

Golf's New Rules: Major Changes

Dear Members,

Please see the following notice concerning the changes to the 2019 Rules of Golf. There have been significant changes to the 'Rules of Golf' in 2019 with the overall purpose of making the game play faster and to "simplify" the rules. The changes have created a higher standard for player integrity with an even higher burden of the player "policing" himself.

The purpose of this notice is to make you aware of the changes and that they will be in place for our club events. We ask that you familiarize yourself with the changes prior to club events to insure that we avoid situations where misunderstandings and arguments occur. Of course in your daily games, our caddies will be aware of the rules but ultimately, if all players in the group agree, and as long as they don't interfere with our basic club rules, you may continue to play your standard games.

Best Regards,

Tim Shaver
Club Manager



The following are the main changes to the Rules of Golf effective January 1, 2019 that are expected to have the most impact on the game and to be of most interest to golfers. The items covered on this page

are organized into categories including Player Behavior, When to Play, Ball at Rest, Ball in Motion, Taking Relief, Areas of the Course, Equipment and laying a Ball. Within each individual item, you will find the main reasons for the change.

Player Behavior

Expected Standards of Player Conduct



Rule 1.2a consolidates the expected standards of player conduct:

- It declares that players are expected to play in the spirit of the game by acting with integrity, showing consideration to others and taking good care of the course.
- It unequivocally states the Committee's authority to disqualify a player for any serious misconduct that is contrary to the spirit of the game.
- In place of the unclear previous concept of "breach of etiquette", it uses the more direct and stronger phrases "misconduct" and "serious misconduct."

Reasons for Change:

Using Rule 1.2a to explain playing in the spirit of the game helps in:

- Giving more prominence to the expectation that all players act with integrity, show consideration to others and take good care of the course,
- And setting expectations so that players are on notice that serious misconduct in failing to meet those expectations could lead to disqualification.

Elimination of the Requirement to Announce the Player's Intent to Lift a Ball



- A player is 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.
- But the player still gets a one-stroke penalty if he or she marked and lifted the ball without good reason to do so under that Rule.

Reasonable Judgment in Estimating and Measuring



New Rule: Decision 34-3/10, a decision that was introduced in April 2017, is now incorporated into the Rules as Rule 1.3b(2) so that when the player estimates or measures a spot, point, line, area or other location, his or her reasonable judgment is accepted:

- If the player did all that could be reasonably expected under the circumstances to make a prompt and accurate estimation or measurement.
- This means that the player's reasonable judgment is upheld even if later shown to be wrong by other information (such as video technology).

Reasons for Change:

There are many times when the Rules require a player to estimate or measure a spot, point, line, area or other location, such as when the player:

- Uses a ball-marker to mark a ball's spot and then replace the ball, or
- Estimates the spot where the previous stroke was made when playing again under penalty of stroke and distance or when a stroke has been cancelled, or
- Needs to find a reference point or line for taking relief (such as the nearest point of complete relief or the line when taking unplayable ball relief), or to determine the extent of a relief area (such as measuring a fixed distance from a reference point).
- Estimates the location of his or her knee when dropping a ball.

So long as the player did all that could be reasonably expected under the circumstances, the player gets no penalty for small inaccuracies, even if an advantage is gained.

When to Play During a Round

Encouraging Prompt Pace of Play



New Rule: Rule 5.6 encourages prompt pace of play by recommending that:

- Players should recognize that their pace of play affects others and they should play promptly throughout the round (such as by preparing in advance for each stroke and moving promptly between strokes and in going to the next tee),
- A player should make a stroke in no more than 40 seconds (and usually in less time) after the player is able to play without interference or distraction, and
- Committees should adopt a Pace of Play Policy (rather than only say they may do so).

* In addition, Rule 6.4 expressly allows playing out of turn in match play by agreement and for stroke play, affirmatively allows and encourages players to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way to save time or for convenience (also known as “ready golf”).

Ball at Rest

Ball Moved During Search



- The player gets no penalty for causing it to move, and
- The ball is always replaced; if the exact spot is not known, the player will replace the ball on the estimated original spot (including on, under or against any attached natural or man-made objects which the ball had been at rest under or against).

