Heavier vs Lighter Golf Shafts – Pros, Cons & Benefits Of Each

Golf is full of intricacies in the swing mechanics and the equipment required to perform optimally. Everyone is unique in stature, swing plane, swing type, and tempo. The debate around shafts is related to heavier vs lighter golf shaft and the pros, cons, and benefits of each.

In general the weight of the club will determine how fast you can swing it and the club head speed you can hit the ball with. The faster the clubhead speed you generate, the faster ball speed you will get and ball speed is the crucial determining factor in how far the ball will go. Different people all swing the club at different speeds and the trick is to find shafts with the optimal weight to maximize your swing and thus the distance you get while maintaining accuracy and control. Having clubs that are too heavy will result in lost distance and a lack of control and having clubs that are too light will result in erratic and uncontrollable strokes.

Fast swing speeds will usually need a heavier shaft and slower swing speeds need lighter shafts. While most

Divers, woods and hybrids come with graphite shafts nowadays, you can select graphite or steel in your irons and graphite will suit slower swing speeds the best.

Swing Speed	Club Weight
Under 70 Mph	Lightest Shafts
70–80Mph	Light, Seniors, Ladies, Juniors
80–90Mph	Regular Weight
90–100Mph	Heavier
100 Mph	Heaviest

Shaft materials

Shafts are manufactured from steel, graphite, multi-material, titanium, and nanofuse shafts.

Heavier shafts are generally made from steel and lighter shafts from graphite. Manufacturers add the most commonly used shafts as standard, but there is an

aftermarket shaft available to suit your swing down to a tee.

Different shaft weight and benefits of each

Whether your swing speed is lightning fast, slow and easy, or anywhere in between, fitting your shaft to your

requirements is no easy task. Shafts are available in a range of weights from 40g to 135g.

There are no set standards for shafts, but they are divided into 3 categories. Iron shafts are available in three weight categories, lightweight for shafts under 90g, mid-weight for shafts between 90g and 110g, and heavyweight for shafts over 120g. Driver shaft weight can vary from 65g to 130g

Golfweek reported that steel shafts can weigh up to 125g and extra-heavy shafts up to 139g. On the opposite side of the spectrum, graphite shafts generally do not weigh more than 90g.

As a guideline slower speeds below 85 mph will benefit more from lightweight shafts, mid speeds between 95 and 105 mph midweight shafts, and fast speeds over 105mph heavy shafts.

Ultimately the best-suited shaft is the lightest shaft that enables you to exert control over your shot while still getting

a good distance.

Unless you are very experienced, it is highly recommended that you start with a slower swing speed using a lighter shaft and increase the shaft weight as you start swinging the club faster.

Benefits of heavier golf shafts

According to the U.S. Golf Teachers Federation, the biggest benefit to be gained from a heavy shaft is accuracy. This is mainly as a result of the manufacturers reducing the length of the shaft. The shorter shaft may lead to a loss in distance on the heavier shafts.

The heavier shafts often have less torque and thus twists less on impact thereby fighting slices and hooks and providing straighter shots.

Your tempo will benefit from a heavier shaft and produce better contact. The enhanced tempo will enable you to have a few split seconds extra to concentrate on your swing mechanics.

Heavier shafts have lower launch angles to lower the ball trajectory if you hit your shots too high and it reduces the amount of spin generated off the

clubhead.

Benefits of lighter shafts

You will be able to create more clubhead speed

Enables ball to get off the ground quicker and a higher ball flight

Lighter shafts create more spin

Cons of heavier shafts

Some of the negative effects of using heavier shafts are:

A decrease in swing speed and loss in distance

Difficulty in releasing the club

Heavier shafts create less spin resulting in less control around the greens

Cons of lighter shafts

Light shafts can lead to:

Increased club head speed can lead to erratic contact leading to a reduction in ball speed and distance.

Shot dispersion can become erratic in distance and

direction

The trajectory can get higher as light shafts typically have higher launch characteristics

Lightweight or heavyweight shafts for woods and hybrids

The majority of drivers, fairway woods, and hybrids are fitted with graphite shafts as standard these days. This promotes lighter shafts on these clubs than what you will find on irons.

Golf is an individual sport and nearly every golfer has a unique swing. Test results have shown that there is no definitive recommendation whether light or heavy shafts are better. More important than distance is the effect of the shaft on your ball flight and accuracy.

Some golfers with slow swing speeds have achieved more distance, accuracy, and dispersion while some have only benefited in some of the categories.

Heavy shafts tend to produce more distance, accuracy, and lower ball trajectory for a golfer with faster swing speeds.

Will you benefit from a heavy shaft?

The weight of the shaft that you use is not linked to your handicap or overall golfing abilities.

Weight in the shaft is linked to your preference for feel and swing speed.

Fast swing speed will benefit from a heavier shaft to provide more control without losing distance.

Slow swing speed and tempo will benefit most from a lightweight shaft.

Shaft weight in your irons

The weight of the shaft on irons plays a decisive role in your ability to reach the apex that is best suited to your game. Having your clubs and shafts fitted at your nearest golf professional or club fitter will yield the best results.

Steel shafts weights vary between 85g to 130g and although this does not seem like an enormous difference it will make an impact in your shot-making ability.

Furthermore, your strength, swing speed, swing tempo, and club length play an enormous role in determining shaft weight. Faster swing speeds and tempo will require a heavier shaft while lower swing speed and tempo require

lighter shafts.

