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## KIDS-AND GOLF WITH KIDS

With the summer on our doorstep, it is time to get the kids out on the golf course. Having taught golf for over 10 years with the majority of it in the junior golf scene, I have learnt how to get the best out of the young golfer. I hope this article will guide you as a parent or caregiver to negotiate a couple of the pitfalls.

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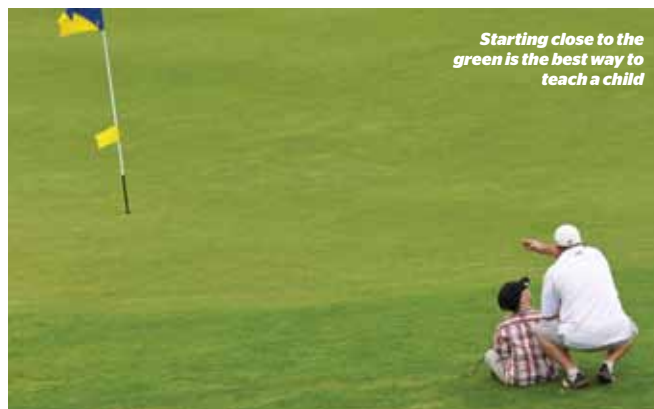
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**There are many reasons why** golf is a great sport to get your kids into and its important that their first experience in golf is a positive one and not too complicated and difficult.

The primary consideration is their size and don't just think about height, but also think about how their strength has an impact as well.

The length and weight of the golf clubs are a major consideration when getting the kids interested in the game. When I started golf, as a child, cut down clubs was all that were available. These days there is no reason not to purchase the correct clubs. The size and weight of kids clubs has improved dramatically and have become a lot more affordable.



*Starting close to the green is the best way to teach a child*



*Kids showing their club height. As you can see the red line is indicating a club that is too long for the child's height. The green lines are good size.*



*Lydia Ko swinging like a pro when she was 10*

Basically, the lighter the club, the easier the child can achieve a faster swing. The lighter the club the less stress it puts on their weak and small joints. So getting clubs that fit the child, is crucial not only for their game development but also for their physical development. All to often I see parents being sold clubs that are WAY too big for their child. Golf club manufacturers sell golf clubs in 3 or 4 year age gaps, i.e 7-10yrs, 11-14yrs and so on. However, I believe kids clubs should be chosen on height not age, the rule of thumb that I use, is that the wedge or 9 iron should be the same length from the floor to the child's hip (widest part of the hips), and every subsequent club length should be 1 inch longer.

Assuming they only have a set of about 5 clubs then this rule should be quite accurate, and of course, graphite shafts ONLY. Don't fall into the trap of buying clubs for your child based on age, or purchasing a set that is too big so the kids can grow into them. The added weight of a poorly sized club will make it a lot harder for the child to get use to. So in fact the parents are not ensuring longevity of the clubs, but shortening the child's interest in the game as they can't use them effectively and they will sooner or later lose interest.

For so long we have expected kids to enjoy what is an adult's sport on an adult's golf course. If you think of any other sport, be it cricket, soccer, basketball, or rugby, kids play on a much

smaller field, with smaller, lighter balls and equipment. Therefore it only seems fitting that kids play on shorter courses. I'm not talking about tees 50 meters ahead of the yellows tees, I mean holes of 80-metres in total length. If your child can't hit the ball more than 50 meters, due to their size, why expect them to have fun on a 250m hole and have to hit 5 of their best shots to get to the green. My suggestion is to take their ball and drop it where you would have a full shot to the green, say 80 metres to the pin. This way it will become enjoyable and achievable for your child. The more they succeed the more they will want to play, the more they play the harder they will want to practice.

**I often get asked "What is the best age to get my kids into golf?" I believe the earlier the better provided:**

**A) they want to have a go and see it as fun.**

**B) they use equipment that fits them.**

**C) they are being taught solid fundamentals, which is best directed by a PGA Professional that has knowledge of junior golf.**

I am currently teaching a number of 5 year old kids who are a lot more technically sound than Lydia Ko was when she was 5. The more kids we get playing and enjoying the sport at a young age the better chance they will have of being very skilled at an older age.

Just like any sport, regular participation is crucial, so get them going and make it a weekly thing and soon they will be able to join Mum, Dad or their Grandparents out on the golf course.

At The Institute of Golf we encourage kids of all ages to excel, and we hope to ignite the kids imagination that they too can succeed on the world stage, just as Lydia has. It is very exciting for me to see these kids light up when they see Lydia practicing beside them here at the Institute of Golf.

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