b. Relief from cart paths and ground under repair: When a player takes relief without penalty from ground under repair or an immovable obstruction, they do not have a choice of sides. Players must establish the nearest point of relief and drop within one-club length of that point, no nearer the hole.

c. Water Hazards (no line of sight relief): When a ball comes to rest in a water hazard (usually defined as yellow lines or stakes) the player has 3 options:

- Play the ball as it lies.
- Use the stroke-and-distance option. Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original shot was last played. This is a one (1) stroke penalty.
- Draw an imaginary line between the point where the ball last entered the hazard and the hole. Drop behind the hazard on an extension of that line. The line of flight entering the hazard has no bearing on the drop. This is a one (1) stroke penalty.



d. Lateral Water Hazards: When a ball comes to rest in a lateral water hazard (usually defined by red lines or stakes) the player has the same three options as the above water hazard, plus two others:

- Drop a ball within two club-lengths of the point of entry, no nearer the hole. One (1) stroke penalty.
- Determine the point on the opposite side of the hazard that is equidistant with the point of entry and drop a ball with two club-lengths. One (1) stroke penalty.

e. Dropped ball may roll two club-length: A dropped ball may roll up to two club-lengths (no nearer the hole) and remain in play. If it rolls more than that it must be redropped. Should the second drop get the same results, the player must place the ball on the spot where it first touched the ground when dropped.

f. Declaring a ball unplayable: Sometimes you will hit a ball into a location from where it is impossible, or unwise, to play it again (under a tree or in a tall clump of grass). Rather than waste strokes trying to get it out, you may declare it unplayable. The rules of golf allow you declare a ball unplayable, anywhere on the course, except within a water hazard. Once you have declared this, you three options:

- Return to where you last played the ball and put another ball into play. One (1) stroke penalty.
- Drop a ball within two club-lengths of the unplayable ball's position, no nearer the hole. CAUTION - your drop may be unplayable, also. One (1) stroke penalty.
- Drop a ball behind the unplayable ball's location, keeping that point between the hole and where you drop. You may go backwards as far as you want. One (1) stroke penalty.

## **15. Tournament procedures**

- Be at the predetermined departure site at least 10 minutes before departure time.
- You may bring a change of clothes as long as they conform to course and school rules.
- You will be required to wear the team uniform to all tournaments.
- You must conform to all golf team rules and course rules.
- We will make every effort to arrive at the tournament site one hour before the first tee time. You should stretch before warming up.
- Go through your warm-up routine as much as time permits.
- You will receive your tee assignment and instructions from your coach.
- Report to the designated area when the tournament host calls you with your information. Report immediately.
- When you are dismissed, go immediately to your tee assignment.

- You must act responsibly and maturely during the course of the day. No cursing, throwing balls or equipment, breaking clubs, or hitting your bag in any manner.
- Do not make excuses. Play hard, post your score, and see where we stand. No loud or disruptive behavior in front of other teams or fans.
- Never accuse another player of cheating if you did not play with him/her.
- Always shake your opponents hand after the round. Regardless of your feelings for your opponent, acknowledge his/her efforts, win or lose, when play is over.
- Never concede a putt during any kind of tournament.
- You will carry the following items in your bag:
  - Balls - carry enough balls to get you thru the round
  - Tees - make sure you have enough
  - Coins (Marker) - always mark your ball with a coin or coin-like object
  - Marker Pen - always mark your ball to identify it from other players
  - Towel - always have a clean one
- Have clean shoes and clubs.
- Never give up the tee box. If you have "honors", tee off first. Do NOT let someone tee off in front of you, if you have "honors". Put the pressure on them, make them watch you.
- Make sure it is your turn, when you are in the fairway. Make your play and get ready to move to your ball. Be thinking about your next shot as you walk.
- Your clubs must be out of the way. Do not place your clubs where they can get hit by an errant shot.
- Place your bag off the green and in line with the next tee box.
- Tend the flag if asked and your ball is closest to the hole.
- Do not make unnecessary movements or noises while others are playing.

## 16. Winner vs. Loser

The Winner = Is Always Part of the Answer  
The Loser = Is Always Part of the Problem

The Winner = Always has an answer  
The Loser = Always has an excuse

The Winner = Says, "Let me do it"  
The Loser = Says, "That is not my job"

The Winner = Sees an answer for every problem  
The Loser = See a problem for every answer

The Winner = Sees a green near every sand trap  
The Loser = Sees sand traps near every green

The Winner = Says, "It may be difficult, but it is possible"  
The Loser = Says, "It may be possible, but it is too difficult"

## 17. Practice routine

a. This practice plan uses variability and specificity. Variability is a proven practice planning technique to maximize an athlete's learning. This practice plan is variable because golfers are never hitting the same shot more than twice in a row. While there are blocks of time devoted to just putting and just approach shots, there is a different shot to hit almost every time. In an actual round, golfers will never have the ability to hit a shot a second time, so this will keep golfers thinking about how to play the next shot.

b. Specificity is also important in a practice plan. You must try to replicate match or game conditions as much as possible. In this practice plan, golfers are never hitting from a "preferred lie;" they are always dropping the ball to simulate what an actual lie would be.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Coaching Points</b>
3:00 - 3:10	Warm-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stretching Routine</li> </ul>	
3:10 - 3:40	Putting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The practice putting green will be used for this activity.</li> <li>▪ Golfers will putt to the holes starting from a pre-determined point to the hole.</li> <li>▪ The goal is to complete each hole in 2 putts or less.</li> <li>▪ Lag Putting</li> <li>▪ Mid-range putting</li> <li>▪ Short Putting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Treat each putt as you would during a competitive match.</li> <li>▪ Use your pre-shot routine - BE CONSISTENT</li> <li>▪ Know when to be aggressive (shorter putts, uphill putts, etc), and when to lag to "tap-in" range</li> </ul>
3:40 - 4:10	Chipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greenside chipping</li> <li>▪ 15 yard chipping</li> <li>▪ 30 yard chipping/pitch</li> <li>▪ Balls will be dropped in different locations to simulate actual lie conditions</li> <li>▪ Work on different clubs and locations until familiar with ball/club reactions and consistently getting the chips within</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Know your club's distances</li> <li>▪ Based on location and standings, know when to be aggressive and attack pin</li> <li>▪ Evaluate shot condition (good vs bad lie), green</li> </ul>

		six feet of the designated target.	slope, green speed and pin position
4:10 - 5:00	Driving Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practice with 10 balls at a time and set a goal (8 of 10 great Drives, 10 of 10 solid Wedges, etc.) Keep starting with a fresh 10 balls until you meet your goal or finish the basket of balls.</li> <li>▪ Go through your bag! Start with Sand Wedge and hit one shot with each club in succession all the way up to Driver. Have a specific target for each club and give yourself a YES or NO after each shot.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do not 'shotgun' balls one after another! You don't do that on the course so don't do it on the Range.</li> <li>▪ Do not 'dominate' the Range, be courteous, share spaces and keep voices low.</li> <li>▪ Do not get distracted! Be 110% confident and mentally tough on the Range</li> <li>▪ Go through your routine before each shot.</li> </ul>