

SPECIAL REPORT



“Seven Things You Should Ask Before Buying Golf Clubs”

By Bobby Lopez, *PGA Professional*

You want to get better at golf, but you're not sure if lessons will help, or maybe a set of new golf clubs.

Determining what the *real* problem is isn't easy and demands some expertise. You shouldn't just go out and buy a set of golf clubs. You must first determine what you want the golf club to do for you.

This is very similar to buying a computer. First determine what software you are going to run so you know what configuration of hardware you need to run the software.

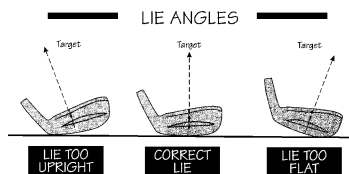
It is the same with golf clubs. One needs to consider the golf swing in question first. The golf club configuration must match the swing not just the physical characteristics, such as how tall you are etc. ***Your swing is the software your golf clubs the hardware.***

There are so many variables to consider that you must be patient and expect to spend a considerable amount of time on this decision.

If the question is, ***“should you take lessons first”?*** ***The answer is a resounding “yes”!*** Golf lessons from a qualified professional will help tremendously in getting you to swing properly before you buy golf clubs. The best person to fit you is someone that already knows your swing. Second best is to be fitted by a good teacher.

For effective club fitting, you need a pro who understands the golf swing motion and how the golf club is effecting your swing motion. Club fitting an improper swing motion could cause more harm than good. There is a definite relationship between the golf club configuration and your ball flight.

If a golfer plays with golf clubs that are too short and too flat a lie angle he/she will probably slice the ball. A quick check of your lie angle could save you years of aggravation in trying to get rid of a slice that is not from a faulty swing move, but your lie angle.



Equipment problems that can cause swing compensations are, but not limited to, improper lie angles, wrong head designs with too little, improper shaft flexes, drivers with too little loft, clubs that are too heavy in total and/or swing weight.

For every one degree your golf clubs are off in lie angle it could cost you as much as 15 feet off line in your approach! Eight degrees off in lie angle could cost you as much as 80 or 90 feet off line!

The Seven Questions

Consider these seven questions I recommend asking *before purchasing a set of golf clubs.*

- ✓ **Question Number #1**
What are the most important considerations in club fitting?
- ✓ **Question Number #2**
What is your training in golf club fitting?
- ✓ **Question Number #3**
How many golf club fittings have you done?
- ✓ **Question Number #4**
What brands to you carry and why?
- ✓ **Question Number #5**
Do you have testimonials?
- ✓ **Question Number #6**
What are your qualifications?
- ✓ **Question Number #7**
Do you offer and guarantees or support after the sale?

✓ Question Number #1

What are the most important considerations in club fitting?

Golf club configurations that must be taken in to consideration are:

- 1) Shaft length
- 2) Shaft flex and deflection point
- 3) Golf club head design
- 4) Lie angle
- 5) Grip size
- 6) Total Weight
- 7) Swing Weight

There are so many variables within these seven configurations that it would be impossible to list them all here. However if you are interested in further information concerning this section then call me at (800) 731-2511.

Just keep in mind that what you are trying to fit here is a golf swing and its characteristics. You are trying to create a golf club configuration that “rewards” you with a great shot when “you make your best swing motion”.

Many golfers are out there playing with golf clubs that do quite the opposite. They only get rewarded when they do the wrong thing, (*a compensation for instance*).

Question Number 2

What is your training in golf club fitting?

Proper golf club fitting demands in-depth training. Some golf club companies offer quick one day training courses, others offer a one or two week course. Be certain to choose a fitter that has at least two years of experience in fitting golf clubs.

Training or no training, there is always the possible bias on the part of the fitter. The best fitters will go through the proper fitting process and base the decision strictly on results, and ball flight.

I personally could fit you in almost any brand of golf clubs, within reason. Although there will be some brands that you will perform better than others for your swing.

