

Choosing a Golf Trolley

By Craig Straw – Golf Trolley Repairer

I repair hundreds of electric golf trolleys every year and it amazes me how many people simply do not bother to do any research on the type of trolley which is most suitable for them, or which trolley is likely to be the most reliable!

The main points to bear in mind when choosing an electric golf trolley, in my opinion, are these:

Frame strength and motor; Reliability; Warranty/Service; Suitability; Battery size; Features/Accessories

Frame and Motor

There are various designs for the frames on electric golf trolleys, all designed to be folded compactly to fit in a car boot. Designs vary, but all the stronger trolleys utilise a chassis between the front and rear wheels which gives added strength.

I would advise anyone to avoid trolleys with a single centre screw-down clamp as this joint is simply not strong enough for regular use. In my experience, this joint collapses after a few months, the frame spars buckle and the frame needs to be replaced. This is because the whole weight of the



Centre clamp - no chassis



Braced Chassis

golf bag falls on this joint and the front and rear wheels 'spread' as there is no chassis supporting them. Whilst this type of frame is suitable for the occasional 9 holes, or with a very light bag, it is not suitable for the regular golfer.

There are several trolleys which you are able to break into several pieces for greater compactness. These can be excellent if you have a very small car, but they take a lot longer to put together and take apart and the mechanism can become loose if not properly maintained. In my experience, the more pieces to take apart, the greater the wear and tear!

The most popular motor size is around 180watts. The newer **high-efficiency** motors are slightly smaller (150watts) but produce more power for less battery drain due to the design of the motor. Anything less than 150 watts is unlikely to cope with hilly courses whilst greater than 200watts can drain your battery very quickly. Look for a long motor Warranty as motors (particularly the carbon brushes) can wear out quite quickly.

Reliability

Most golfers choose an electric trolley because they no longer want to carry or pull up to 20kgs of golf equipment round a golf course! An electric trolley can help your game by reducing the tiredness, especially at the end of a round, and at the same time allows you to carry all your 'kit' including waterproofs, water, accessories etc.

It almost goes without saying that this is of little benefit if the trolley breaks down and you end up having to pull or push the trolley round anyway, so reliability is a key issue. Most reputable manufacturers produce good quality trolleys which are designed to last. As a 'rule of thumb' if the manufacturer does not have a website and clear access to spare parts and service, avoid them. Typically these are the 'Ebay' type trader who simply buys a load of cheap trolleys from China and dumps them on an auction site: when the trolley breaks down they are nowhere to be found when you need to get it repaired – and if you take it to a repairer they will have great difficulty in sourcing

the spare parts, so it is a case of 'buyer beware'. I am constantly given trolleys to mend only to find that the spare parts needed are not available. The bargain trolley that breaks down irreparably after 6 months is not quite such a bargain!

Also look at how long the manufacturer has been established – the longer the better. Not only does it show that they are committed to their business, but that they are likely to have developed a full Service department and that they have a good reputation among their existing customers.

It is also worthwhile looking up independent reviews of the trolleys. Users tend to be very critical and these reviews will give a good flavour of the trolley's benefits and drawbacks. Does the supplier have a web site? Investment in a good web site does show some measure of commitment on the part of the supplier and should also list spare parts and Service details.

Price is not the only criterion. Bear in mind that when you purchase an electric trolley from a retail outlet, a fair proportion of the cost is taken up by the retailer's margin. Trolleys purchased on the Internet can offer excellent value, but ensure that you are dealing with a reliable, established supplier

Warranty

Sadly, electric trolleys can break down. They are used in all kinds of weather, over all kinds of terrain and rarely, if ever, are they cleaned and serviced! They spend most of their life either in a damp car boot or a cold garage, rarely oiled or adjusted and almost never have the mud washed off them.

The length of the Warranty is often an indication by the manufacturer of how reliable they expect their trolley to be. Service costs them money, and Warranty service costs even more so a trolley with a long Warranty is almost certain to be well made. Not only is it likely to be more reliable, you have the benefit of knowing that if anything does go wrong, the repair cost is covered. Replacing an electronic controller or motor/gearbox can cost up to £100 so if the part is covered it can give you a big saving.

