

GOLF COURSE DESIGN

CONSTRUCTION & ARCHITECTURE

My Student Design Journal

Name

Homeschool Golf Academy Curriculum

Stage 1: Discover & Play · Pages will be added for Stages 2, 3 and 4, and for every architect mini course

Started on:

My home facility:

My favorite hole there:

One question about golf course design I want to answer:

About This Journal

This is your personal Golf Course Design Journal. It is a working document — a place to sketch holes, record observations, work out design ideas, analyze courses you play, and build your understanding of how and why golf courses are designed the way they are.

The journal is organized by stage and then by week. Stage 1 covers six weeks. When you begin Stage 2 — Learn & Improve — new pages will be added for that stage's six weeks. The architect mini-course sections at the back are ready for when you study each individual architect.

A good design journal is messy, full of crossings-out and revised ideas. That is what real architects' sketchbooks look like. Fill every page. Draw big. Write your real thoughts, not what you think you should think.

How to use each type of page in this journal:

Activity Log pages	Complete after each lesson — record what you observed, discovered and wondered about.
Drawing pages	Sketch hole designs, green complexes, course maps and site observations. Draw large.
Analysis pages	Use when studying a specific hole or course — apply the analytical framework from lessons.
Vocabulary pages	Record new design terms with your own definition and a sketch of what they mean.
Portfolio pages	Your best design work from each week — curated, labelled and dated.
Reflection pages	End of each week and end of each stage — write honestly about what you learned.

STAGE 1: DISCOVER & PLAY

Golf Course Design, Construction & Architecture

Stage 1 started:

Stage 1 finished:

My Stage 1 design goal — what kind of designer do I want to become?

WEEK
1

Land and Landscape

How nature shapes golf · Reading what the land is already offering

Lessons completed this week:

☐ The Land Speaks First	☐ What Makes Land Good for Golf?	☐ Types of Golf Land — Links, Heathland, Parkland, Desert	☐ Your First Design: Draw a Golf Hole
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Observation Log — answer each question based on what you noticed and discovered this week.

1. What type of land is my home facility built on?

Notes

2. What natural features does the course use or ignore?

Notes

3. Where does water flow after rain — and how does the course manage it?

Notes

4. What is the most interesting natural feature I noticed today?

Notes

WEEK

1

Land and Landscape

Drawing page

My Site Sketch — draw a bird's-eye view of a section of your facility. Label the natural features.

Notes on this drawing — what design decision does it show?

WEEK
1

Land and Landscape
Activity page

My First Hole Design

Par number:

Tee location on sketch:

Green location on sketch:

The safe route (describe it):

The risky route (describe it):

What makes this hole interesting:

Additional notes and observations:

WEEK
1

Land and Landscape
Weekly reflection

What surprised me most about the land this week? What question am I carrying into Week 2?

My reflection:

Best design idea I had this week:

One question I am carrying into next week:

Notes

WEEK
2

Shapes of Holes

Straight, dogleg and cape holes · How geometry creates strategic decisions

Lessons completed this week:

☐ The Straight Hole	☐ The Dogleg	☐ The Cape Hole	☐ Reading a Hole from the Tee
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Observation Log — answer each question based on what you noticed and discovered this week.

1. A straight hole I played — what made it interesting despite being straight?

Notes

2. A dogleg I played — which direction? How severe was the turn?

Notes

3. The decision I faced from the tee (what were my options)?

Notes

4. What information did the architect give me vs. hide from me?

Notes

WEEK

2

Shapes of Holes

Drawing page

My Dogleg or Cape Design — draw it from above. Show both strategic routes with arrows.

Notes on this drawing — what design decision does it show?

WEEK
2

Shapes of Holes
Activity page

Pre-Shot Reading Log

Hole played:

Hole shape (straight / dogleg / cape):

Ideal landing zone (where I identified it):

The temptation (risky route):

Was my reading correct after playing the hole?

What I missed or did not predict:

Additional notes and observations:

WEEK
2

Shapes of Holes
Weekly reflection

What is the most strategically interesting hole I played this week? What made it work?

My reflection:

Best design idea I had this week:

One question I am carrying into next week:

Notes

WEEK
3

Hazards and Features

Bunkers, water, rough and natural features · Why hazards shape strategy

Lessons completed this week:

☐ Bunkers — The Architect's Punctuation	☐ Water — The Absolute Hazard	☐ Rough and Natural Features	☐ Natural Genius — When the Land Does the Work
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Observation Log — answer each question based on what you noticed and discovered this week.

1. A bunker I analyzed — where exactly it is, and why is it there?

Notes

2. What approach angle does this bunker punish?

Notes

3. A water hazard I observed — absolute penalty or does it allow recovery?

Notes

4. A natural feature the architect used — what was it, and what does it create?

Notes

WEEK

3

Hazards and Features

Drawing page

Bunker Study — draw a green complex showing the bunker positions, their shapes, and what each one guards.

Notes on this drawing — what design decision does it show?

WEEK
3

Hazards and Features
Activity page

Hazard Analysis

Hole I studied:

Type of primary hazard
(bunker / water / rough /

What shot does the
hazard punish?

