

# Rule 1. The Game

## 1-1. General

The Game of Golf consists of playing a ball with a club from the *teeing ground* into the *hole* by a *stroke* or successive *strokes* in accordance with the *Rules*.

## 1-2. Exerting Influence on Ball

A player or *caddie* must not take any action to influence the position or the movement of a ball except in accordance with the *Rules*.

(Removal of loose impediment — see Rule 23-1.)

(Removal of movable obstruction — see Rule 24-1.)

\*Penalty for Breach of Rule 1-2: Match play — Loss of hole; Stroke play — Two strokes.

\*In the case of a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the Committee may impose a penalty of disqualification.

**Note:** A player is deemed to have committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2 if the *Committee* considers that his act of influencing the position or movement of the ball has allowed him or another player to gain a significant advantage or has placed another player, other than his *partner*, at a significant disadvantage.

## 1-3. Agreement to Waive Rules

Players must not agree to exclude the operation of any *Rule* or to waive any penalty incurred.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 1-3: Match play — Disqualification of both sides; Stroke play — Disqualification of competitors concerned.

(Agreeing to play out of turn in stroke play — see Rule 10-2c.)

## 1-4. Points Not Covered by Rules

If any point in dispute is not covered by the *Rules*, the decision should be made in accordance with equity.

## Rule 2. Match Play

### 2-1. General

A match consists of one *Side* playing against another over a *stipulated round* unless otherwise decreed by the *Committee*.

In match play the game is played by holes.

Except as otherwise provided in the *Rules*, a hole is won by the *Side* that *holes* its ball in the fewer *strokes*. In a handicap match, the lower net score wins the hole. The state of the match is expressed by the terms: so many "holes up" or "all square," and so many "to play."

A *Side* is "dormie" when it is as many holes up as there are holes remaining to be played.

### 2-2. Halved Hole

A hole is halved if each *side holes* out in the same number of *strokes*.

When a player has *holed* out and his opponent has been left with *astroke* for the half, if the player subsequently incurs a penalty, the hole is halved.

### 2-3. Winner of Match

A match is won when one *Side* leads by a number of holes greater than the number remaining to be played.

If there is a tie, the *Committee* may extend the *stipulated round* by as many holes as are required for a match to be won.

### 2-4. Concession of Match, Hole or Next Stroke

A player may concede a match at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that match.

A player may concede a hole at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that hole.

A player may concede his opponent's next *stroke* at any time, provided the opponent's ball is at rest. The opponent is considered to have *holed* out with his next *stroke*, and the ball may be removed by either *Side*.

A concession may not be declined or withdrawn.

(Ball overhanging hole - see Rule 16-2.)

### 2-5. Doubt as to Procedure; Disputes and Claims

In match play, if a doubt or dispute arises between the players, a player may make a claim. If no duly authorized representative of the *Committee* is available within a reasonable time, the players must continue the match without delay. The *Committee* may consider a claim only if the player making the claim notifies his opponent (i) that he is making a claim, (ii) of the facts of the situation and (iii) that he wants a ruling. The claim must be made before any player in the match plays from the next *teeing ground* or, in the case of the last hole of the match, before all players in the match leave the *putting green*.

A later claim may not be considered by the *Committee*, unless it is based on facts previously unknown to the player making the claim and he had been given wrong information (Rules 6-2a and 9) by an opponent.

Once the result of the match has been officially announced, a later claim may not be considered by the *Committee*, unless it is satisfied that the opponent knew he was giving wrong information.

## **2-6. General Penalty**

The penalty for a breach of a *Rule* in match play is loss of hole except when otherwise provided.

## Rule 3. Stroke Play

### 3-1. General; Winner

A stroke-play competition consists of *competitors* completing each hole of a *stipulated round* or *rounds* and, for each round, returning a score card on which there is a gross score for each hole. Each *competitor* is playing against every other *competitor* in the competition.

The *competitor* who plays the *stipulated round* or *stipulated round* in the fewest *strokes* is the winner.

In a handicap competition, the *competitor* with the lowest net score for the stipulated or *stipulated round* is the winner.

### 3-2. Failure to Hole Out

If a *competitor* fails to *hole* out at any hole and does not correct his mistake before he makes a stroke on the next *teeing ground* or, in the case of the last hole of the round, before he leaves the green, he is disqualified.

### 3-3. Doubt as to Procedure

#### ■ a. Procedure

In stroke play, if a *competitor* is doubtful of his rights or the correct procedure during the play of a hole, he may, without penalty, complete the hole with two balls.

After the doubtful situation has arisen and before taking further action, the competitor must announce to his *marker* or a *fellow-competitor* that he intends to play two balls and which ball he wishes to count if the Rules permit.

The *competitor* must report the facts of the situation to the Committee before returning his score card. If he fails to do so, he is disqualified.

Note: If the *competitor* takes further action before dealing with the doubtful situation, Rule 3-3 is not applicable. The score with the original ball counts or, if the original ball is not one of the balls being played, the score with the first ball put into play counts, even if the *Rules* do not allow the procedure adopted for that ball. However, the *competitor* incurs no penalty for having played a second ball, and any *penalty strokes* incurred solely by playing that ball do not count in his score.

#### ■ b. Determination of Score for Hole

(i) If the ball that the *competitor* selected in advance to count has been played in accordance with the *Rules*, the score with that ball is the competitor's score for the hole. Otherwise, the score with the other ball counts if the *Rules* allow the procedure adopted for that ball.

(ii) If the *competitor* fails to announce in advance his decision to complete the hole with two balls, or which ball he wishes to count, the score with the original ball counts, provided it has been played in accordance with the *Rules*. If the original ball is not one of the balls being played, the first ball put into play counts, provided it has been played in accordance with the *Rules*. Otherwise, the score with the other ball counts if the *Rules* allow the procedure adopted for that ball.

Note 1: If a *competitor* plays a second ball under Rule 3-3, the *strokes* made after this Rule has been invoked with the ball ruled not to count and *penalty strokes* incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.

Note 2: A second ball played under Rule 3-3 is not a *provisional ball* under Rule 27-2.

#### **3-4. Refusal to Comply with a Rule**

If a *competitor* refuses to comply with a *Rule* affecting the rights of another competitor, he is disqualified.

#### **3-5. General Penalty**

The penalty for a breach of a *Rule* in stroke play is two strokes except when otherwise provided.

## Rule 4. Clubs

A player in doubt as to the conformity of a club should consult the USGA.

A manufacturer should submit to the USGA a sample of a club to be manufactured for a ruling as to whether the club conforms with the [Rules](#). The sample becomes the property of the USGA for reference purposes. If a manufacturer fails to submit a sample or, having submitted a sample, fails to await a ruling before manufacturing and/or marketing the club, the manufacturer assumes the risk of a ruling that the club does not conform with the [Rules](#).

### Definitions

All defined terms are in *italics* and are listed alphabetically in the Definitions section.

#### 4-1. Form and Make of Clubs

##### ■ a. General

The player's clubs must conform with this Rule and the provisions, specifications and interpretations set forth in [Appendix II](#).

**Note:** The [Committee](#) may require, in the conditions of a competition (Rule [33-1](#)), that any driver the player carries must have a clubhead, identified by model and loft, that is named on the current List of Conforming Driver Heads issued by the USGA.

##### ■ b. Wear and Alteration

A club that conforms with the [Rules](#) when new is deemed to conform after wear through normal use. Any part of a club that has been purposely altered is regarded as new and must, in its altered state, conform with the [Rules](#).

#### 4-2. Playing Characteristics Changed and Foreign Material

##### ■ a. Playing Characteristics Changed

During a [stipulated round](#), the playing characteristics of a club must not be purposely changed by adjustment or by any other means.

##### ■ b. Foreign Material

Foreign material must not be applied to the club face for the purpose of influencing the movement of the ball.

\*PENALTY FOR CARRYING, BUT NOT MAKING STROKE WITH, CLUB OR CLUBS IN BREACH OF RULE [4-1](#) or [4-2](#):

Match play - At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round - Two holes.

Stroke play - Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round - Four strokes.

Match or stroke play - In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.

Bogey and par competitions - See Note 1 to Rule [32-1a](#).

Stableford competitions - See Note 1 to Rule [32-1b](#).

\*Any club or clubs carried in breach of Rule [4-1](#) or [4-2](#) must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his [marker](#) or a [fellow-competitor](#) in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a

breach has occurred. If the player fails to do so, he is disqualified.

PENALTY FOR making stroke with club in BREACH OF RULE [4-1](#) or [4-2](#): Disqualification.

### **4-3. Damaged Clubs: Repair and Replacement**

#### **■ a. Damage in Normal Course of Play**

If, during a [stipulated round](#), a player's club is damaged in the normal course of play, he may:

(i) use the club in its damaged state for the remainder of the [stipulated round](#); or

(ii) without unduly delaying play, repair it or have it repaired; or

(iii) as an additional option available only if the club is unfit for play, replace the damaged club with any club. The replacement of a club must not unduly delay play and must not be made by borrowing any club selected for play by any other person playing on the [course](#).

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE [4-3a](#):

See Penalty Statements for Rule [4-4a](#) or [b](#) and Rule [4-4c](#).

**Note:** A club is unfit for play if it is substantially damaged, e.g., the shaft is dented, significantly bent or broken into pieces; the clubhead becomes loose, detached or significantly deformed; or the grip becomes loose. A club is not unfit for play solely because the club's lie or loft has been altered, or the clubhead is scratched.

#### **■ b. Damage Other Than in Normal Course of Play**

If, during a [stipulated round](#), a player's club is damaged other than in the normal course of play rendering it non-conforming or changing its playing characteristics, the club must not subsequently be used or replaced during the round.

#### **■ c. Damage Prior to Round**

A player may use a club damaged prior to a round, provided the club, in its damaged state, conforms with the [Rules](#).

Damage to a club that occurred prior to a round may be repaired during the round, provided the playing characteristics are not changed and play is not unduly delayed.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE [4-3b](#) or [c](#): Disqualification.

(Undue delay - see Rule [6-7](#).)

### **4-4. Maximum of 14 Clubs**

**■ a. Selection and Addition of Clubs** The player must not start a [stipulated round](#) with more than 14 clubs. He is limited to the clubs thus selected for that round, except that if he started with fewer than 14 clubs, he may add any number, provided his total number does not exceed 14.

The addition of a club or clubs must not unduly delay play (Rule [6-7](#)) and the player must not add or borrow any club selected for play by any other person playing on the [course](#).

## ■ b. Partners May Share Clubs

Partners may share clubs, provided that the total number of clubs carried by the Partners so sharing does not exceed 14.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-4a or b, Regardless Of Number Of Excess Clubs Carried:

Match play - At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round: Two holes.

Stroke play - Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round: Four strokes.

Bogey and par competitions - See Note 1 to Rule 32-1a.

Stableford competitions - See Note 1 to Rule 32-1b.

## ■ c. Excess Club Declared Out of Play

Any club or clubs carried or used in breach of Rule 4-3a(iii) or Rule 4-4 must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his marker or a fellow-competitor in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a breach has occurred. The player must not use the club or clubs for the remainder of the stipulated round.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-4c: Disqualification.

## Rule 5. The Ball

### 5-1. General

The ball the player plays must conform to the requirements specified in [Appendix III](#).

**Note:** The *Committee* may require, in the conditions of a competition (Rule [33-1](#)), that the ball the player plays must be named on the current List of Conforming Golf Balls issued by the United States Golf Association.

### 5-2. Foreign Material

Foreign material must not be applied to a ball for the purpose of changing its playing characteristics.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE [5-1](#) or [5-2](#): Disqualification.

### 5-3. Ball Unfit for Play

A ball is unfit for play if it is visibly cut, cracked or out of shape. A ball is not unfit for play solely because mud or other materials adhere to it, its surface is scratched or scraped or its paint is damaged or discolored.

If a player has reason to believe his ball has become unfit for play during play of the hole being played, he may lift the ball, without penalty, to determine whether it is unfit.

Before lifting the ball, the player must announce his intention to his opponent in match play or his *marker* or a *fellow-competitor* in stroke play and mark the position of the ball. He may then lift and examine it, provided that he gives his opponent, *marker* or *fellow-competitor* an opportunity to examine the ball and observe the lifting and replacement. The ball must not be cleaned when lifted under Rule [5-3](#).

If the player fails to comply with all or any part of this procedure or if he lifts the ball without having reason to believe that it has become unfit for play during play of the hole being played, he incurs a penalty of one stroke.

If it is determined that the ball has become unfit for play during play of the hole being played, the player may *substitute* another ball, placing it on the spot where the original ball lay. Otherwise, the original ball must be replaced. If a player *substitutes* a ball when not permitted and makes a *stroke* at the wrongly *substituted ball*, he incurs the general penalty for a breach of Rule [5-3](#), but there is no additional penalty under this Rule or [15-2](#).

If a ball breaks into pieces as a result of a *stroke*, the *stroke* is canceled and the player must play a ball, without penalty, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played (see Rule [20-5](#)).

\*PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5-3:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes. \*If a player incurs the general penalty for breach of Rule [5-3](#), there is no additional penalty under this Rule.

**Note 1:** If the opponent, *marker* or *fellow-competitor* wishes to dispute a claim of unfitness, he must do so before the player plays another ball.

**Note 2:** If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered, see Rule [20-3b](#).

(Cleaning ball lifted from putting green or under any other Rule - see Rule [21](#).)

