

Games in the Game of the Father

Want to get a junior into golf while improving your own skills? Try these games from the PGA pros at Trent Wearer Golf Academy.

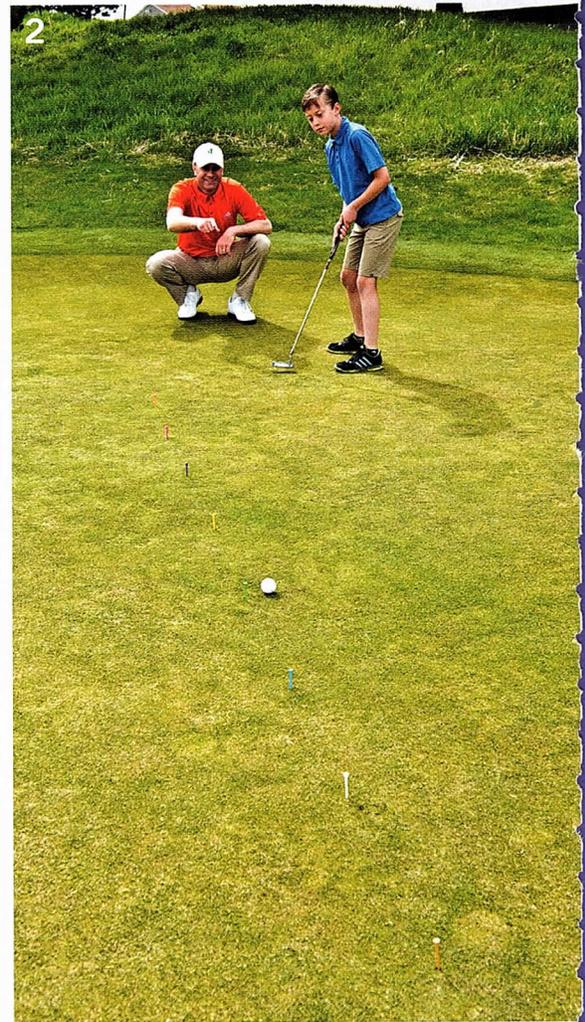
MAKING PRACTICE FUN for junior golfers is vital to their growth and love of the sport. Shifting practice from mechanics to enjoyable, competitive games results in improved performance for both juniors and the parents who play with them.

Trent Wearer Golf Academy is located at Meridian Golf Club in Englewood. trentwearergolf.com; 303-645-8000



1. BOWLING-PIN PUTTING: At a distance of 10 feet, set up two sets of four plastic bowling pins, army men or—for a real challenge—golf tees a foot apart. Each person stands by his or her “pins.” Play against each other by alternating putting one ball in an effort to knock over the other person’s pins. The first one who knocks over all four of the other person’s pins wins. Variations: play nine or 18 four-putt “holes.” Use either a match-play (most pins knocked down wins “hole”) or stroke-play format (cumulative number of pins).

—Kelly Plaisier



2. TEE BALL: Begin by setting up eight tees about two feet apart. Starting from a position of about five feet away from the first tee, have the junior roll the ball toward the second tee trying to get it to stop as close to it as possible. It ideally should go past the first tee but not past the third tee. If successful, the junior should now attempt to get his/her ball to stop as close as possible to the third tee. Again it must go past the previous tee but not past the next one. Once the junior shows some proficiency from five feet, he/she can move back to 10 feet.

—Trent Wearer

3. CHIPPING BOX: (photo on facing page) Using string or sticks (as shown here), create an eight-by-eight-foot frame around the hole. Getting chips as close as possible to the hole certainly puts less pressure on putting, so a great way to improve the skill of distance control is to set up a border in which the ball must come to rest. Using only one ball, start from just a couple of feet off the fringe and try to chip into the box. Then move back some distance, say three feet, and hit your second shot. Continue moving back in approximately three-foot increments in about five locations, hitting only one ball at each distance. Count how many end up in the box, then start again trying to beat that score.

—Trent Wearer

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHIL ANTONIOCCI



4. ICE-CREAM CONE CHIPPING: This is a fun way to seemingly make the hole bigger and yet at the same time teach both junior and adult the important skill of distance control. We like to use three sticks on each side of the cone just to add color but one stick on each side will work fine. If the ball is rolling too quickly it will roll right over the sticks instead of funneling to the cup. Obviously if it's rolling too slowly it won't have a chance to have the sticks guide it into the hole.

—Trent Wearer

5. TOWER OF POWER : This game helps develop full-swing aim, ball-trajectory control and shot-making that relies more on instinct than on technique. Stack six, 10, 15 or 21 empty plastic range-ball baskets upside-down to form a pyramid-shaped tower. The golfer stands 15-20 feet away with a 7- or 8-iron and the goal of knocking down as many baskets as possible in five shots, preferably taken as fast as possible. Count the number of baskets. Then rebuild the tower for the next player. Whoever knocks down the most baskets wins.

In one variation of the game, players can alternate shots, keeping score of the number they hit. If player B is behind on his/her last shot, he or she can knock down the remaining baskets to tie the score. In another variation involving two teams, designated players from both team simultaneously hit five balls while the others wait safely "on deck" until it's their turn. They keep hitting until all the baskets are knocked down.

—Katie Milstead



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