The 2019 Rules of Golf: Major Changes

Effective January 1, 2019
Overview

• Definitions - Golf’s “Words of Art”
• Spirit of the Game & Etiquette
• Promoting Faster Pace of Play
• Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties
  – On the Putting Green
  – In Bunkers
  – Accidental Acts & Occurrences
• Determining Who or What Moved a Ball at Rest
• Penalty Areas
• Simplified Dropping and Re-Dropping Procedures
• Unplayable Ball in Bunker – New Relief Option
• Advice, Equipment, Stroke & Distance Local Rule
Definitions - “Words of Art”

Selected New Definitions - (Review the others…)

Areas of the Course - General Area, Teeing Area, Penalty Area, Bunkers, Putting Green

Ball Marker - Artificial object…such as a tee, a coin, an object made to be a ball marker, or another small piece of equipment.

Club-Length - Measured by the longest club in the player’s bag except for a putter

Drop - Let go of a ball so it falls through the air with the intent for the ball to be in play.

Embedded - A ball in its own pitch mark made after the previous stroke and part of the ball is below the surface of the ground.

Improve - Alter conditions to that the player gains a potential advantage for a stroke.
More Definitions

**Virtual Certainty** - Conclusive evidence or 95% probability that an event occurred.

**Moved** - A ball has left its spot and come to rest on any other spot.

**Place** - Set a ball on the ground and let it go with the intent to put it in play. The ball must stay on that spot.

**Natural Forces** - Wind, water, gravity

**Reference Point** - A chosen point determined by a Rule from where the size of a Relief Area is measured.

**Relief Area** - An area one or two club-lengths from a Reference Point depending on the governing Rule.
Areas of the Course

• The general area, (the entire course except for the other defined areas)

• The other defined areas of the course:
  ▪ The teeing area the player must play from in starting the hole he or she is playing,
  ▪ All bunkers,
  ▪ All penalty areas, and
  ▪ The putting green of the hole the player is playing.
Selected Definitions

**Penalty Area**

An area from which relief with a one-stroke penalty is allowed if the player’s ball comes to rest there.

A *penalty area* is:

- Any body of water on the *course* (whether or not marked by the *Committee*), including a or other open watercourse (even if not containing water), and
- Any other part of the *course* the *Committee* defines as a *penalty area*. 
Clarification of Important Terms

Deliberate

An action intentionally taken or intentionally not taken by the player; the player had a choice, e.g., a player lifts a ball thinking it is a stray ball, and it is his or her ball. The lifting was deliberate. The ball was not accidentally lifted.

Also, a person authorized to attend the flagstick fails to remove the flagstick from the hole, as he or she believed the attended flagstick did not need to be removed when attended, and the ball strikes the flagstick in the hole. A deliberate action...

Accidental

An unintentional act by the player; the player did not choose to perform the (specific) act, the act was not planned or considered, e.g., a player, while marking the location of ball on the putting green, accidentally causes the ball to move.
Reasonable Judgment of the Player

• Many Rules require a player to determine a spot, point, line, area or other location under the Rules, such as:
  » Estimating where a ball last crossed the edge of a *penalty area*,
  » Estimating or measuring when *dropping* or placing a ball in taking relief, or
  » *Replacing* a ball on its original spot (whether the spot is known or estimated).

• “So long as the player does what can be reasonably expected under the circumstances…the player’s reasonable judgment will be accepted after a stroke is made even if proven wrong at a later time.”
Spirit of the Game / Etiquette

• Playing by the Rules

“All players are expected to play in the spirit of the game by:

• Acting with integrity….
• Showing consideration to others….
• Taking good care of the course….”

(The new Rules directly address the high standards of conduct expected from players.

(Rule 1.2a - Standards of Player Conduct; Conduct Expected of All Players)
MAJOR CHANGES

Spirit of the Game / Etiquette

• Playing by the Rules
  – Player Integrity

You will be able to mark and lift a ball to identify it, check for damage or see if it is embedded without first announcing your intention to another player.
Spirit of the Game / Etiquette

• Standards of Conduct
  – Committee set codes of conduct allowed

“The Committee may set its own standards of player conduct in a Code of Conduct adopted as a Local Rule.”

