

COURSE CARE

The Golfer's List Of New Year's Resolutions — 10 Years Later DECEMBER 15, 2017 By Larry Gilhuly, agronomist, West Region



Rake any footprints or disturbances you create in bunkers. Depressions and ridges in the sand can create very difficult playing conditions for other golfers.

A decade ago, the first of several New Year's resolution lists was written to help remind golfers that their actions on a golf course directly impact playing conditions. To celebrate the upcoming new year and determine how golfers have responded to these suggestions, those resolutions are again listed along with observations of how things have changed over the past 10 years. Once again, this list is offered to encourage all golfers to have a positive impact on every golf course they play.

1. **I resolve** to leave bunkers the way I found them by properly raking my footprints and shot marks, regardless of how successful my bunker shot was. **10 years later** – We still need more work in this area.
2. **I resolve** to fill my divots with the appropriate divot mix and to make sure they are filled to the proper level – i.e., slightly below the level of the surrounding turf canopy. Properly filling divots will help them heal quickly, avoids creating a poor lie and prevents damaging mowers. **10 years later** – Improvement has been noted in this area, but more is needed.
3. **I resolve** to properly fix all of my ball marks by gently pushing the turf in toward the center of the mark using a pointed tool. Lifting or twisting the turf can cause damage that requires weeks

of recovery. **10 years later** – Although not perfect, there has been some positive movement in this area.

4. **I resolve** to follow all cart rules and directional signs when driving a golf cart. **10 years later** – Another area of slight improvement.

5. **I resolve** to avoid walking over ropes that are meant to move traffic away from a weakened area. If I trip over said rope, I will take personal responsibility for my mistake. **10 years later** – Fortunately, fewer ropes and stakes are being used on golf courses today, making this less of an issue.

6. **I resolve** to understand that the maintenance staff can be injured by my attempts at striking a very hard white ball. A few seconds of patience can help prevent a serious injury. **10 years later** – Thank goodness there has been positive movement on this issue.

7. **I resolve** to remember that cart paths are not like a public road where parking occurs along the edges. I will park and drive my golf cart on cart paths to avoid wearing out adjacent turf. **10 years later** – Unfortunately, this one still remains an area where improvement is needed.

8. **I resolve** to understand that trees never grow smaller as they age and that sometimes tree removal is necessary for turf health and golf course playability. **10 years later** – A major positive shift has occurred during the past decade as many golf courses have begun to address tree issues. Keep up the good work.

9. **I resolve** to understand that all putting greens are different; thus, green speeds should not be the same from course to course. Each facility must find the speed that is appropriate for the design of the putting greens, the skill level of the players and the overall maintenance budget. Detecting and adapting to different course conditions is an inherent challenge of the game. **10 years later** – A growing understanding of this issue has been noted at many golf courses in the last decade.

10. **And finally, I resolve** to remember that the game is just that – a game. I will accept responsibility for my success or failure at this difficult game, even while sitting in the 19th hole. **10 years later** – Only those of you reading can know whether any progress has been made on this issue. I hope all of you enjoy this challenging game and also the upcoming new year.