✓ Question Number 3

How Many Golf Club Fittings Have You Done?

It is important to pay special attention to the answer you get and to know the difference between dynamic fitting and static fitting. Dynamic fitting calls for the hitting of golf balls until you find the right configuration. ***Dynamic meaning in motion.***

Static fitting is taking measurements. Such as finger tip to floor etc. Static fitting is of little value but better than nothing.

If the fitter does static fits only, then start looking elsewhere. Equally if the fitter says that they have been fitting for only a year or so, try to find a fitter with more experience.

If the fitter is a store clerk at a golf store be very cautious. ***Check the teaching and playing credentials!***

✓ Question Number 4

What brands do you carry and why?

The reason for carrying more than one brand is strictly for head design. Golf club companies do not make golf shafts. They buy golf shafts and install them in their golf clubs. The number of golf shaft configurations available in the fitting system can have a crucial effect on your finding the best golf club for your swing.

A specific head design might produce a better ball flight for your swing. I must strongly caution you here, **DO NOT FALL IN LOVE WITH THE LOOKS OF A SPECIFIC HEAD DESIGN!**

You might find that the golf club that you dislike in looks, might be the best one for your swing. Get over it! You want ball flight performance here, not looks.

The distribution of the weight and the offset of the head can cause you to produce different flight patterns. Generally the offset head will cause the ball to travel a little higher and about three degrees to the left, (for right handers).

Don't be afraid to hit blades, (non cavity backs) if they produce the right ball flight for you. Again, let your swing choose the golf club, not you!

Equally you might find that a softer shaft would perform better for your swing. Don't be a macho man and insist on a stiff shaft. Let your swing choose the golf club, not you!

✓ Question Number 5

Do You Have Testimonials?

If the fitter has in depth experience then he/she can gladly introduce you to other golfers that can give you there testimonial on the results they have enjoyed.

If the fitter has no testimonials to offer then walk!

Anything the fitter will tell you is not nearly as powerful as what his customers will tell you. Ask his customers how long they have been playing with the golf clubs. Anyone playing with their golf clubs more than a year shows that the fit must be pretty good.

I have seen some terrible fits out there that have ruined many a golf swing. Especially golf clubs that were fitted too long and too upright. If you see that many of the golf clubs the fitter has offered are long and upright then beware!

In most cases, the upright lie angle that the fitter is prescribing is because the golfer is swinging over the top. Centrifugal force is pulling the shaft down and out producing a toe down effect. This gives a false reading. One must first fix the over the top move in the golf swing before fitting for golf clubs!

✓ Question Number 6

What Are Your Qualifications?

A PGA professional with golf club fitting training and past playing experience would be my choice. A former player would be more apt to recognize that you should have the configuration that you can best score with through accuracy and better balance.

A PGA member does not guarantee that the fitter is competent or experienced, however it does show that the individual is dedicated to the golf business and has completed a five year apprenticeship.

A competent fitter will always choose accuracy over distance. The key is consistency. A golf club you can hit well frequently and comfortably. Your balance should improve with the right golf club.

Many golfers make a serious mistake with their driver selection. Even Tiger has a 43 1/2" driver. Golfers everywhere are hitting 45 to 46" long drivers thinking that they can hit the ball further. **Remember, golf is a target game!**

Choose the golf club you play best with, not what you hit the longest.

✓ Question Number 7

Do You Offer Any Guarantees or Support After the Sale?

Your fitter should guarantee his/her work. The golf clubs should not be shipped to you directly. Good fitters will insist on the clubs to be shipped to the fitter. The fitter should watch you hit some balls with the golf clubs to be certain that the fit was proper, before you leave with your new golf clubs.

Your fitter should have used face tape, (a tape that sticks to the face of the golf club and shows the impact spot on the club face) during your fit. More face tape should be used once the golf clubs are received to see if the golf clubs are consistent with the original fit.