(Rule 1.2b - Standards of Player Conduct; Code of Conduct)
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Promoting Faster Pace of Play

• Rule 5.6b
  – Prompt Pace of Play
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Promoting Faster Pace of Play

• Rule 5.6b – Prompt Pace of Play
  - Ready Golf Encouraged
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Promoting Faster Pace of Play

• Rule 5.6b – Prompt Pace of Play
  • Ready Golf Encouraged
  • Search time reduced to 3 minutes

2019 Rule

Three minutes will be the maximum allotted time to search for a ball, rather than the current five minutes.
Major Changes

Promoting Faster Pace of Play

- Rule 5.6b – Prompt Pace of Play
  - Ready Golf Encouraged
  - Search time reduced to 3 minutes
  - Caddies
    - May not assist player with
    - alignment
MAJOR CHANGES

Promoting Faster Pace of Play

- Rule 5.6b – Prompt Pace of Play
  - Ready Golf Encouraged
  - Search time reduced to 3 minutes
  - Caddies
    - May not assist player with alignment
    - May always mark, lift and clean
    - ball on the Putting Green
MAJOR CHANGES

Promoting Faster Pace of Play

- Rule 5.6b – Prompt Pace of Play
- Ready Golf Encouraged
- Search time reduced to 3 minutes
- Caddies
  - May not assist player with alignment
  - May always mark, lift and clean ball on PG
- Putting allowed with Flagstick in the Hole
- Optional Local Rule for Stroke and Distance
Simplified Dropping and Re-Dropping Procedures

- Drop from Knee Height
Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way

- Player (or partner) must drop ball.
- Drop straight down from knee height.
- Ball cannot hit player or equipment before striking ground.
- Must be dropped in relief area.
Specific Relief Areas for Each Situation

Relief Area Definition

• The area where a player must drop a ball when taking relief under a Rule. Each relief Rule requires the player to use a specific relief area whose size and location are based on these three factors:

  • Reference Point: The point from which the size of relief area is measured. In back on a line relief, the player must choose the reference point or it will be determined by where he drops the ball (Explanation).

  • Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The relief area is either one or two club-lengths from the reference point. There are two times a player may use two club-lengths: for lateral Penalty Area relief, and lateral Unplayable relief. All other relief areas, free or with penalty, are one club-length measurements. The club is the longest club the player has in all circumstances but not a putter.
Where a Dropped Ball Must Come to Rest

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

Players will continue to correct for a ball not properly dropped or in the wrong location:

- There is no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground.
- If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it must be dropped a second time;
- If it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it must be placed where it first touched the ground on the second drop.
Simplified Dropping and Re-Dropping Procedures

- Drop from Knee Height
- Club-Lengths and
- Relief Areas
MAJOR CHANGES

Simplified Dropping and Re-Dropping Procedures

- Drop from Knee Height
- Club-Lengths and Relief Areas
- When to Re-Drop
Simplified Dropping and Re-Dropping Procedures

- Drop from Knee Height
- Club-Lengths and Relief Areas
- When to Re-Drop
- All drops permit substitution
  - free relief
  - penalty relief
Penalty Areas

- What are they?
Penalty Areas

- What are they?
- Any Penalty Area can be marked Red (or Yellow), but Red is the Default Color Now

2019 Rule

Any penalty area (water hazard) can be marked as red, which means that lateral relief will be available to you.
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Penalty Areas

• What are they?
• Any Penalty Area can be marked Red
• Play from Penalty Areas
  - Okay to move loose impediments
  - Okay to make practice swings
  - Okay to ground your club
  - Okay to touch water
Penalty Areas

• What are they?
• Any Penalty Area can be marked Red
• Play from Penalty Areas
  – Okay to move loose impediments
  – Okay to make practice swings
  – Okay to ground your club
  – Okay to touch water
• Relief Options (Red–3, Yellow–2)
  – Stroke and Distance (Red or Yellow)
  – Back-on-the-Line (Red or Yellow)
MAJOR CHANGES

Penalty Areas

- What are they?
- Any Penalty Area can be marked Red
- Play from Penalty Areas
  - Okay to move loose impediments
  - Okay to make practice swings
  - Okay to ground your club
  - Okay to touch water
- Relief Options (Red–3, Yellow–2)
  - Stroke and Distance (Red or Yellow)
  - Back-on-the-Line (Red or Yellow)
  - Lateral Relief (Red only)
Penalty Areas

