

CHANGES IN THE RULES OF GOLF

Rule 4.1a(2) Use or Repair of Club Damaged During Round

“Damaged during a round” means when the club’s performance characteristics are changed because of **any** act which now includes damage through throwing or abusing a club. In such circumstances, a player may continue to make strokes with the damaged club or have the club repaired by restoring it as nearly as possible to its condition before the damaged happened. The club may not be replaced by another one.

Rule 4.2c, Rule 7.3 and Rule 16.4 Lifting Ball

A player will be allowed to mark and lift the ball and proceed under the Rule without needing first to announce this intention to another person or to give that person a chance to observe the process.

Rule 4.3a(1) Distance Information

Distance measuring devices are allowed unless a local rule is in place banning such devices. This is the opposite of the old rule.

Rule 4.3a(4) Audio and Video

Listening to audio or watching videos unrelated to the competition being played (such as a news report or background music) is now allowed as long as this is done with consideration to other players, not to eliminate distractions or to help with swing tempo or to help the player with choosing a club or how to play during the round.

Rule 5.3 Starting and Ending Round

A general penalty of two strokes will now apply if a player starts his round no more than five minutes from the time set by the Committee either later **or before** this time. A starting time is treated as an exact time. For example, 9:00 am means 9:00:00 not any time until 9:01 am. Of course, this refers to the first player on the tee with his fellow competitors also present and ready to play.

Rule 5.6b Prompt Pace of Play

The rule recommends that the player make the stroke in no more than 40 seconds after he is able to play without interference or distraction. The rule also encourages “ready golf” both in match play (by agreement) or in stroke play (unless the player whose ball is farthest away from the hole is ready and able to play and indicates that he wants to play first).

Rule 6.4b(1) Order of Play – Stroke Play

The ‘honour’ on the tee is determined by Gross Score – previously was net score in stableford and bogey competitions.

Rule 6.4b(2) Order of Play – Stroke Play

Encourages players to play ready golf and play out of turn. This is also available for match play rounds under the Exception to Rule 6.4a(2).

Rule 7.4 Ball accidentally Moved During Search

There is no penalty if the player’s ball is accidentally moved by anyone while trying to find or identify it. If this happens, the ball must be replaced on its original spot.

Rule 8.1c Avoiding Penalty by Restoring Conditions

If a player has improved the conditions by moving, bending or breaking an object (for example by moving a boundary stake) there is no penalty if, before making the next stroke, the player restores the original condition.

Rule 9.3 Ball moved by Natural Forces

If natural forces (such as wind) cause a player's ball at rest to move, then the ball must be played from its new spot. However, a ball on putting green must be replaced if it moves **after** having already been lifted and replaced no matter what caused it to move.

Rule 10.1a Fairly Striking the Ball

If the player's club accidentally hits the ball more than once, there has been only one stroke and there is no penalty.

Rule 10.2b(2) Pointing out Line of Play for Ball on Putting Green

It is now possible for the player or his caddie to touch the putting green with a hand, foot or anything he is holding without penalty **but** must not improve the conditions in so doing.

Rule 10.2b(4) Restriction on Caddie Standing Behind Player

The general penalty of two strokes will be applied if a player begins taking a stance and the player's caddie is deliberately standing in a location on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball even though the player realises, and he backs away. The exception is only if this happens on the putting green where the player can back away from the stance and does not begin to take the stance again until after the caddie has moved out of that location.

Rule 11.1a Ball in Motion Accidentally Hits Any Person or Outside Influence

If a player's ball in motion accidentally hits any person there is no penalty even if the ball hits the player, the opponent or any other player or any of their caddies or equipment.

Rule 12.2a Removing Loose Impediments in Bunker

Before playing a ball in a bunker, a player may remove loose impediments and moveable obstructions.

Rule 13.1c(2) Repair of Damage on Putting Green

A player may repair ball marks, shoe damage including spike marks and scrapes or indentations caused by equipment or flagstick as well as embedded objects such as a stone, acorn or tee). But this does not include aeration holes, natural wear of the hole and natural surface imperfections such as weeds or areas of bare, diseased or uneven growth.

Rule 13.1d(1) No Penalty for Accidentally Causing a Ball to Move

Introduced as a local rule in 2017, this provision which allows no penalty if a ball or ball marker is accidentally moved on the putting green is now a Rule in itself.

Rule 13.2a(1) Leaving Flagstick in Hole

The player must decide before making the stroke whether he wants the flagstick left in the hole, have it attended and removed, or by have a removed flagstick put back in the hole. There is no penalty if the ball in motion hits the flagstick left in the hole.

Rule 14.2c Spot Where Ball is replaced

In replacing a ball where the original spot is not known it must be placed at the estimated spot.

Rule 14.3a Original Ball or Another Ball May be Used

A player may use any ball each time he drops or places a ball in taking relief under a Rule.

Rule 14.3b(2) Ball Must be Dropped in Right Way

The ball must be dropped straight down from a location at knee height.

Rule 14.3c Ball Dropped in Right Way Must Come to Rest in Relief Area

If a dropped ball comes to rest outside the *relief area* it must be re-dropped or placed after second drop. Please refer to the definition of a *relief area* as this is not two club lengths.

Rule 15.1 Loose Impediments

The exception under this Rule restricts the player from removing a loose impediment where a ball must be replaced in circumstances when such a loose impediment, if moved when the ball was at rest, would have been likely to have caused the ball to move.

Rule 16.3 Embedded Ball

Relief is now possible everywhere in the general area unless the Committee puts in place a local rule allowing relief only for a ball embedded in an area cut to fairway height or less.

Rule 17.1b Player May Play Ball as it Lies in Penalty Area

There are no restrictions for playing a ball in a penalty area (marked red or yellow) and i.e. player may remove loose impediments and take practice swings.

Rule 17.1d Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

Unless the *Committee* adopts a Local Rule allowing lateral relief on the opposite side of a red penalty area at an equal distance from the hole, relief for a ball in a red penalty area no longer allows for this option.

Rule 18.2(a)1 When Ball is Lost

A ball is lost if not found in three minutes after the player or his caddie begins to search for it.

Rule 19.3 Unplayable Ball in Bunker

As an extra relief option when a player's ball is in a bunker, for a total of two penalty strokes, the player may take back-on-the-line relief outside the bunker.

Definition of Club Length

The length of the longest club the player has during the round other than a putter – so normally a driver. Should a player choose a 7-iron, for example, to measure a club length and drops a ball outside the length of a 7-iron but within the length of his driver then the dropped ball is deemed to have dropped correctly and is in play.

Relief Area

Each relief Rule requires the player to use a specific relief area whose size and location are based on three factors: (a) Reference Point – the point from which the relief area is measured; (b) Size – one or two club lengths from the reference point depending on Rule being applied; and (c) Limitation – the location of the relief area may be limited in one or more ways e.g. not nearer the hole than the reference point.