

SIX EASY STEPS TO PLANNING A GOLF EVENT



What Every Event Planner Should Consider When Hosting A Golf Outing

Planning an Outing

So, you've decided to put on a golf outing and you think it is going to be fun and easy – and it will be with a little advance planning and some help from our professionals at Dogwood Golf Club. Following the outline set forth in this planning guide will make your job easier and more fun for you and your golfers. ***You do not need to be an experienced golfer to run a successful golf event!***

When planning an outing, you first need to identify your goals. Having these clearly defined you can begin the process. When structuring your event, always consider the talents and make-up of your golf participants. Having an event that is too challenging (and not fun for everyone) can sour the day and linger on the mind of your participants until next year. Careful planning is the key to insuring a memorable event for all players and guests. Most golf events can be staged by one person or a small committee.

One of the pleasant surprises about staging your golf event at Dogwood Golf Club is how helpful our golf and food & beverage staffs can be, both in the planning process and on the actual event day – to the point where on the day of your event, our staff will almost seem like part of your staff. We provide proximity markers, score sheets, personalized cart assignments and tournament scorecards and can assist in rules and contest set ups.

We put a high value on building a spirit of teamwork to help you meet your objectives, timelines and costs. You'll find us attentive to your needs and very flexible when it comes to those inevitable last-minute changes or day of event 'hiccups.'

In this guide we'll take you step by step through many of the details involved in successful events. At Dogwood we 'host' around 40 events each year so we're very well aware of what works and what doesn't as well as what is fun and what is not.

As they say on TV, "One call that's all" and we'll take it from there.



First Step: Decide on a Date

The single most important step in planning your golf event is securing a date. Mondays are the most typical days for a tournament and outings at Dogwood. That said, depending on the size of your group, we can accommodate you on other days of the week. We do our member outings on weekends so that option is generally not available.

The most popular time of day for an event is late morning to early afternoon. This works well for guests who do not want to get up early or have to get away from work. Another option is to use our well-appointed meeting space to hold a business meeting before the golf event, and then break for lunch followed by an afternoon of golf.

Second Step: Choose a Golf Course

You must decide which golf course is appropriate for your outing event. Ideally the golf facility will be located so that your guests have an easy commute the day of the event. Dogwood is conveniently located in West Marietta just off the East-West Connector (Barrett Parkway). If you are hosting out of town guests, accommodations are available nearby for their convenience.

Before you decide, take a tour of the prospective golf courses under consideration. We invite you to make an appointment for your first visit so that we can have all our department heads available to discuss your event. We'll even provide you or your committee with a complimentary round of golf where you'll have an opportunity to experience our facility firsthand!

Keep in mind that there will be players at your event with a wide range of golf experience, so the length and layout of the course should have an impact on your choice. The best choice for a golf outing is a course that will provide a challenge for the better golfers, yet allow occasional players a chance to navigate their way around with the least amount of difficulty. Dogwood is just such a course and with our newly renovated greens, the topography of our course is an excellent choice for the inexperienced golfer.

Remember, even if you have a group of players with a wide range of golf experience, you can compensate by having players tee off from forward tees or by picking a format of play (such as a team scramble) that is designed to make sure everyone has a fun day. More on this strategy will be presented later in the Fourth Step, Choosing a Format of Play.

Sign the Contract

Once you decide on a date and location, the golf course will draw up a contract listing all of the elements of your event. This provides a written agreement that the golf course will reserve the particular date on your behalf and agree to hold the tee times and deliver the food and beverages in proper quantities, as well as other services you request. A deposit will be required to confirm your reservation.

Once you have signed the contract, the golf course will require that by a certain date you guarantee to pay for a certain number of players on the day of the event. In the case of our golf facility, this consultation begins several weeks in advance and results in a guarantee about ten days in advance. This allows us to reserve the proper amount of tee times, order the right amount of food and schedule adequate staffing to meet your needs and avoid any last minute changes that could adversely affect our service to your event.

