

Golf Cart Safety
Staying Safe on the Cart Paths
By Brent Kelley, About.com Guide

Golf cart safety can be summarized with this very simple piece of advice: *Don't act stupid!* Most on-course accidents involving golf carts - and there are probably more of them than you might think - stem from golfers, well, acting stupid: the equivalent of golf-cart joyriding.

Standing rather than sitting inside the cart; hanging legs or arms out of the cart; the driver not paying attention to where he or she is going; taking sharp turns at too high speeds; or operating a cart when impaired by alcohol.

The rules of the road - real cars on real roads, that is - apply just as well to the cart paths.

When you first pile into your cart, read over the "warnings" or "safety guidelines" stickers or text that most golf carts come with. *And observe those rules!* They serve as good reminders before you begin your round of golf.

Keep your arms and legs inside the cart when the cart is in motion. It's especially easy to catch a cleated shoe in the ground, for example, if you decide to hang a foot outside the cart while traveling. And that can easily lead to a sprained ankle or even a broken ankle or foot. Then there are obstacles - tree branches, for example - that arms or legs extended from the cab of the cart can impact.

Most carts in use on golf courses are not equipped with safety belts. Don't go flying around corners or attempt sharp curves at top speed - this can result in someone being thrown from the cart (yes, people have been killed as a result of being thrown from a golf cart).

If you are the driver, don't press on the accelerator until your partner is seated.

Watch the cart path. Sounds simple, but just as a driver on a highway can be distracted by something and lose sight of the road, so can golfers get distracted and drive right off the designated cart path. Depending on what's in front of you, that can be dangerous.

Be extra vigilant on cart paths around the clubhouse and at any intersections or bottlenecks on the course. Carts colliding is not a good idea.

Don't speed into a stop behind a parked cart. You know what we mean: Your partners are already up at the green and parked, you race ahead to catch up and slam on the brakes just as your cart is about to rear-end theirs. See above: Colliding carts is not a good idea.

Use the carts as they are intended on the golf course, not as a toy, not for joyriding (a NASCAR driver was goofing off and climbed onto the roof of a moving golf cart on the golf course; he was thrown from the roof and injured).

Don't take the cart to places on the golf course where it is not intended to go: Through thickets of trees, over rough terrain, down through gulleys or ravines, through water.

Yes, these are common-sense, even simplistic golf cart safety guidelines. Hey, golf cart safety on the course ain't brain surgery! We'll repeat what we said at the top: What it boils down to is "*don't act stupid!*"