## Rule 6. The Player

### 6-1. Rules

The player and his *caddie* are responsible for knowing the *Rules*. During a *stipulated round*, for any breach of a *Rule* by his *caddie*, the player incurs the applicable penalty.

### 6-2. Handicap

#### ■ a. Match Play

Before starting a match in a handicap competition, the players should determine from one another their respective handicaps. If a player begins a match having declared a handicap higher than that to which he is entitled and this affects the number of strokes given or received, he is disqualified; otherwise, the player must play off the declared handicap.

#### ■ b. Stroke Play

In any round of a handicap competition, the *competitor* must ensure that his handicap is recorded on his score card before it is returned to the *Committee*. If no handicap is recorded on his score card before it is returned (Rule 6-6b), or if the recorded handicap is higher than that to which he is entitled and this affects the number of strokes received, he is disqualified from the handicap competition; otherwise, the score stands.

**Note:** It is the player's responsibility to know the holes at which handicap strokes are to be given or received.

### 6-3. Time of Starting and Groups

#### ■ a. Time of Starting

The player must start at the time established by the *Committee*.

#### ■ b. Groups

In stroke play, the *competitor* must remain throughout the round in the group arranged by the *Committee*, unless the *Committee* authorizes or ratifies a change.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 6-3: Disqualification.

(Best-ball and four-ball play - see Rules 30-3a and 31-2.)

**Note:** The *Committee* may provide, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), that if the player arrives at his starting point, ready to play, within five minutes after his starting time, in the absence of circumstances that warrant waiving the penalty of disqualification as provided in Rule 33-7, the penalty for failure to start on time is loss of the first hole in match play or two strokes at the first hole in stroke play instead of disqualification.

### 6-4. Caddie

The player may be assisted by a *caddie*, but he is limited to only one *caddie* at any one time.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 6-4:

Match play - At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round - Two holes.

Stroke play - Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round - Four strokes.

Match or stroke play - In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next

hole. A player having more than one *caddie* in breach of this Rule must immediately upon the discovery that a breach has occurred ensure that he has no more than one *caddie* at any one time during the remainder of the *stipulated round*. Otherwise, the player is disqualified.

Bogey and par competitions - See Note 1 to Rule [32-1a](#).

Stableford competitions - See Note 1 to Rule [32-1b](#).

**Note:** The *Committee* may, in the conditions of a competition (Rule [33-1](#)), prohibit the use of *caddies* or restrict a player in his choice of *caddie*.

## 6-5. Ball

The responsibility for playing the proper ball rests with the player. Each player should put an identification mark on his ball.

## 6-6. Scoring in Stroke Play

### ■ a. Recording Scores

After each hole the *marker* should check the score with the *competitor* and record it. On completion of the round, the *marker* must sign the score card and hand it to the *competitor*. If more than one *marker* records the scores, each must sign for the part for which he is responsible.

■ **b. Signing and Returning Score Card** After completion of the round, the *competitor* should check his score for each hole and settle any doubtful points with the *Committee*. He must ensure that the *marker* or *markers* have signed the score card, sign the score card himself and return it to the *Committee* as soon as possible.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [6-6b](#): Disqualification.

■ **c. Alteration of Score Card** No alteration may be made on a score card after the *competitor* has returned it to the *Committee*.

■ **d. Wrong Score for Hole** The *competitor* is responsible for the correctness of the score recorded for each hole on his score card. If he returns a score for any hole lower than actually taken, he is disqualified. If he returns a score for any hole higher than actually taken, the score as returned stands.

**Note 1:** The *Committee* is responsible for the addition of scores and application of the handicap recorded on the score card - see Rule [33-5](#).

**Note 2:** In *four-ball* stroke play, see also Rules [31-3](#) and [31-7a](#).

## 6-7. Undue Delay; Slow Play

The player must play without undue delay and in accordance with any pace of play guidelines that the *Committee* may establish. Between completion of a hole and playing from the next *teeing ground*, the player must not unduly delay play.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [6-7](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

Bogey and par competitions - See Note 2 to Rule [32-1a](#).

Stableford competitions - See Note 2 to Rule [32-1b](#).

For subsequent offense - Disqualification.

**Note 1:** If the player unduly delays play between holes, he is delaying the play of the next hole and, except for bogey, par and Stableford competitions (see Rule [32](#)), the penalty applies to that hole.

**Note 2:** For the purpose of preventing slow play, the *Committee* may, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), establish pace of play guidelines including maximum periods of time allowed to complete a *stipulated round*, a hole or a *stroke*.

In stroke play only, the *Committee* may, in such a condition, modify the penalty for a breach of this Rule as follows:

First offense - One stroke; Second offense - Two strokes.

For subsequent offense - Disqualification.

## **6-8. Discontinuance of Play; Resumption of Play**

### **a. When Permitted**

The player must not discontinue play unless:

- i. the *Committee* has suspended play;
- ii. he believes there is danger from lightning;
- iii. he is seeking a decision from the *Committee* on a doubtful or disputed point (see Rules 2-5 and 34-3); or

there is some other good reason such as sudden illness.

Bad weather is not of itself a good reason for discontinuing play.

If the player discontinues play without specific permission from the *Committee*, he must report to the *Committee* as soon as practicable. If he does so and the *Committee* considers his reason satisfactory, there is no penalty. Otherwise, the player is disqualified.

**Exception in match play:** Players discontinuing match play by agreement are not subject to disqualification, unless by so doing the competition is delayed.

**Note:** Leaving the *course* does not of itself constitute discontinuance of play.

### **■ b. Procedure When Play Suspended by Committee**

When play is suspended by the *Committee*, if the players in a match or group are between the play of two holes, they must not resume play until the *Committee* has ordered a resumption of play. If they have started play of a hole, they may discontinue play immediately or continue play of the hole, provided they do so without delay. If the players choose to continue play of the hole, they are permitted to discontinue play before completing it. In any case, play must be discontinued after the hole is completed.

The players must resume play when the *Committee* has ordered a resumption of play.

**PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 6-8b:** Disqualification.

**Note:** The *Committee* may provide, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), that in potentially dangerous situations play must be discontinued immediately following a suspension of play by the *Committee*. If a player fails to discontinue play immediately, he is disqualified, unless circumstances warrant waiving the penalty as provided in Rule 33-7.

### **■ c. Lifting Ball When Play Discontinued**

When a player discontinues play of a hole under Rule 6-8a, he may lift his ball, without penalty, only if

the *Committee* has suspended play or there is a good reason to lift it. Before lifting the ball the player must mark its position. If the player discontinues play and lifts his ball without specific permission from the *Committee*, he must, when reporting to the *Committee* (Rule 6-8a), report the lifting of the ball.

If the player lifts the ball without a good reason to do so, fails to mark the position of the ball before lifting it or fails to report the lifting of the ball, he incurs a penalty of one stroke.

#### ■ d. Procedure When Play Resumed

Play must be resumed from where it was discontinued, even if resumption occurs on a subsequent day. The player must, either before or when play is resumed, proceed as follows:

- a) if the player has lifted the ball, he must, provided he was entitled to lift it under Rule 6-8c, place the original ball or a *substituted ball* on the spot from which the original ball was lifted. Otherwise, the original ball must be replaced;
- b) if the player has not lifted his ball, he may, provided he was entitled to lift it under Rule 6-8c, lift, clean and replace the ball, or *substitute* a ball, on the spot from which the original ball was lifted. Before lifting the ball he must mark its position; or
- c) if the player's ball or ball-marker is moved (including by wind or water) while play is discontinued, a ball or ball-marker must be placed on the spot from which the original ball or ball-marker was moved.

**Note:** If the spot where the ball is to be placed is impossible to determine, it must be estimated and the ball placed on the estimated spot. The provisions of Rule 20-3c do not apply.

\*PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 6-8d:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

\*If a player incurs the general penalty for a breach of Rule 6-8d, there is no additional penalty under Rule 6-8c.

## Rule 7. Practice

### 7-1. Before or Between Rounds

■ **a. Match Play** On any day of a match-play competition, a player may practice on the competition *course* before a round.

■ **b. Stroke Play** Before a round or play-off on any day of a stroke-play competition, a *competitor* must not practice on the competition *course* or test the surface of any *putting green* on the *course* by rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface. When two or more rounds of a stroke-play competition are to be played over consecutive days, a *competitor* must not practice between those rounds on any competition *course* remaining to be played, or test the surface of any *putting green* on such *course* by rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface.

**Exception:** Practice putting or chipping on or near the first *teeing ground* before starting a round or play-off is permitted.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [7-1b](#): Disqualification.

**Note:** The *Committee* may, in the conditions of a competition (Rule [33-1](#)), prohibit practice on the competition *course* on any day of a match-play competition or permit practice on the competition *course* or part of the *course* (Rule [33-2c](#)) on any day of or between rounds of a stroke-play competition.

### 7-2. During Round

A player must not make a practice *stroke* during play of a hole.

Between the play of two holes, a player must not make a practice *stroke*, except that he may practice putting or chipping on or near:

(a) the *putting green* of the hole last played,

(b) any practice *putting green*, or

(c) the *teeing ground* of the next hole to be played in the round, provided a practice *stroke* is not made from a *hazard* and does not unduly delay play (Rule [6-7](#)).

*Strokes* made in continuing the play of a hole, the result of which has been decided, are not practice *strokes*.

**Exception:** When play has been suspended by the *Committee*, a player may, prior to resumption of play, practice (a) as provided in this Rule, (b) anywhere other than on the competition *course* and (c) as otherwise permitted by the *Committee*.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [7-2](#):

Match play- Loss of hole; Stroke play- Two strokes. In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.

**Note 1:** A practice swing is not a practice *stroke* and may be taken at any place, provided the player does not breach the *Rules*.

**Note 2:** The *Committee* may, in the conditions of a competition (Rule [33-1](#)), prohibit:

(a) practice on or near the *putting green* of the hole last played, and

(b) rolling a ball on the *putting green* of the hole last played.

## Rule 8. Advice; Indicating Line of Play

### 8-1. Advice

During a *stipulated round*, a player must not:

- (a) give *advice* to anyone in the competition playing on the *course* other than his *partner*, or
- (b) ask for *advice* from anyone other than his *partner* or either of their *caddies*.

### 8-2. Indicating Line of Play

#### ■ a. Other Than on Putting Green

Except on the *putting green*, a player may have the *line of play* indicated to him by anyone, but no one may be positioned by the player on or close to the line or an extension of the line beyond the *hole* while the *stroke* is being made. Any mark placed by the player or with his knowledge to indicate the line must be removed before the *stroke* is made.

**Exception:** *Flagstick* attended or held up - see Rule 17-1.

■ **b. On the Putting Green** When the player's ball is on the *putting green*, the player, his *partner* or either of their *caddies* may, before but not during the *stroke*, point out a line for putting, but in so doing the *putting green* must not be touched. A mark must not be placed anywhere to indicate a line for putting.

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play- Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

**Note:** The *Committee* may, in the conditions of a team competition (Rule 33-1), permit each team to appoint one person who may give *advice* (including pointing out a line for putting) to members of that team. The *Committee* may establish conditions relating to the appointment and permitted conduct of that person, who must be identified to the *Committee* before giving *advice*.

## Rule 9. Information as to Strokes Taken

### 9-1. General

The number of [strokes](#) a player has taken includes any strokes incurred.

### 9-2. Match Play

#### ■ a. Information as to Strokes Taken

An opponent is entitled to ascertain from the player, during the play of a hole, the number of [strokes](#) he has taken and, after play of a hole, the number of [strokes](#) taken on the hole just completed.

#### ■ b. Wrong Information

A player must not give wrong information to his opponent. If a player gives wrong information, he loses the hole.

A player is deemed to have given wrong information if he:

- (i) fails to inform his opponent as soon as practicable that he has incurred a penalty, unless (a) he was obviously proceeding under a [Rule](#) involving a penalty and this was observed by his opponent, or (b) he corrects the mistake before his opponent makes his next [stroke](#); or
- (ii) gives incorrect information during play of a hole regarding the number of [strokes](#) taken and does not correct the mistake before his opponent makes his next [stroke](#); or
- (iii) gives incorrect information regarding the number of [strokes](#) taken to complete a hole and this affects the opponent's understanding of the result of the hole, unless he corrects the mistake before any player makes a [stroke](#) from the next [teeing ground](#) or, in the case of the last hole of the match, before all players leave the [putting green](#).

A player has given wrong information even if it is due to the failure to include a penalty that he did not know he had incurred. It is the player's responsibility to know the [Rules](#).

### 9-3. Stroke Play

A [competitor](#) who has incurred a penalty should inform his [marker](#) as soon as practicable.

## Rule 10. Order of Play

### 10-1. Match Play

#### ■ a. When Starting Play of Hole

The *Side* that has the *honor* at the first *teeing ground* is determined by the order of the draw. In the absence of a draw, the *honor* should be decided by lot.

The *Side* that wins a hole takes the *honor* at the next *teeing ground*. If a hole has been halved, the *Side* that had the *honor* at the previous *teeing ground* retains it.

#### ■ b. During Play of Hole

After both players have started play of the hole, the ball farther from the *hole* is played first. If the balls are equidistant from the *hole* or their positions relative to the *hole* are not determinable, the ball to be played first should be decided by lot.