Third Step: Establish Your Budget

When establishing a budget for your golf event, remember that most golf courses will charge on a per person basis. This cost per golfer includes the greens fee and cart fee (the actual cost of playing the course and renting a riding golf cart). Other amenities such as a driving range set up may also be important to your guests. Dogwood GC has a first class practice facility for your guests.

Does your group require food and beverage service? Food and beverage is usually calculated separately from the actual golf cost per head. A traditional part of a golf event is to extend hospitality to your guests with outstanding food and drink. Meals can be served before and/or after your golf event.

Often, this starts with lunch upon arrival, where guests can grab something quick to eat before spending 4½ hours out on the course. Our golf facility offers many options including box lunches or affordable buffet selections with such favorites as hamburgers and hot dogs. You can also place our freshly prepared box lunches on the golf carts so everyone can take it with them on the golf course.

Once out on the golf course, beverage service is important – especially on warm days when hydration is a must. Rest assured that our beverage carts will provide friendly on-course snack and beverage service to each of your guests. You may also want to consider purchasing drink tickets so your guests can exchange tickets for beverages on the golf course without having to pay or fumble for change. Many of our golf outings provide two or three drink tickets (purchased by an event sponsor in advance) to each golfer when they check-in for the event. We also offer master tab options as well. (Please note: Dogwood GC does not allow outside food and drink to be brought onto the property. If an event sponsor wishes to donate food or drink items for distribution to your guests during the event they must be purchased by prior arrangement through our food and beverage department.)

After 18 holes and 4½ hours on the course, most golfers are ready for dinner. Dogwood GC provides you with a great array of post-event meal choices. You can choose from our casual Fairway Feast Buffet (burgers, dogs, and all the fixin's) or go for an Italian Buffet or all the way to a fun BBQ of pulled pork and grilled chicken breasts. All events will enjoy our picturesque view of the golf course. The choice is yours!

Prizes and Gifts

What kind of prizes will you give away? Will you purchase them, or will they be donated? Many golf outing events, especially those with a charitable purpose, contact various businesses for donations of prizes. Additionally, Dogwood GC can work with your organization to provide competitive pricing on merchandise stocked in our golf shop or create gift cards that your golfers can redeem in our golf shop on the day of the event.

We would also be pleased to assist your event with custom logo production on specialty items and gifts. Typically this process requires about 8 to 10 weeks for delivery from submission of a purchase order.

Other Budget Items

Depending on the size and scope of your event, here are some other items that could be considered as part of your golf outing budget:

- Drink tickets
- Driving range warm-up
- Prizes (trophies, golf balls, golf equipment, gift certificates) Printing (brochures, invitations, posters, entry forms)
- Hole-in-one contest insurance for high visibility prizes (car, cash, vacation) Gifts for event volunteers
- Photography (team pictures)
- Signs and banners to recognize event sponsors Event scoring fee
- Pre-event clinic hosted by club professional

The number of items in your budget will vary depending on the size of your event and how much impact you need to make with participants, clients or other guests.

Defraying Costs with Sponsors



If your golf outing is a charity outing, hole sponsors are a great way to raise money for the designated charity, as well as a way to engage local businesses to help promote your event. Determine a price for sponsorship of each hole. Sponsor signs are placed at the event to publicize the name of the company making the contribution to the success of the event.

Dogwood is prepared to help produce hole sponsor signs, and in the process, collect copy and artwork from the individual hole sponsors.

Sponsorships do not have to be limited to just selling hole signs. You can increase sponsor visibility and track their return on investment by offering:

- Sponsorships for lunch, dinner, beverage cart or prize table. Make sure to mention each sponsor as the prize is awarded.
- Sponsor access to your event's company or charity database for marketing purposes. Sponsorship materials included in player gift bags. All major sponsors (and logos) included in event advertising and marketing.
- Go for "big ticket" industries such as automotive, real estate and financial as they know the value of golfer demographics.
- Special pricing (cost-plus) for sponsor logo'd merchandise. Our golf pro shop can facilitate these special orders.

