

Golf formats explained

Below is a list of popular golf competition formats. Additional information will be available on the Competition Notes sent out prior to each Saturday competition.

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[Accumulator \(or Alliance\)](#)

This is a Stableford Competition played in teams of 3.

As the name suggests a team accumulates points by adding the points won based on the following:

- Holes 1, 2 & 3 only one of the individual scores count
- Hole 4, 5 & 6 two of the scores count
- Holes 7, 8 & 9 all 3 scores count.

This formula is repeated on the remaining 9 holes.

[Alternate Shots](#)

Alternate Shot, also called Foursomes, is a competition format in which 2-person teams alternate hitting the same ball. The first player tees off, the second player hits the second shot, the first player hits the third shot, and so on until the ball is holed. Playing from the tee is also alternated so that the same player does not hit every drive.

Alternate Shot can be played as stroke play or match play.

Best Ball

Best ball is one of the most popular golf tournament formats.

Best ball can be played by using 2, 3 or 4 person teams. Each player on the team plays his or her own golf ball throughout the round, and on each hole the low score or "Best Ball" of the group serves as the team score. For example, player A gets a 5, B gets a 4, C gets a 6, D gets a 6, then the team score for that hole is 4, because the low score of the group was B's 4.

Best ball is usually played as stroke play with the total score added up at the end of the round. It can be played as match play, but best-ball match play with more than 2 person teams results in a lot of halved holes.

Better-Ball

A best ball competition in which the teams are comprised of two players. When played as match play, better-ball is another name for Four Ball Better-Ball.

The two players on the team each play their own ball throughout the round. The low score, or better ball, among the two on each hole is the team's score for that hole.

Four Ball Better-Ball (4BBB)

Four Ball is a match between two teams of two players (a total of four balls being played, hence the name) against each other using better-ball scoring.

All four players play their own ball throughout; at the end of each hole, the low score between the two partners on each team is that team's score. For example, Players A and B form one team. On the first hole, A scores a 5, B scores a 6, so the team score is 5.

Four Ball can be played as stroke play or match play and is one of the formats used at the Ryder Cup.

Foursomes

Foursomes is a competition format in which teams are comprised of two players each, and the players alternate hitting the same ball (which is why Foursomes is also very commonly called "alternate shot").

The first player tees off, the second player hits the second shot, the first player hits the third shot, and so on until the ball is holed. Players alternate hitting tee shots so that the same player does not hit every drive.

Foursomes can be played as stroke play or match play. As match play, Foursomes is one of the formats used in the Ryder Cup.

Greensomes

Greensomes, also known as Scotch Foursomes, is a competition format that is a variation of foursomes (2-person teams, each playing one ball). In Greensomes, both players on a team tee off, the best of the two tee balls is selected and that ball is then played alternate-shot until holed.

In regular foursomes, the 2-person team would play alternate shot for the full hole, i.e., only one tee ball would be hit.

Greensomes is essentially a 2-person scramble off the tee, then alternate-shot into the hole.

Canadian Greensomes

Canadian Greensomes is a variation of Greensomes where both players tee off. Each player then plays their partners ball as their second shot, the best of the two balls is then selected and that ball is then played alternate-shot until holed.

Matchplay

Can be played in singles or in team's foursomes or fourballs. Basically, you play for a hole. If you score better than your playing partner/s, then you win the hole and go one up. If you win the next hole you go two up and so on. If you are three up with three holes left to play this is called 'Dormie' because you cannot lose.

If you are still level by the end of 18 holes, then you finish all square unless you have to find a winner in which case you keep playing under sudden death rules until someone wins.

Skins

"Skins" this term is used to calculate the number of holes won or lost by a player or team and is what the Skins Game is played for. In a Skins game you play a type of match play format in which each hole has a set value (usually in money or points). The player who wins the hole is said to win the "Skin", and whatever that Skin is worth. Skins games are often more dramatic than standard match play because holes are not halved. When players tie on a given hole, the value of that hole is carried over and added to the value of the following hole. The more ties, the greater the value of the "Skin" and the bigger the eventual payoff. For example, a friendly skins game might be played for £1 per hole. If three holes in a row are played without a winner, then the fourth hole is worth £4 (£1 for its own value, plus a pound for each hole that carries over).

Stableford

A Stableford competition is a golf tournament in which the object is to get the highest score. That is because in Stableford, golfers are awarded points based on their scores in relation to a fixed score at each hole. That fixed score can be par, or any number of strokes the competition committee chooses (6, 8, whatever).

The USGA and R&A define Stableford points in this manner:

- More than 1 over fixed score (or no score returned) - 0 points
- One over fixed score - 1 point
- Fixed score - 2 points
- One under fixed score - 3 points
- Two under fixed score - 4 points
- Three under fixed score - 5 points
- Four under fixed score - 6 points

Stroke Play

The standard form of golf that you would play in medal competitions or maybe just friendly rounds. Mark the number of shots you score and add them up to get a total at the end. This equates to your GROSS score. Or deduct your playing handicap from your gross score to get a NET score.

Scramble

Scrambles involve 2/3/4-person teams playing 2/3/4 balls, but with each shot coming from the same spot (the best drive is chosen, and all four team members then hit from that spot, and so on until the ball is holed).

Texas Scramble

Texas Scramble is a competition format that is a basic Scramble with a twist.

The variation in a Texas Scramble is that at least four drives, (or whatever the tournament organisers decide), must be played by the members of the team during the course of the round: The stipulated number of drives needs to be hit by Player A, and by Player B, and so on.

Florida Scramble

The Florida Scramble is a variation on the typical scramble in which one player on each team sits out each shot. ... The better of the second shots is selected and the player who hit it sits out the third shots; and so on until the ball is holed.

Yellow Ball

This is a Stableford Competition played in teams of 3 or 4.

Before the start of the game the team decide what will be the player order for the Yellow ball holder. Once the order is decided it cannot be changed. Whatever score is realised by the Yellow ball holder the points will be doubled. The other two players score as normal. If the team lose the Yellow ball, then they can no longer claim double points from the hole that it was lost on thru to the end of the 18 holes. All three scores to count regardless that the yellow ball is lost.