

Principal Changes Introduced in the 2023 Rules of Golf

Specific Rules

Rule 1.3c(4) Applying Penalties to Multiple Breaches of the Rules

The Rule has been amended so that determining whether breaches are related or unrelated is no longer part of its application, meaning that there will be fewer instances where multiple penalties will be applied.

Rule 3.3b(4) Player Not Responsible for Showing Handicap on Scorecard or Adding Up Scores

The Rule has been amended so that a player is no longer required to show their handicap on their scorecard. The Committee is responsible for calculating the player's handicap strokes for the competition and using that to calculate the player's net score.

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

The Rule has been amended to allow a player to replace a damaged club, provided the club has not been damaged through abuse.

Rule 6.3b(3) Substitution of Another Ball While Playing a Hole

The penalty for playing an incorrectly substituted ball has been reduced from the general penalty to one penalty stroke.

Rule 9.3 Ball Moved by Natural Forces

New Exception 2 provides that a ball must be replaced if it moves to another area of the course after being dropped, placed or replaced. This also applies if the ball comes to rest out of bounds.

Rule 10.2b Other Help

Rule 10.2b has been rewritten for clarity and to incorporate the key principles of the Clarifications issued in April 2019 to support the 2019 Rule.

Rules 10.2b(1) and (2) have been amended to provide that neither the caddie nor any other person is allowed to set an object down to help the player with the line of play or other directional information (such as when the player cannot see the flagstick), and the player cannot avoid penalty by having the object removed before the stroke is made.

Rule 11.1b Ball in Motion Accidentally Hits Person or Outside Influence: Place from Where Ball Must Be Played

Rule 11.1b has been rewritten for clarity.

Rule 11.1b(2) has been amended to provide that if a ball played from the putting green hits an insect, the player or the club used to make the stroke, the ball is played as it lies – the stroke is not replayed.

Rule 21.1c Penalties in Stableford

The Rule is amended to provide that penalties in relation to clubs, time of starting and unreasonable delay will now be applied to the hole in the same way as regular stroke play. The same amendment is made to Rule 21.3c (Penalties in Par/Bogey).

Rule 25 Modifications for Players with Disabilities

The introduction of new Rule 25 means that the modifications provided in the Rule apply to all competitions, including all forms of play.

General Changes

Back-on-the-Line Relief Procedure

The back-on-the-line relief procedure is amended to provide that the player is required to drop on the line. The spot on the line where the ball first touches the ground when dropped creates a relief area that is one club-length in any direction from that point. This amendment is reflected in changes to Rules 14.3b(3), 16.1c(2), 17.1d(2), 19.2b and 19.3, and the definition of relief area.

How to Proceed When Stroke Must Be Replayed

Several Rules that used the phrase “stroke does not count” (such as Rule 11.1b) have been amended so that the failure to replay a stroke when required to do so, while still a breach of the relevant Rule, no longer carries the potential for disqualification.