

Golf Course Design, Construction & Architecture

Parent-Teacher Notes

Stage 1: Discover & Play

Your role: curious co-explorer · 6 Weeks · 24 Lessons · Homeschool Golf Academy

How to Use This Document

This document contains every parent-teacher note from the Stage 1 Golf Course Design curriculum — all six weeks, all four lessons per week — in a single downloadable reference. Each note tells you what the lesson is doing educationally, how to facilitate the key activity or discussion, what to watch for in your student's response, and where to push further if they are ready.

Notes are written for you — the parent-teacher — not for your student. Read the Week Guidance box at the start of each section before beginning that week's lessons.

The Quick Reference table at the back gives a single-sentence facilitation priority for every lesson — ideal for a 30-second review before each session.

Stage Overview

Your role: curious co-explorer alongside your student

At Stage 1 your role is adventure companion, not instructor. The goal is to make design feel like discovery — to help your student see the golf course they already know with completely new eyes. Every lesson should feel like finding something that was always there but never noticed before. Your most important facilitation tools this stage are the question "why is it there?" and your genuine enthusiasm for the answers your student finds.

Week 1 — Land and Landscape

Week Guidance

Week 1 lays the physical and philosophical foundation for the entire Stage 1 curriculum. The most important activity this week is the site walk — it should not be moved indoors, skipped, or shortened. Children who have physically walked a piece of land with an architect's eye retain the lesson in a way that photographs alone cannot produce. Your facility's land contains enough natural variety for every observation this week asks for.

LESSON

1

The Land Speaks First

Parent-Teacher Note

The site walk is the single most experiential lesson in Stage 1 and should not be skipped. Children who have physically walked a piece of land with the eye of an architect remember the lesson permanently. Your facility's land — even a small section of it — contains enough natural variety for this exercise. Resist the urge to explain things before your student has had time to observe. Let the land speak first.

LESSON

2

What Makes Land Good for Golf?

Parent-Teacher Note

The regional research works best as a visual activity — find aerial photographs and maps of the region alongside written research. The visual connection between land type and course character reinforces the core idea that good land produces good courses. Push your student beyond surface description: what specifically about the soil, the drainage, the topography makes this region well-suited to golf?

LESSON

3

Types of Golf Land — Links, Heathland, Parkland, Desert

Parent-Teacher Note

The four landscape type photographs, viewed side by side, make the visual differences unmistakable. This visual vocabulary — being able to identify a course type from a photograph — is foundational design literacy that all subsequent architecture lessons build upon. Ensure your student can articulate not just what each type looks like but why it produces a different kind of golf.

LESSON

4

Your First Design: Draw a Golf Hole

Parent-Teacher Note

Stage 1 design drawings should be large and bold — these students are often perfectionists who make tiny, tentative sketches. The design journal is a place for big ideas expressed directly. The best first-hole drawings show genuine personal vision, not accurate technical drafting. Celebrate imagination over precision at this stage. The quality of the thinking — is there a clear safe route and a clear risky route? — is the only criterion that matters.

Week 2 — Shapes of Holes

Week Guidance

Week 2 introduces the most important analytical vocabulary for playing and designing golf: hole geometry and the strategic decisions it creates. The pre-shot reading routine in Lesson 4 is immediately applicable to every round your student plays from this point forward — if they begin doing it consistently, their course management will improve measurably alongside their design understanding. Make time for the full activity.

LESSON

1

The Straight Hole

Parent-Teacher Note

The Pebble Beach 18th is freely available in aerial photographs and is one of the most discussed holes in golf. The St. Andrews 18th is historically the most famous straight hole and has the additional dimension of the town running alongside it. Either works well for this lesson. Push your student beyond "it looks beautiful" — what specific design decisions make this hole challenging despite being straight?

LESSON

2

The Dogleg

Parent-Teacher Note

The dogleg design activity develops genuine strategic thinking alongside spatial awareness. Encourage your student to work out the numbers — if you cut the corner, you have 130 yards in; if you play safe, you have 190 yards. Is 60 yards worth the risk? This is exactly the calculation a professional golfer makes on every dogleg. The numbers make abstract risk-reward thinking concrete.