**Exception:** Rule 30-3b (*best-ball* and *four-ball* match play).

**Note:** When it becomes known that the original ball is not to be played as it lies and the player is required to play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule 20-5), the order of play is determined by the spot from which the previous *stroke* was made. When a ball may be played from a spot other than where the previous *stroke* was made, the order of play is determined by the position where the original ball came to rest.

#### ■ c. Playing Out of Turn

If a player plays when his opponent should have played, there is no penalty, but the opponent may immediately require the player to cancel the *stroke* so made and, in correct order, play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule 20-5).

### 10-2. Stroke Play

#### ■ a. When Starting Play of Hole

The *competitor* who has the *honor* at the first *teeing ground* is determined by the order of the draw. In the absence of a draw, the *honor* should be decided by lot.

The *competitor* with the lowest score at a hole takes the *honor* at the next *teeing ground*. The *competitor* with the second lowest score plays next and so on. If two or more *competitors* have the same score at a hole, they play from the next *teeing ground* in the same order as at the previous *teeing ground*.

**Exception:** Rule 32-1 (handicap bogey, par and Stableford competitions).

#### ■ b. During Play of Hole

After the [competitors](#) have started play of the hole, the ball farthest from the [hole](#) is played first. If two or more balls are equidistant from the [hole](#) or their positions relative to the [hole](#) are not determinable, the ball to be played first should be decided by lot.

**Exceptions:** Rules [22](#) (ball assisting or interfering with play) and [31-4](#) ([four-ball](#) stroke play).

**Note:** When it becomes known that the original ball is not to be played as it lies and the [competitor](#) is required to play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)), the order of play is determined by the spot from which the previous [stroke](#) was made. When a ball may be played from a spot other than where the previous [stroke](#) was made, the order of play is determined by the position where the original ball came to rest.

### ■ c. Playing Out of Turn

If a [competitor](#) plays out of turn, there is no penalty and the ball is played as it lies. If, however, the [Committee](#) determines that [competitors](#) have agreed to play out of turn to give one of them an advantage, they are disqualified.

(Making stroke while another ball in motion after stroke from putting green - see Rule [16-1f](#).)

(Incorrect order of play in threesome and foursome stroke play - see Rule [29-3](#).)

### 10-3. Provisional Ball or Another Ball from Teeing Ground

If a player plays a [provisional ball](#) or another ball from the [teeing ground](#), he must do so after his opponent or [fellow-competitor](#) has made his first [stroke](#). If more than one player elects to play a [provisional ball](#) or is required to play another ball from the [teeing ground](#), the original order of play must be retained. If a player plays a [provisional ball](#) or another ball out of turn, Rule [10-1c](#) Rule [10-2c](#) applies.

# Rule 11. Teeing Ground

## 11-1. Teeing

When a player is putting a ball into play from the [teeing ground](#), it must be played from within the [teeing ground](#) and from the surface of the ground or from a conforming [tee](#) in or on the surface of the ground.

For the purposes of this Rule, the surface of the ground includes an irregularity of surface (whether or not created by the player) and sand or other natural substance (whether or not placed by the player).

If a player makes a [stroke](#) at a ball on a non-conforming [tee](#), or at a ball teed in a manner not permitted by this Rule, he is disqualified.

A player may stand outside the [teeing ground](#) to play a ball within it.

## 11-2. Tee-Markers

Before a player makes his first [stroke](#) with any ball on the [teeing ground](#) of the hole being played, the tee-markers are deemed to be fixed. In these circumstances, if the player moves or allows to be moved a tee-marker for the purpose of avoiding interference with his [stance](#), the area of his intended swing or his [line of play](#), he incurs the penalty for a breach of Rule [13-2](#).

## 11-3. Ball Falling off Tee

If a ball, when not [in play](#), falls off a [tee](#) or is knocked off a [tee](#) by the player in [addressing](#) it, it may be re-teed, without penalty. However, if a [stroke](#) is made at the ball in these circumstances, whether the ball is moving or not, the [stroke](#) counts, but there is no penalty.

## 11-4. Playing from Outside Teeing Ground

### ■ a. Match Play

If a player, when starting a hole, plays a ball from outside the [teeing ground](#), there is no penalty, but the opponent may immediately require the player to cancel the [stroke](#) and play a ball from within the [teeing ground](#).

### ■ b. Stroke Play

If a [competitor](#), when starting a hole, plays a ball from outside the [teeing ground](#), he incurs a penalty of two strokes and must then play a ball from within the [teeing ground](#).

If the [competitor](#) makes a [stroke](#) from the next [teeing ground](#) without first correcting his mistake or, in the case of the last hole of the round, leaves the [putting green](#) without first declaring his intention to correct his mistake, he is disqualified.

The [stroke](#) from outside the [teeing ground](#) and any subsequent [strokes](#) by the [competitor](#) on the hole prior to his correction of the mistake do not count in his score.

## 11-5. Playing from Wrong Teeing Ground

The provisions of Rule [11-4](#) apply.

## Rule 12. Searching for and Identifying Ball

### 12-1. Searching for Ball; Seeing Ball

In searching for his ball anywhere on the [course](#), the player may touch or bend long grass, rushes, bushes, whins, heather or the like, but only to the extent necessary to find and identify it, provided that this does not improve the lie of the ball, the area of his intended [stance](#) or swing or his [line of play](#).

A player is not necessarily entitled to see his ball when making a [stroke](#).

In a [hazard](#), if a ball is believed to be covered by [loose impediments](#) or sand, the player may remove by probing or raking with a club or otherwise, as many [loose impediments](#) or as much sand as will enable him to see a part of the ball. If an excess is removed, there is no penalty and the ball must be re-covered so that only a part of the ball is visible. If the ball is [moved](#) during the removal, there is no penalty; the ball must be replaced and, if necessary, re-covered. As to removal of [loose impediments](#) outside a [hazard](#), see Rule [23-1](#).

If a ball lying in or on an [obstruction](#) or in an [abnormal ground condition](#) is accidentally [moved](#) during search, there is no penalty; the ball must be replaced, unless the player elects to proceed under Rule [24-1b](#), [24-2b](#) or [25-1b](#) as applicable. If the player replaces the ball, he may still proceed under Rule [24-1b](#), [24-2b](#) or [25-1b](#) if applicable.

If a ball is believed to be lying in water in a [water hazard](#), the player may probe for it with a club or otherwise. If the ball is [moved](#) in probing, it must be replaced, unless the player elects to proceed under Rule [26-1](#). There is no penalty for causing the ball to [move](#), provided the movement of the ball was directly attributable to the specific act of probing. Otherwise, the player incurs a [penalty stroke](#) under Rule [18-2a](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule [12-1](#):

[Match play](#) - Loss of hole; [Stroke play](#) - Two strokes.

### 12-2. Identifying Ball

The responsibility for playing the proper ball rests with the player. Each player should put an identification mark on his ball.

If a player has reason to believe a ball at rest is his and it is necessary to lift the ball in order to identify it, he may lift the ball, without penalty, in order to do so.

Before lifting the ball, the player must announce his intention to his opponent in match play or his [marker](#) or a [fellow-competitor](#) in stroke play and mark the position of the ball. He may then lift the ball and identify it, provided that he gives his opponent, [marker](#) or [fellow-competitor](#) an opportunity to observe the lifting and replacement. The ball must not be cleaned beyond the extent necessary for identification when lifted under Rule [12-2](#).

If the ball is the player's ball and he fails to comply with all or any part of this procedure, or he lifts his ball in order to identify it when not necessary to do so, he incurs a penalty of one stroke. If the lifted ball is the player's ball, he must replace it. If he fails to do so, he incurs the general penalty for a breach of Rule [12-2](#), but there is no additional penalty under this Rule.

**Note:** If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered, see Rule [20-3b](#).

\*Penalty for Breach of Rule [12-2](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

\*If a player incurs the general penalty for a breach of Rule [12-2](#), there is no additional penalty under this Rule.

## Rule 13. Ball Played as It Lies

### 13-1. General

The ball must be played as it lies, except as otherwise provided in the [Rules](#).

(Ball at rest moved - see Rule [18](#).)

### 13-2. Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play

A player must not improve or allow to be improved:

- the position or lie of his ball,
- the area of his intended [stance](#) or swing,
- his [line of play](#) or a reasonable extension of that line beyond the [hole](#), or
- the area in which he is to drop or place a ball,

by any of the following actions:

- pressing a club on the ground,
- moving, bending or breaking anything growing or fixed (including immovable [obstructions](#) and objects defining [out of bounds](#)),
- creating or eliminating irregularities of surface,
- removing or pressing down sand, loose soil, replaced divots or other cut turf placed in position, or
- removing dew, frost or water.

However, the player incurs no penalty if the action occurs:

- in grounding the club lightly when [addressing the ball](#),
- in fairly taking his [stance](#),
- in making a [stroke](#) or the backward movement of his club for a [stroke](#) and the [stroke](#) is made,
- in creating or eliminating irregularities of surface within the [teeing ground](#) (Rule [11-1](#)) or in removing dew, frost or water from the [teeing ground](#), or
- on the [putting green](#) in removing sand and loose soil or in repairing damage (Rule [16-1](#)).

**Exception:** Ball in [hazard](#) - see Rule [13-4](#).

### 13-3. Building Stance

A player is entitled to place his feet firmly in taking his [stance](#), but he must not build a [stance](#).

### 13-4. Ball in Hazard; Prohibited Actions

Except as provided in the [Rules](#), before making a [stroke](#) at a ball that is in a [hazard](#) (whether a [bunker](#) or a [water hazard](#)) or that, having been lifted from a [hazard](#), may be dropped or placed in the [hazard](#), the player must not:

- a. Test the condition of the [hazard](#) or any similar [hazard](#);
- b. Touch the ground in the [hazard](#) or water in the [water hazard](#) with his hand or a club; or

c. Touch or move a [loose impediment](#) lying in or touching the [hazard](#).

**Exceptions:**

1. Provided nothing is done that constitutes testing the condition of the [hazard](#) or improves the lie of the ball, there is no penalty if the player (a) touches the ground or [loose impediments](#) in any [hazard](#) or water in a [water hazard](#) as a result of or to prevent falling, in removing an [obstruction](#), in measuring or in marking the position of, retrieving, lifting, placing or replacing a ball under any [Rule](#) or

(b) places his clubs in a [hazard](#).

2. After making the [stroke](#), if the ball is still in the [hazard](#) or has been lifted from the [hazard](#) and may be dropped or placed in the [hazard](#), the player may smooth sand or soil in the [hazard](#), provided nothing is done to breach Rule [13-2](#) with respect to his next [stroke](#). If the ball is outside the [hazard](#) after the [stroke](#), the player may smooth sand or soil in the [hazard](#) without restriction.

3. If the player makes a [stroke](#) from a [hazard](#) and the ball comes to rest in another [hazard](#), Rule [13-4a](#) does not apply to any subsequent actions taken in the [hazard](#) from which the [stroke](#) was made.

**Note:** At any time, including at [address](#) or in the backward movement for the [stroke](#), the player may touch, with a club or otherwise, any [obstruction](#), any construction declared by the [Committee](#) to be an integral part of the [course](#) or any grass, bush, tree or other growing thing.

Penalty For Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

(Searching for ball - see Rule [12-1](#).)

(Relief for ball in water hazard - see Rule [26](#).)

## Rule 14. Striking the Ball

### 14-1. Ball to Be Fairly Struck At

The ball must be fairly struck at with the head of the club and must not be pushed, scraped or spooned.

### 14-2. Assistance

In making a stroke, a player must not:

- a. Accept physical assistance or protection from the elements; or
- b. Allow his caddie, his partner or his partner's caddie to position himself on or close to an extension of the line of play or the line of putt behind the ball.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 14-1 or 14-2:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

### 14-3. Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment

The United States Golf Association (USGA) reserves the right, at any time, to change the Rules relating to artificial devices, unusual equipment and the unusual use of equipment, and make or change the interpretations relating to these Rules.

A player in doubt as to whether use of an item would constitute a breach of Rule 14-3 should consult the USGA.

A manufacturer should submit to the USGA a sample of an item to be manufactured for a ruling as to whether its use during a stipulated round would cause a player to be in breach of Rule 14-3. The sample becomes the property of the USGA for reference purposes. If a manufacturer fails to submit a sample or, having submitted a sample, fails to await a ruling before manufacturing and/or marketing the item, the manufacturer assumes the risk of a ruling that use of the item would be contrary to the *Rules*.

Except as provided in the *Rules*, during a stipulated round the player must not use any artificial device or unusual equipment, or use any equipment in an unusual manner:

- a. That might assist him in making a stroke or in his play; or
- b. For the purpose of gauging or measuring distance or conditions that might affect his play; or
- c. That might assist him in gripping the club, except that:

- (i) plain gloves may be worn;
- (ii) resin, powder and drying or moisturizing agents may be used; and
- (iii) a towel or handkerchief may be wrapped around the grip.

#### Exceptions:

1. A player is not in breach of this Rule if (a) the equipment or device is designed for or has the effect of alleviating a medical condition, (b) the player has a legitimate medical reason to use the equipment or device, and (c) the Committee is satisfied that its use does not give the player any undue advantage over other players.

2. A player is not in breach of this Rule if he uses [equipment](#) in a traditionally accepted manner.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [14-3](#): Disqualification.

