

*Instructional Booklet*

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# Early Start

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A P A R E N T ' S G U I D E  
F O R K I D S 5 & U N D E R



**U.S. Kids Golf**

## **This booklet belongs to:**

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*This learning program was developed by U.S. Kids Golf  
through the combined efforts of:*

**John Godwin**, Youth Instructor for over 30 years and 2004 PGA of America  
National Junior Golf Leader,

**Dan Van Horn**, U.S. Kids Golf Founder and father of three,  
**Rob Tipton**, U.S. Kids Golf Creative Director and father of four,  
**and other PGA and LPGA professionals.**

# INTRODUCTION STARTING RIGHT

**“When golf ceases to be fun, your child will lose interest.”**

— John Godwin,  
PGA Master Teaching Professional

**M**aking golf fun takes precedence over everything else in the most formative years of a child’s life, age five and under.

However, what’s fun for you may not be fun for your child. Most kids will not find it fun to adjust and readjust their golf swing or

contemplate how to shoot their lowest score.

Fun for a four or five year old can be as simple as hitting the ball, playing miniature golf, riding a cart, purchasing a drink, and, of course, being with you.

While competition and increased instruction will come later, for now, encouragement, rewards, and positive feelings will go much farther toward keeping your child engaged in the game.



**A parent should always:**

- 1. Make golf fun**
- 2. Provide the minimum instruction**
- 3. Choose the proper equipment**

**Kids who start young are much more likely to play golf as adults.**

— conclusion from the National Golf Foundation, Report on Junior Golfers



## **How much is too much?**

**F**ormal instruction generally begins at about age six, similar to the first grade in school. The Level 1 Learning Program booklet is recommended at that time.

Until then, a minimum of instruction can be helpful, but too much can discourage your child and possibly turn them away from the game forever.

How much is too much?

The answer is simple...it's too much when your child no longer wants to play.

If he or she has become disinterested, the game is no longer fun, and it is up to you to make it fun for them.

This book will explore ways for you to make your child's golf experience enjoyable while providing the right amount of instruction to set the stage for a proper swing and a good foundation to carry them for a lifetime.

## THE FIRST STEP EQUIPMENT

**Cut-off adult clubs** have been the standard for children's use for many years. But most adult golfers wrestle with poor swing habits resulting from their start with cut-off clubs that were too heavy and stiff.

**Club Weight** is one of the most important aspects of selecting clubs for your child. Lighter clubheads will allow more clubhead speed and distance, improve balance, and help kids develop a smooth, natural swing.

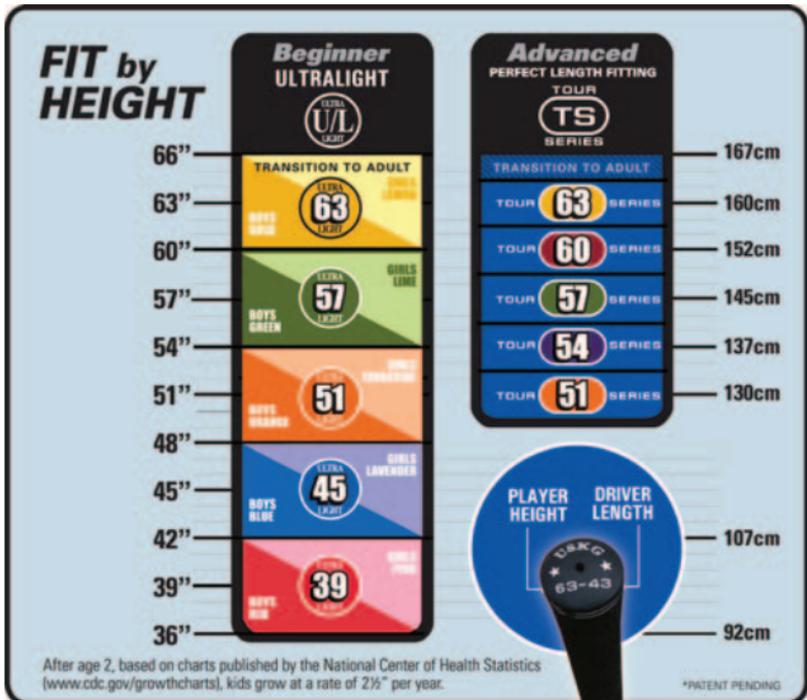


**Club Length** is also critical in developing a good swing and learning the fundamentals. As the picture above indicates, a driver should never be above or below the yellow lines.

**When selecting a first club**, a putter is the best choice to first put in a kids hand. Then a 9-iron training club because it is fun and easy for kids to hit the ball in the air off of a tee. Add a lofted fairway wood or hybrid club for the ideal starter set.

