

Greetings, Parents and Players,

As we prepare to begin registration for our Spring Session, we ask that you take a few moments to learn about some changes to the First Tee Program for 2023.

First Tee was founded nationally in 1997, and after 25 years of impact, is embarking on an exciting evolution. Now in our 20th anniversary year in the Greater Seattle area, and a leading chapter in the network, we are thrilled to be a part of this journey. This process includes:

- **New registration portal:**
 - Much more user-friendly.
 - Financial aid process no longer requires parents to log back in to complete registration once approved.
- **Age-based enrollment**
 - Participants are grouped by age, including new and returning players.
 - Advancement is based on age.
 - Additional play, practice, and leadership opportunities in each age group for those who demonstrate exceptional commitment, skill and desire to learn.
- **Refreshed curriculum**
 - Each age group has a set of developmentally appropriate core lessons.
 - Lessons are focused on personal growth and engagement.
 - New participants
 - Nine Core Values are now blended through all age groups, rather than only at the entry level.

Coming soon:

- **Digital yardage book** replaces the paper yardage book, and is completed electronically through interactive games and activities.
- **Badging** system allows participants to log accomplishments on and off the course electronically, and earning rewards for completion.

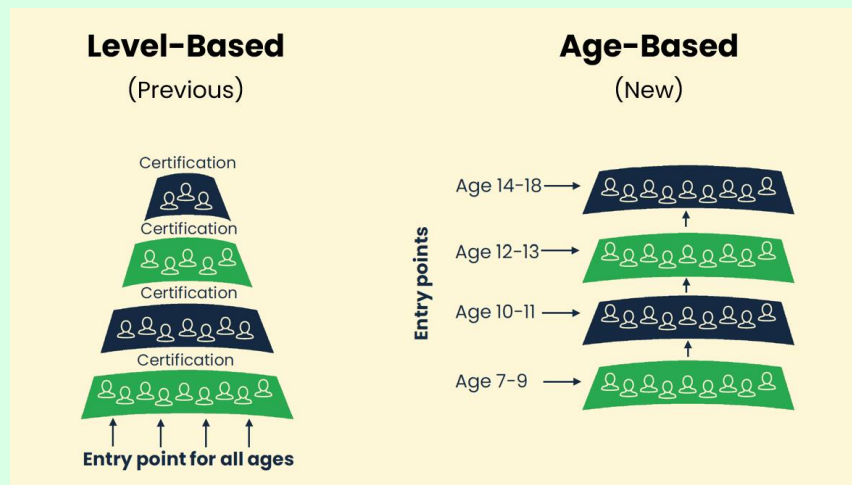


First Tee Programs around the country have reformatted their classes to be delivered by age, including those who are new to the program. This is in alignment with many other youth programs, and will enable our coaches to ensure create meaningful and fun content aligned to each kids' developmental level. It will bring other benefits as well, from kids bringing friends into their classes to more teens staying with First Tee longer, as it is the long-term exposure to valuable life lessons where kids experience the most significant growth.

Classes will now be offered as follows:

- Age 7-9: Early Elementary School
- Age 10-11: Older Elementary School/Early Adolescence
- Age 12-13: Middle School/Early Adolescence
- Age 14-18: High School/Middle Adolescence

**Some class options combine multiple age groups.*



You may be wondering why we are making this change from our previous format, where all participants started at the same level, regardless of age. As an organization, we are always striving to create a better and more impactful experience for your child, and years of extensive research and feedback has yielded some very convincing results.

By delivering our program to participants of the same age range, our goal is to create programs and experiences that are just as fun as they are meaningful, where kids feel excited to grow, safe to fail, and better equipped for whatever comes their way next.

First Tee Program

Age Group Descriptions

Age 7-9

First Tee Program for ages 7-9 teaches the game of golf in a fun, safe, and empowering environment. At this age group, we are **introducing and engaging** participants with both golf and life skills. Participants will get active and play golf with their peers to help them build inner strength, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for the game. Classes are designed to accommodate new and returning golfers of the same age. Participants will register and be grouped by age and will progress through the program as they “age up,” with lessons adjusted to challenge players at their skill level.

Age 10-11

First Tee Program for ages 10-11 supports the **exploration** of both character and golf skills in active and collaborative ways. The learning experiences in the course help to build inner strength, self-confidence, and an enthusiasm for the sport, while encouraging the development of positive Game Changing behaviors. Classes are designed to accommodate new and returning golfers of the same age. Participants will register and be grouped by age and will progress through the program as they “age up” with lessons adjusted to challenge players at their skill level.

