
1. Why can't spike marks be repaired?

The repair of spike marks which might assist the player in his subsequent play of the hole would constitute a breach of Rule 16-1c. Since it is not always possible to distinguish spike marks from other damage or irregularities of surface, allowing the repair of spike marks would, in effect, entail permitting any damage or irregularity of surface on the putting green to be repaired. This is contrary to the fundamental principle of "playing the course as you find it" and it would undoubtedly lead to an increase of slow play as players attempt to perfect their line of putt.

2. Can I use an "x-out" ball to play a round of golf?

Provided the ball in question meets the prescribed specifications (Rule 5-1), and the Committee has not laid down the conditions of the competition that the ball to be used shall be of certain specifications, brand and marking as detailed in the current List of Conforming Golf Balls issued by The R&A, there is no reason why an x-out ball should not be used - see Decision 5-1/4.

3. May stakes defining a water hazard or lateral water hazard be moved?

A water hazard stake is, by Definition, an obstruction. Consequently, if such a stake is movable, it may be removed, without penalty, in accordance with Rule 24-1. A player may remove a movable obstruction anywhere on the course, irrespective of whether his ball lies in a water hazard or not.

4. May the player have the flagstick attended even if his ball is not on the putting green?

Yes. Rule 17-1 states that before and during the stroke, a player may have the flagstick attended, removed or held up.

5. May a player putt with one hand while holding the flagstick with the other?

Yes, provided the flagstick has been removed from the hole and the ball therefore does not strike it. If the ball were to strike the flagstick, a breach of Rule 17-3a would occur - see Decision 17-1/5.

6. Must a player use a small coin or similar object to mark the position of his ball before lifting it?

The Note to Rule 20-1 states in part that the position of the ball should be marked by placing a ball-marker, small coin or other small object immediately behind the ball. When the word "should" is used in the Rules of Golf it is a recommendation only and failure to comply does not result in a penalty. The intention is to emphasise that use of a ball-marker or other small object (such as a coin) is considered to be the best way to mark a ball.

7. Is the person who lifted the player's ball the only person who may replace it?

No. Up to a maximum of three different people may replace a ball, depending on the circumstances i.e. the player, his partner or the person who lifted it. For example, in a four-ball match, if a player were to authorise his caddie to lift his ball, the caddie, his partner or the player could replace it. However, if the player lifts the ball himself, only the player or his partner may replace it - see Rule 20-3a.

8. How is a tie in stroke play decided?

It is up to the Committee, except that a tie shall not be decided by a match. The Committee should announce the procedure in advance. (1) In the event of a tie in a scratch stroke play competition, an 18-hole play-off is recommended. If that is not feasible, a sudden-death play-off is recommended. (2) In handicap stroke play, a play-off over 18 holes with handicaps is recommended. If a shorter play-off is necessary, the percentage of 18 holes to be played should be applied to the players' handicaps to determine their play-off handicaps. It is advisable to arrange for a percentage of holes that will result in whole numbers in handicaps. (3) In either a scratch or handicap stroke play competition, if a play-off of any type is not feasible, matching cards is recommended. The method of matching cards should be

announced in advance. An acceptable method of matching cards is to determine the winner on the basis of the best score for the last nine holes. If the tying players have the same score for the last nine, determine the winner on the basis of the last six holes, last three holes and finally the 18th hole. If such a method is used in a handicap stroke play competition, one-half, one-third, one-sixth, etc., of the handicaps should be deducted. (4) If the conditions of the competition provide that ties shall be decided over the last nine, last six, last three and last hole, they should also provide what will happen if this procedure does not produce a winner (see Appendix I, Rules of Golf).

9. Must a player enter his handicap in the box provided on the card?

Although under Rule 6-2b a competitor must ensure that his handicap is recorded on his score card before it is returned to the Committee, it does not stipulate where the handicap shall be recorded and, as long as it appears somewhere on the card, the competitor has fulfilled his duty. Consequently, a competitor should not be disqualified for failure to record his handicap in the "official" box provided on the card.

10. May a player practice on the competition course?

Before a competition in match play, a player may practise on the competition course unless prohibited from doing so by the Committee - see Note to Rule 7-1. However, in stroke play, a competitor is not permitted to practise on the competition course before the competition or test the surface of any putting green unless permitted to do so by the Committee. During a competition, a player is not permitted to play a practice stroke either during the play of a hole or between the play of two holes, except that, between the play of two holes, the player may practise putting or chipping on or near the putting green of the hole last played, any practice putting green or the teeing ground of the next hole to be played, provided such a practice stroke is not played from a hazard.

11. What differentiates a water hazard from a lateral water hazard?

A water hazard is any sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, surface drainage ditch or other open water course (whether or not containing water) and anything of a similar nature - see Definition "Water Hazard". If a player's ball lies in a water hazard, he may play the ball as it lies or proceed under Rule 26-1a or b. A lateral water hazard is a water hazard or that part of a water hazard so situated that it is not possible or is deemed by the Committee to be impracticable to drop a ball behind the water hazard in accordance with Rule 26-1b - see Definition "Lateral Water Hazard". If a player's ball lies in a lateral water hazard, he may, in addition to the options available when in a water hazard, proceed under Rule 26-1c.