**Note:** The [Committee](#) may make a Local Rule allowing players to use devices that measure or gauge distance only.

#### **14-4. Striking the Ball More Than Once**

If a player's club strikes the ball more than once in the course of a [stroke](#), the player must count the [stroke](#) and add a [penalty stroke](#), making two [strokes](#) in all.

#### **14-5. Playing Moving Ball**

A player must not make a [stroke](#) at his ball while it is moving.

#### **Exceptions:**

- Ball falling off [tee](#) - Rule [11-3](#).
- Striking the ball more than once - Rule [14-4](#).
- Ball moving in water - Rule [14-6](#).

When the ball begins to [move](#) only after the player has begun the [stroke](#) or the backward movement of his club for the [stroke](#), he incurs no penalty under this Rule for playing a moving ball, but he is not exempt from any penalty under the following Rules:

- Ball at rest [moved](#) by player - Rule [18-2a](#).
- Ball at rest moving after [address](#) - Rule [18-2b](#).

(Ball purposely deflected or stopped by player, partner or caddie - see Rule [1-2](#).)

#### **14-6. Ball Moving in Water**

When a ball is moving in water in a [water hazard](#), the player may, without penalty, make a [stroke](#), but he must not delay making his [stroke](#) in order to allow the wind or current to improve the position of the ball. A ball moving in water in a [water hazard](#) may be lifted if the player elects to invoke Rule 26.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [14-5](#) or [14-6](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## Rule 15. Substituted Ball; Wrong Ball

### 15-1. General

A player must hole out with the ball played from the teeing ground unless the ball is lost or out of bounds or the player substitutes another ball, whether or not substitution is permitted (see 15-2). If a player plays a wrong ball, see Rule 15-3.

### 15-2. Substituted Ball

A player may substitute a ball when proceeding under a Rule that permits the player to play, drop or place another ball in completing the play of a hole. The substituted ball becomes the ball in play.

If a player substitutes a ball when not permitted to do so under the Rules, that substituted ball is not a wrong ball; it becomes the ball in play. If the mistake is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6 and the player makes a stroke at a wrongly substituted ball, he loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play under the applicable Rule and, in stroke play, must play out the hole with the substituted ball.

**Exception:** If a player incurs a penalty for making a stroke from a wrong place, there is no additional penalty for substituting a ball when not permitted.

(Playing from wrong place - see Rule 20-7.)

### 15-3. Wrong Ball

#### ■ a. Match Play

If a player makes a stroke at a wrong ball, he loses the hole.

If the wrong ball belongs to another player, its owner must place a ball on the spot from which the wrong ball was first played.

If the player and opponent exchange balls during the play of a hole, the first to make a stroke at a wrong ball loses the hole; when this cannot be determined, the hole must be played out with the balls exchanged.

**Exception:** There is no penalty if a player makes a stroke at a wrong ball that is moving in water in a water hazard. Any strokes made at a wrong ball moving in water in a water hazard do not count in the player's score. The player must correct his mistake by playing the correct ball or by proceeding under the Rules.

#### ■ b. Stroke Play

If a competitor makes a stroke or strokes at a wrong ball, he incurs a penalty of two strokes.

The competitor must correct his mistake by playing the correct ball or by proceeding under the Rules. If he fails to correct his mistake before making a stroke on the next teeing ground or, in the case of the last hole of the round, fails to declare his intention to correct his mistake before leaving the putting green, he is disqualified.

strokes made by a competitor with a wrong ball do not count in his score. If the wrong ball belongs to another competitor, its owner must place a ball on the spot from which the wrong ball was first played.

**Exception:** There is no penalty if a [competitor](#) makes a [stroke](#) at a [wrong ball](#) that is moving in water in a [water hazard](#). Any [strokes](#) made at a [wrong ball](#) moving in water in a [water hazard](#) do not count in the [competitor's](#) score.

(Lie of ball to be placed or replaced altered - see Rule [20-3b](#).)

(Spot not determinable - see Rule [20-3c](#).)

# Rule 16. The Putting Green

## 16-1. General

### ■ a. Touching Line of Putt

The [line of putt](#) must not be touched except:

- (i) the player may remove [loose impediments](#), provided he does not press anything down;
- (ii) the player may place the club in front of the ball when [addressing](#) it, provided he does not press anything down;
- (iii) in measuring - Rule [18-6](#);
- (iv) in lifting or replacing the ball - Rule [16-1b](#);
- (v) in pressing down a ball-marker;
- (vi) in repairing old [hole](#) plugs or ball marks on the [putting green](#) - Rule [16-1c](#); and
- (vii) in removing movable [obstructions](#) - Rule [24-1](#).

(Indicating line for putting on putting green - see Rule [8-2b](#).)

### ■ b. Lifting and Cleaning Ball

A ball on the [putting green](#) may be lifted and, if desired, cleaned. The position of the ball must be marked before it is lifted, and the ball must be replaced (see Rule [20-1](#)).

### ■ c. Repair of Hole Plugs, Ball Marks and Other Damage

The player may repair an old [hole](#) plug or damage to the [putting green](#) caused by the impact of a ball, whether or not the player's ball lies on the [putting green](#). If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally [moved](#) in the process of the repair, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of repairing an old [hole](#) plug or damage to the [putting green](#) caused by the impact of a ball. Otherwise, Rule [18](#) applies.

Any other damage to the [putting green](#) must not be repaired if it might assist the player in his subsequent play of the hole.

### ■ d. Testing Surface

During the [stipulated round](#), a player must not test the surface of any [putting green](#) by rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface.

**Exception:** Between the play of two holes, a player may test the surface of any practice [putting green](#) and the [putting green](#) of the hole last played, unless the [Committee](#) has prohibited such action (see Note 2 to Rule [7-2](#)).

### ■ e. Standing Astride or on Line of Putt

The player must not make a [stroke](#) on the [putting green](#) from a [stance](#) astride, or with either foot touching, the [line of putt](#) or an extension of that line behind the ball.

**Exception:** There is no penalty if the [stance](#) is inadvertently taken on or astride the [line of putt](#) (or an extension of that line behind the ball) or is taken to avoid standing on another player's [line of putt](#) or prospective [line of putt](#).

#### ■ f. Making Stroke While Another Ball in Motion

The player must not make a [stroke](#) while another ball is in motion after a [stroke](#) from the [putting green](#), except that if a player does so, there is no penalty if it was his turn to play.

(Lifting ball assisting or interfering with play while another ball in motion - see Rule [22](#).)

Penalty for Breach of Rule [16-1](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

(Position of caddie or partner - see Rule [14-2](#).)

(Wrong putting green - see Rule [25-3](#).)

#### 16-2. Ball Overhanging Hole

When any part of the ball overhangs the lip of the [hole](#), the player is allowed enough time to reach the [hole](#) without unreasonable delay and an additional ten seconds to determine whether the ball is at rest. If by then the ball has not fallen into the [hole](#), it is deemed to be at rest. If the ball subsequently falls into the [hole](#), the player is deemed to have [holed](#) out with his last [stroke](#) and must add a [penalty stroke](#) to his score for the hole; otherwise, there is no penalty under this Rule.

(Undue delay - see Rule [6-7](#).)

## Rule 17. The Flagstick

### 17-1. Flagstick Attended, Removed or Held Up

Before making a [stroke](#) from anywhere on the [course](#), the player may have the [flagstick](#) attended, removed or held up to indicate the position of the [hole](#).

If the [flagstick](#) is not attended, removed or held up before the player makes a [stroke](#), it must not be attended, removed or held up during the [stroke](#) or while the player's ball is in motion if doing so might influence the movement of the ball.

**Note 1:** If the [flagstick](#) is in the [hole](#) and anyone stands near it while a [stroke](#) is being made, he is deemed to be attending the [flagstick](#).

**Note 2:** If, prior to the [stroke](#), the [flagstick](#) is attended, removed or held up by anyone with the player's knowledge and he makes no objection, the player is deemed to have authorized it.

**Note 3:** If anyone attends or holds up the [flagstick](#) while a [stroke](#) is being made, he is deemed to be attending the [flagstick](#) until the ball comes to rest.

(Moving attended, removed or held up flagstick while ball in motion - see Rule [24-1](#).)

### 17-2. Unauthorized Attendance

If an opponent or his [caddie](#) in match play or a [fellow-competitor](#) or his [caddie](#) in stroke play, without the player's authority or prior knowledge, attends, removes or holds up the [flagstick](#) during the [stroke](#) or while the ball is in motion, and the act might influence the movement of the ball, the opponent or [fellow-competitor](#) incurs the applicable penalty.

\*Penalty for Breach of Rule [17-1](#) or [17-2](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

\*In stroke play, if a breach of Rule [17-2](#) occurs and the [competitor's](#) ball subsequently strikes the [flagstick](#), the person attending or holding it or anything carried by him, the [competitor](#) incurs no penalty. The ball is played as it lies, except that if the [stroke](#) was made on the [putting green](#), the [stroke](#) is canceled and the ball must be replaced and replayed.

### 17-3. Ball Striking Flagstick or Attendant

The player's ball must not strike:

- a. The [flagstick](#) when it is attended, removed or held up;
- b. The person attending or holding up the [flagstick](#) or anything carried by him; or
- c. The [flagstick](#) in the [hole](#), unattended, when the [stroke](#) has been made on the [putting green](#).

**Exception:** When the [flagstick](#) is attended, removed or held up without the player's authority - see Rule [17-2](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule [17-3](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes and the ball must be played as it lies.

#### **17-4. Ball Resting Against Flagstick**

When a player's ball rests against the flagstick in the hole and the ball is not holed, the player or another person authorized by him may move or remove the flagstick, and if the ball falls into the hole, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke; otherwise, the ball, if moved, must be placed on the lip of the hole, without penalty.

## Rule 18. Ball at Rest Moved

### 18-1. By Outside Agency

If a ball at rest is [moved](#) by an [outside agency](#), there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced.

**Note:** It is a question of fact whether a ball has been [moved](#) by an [outside agency](#). In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that an [outside agency](#) has [moved](#) the ball. In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must play the ball as it lies or, if the ball is not found, proceed under Rule [27-1](#).

(Player's ball at rest moved by another ball - see Rule [18-5](#).)

### 18-2. By Player, Partner, Caddie or Equipment

#### ■ a. General

When a player's ball is [in play](#), if:

- (i) the player, his [partner](#) or either of their [caddies](#) lifts or [moves](#) it, touches it purposely (except with a club in the act of [addressing](#) it) or causes it to [move](#) except as permitted by a [Rule](#), or
- (ii) [equipment](#) of the player or his [partner](#) causes the ball to [move](#), the player incurs a penalty of one stroke. If the ball is moved, it must be replaced, unless the movement of the ball occurs after the player has begun the [stroke](#) or the backward movement of the club for the [stroke](#) and the [stroke](#) is made.

Under the [Rules](#) there is no penalty if a player accidentally causes his ball to [move](#) in the following circumstances:

- In searching for a ball in a [hazard](#) covered by [loose impediments](#) or sand, for a ball in an [obstruction](#) or [abnormal ground condition](#) or for a ball believed to be in water in a [water hazard](#) - Rule [12-1](#)
- In repairing a [hole](#) plug or ball mark - Rule [16-1c](#)
- In measuring - Rule [18-6](#)
- In lifting a ball under a [Rule](#) - Rule [20-1](#)
- In placing or replacing a ball under a [Rule](#) - Rule [20-3a](#)
- In removing a [loose impediment](#) on the [putting green](#) - Rule [23-1](#)
- In removing movable [obstructions](#) - Rule [24-1](#).

#### ■ b. Ball Moving After Address

If a player's [ball in play moves](#) after he has [addressed](#) it (other than as a result of a [stroke](#)), the player is deemed to have [moved](#) the ball and incurs a penalty of one stroke. The ball must be replaced, unless the movement of the ball occurs after the player has begun the [stroke](#) or the backward movement of the club for the [stroke](#) and the [stroke](#) is made.

### 18-3. By Opponent, Caddie or Equipment in Match Play

#### ■ a. During Search

If, during search for a player's ball, an opponent, his [caddie](#) or his [equipment moves](#) the ball, touches it or causes it to [move](#), there is no penalty. If the ball is [moved](#), it must be replaced.

#### ■ b. Other Than During Search

If, other than during search for a player's ball, an opponent, his [caddie](#) or his [equipment moves](#) the ball, touches it purposely or causes it to [move](#), except as otherwise provided in the [Rules](#), the opponent incurs a penalty of one stroke. If the ball is [moved](#), it must be replaced.

(Playing a wrong ball - see Rule [15-3](#).)

(Ball moved in measuring - see Rule [18-6](#).)

#### 18-4. By Fellow-Competitor, Caddie or Equipment in Stroke Play

If a [fellow-competitor](#), his [caddie](#) or his [equipment moves](#) the player's ball, touches it or causes it to [move](#), there is no penalty. If the ball is [moved](#), it must be replaced.

(Playing a wrong ball - see Rule [15-3](#).)

#### 18-5. By Another Ball

If a [ball in play](#) and at rest is [moved](#) by another ball in motion after a [stroke](#), the [moved](#) ball must be replaced.

#### 18-6. Ball Moved in Measuring

If a ball or ball-marker is [moved](#) in measuring while proceeding under or in determining the application of a [Rule](#), the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of measuring. Otherwise, the provisions of Rule [18-2a](#), [18-3b](#) or [18-4](#) apply.