Sell Mulligans

As you know, a mulligan is an extra shot that can be used to take the place of an errant shot. These should be sold prior to the round either in packages (say 3 for \$5) or individually. Should a player muff a shot, they can use the pre-purchased mulligan to replay a bad shot without any sort of penalty. Mulligans are an excellent way to raise money or to defray the expenses of a golf outing. Traditionally, only two or three mulligans per player are allowed for purchase. Depending on your group, the price of a mulligan can vary from \$1 up as high as \$20 or more.

The "all inclusive" BIG Ticket

If your event sells individual contest and raffle ticket options to players at check-in, it may be more profitable to offer an all-inclusive "Big" ticket for one easy to buy price. For example, if 3 mulligans, longest drive contest, closest-to-the-pin contest, hole-in-one contest and 3 raffle tickets cost \$5 each for a total of \$25 for all events, an all-inclusive BIG ticket could be sold for \$20.

Gifts and Recognition

No outing is complete without recognition and commemoratives for your attendees. You can order golf shirts, hats, golf balls and other specialty merchandise direct from Dogwood GC and it will be waiting upon your arrival. Our golf pro shop has many choices and our Golf Event Coordinator can help you select what will work best for your group. Many items can be customized with logos from your company or sponsor. Some discounts available on select merchandise.

Fourth Step: Choose a Format of Play

A primary factor in determining the format of play for your golf outing is the skill level and number of players who will participate. Because the social nature of golf tends to bring players of varying abilities together no matter how well they play, you should try to pick a format that will allow everyone to take part in the competition and enjoy the round. Selecting a format that is focused on entertainment, not on arithmetic and rules is the key to having fun.

You may also want to choose a format that allows players to complete their round in a reasonable amount of time. No one enjoys taking six hours to play a round of golf. Remember, the typical golf outing time goal is to complete the round in four and a half hours depending on the size of the group. You should request that the course staff takes appropriate measures to assure that play progresses at a suitable pace. The friendly Player Assistants at Dogwood GC will monitor play and assist your golfers throughout the day to facilitate a smooth flow until the conclusion of play.



Starting Time Options

Depending upon the number of golfers, time of day and day of week, Dogwood GC provides the following starting time options for your golf outing:

Consecutive Tee Times

These are reservations that are held for any size group. Under this method, each golfer or group is assigned a tee time. Groups are sent off in sequence from the first tee in intervals of 9 minutes.

Full Shotgun Start

A shotgun start is a golf outing format in which all groups of players tee off simultaneously from different holes on the golf course. Thus, a foursome might begin play on hole twelve and complete a total of 18 holes, finishing on hole eleven. The minimum required for a shotgun event is variable depending on the date and time of year. The maximum is 128. We offer both morning and afternoon shotgun events. Choosing between the two it is wise to consider time of year and weather possibilities.

Modified Shotgun Start

In a "modified" shotgun start the players all start at the same time but do not occupy the entire course – in other words, you use only as many golf holes as needed to accommodate the size of your group. The minimum number of players varies from depending on availability. We offer limited weekday morning and afternoon modified shotgun events.

Formats

There are a wide variety of formats of play that will work for your event, but team formats typically work best. Teams also tend to even out discrepancies in terms of golf skills so everyone has a chance to win.

To create teams that are even in terms of ability, you can ask for each player's handicap. Regular golfers carry a handicap, but there will be a number of players at your event who do not play often, and therefore, do not keep track of their scores to establish a handicap. In this case, you can assign handicaps that appear fitting to the individual who doesn't play much.

If you need assistance assigning a handicap, our course professionals will be glad to assist you to ensure the competition is fair and enjoyable for everyone.

The most widely used approach is to simply assign players to teams based stated preference.

By far, the most popular format of play is the Team Scramble because it allows for a good pace of play despite a large number of players. Additionally, a Team Scramble gives everyone, even less experienced players, a chance of winning. A Team Scramble has four players on a team. All players tee off and then each player hits their second shot from the spot where the best drive landed. On each succeeding shot all golfers play from where the best shot of the four landed. This process is continued until the ball is holed out. Our professional staff will be glad to give you more information about how to conduct a Team Scramble.

