Ernie Els #GameON Autism™ Golf Clinic: “How to Guide”
Why Autism & Golf?

» Golf is a form of exercise… Yes! Golf is exercise.

» Exercise has been proven to be an effective intervention.
  • Improves motor function
  • Increases participation
  • Improves social skills
A Golf Course Environment

» A preferred environment - Why?
» Outdoor environment

- Peaceful
- Natural
- Quiet
- Sensory
A Golfing Environment

» Success in golf is personal and different for every golfer
» The inclusionary nature of the game—the handicap system
» Golf versus other sports
Traits of ASD + Golf

» Repetition is woven into the fabric of golf
  • The concept of the game
  • Perfect practice makes perfect (block and intermittent)

» Golf can be a socially appropriate, functional outlet
Ernie Els #GameON Autism™ Golf Clinic

» Autism is not game over, it’s game on!
Ernie Els #GameON Autism™ Golf Clinic

» A 1 hour introduction to golf
» 5 station rotation, including a warm up
» Specialized golf instruction
Began in 2013
Hosted clinics nationally and internationally
In conjunction with the Ernie Els Golf Challenge, PGA Tour events, and exhibition events that promote autism awareness
The clinic begins well before the day of the event

The Clinic Activity Book
The Social Story

#GameON Autism
Golf Clinic

We will be participating in a #GAMEON Autism Golf Clinic.

When we arrive, we will probably stop at the bathroom first and get a drink of water.

Next, we will walk over to the golf course to begin the golf clinic.

Before we touch any golf clubs we will stop and learn about the rules and schedule for our day.

After our welcome we will learn some golf skills at 5 different stations. The golf coach will help us learn how to stretch, hold a club, aim at a target and hit the golf ball, different distances.

We will take turns using different types of golf equipment.
The Social Story

#GameON Autism
Golf Clinic

It is important to be very careful with the golf club. It will be on the ground unless it is your turn to swing.

During the golf clinic, we will have a healthy snack and drink. If I feel tired or I am too hot, I can ask for a break and go to the HEALTHY SNACK station.

We will end the day by taking a picture of the group.

It will be fun to learn new things about golf. I will probably be happy and I might want to come back another day to play golf again.
Clinic Flow

1. Introduction
2. Social storyboard
3. Rules
4. Warm-up
5. Small groups
6. Station rotation
7. Wrap up
A variety of equipment to fit each student’s abilities and needs
### Supplies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm Up</th>
<th>Putting</th>
<th>Chipping</th>
<th>Pitching</th>
<th>Full Swing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Rollerama</td>
<td>SNAG targets</td>
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### Equipment

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### Visual Supports

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Warm-up

» Stretching in a Circle
  • A fun icebreaker
  • A quick and easy way to assess

» Static and Active stretching
Visual Supports

» What is a visual support?

• picture symbols
• commenting board
• choice board
• boundaries
• token board
• signage
• story board
• step by step task charts
Visual Supports

Why use visual supports?

- Individuals with autism are visual learners
- Increase predictability while decreasing fear/anxiety
- Visual supports are lasting
- Increase independence
- Increase comprehension
A proper grip?

Instruction process

- Verbal
- Model
- Hand over hand (for some)*
- Visual supports
- Verbal cues

The Grip
How we teach:

1. Verbally communicate clear and concise instruction
2. Use visual supports
3. Model the instruction
4. Student practices the motion
5. Instructor prompts as needed
6. Instructor provides positive, corrective feedback
7. Student learns and improves
Challenges you may see

» Communication issues
» Self stimulatory behaviors
» Motor skill deficits
» Lack of awareness for danger
» Self-regulatory issues
Abilities you may see

» Ability to retain concrete concepts
» Intense focus and determination
» Learning by watching
» Strong rote memory
» Attention to detail
» Honesty and no judgement
Set Ups: Creating a rich learning environment

“Structure alleviates stress”
Set Ups: Creating a rich learning environment

» SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY
  • Safety areas
  • Hitting stalls
  • Equipment placement

» Structure + Organization = Predictability

★ Decreased anxiety
★ Optimal performance
Set Ups: Safety areas, hitting stalls, and visual supports

✓ Consistently marked
✓ Clearly marked
Safety, Safety, Safety

» Important things to know about children with ASD

- Some do not have adequate self-preservation skills
- Elopement
- Accidents
- Drownings
Safety & Golf

» So what does this mean for you?

- Heighten your awareness
  - Instructors must keep track of their head counts at all times
  - Welcome the help of parents and aides

- Create a safe environment through proper set ups
  - Avoid bodies of water
  - Avoid setting up in potentially dangerous areas
  - Rules, equipment placement, and organization
  - Create a rich learning environment to keep your participants engaged!
Clinic RULES

- Be a good sport
- Keep your golf club safe
- Listen to the coach
- Stay with the group
- Share the equipment
- Take turns
- Listen and respond to the whistle
- Have FUN!!
Guidelines for Instructing individuals with ASD

» There are 9 guidelines to follow:

1. Be clear and concise
2. Hands on instruction is NOT for all
3. Use positive feedback
4. Provide time structures
5. Provide choices
6. Be patient
7. Provide options
8. Model
9. Utilize visual supports
Golf Stations

- Signage
- Visual Supports
- Equipment
- Set Up
- Drills & Activities
- Adaptations*
- Clean Up
- Transitions
Infusing Social Communication Skills

» Encourage students to:

• Take turns and share
• Try many different activities and drills (keep it moving)
• Clean up
• Positive feedback
Putting

» Instruction process

« Verbal
« Model
« Hand over hand (for some)*
« Visual supports
« Verbal cues
« Positive reinforcement

» Drills & Activities

⇒ Rolling the ball
⇒ Putt to rollerama or blocks
⇒ Train tracks
⇒ Bumper noodles

“Ankle to Ankle”
Chipping

» Instruction process

- Verbal
- Model
- Hand over hand (for some)*
- Visual supports
- Verbal cues
- Positive reinforcement

» Drills & Activities

- Tossing the ball
- Chip to rollerama or blocks
- Chip to targets
Pitching

» Instruction process

» Drills & Activities

★ A great bridge into full swing
➡ Tossing the ball
➡ Pitch to targets

“Hip to Hip” or “L to L”
Full Swing

» Instruction process

» Drills & Activities
  ➔ Tossing the ball
  ➔ Full Swings on the range
  ➔ Transition from near golf to traditional golf clubs

“Big Circle” or “Right shoulder, Left shoulder”
Break Area

- Allow students to take lots of breaks
- Issues with sensory regulation
- Healthy snacks, gluten free/dairy free
Running a Golf Clinic

Day of:

- Equipment and proper station set-ups
- Student/Instructor ratio 4:1
- Welcome aides and parents
Running a Golf Clinic

» Logistics

• Find an autism partner- autism society, local autism organization, or an autism school

• Find a golf facility- willing to accommodate their space for a few hours

• Find golf instructors AND train them properly
Running a Golf Clinic

Logistics Continued…

- Forms
- Prime the participants
- Prime the golf instructors
- Online survey
How you can get involved

» Running a clinic
» Creating vocational opportunities
» Volunteer
» Get involved with your local autism society
» Awareness, recognition, understanding
Thank you!
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