



Hit More Greens for Lower Scores

The off-season is a great time to rest and reflect on last year's golf performance, what did you do well, and, more importantly, what do you need to do to shoot lower scores in 2026?

If you set a goal for 2026 of shooting lower scores, here is a way to help you break the scoring barrier and shoot the lowest scores of your life, often without taking a lesson.

As golfers, we are too fixated on the number at the end of the scorecard. We put too much pressure on ourselves trying to shoot a certain number. That pressure leads to bad swings and bad decisions on the course, and in turn higher scores. How many times have you counted your score and said to yourself, "If I just bogey the last two holes, I will break 100 for the first time"? That thought is usually followed by a double – triple finish. If you look at a round of golf differently, you can shoot lower scores.

One of the easiest ways to lower scoring is by hitting more greens. When you look at scores as a few key measurable statistics, your scores will start to make sense, and you can pinpoint ways to lower your score. Here is an easy guide to help shoot lower scores. The table will also help you identify other parts of your game that may need to be improved.

Greens in Regulation Table Related to Score

3-5 Greens in Regulation (GIR) = Score 90-100

6-8 GIR = Score 85-90

9-11 GIR = Score 80-85

12-13 GIR = Score 75-80

13-15 GIR = Score 72-74

16-18 GIR = Score Par or Better

The average PGA Tour players hit 34 greens per round.

Assuming you have an average of 30-34 putts per round and no major chipping issues, short game lessons with a qualified PGA Professional would be a wise investment.

Why GIR Matters

Each additional green you hit should lower your score by 1 or 2 strokes.

Missing greens puts added pressure and importance on chipping. The PGA Tour Average is 50% conversion on greenside up and down.

The more greens you hit, the fewer chips you have and the more birdie putts you have. In turn, a lower score per hole.

How to hit more greens- If you track your greens in regulation and things aren't getting better, take a lesson with a qualified PGA Professional that will help with more consistent ball striking.



Know your Yardages

Use the off season to get on a simulator and find out how far each iron goes on average. Most peoples' perception is very off on this actual distance. Hit 10 balls with each club, delete any really bad shots, and come up with your average. You also want to know how far a really good shot goes. For me, I know my 8-iron average is 163 yards. That club could go 155 to 165 yards on any given decent swing. When I am a little excited it could go 168 yards, but usually it's 160 to 163 yards. It is super important to know that information if you want to hit more greens.

Choose the right club using two yardages. Most golfers will use a range finder to shoot the distance to the pin. But I would suggest after you get that distance, shoot what it is to the front of the green or to carry a hazard that is short of the flag. The combination of those two yardages should be your target. If I know the pin is 166 and it's 150 to the front edge of the green, I know I have a 16-yard gap that I need to land the ball in and that should be a standard 8 iron for me.

Add or Subtract for the Elements

Before you set on your final yardage, look at the lie: is it good or bad? Is there wind or elevation that you need to consider? All these factors play a role in the yardage and choosing the club.

Once all the homework is done, make the center of the green your target and the gap between the two distances. Forget about the pin and make your goal to aim at the middle of the green. If you adapt to this mentality, you will make a freer swing and hit good shots more frequently. A few of these might even end up close to the hole for an easy birdie or par.

To simplify: if you want to shoot lower scores make the target the middle of the green and not the number at the end of the scorecard. Try to make the game easier by making the goal to hit more greens. If your dream is to break 90, your thought on the first tee should be, "I'm going to hit seven greens today." If your putting and chipping are average you should achieve your goal. The more you commit to this mentality and practice it each time you play, the lower your scores will be.

For more information and golf tips and drills follow @mikecarbraygolf on Instagram.

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