12. Can I use a motorised cart?

Unless the use of a motorised cart is prohibited by the Committee in the conditions of competition (Rule 33-1), a player may use such equipment during a competition - see Decision 33-1/8.

13. What are the Rules for greensomes, texas scrambles etc?

These are not recognised forms of play and thus are not covered by the Rules of Golf. Therefore, it is a matter for the Committee in charge of the competition to decide upon any matters that may arise and its decision shall be final (Rule 34-3).

14. When is a record score officially recognised as a "course record"?

The term "course record" is not defined in the Rules of Golf, therefore, it is a matter for the Committee in charge of the competition to decide whether it recognises a score as a course record. It is recommended that a record score should only be recognised if made in an individual stroke play competition with the holes and tee markers in their championship positions and a Local Rule on preferred lies is not in operation - see Decision Misc/1.

15. Can a player be disqualified for not initialling any alterations made on his score card?

A Committee cannot require that alterations made on score cards be initialled. Consequently, a player should not be disqualified for failure to do so - see Decision 6-6a/6.

16. Can a player be disqualified for an omission or error in entering his score into a computer?

The Rules of Golf do not require a competitor to enter scores into a computer. Therefore, a competitor may not be penalised or disqualified under the Rules of Golf if the scores entered into the computer are incorrect, or indeed, he fails to enter these scores. However, while it is not permissible to penalise a player under the Rules of Golf for failing to enter his score into a computer, a Committee may, in order to assist in the administration of the competition, introduce a "club regulation" to this effect and provide disciplinary sanctions (e.g. ineligibility to play in the next club competition) for failure to act in accordance with the regulation (see Decision 6-6b/8).

17. Must a player announce to his opponent(s) or fellow-competitor(s)

that he intends to substitute his ball between the play of two holes?

Although such an announcement would be courteous, a player is not required under the Rules to inform an opponent or fellow-competitor that he intends to play a different ball between the play of two holes.

18. What should a player do if his ball at rest is moved by a gust of wind?

Wind is not an "Outside Agency" (see Definition) and therefore, as a general rule, if a sudden gust of wind moves a player's ball, there is no penalty and the ball is played from its new position. However, if this happens after the player has addressed the ball, the player is deemed to have moved it, he incurs a penalty stroke and the ball must be replaced (Rule 18-2b).

19. Must a ball be marked when taking a drop from an immovable obstruction, an abnormal ground condition or because the ball is considered to be unplayable (i.e. under Rules 24, 25 or 28)?

The position of a ball need only be marked when it is lifted under a Rule that requires it to be replaced e.g. Rule 16-1b, or 20-1. A ball to be dropped or placed in any other position, such as when taking relief from an immovable obstruction, an abnormal ground condition or an unplayable lie, does not need to be marked, but it would always be considered good practice to do so.

20. May a player take free relief from interference by an out of bounds fence?

No. Objects defining out of bounds, such as walls, fences, stakes and railings are considered fixed and therefore are not obstructions.

21. Can a player verbally declare his ball to be lost?

A player may not render a ball lost solely by declaration. A ball can only be considered lost when (a) it is not found or identified as his by the player within 5 minutes after the player's side or his or their caddies have begun to search for it; or (b) the player has put another ball into play under the Rules, even though he may not have searched for the original ball; or (c) the player has played any stroke with a provisional ball from the place where the original is likely to be or from a point nearer the hole than that place, whereupon the provisional ball becomes the ball in play.

22. May a player, after going forward to search for his ball, return to where he last played in order to play a provisional ball?

No. If the player did so the second ball would become the ball in play and the original ball would be lost (see Rule 27-2a and Definition "Lost Ball"). He must play a provisional ball "before going forward to search".

23. Can a player be disqualified for an omission or error in adding his score or points on his score card?

The competitor is responsible only for the correctness of the score recorded for each hole (Rule 6-6d) and the Committee is responsible for the addition of scores or points (Rule 33-5). If a total recorded by the competitor is incorrect, it is the responsibility of the Committee to correct the error, without penalty to the competitor (see Decision 6-6d/2).

24. Should rakes be placed inside or outside bunkers?

It is recommended that rakes be placed outside bunkers as on balance it is felt there is less likelihood of an advantage or disadvantage to the player. In practice players who leave rakes in bunkers frequently leave them at the side which tends to stop a ball rolling into the flat part of the bunker, resulting in a much more difficult shot than would otherwise have been the case. This is especially true of small bunkers. If a ball comes to rest against a rake in the bunker, the player must proceed under Rule 24-1 and it may not be possible to replace the ball on the same spot or find a spot in the bunker which is not nearer the hole - see Decision 20-3d/2. If rakes are left in the middle of the bunker, the only way to do so is to throw them into the bunker, damaging the surface. Also, if a rake is in the middle of a large bunker it is either not used or the player is obliged to rake a large area of the bunker resulting in unnecessary delay. Ultimately, it is a matter for the Committee to decide where it wishes rakes to be placed (see Decision Misc./2).