Junior golfers are the potential adult paying members of the future and it is essential to ensure they have a quality experience at junior level.

Image: Tom Ward.
SECTION 4

Membership & Cost

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Introduction

JUNIOR GOLFERS ARE THE FUTURE OF THE GAME AND THEREFORE EVERY OPPORTUNITY SHOULD BE TAKEN BY GOLF CLUBS TO ENSURE THEY WELCOME THESE YOUNG PEOPLE INTO MEMBERSHIP, WITHOUT PLACING ANY UNNECESSARY BARRIERS, FINANCIAL OR OTHER.

From the outside golf can often be perceived as expensive in comparison to other sports and it is the responsibility of the golf club to ensure they are promoting a range of packages which do not restrict participation. With a high proportion of golf clubs having junior vacancies, competition is great and parents/guardians will look for membership offers that provide the best value for money.

Although the income obtained through the junior section only accounts for a small proportion of the overall golf club income, it is important to remember that these members are the potential adult paying members of the future and it is therefore essential to ensure they have a quality experience of the game at junior level.
Membership Categories

Below are some examples of different junior membership packages, all of which can be adapted and re-named to suit an individual golf club’s requirements (some of the categories do overlap):

- **Trial Membership** - this type of package is beneficial for the potential member and parents as it gives them an opportunity to experience the golf club (without having to financially commit) for a limited amount of time. A nominal fee can be charged that could include coaching and playing opportunities.

- **Introductory/Academy Membership** - usually run for a limited period of time (between 3 and 12 months), this package would include regular coaching and use of some facilities (for example, a short course), all helping to encourage a new player into membership. Some golf clubs offer this type of package to younger players prior to junior membership with emphasis on game based activities utilising adapted equipment.

- **Short Course/Par 3 Membership** - golf clubs that have a short course or pitch & putt course can offer a specific package whereby members can access this course, receive coaching and use the golf club facilities. This is ideal for juniors, beginners and families who are not ready to play on the main course yet, but want some form of playing opportunity.

- **6 or 9 Hole Membership** - although not possible at all golf clubs, this is appealing as it gives juniors the opportunity to play in a shorter timescale. This again may be more appealing to a family, who may struggle to justify committing to full membership due to time constraints.

- **Junior Membership** - the junior package should include a variety of activities which are enjoyable and affordable. Regular coaching and competitive opportunities should be available for all ages and abilities, with an opportunity for juniors to develop to whatever level they aspire to.

- **Student Membership** - this is ideal for those who go away to university as it allows them to retain their links with the golf club at a reduced rate so they can still play during holiday periods. If located near a local university golf clubs should look to develop relationships and make links to support students who want to take up the game, occasionally play or take up membership. Low cost opportunities can be available at times when the course is quiet.

- **Intermediate Membership** - a section of membership that falls between junior and adult is ideal as this is an age when many younger players may leave the game due to financial constraints. Intermediate membership can be staggered up to the age of 30 for example to help young people adjust to the increase in subscription from junior to adult and retain them within the game.

- **Family Membership** - a discounted package can be offered to families, whereby children go free or one adult pays half price. By financially encouraging and supporting members with families they are more likely to remain within the game as leisure time is limited and therefore undertaking an activity as a family is more favourable.

- **Incentive Membership Packages** - for example buy 12 months and get 2 free or buy 6 months and receive a free voucher for the Professional shop. With competition for leisure activities, golf clubs need to demonstrate that they are providing good value for money.
Junior membership fees vary across the country and there are a number of factors which influence this and these should be considered when setting fees:

- Competitors’ costs
- Average fees – national, regional and county (see Golf Club Membership Questionnaire)
- What is the membership target?
- What will be the effect if membership reduces?
- Think long term – adult members of the future
- What do members think? What about members that have left?
- What do other sports charge?
- Geographical & socio-economic factors

It is essential that golf clubs regularly review their subscriptions to ensure their packages encourage the recruitment and retention of young people into membership. Being creative with payment methods can also be advantageous in supporting parents/guardians of juniors, who may not be able to financially commit once a year.

Spreading the cost through monthly payments or offering units of membership which can be bought as required provides a much more consumer friendly approach to golf club membership.
Additional Fees

THE NUMBER OF GOLF CLUBS CHARGING JUNIOR ENTRANCE FEES CONTINUES TO DECREASE AS DOES THE NUMBER OF CLUBS CHARGING ADULT ENTRANCE FEES, AS THIS IS SEEN AS A FINANCIAL BARRIER FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO TAKE UP MEMBERSHIP.