No Penalty for Moving Ball on the Putting Green



New Rule: Under Rule 1.3d, there is no longer a penalty if a player (or opponent) accidentally causes the player's ball to move on the putting green.

Standard for Deciding Why a Ball Moved



New Rule: Under Rule 9.2, the “known or virtually certain” standard (meaning at least 95% likely) applies to all questions of fact about why a ball at rest moved:

- A player, opponent or outside influence is found to have caused the ball to move if the player, opponent or outside influence was known or virtually certain to have caused it to move; otherwise it is assumed that natural forces caused it to move.

Replacing Ball When Original Spot is Not Known



New Rule: Under Rule 14.2c:

- The ball is always placed on a spot rather than dropped.
- If the exact original spot is not known, the player is required to replace the ball on its estimated spot (including on, under or against any attached natural objects that the ball had been at rest on, under or against).

Ball in Motion

Ball in Motion Accidentally Deflected



New Rule: Under Rule 11.1, for all accidental deflections, including when the ball hits the player or opponent or their equipment or caddies:

- There is no penalty and the ball is played as it lies (with limited exceptions).
- To address any concern that a player might deliberately position equipment to act as a backstop and potentially deflect his or her ball, there is a penalty if the ball hits equipment that was positioned for that purpose (Rule 11.2a).

Taking Relief

Measuring the Size of the Relief Area Where a Ball Must Be Dropped and Played



New Rule: Players continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure is changed in several ways as detailed in Rule 14.3:

- The focus of the dropping procedure is on a specific “relief area” set by the Rule under which relief is being taken and is either one or two club-lengths from a reference point (and may have certain other limitations).
- The relief area is a fixed size for each player and is pre-determined based on the clubs the player has selected for play.

New Procedure for Dropping a Ball



New Rule: Players continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure is changed in several ways as detailed in Rule 14.3:

- How a ball may be dropped is simplified; the only requirement is that the ball be let go from knee height so that it falls through the air and does not touch any part of the player’s body or equipment before it hits the ground.

Where a Dropped Ball Must Come to Rest



New Rule: Players continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure is changed in several ways as detailed in Rule 14.3:

- The ball must be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area; and there is no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground but before coming to rest in the relief area.
- If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it is dropped a second time; if it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it is placed where it first touched the ground.
- If the placed ball does not come to rest on that spot after two attempts, the player will then place the ball on the nearest spot (not nearer the hole) where it will come to rest.

Fixed Distances to be Used for Measuring



New Rule: A club-length is defined as the length of the longest club in the player's bag, except that this cannot be his or her putter.

- The relief area for dropping a ball is a fixed size of either one or two club-lengths depending on which relief Rule is being used.
- The relief area is a fixed size for each player and is pre-determined based on the clubs the player has selected for play.

Time For Search Before Ball is Lost



New Rule: Under Rule 18.2, the time for a ball search (before the ball becomes lost) has been reduced from 5 minutes to 3 minutes.

Substitution of Ball Always Allowed When Taking Relief



New Rule: Under Rule 14.3, when taking relief, the player is always allowed the choice to substitute a ball or to use the original ball, including when taking penalty relief and when taking free relief (Rules 15-19).

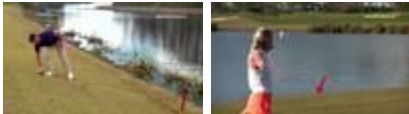
Relief for an Embedded Ball



New Rule: The previous default position in the Rules is reversed:

- Rule 16.3 allows relief for a ball embedded anywhere in the “general area” (that is, the area previously known as “through the green”), except when embedded in sand.
- But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule restricting relief to a ball embedded in those parts of the general area cut to fairway height or less.
- In taking relief, the player drops the original ball or a substituted ball within one club-length of (but not nearer the hole than) the spot right behind where the ball was embedded.

