

Standards

One word that gets bantered around a lot is standards. Let's first take a look at the word "standard" and how it relates to golf clubs. According to the dictionary, it is described as:

"Something considered by an authority or by general consent as a basis of comparison; an approved model."

The golf industry is not tied to a universal governing body that regulates *all* of the specifications that clubs are built to. The closest thing to that are the United States Golf Association and the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, which does list specific rules pertaining to equipment. Some of what is covered in the "*Rules of Golf*" (Appendix II) is a maximum on volume (or size of the head), groove depth and width, coefficient of restitution and club length. However, many of the specifications that you may have heard of or familiar with are not regulated and the manufacturers are free to design as they may (obviously within limits).

Some of the specifications such as loft, lie and face angle vary by manufacturer to manufacturer or within the same companies offering of clubs. Loft or lie may vary in the same company's product line because of who the model is designed for. The loft may be stronger if the center of gravity is further back behind the face or the lie may be more upright if it was design for the mid or higher handicapped golfer. It is not that hard to see 3 or 4 degrees difference in these two specifications. However, each and every company measures these specifications nearly identically as there are heavy duty specification gauges to help register the club by the foundry, plus the design and QC departments of the golf club company.

Other specifications such as flex, torque and even grip size are more generic in nature. One company's idea of each of these specifications may be completely different from another company's model with a similar nomenclature.

The reason behind this is each company developed their own standard internally to differentiate certain specifications. One company's R-flex may quite very well be stiffer or more flexible than another company's R-flex.

The same could be said of grip size as well, as one company's mid-size may be larger or smaller than another company's mid-size grip. The terms oversize and jumbo do not provide exact measurements as does degrees or inches (when referring to loft or length.)

Length is surely one specification that ought to have a "standard". In essence it does in the way that it is measured, but not when it comes to manufacturing golf clubs. Graphite-shafted clubs are generally longer than their steel-shafted counterparts for swingweight purposes. With the addition of hybrid clubs, models with the same number engraved on the sole can vary quite considerably from one manufacturer to the next as the head weight dictate the final length.

It is possible to go to several different club fitters and get completely different results. For example, a certified Ping clubfitter may suggest that you use a 2° upright iron. Titleist might recommend 3° upright, while a local independent clubfitter may recommend 1° upright. At first a consumer may be confused, but they need to know what the so-called standard lies of each of these models are to begin with. These very well might end up with the same result (i.e. a 64° #6-iron).

While lacking standards among golf clubs, a custom clubmaker, takes all of the variables out of a set when he/she custom fits and assembles that set. Lengths, lofts and lies can be changed to fit the player. Custom clubmaking eliminates the concern for standards, creating a best fit club (or clubs) to the individual without the huge concern with club standards.

Hopefully you will use the word "standard" as a **reference** only. Probably the better terminology ought to be average or benchmark to take the place of standard. Use it to compare one club with another. But remember, if all clubs (or specifications) were standardized, then there would be no diversity available to golfers of all shapes, sizes, strengths and skill levels. Educate yourself or consult those in the know as to what the actual specifications are and how they relate to your game.

"The only standard there is in the golf industry is there are no standards." Jeff Summitt