\*Penalty for Breach of Rule:

[Match play](#) - Loss of hole; [Stroke play](#) - Two strokes.

\*If a player who is required to replace a ball fails to do so, or if he makes a [stroke](#) at a ball [substituted](#) under Rule [18](#) when such [substitution](#) is not permitted, he incurs the general penalty for breach of Rule [18](#), but there is no additional penalty under this Rule.

**Note 1:** If a ball to be replaced under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be [substituted](#).

**Note 2:** If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered, see Rule [20-3b](#).

**Note 3:** If it is impossible to determine the spot on which a ball is to be placed, see Rule [20-3c](#).

## Rule 19. Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped

### 19-1. By Outside Agency

If a player's ball in motion is accidentally deflected or stopped by any [outside agency](#), it is a [rub of the green](#), there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, except:

a. If a player's ball in motion after a [stroke](#) other than on the [putting green](#) comes to rest in or on any moving or animate [outside agency](#), the ball must [through the green](#) or in a [hazard](#) be dropped, or on the [putting green](#) be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball came to rest in or on the [outside agency](#), but not nearer the [hole](#), and

b. If a player's ball in motion after a [stroke](#) on the [putting green](#) is deflected or stopped by, or comes to rest in or on, any moving or animate [outside agency](#), except a worm, insect or the like, the [stroke](#) is canceled. The ball must be replaced and replayed.

If the ball is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be [substituted](#).

**Exception:** Ball striking person attending or holding up [flagstick](#) or anything carried by him - see Rule [17-3b](#).

**Note:** If the [referee](#) or the [Committee](#) determines that a player's ball has been purposely deflected or stopped by an [outside agency](#), Rule [1-4](#) applies to the player. If the [outside agency](#) is a [fellow-competitor](#) or his [caddie](#), Rule [1-2](#) applies to the [fellow-competitor](#).

(Player's ball deflected or stopped by another ball - see Rule [19-5](#).)

### 19-2. By Player, Partner, Caddie or Equipment

If a player's ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by himself, his [partner](#) or either of their [caddies](#) or [equipment](#), the player incurs a penalty of one stroke. The ball must be played as it lies, except when it comes to rest in or on the player's, his [partner's](#) or either of their [caddies'](#) clothes or [equipment](#), in which case the ball must [through the green](#) or in a [hazard](#) be dropped, or on the [putting green](#) be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball came to rest in or on the article, but not nearer the [hole](#).

**Exception 1:** Ball striking person attending or holding up a [flagstick](#) or anything carried by him - see Rule [17-3b](#).

**Exception 2:** Dropped ball - see Rule [20-2a](#).

(Ball purposely deflected or stopped by player, partner or caddie - see Rule [1-2](#).)

### 19-3. By Opponent, Caddie or Equipment in Match Play

If a player's ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by an opponent, his [caddie](#) or his [equipment](#), there is no penalty.

The player may, before another [stroke](#) is made by either [Side](#), cancel the [stroke](#) and play a ball, without penalty, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)) or he may play the ball as it lies. However, if the player elects not to cancel the [stroke](#) and the ball has come to rest in or on the opponent's or his [caddie's](#) clothes or [equipment](#), the ball must [through the green](#) or in a [hazard](#) be dropped, or

on the [putting green](#) be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball came to rest in or on the article, but not nearer the [hole](#).

**Exception:** Ball striking person attending or holding up [flagstick](#) or anything carried by him - see Rule [17-3b](#).

(Ball purposely deflected or stopped by opponent or caddie - see Rule [1-2](#).)

#### **19-4. By Fellow-Competitor, Caddie or Equipment in Stroke Play**

See Rule [19-1](#) regarding ball deflected by [outside agency](#).

**Exception:** Ball striking person attending or holding up [flagstick](#) or anything carried by him - see Rule [17-3b](#).

#### **19-5. By Another Ball**

##### **■ a. At Rest**

If a player's ball in motion after a [stroke](#) is deflected or stopped by a [ball in play](#) and at rest, the player must play his ball as it lies. In match play, there is no penalty. In stroke play, there is no penalty, unless both balls lay on the [putting green](#) prior to the [stroke](#), in which case the player incurs a penalty of two strokes.

##### **■ b. In Motion**

If a player's ball in motion after a [stroke](#) is deflected or stopped by another ball in motion after a [stroke](#), the player must play his ball as it lies. There is no penalty, unless the player was in breach of Rule [16-1f](#), in which case he incurs the penalty for breach of that Rule.

**Exception:** If the player's ball is in motion after a [stroke](#) on the [putting green](#) and the other ball in motion is an [outside agency](#) - see Rule [19-1b](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## Rule 20. Lifting, Dropping and Placing; Playing from Wrong Place

### 20-1. Lifting and Marking

A ball to be lifted under the *Rules* may be lifted by the player, his *partner* or another person authorized by the player. In any such case, the player is responsible for any breach of the *Rules*.

The position of the ball must be marked before it is lifted under a *Rule* that requires it to be replaced. If it is not marked, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke and the ball must be replaced. If it is not replaced, the player incurs the general penalty for breach of this Rule, but there is no additional penalty under Rule 20-1.

If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally *moved* in the process of lifting the ball under a *Rule* or marking its position, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball. Otherwise, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under this Rule or Rule 18-2a.

**Exception:** If a player incurs a penalty for failing to act in accordance with Rule 5-3 or 12-2, there is no additional penalty under Rule 20-1.

**Note:** The position of a ball to be lifted should be marked by placing a ball-marker, a small coin or other similar object immediately behind the ball. If the ball-marker interferes with the play, *stance* or *stroke* of another player, it should be placed one or more clubhead-lengths to one side.

### 20-2. Dropping and Re-Dropping

#### ■ a. By Whom and How

A ball to be dropped under the *Rules* must be dropped by the player himself. He must stand erect, hold the ball at shoulder height and arm's length and drop it. If a ball is dropped by any other person or in any other manner and the error is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke.

If the ball when dropped touches any person or the *equipment* of any player before or after it strikes a part of the *course* and before it comes to rest, the ball must be re-dropped, without penalty. There is no limit to the number of times a ball must be re-dropped in these circumstances.

(Taking action to influence position or movement of ball - see Rule 1-2.)

#### ■ b. Where to Drop

When a ball is to be dropped as near as possible to a specific spot, it must be dropped not nearer the *hole* than the specific spot which, if it is not precisely known to the player, must be estimated.

A ball when dropped must first strike a part of the *course* where the applicable *Rule* requires it to be dropped. If it is not so dropped, Rules 20-6 and 20-7 apply.

#### ■ c. When to Re-Drop

A dropped ball must be re-dropped, without penalty, if it:

- (i) rolls into and comes to rest in a *hazard*;
- (ii) rolls out of and comes to rest outside a *hazard*;
- (iii) rolls onto and comes to rest on a *putting green*;
- (iv) rolls and comes to rest *out of bounds*;
- (v) rolls to and comes to rest in a position where there is interference by the condition from which relief was taken under Rule 24-2b (immovable obstruction), Rule 25-1 (abnormal ground conditions), Rule 25-3 (wrong putting green) or a Local Rule (Rule 33-8a), or rolls back into the pitch-mark from which it was lifted under Rule 25-2 (embedded ball);
- (vi) rolls and comes to rest more than two club-lengths from where it first struck a part of the *course*; or
- (vii) rolls and comes to rest nearer the *hole* than:
  - (a) its original position or estimated position (see Rule 20-2b) unless otherwise permitted by the *Rules*; or
  - (b) the *nearest point of relief* or maximum available relief (Rule 24-2, 25-1 or 25-3); or
  - (c) the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the *water hazard* or *lateral water hazard* (Rule 26-1).

If the ball when re-dropped rolls into any position listed above, it must be placed as near as possible to the spot where it first struck a part of the *course* when re-dropped.

**Note 1:** If a ball when dropped or re-dropped comes to rest and subsequently *moves*, the ball must be played as it lies, unless the provisions of any other *Rule* apply.

**Note 2:** If a ball to be re-dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be *substituted*.

(Use of Dropping Zone - see Appendix I; Part B; Section 8.)

### 20-3. Placing and Replacing

#### ■ a. By Whom and Where

A ball to be placed under the *Rules* must be placed by the player or his *partner*. If a ball is to be replaced, the player, his *partner* or the person who lifted or *moved* it must place it on the spot from which it was lifted or *moved*. If the ball is placed or replaced by any other person and the error is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke. In any such case, the player is responsible for any other breach of the *Rules* that occurs as a result of the placing or replacing of the ball.

If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally *moved* in the process of placing or replacing the ball, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of placing or replacing the ball or removing the ball-marker. Otherwise, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a or 20-1.

If a ball to be replaced is placed other than on the spot from which it was lifted or *moved* and the error is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6, the player incurs the general penalty, loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play, for a breach of the applicable *Rule*.

#### ■ b. Lie of Ball to Be Placed or Replaced Altered

If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered:

(i) except in a *hazard*, the ball must be placed in the nearest lie most similar to the original lie that is not more than one club-length from the original lie, not nearer the *hole* and not in a *hazard*;

(ii) in a *water hazard*, the ball must be placed in accordance with Clause (i) above, except that the ball must be placed in the *water hazard*;

(iii) in a *bunker*, the original lie must be re-created as nearly as possible and the ball must be placed in that lie.

#### ■ c. Spot Not Determinable

If it is impossible to determine the spot where the ball is to be placed or replaced:

(i) *through the green*, the ball must be dropped as near as possible to the place where it lay but not in a *hazard* or on a *putting green*;

(ii) in a *hazard*, the ball must be dropped in the *hazard* as near as possible to the place where it lay;

(iii) on the *putting green*, the ball must be placed as near as possible to the place where it lay but not in a *hazard*.

**Exception:** When resuming play (Rule 6-8d), if the spot where the ball is to be placed is impossible to determine, it must be estimated and the ball placed on the estimated spot.

#### ■ d. Ball Fails to Come to Rest on Spot

If a ball when placed fails to come to rest on the spot on which it was placed, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced. If it still fails to come to rest on that spot:

(i) except in a *hazard*, it must be placed at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the *hole* and not in a *hazard*;

(ii) in a *hazard*, it must be placed in the *hazard* at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the *hole*.

If a ball when placed comes to rest on the spot on which it is placed, and it subsequently *moves*, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, unless the provisions of any other *Rule* apply.

Penalty for Breach of Rule [20-1](#), [20-2](#) or [20-3](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

#### 20-4. When Ball Dropped or Placed Is in Play

If the player's *ball in play* has been lifted, it is again in play when dropped or placed.

A *substituted ball* becomes the *ball in play* when it has been dropped or placed.

(Ball incorrectly substituted - see 15-2.)

(Lifting ball incorrectly substituted, dropped or placed - see Rule 20-6.)

## 20-5. Making Next Stroke from Where Previous Stroke Made

When a player elects or is required to make his next *stroke* from where a previous *stroke* was made, he must proceed as follows:

- a) On the Teeing Ground: The ball to be played must be played from within the *teeing ground*. It may be played from anywhere within the *teeing ground* and may be teed.
- b) Through the Green: The ball to be played must be dropped and when dropped must first strike a part of the *course through the green*.
- c) In a Hazard: The ball to be played must be dropped and when dropped must first strike a part of the *course* in the *hazard*.
- d) On the Putting Green: The ball to be played must be placed on the *putting green*.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 20-5:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## 20-6. Lifting Ball Incorrectly Substituted, Dropped or Placed

A ball incorrectly *substituted*, dropped or placed in a wrong place or otherwise not in accordance with the *Rules* but not played may be lifted, without penalty, and the player must then proceed correctly.

## 20-7. Playing from Wrong Place

### ■ a. General

A player has played from a wrong place if he makes a *stroke* at his *ball in play*:

- i. on a part of the *course* where the *Rules* do not permit a *stroke* to be played or a ball to be dropped or placed; or
- ii. when the *Rules* require a dropped ball to be re-dropped or a *moved* ball to be replaced.

**Note:** For a ball played from outside the *teeing ground* or from a wrong *teeing ground* - see Rule 11-4.

### ■ b. Match Play

If a player makes a *stroke* from a wrong place, he loses the hole.

### ■ c. Stroke Play

If a *competitor* makes a *stroke* from a wrong place, he incurs a penalty of two strokes under the applicable *Rule*. He must play out the hole with the ball played from the wrong place, without correcting his error, provided he has not committed a serious breach (see Note 1).

If a *competitor* becomes aware that he has played from a wrong place and believes that he may have committed a serious breach, he must, before making a *stroke* on the next *teeing ground*, play out the hole with a second ball played in accordance with the *Rules*. If the hole being played is the last hole of the round, he must declare,

before leaving the *putting green*, that he will play out the hole with a second ball played in accordance with the *Rules*.

If the *competitor* has played a second ball, he must report the facts to the *Committee* before returning his score card; if he fails to do so, he is disqualified. The *Committee* must determine whether the *competitor* has committed a serious breach of the applicable *Rule*. If he has, the score with the second ball counts and the *competitor* must add two *penalty strokes* to his score with that ball. If the *competitor* has committed a serious breach and has failed to correct it as outlined above, he is disqualified.

**Note 1:** A *competitor* is deemed to have committed a serious breach of the applicable *Rule* if the *Committee* considers he has gained a significant advantage as a result of playing from a wrong place.