Age 12-13

First Tee Program for ages 12-13 focuses on the development of both golf and character skills. The lessons and activities in this program **empower participants** to explore both golf skills and character commitments appropriate for their stage of growth and development. Coaches support the development of confidence in participants through additional opportunities for them to demonstrate mastery and growth in their golf skills and abilities. Classes are designed to accommodate new and returning golfers of the same age. Participants will register and be grouped by age and will progress through the program as they “age up,” with lessons adjusted to challenge players at their skill level.

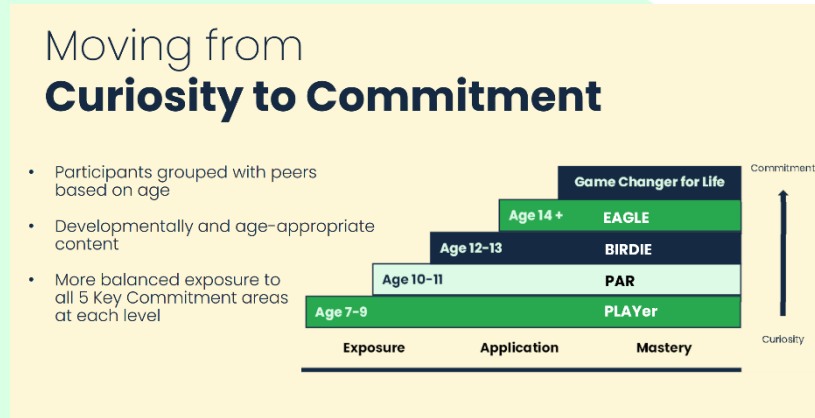
Age 14-18

First Tee Program for ages 14+ places a greater emphasis on the personal development of participants. These lessons help participants **elaborate** on their understanding, applying what they have learned to new situations on and off the course to deepen their skills as they **evaluate, reflect on, and provide evidence of their new understanding** of life and golf skills. As participants learn more about who they are and what they are capable of, they have the opportunity at First Tee to begin to look towards the future and plan their own paths. Classes are designed to accommodate new and returning golfers of the same age.

Frequently Asked Questions

What age group should we choose?

Enrollment is simple. Just choose a class within your age group! In some cases, multiple age groups might be combined. The registration portal will only show you options for your particular age group.



What if our birthdate occurs after the start of the season?

Participants need to meet the minimum age of a group by the first date of class to be eligible. The registration portal should only show you options that fit this criteria.

Are there exceptions to the age minimums for each group?

Sorry, but no exceptions are made to the age criteria. Since our focus is on designing classes that are developmentally appropriate, it's especially important that ages are consistent across all groups. "But it's just a few days, or a week difference!" you might say... true, and we completely understand. But to maintain program integrity, we have to draw a firm line somewhere.

How are class lengths determined?

Age groups 7-9 and 10-11 are 60 minutes. Age groups 12-13 and 14-18 are 90 minutes. When combined, the default duration is to that of the older age group.

One thing that we learned during COVID, when all classes were just one hour, was that we were able to focus intentionally on the core golf and life skills activities for the full hour. Some classes that were longer would often spend much of the class time on the course, which is great for application. So, by offering other times for play and practice days, and often adjacent to your regular class time, we can be more intentional about how the time is spent in the educational process.

If you are a returning player and accustomed to longer class times, don't worry! Read more about the "plus" program below, and look out for the guidelines there so you are eligible for additional play and practice opportunities throughout the season.

Will there be a range of skill levels in each age group?

Yes! This has always been true for First Tee classes, and in nearly all youth programs. It is important to recognize that participants learn best in a diverse group. We learn from each other, and in tandem with other's learning. We share what we know, and others share with us. Diversity takes many forms, including skill level, learning styles, personalities, and backgrounds. Additionally, and most importantly in First Tee, golf skill is only one measure of individual progress, along with valuable life skills and character development. Some participants are talented in their ability to produce great golf shots and low scores. Others are advanced in their ability to motivate others, set a positive example, demonstrate knowledge of the rules of the game, and understand the science and physics of golf. Much like life, golf gives us a myriad of opportunities to grow, and we celebrate everyone's path equally.

How will First Tee accommodate for varying skill levels in each age group?

During each class, coaches will typically assign players into one of two or three groups. Those can be arranged by age, skill, gender, experience, or any other characteristic. In age-based classes, we will lean on our player records and observations to determine the best fit for each player, and of course how we can best serve them during class time. We will use those same methods to split and assign groups during class time.

Why not have classes designated as “beginner, intermediate, advanced”?

As of spring 2023, we plan to accommodate all skill levels within each class, but this is a consideration, and certainly a possibility for future seasons.

When will the *digital yardage book* and *badging* and be implemented?

