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“The Always Be Cheerful Book of Golf in The Villages,” by Babette Williams. ISBN 978-1-60264-744-2.

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Dedicated to Aubrey,  
for his infinite patience



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# Introduction

Congratulations! And welcome to The Villages!

So you've unpacked and settled down in your new home. With the basics out of the way, what's next?

You will most likely want to consider learning how to play golf. Everybody in The Villages does it. The place is swarming with gorgeous green courses just waiting to welcome you as a member. This has to be the most effortless way in the world to be introduced to 80,000 people, just four at a time.

Convinced to give it a try, you buy a golf cart and decorate it in your favorite team's colors. But now you encounter a huge problem: you've never ever played golf. Or maybe you've played a few times, but that was fifteen years ago. Golf looks like fun, and you want to be part of the fun, but - how do you go forward?

I'm here to tell you that I did it, and so can you. At the advanced age of sixty-four, I had my first golf lesson. There was no question in my mind: I was positive that I would be an ace within the year. How hard could it be to hit a little white ball that didn't move on its own?

Ha! Was I wrong! Guess what? Me, the competitive athlete, was wrong, wrong, wrong.

But I persisted, and over time I've mellowed into a socially competent golfer. Dropping my standards of perfection and the necessity of being "the best" has allowed me to enjoy the game to the utmost. Now, at the more advanced age of eighty-two, I "have a grip" on this wily, wonderful, frustrating, but oh, so interesting sport.

**SMART IDEA:**

**One day at a time, one step at a time, and golf is a pleasure. Setting impossible goals takes all the fun out of it.**

When my husband and I moved to our home in The Villages, we were one of many new families that settled in Hadley West that year.

It was difficult at first as we didn't know anyone. I guess we weren't the only lonely newcomers to move into Hadley West, because Sherrie, who lives around the corner, decided to organize a golf group. There were just a handful of gals at first, maybe four or five of us, who gathered together for the very first Hadley West Nine Hole Golf Group towards the end of last year.

We have grown steadily, and now, as of this writing, we have sixteen active members who play nine holes of executive golf every Thursday, and then have lunch together.

The range of our golfing abilities varies, but the warmth and companionship that has developed among us is the greatest gift of all. We are enjoying friendships that go beyond golf, and this has made the transition to our community seamless.

And, as the community grows, more and more people, golfers and non-golfers, are anxious to be a part of this varied, interesting, vital group.

This little book was written because the members of Hadley West began to realize that, for beginners, learning to hit the ball was not enough. It would have been such a comfort to have known the right way to do things on the golf course when we started out.

Our aim is modest: We want to explain all the small intangibles that are part of playing the game. We will leave the mechanics of golf to the person best qualified to teach the game: the professional. Our job is to help you look as though you have been on a golf course your entire life. After all, once upon a time each of us was exactly what you are now: a brand-new golfer.

Mark my words, it's not easy. But if you're game, let the games begin.

# Chapter One

## Don't Worry Be Happy

### **SMART IDEA:**

**The first step in your golf career is to sign up and take a series of lessons from a qualified professional instructor.**

Believe me, this is the very best action you can take to make the learning process comfortable. Make your appointment today!

Somewhere in this early period, you will be invited to “golf with the girls.” Despite your trepidation, accept the invitation. Say yes. You will be scared, insecure, and well aware that two lessons doth not a golfer make. And let's not forget to mention the brand-new bag full of clubs that you don't know how to use.

Fear not. After you read this book, you will know what to do, even if you can't hit the ball worth a hoot. That comes later—much later.

### **SMART IDEA:**

**Before you even step foot on the golf course, mark each of your balls with a permanent marker.**

This will eliminate confusion when two little balls, one yours and one someone else's, land near each other. I know this may seem trivial, but marking your balls will save you a lot of grief down the line.

After a sleepless night, during which you toss and turn and worry about tomorrow (which is now today), the big moment will arrive. And no, you can't call in sick. Hopefully, you have made arrangements for one of your playing partners to pick you up in her cart. Or one of the gals will have set this up for you, eliminating concerns about how to get to wherever you're going, where to park, and all that stuff. Even though you are bleary-eyed, stumble outside at the appointed time to meet the driver.



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