**Note 2:** If a *competitor* plays a second ball under Rule 20-7c and it is ruled not to count, *strokes* made with that ball and *penalty strokes* incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded. If the second ball is ruled to count, the *stroke* made from the wrong place and any *strokes* subsequently taken with the original ball including *penalty strokes* incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.

**Note 3:** If a player incurs a penalty for making a *stroke* from a wrong place, there is no additional penalty for *substituting* a ball when not permitted.

## Rule 21. Cleaning Ball

A ball on the *putting green* may be cleaned when lifted under Rule [16-1b](#). Elsewhere, a ball may be cleaned when lifted, except when it has been lifted:

- a) To determine if it is unfit for play (Rule [5-3](#));
- b) For identification (Rule [12-2](#)), in which case it may be cleaned only to the extent necessary for identification; or
- c) Because it is assisting or interfering with play (Rule [22](#)).

If a player cleans his ball during play of a hole except as provided in this Rule, he incurs a penalty of one stroke and the ball, if lifted, must be replaced.

If a player who is required to replace a ball fails to do so, he incurs the general penalty under the applicable *Rule*, but there is no additional penalty under Rule [21](#).

**Exception:** If a player incurs a penalty for failing to act in accordance with Rule [5-3](#), [12-2](#) or [22](#), there is no additional penalty under Rule [21](#).

## Rule 22. Ball Assisting or Interfering with Play

### 22-1. Ball Assisting Play

Except when a ball is in motion, if a player considers that a ball might assist any other player, he may:

- a) Lift the ball if it is his ball, or
- b) Have any other ball lifted.

A ball lifted under this Rule must be replaced (see Rule [20-3](#)). The ball must not be cleaned, unless it lies on the [putting green](#) (see Rule [21](#)).

In stroke play, a player required to lift his ball may play first rather than lift the ball.

In stroke play, if the [Committee](#) determines that [competitors](#) have agreed not to lift a ball that might assist any [competitor](#), they are disqualified.

### 22-2. Ball Interfering with Play

Except when a ball is in motion, if a player considers that another ball might interfere with his play, he may have it lifted.

A ball lifted under this Rule must be replaced (see Rule [20-3](#)). The ball must not be cleaned, unless it lies on the [putting green](#) (see Rule [21](#)).

In stroke play, a player required to lift his ball may play first rather than lift the ball.

**Note:** Except on the [putting green](#), a player may not lift his ball solely because he considers that it might interfere with the play of another player. If a player lifts his ball without being asked to do so, he incurs a penalty of one stroke for a breach of Rule [18-2a](#), but there is no additional penalty under Rule [22](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## Rule 23. Loose Impediments

### 23-1. Relief

Except when both the [loose impediment](#) and the ball lie in or touch the same [hazard](#), any [loose impediment](#) may be removed without penalty.

If the ball lies anywhere other than on the [putting green](#) and the removal of a [loose impediment](#) by the player causes the ball to [move](#), Rule [18-2a](#) applies.

On the [putting green](#), if the ball or ball-marker is accidentally [moved](#) in the process of removing a [loose impediment](#), the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the removal of the [loose impediment](#). Otherwise, if the player causes the ball to [move](#), he incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule [18-2a](#).

When a ball is in motion, a [loose impediment](#) that might influence the movement of the ball must not be removed.

**Note:** If the ball lies in a [hazard](#), the player must not touch or move any [loose impediment](#) lying in or touching the same [hazard](#) - see Rule [13-4c](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

(Searching for ball in hazard - see Rule [12-1](#).)

(Touching line of putt - see Rule [16-1a](#).)

## Rule 24. Obstructions

### 24-1. Movable Obstruction

A player may take relief, without penalty, from a movable [obstruction](#) as follows:

- a) If the ball does not lie in or on the [obstruction](#), the [obstruction](#) may be removed. If the ball [moves](#), it must be replaced, and there is no penalty, provided that the movement of the ball is directly attributable to the removal of the [obstruction](#). Otherwise, Rule [18-2a](#) applies.
- b) If the ball lies in or on the [obstruction](#), the ball may be lifted and the [obstruction](#) removed. The ball must [through the green](#) or in a [hazard](#) be dropped, or on the [putting green](#) be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball lay in or on the [obstruction](#), but not nearer the [hole](#).

The ball may be cleaned when lifted under this Rule.

When a ball is in motion, an [obstruction](#) that might influence the movement of the ball, other than [equipment](#) of any player or the [flagstick](#) when attended, removed or held up, must not be moved.

(Exerting influence on ball - see Rule [1-2](#).)

**Note:** If a ball to be dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be [substituted](#).

### 24-2. Immovable Obstruction

#### ■ a. Interference

Interference by an immovable [obstruction](#) occurs when a ball lies in or on the [obstruction](#), or when the [obstruction](#) interferes with the player's [stance](#) or the area of his intended swing. If the player's ball lies on the [putting green](#), interference also occurs if an immovable [obstruction](#) on the [putting green](#) intervenes on his [line of putt](#). Otherwise, intervention on the [line of play](#) is not, of itself, interference under this Rule.

#### ■ b. Relief

Except when the ball is in a [water hazard](#) or a [lateral water hazard](#), a player may take relief from interference by an immovable [obstruction](#) as follows:

- i. Through the Green: If the ball lies [through the green](#), the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, within one club-length of and not nearer the [hole](#) than the [nearest point of relief](#). The [nearest point of relief](#) must not be in a [hazard](#) or on a [putting green](#). When the ball is dropped within one club-length of the [nearest point of relief](#), the ball must first strike a part of the [course](#) at a spot that avoids interference by the immovable [obstruction](#) and is not in a [hazard](#) and not on a [putting green](#).
- ii. In a Bunker: If the ball is in a [bunker](#), the player must lift the ball and drop it either:
  - a) Without penalty, in accordance with Clause (i) above, except that the [nearest point of relief](#) must be in the [bunker](#) and the ball must be dropped in the [bunker](#); or
  - b) Under penalty of one stroke, outside the [bunker](#) keeping the point where the ball lay directly between the [hole](#) and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind the [bunker](#) the ball may be dropped.

- iii. On the Putting Green: If the ball lies on the [putting green](#), the player must lift the ball and place it, without penalty, at the [nearest point of relief](#) that is not in a [hazard](#). The [nearest point of relief](#) may be off the [putting green](#).
- iv. On the Teeing Ground: If the ball lies on the [teeing ground](#), the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, in accordance with Clause [\(i\)](#) above.

The ball may be cleaned when lifted under this Rule.

(Ball rolling to a position where there is interference by the condition from which relief was taken - see Rule [20-2c\(v\)](#).)

**Exception:** A player may not take relief under this Rule if (a) it is clearly unreasonable for him to make a [stroke](#) because of interference by anything other than an immovable [obstruction](#) or (b) interference by an immovable [obstruction](#) would occur only through use of an unnecessarily abnormal [stance](#), swing or direction of play.

**Note 1:** If a ball is in a [water hazard](#) (including a [lateral water hazard](#)), the player may not take relief from interference by an immovable [obstruction](#). The player must play the ball as it lies or proceed under Rule [26-1](#).

**Note 2:** If a ball to be dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be [substituted](#).

**Note 3:** The [Committee](#) may make a Local Rule stating that the player must determine the [nearest point of relief](#) without crossing over, through or under the [obstruction](#).

### **24-3. Ball in Obstruction Not Found**

It is a question of fact whether a ball that has not been found after having been struck toward an [obstruction](#) is in the [obstruction](#). In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that the ball is in the [obstruction](#). In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must proceed under Rule [27-1](#).

#### **■ a. Ball in Movable Obstruction Not Found**

If it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in a movable [obstruction](#), the player may [substitute](#) another ball and take relief without penalty under this Rule. If he elects to do so, he must remove the [obstruction](#) and [through the green](#) or in a [hazard](#) drop a ball, or on the [putting green](#) place a ball, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the movable [obstruction](#), but not nearer the hole.

#### **■ b. Ball in Immovable Obstruction Not Found**

If it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in an immovable [obstruction](#), the player may take relief under this Rule. If he elects to do so, the spot where the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the [obstruction](#) must be determined and, for the purpose of applying this Rule, the ball is deemed to lie at this spot and the player must proceed as follows:

- i. Through the Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable [obstruction](#) at a spot [through the green](#), the player may [substitute](#) another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule [24-2b\(i\)](#).

- ii. In a Bunker: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot in a bunker, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 24-2b(ii).
- iii. In a Water Hazard (including a Lateral Water Hazard): If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot in a water hazard, the player is not entitled to relief without penalty. The player must proceed under Rule 26-1.
- iv. On the Putting Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot on the putting green, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 24-2b(iii).

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

# Rule 25. Abnormal Ground Conditions, Embedded Ball and Wrong Putting Green

## 25-1. Abnormal Ground Conditions

### ■ a. Interference

Interference by an abnormal ground condition occurs when a ball lies in or touches the condition or when the condition interferes with the player's stance or the area of his intended swing. If the player's ball lies on the putting green, interference also occurs if an abnormal ground condition on the putting green intervenes on his line of putt. Otherwise, intervention on the line of play is not, of itself, interference under this Rule.

**Note:** The Committee may make a Local Rule stating that interference by an abnormal ground condition with a player's stance is deemed not to be, of itself, interference under this Rule.

### ■ b. Relief

Except when the ball is in a water hazard or a lateral water hazard, a player may take relief from interference by an abnormal ground condition as follows:

- i. Through the Green: If the ball lies through the green, the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest point of relief. The nearest point of relief must not be in a hazard or on a putting green. When the ball is dropped within one club-length of the nearest point of relief, the ball must first strike a part of the course at a spot that avoids interference by the condition and is not in a hazard and not on a putting green.
- ii. In a Bunker: If the ball is in a bunker, the player must lift the ball and drop it either:
  - (a) Without penalty, in accordance with Clause(i) above, except that the nearest point of relief must be in the bunker and the ball must be dropped in the bunker or, if complete relief is impossible, as near as possible to the spot where the ball lay, but not nearer the hole, on a part of the course in the bunker that affords maximum available relief from the condition; or
  - (b) Under penalty of one stroke, outside the bunker, keeping the point where the ball lay directly between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind the bunker the ball may be dropped.
- iii. On the Putting Green: If the ball lies on the putting green, the player must lift the ball and place it, without penalty, at the nearest point of relief that is not in a hazard or, if complete relief is impossible, at the nearest position to where it lay that affords maximum available relief from the condition, but not nearer the hole and not in a hazard. The nearest point of relief or maximum available relief may be off the putting green.
- iv. On the Teeing Ground: If the ball lies on the teeing ground, the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, in accordance with Clause(i) above.

The ball may be cleaned when lifted under Rule 25-1b.

(Ball rolling to a position where there is interference by the condition from which relief was taken - see Rule 20-2c(v).)

**Exception:** A player may not take relief under this Rule if (a) it is clearly unreasonable for him to make a stroke because of interference by anything other than an abnormal ground condition or (b) interference by

an [abnormal ground condition](#) would occur only through use of an unnecessarily abnormal [stance](#), swing or direction of play.

**Note 1:** If a ball is in a [water hazard](#) (including a [lateral water hazard](#)), the player is not entitled to relief without penalty from interference by an [abnormal ground condition](#). The player must play the ball as it lies (unless prohibited by Local Rule) or proceed under Rule [26-1](#).

**Note 2:** If a ball to be dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be [substituted](#).

### ■ c. Ball in Abnormal Ground Condition Not Found

It is a question of fact whether a ball that has not been found after having been struck toward an [abnormal ground condition](#) is in such a condition. In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that the ball is in the [abnormal ground condition](#). In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must proceed under Rule [27-1](#).

If it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in an [abnormal ground condition](#), the player may take relief under this Rule. If he elects to do so, the spot where the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the [abnormal ground condition](#) must be determined and, for the purpose of applying this Rule, the ball is deemed to lie at this spot and the player must proceed as follows:

- i. Through the Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the [abnormal ground condition](#) at a spot [through the green](#), the player may [substitute](#) another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule [25-1b\(i\)](#).
- ii. In a Bunker: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the [abnormal ground condition](#) at a spot in a [bunker](#), the player may [substitute](#) another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule [25-1b\(ii\)](#).
- iii. In a Water Hazard (including a Lateral Water Hazard): If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the [abnormal ground condition](#) at a spot in a [water hazard](#), the player is not entitled to relief without penalty. The player must proceed under Rule [26-1](#).
- iv. On the Putting Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the [abnormal ground condition](#) at a spot on the [putting green](#), the player may [substitute](#) another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule [25-1b\(iii\)](#).

## 25-2. Embedded Ball

A ball embedded in its own pitch-mark in the ground in any closely mown area [through the green](#) may be lifted, cleaned and dropped, without penalty, as near as possible to the spot where it lay but not nearer the [hole](#). The ball when dropped must first strike a part of the [course through the green](#). "Closely mown area" means any area of the [course](#), including paths through the rough, cut to fairway height or less.

## 25-3. Wrong Putting Green

### ■ a. Interference

Interference by a [wrong putting green](#) occurs when a ball is on the [wrong putting green](#).

Interference to a player's [stance](#) or the area of his intended swing is not, of itself, interference under this Rule.