This technology is being developed at First Tee HQ in Florida, and is in the final stages of production. We have seen sneak peeks and it should be a great addition to the program! We anticipate badging and the digital yardage book to be ready in late 2023, but if earlier we will be ready to launch. In the meantime, we will be utilizing Google Forms as an at-home learning module to replace the written yardage book.

Outside of class participation, what should participants be working on?

Weekly classes is the core experience at First Tee. This is where we learn and practice the most important lessons in a group setting. It's where we build our interpersonal, self-management, resiliency and goal-setting skills. But the learning doesn't stop there.

Just as before, materials will be available to practice and apply your knowledge outside of class (see above), and additional in-person opportunities to play and practice will be available, such as the [Chapter Championship](#), [PGA Junior League Golf](#), and by reaching the “Plus” or “+” status.

For those ready and interested in more course play, work on advancing to “plus” status for more play within the First Tee, take advantage of the [Open Play](#) privilege for all First Tee – Greater Seattle members and play the par-3 courses anytime for just \$2, and consider enrolling in the Youth on Course (YOC) program, which provides young people with the opportunity to play more than 50 local golf courses for just \$5! Learn more about both of these and sign up for YOC on [this page](#).

For returning participants:

Has my level changed?

It might have! With the new age guidelines, your group assignment may have changed slightly. For instance, if you were 9 years old and in a “Par” level class, you are now in the 7-9 “PLAYer” group. Developmental experts do recommend this grouping. And as a 9 year old in that group, being the oldest means setting an example, and that can help build player confidence. *This will also be true for those age 11 who were in “Birdie” and 13 in “Eagle” previously.*

Additionally, and since you had certified to the “Par” level, you will be automatically classified as a “PLAYer +” and be eligible for additional opportunities outside of class, like supervised driving range and course play time, league play, and more. And when you turn 10, you will automatically advance to the 10-11 age group.

Has the curriculum changed?

The curriculum is very similar, and has evolved to include some new lessons, be even more relevant for each age group, and to allow for players to enter at their age group and not miss out on the most important lessons in the program. 80% of the previous core lessons are still included in the curriculum, like “Meeting & Greeting,” “Personal Par,” the “4 Rs,” and “STAR”, all Nine Core Values, and many more that you may already be familiar with, along with new ones you will have the opportunity to learn.

In the new age-based model, am I now with younger players?

In some cases you may be, and in others you will be with older players, but you will always be with your peers! And we make no exceptions to the age guidelines, so rest assured only those who meet the age guidelines are eligible to join those same classes as you.

If my friend wants to join but has never played with First Tee before, can he/she join my class?

Absolutely! This is one of the most exciting changes with the age-based model. Whereas before, your friend would need to “start from the beginning” and it may take several seasons or even years to master the First Tee material and catch up to your level and be eligible for the same class, even if they had the same level of maturity and skill. Now they can join you in an upcoming season!

What are the Key Commitments?

The Key Commitments are the new cornerstone of the program and in being a *Game Changer*. These are not a replacement for the Nine Core Values, but rather the *Code of Conduct*, which research has shown was perceived as setting too much of an extrinsic standard of participation, whereas the Key Commitments are intrinsic and more important to one’s character. For instance, the Code of Conduct included dress codes and specific behavioral requirements more representative of traditional golf etiquette, which have become outdated and are not as indicative of a young person’s positive engagement and individual potential.



Has there been a change to the Nine Core Values?

The Nine Core values are still as important as ever! The change is that they are now blended throughout the age-based curriculum, so instead of mastering all nine in the first level (what was formerly *PLAYer*), they are now taught and practiced in all age groups. This allows a participant of any age to join the program with their peers, not have to start “from the beginning” and will not miss out on important content.

What about the Ace level?

Ace is still alive and well! Nothing has changed about Ace level eligibility and programming. Participants must be age 15+ and have reached the highest status in the age-based program, which will be known as “Eagle +” and have a strong demonstrated record of leadership, service, and participation with the chapter. Please contact us if you are interested in applying for the Ace program.

Are there still yardage books?

Written yardage books have been “sunsetted” and are no longer in use. A digital yardage book will be released this year, and in the meantime we will be utilizing Google Forms as an electronic and at-home way to learn and apply your knowledge. *See above for more details.*

Will course play still be available during class time?

Yes! As always, we utilize as much of each facility as possible, including putting and chipping greens, driving ranges, open space, and when possible, the golf course. As always, class time is not designed for a full round of golf, but rather one or a few holes of play and on-course learning.

How do I advance to the next age group?

To move from one age group to another, all that needs to happen is to “age up” or meet the minimum age requirement. But advancement within an age group is still possible, and encouraged for those who have a desire for more learning and playing opportunities. This is known as “plus” or “+” status, and more details will be released soon on those guidelines.