Scoring

Of course you will need to honor your competition winners. We can apply a unique “twist” by flighting your field of players to equitably determine multiple event winners (a “flight” is a term for a division of golfers within a golf tournament. Typically each flight, or division, consists of golfers (or teams) of roughly similar skills competing against each other for victory within their flight.) or we’ll be happy to show you our fun (and easy) alternative! This avoids the perception that prizes are too weighted towards winning teams and suggests that everyone can be a winner before the event begins.



On course Contests

Added activities at golf outings are extremely popular because the focus is on having fun and not just the players’ score. Dogwood GC can help you set up fun contests and provide your event with appropriate proximity markers. Here are some popular contests:

Longest Drive

Award a prize for the person who hits the longest drive on a predetermined hole during the golf outing. Usually this takes place on the course’s longest hole such as a par 5 and the winning tee shot must land in the fairway of the designated hole to qualify. Separate contests are usually run for men and women players.

Straightest Drive

This contest places the emphasis on accuracy rather than distance – so anyone can win! A line is painted down the middle of the fairway and the tee shot landing closest to that line is determined as the winner.

Shortest Drive

This contest is strictly for fun and can usually get a laugh or two from players. The person who hits the shortest tee shot is declared the winner. Usually this contest is shared by both men and women players.

Longest Putt

The winner is the player who is able to sink the longest putt on a predetermined green on the golf course. Sometimes this contest is conducted on the practice putting green prior to the start of the round to get each group in a fun mood. This contest can be shared by both men and women players.

Closest to the Pin

This contest rewards the tee shot from a par 3 hole that comes closest to the pin. Separate contests are usually run for men and women players.

Beat the Pro

This contest pits each interested golfer against the 'club pro' on a particular par 3. The 'bet' is usually \$5 against a sleeve of golf balls (these should be gathered through donation) with the winner determined by whomever is closest to the pin. This is a great way to make some extra money during the event.

Hole-in-One Winner

One way to draw attention to your event is to conduct a high visibility hole-in-one contest on a par 3 hole by awarding the winner a new automobile, a spectacular trip, or big pot of money. While very few people during the course of a year win hole-in-one contests, the prospect of hitting the one-in-a-million shot is something that intrigues everyone who steps up on the tee to have a go at it.

A hole-in-one contest with a brand new automobile, dream vacation, boat or large cash award as the first prize is something you may want to consider for your pre-event publicity. Of course the cost of the grand prize for the winner is taken care of by an insurance company. There are a number of ways to set up such a contest, but the first step is typically to contact a specialty insurance company that covers such contests.

The insurance company will require a minimum tee shot distance that must be observed for the contest. Our golf staffs will work with you to ensure that the tees are set to the proper distance to qualify for the prize. Please be sure we have a copy of your hole-in-one contract 24 hours before the start of the event.



Hole-in-One Winner: Alternative

Rather than spend the money on an insurance policy to cover the cost of an automobile awarded to a rare hole-in-one feat, Dogwood has a plan whereby you add a minimal dollar figure to each player (\$3 or \$5) and if someone makes the hole-in-one they win the money. If no one makes a hole-in-one, the contest converts to another 'closest to the pin' and the person and event split the pot 50/50. This guarantees that someone actually goes home with a desirable prize! In addition, Dogwood can provide a complimentary golf membership to the hole-in-one winner for your event – just ask for details!

Other Ideas to Avoid a Boring Event

The general theme is to take some of the emphasis away from golfing skills and place more focus on entertainment. Here are some additional ways to inject fun into your event. (Additional charges may also be incurred.)

- On a par 3 hole place an additional putting cup on the green and allow players to putt to whichever hole they are closest to. This can be done with or without flagsticks.
- Set up a driving range contest. Place a child's wading pool on the range at 150 yards – anyone who lands in the pool gets a prize.
- Use a video camera to record one shot of every player and broadcast the results on a TV in the bar during the cocktail reception.

Contests for Non-Golfers

It may be desirable to have something available so that non-golfers can come out and enjoy the day along with the rest of

the group. One popular activity is a putting contest. Everyone can putt a golf ball and most people have played miniature golf at one time or another. You can arrange for a special putting course set up on the practice putting green while other guests are out on the golf course.