## ■ b. Relief

If a player's ball lies on a [wrong putting green](#), he must not play the ball as it lies. He must take relief, without penalty, as follows:

The player must lift the ball and drop it within one club-length of and not nearer the [hole](#) than the [nearest point of relief](#). The [nearest point of relief](#) must not be in a [hazard](#) or on a [putting green](#). When dropping the ball within one club-length of the [nearest point of relief](#), the ball must first strike a part of the [course](#) at a spot that avoids interference by the [wrong putting green](#) and is not in a [hazard](#) and not on a [putting green](#). The ball may be cleaned when lifted under this Rule.

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## Rule 26. Water Hazards (Including Lateral Water Hazards)

### 26-1. Relief for Ball in Water Hazard

It is a question of fact whether a ball that has not been found after having been struck toward a [water hazard](#) is in the [hazard](#). In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that the ball is in the [hazard](#). In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must proceed under Rule [27-1](#).

If a ball is in a [water hazard](#) or if it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in a [water hazard](#) (whether the ball lies in water or not), the player may under penalty of one stroke:

- a) Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)); or
- b) Drop a ball behind the [water hazard](#), keeping the point at which the original ball last crossed the margin of the [water hazard](#) directly between the [hole](#) and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind the [water hazard](#) the ball may be dropped; or
- c) As additional options available only if the ball last crossed the margin of a [lateral water hazard](#), drop a ball outside the [water hazard](#) within two club-lengths of and not nearer the [hole](#) than (i) the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the [water hazard](#) or (ii) a point on the opposite margin of the [water hazard](#) equidistant from the [hole](#).

When proceeding under this Rule, the player may lift and clean his ball or [substitute](#) a ball.

(Prohibited actions when ball is in hazard - see Rule [13-4](#).)

(Ball moving in water in a water hazard - see Rule [14-6](#).)

### 26-2. Ball Played Within Water Hazard

#### ■ a. Ball Comes to Rest in Same or Another Water Hazard

If a ball played from within a [water hazard](#) comes to rest in the same or another [water hazard](#) after the [stroke](#), the player may:

- i. proceed under Rule [26-1a](#). If, after dropping in the [hazard](#), the player elects not to play the dropped ball, he may:
  - a. proceed under Rule [26-1b](#), or if applicable Rule [26-1c](#), adding the additional penalty of one stroke prescribed by the Rule and using as the reference point the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of this [hazard](#) before it came to rest in this [hazard](#); or
  - b. add an additional penalty of one stroke and play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the last [stroke](#) from outside a [water hazard](#) was made (see Rule [20-5](#)); or
- ii. proceed under Rule [26-1b](#), or if applicable Rule [26-1c](#); or
- iii. under penalty of one stroke, play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the last [stroke](#) from outside a [water hazard](#) was made (see Rule [20-5](#)).

#### ■ b. Ball Lost or Unplayable Outside Hazard or Out of Bounds

If a ball played from within a [water hazard](#) is [lost](#) or deemed unplayable outside the [hazard](#) or is [out of bounds](#), the player may, after taking a penalty of one stroke under Rule [27-1](#) or [28a](#):

- i. play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot in the [hazard](#) from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)); or
- ii. proceed under Rule [26-1b](#), or if applicable Rule [26-1c](#), adding the additional penalty of one stroke prescribed by the Rule and using as the reference point the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the [hazard](#) before it came to rest in the [hazard](#); or
- iii. add an additional penalty of one stroke and play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the last [stroke](#) from outside a [water hazard](#) was made (see Rule [20-5](#)).

**Note 1:** When proceeding under Rule [26-2b](#), the player is not required to drop a ball under Rule [27-1](#) or [28a](#). If he does drop a ball, he is not required to play it. He may alternatively proceed under Rule [26-2b\(ii\)](#) or [\(iii\)](#).

**Note 2:** If a ball played from within a [water hazard](#) is deemed unplayable outside the [hazard](#), nothing in Rule [26-2b](#) precludes the player from proceeding under Rule [28b](#) or [c](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## Rule 27. Ball Lost or Out of Bounds; Provisional Ball

### 27-1. Stroke and Distance; Ball Out of Bounds; Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes

#### ■ a. Proceeding Under Stroke and Distance

At any time, a player may, under penalty of one stroke, play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)), i.e., proceed under penalty of stroke and distance.

Except as otherwise provided in the *Rules*, if a player makes a *stroke* at a ball from the spot at which the original ball was last played, he is deemed to have proceeded under penalty of stroke and distance.

#### ■ b. Ball Out of Bounds

If a ball is *out of bounds*, the player must play a ball, under penalty of one stroke, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)).

#### ■ c. Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes

If a ball is *lost* as a result of not being found or identified as his by the player within five minutes after the player's *Side* or his or their *caddies* have begun to search for it, the player must play a ball, under penalty of one stroke, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)).

#### Exceptions:

1. If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball that has not been found is in an *obstruction* (Rule [24-3](#)) or is in an *abnormal ground condition* (Rule [25-1c](#)), the player may proceed under the applicable *Rule*.
2. If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball that has not been found has been moved by an *outside agency* (Rule [18-1](#)) or is in a *water hazard* (Rule [26-1](#)), the player must proceed under the applicable *Rule*.

#### PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE [27-1](#):

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

### 27-2. Provisional Ball

#### ■ a. Procedure

If a ball may be *lost* outside a *water hazard* or may be *out of bounds*, to save time the player may play another ball provisionally in accordance with Rule [27-1](#). The player must inform his opponent in match play or his *marker* or a *fellow-competitor* in stroke play that he intends to play a *provisional ball*, and he must play it before he or his *partner* goes forward to search for the original ball.

If he fails to do so and plays another ball, that ball is not a *provisional ball* and becomes the *ball in play* under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule [27-1](#)); the original ball is *lost*.

(Order of play from teeing ground - see Rule [10-3](#).)

**Note:** If a [provisional ball](#) played under Rule [27-2a](#) might be [lost](#) outside a [water hazard](#) or [out of bounds](#), the player may play another [provisional ball](#). If another [provisional ball](#) is played, it bears the same relationship to the previous [provisional ball](#) as the first [provisional ball](#) bears to the original ball.

#### ■ b. When Provisional Ball Becomes Ball in Play

The player may play a [provisional ball](#) until he reaches the place where the original ball is likely to be. If he makes a [stroke](#) with the [provisional ball](#) from the place where the original ball is likely to be or from a point nearer the [hole](#) than that place, the original ball is [lost](#) and the [provisional ball](#) becomes the [ball in play](#) under penalty of stroke and distance(Rule [27-1](#)).

If the original ball is [lost](#) outside a [water hazard](#) or is [out of bounds](#), the [provisional ball](#) becomes the [ball in play](#), under penalty of stroke and distance(Rule [27-1](#)).

If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball is in a [water hazard](#), the player must proceed in accordance with Rule [26-1](#).

**Exception:** If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball is in an [obstruction](#) (Rule [24-3](#)) or an [abnormal ground condition](#) (Rule [25-1c](#)), the player may proceed under the applicable [Rule](#).

#### ■ c. When Provisional Ball to Be Abandoned

If the original ball is neither [lost](#) nor [out of bounds](#), the player must abandon the [provisional ball](#) and continue playing the original ball. If he makes any further [strokes](#) at the [provisional ball](#), he is playing a [wrong ball](#) and the provisions of Rule [15-3](#) apply.

**Note:** If a player plays a [provisional ball](#) under Rule [27-2a](#), the [strokes](#) made after this Rule has been invoked with a [provisional ball](#) subsequently abandoned under Rule [27-2c](#) and [penalty strokes](#) incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.

## Rule 28. Ball Unplayable

The player may deem his ball unplayable at any place on the [course](#), except when the ball is in a [water hazard](#). The player is the sole judge as to whether his ball is unplayable.

If the player deems his ball to be unplayable, he must, under penalty of one stroke:

- a. Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)); or
- b. Drop a ball behind the point where the ball lay, keeping that point directly between the [hole](#) and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind that point the ball may be dropped; or
- c. Drop a ball within two club-lengths of the spot where the ball lay, but not nearer the [hole](#).

If the unplayable ball is in a [bunker](#), the player may proceed under Clause a, b or c. If he elects to proceed under Clause b or c, a ball must be dropped in the [bunker](#).

When proceeding under this Rule, the player may lift and clean his ball or [substitute](#) a ball.

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play - Two strokes.

## Rule 29. Threesomes and Foursomes

### 29-1. General

In a threesome or a foursome, during any stipulated round the Partners must play alternately from the teeing grounds and alternately during the play of each hole. Penalty strokes do not affect the order of play.

### 29-2. Match Play

If a player plays when his partner should have played, his Side loses the hole.

### 29-3. Stroke Play

If the Partners make a stroke or strokes in incorrect order, such stroke or strokes are canceled and the Side incurs a penalty of two strokes. The Side must correct the error by playing a ball in correct order as nearly as possible at the spot from which it first played in incorrect order (see Rule 20-5). If the Side makes a stroke on the next teeing ground without first correcting the error or, in the case of the last hole of the round, leaves the putting green without declaring its intention to correct the error, the Side is disqualified.

## Rule 30. Three-Ball, Best-Ball and Four-Ball Match Play

### 30-1. Rules of Golf Apply

The Rules of Golf, so far as they are not at variance with the following specific Rules, apply to [three-ball, best-ball and four-ball matches](#).

### 30-2. Three-Ball Match Play

#### ■ a. Ball at Rest Moved by an Opponent

Except as otherwise provided in the [Rules](#), if the player's ball is touched or [moved](#) by an opponent, his [caddie](#) or [equipment](#) other than during search, Rule [18-3b](#) applies. That opponent incurs a penalty of one stroke in his match with the player, but not in his match with the other opponent.

#### ■ b. Ball Deflected or Stopped by an Opponent Accidentally

If a player's ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by an opponent, his [caddie](#) or [equipment](#), there is no penalty. In his match with that opponent the player may, before another [stroke](#) is made by either [Side](#), cancel the [stroke](#) and play a ball, without penalty, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)) or he may play the ball as it lies. In his match with the other opponent, the ball must be played as it lies.

**Exception:** Ball striking person attending or holding up [flagstick](#) or anything carried by him - see Rule [17-3b](#).

(Ball purposely deflected or stopped by opponent - see Rule [1-2](#).)

### 30-3. Best-Ball and Four-Ball Match Play

#### ■ a. Representation of Side

A [Side](#) may be represented by one [partner](#) for all or any part of a match; all [Partners](#) need not be present. An absent [partner](#) may join a match between holes, but not during play of a hole.

#### ■ b. Order of Play

Balls belonging to the same [Side](#) may be played in the order the [Side](#) considers best.

#### ■ c. Wrong Ball

If a player incurs the loss of hole penalty under Rule [15-3a](#) for making a [stroke](#) at a [wrong ball](#), he is disqualified for that hole, but his [partner](#) incurs no penalty even if the [wrong ball](#) belongs to him. If the [wrong ball](#) belongs to another player, its owner must place a ball on the spot from which the [wrong ball](#) was first played.

#### ■ d. Penalty to Side

A [side](#) is penalized for a breach of any of the following by any [partner](#):

- Rule [4](#) - Clubs
- Rule [6-4](#) - Caddie
- Any Local Rule or Condition of Competition for which the penalty is an adjustment to the state of the match.

#### ■ e. Disqualification of Side

- A [Side](#) is disqualified if any [partner](#) incurs a penalty of disqualification under any of the following:
  - Rule [1-3](#) - Agreement to Waive Rules
  - Rule [4](#) – Clubs
  - Rule [5-1](#) or [5-2](#) - The Ball
  - Rule [6-2a](#) - Handicap
  - Rule [6-4](#) – Caddie
  - Rule [6-7](#) - Undue Delay; Slow Play
  - Rule [11-1](#) – Teeing
  - Rule [14-3](#) - Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment
  - Rule [33-7](#) - Disqualification Penalty Imposed by Committee
- A [Side](#) is disqualified if all [Partners](#) incur a penalty of disqualification under any of the following:
  - Rule [6-3](#) - Time of Starting and Groups
  - Rule [6-8](#) - Discontinuance of Play
- In all other cases where a breach of a [Rule](#) would result in disqualification, the player is disqualified for that hole only.

#### ■ f. Effect of Other Penalties

If a player's breach of a [Rule](#) assists his [partner's](#) play or adversely affects an opponent's play, the [partner](#) incurs the applicable penalty in addition to any penalty incurred by the player.

In all other cases where a player incurs a penalty for breach of a [Rule](#), the penalty does not apply to his [partner](#). Where the penalty is stated to be loss of hole, the effect is to disqualify the player for that hole.

### Rule 31. Four-Ball Stroke Play

#### 31-1. General

The Rules of Golf, so far as they are not at variance with the following specific Rules, apply to [four-ball](#) stroke play.

#### 31-2. Representation of Side

A [Side](#) may be represented by either [partner](#) for all or any part of a [stipulated round](#); both [Partners](#) need not be present. An absent [competitor](#) may join his [partner](#) between holes, but not during play of a hole.

#### 31-3. Scoring

The [marker](#) is required to record for each hole only the gross score of whichever [partner's](#) score is to count. The gross scores to count must be individually identifiable; otherwise, the [Side](#) is disqualified. Only one of the [Partners](#) need be responsible for complying with Rule [6-6b](#).

(Wrong score - see Rule [31-7a](#).)

### 31-4. Order of Play

Balls belonging to the same [Side](#) may be played in the order the [Side](#) considers best.