What shot does the
hazard reward?

Is this hazard strategic
or penal — and why?

One thing the architect
could have done

Additional notes and observations:

WEEK
3

Hazards and Features
Weekly reflection

What is the most well-placed hazard I have seen or played this week? What makes its placement so effective?

My reflection:

Best design idea I had this week:

One question I am carrying into next week:

Notes

WEEK
4

Building the Course

From design to earth · The construction sequence and the people who build

Lessons completed this week:

☐ From Plan to Ground: The Construction Sequence	☐ The Green: Golf's Most Engineered Surface	☐ Water, Grass, and the Agronomist	☐ The Course Opens: Grow-In and the First Round
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Observation Log — answer each question based on what you noticed and discovered this week.

1. One thing I learned about how greens are built (USGA spec, layers, drainage):

Notes

2. Something I noticed about the turf quality at my facility — what does it suggest about construction quality?

Notes

3. What irrigation technology does my facility use? How do I know?

Notes

4. What would I ask the superintendent if I could interview them?

Notes

WEEK

4

Building the Course

Drawing page

Construction Cross-Section — draw a cross-section of a putting green showing the USGA construction layers. Label each layer.

Notes on this drawing — what design decision does it show?

WEEK
4

Building the Course
Activity page

Superintendent Investigation

Grass type on greens:

Grass type on fairways:

Evidence of drainage system (inspection

Irrigation system type (observation):

Estimated condition rating (1-10) and why:

One improvement I would suggest if I were

Additional notes and observations:

WEEK 4	Building the Course Weekly reflection
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Before this week, I thought courses were built by _____. Now I understand _____.

My reflection:

Best design idea I had this week:

One question I am carrying into next week:

Notes

WEEK
5

Famous Courses
Learning design through the world's greatest examples

Lessons completed this week:

☐ Augusta National — Where Strategy Meets Beauty	☐ Pebble Beach — The Course the Ocean Designed	☐ St. Andrews — Where Golf Began	☐ Courses Near Home — Finding Design Excellence Everywhere
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Observation Log — answer each question based on what you noticed and discovered this week.

1. The most important strategic decision at Augusta National's Amen Corner (holes 11, 12, 13):

Notes

2. What does Pebble Beach's 7th hole demonstrate about the relationship between land and design?

Notes

3. Why is St. Andrews considered the most important course in the world even though it was never formally designed?

Notes

4. One design quality I found at my home facility that compares to a quality I studied in a famous course:

Notes

WEEK

5

Famous Courses

Drawing page

Augusta Amen Corner Sketch — draw holes 11, 12, and 13 from above. Label the key strategic decisions at each hole.

Notes on this drawing — what design decision does it show?

WEEK
5

Famous Courses
Activity page

Famous Course Research Profile

Course I researched:

Designer and year opened:

Landscape type:

Design purpose (private / resort / public /

Signature design feature:

The most strategically interesting hole and

One thing I would change — and why:

Additional notes and observations:

WEEK
5

Famous Courses
Weekly reflection

What makes a golf course "famous"? Is it design quality, history, or something else — and how do you separate them?

My reflection:

Best design idea I had this week:

One question I am carrying into next week:

Notes

WEEK
6

Design Your Hole

Stage 1 capstone project · Original hole design from brief to presentation

Lessons completed this week:

☐ The Design Brief	☐ Drawing the Design	☐ Presenting Your Design	☐ Looking Ahead — What Stage 2 Will Bring
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Observation Log — answer each question based on what you noticed and discovered this week.

1. My design brief — what constraints am I working within?

Notes

2. My three key design decisions before drawing (tee, pond, trees):

Notes

3. What is the strategic concept of my hole in one sentence?

Notes

4. What is the specific reward for taking the risky route?

Notes

WEEK

6

Design Your Hole

Drawing page

CAPSTONE DESIGN — My Par-4 Hole (full page — use every square centimeter)

Notes on this drawing — what design decision does it show?

WEEK
6

Design Your Hole

Activity page

Design Decision Record

My hole name:

Par number:

Tee placement decision and reason:

Pond use decision (greenside / fairway /

Tree use (obstacle / framing / removed) and

Green position and reason:

Safe route description:

Risky route description and reward:

Additional notes and observations:

WEEK
6

Design Your Hole
Weekly reflection

My Stage 1 design statement: what I believe makes a great golf hole, and why.

My reflection:

Best design idea I had this week:

One question I am carrying into next week:

Notes

My Stage 1 Design Portfolio

Selected work from Weeks 1–6

This section is your curated portfolio — your best design work from Stage 1, selected and labelled by you. Not every sketch or note belongs here. Choose the work that best represents your thinking. Date everything.

Portfolio piece title:

From Week:

Design type (hole / green / site sketch / analysis):

Portfolio piece 1 — paste, draw or transfer your selected work here

Why I chose this piece for my portfolio — what does it show about my design thinking?

Portfolio piece title:

From Week:

Design type (hole / green / site sketch / analysis):

Portfolio piece 2 — paste, draw or transfer your selected work here

Why I chose this piece for my portfolio — what does it show about my design thinking?