If a golf club does choose to charge an entrance fee then careful consideration should be given to what this fee includes: does it provide access to coaching or are discount vouchers offered?

Although an entrance fee may make a new member more committed to their membership, it can also put a golf club at a disadvantage with its competitors.

Entry from junior into intermediate and/or adult membership should ideally be automatic, without any fees incurred to support the retention of young golfers. If a transitional fee is charged, golf clubs should ensure they reward loyalty and again carefully consider their reasons for imposing an additional fee.

Fact:

ONLY 5% OF GOLF CLUBS HAVE A JOINING/ENTRANCE FEE FOR JUNIORS.

Golf Club Membership Questionnaire – England Golf
A RANGE OF MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE

AT BAWBURGH GOLF CLUB, WE HAVE A RANGE OF MEMBERSHIP PACKAGES TO SUIT ALL TYPES OF GOLFER AND EVEN A CATEGORY FOR THE NON GOLFER!

To support juniors getting into golf and retaining them within the game, we have staggered fees available up to the age of 29. There are junior, student and intermediate packages, with under 12’s entitled to free membership if they have a parent or grandparent who is a full playing member.

All of our membership packages at Bawburgh provide use of the 9 and 18 hole courses, the main club and the Norwich Family Golf Centre. All members receive a 10% discount on food and drink at both facilities, plus 10% off the balls at the range and free use of the short game area. Our members also have access to an online booking system, regular competitions during the year and a golf reception available to support all players and members.

All participants involved in the ‘Get back into’ programmes supported by the Norfolk County Golf Partnership are also offered one month on the 9 hole course at the end of the 6 to 8 weeks of coaching. We have also given 3 to 4 months free membership to people joining in April and May, as long as they pay next year’s subscription in full, which has already brought in 40 new members alone.

It has been a very tough and competitive period for recruiting and retaining new members over the last few years, however through regularly reviewing our categories we are able to offer a variety of competitive membership offers for our current and prospective members, juniors and adults!

Robert Barnard
Managing Director

MEMBERSHIP TYPES AT BAWBURGH

- **PLATINUM MEMBERS (ALL YEAR ROUND ENTHUSIAST)**
  7-Day membership not subject to any restrictions, apart from when competitions or societies have been pre-booked.

- **SILVER MEMBERS (FOR THE BUSY WEEKENDER)**
  5-Day membership (Monday to Friday) not subject to any other restrictions, apart from when competitions or societies have been pre-booked.

- **GOLD MEMBERS (OFF PEAK SEASONAL GOLFER)**
  7-Day membership but tee-off times limited as follows: From April 1st to September 30th:- Weekdays after 1.00 pm, weekends after 1.00 pm (booking required). From 1st October to March 31st:- Weekdays after 11.00am, weekends after 1.00pm (booking required). However, play is allowed before these times on any day for an additional fee per round.

- **MERCURY MEMBERS (A FLEXIBLE WAY TO ENJOY GOLF)**
  7-Day membership with the benefits of being a member, whilst conveniently combining it with an easier way of paying only for the golf you play. Purchase 100, 150 or 200 points and select the day & time that you want to play.

- **CHROME MEMBERS (EASTON 9 HOLE COURSE)**
  5-Day & 7-Day membership available at a more relaxed venue for golf, but still with the challenges that a par 3 course can provide.

- **BRONZE MEMBERS (FOR THE NON GOLFER)**
  7-Day house (non golf) member.
There are a number of factors which contribute to a good membership package, which will encourage junior golfers into membership and although they may only be paying a fraction of the adult fee, they should still be receiving value for money and a range of opportunities to support their retention within the game.

Having a range of affordable membership categories will hopefully provide something for juniors of all ages and abilities. Family membership categories are also a great way of supporting adults and juniors to participate both individually or together.

Retaining players once they reach 18 is difficult, however offering a student or retainer package may be of benefit. It is not just students from the golf club who should be considered, students from a local university may also want to participate whilst away from home and golf clubs should look at what affordable offers they can provide.

Membership costs have to be competitive, provide value for money and be regularly reviewed to ensure they are meeting the needs of the customer.

England Golf publishes average membership fees every two years at national, regional and county level (see Section 9 for details).