LESSON

3

The Cape Hole

Parent-Teacher Note

Aerial photographs of cape holes are particularly striking and communicate the design idea instantly. If your student can access a satellite view of the 4th at Bandon Dunes, the ocean context makes the concept viscerally clear in a way that no description can match. Ask after the research: what is the cape hole really asking the player to decide? The answer — "how much of the hazard can I carry?" — should be immediately clear from the photograph.

LESSON

4

Reading a Hole from the Tee

Parent-Teacher Note

The tee study activity is one of the most practically valuable exercises in the curriculum because it develops course management thinking alongside design literacy. If your student begins doing the 60-second reading routine consistently, their actual golf scores will improve — not just their understanding of design. The evaluation afterward ("did it play the way I predicted?") is the learning loop that builds the skill. Don't rush this.

Week 3 — Hazards and Features**Week Guidance**

Week 3 is where strategic design thinking becomes physical and observable. The bunker walk — going inside a bunker with permission and looking back toward the fairway — is one of the most revealing perspective shifts in the curriculum. Do not skip it. The view from inside the bunker, looking up at the lip and back across the fairway, makes the architect's intention immediately legible in a way that no amount of description can replicate.

LESSON

1

Bunkers — The Architect's Punctuation

Parent-Teacher Note

Walking inside a bunker with permission and looking back toward the fairway is one of the most revealing perspective shifts in this curriculum. From inside a deep bunker, looking up at the lip and back toward the fairway, the architecture becomes completely clear in a way it never does from a distance. Ask your student from inside: "Why is this bunker here? What shot does it catch? What does it force the player to think about from 100 yards away?"

LESSON

Water — The Absolute Hazard

2

Parent-Teacher Note

The Augusta 12th has been written about more extensively than almost any hole in golf, and the analysis is widely available. Encourage your student to read two or three different accounts of this hole's strategy — from architects, players, and commentators. The variety of perspectives demonstrates that great design generates genuine intellectual debate, and that the same hole can be analyzed at many different levels of sophistication.

LESSON

3

Rough and Natural Features

Parent-Teacher Note

The rough inspection walk requires your student to notice something they usually walk past without seeing. Most junior golfers have never thought about rough as a designed element — they experience it only as punishment. The moment they begin to see it as an intentional architectural choice — this depth of rough, this type of grass, this penalty — their entire relationship with the course begins to change.

LESSON

4

Natural Genius — When the Land Does the Work

Parent-Teacher Note

The Cypress Point 16th is freely available in extraordinary photography. The view from behind the green, looking back across the Pacific Ocean to the tee, is one of the most striking images in golf. If your student understands why this hole looks the way it does — what MacKenzie added and what the land already had — they understand the core principle of naturalism. The thought experiment ("what would this hole be on flat inland land?") is the most useful analytical device for isolating design from setting.

Week 4 — Building the Course

Week Guidance

Week 4 is the most technical week of Stage 1 and benefits greatly from real-world connections. If any construction or renovation work is happening at your facility, this is the week to get a supervised tour. The superintendent interview in Lesson 3 is one of the most valuable activities in the curriculum — most superintendents are genuinely pleased to talk about their work with a young golfer who is curious and prepared. Call ahead and arrange it if at all possible.

LESSON

1

From Plan to Ground: The Construction Sequence

Parent-Teacher Note

The timeline activity develops project thinking alongside construction knowledge. The question "what would happen if drainage was done incorrectly?" often produces excellent reasoning: the course would be unplayable after rain, the grass would be damaged, repair would require tearing up finished work. This is genuine engineering consequence thinking. Encourage your student to trace the consequences through the full sequence, not just identify the immediate problem.

LESSON

The Green: Golf's Most Engineered Surface

Parent-Teacher Note

2

The Stimpmeter is one of those tools that young golfers find surprisingly interesting because it measures something they have experienced — fast greens vs slow greens — in a precise, scientific way. Most golf facilities have one; ask whether you can see how it is used. The connection between green construction (the USGA spec, the sand root zone) and green speed (Stimpmeter readings) gives the technical content immediate practical relevance.