**Fitting through the years** is key to the development and improvement of the young golfer. Kids grow an average of 2.5 inches per year after age two, and as your child grows, you will need to re-fit them according to their height. Check their height every six months to be sure their clubs are properly fit.

**If you have any questions** about fitting your child, go to the U.S. Kids Golf website at [www.uskidsgolf.com/fitting](http://www.uskidsgolf.com/fitting) to determine the proper length clubs for your child's height.



# HAVING FUN PUTTING

**Putting** is 40% of the game, and, for most, it is the starting point in golf. The miniature golf course is a great place to begin learning a putting stroke. Be patient, and keep your instruction limited to the two points below.



1

## **Thumbs on Top**

A simple way to grip the club.

2

## **“Y” Set-up**

Arms and putter form the letter “Y”.



## MINIATURE GOLF

is a great way for a child to have fun putting. Play often, but always bring your child's own putter, including on your vacation time. Miniature golf could be your child's first experience with golf and the one that keeps them hooked on the game in the early years.



### Games on the green:

Play three holes with your child on the practice putting green. Give yourself a par of two and your child a par of four. Balance the winning and the losing, and adjust the par levels as needed.

Games like this one will make practice fun for your son or daughter and help them understand the importance of keeping score.

# HAVING FUN CHIPPING

**Chipping** is a simple stroke that should be a natural progression from putting. Keep your instruction limited to the two points below and help your child stay focused on a target.



1

## Hot dog in Bun

Keep the hands together.

2

## “Y” Set-up

Arms and club form the letter “Y” with a stroke similar to putting, with the ball played off the back foot.



## **GAMES TO PLAY:**

Give your child three shots to get the ball on the green. From there, work on getting it closer to the hole.



## **HIT YOUR SHOT,**

then give your child three chances (or as many as needed to encourage success) to get his or her shot closer to the pin than yours. This form of play will motivate the player to improve and stay target-oriented. Play for a prize, and you will see a new level of determination.

## HAVING FUN FULL SWING

**Full swing:** Making contact with the ball is the first goal to give your child. Keep your instruction limited to the two points below. Encourage good shots, but **AVOID CORRECTING THE BAD SHOTS**. Every shot that makes contact is a good shot at this stage.



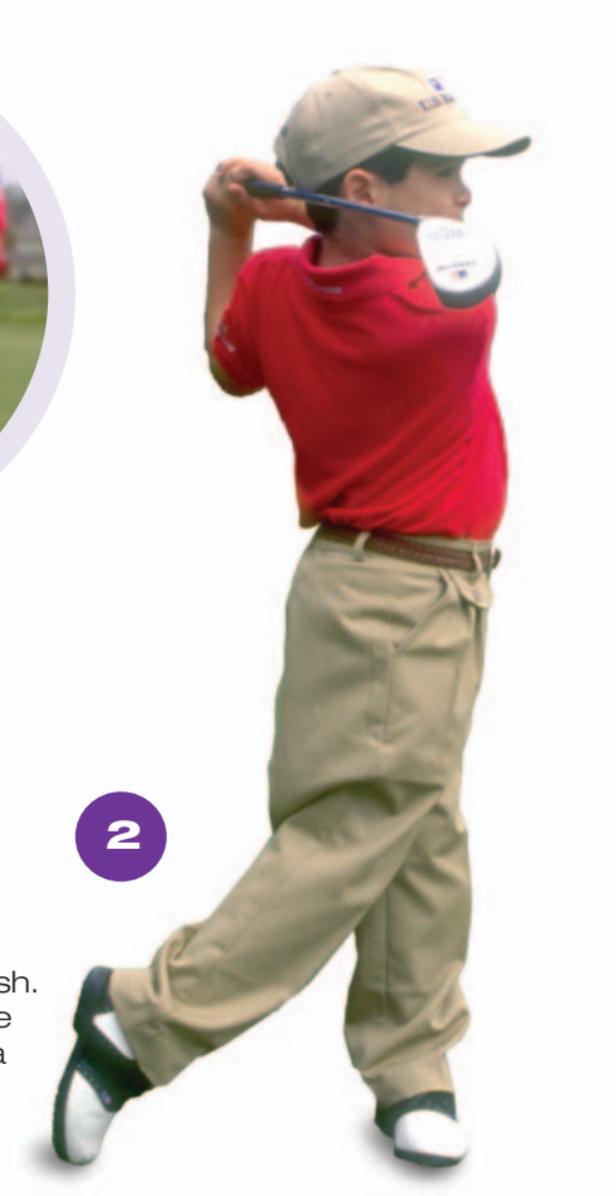
1

### Hot dog in bun

Keep the hands together.