If I have “plus” status, in which class should I enroll?

Enrollment in classes is all by age, so sign up with your age group! Opportunities for those with “plus” status are offered outside, and sometimes adjacent to, your weekly classes, and there is not a separate signup for those. Stay tuned for the schedule of “plus” opportunities for the spring session.

How do I know if I am “plus” status?

Your status will default to your most recent certified status. For example, if you are age 9 had just begun the Par level, but had not certified (primary three checklist items not yet complete: yardage book, knowledge tests & Chapter Championship score), that means officially your most recent certification was at the PLAYER level. Therefore, your next enrollment will be in the 7-9 age group and automatically PLAYER +. Another example: if you are age 10, had recently played in the Par level but not yet certified (same as previous example), you will now be in the 10-11 age group and have Par status, with the opportunity to advance to Par + in the new model. *See your most recent Progress Report to check your records.*

Is it too late to complete previous certifications and reach “plus” status?

Based on current records, we will be reaching out to those who will automatically matriculate into “plus” status. For those who will automatically qualify for “plus” status, based on certification completion in the previous model (example: age 9 at the Par level will become PLAYER +, or age 14 and Eagle certified becomes Eagle +), you don’t need to do anything. If you had completed your playing requirement (Chapter Championship score) and just needed to complete your yardage book and/or knowledge tests, you may still submit those prior to the start of the spring session, when those will officially be retired.

How do I advance to the “plus” status in the new model?

Within each age group, participants can qualify for the “plus” or “+” status. The specific guidelines for this will be released soon, but will be very similar to what was used in the past for “certification” to advance in levels (minus the yardage book, of course, which has been retired!). As before, the three primary checklist items will be: 1) the playing requirement (Chapter Championship), 2) lesson materials (Yardage Book replaced by online activities), and 3) knowledge assessment (online). For those at the Eagle level, service as a junior volunteer will also be included, as leadership development is a keystone element of the First Tee experience as participants reach their teenage years.

For reference, these were the previous guidelines used through 2022:

Look for something similar to be released soon!

CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES						
Category	Description	PLAYER	Par	Birdie	Eagle	Ace
Age Guideline	Required Minimum	7	9	11	13	15
	<small>Eligibility is determined by the season following a participant's birthday, and given the completion of the following certifications.</small>					
Core Lesson Mastery	Sessions Per Level	2-6	2-6	2-6	2-6	2-6
	Class Attendance	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
	Homework/Assignments	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%
<small>These are recommended averages per season to achieve optimal exposure to and practice with each core lesson.</small>						
Written Tests	Golf Knowledge	8/10	12/15	16/20	20/25	Custom
	Life Skills Knowledge	10/12	15/18	20/24	25/30	Custom
Short Game	Putting Course (10-30 ft)	27 (9h)	23 (9h)	21 (9h)	18 (9h)	15 (9h)
	Up-and-in Course (2-20 yd)	18 (3h)	12 (3h)	21 (6h)	27 (9h)	23 (9h)
Full Swings	Approach Shots	10+ yd	25+ yd	55+ yd	80+ yd	100+ yd
	Driving/ Tee Shots	25+ yd	50+ yd	100+ yd	160+ yd	200+ yd
<small>From this distance, players must achieve a score of 50% (ball comes to rest on green/fairway).</small>						
Course Play (9h)	Minimum # Complete Rounds	2	2	5	10	10*
	<small>Must include at least one tournament and one non-tournament round at each level (scoring guidelines below). Must be stroke play format and outside of regular class session (Week 8 does not qualify). *Ace rounds must include 10 different golf courses.</small>					
	Target Score	63	54	45	108	92
Other	Completion of Yardage Book	PLAYER (white)	Par (orange)	Birdie (blue)	Eagle (green)	Ace
		<small>9h - Par-3 Course (recommended 1,500+yd) 18h - Regulation Course (5,000+yd)</small>				

NOTES:

- Certification guidelines are designed and administered by The First Tee, World Golf Foundation and the governing bodies of golf to provide reasonable goals and structure for each level in the program.
- There is no certification process for the Target level; the Life Skills Experience (LSE) officially begins at PLAYER.
- In order to advance to the next level, a player must: 1) be age eligible (no exceptions), and 2) be fully certified (all items complete). Exceptions can be made to allow players to progress to the next level, but their record will need to reflect outstanding performance in one or more other categories. No exceptions are made for the age requirements listed above.

Is everything set in stone now?

Not necessarily! We have built a solid foundation for 2023 and will consider this our transition year to the new model, where we learn what works best in this next phase of First Tee.

We appreciate your cooperation, participation, and feedback!

Additional questions? Please reach out to us!

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