LESSON

3

Water, Grass, and the Agronomist

Parent-Teacher Note

The superintendent interview is one of the most valuable activities in the entire Stage 1 curriculum — it connects theoretical design content to the real people who manage the course your student plays every week. Most superintendents are delighted to talk about their work with young golfers. Prepare your student with specific questions in advance: what grass types do you use and why? What is the biggest challenge you face this season? How much water does the course use per year?

LESSON

4

The Course Opens: Grow-In and the First Round

Parent-Teacher Note

The course life timeline activity connects construction knowledge to history, sustainability, and the stewardship themes that run through Stages 3 and 4. Even at Stage 1, establishing the idea that a course is a living thing that changes over time — not a static construction project — is worth investing time in. Augusta National is a particularly rich example because its entire evolution across 90 years is well-documented and directly connected to the Augusta special course later in the curriculum.

Week 5 — Famous Courses

Week Guidance

Week 5 is exploration and celebration — let your student's genuine enthusiasm guide the depth. The instruction to let them choose their favorite course from the four studied and spend extra time on it is deliberate: depth on one course they connect with is more valuable than surface coverage of four. The home course hole analysis in Lesson 4 is the most personally meaningful activity in Stage 1 and often produces the most surprising revelations.

LESSON

1

Augusta National — Where Strategy Meets Beauty

Parent-Teacher Note

The Amen Corner sequence analysis develops sequential strategic thinking — understanding how holes work together as well as individually. This is fundamentally a Stage 3 and 4 concept being introduced at an accessible Stage 1 level. Do not push for more analytical depth than your student naturally reaches. The seed of the idea — that three consecutive holes can collectively create something more powerful than any of them alone — is all that Stage 1 requires.

LESSON

Pebble Beach — The Course the Ocean Designed

2

Parent-Teacher Note

The 7th at Pebble Beach is a perfect example of the naturalism principle from Week 3 — a hole whose greatness is almost entirely derived from its setting rather than its design complexity. The thought experiment ("what would this hole be if it were moved inland to flat ground?") is the most useful device for isolating the quality of the design from the quality of the setting. A great hole should be at least somewhat interesting even without the spectacular backdrop.

LESSON

3

St. Andrews — Where Golf Began

Parent-Teacher Note

The Road Hole bunker has ended more major championship hopes than any other single hazard in golf. The research will almost certainly surface stories about Tommy Nakajima, Tom Watson, and others — which makes the hole come alive as human drama rather than just architectural analysis. Encourage your student to find a video of a famous Road Hole incident in a championship and watch it together as the primary source for this lesson.

LESSON

4

Courses Near Home — Finding Design Excellence Everywhere

Parent-Teacher Note

The home course hole analysis is the most personally meaningful assignment in Stage 1. A student who looks at a familiar hole with fresh architectural eyes — and notices something they have played past for years without ever seeing — has genuinely developed a new perceptual capacity. Take time to discuss their observations, not to correct them, but to extend them: "Interesting — why do you think the architect chose to put it there rather than 15 yards to the right?"

Week 6 — Design Your Hole

Week Guidance

Week 6 is the Stage 1 capstone, and your most important role is to take the work seriously. Ask real questions during the presentation. Express genuine curiosity about the design decisions. The signed and dated reflection at the end of Lesson 4 is a time capsule — store it carefully. Its value is entirely in the re-reading at the end of Stage 2, Stage 3, and most powerfully Stage 4, when your student will be able to see how their thinking has evolved across the curriculum.

LESSON

1

The Design Brief

Parent-Teacher Note

The pre-drawing planning exercise is important because it prevents the most common Stage 1 design error: drawing without thinking first. Students who plan their decisions before drawing — committing in writing to where the tee will go, how they will use the pond, what the trees will do — produce significantly more coherent designs. The commitment is the important thing: "I have decided the pond will be on the right side of the green because it punishes the approach from the left, which is where the risky tee shot puts you."

LESSON

2

Drawing the Design

Parent-Teacher Note

Some students will want to redraw their design multiple times to get it "right." Encourage iteration — two or three drafts is excellent design process — but also set a deadline for the final version. A finished drawing with imperfect execution is more valuable than a never-completed pursuit of perfection. The quality of the thinking, not the quality of the draftsmanship, is what Stage 1 assesses. A bold drawing with a clear design idea and two visible strategic routes is a success.