Also read the Warranty details carefully. Phrases such as 'Manufacturers Warranty' should be treated circumspectly – it usually means that you have to return the trolley to the Manufacturer for repair. Do you really want to send your trolley back to the Far East? Also be aware of 'return to base' Warranties. This often means that you have to pay all costs to get the trolley back for repair and this cost can be greater than the cost of repairs. All reputable suppliers either have local repairers or they will arrange to collect and repair your trolley at their cost. Again, read the small print!

Finally, bear in mind that no trolley can be repaired if there are no spare parts. Have a look at the supplier's web site – are spare parts easily available? Don't simply accept the statement of 'full stock of spare parts' in the advert – you will be surprised how these spare parts are suddenly 'out of stock' when you need them!

Suitability

Are you buying the right kind of trolley for your game? If you generally carry a lot of gear, go for a good, sturdy trolley. If you have difficulty lifting heavy loads, go for a lightweight trolley with a detachable battery. Are you very tall or very short? Look at the handle height and make sure it will be comfortable to use. Will the trolley freewheel? Being able to freewheel the trolley will save you battery power when going downhill, and also, should the trolley/battery fail, you can still push or pull your trolley to the clubhouse. If the trolley has no freewheel, you will have to carry it and your clubs to the 18th! Does the trolley come with any accessories? Most useful accessories include a fully zipped trolley bag (which helps keep mud and dirt out of your boot), scorecard holders, umbrella holders and drinks holders. They all make golfing more enjoyable so check you can get them if you need them.

Battery size.

Modern golf trolleys tend to have larger motors. The minimum suitable size of golf battery is 20AH (amp hours). This will allow you to play 18 holes on a moderately hilly course. Any less than this and the battery will be under considerable strain and may fail quickly. 18AH batteries are generally suitable for 9 holes.

Larger capacity batteries (26-28AH) are more suitable for the regular golfer who plays several times a week, particularly if it is a hilly course.

Very large capacity batteries (36AH) are designed for 36 hole use. Only buy this size if you regularly play 36 holes in one day. If you do not use the battery to its full capacity, the battery can develop a 'memory effect' and you will quickly lose the benefit of the higher capacity. In my opinion, if you play 2 rounds in a day, you are better having 2 x 20AH batteries and alternating their use each round. That way, you always have a battery ready for use and each battery will last longer.

Finally, check the Warranty on the battery. If it is less than 12 months it is likely to be of poor quality. Replacement batteries are expensive and buying a new battery every 6 months can make your golf very costly.

Features

Electric Golf trolleys are becoming more sophisticated. Basic trolleys have a simple variable speed control and an on-off switch and tend to be very reliable.

The next level of trolleys have 'Distance Controls' which allow the trolley to be sent a fixed distance, usually 10, 20 and 30 yards on its own. This is a useful feature if you want to send your trolley on to the next tee whilst you putt out, or if the next tee is off to one side as you approach the green. Beware that a trolley running on its own can tip over so look for one fitted with a rear (stabiliser) wheel which prevents this. This type of trolley also usually offers 'Cruise Control' whereby the last speed setting is memorised and with the push of a button, your trolley will resume the same speed when you set off which means that you do not have to constantly adjust the speed control.

The newer trolleys have very sophisticated electronics which allow you to set the Distance, and will also measure distance travelled. This is particularly useful for measuring your drive and in calculating the distance left to the green. Combined with this is often a feedback system which keeps your trolley at a constant speed, especially uphill and exactly matches your walking pace.

Having said that, the more sophisticated, the more chance there is for it to go wrong and the more costly to repair, so a long Warranty is essential!

The final type of trolley is the full Remote Control. These trolleys have a hand-held transmitter which allows the trolley to be controlled from up to 40 yards away. Because these trolleys have a motor for each wheel, they can easily turn left or right and even reverse! Usually, they can also be controlled manually like other trolleys, but they do demand more concentration when using the hand-held control. They can be a lot of fun to use but the drawback is that the twin motors mean that they need a higher capacity battery and the whole unit is heavier than a standard trolley.

I hope you find this guide useful. In my experience always buy a good quality trolley from a reputable manufacturer, get as long a Warranty as possible and buy a trolley to suit your game. That way, your golf will be more enjoyable and you will knock shots off your handicap. Enjoy your golf!

Craig Straw is an Independent golf trolley repairer and is the owner of Golf Trolley Services. If you have a problem trolley, Craig can be contacted on 07811 382852.