If the fit is improper, the fitter should have the relationship with his/her supplier to send the golf clubs back for adjustment.

It is this type of special attention and follow-up that your golf game deserves. Anything less and you are just gambling.

Buying "off the rack" standard clubs would be buying your golf clubs on perceived performance. You perceive, (by way of a commercial or you hit your pals clubs) that a new set of golf clubs will help your game.

Under the scenario I am recommending, you would make your purchase under proven performance. You see the results before you buy!

This is how touring pros choose their golf clubs. ***Do you deserve anything less?***

What should my golf clubs cost?

Now we haven't talked price. Really good custom fitted golf clubs are not cheap. However when you consider the fact that you are less likely to purchase another set for quite some time I can safely say that custom golf clubs are less expensive over time.

Plus what is a good golf game worth to you? Why spend money on green fees and maybe even lessons and not go all the way with the right equipment.

I would budget at least \$500 to \$1,500 depending on who you deal with. Again, you really do not get to pick the golf club, your swing does. So don't get upset with the fitter. Just make sure that the price is in line with industry standards, and take into account any extra time spent by the fitter and support after the sale. All that extra attention has its costs and is well worth it.

You should be able to divide your costs into five years. If you happen to have a real growth spurt in your swing speed then you might have to consider re-shafting the set. I would consider that a good problem to have.

Special Tip For Juniors

Buy the best quality and best fit. A poor fit could cause bad habits that might last a lifetime. Similar to buying a child an inexpensive pair of shoes that end up doing damage to their feet.

I would shy away from cavity backs if the youngster is a teenager. Count on re-shafting the golf club every two years. It will be better in the long run to buy one really good set, that can be re-shafted over the years, then buy a new set with each growth spurt.

Make sure you buy forged club heads so you can bend the lie angles over the years. If not forged ask for 431 stainless steel.

Extra Tips That Help Should I buy my golf clubs from a store that fits with a computer?

Absolutely not! Reason being, the computer does not take into account any swing faults you might have. For instance, if you are swinging over the top, can the computer fix the faulty swing move before recommending a golf club?

How About Professional Golf Club Builders?

The key word here is professional. Some golf club builders are very good. Technically, they put together a very good golf club. Try to make sure the club builder is a member of the Professional Clubmakers Society and that he/she has passed all the necessary exams. The society offers two kinds of membership, with and without exam certification.

Professional club builder's construction skills are very good, however you should find a qualified golf instructor to determine the right fit for you and pass the specifications on to your golf club builder.

My friend makes golf clubs in his garage and he says that he can custom fit?

First make sure your friend can break 90! Usually these garage mechanics do not have the golf swing knowledge and deal only in knock off products that might be short on the proper specifications.

Most garage mechanics are short on all the necessary tools needed for true and proper golf club building.

Graphite Shafts?

It is especially important to have the right fitter when talking graphite. Graphite can be an asset in the right hands, however only the best graphite will do. Choose high quality graphite from a credible company that can get you the same golf club delivered that you hit in the sample fitting system.

Titanium Drivers?

Most all driver heads are going to weigh about 200 grams. Even the old wooden woods weigh about 200 grams. There are some lighter head weights available for the extra long drivers.

The only advantage to the titanium driver is that due to the light weight of titanium metal, one can produce a larger size head and still weigh 200 grams. In theory, larger the head the more forgiveness.

The bottom sole plate of the metal woods weigh more in comparison to the top of the head thus producing a lower center of gravity which makes the club easier to hit higher. That is why you see the lower lofts such as 7 and 8 degrees in the Titanium heads.

Anytime you get the center of gravity of the golf club below the center of gravity of the ball you will get immediate lift. That, more than the larger head makes the golf club easier to hit. ***As proof, notice that now the golf club companies are changing to smaller club head designs!***

Bobby Lopez is a PGA professional with over 30 years experience. He has proven his techniques in his own golf schools in Virginia. To learn more how Mr. Lopez can help you with club fitting call (800) 731-2511