Offering a golf clinic for non-golfers while the event is out on the golf course is also a fun alternative. Dogwood can arrange our professional teaching staff to offer introductory clinics or swing clinics on the practice range while your event is ongoing. Prizes can be given for 'most improved' or 'best potential' all the while encouraging the non-players to hang around and support your event. Later, they can join the tournament players for awards and dinner after the tournament is concluded.

Fifth Step: Planning Timeline

When planning your golf outing, use the following table to assist you in achieving your goals. Long range planning will provide a cushion of time in the event of problems.

- **Twelve Down to Six Months in Advance:**
 - Research and select the golf facility.
 - Determine when you would like to hold your event. Select both first and a second choice dates and times along with choice of golf course. Call Dogwood GC early for best selection.
 - Call to secure golf reservations.
 - Establish a Group and On-Site Contact to coordinate your event.
 - Establish budgets for food & beverage, gifts, prizes, driving range, green fees and carts.
 - Determine tee times, games, prizes.
 - Work with your On-Site Contact to determine your food, beverage and banquet space needs.
 - Sign contract(s) and return with deposit (if required).
 - Determine the form of payment. Dogwood GC accepts payment in full on the day of the event via major credit card or accepts payment from individual attendees.

- **Six Down To Three Months in Advance:**
 - Prepare invitations and establish a mailing list.
 - Send out publicity announcements.
 - Send out invitations for the event (be sure to include dress code and directions).
 - Inform event sponsors wishing to donate food or drink items for distribution to your guests during the event that they must be purchased by prior arrangement through the food and beverage department.
 - Contact any outside vendors you may be using for tee signs, graphic materials, prizes, awards, hole-in-one prizes, hole-in-one insurance, etc.
 - Recruit volunteers.
 - Place orders for specialty or logo'd merchandise.
 - Select a photographer or videographer.
 - Reserve any rental equipment your event may need.

- **One Month in Advance:**
 - Review start times and activities with your Golf Course Event Coordinator.
 - Finalize food and beverage details with your Banquet Coordinator.
 - Check status of special orders and gift items.
 - Confirm volunteers and schedule meeting for assignment of duties.
 - Send second invitation announcement to those who have not yet signed up.

- Send confirmation notice to those who have already signed up.
- **Two Weeks in Advance:**
 - Begin arranging your final guest list.
 - Begin to pair players on your tee sheet based on your criteria (handicap, playing ability, compatibility, company, etc.).
 - Contact your Golf Event and Banquet Coordinator with final number guarantee for the event.
 - Confirm on-course food and beverage needs with Banquet Coordinator.
 - Complete final checklist for prizes and contests.
- **One Week in Advance:**
 - Send your player pairing list to the Golf Event Coordinator. (For shotgun starts your Golf Event Coordinator will assign the starting holes for each group – be sure to note any groups that like to start together.)
 - Reconfirm outside suppliers.
 - Make sure all special orders, gifts and prizes have been received.
- **Two Days in Advance:**
 - Review tee time pairings, provide alphabetized guest list and alert Golf Event Coordinator of any last minute changes.
 - Consult with the Golf Event Coordinator about placement of hole sponsor signs and special awards on the golf course.
 - Check with Banquet Coordinator on all final food and beverage details.
- **Day of the Event:**
 - Arrive at least one and a half hours prior to your guests.
 - Make sure volunteers arrive one hour before guests.
 - Know where golf facility amenities are located (Driving Range, 1st Tee, etc.).
 - Hold a short pre-event volunteer meeting.
 - Be prepared to inform guests or sponsors that they cannot bring donated food or beverage onto the golf facility.
 - Be prepared for last minute changes.
 - Check on food and beverage arrangements.
 - Check arrival of special event awards (automobiles, etc.).
 - Make sure registration table is set up and staffed.
 - Stay in close touch with Golf Event and Banquet Coordinator regarding last minute changes.
 - Make sure tee gifts and rule sheets are placed on golf carts.
 - Confirm on-course food and beverage service.
 - In case of inclement weather, review rain options with Golf Event Coordinator and food & beverage obligations with Banquet Coordinator.
- **After your event**
 - Don't forget to book for next year at Dogwood GC.