### Stick the Finish

This picture (right) shows the ideal finish. Learning to hold the finish will promote a balanced swing.



## Tee up all of your child's shots

at this early stage of learning, woods and irons. Give your child a target and a distance goal. Have him or her throw a golf ball as far as they can to establish a distance threshold. Count how many of their shots go farther than this mark, and set your own records. Also, count the number of shots your child hits without missing the ball.



**Safety** is especially important on the driving range. Don't use this time to practice your own game. Instead, give your attention to your child so you can encourage them as well as keep them out of the path of other golfers.

## HAVING FUN AT THE RANGE

**Your day at the driving range** should be short and action packed—no more than one hour. Your main goal is to make the time fun. Make a game out of your practice, which should include these three stations: putting green, chipping green, and the driving range.



Putting: 15 minutes



Chipping: 15 minutes

**Time:** Do not use the time with your child to work on your own golf game. Give your time to your child, and both of you will benefit and enjoy yourselves more.

**Instruction:** Provide only the minimum instruction (see pgs. 8-12). Let your child do what comes naturally at first. If at all possible, DON'T give instruction—rather encourage and affirm the fun your child is having.

**Keep it Fun:** Look for signs that your child is not having fun. If your child seems bored or distracted, take a break or move on to another area of fun.



Range: 15 minutes

### **Encouragement:**

Encouraging words are far more important than swing instruction. Try to use ten words of encouragement for every word of correction.

**Always end your day** with something special like a drink or a snack. This will give you and your child a moment to review your time together.



## HAVING FUN PLAYING THE COURSE

### Playing the course

Very soon, if not already, your child will want to join you on the golf course.



**Starting out:** For your first time together on the course, have your child ride in the cart with you while you play three holes, letting him or her hit an occasional shot or putt on the green. Don't be discouraged if your son or daughter has more fun in the sand trap than they do playing golf.

**Play forward tees:** When playing a full golf hole for the first time, let your child tee off from very close to the green—no farther away than the 100 yard marker.

**Keeping score:** Once your child shows an interest in keeping score, establish a par at a distance that's appropriate for him or her. Remember, pars and birdies are better than bogeys.

## A Structured Learning Program

At about age six, your child will be ready for the next stage in the early learning process, the Level 1 Instructional booklet.



Learning Program booklets are available to order on the U.S. Kids Golf website.

## Many golf courses

across the country are installing tees for the entire family, based on the U.S. Kids Golf Family Course program.

Visit the U.S. Kids Golf website at [www.uskidsgolf.com/familycourse](http://www.uskidsgolf.com/familycourse) for inexpensive ways to set up your golf course as a Family Course.



## HAVING FUN IN THE YARD

**Your yard** is a great place to play and practice with your child at a moment's notice. Bringing golf to your home will also allow him or her to enjoy the game on their own.



**Safety:** Use plastic or foam balls to avoid injury or broken windows.

**Games:** Most yards can easily become a make-shift golf course with a little creativity. Sidewalks become out-of-bounds and shrubs are hazards.



**Equipment:** Use the same equipment your child will use at the golf course.

**Props:** Hula-hoops, buckets, or even a coiled watering hose can make great targets for a fun way to practice chipping. Hitting a shot over the top bar of a swing set helps develop confidence.

## GLOSSARY OF GOLF TERMS

**Golf has a language of its own.** The following terms will be helpful to teach your child as he or she learns to play.

**Addressing the ball** - taking your stance and grounding your club in preparation for a stroke.

**Aim** - alignment of your body and clubface towards the target.

**Back swing** - the beginning of the swing, which includes the arms, hands, and body motion.

**Chip** - a shot played from near the edge of the green.

**Divot** - grass that is destroyed by your club.

**Etiquette** - manners and protocol during play, including common courtesies extended to other players and care of the course.

**Follow-through** - that portion of the swing after the ball has been struck all the way to the completion of motion.

**Gimmie** - a short putt that is conceded.

**Grip** - the placement of your hands on the club, or the rubber handle on the shaft of the club.

**Pitch** - a short shot played with a lofted club to the green.

**Whiff** - to swing and miss the ball completely.

Kids learn differently than adults.

In addition to the right equipment, kids need a balanced program to keep them excited and challenged in the game.

Too much instruction can turn them away from golf. Too little, and they can become frustrated, develop poor swing habits, and even lose interest.

Our program provides fundamental instruction with positive incentives to encourage young golfers to reach their full potential. It is designed to be used with a PGA or LPGA professional.



**\$5.99** sug. retail

## Learning Program

created by  
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