Buy the Sunday Bag

Three clubs and one alignment stick.

How to walk into the used rack — or shop it from your phone — and leave with everything you need to play a par-3 nine. No driver. No full set. No fitting appointment.

01 What you are buying — and what you are not

02 The First 9 Method: a putter, a 52, a 56 and a stick

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05 How to inspect a used club in sixty seconds

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07 If you already bought the box

Companion to Getting Started in Golf.

Get equipped. Then get on the course.

01

What you are buying

A full set is a decision machine. A new driver is the most expensive club in the bag and the least useful on a par 3. Spend once: three clubs and one alignment stick. Then go play.

Used is allowed. A putter with a few scuffs on the sole still rolls. Fancy is a delay.

> *You are allowed to buy used.*
>
> *You are not allowed to skip the alignment stick.*

The First 9 Method

- A Sunday bag — six clubs or fewer. Light enough to walk a par 3.
- A putter — every hole ends here.
- A 52-degree wedge — the fuller-swing club. Often the tee club on a short par 3.
- A 56-degree wedge — chips, pitches, bunkers, everything around the green.
- An alignment stick — MUST-HAVE. Practice only. A few dollars. Any store brand. Not on the course.

Why a 52 and a 56

Nothing here gets wasted. A full iron set you buy later (often 5-iron through pitching wedge) brings its own pitching wedge and 8-iron. It almost never includes a 52 or a 56, so these two stay in your bag. A longer par 3, about 120 yards and up? Borrow or rent a hybrid or 7-iron. Do not buy one yet.

Leave these on the rack

- The driver. Theater on a 120-yard hole.
- A boxed iron set. Fourteen clubs you cannot yet use.
- A lone pitching wedge or 8-iron. Your future iron set brings both.
- A tour-grind wedge with almost no bounce. It will dig.
- A used glove. Buy that new.
- Anything sold as a “complete beginner set” with a tiny bag and a plastic driver.

THE POINT

Rent first if a course will let you. Buy second. The win is a finished nine this week — not a prettier receipt.

02

The First 9 Method

Write these numbers down. If a listing does not match, keep walking. Your two wedges do not need to match each other. Matching specs is the job.

SUNDAY BAG

Holds 6 clubs. Has a stand or sits upright. One strap is enough. Zippers work. Used or open-box costs a fraction of new and works the same. That is the identity piece. It tells the starter you belong.

PUTTER

Length 33, 34, or 35 inches. If you are under 5'6", start at 33. Most people do well at 34. Face must be clean enough to roll. Odyssey, Cleveland, Ping. Used beats new: a club you can trust for far less.

52-DEGREE

Look for 52 on the sole. 50 to 53 is fine. Standard bounce. Steel shaft or wedge flex, standard length. Cleveland CBX, Callaway Jaws or older Mack Daddy. Any brand works. Used beats new.

56-DEGREE

Look for 56 on the sole. 54 to 56 is fine. Bounce around 10 to 14 degrees — mid bounce, not a thin tour grind. Cleveland CBX, Callaway Jaws or older Mack Daddy. Used beats new.

Must-have — the alignment stick

One alignment stick. A few dollars. Any store brand — do not hunt a logo.
It is the fourth piece of the Method, with the putter, the 52, and the 56.
Practice only. It does not come on the course. A boxed set will not include one. Buy it.
A glove, three tees, a ball-mark tool, and cheap balls are fine. They are not the Method.

LATER, WHEN YOU BUY A SET

Most current sets have a pitching wedge around 43 to 44 degrees. That leaves a gap below your 52. That is fine. If it ever bothers you, add a gap wedge around 48 then.

03

What it should cost

No price list here: prices move by town, season, and condition. Shop by rule instead. Good used condition — not garage-sale junk, not mint-in-plastic. If a shop is asking new-club money for a used face, leave.

Piece	Buy it	Save by	Walk away if
52-degree	Used, Very Good+	Older model, any brand	Priced near new
56-degree	Used, Very Good+	Older Jaws or CBX	Thin tour grind
Putter	Used, face clean	Last year's model	Priced like a driver
Sunday bag	Used or open-box	Last year's colors	Costs more than a club
Alignment stick	**New, a few dollars**	Any store brand	It's "tour" branded

Two honest paths

Budget path, used throughout: a finished Sunday Bag for a fraction of a boxed set, with room left for a week of golf — not a driver you will outgrow or fear.

Cleaner path, better faces, newer bag: still less than one new driver on a rack with a launch-monitor pitch attached.

The stick is a must-have, not an extra. It costs a few dollars. The club rules above stay the same.

THE MONEY TEST

If the bag and three clubs cost more than a new driver, you bought the wrong story. Walk.
The value of this brand is time and money saved — not a prettier receipt.

04

Where to shop

Pick one path and finish. Three open tabs is how people buy a driver by accident.

Rent this week

Call the par-3 course. Ask if they rent wedges and a putter. Play nine before you spend. If they only rent full sets, take the putter and the wedges out of the set and leave the rest in the bag.

Local used rack

Play It Again Sports. The used wall at a PGA TOUR Superstore or Golf Galaxy. A driving-range pro shop. You can hold the grip and see the face. That is worth the drive.