### 31-5. Wrong Ball

If a [competitor](#) is in breach of Rule [15-3b](#) for making a [stroke](#) at a [wrong ball](#), he incurs a penalty of two strokes and must correct his mistake by playing the correct ball or by proceeding under the [Rules](#). His [partner](#) incurs no penalty even if the [wrong ball](#) belongs to him.

If the [wrong ball](#) belongs to another [competitor](#), its owner must place a ball on the spot from which the [wrong ball](#) was first played.

### 31-6. Penalty to Side

A [side](#) is penalized for a breach of any of the following by either [partner](#):

- Rule [4](#) - Clubs
- Rule [6-4](#) - Caddie
- Any Local Rule or Condition of Competition for which there is a maximum penalty per round.

### 31-7. Disqualification Penalties

#### ■ a. Breach by One Partner

A [Side](#) is disqualified from the competition if either [partner](#) incurs a penalty of disqualification under any of the following:

- Rule [1-3](#) - Agreement to Waive Rules
- Rule [3-4](#) - Refusal to Comply with a Rule
- Rule [4](#) - Clubs
- Rule [5-1](#) or [5-2](#) - The Ball
- Rule [6-2b](#) - Handicap
- Rule [6-4](#) - Caddie
- Rule [6-6b](#) - Signing and Returning Score Card
- Rule [6-6d](#) - Wrong Score for Hole
- Rule [6-7](#) - Undue Delay; Slow Play
- Rule [7-1](#) - Practice Before or Between Rounds
- Rule [11-1](#) - Teeing
- Rule [14-3](#) - Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment
- Rule [22-1](#) - Ball Assisting Play
- Rule [31-3](#) - Gross Scores to Count Not Individually Identifiable
- Rule [33-7](#) - Disqualification Penalty Imposed by Committee

#### ■ b. Breach by Both Partners

A [Side](#) is disqualified from the competition:

- i. if each [partner](#) incurs a penalty of disqualification for a breach of Rule [6-3](#) (Time of Starting and Groups) or Rule [6-8](#) (Discontinuance of Play), or

- ii. if, at the same hole, each partner is in breach of a Rule the penalty for which is disqualification from the competition or for a hole.

■ **c. For the Hole Only**

In all other cases where a breach of a Rule would result in disqualification, the competitor is disqualified only for the hole at which the breach occurred.

**31-8. Effect of Other Penalties**

If a competitor's breach of a Rule assists his partner's play, the partner incurs the applicable penalty in addition to any penalty incurred by the competitor.

In all other cases where a competitor incurs a penalty for breach of a Rule, the penalty does not apply to his partner.

## Rule 32. Bogey, Par and Stableford Competitions

### 32-1. Conditions

Bogey, par and Stableford competitions are forms of stroke play in which play is against a fixed score at each hole. The [Rules](#) for stroke play, so far as they are not at variance with the following specific Rules, apply.

In handicap bogey, par and Stableford competitions, the [competitor](#) with the lowest net score at a hole takes the [honor](#) at the next [teeing ground](#).

#### ■ a. Bogey and Par Competitions

The scoring for bogey and par competitions is made as in match play. Any hole for which a [competitor](#) makes no return is regarded as a loss. The winner is the [competitor](#) who is most successful in the aggregate of holes.

The [marker](#) is responsible for marking only the gross number of [strokes](#) for each hole where the [competitor](#) makes a net score equal to or less than the fixed score.

**Note 1:** The [competitor's](#) score is adjusted by deducting a hole or holes under the applicable [Rule](#) when a penalty other than disqualification is incurred under any of the following:

- Rule [4](#) - Clubs
- Rule [6-4](#) - Caddie
- Any Local Rule or Condition of Competition for which there is a maximum penalty per round.

The [competitor](#) is responsible for reporting the facts regarding such a breach to the [Committee](#) before he returns his score card so that the [Committee](#) may apply the penalty. If the [competitor](#) fails to report his breach to the [Committee](#), he is disqualified.

**Note 2:** If the [competitor](#) is in breach of Rule [6-7](#) (Undue Delay; Slow Play), the [Committee](#) will deduct one hole from the aggregate of holes. For a repeated offense, see Rule [32-2a](#).

#### ■ b. Stableford Competitions

The scoring in Stableford competitions is made by points awarded in relation to a fixed score at each hole as follows:

| <b><u>Hole Played In</u></b>                        | <b><u>Points</u></b> |
|---|----------------------|
| More than one over fixed score or no score returned | 0                    |
| One over fixed score                                | 1                    |
| Fixed score   | 2                    |
| One under fixed score                               | 3                    |
| Two under fixed score                               | 4                    |
| Three under fixed score                             | 5                    |
| Four under fixed score                              | 6                    |

The winner is the [competitor](#) who scores the highest number of points.

The [marker](#) is responsible for marking only the gross number of [strokes](#) at each hole where the [competitor's](#) net score earns one or more points.

**Note 1:** If a [competitor](#) is in breach of a [Rule](#) for which there is a maximum penalty per round, he must report the facts to the [Committee](#) before returning his score card; if he fails to do so, he is disqualified.

The [Committee](#) will, from the total points scored for the round, deduct two points for each hole at which any breach occurred, with a maximum deduction per round of four points for each Rule breached.

**Note 2:** If the [competitor](#) is in breach of Rule [6-7](#) (Undue Delay; Slow Play), the [Committee](#) will deduct two points from the total points scored for the round. For a repeated offense, see Rule [32-2a](#).

## **32-2. Disqualification Penalties**

### **■ a. From the Competition**

A [competitor](#) is disqualified from the competition if he incurs a penalty of disqualification under any of the following:

- Rule [1-3](#) - Agreement to Waive Rules
- Rule [3-4](#) - Refusal to Comply with Rule
- Rule [4](#) - Clubs
- Rule [5-1](#) or [5-2](#) - The Ball
- Rule [6-2b](#) - Handicap
- Rule [6-3](#) - Time of Starting and Groups
- Rule [6-4](#) - Caddie
- Rule [6-6b](#) - Signing and Returning Score Card
- Rule [6-6d](#) - Wrong Score for Hole, i.e., when the recorded score is lower than actually taken, except that no penalty is incurred when a breach of this Rule does not affect the result of the hole
- Rule [6-7](#) - Undue Delay; Slow Play
- Rule [6-8](#) - Discontinuance of Play
- Rule [7-1](#) - Practice Before or Between Rounds
- Rule [11-1](#) - Teeing
- Rule [14-3](#) - Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment
- Rule [22-1](#) - Ball Assisting Play
- Rule [33-7](#) - Disqualification Penalty Imposed by Committee

### **■ b. For a Hole**

In all other cases where a breach of a [Rule](#) would result in disqualification, the [competitor](#) is disqualified only for the hole at which the breach occurred.

## Rule 33. The Committee

### 33-1. Conditions; Waiving Rule

The [Committee](#) must establish the conditions under which a competition is to be played.

The [Committee](#) has no power to waive a Rule of Golf.

Certain specific [Rules](#) governing stroke play are so substantially different from those governing match play that combining the two forms of play is not practicable and is not permitted. The result of a match played in these circumstances is null and void and, in the stroke-play competition, the [competitors](#) are disqualified.

In stroke play, the [Committee](#) may limit a [referee's](#) duties.

### 33-2. The Course

#### ■ a. Defining Bounds and Margins

The [Committee](#) must define accurately:

- (i) the [course](#) and [out of bounds](#),
- (ii) the margins of [water hazards](#) and [lateral water hazards](#),
- (iii) [ground under repair](#), and
- (iv) [obstructions](#) and integral parts of the [course](#).

#### ■ b. New Holes

New [holes](#) should be made on the day on which a stroke-play competition begins and at such other times as the [Committee](#) considers necessary, provided all [competitors](#) in a single round play with each [hole](#) cut in the same position.

**Exception:** When it is impossible for a damaged [hole](#) to be repaired so that it conforms with the Definition, the [Committee](#) may make a new [hole](#) in a nearby similar position.

**Note:** Where a single round is to be played on more than one day, the [Committee](#) may provide, in the conditions of a competition (Rule [33-1](#)), that the [holes](#) and [teeing grounds](#) may be differently situated on each day of the competition, provided that, on any one day, all [competitors](#) play with each [hole](#) and each [teeing ground](#) in the same position.

#### ■ c. Practice Ground

Where there is no practice ground available outside the area of a competition [course](#), the [Committee](#) should establish the area on which players may practice on any day of a competition, if it is practicable to do so. On any day of a stroke-play competition, the [Committee](#) should not normally permit practice on or to a [putting green](#) or from a [hazard](#) of the competition [course](#).

#### ■ d. Course Unplayable

If the [Committee](#) or its authorized representative considers that for any reason the [course](#) is not in a playable condition or that there are circumstances that render the proper playing of the game impossible, it may, in match play or stroke play, order a temporary suspension of play or, in stroke play, declare play null and void and cancel all scores for the round in question. When a round is canceled, all penalties incurred in that round are canceled.

(Procedure in discontinuing and resuming play - see Rule [6-8](#).)

### **33-3. Times of Starting and Groups**

The [Committee](#) must establish the times of starting and, in stroke play, arrange the groups in which [competitors](#) must play.

When a match-play competition is played over an extended period, the [Committee](#) establishes the limit of time within which each round must be completed. When players are allowed to arrange the date of their match within these limits, the [Committee](#) should announce that the match must be played at a stated time on the last day of the period, unless the players agree to a prior date.

### **33-4. Handicap Stroke Table**

The [Committee](#) must publish a table indicating the order of holes at which handicap strokes are to be given or received.

### **33-5. Score Card**

In stroke play, the [Committee](#) must provide each [competitor](#) with a score card containing the date and the [competitor's](#) name or, in [foursomes](#) or [four-ball](#) stroke play, the [competitors'](#) names.

In stroke play, the [Committee](#) is responsible for the addition of scores and the application of the handicap recorded on the score card.

In [four-ball](#) stroke play, the [Committee](#) is responsible for recording the better-ball score for each hole and in the process applying the handicaps recorded on the score card, and adding the better-ball scores.

In bogey, par and Stableford competitions, the [Committee](#) is responsible for applying the handicap recorded on the score card and determining the result of each hole and the overall result or points total.

**Note:** The [Committee](#) may request that each [competitor](#) record the date and his name on his score card.

### **33-6. Decision of Ties**

The [Committee](#) must announce the manner, day and time for the decision of a halved match or of a tie, whether played on level terms or under handicap.

A halved match must not be decided by stroke play. A tie in stroke play must not be decided by a match.

### **33-7. Disqualification Penalty; Committee Discretion**

A penalty of disqualification may in exceptional individual cases be waived, modified or imposed if the [Committee](#) considers such action warranted.

Any penalty less than disqualification must not be waived or modified.

If a [Committee](#) considers that a player is guilty of a serious breach of etiquette, it may impose a penalty of disqualification under this Rule.

### **33-8. Local Rules**

#### **■ a. Policy**

The [Committee](#) may establish Local Rules for local abnormal conditions if they are consistent with the policy set forth in [Appendix I](#).

#### **■ b. Waiving or Modifying a Rule**

A Rule of Golf must not be waived by a Local Rule. However, if a [Committee](#) considers that local abnormal conditions interfere with the proper playing of the game to the extent that it is necessary to make a Local Rule that modifies the Rules of Golf, the Local Rule must be authorized by the USGA.

## Rule 34. Disputes and Decisions

### 34-1. Claims and Penalties

#### ■ a. Match Play

If a claim is lodged with the [Committee](#) under Rule [2-5](#), a decision should be given as soon as possible so that the state of the match may, if necessary, be adjusted. If a claim is not made in accordance with Rule [2-5](#), it must not be considered by the [Committee](#).

There is no time limit on applying the disqualification penalty for a breach of Rule [1-3](#).

#### ■ b. Stroke Play

In stroke play, a penalty must not be rescinded, modified or imposed after the competition has closed. A competition is closed when the result has been officially announced or, in stroke-play qualifying followed by match play, when the player has teed off in his first match.

**Exceptions:** A penalty of disqualification must be imposed after the competition has closed if a [competitor](#):

- i. was in breach of Rule [1-3](#) (Agreement to Waive Rules); or
- ii. returned a score card on which he had recorded a handicap that, before the competition closed, he knew was higher than that to which he was entitled, and this affected the number of strokes received (Rule [6-2b](#)); or
- iii. returned a score for any hole lower than actually taken (Rule [6-6d](#)) for any reason other than failure to include a penalty that, before the competition closed, he did not know he had incurred; or
- iv. knew, before the competition closed, that he had been in breach of any other [Rule](#) for which the penalty is disqualification.

### 34-2. Referee's Decision

If a [referee](#) has been appointed by the [Committee](#), his decision is final.

### 34-3. Committee's Decision

In the absence of a [referee](#), any dispute or doubtful point on the [Rules](#) must be referred to the [Committee](#), whose decision is final.

If the [Committee](#) cannot come to a decision, it may refer the dispute or doubtful point to the Rules of Golf Committee of the United States Golf Association, whose decision is final.

If the dispute or doubtful point has not been referred to the Rules of Golf Committee, the player or players may request that an agreed statement be referred through a duly authorized representative of the [Committee](#) to the Rules of Golf Committee for an opinion as to the correctness of the decision given. The reply will be sent to this authorized representative.

If play is conducted other than in accordance with the Rules of Golf, the Rules of Golf Committee will not give a decision on any question.