LESSON

3

Presenting Your Design

Parent-Teacher Note

The verbal presentation is one of the highest-value activities in Stage 1 because it forces articulation of design intent. Many students discover through the act of presenting that parts of their design were drawn without being decided — they made a mark without knowing why. That discovery is precisely the point, and it should be celebrated as a learning moment rather than treated as a failure. A question your student cannot answer points directly to the design decision they need to make.

LESSON

4

Looking Ahead — What Stage 2 Will Bring

Parent-Teacher Note

The signed and dated reflection is a time capsule. Its entire value is in the re-reading — at the end of Stage 2, Stage 3, and most powerfully at the end of Stage 4, when your student can see how their thinking has evolved across the full curriculum. Store it carefully in the design journal. Photograph it if you have any doubt about the journal's safekeeping. The student who reads their Stage 1 design statement at the end of Stage 4 will have access to something most designers never have: a documented record of where they started.

QUICK REFERENCE — FACILITATION PRIORITIES

One-sentence facilitation priority for every Stage 1 lesson

Wk	Les	Lesson Title	Key Facilitation Priority
1	1	The Land Speaks First	Do the site walk outside — let your student observe before you explain anything.
1	2	What Makes Land Good for Golf?	Combine photographs with written research — the visual connection between land and course type is the lesson.
1	3	Types of Golf Land — Links, Heathland, Parkland, Desert	Four photographs side by side makes the differences unmistakable — push for "why different golf" not just "looks different".
1	4	Your First Design: Draw a Golf Hole	Celebrate imagination over precision — the only criterion is: does the hole have a clear decision point?
2	1	The Straight Hole	Push beyond "it looks beautiful" — what specific decisions make a straight hole strategically challenging?
2	2	The Dogleg	Work out the actual yardage difference between the safe and risky route — numbers make risk-reward concrete.
2	3	The Cape Hole	Satellite view of Bandon Dunes 4th makes the cape concept viscerally clear — use it.
2	4	Reading a Hole from the Tee	60 seconds of reading before every tee shot — the evaluation afterward is the learning loop that builds the skill.
3	1	Bunkers — The Architect's Punctuation	Go inside a bunker and look back — the architecture becomes clear in a way no description can match.
3	2	Water — The Absolute Hazard	Read multiple analyses of the Augusta 12th — the variety of perspectives demonstrates what great design generates.
3	3	Rough and Natural Features	The rough is a designed element — when your student sees it that way for the first time, their relationship with the course changes.
3	4	Natural Genius — When the Land Does the Work	Ask: "What would this hole be on flat inland land?" — isolates design quality from setting.
4	1	From Plan to Ground: The Construction Sequence	Ask "what happens if drainage is done incorrectly?" — trace the consequences through the full sequence.
4	2	The Green: Golf's Most Engineered Surface	Find out if your facility has a Stimpmeter — measuring it connects green construction to playing experience directly.
4	3	Water, Grass, and the Agronomist	Arrange the superintendent interview in advance — prepare specific questions and treat it as a formal research exercise.
4	4	The Course Opens: Grow-In and the First Round	Establish early: a course is a living thing that changes over time, not a finished construction project.
5	1	Augusta National — Where Strategy Meets Beauty	Plant the seed: consecutive holes can create something more powerful than any hole alone. Don't push for more depth.
5	2	Pebble Beach — The Course the Ocean Designed	"What would the 7th be on flat inland ground?" — this thought experiment isolates design from setting.
5	3	St. Andrews — Where Golf Began	Find video of a famous Road Hole championship incident — history becomes human drama, not just architecture.
5	4	Courses Near Home — Finding Design Excellence Everywhere	Extend observations with "why there rather than 15 yards to the right?" — this is the key analytical move at Stage 1.

6	1	The Design Brief	Commit to decisions in writing before drawing — prevents designing by accident rather than intention.
6	2	Drawing the Design	Set a deadline for the final drawing — a bold finished sketch beats an endlessly revised perfect one.
6	3	Presenting Your Design	A question your student can't answer in the presentation points directly to the design decision they haven't made yet.
6	4	Looking Ahead — What Stage 2 Will Bring	Store the signed reflection carefully — its value is entirely in the re-reading at the end of Stage 4.