



MODERNIZING GOLF'S RULES

Major Proposed Changes

MARCH 1, 2017



These are the proposed changes expected to have the most impact on the game and to be of most interest to golfers and those who follow the game. The 33 items covered on this page are organized into eight categories, and within each proposed change you will find the main reasons why the change is being proposed. To go directly to the proposed changes relevant to each category, click the links below.

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Ball at Rest

Ball Moved During Search



No penalty for accidentally moving your ball during search.

No Penalty for Moving Ball on the Putting Green



No penalty for accidentally moving your ball or ball-marker on the putting green.

Standard for Deciding Why a Ball Moved



New standard to determine if you caused your ball to move.

Replacing Ball When Original Spot is Not Known



When the original location of a ball is not known, replace the ball on its estimated spot.

Ball in Motion

Ball in Motion Accidentally Deflected



No penalty if your ball in motion is accidentally deflected by you, your equipment, or your caddie.

Taking Relief

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



The focus of the new dropping procedure would be on a specific “relief area” of either 20 or 80 inches from a reference point or reference line.

Proposed New Procedure for Dropping a Ball



The only requirement will be for you to hold the ball above the ground and let it go so that it falls through the air before coming to rest.

Where a Dropped Ball Must Come to Rest



The ball must come to rest in the relief area where it was dropped, or else the ball must be redropped.

Fixed Distance (Not Club-Lengths) Used for Measuring



The relief area will be measured by a fixed distance of either 20 or 80 inches from the reference point or the reference line.

Time For Search Before Ball is Lost



A ball is lost if not found in three minutes (rather than the current 5 minutes).

Substitution of Ball Always Allowed When Taking Relief



A player may always substitute a ball when taking relief.

Relief For an Embedded Ball



Relief allowed without penalty for an embedded ball anywhere (except in sand) in the “general area” (a new term for “through the green”).

Areas of the Course

When to Replace a Ball That Moves on the Putting Green



Always replace your ball on its original spot, even if it was blown by the wind or moved for no clear reason.

Repairing Damage on the Putting Green



Repair of almost any damage allowed on the putting green (including spike marks and animal damage).

Touching Line of Play on a Putting Green



No penalty for touching your line of play on the putting green so long as doing so does not improve the conditions for your stroke.

Ball Played From Green Hits Unattended Flagstick in Hole



No penalty if your ball played from the putting green (or anywhere else) hits the unattended flagstick in the hole.

Areas the Committee May Mark as Penalty Areas



Areas of desert, jungle, lava rock, etc. (in addition to areas of water) may now be marked as red or yellow “penalty areas.”

Touching or Moving Loose Impediments or Touching the Ground in a Penalty Area



No penalty for moving loose impediments, touching the ground, or grounding your club in a penalty area.

Expanded Use of Red-Marked Penalty Areas



Committees are given the discretion to mark any penalty area as red so that lateral relief is always allowed.

Elimination of Opposite Side Relief for Red Penalty Areas



Relief from a red penalty area no longer allowed on the opposite side from where the ball last entered the penalty area.

Moving or Touching Loose Impediments or Touching Sand in a Bunker



Relaxed Rules relating to loose impediments and touching the ground in a bunker.

Unplayable Ball in Bunker



Relief allowed outside a bunker for an unplayable ball for two penalty strokes.

Equipment

Use of Clubs Damaged During Round



A club damaged during a round can continue to be used, even if you damaged it in anger.

Adding Clubs to Replace a Club Damaged During Round



You will not be allowed to replace a damaged club during a round if you were responsible for the damage.

Use of Distance-Measuring Devices



The use of DMDs will be allowed unless a Local Rule has been adopted prohibiting their use.

Playing a Ball

Caddie Standing Behind a Player to Help Line the Player Up



A caddie is not allowed to stand on a line behind a player while the player is taking his or her stance and until stroke is made.

Caddie Lifting Ball on the Putting Green



A caddie may lift and replace a player's ball on the putting green without the player's specific authorization to do so.

When to Play During a Round

Encouraging Prompt Pace of Play



It is recommended that you play "ready golf" and make each stroke in no more than 40 seconds.

Maximum Score Form of Stroke Play



A new “Maximum Score” form of stroke play is recognized, where a player’s score for a hole is capped at a max score.

Player Behavior

Expected Standards of Player Conduct



The proposed new Rules speak to the high standards of conduct expected from players.

Code of Player Conduct



Committees are given authority to adopt their own code of player conduct and to set penalties for breaches of that code.

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



When you have good reason to mark and lift your ball, you are no longer required to first announce your intention.

Reasonable Judgment in Estimating and Measuring



A player’s reasonable judgment will not be second-guessed based on later evidence.

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