



Keep it *Simple*, Keep it *Fast*, Make it *Fun*

I often get asked, as do many Professionals, to share 'drills' that I use during my clinics. If any of you, or more specifically your kids, have ever been in Coach Em's classes, you would know that I rarely reference my clinic activities as 'drills'. Instead, I incorporate fun game-based activities that allow kids to practice without knowing they are ... kind of like the mystery chicken nuggets that have hidden veggies in them.

With the bulk of my day focusing on 4 to 12 year-old golfers, my instruction requires a 'short and sweet' approach. The attention span of my audience is literally counted in minutes if not seconds. Arriving for Clinics, I move quickly, talk fast (and loud!), and bring energy. Instruction is given while demonstrating, using as few words as possible.

At this young age, I focus on the three C's during my lessons. Contact being first, Control being second and Consistency being third. Once this is accomplished the real fun begins. That's when we can polish the gem and focus on the issues that are consistent enough to work on.

I like to start all lessons with the full swing using the driver (specifically the US Kids UL Drivers) and yes, naming these are not only needed but required! I have the Red Tomato, Yellow Banana and the popular and most sought-after Blue Bomber. All of my clubs have molded grips that I strongly recommend. These are the *best* items you can pass to your little golfer; after all, the grip controls the club face! Remember the 3 C's!

Let's tackle each of the three Cs here. I break the full swing into three positions.

Position 1: Is all about the set up, posture, and grip, to the students the most boring part of the swing. There is nothing to move, except for a booty shake (which is key to any superior swing). To the instructor, Position 1 is one of the most important, setting them up for great contact and a controlled swing.

Position 2: The take away and L position or as I refer to as the L for *Launch*. This position is where the amazing UL Drivers come into play. Many students using cut down drivers or drivers too large, are too heavy, which makes it extremely challenging to make a proper L position.

Position 3: The "funnest" position. Hitting the ball and focusing on sticking and holding the *finish*. I encourage all students to hold this position for three seconds, or until the ball stops moving. After all, these future tour players will be photographed holding a great Position 3.

As far as targets go, they can and should be *fun*! A great addition to the ordinary boring hitting stations can be animal or figure head-covers on alignment sticks, and adding sun glasses, baskets, or golf balls to knock off, the games are endless. This provides a familiar face to class, adds a multitude of challenges, and provides instant feedback when hitting them. Launching over, under, or in between. Pick your favorite animal and stick the finish!

Working our way to the putting green can be treacherous. To putt at the beginning of the lesson when you have a better chance of attention and patience or do you save it for the end of your practice session?

Over the years I have become creative on the putting green and have even developed putting clinics that kids beg to enroll in. This is, if I had to be honest, is my favorite place to add *fun*, and maybe most important to work on our games.

The following are a few of my favorite games and activities that instill *fun* while allowing kids to practice control.

Tic Tac Toe: Using grids to form a grid along with a colorful drink coaster, matching colored balls and my patented 'Squishtees' (search on Google) to capture the squares.

Skittles in the Circle: Placing a six-foot circle around the putting cup instantly makes the long putts less daunting. We start with a goal of two golf balls in the circle and each class after that we raise our goals.

Teams: Breaking the kids into the younger vs. the older, boys vs. girls, or my favorite—kids vs. coach—losers always need to do the clean-up or lose the golf cart ride back to their parents!

Lolli Palooza: My year-end classes get the remaining, if any, DumDum lollipops. I arrange lollipops all over the putting green. The object is to travel from start to hole without hitting a lolli ... what's horrible about candy on a putting course?

In the end, introducing the game of golf to the kids, although tough, is extremely rewarding. Watching them develop lifelong skills, and friends to a game that will be able to be enjoyed lifelong.

Remember, for the youngest of learners, Keep it Simple, Keep it Fast, Make it Fun. 🏌️

Emily Burns began her career in the golf industry at Royal Fox Country Club in 2000. She later moved to Ruth Luke Country Club. In 2008, Emily joined Cantigny Golf as the Youth Links Head Golf Professional. During her time at Cantigny, Emily has developed several classes, programs, and leagues for her junior golfers of all levels, from Pee Wee players (4 years old) to teens. Emily also began a family during her time at Cantigny and now has three little golf lovers of her own..