• What are they?
• Any Penalty Area can be Marked Red
• Play from Penalty Areas
  − Okay to move loose impediments
  − Okay to make practice swings
  − Okay to ground your club
  − Okay to touch water
• Relief Options (Red–3, Yellow–2)
  − Stroke and Distance (Red or Yellow)
  − Back-on-the-Line (Red or Yellow)
  − Lateral Relief (Red only)
• Option for equal distance opposite margin relief, available by Local Rule only
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Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• On the Putting Green
  – Repair of Damage
M A J O R  C H A N G E S

Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• On the Putting Green
  – Repair of Damage
  – Touching Line of Play
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Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• On the Putting Green
  - Repair of Damage
  - Touching Line of Play
  - Accidental movement of ball (No Penalty)
Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• On the Putting Green
  - Repair of Damage
  - Touching Line of Play
  - Accidental movement of ball
    (No Penalty)
  - After marking & lifting, the ball is always replaced if it moves
Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

**Major Changes**

- **On the Putting Green**
  - Repair of Damage
  - Touching Line of Play
  - Accidental movement of ball, No Penalty
  - After marking & lifting, ball is always replaced if it moves
  - Okay for a putt to strike an unattended flagstick in the hole
Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• In Bunkers
  – Okay to move Loose
  – Impediments
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Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• In Bunkers
  – Okay to move Loose Impediments
  – Touching Sand, except near ball
  – Ground Club, except near ball
  – Testing still penalized
Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

- Accidental Acts and Occurrences, **No Penalty**
  - Deflection of a Ball in Motion
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Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

• Accidental Acts and Occurrences, **No Penalty**
  – Deflection of a Ball in Motion
  – Movement of a Ball on the Putting Green
  – Movement of a Ball During Search
Relaxed Requirements and Reduced Penalties

- Accidental Acts and Occurrences, **No Penalty**
  - Deflection of a Ball in Motion
  - Movement of a Ball on the Putting Green
  - Movement of a Ball During Search
  - Double Hits
Determining Who or What Moved a Ball at Rest

- **Virtual Certainty** required to conclude you caused your ball to move.
- 95% Standard
- Reverse of previous Rule
Unplayable Ball – New Bunker Relief Option

• Back-on-the-Line Outside Bunker
• Two Penalty Strokes
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Advice & Help, Equipment, Stroke & Distance

- Caddie not allowed to stand behind player to help with alignment
- Caddie may always mark, lift and clean ball on PG
- Clubs
  - Damage, for any reason, during your round, either continue play with or repair it
  - Replacement allowed only if player is not responsible for damage
MAJOR CHANGES

Advice & Help, Equipment, Stroke & Distance

• Caddie not allowed to stand behind player to help with alignment
• Caddie may always mark, lift and clean ball on PG
• Clubs
  – Damage, for any reason, during your round, either continue play with or repair it
  – Replacement allowed only if player is not responsible for damage
• Distance Measuring Devices permitted unless prohibited by a Local Rule
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Advice & Help, Equipment, Stroke & Distance

• Local Rule Alternative for Stroke and Distance
New Local Rule for 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.

2019 Rule: “Maximum Score” is a new, additional form of stroke play that a Committee may authorize:

• A player’s score for each hole is capped at a maximum set by the Committee, which may be fixed (such as 6, 8, 10, etc.), related to par (such as two times par or triple bogey), or related to the player’s handicap (such as net double bogey).

• A player who does not complete a hole (often referred to informally as “picking up”) will not be disqualified, but simply gets the maximum score for the hole.
New Rule on Green Reading Books

Golfers may continue to use a putting-green map or other putting-green information, except that:

- Any image of a putting green must be limited to a scale of 3/8 inch to 5 yards (1:480) or smaller (the “scale limit”).
- Any book or other paper containing a map or image of a putting green must not be larger than 4 ¼ inches x 7 inches (the “size limit”), although a “hole location sheet” that displays nine or more holes on a single sheet of paper may be larger, provided that any image of a single putting green meets the scale limit.
- No magnification of putting-green information is allowed other than a player’s normal wearing of prescription glasses or lenses.
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Review and Questions

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Our mission
The United States Golf Association promotes and conserves the true spirit of the game of golf as embodied in its ancient and honorable traditions. We act in the best interests of the game for the continued enjoyment of those who love and play it.