

The Rules of Golf – Changes for 2019

Following the Rules Modernization Initiative undertaken by the R&A, the USGA and other interested parties, the Rules of Golf have been updated and a new Pocket edition entitled the 'Player's Edition' has been published for the first time.

We have copies of the Player's Edition available from the General Office, the Clubhouse and Pro Shop; these are free of charge so please call in for a copy.

In order to simplify things and draw attention to the main differences we have written the following Notes on some of the more significant changes. These are merely a summary, please take some time to read the Rules in full to give you an all-round appreciation of the updates made to the Rules as a whole.

The Most Important Changes

There are now deemed to be FIVE areas of the Course – the **General Area** is the entire course with the exception of – the **Teeing Area** and **Putting Green** of the hole being played; **Penalty Areas** and **Bunkers**.

1. The **search** time for a ball reduces to **three minutes** (Rule 18).
2. If a ball is moved during the search there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced (Rule 7).
3. A **ball embedded in its own pitch-mark** anywhere in the General Area (including the rough) may be lifted, cleaned and dropped (Rule 16).
4. When **dropping the ball**; you are permitted to use your longest club but NOT your putter, to measure relief.
5. **Dropping must be from KNEE high**. The ball must strike the ground first and must remain within the 'relief area'. If it is **dropped incorrectly** or rolls outside the relief area, there is no penalty and the ball is simply **re-dropped** (Rule 14).
6. If the ball comes to **rest on the wrong green** it must be dropped off the green and you are not permitted to stand on the wrong green, thus you must drop away from the apron of the green (Rule 13).
7. If a player's ball accidentally **hits himself** or his equipment, there is **no penalty** and the ball is played as it lies, (Rule 11).
8. There is no penalty for a **double hit**, it counts as one shot (Rule 10).
9. In a **bunker**, you are not permitted to test the surface by smoothing the line of play, grounding the club behind the ball or touching the sand with your practice swing – these all count as a one shot penalty. However, you are allowed to smooth marks NOT in the line of play and to lean on the club (Rule 12).
10. **Loose impediments**, such as stones, twigs, leaves and fir cones can be **removed without penalty** from Bunkers and Penalty Areas. However, there is still a penalty if you cause the ball to move while removing them (Rule 15).
11. **Unplayable ball in a bunker** – there were three options available to you, there is now a fourth – you can **drop outside, behind the bunker** under a penalty of TWO shots (Rule 19).

12. **Water Hazards** are now called **Penalty Areas** and do not need to contain water, thus allowing the committee to designate other areas as Penalty Areas to speed up play (Rule 17).
13. You are now **permitted to ground your club** in a Penalty Area (Rule 17).
14. If a **ball is moving on the green** after it has been marked and replaced (e.g. due to windy conditions) there is **no penalty** and the ball must be replaced.
15. Accidentally **moving the ball** on the green does not incur a penalty, e.g. when taking a practice swing too close to the ball; you must replace the ball (Rule 13).
16. You are **allowed to repair damage** on the green, e.g. caused by spike marks, stones etc. whether or not your ball lies on the green (Rule 13.1c).
17. You are **not allowed** to line up your shot by **laying a club** on the ground (Rule 10).
18. **Caddies are not allowed** to line up their player by **standing behind** them (Rule 10).
19. The ball **can hit the flagstick** without penalty; therefore you can putt with the flagstick left in (Rule 13).
20. A **ball wedged** against the flagstick in the hole is deemed to have been holed if **PART of the ball** is below the surface of the green (Rule 13).