The sand used in bunkers has drastic implications on how bunkers play. But which physical properties of sand might we manipulate to improve playability, reduce maintenance and extend the life of bunkers — all worthwhile objectives. Liners are intended to improve playability, reduce maintenance and increase life span for bunkers. It is important to understand which liner is necessary at all, as well as which liner provides what benefits in order to make the best decision for your course. Unfortunately, deciding which liner to use, or whether a liner is necessary at all, is not always straightforward.

The sand used in bunkers is often called sandstone, but that is a misnomer. Some common sand grains are quartz and flint, which are larger and more angular than most sand grains. This larger grain size can lead to issues with longer crumbling time. This means the sand tends to remain loose longer, which can lead to increased maintenance as the sand has to be replaced more frequently. Since the sand is also larger, it can also lead to issues with higher sand temperature, which is detrimental to grass growth.

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There are many different types of sand that can be used in bunkers, and each has its own unique properties. Some common types of sand include quartz, feldspar, and mica. These types of sand have different characteristics that can impact bunkers. For example, quartz has a high density, which makes it heavier and more likely to settle. Feldspar is a lighter sand that is more likely to settle quickly, but it is also more prone to cracking. Mica is a middle ground between quartz and feldspar, with properties that are similar to both.

There are also different grades of sand that can be used in bunkers. These grades are based on the size of the sand grains, with finer grades having smaller grains and coarser grades having larger grains. Fine grades are more likely to settle quickly, but they can also be more prone to cracking. Coarse grades are more likely to remain loose and provide better playability, but they may also require more maintenance. It is important to consider the grade of sand that is used in bunkers to ensure the best possible playability and maintenance.

Another factor to consider when choosing sand for bunkers is the source of the sand. Some sources, such as from the ocean, may contain impurities that can affect the quality of the sand. It is important to research the source of the sand to ensure it is clean and free of any contaminants.

Overall, it is important to choose the right type and grade of sand for bunkers to ensure the best possible playability, maintenance, and life span. It is also important to consider the source of the sand to ensure it is clean and free of contaminants. By carefully selecting the sand used in bunkers, golf course superintendents can improve the overall quality of their bunkers and provide a better experience for their golfers.