Trusted used sites

Callaway Pre-Owned, GlobalGolf, 2nd Swing. Filter: wedges at 52 and 56, then putters. Condition Very Good or better. Read the return window before you click.

Marketplace, last

Facebook Marketplace and Craigslist only if you can meet in daylight, hold the club, and walk away. Cash. No “hold it for you.” No shipping from a stranger.

What to type in the search bar

- “52 degree wedge used Cleveland” or “52 Jaws” or “52 CBX”
- “56 degree wedge used” or “56 Jaws” or “56 CBX” — any brand is fine
- “Odyssey putter 34” or “Cleveland HB Soft 34”
- “Sunday bag” or “Loma bag” or “par 3 golf bag 6 club”

ONE AFTERNOON

Saturday morning: two shops or one website. Cap the spend. If you are still a club short by dinner, rent Monday and try again next weekend. Do not “just browse drivers.”

05

Sixty-second inspection

You do not need to be a club fitter. You need to reject the broken ones. Do this in order. If it fails a step, put it back.

01 Face

Look at the hitting area in good light. Light scratches are fine. A groove that is rusted shut, a dent in the center, or a crack at the hosel is not.

02 Loft stamp

Turn the sole toward you. You want 52 on one wedge and 56 on the other. A degree or two off is fine. Keep them about four degrees apart. If there is no stamp, do not guess.

03 Bounce

On the 56, you want some width under the back of the sole. A knife-thin trailing edge is a tour grind. Beginners chunk those.

04 Length

Stand the putter next to your leg. The grip should come to mid-forearm, not your hip. 34 is the default. 33 if you are shorter.

05 Grip

If it is slick, shiny, or hard as plastic, a regrip is cheap — or pass and find one that still feels like rubber.

06 Bag

Zip every zipper. Stand it up. Look at the strap stitch. A broken stand is fine if you only walk a par 3 and the bag still sits.

Walk away if

- The seller will not let you hold it.
- The photo is only of the back of the head.
- The price is close to new.
- It is a lefty and you are right-handed. Do not “make it work.”
- You feel rushed. Confused buyers buy drivers.

The shopping card

Print this page. Put it in your pocket. Buy only what is on it. Then book the nine.

Buy list

- [ ] Sunday bag — 6 clubs, stand or sits up, zippers work. Used or open-box.
- [ ] Putter — 33 to 35 inches, face playable. Used, not new.
- [ ] 52-degree — stamp says 50 to 53, steel or wedge flex. Used, not new.
- [ ] 56-degree — stamp says 54 to 56, mid bounce. Used, not new.
- [ ] **Alignment stick — MUST-HAVE. Practice only. A few dollars. Any store brand.**
- [ ] Dozen cheap balls, a new glove, three tees. Not a sleeve of tour balls.
- [ ] Did not buy a driver.
- [ ] Did not buy a 14-club set.
- [ ] Did not buy a pitching wedge or 8-iron. A set brings those later.
- [ ] Booked a par-3 nine for this week.

What to say

- At the used rack: “A putter, a 52 and a 56. And one alignment stick. That’s the Method.”
- At the window of the par 3: “I’m new. Three clubs. Front tees.”
- To yourself, in the driver aisle: Nothing. Walk to the car.

REMEMBER

You are allowed to buy used.

You are not allowed to be confused about what to buy next. Book the nine before you leave the shop.

07

Already bought the box

Most people who feel burned already own a 14-club starter set. You do not need a new receipt to play a par-3 nine. Open the bag you have. Pull out the putter and the sand wedge. Leave the rest in the garage.

You are allowed to have bought the wrong set. You are not allowed to keep deciding among fourteen clubs. You are also not allowed to skip the alignment stick. The box will not include one. Buy one.

What to pull

PUTTER

The flat face. Often a bent neck. It does not look like the others. That one comes with you.

SAND WEDGE

Sole stamp says S or SW, or a number around 54 to 56. It stands in for the 56. Keep it if the face is sound.

A WEDGE AROUND 50 TO 52

Rare in a box. Stamp says A, AW, GW, or a number around 50 to 52. If you find one, it stands in for the 52. If not, that is the one club to buy. Used, not new.

Leave these

Driver, woods, hybrids, the numbered irons, and the pitching wedge (stamp says P or PW). Your future iron set brings its own. A tiny plastic driver from a boxed set is not a Sunday Bag. If your par 3 has a few longer holes, the 7-iron or hybrid from the box can come along for those.

Must-have — the alignment stick

Fourth piece of the Method, not an accessory. One alignment stick, a few dollars. Any store brand — do not hunt a logo. Practice only. It does not come on the course. It teaches your body where “right” feels.

Replace one club, not the set

Play first. If a face is cracked, a groove is rusted shut, or a grip is hard plastic, replace that one club using the inspection steps and the shopping card on the previous pages. Do not “upgrade” into a driver while you are in the store.

A listing, pass or fail

PASS “52° wedge, Cleveland, Very Good, well under new.” Hold it. Check the stamp.

FAIL “Complete beginner set, driver included.” That is the story this guide exists to stop.

FAIL “Tour grind, low bounce, knife-thin sole.” Beginners dig those. Walk.

REMEMBER

Play the clubs you pulled. Book the par-3 nine this week.

Used-market prices vary by town and season. If the local rack runs high, rent and play anyway.