Another concept to consider is progressive weighting through the set. This means that the shaft gets heavier the shorter the club becomes. Your short irons will have a heavier shaft than your long irons and woods.

Who should use each?

Golfers with slow swing speed and slow tempo will benefit from using lighter shafts in an attempt to maximize their swing speed

The opposite is true for heavier shafts as they are more beneficial for fast swing speeds. This also applies if you have a fast tempo.

Spin and the heavy shaft

The amount of spin generated by a club is affected by a few factors such as loft, club length, flexibility, and the weight of the club including the shaft.

Heavy shafts tend to produce lower spin than a lightweight shaft. This assertion assumes that both are stuck in the sweet spot of the clubface.

The effect of your swing speed

Your swing speed exerts forces on the shaft and makes it bend. The faster your swing speed the more bend you will get in the shaft.

When there is too much bend in the shaft it will affect the quality of the strike, control, and ball trajectory will be affected.

Lightweight steel vs graphite shafts – pros, cons, who should use each?

The decision to choose between graphite and steel has become more difficult as progress has been made with the manufacture of graphite shafts.

Graphite shafts can now be produced in similar weights to the steel shafts and have more torque than steel enabling you to square the clubface more efficiently at impact. The price point of graphite shafts is still higher than steel.

Steel Shafts Pros

Steel shafts are stronger, more durable, and less expensive
Manufactured from carbon steel or occasionally stainless steel

Stepped steel and rifle steel constructions
Steel produces less torque

Offer more control and place greater emphasis on accuracy than distance

Cons

Steel shafts do require a faster swing speed to generate distance

Recommended player

Steel shafts are recommended for players who require more control than the distance

Graphite Shafts Pros

Lighter than steel and easier to produce in a variety of flex and colors
Generates greater swing speed for more power Graphite reduces the weight of your club

Better at dampening vibrations

Cons

It sacrifices control due to the flex generated during the

swing

More difficult to get a consistent feel and stiffness in a set of graphite shafted irons
More expensive and less durable than steel

Require more care and protection while in the bag to prevent scratches

Recommended player

Can be used by everyone including lady golfers and seniors who lack swing speed

Shafts used by professional golfers

The shafts in use by professional golfers vary depending on their preferences for the feel and feedback received via the shaft.

As most professional golfers have high swing speeds, most of them use an extra-stiff shaft on their drivers and other clubs

The trend in the professional ranks has been to move to lighter shafts and some professionals use shafts that are as light as 60g. This is still linked to personal preference.

Different shaft weight in irons

Iron shafts are available in a variety of weights and some manufacturers offer a variety of weights in their irons. This ensures that your shorter clubs have heavier shafts for more control end consistency even if you lose some of the clubhead speed.

Longer irons require slightly lighter shafts to increase your swing speed and to increase the launch angle thus getting the ball flight to be higher.

Driver shaft weight vs shaft weight for other woods

Most stock shafts from manufacturers use the same weight of shaft in fairway woods as their driver models.

Fairway woods have shafts that are between 1 and 3 inches shorter than your driver shaft. To create a consistent feeling between the clubs it is highly recommended that your fairway wood shafts should be slightly (5 to 15 grams) heavier than your driver shaft.

Shafts that are too heavy

If your golf shaft is too heavy you might experience:

Loss of quality of strike Lower clubhead speed Hit your golf ball too low

A reduced spin resulting in low ball trajectory of woods Loss in accuracy and consistency

Shafts that are too light

On the other hand, if your golf shaft is too light you might see the following:

Too high resulting in a loss of distance
Loss of quality of strike
Loss of feeling of the club throughout your swing Head will feel too heavy for the shaft

Types of flex and how they affect your golf

All shafts flex under the stress exerted by the golf swing and it affects your distance and direction. This varies depending on the strength and swing speed of every golfer.

The flex of a shaft is the rating of the ability to bend during the golf swing and plays is a key factor in hitting straight shots travel at the optimal trajectory. Less flex in the shaft will produce better quality shots and provide more control.

Shaft flex is a key factor and using the correct flex is of the utmost importance.

The is no standard flex rating and it may vary between the various manufacturers.

Low swing speeds want to produce more flex while fast swing speeds require stiff to extra-stiff shafts. Flex ratings are Ladies(L), Amateur(A), Senior(S), Regular(R), Stiff(S), and Extra Stiff (X).

Other factors that prevent you from performing optimally

Other factors play a role in the efficiency of a shaft other than the weight and the flex.

Torque is the twisting movement of the shaft during the golf swing providing a rating about the 'twisting' characteristics of the shaft measured in degrees. The more the shaft twists, the higher the rating, and more torque will create a softer feel.

The higher the torque of the shaft, the higher the trajectory will be.

Kick-point or flex-point is a small but measurable effect at the point where the shaft bends and affects the trajectory of the shot. A high kick-point creates a low shot trajectory and a low kick-point a high shot trajectory as the shaft tip whips the clubhead through.

Watch this video on YouTube for a demonstration of how different weights impact various players.

Final thoughts

Shafts play a crucial role in your ability to hit long and straight shots.

There is a range of factors in the shaft that have a significant impact on how your shaft operates such as the weight, flex, torque, kick point to name a few.

It is not only the internal factors that affect the shaft performance but external factors such as your swing speed and swing tempo exerting forces onto the shaft.

To maximize the efficiency of the shaft a fitting by a professional will provide the ultimate benefit. Get the best shaft out there to suit your physical attributes and swing.

Tex

t