Food & Beverage and Banquet Checklist

- Choose menu
- Choose beverages needed
- On-course food and beverage requirements Box lunch needs
- Audio visual needs
- Be aware of the cancellation policy
- Final count usually due 72 hours prior to your event



Typical Schedule of Outing Events

The following schedule is an example of a golf outing timeline:

Time Activity

10:00 am – Players arrive for registration

11:00 am – Shotgun Team Scramble tees off

3:30 pm – Golfer return to clubhouse

4:00pm – Cocktail reception

5:00 pm – Awards presentation/Dinner

7:30pm - Departure

Our golf staff will also be happy to help you collect scorecards from teams as they finish their round as well as the proximity markers with the results of some of your contests that may still be out on the course when players finish. (Don't forget to take your sponsor signs home for next year!)

Golfers coming off the golf course are usually hungry. Choosing a meal and serving format that can serve a large number of guests in a short period of time is important. This is why the buffet options at Dogwood GC are so popular for golf outings.

Of course, Dogwood GC will closely monitor the pace of play of your golf outing and help coordinate the serving time when most of your players will be finished.

Getting the Word Out

A key component of planning for a golf outing is informing your potential players about the event. Since everyone is time-pressed these days, it is extremely important to provide your guests with at least six months' advance notice. If there is a demand for spots in your event, you may need to start the process even further in advance.

Your announcement (and/or press release) should include the name and date of the event, the location, starting time(s) and list of the day's activities. Distribution can be via email, newsletter or US Mail.

Approximately two to three months in advance, you should plan to follow up with a second announcement. This could include a registration form or some type of reply form. One month in advance, plan to have your volunteers follow up with more news about the golf outing, a "last chance to enter" invitation for those who have not replied and a confirmation letter for those who have already signed up.

Final Step: The Finishing Touches

Volunteers

No successful event can be done with volunteers. These individuals will assist the entire day handling such areas as the registration table, helping with on-course contests, photography, loading and unloading supplies, and collecting supplies when the event is completed. Here are some additional ways that Dogwood GC can help you take care of the people that make your event a success:

- On-the-house open tabs for food and non-alcoholic beverages. A high perceived value to volunteers and a nice "thank you" for their contribution.
- A small post event "thank you" luncheon or golf outing for volunteers a week or two after the main event. (Additional charges will be incurred).
- Beginner golf clinics. This is a great way to entertain volunteers and introduce them to the game of golf while

the golf outing is on the golf course. (Additional charges will be incurred).

- Allowing volunteers to ride along with Player Assistants and Beverage Cart drivers or have their own golf cart. This is a great opportunity for volunteers to dialog with outing participants and be part of the event.
- Golf gift cards. These have a high perceived value to volunteers that play golf and low cost to your event. (Additional charges will be incurred).
- “At cost” gifts and uniforms for volunteers. Providing uniforms adds a touch of class to your event. With advance planning Dogwood GC can order your apparel on a cost plus tax and shipping basis. The uniforms become great mementos for volunteers who can enjoy wearing them with a story to tell about your event.

The “Thank You” Banquet

Depending upon the size and purpose of your golf outing, the final conclusion to your tournament may be a post event banquet. This provides your organization with the opportunity to honor competition winners, say thank you to sponsors, announce charitable contributions, and most important, treat your volunteers to a wonderful meal. Dogwood GC offers many food and beverage options to meet your needs and can be served indoors in our clubhouse or outside under a large banquet tent.

So at the end of the day . . .

From corporate outings and charity events to family tournaments and class reunions, the professionally trained staff at Dogwood GC will assist you in coordinating golf events from the moment tee times are made through menu selection, marketing, and from creating hole events to accommodating special requests. One call gets the ball rolling.

Contact Dogwood GC at 770-941-2202 or via email Event Coordinator Christopher Werner (cwerner@dogwoodgolf.org)