Procedure for Taking Lateral & Back-on-the-Line Relief



New Rule: Players continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure is changed in several ways as detailed in Rule 14.3:

- The focus of the dropping procedure is on a specific “relief area” set by the Rule under which relief is being taken and is either one or two club-lengths from a reference point (and may have certain other limitations).
- The ball needs only to be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area; and there is no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground but before coming to rest in the relief area.
- If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it is dropped a second time; if it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it is placed where it first touched the ground.
- If the placed ball does not come to rest on that spot after two attempts, the player will then place the ball on the nearest spot (not nearer the hole) where it will come to rest.

Areas of the Course

When to Replace a Ball That Moves on the Putting Green



New Rule: Rule 13.1d revises the procedure for when a ball on the putting green is moved by wind, water or other natural forces, so that it must sometimes be replaced and sometimes be played from its new spot:

- If the ball had been lifted and replaced on its original spot before it moved, the ball must always be replaced on its original spot, regardless of what caused it to move.

- The ball must be played from its new spot only if the ball had not been lifted and replaced before it moved.

Repairing Damage on the Putting Green



New Rule: Rule 13.1c(2) allows repair of almost any damage on the green:

- “Damage on the putting green” is defined to include all types of damage (such as ball-marks, shoe damage, indentations from a club or flagstick, animal damage, etc.), except aeration holes, natural surface imperfections or natural wear of the hole.

Touching Line of Play on a Putting Green



New Rule: The previous prohibition of touching the line of play on the putting green is eliminated:

- There is no longer a penalty for merely touching the line of play on the putting green (the term “line of play” applies everywhere on the course including the putting green, and the term “line of putt” is no longer used).
- But the player is still subject to the prohibition on improving his or her line of play on the putting green (see Rule 8.1a, as limited by 8.1b).

Ball Played From Green Hits Unattended Flagstick in Hole



New Rule: Under Rule 13.2a(2):

- There is no longer a penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits a flagstick left in the hole.
- Players are not required to putt with the flagstick in the hole; rather, they continue to have the choice to have it removed (which includes having someone attend the flagstick and remove it after the ball is played).

Touching Loose Impediments or Ground in a Penalty Area



New Rule: Under Rule 17:

- There are no longer any special restrictions when a ball is in a “penalty area” (the expanded designation for the area that includes what were previously called water hazards).

- A player is allowed to touch or move loose impediments and touch the ground with hand or club (such as grounding the club right behind the ball) for any reason, subject only to the prohibition on improving conditions for the stroke (see Rule 8.1a).

Moving or Touching Loose Impediments or Touching Sand in a Bunker



New Rule: Under Rules 12.2a and 12.2b, the player is allowed to touch or move loose impediments in a bunker and is generally allowed to touch the sand with a hand or club; but a limited prohibition continues so that the player must not:

- Deliberately touch the sand in a bunker with a hand, club, rake or other object to test the condition of the sand to learn information for the stroke, or
- Touch the sand in a bunker with a club in making a practice swing, in grounding the club right in front of or behind the ball, or in making the backswing for a stroke.

Reasons for Change:

- Touching the sand with the club right in front of or behind the ball or in the backswing for the stroke continues to be prohibited to make sure the player does nothing to reduce the challenge of playing from the sand; these prohibitions are already well known and followed by almost all players.

Unplayable Ball in Bunker



New Rule: The player has an extra option allowing relief outside the bunker using the back-on-the-line procedure, but for a total of two penalty strokes (Rule 19.3b).

Equipment

Use of Clubs Damaged During Round



New Rule: Under Rule 4.1:

- A player is allowed to keep using and/or to repair any club damaged during the round, no matter what the damage and even if the player damaged it in anger.

- A player is not allowed to replace a damaged club, except when it is damaged during the round by an outside influence or natural forces, or by someone other than the player or his or her caddie.

Use of Distance-Measuring Devices



New Rule: The previous default position in the Rules is reversed:

- Rule 4.3 now allows players to use DMDs to measure distance.
- But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting such use of DMDs.

Playing a Ball

Caddie Standing Behind a Player to Help Line the Player Up



New Rule: Under Rule 10.2b(4):

- The previous prohibition is extended so that, once the player begins taking a stance for the stroke, and until the stroke is made, the player's caddie must not deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball for any reason.
- There is no penalty if the caddie accidentally stands on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball, rather than in trying to help in lining up.