Portfolio piece title:

From Week:

Design type (hole / green / site sketch / analysis):

Portfolio piece 3 — paste, draw or transfer your selected work here

Why I chose this piece for my portfolio — what does it show about my design thinking?

Portfolio piece title:

From Week:

Design type (hole / green / site sketch / analysis):

Portfolio piece 4 — paste, draw or transfer your selected work here

Why I chose this piece for my portfolio — what does it show about my design thinking?

Stage 1 Reflection

The most important design idea I learned in Stage 1:

The hole design I am most proud of — and why:

One thing I noticed about my home course that I had never noticed before:

The design question I most want to answer in Stage 2:

Stage 1 completed:

Sign here: _____

My Design Vocabulary

Record new terms here as you encounter them throughout the curriculum

Each entry should include: the term, your own definition in your own words, a small sketch if the term has a visual quality, and the week you first encountered it.

Topography	The shape and surface features of a piece of land — hills, valleys, flat areas, ridges.	Sketch:
Links land	Flat or rolling coastal land with sandy soil, tough native grasses, and wind as a constant factor.	Sketch:
Parkland course	A course built on soft, heavily vegetated land where grass stops the ball where it lands.	Sketch:
Strategic design	A hole where the player's decision matters as much as the player's execution — multiple legitimate routes.	Sketch:
Penal design	A hole with one correct route that punishes any deviation equally — no real choice available.	Sketch:
Risk-reward	The balance between the danger of an aggressive shot and the specific advantage it provides if successful.	Sketch:
Dogleg	A hole where the fairway turns left or right — requiring the player to decide how much corner to cut.	Sketch:
Cape hole	A hole where the fairway juts into a hazard, rewarding players who carry more of it.	Sketch:
Green complex	The putting surface and all the features surrounding it — bunkers, run-offs, false fronts.	Sketch:
Cut and fill	The earthmoving balance: how much soil is removed (cut) vs. how much is added (fill) across a site.	Sketch:
Grow-in	The period after seeding when grass establishes — before the course can be played.	Sketch:
Naturalism	The design philosophy that courses should look discovered, not built — responding to the land as found.	Sketch:

Add your own new terms below:

My Golf Architecture Library

Courses I have visited, studied or analyzed

Record every course you visit or study analytically — not just courses you play casually. Include facility name, designer, landscape type, your design rating (1-10), and one sentence about what the design taught you.

Course Name	Designer	Land Type	Rating	One Design Lesson

FUTURE STAGES

Pages will be added when each stage begins

This journal grows with you. The sections below are reserved for Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the Golf Course Design curriculum. When you begin each stage, new pages will be inserted here — carrying forward the vocabulary, portfolio and architecture library you have already built.

Do not skip ahead. The value of each stage builds on what came before. Stage 4's capstone — a complete 18-hole design with routing plan, design philosophy statement and environmental impact assessment — is the destination. Stage 1 is the first step.

Stage 2: Learn & Improve

Pages to be added when this stage begins

Strategic design philosophy, green design, construction science, technology in design, and course analysis project. Pages added when Stage 2 begins.

Stage 3: Train to Compete

Pages to be added when this stage begins

Design debates, sustainability, contested questions, design proposals with full written justification. Pages added when Stage 3 begins.

Stage 4: Train to Win

Pages to be added when this stage begins

Complete 18-hole design, routing plan, design philosophy statement, construction brief, environmental impact assessment. Pages added when Stage 4 begins.

ARCHITECT MINI-COURSES

Stand-alone one-week deep dives · Pages added when each mini-course is studied

The architect mini-courses are stand-alone, available at any stage. Each one is a one-week study of a single architect's philosophy, signature courses and lasting legacy. Study them in any order — or alongside the main stage curriculum.

Alister MacKenzie

Strategic minimalism · Augusta National · Cypress Point

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Pete Dye

Brutalist innovation · TPC Sawgrass · Whistling Straits

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Donald Ross

Classic American · Pinehurst No. 2

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Tom Doak

Modern minimalism · Cabot Cliffs · Cape Kidnappers

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Coore & Crenshaw

Restoration & naturalism · Sand Hills · Pinehurst restoration

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

C.B. Macdonald

Template hole concept · National Golf Links · Yale

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Robert Trent Jones Sr.

American maximalism · Spyglass Hill · Firestone

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Jack Nicklaus Design

Player as architect · Muirfield Village · Bear's Club

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

Tiger Woods & Modern Design

PopStroke · HGL · El Cardonal

Pages to be added when this mini-course is studied

SPECIAL COURSE: AUGUSTA NATIONAL

Architecture · Redesigns · Current Stewardship · A dedicated one-week deep dive

Section 1 — The MacKenzie Original (1932–1934)
Pages to be added when the Augusta National special course is studied

Section 2 — Redesigns & Evolution
Pages to be added when the Augusta National special course is studied

Section 3 — Current Stewardship
Pages to be added when the Augusta National special course is studied

What I already knew about Augusta National before studying it formally:

Every great golf course began as an idea in someone's imagination.
This journal is where yours begins.
Golf Course Design, Construction & Architecture · Golf Academy Homeschool Curriculum