


# CLARIFICATIONS FOR 2023 RULES OF GOLF INDEX

[Previously called Interpretations]



Updated: 4 January 2024

Additional Clarifications (updated regularly) can be found [here](#)



 **Highlighted: New or Updated Clarifications**

## RULE 1 - Clarifications

- 1.2a/1 Determining If a Player Has Committed Serious Misconduct
- 1.3b(1)/1 Disqualifying Players Who Know a Rule but Agree to Ignore It
- 1.3b(1)/2 In Order to Agree to Ignore a Rule or Penalty, Players Must Be Aware the Rule Exists
- 1.3c/1 Player Is Not Disqualified from a Competition When That Round Does Not Count
- 1.3c/2 Applying Disqualification Penalties, Concessions and Wrong Number of Strokes in a Stroke-Play Play-Off
- 1.3c(1)/1 Action of Another Person Breaches a Rule for Player
- 1.3c(4)/1  Player Gets Two One-Stroke Penalties When There Is an Intervening Event
- 1.3c(4)/2  Player Breaches Rule Then Breaches Another Rule as Part of Their Next Stroke

## RULE 2 - Clarifications



None

## RULE 3 - Clarifications



- 3.2b(1)/1 Players Must Not Concede Holes to Shorten a Match
- 3.2b(1)/2  Concession Not Valid When Result of Hole Has Already Been Decided
- 3.2b(2)/1 Concession Is Not Valid When Caddie Attempts to Make Concession
- 3.2c(1)/1 Declaring Higher Handicap Is a Breach Even If Affected Hole Has Not Been Played
- 3.2c(1)/2  Player Gives Opponent Incorrect Handicap Information Before Handicap Match
- 3.2d(1)/1 Meaning of the “No Penalty If No Effect on Result of Hole” Exception
- 3.2d(1)/2 Wrong Number of Strokes Given by Player After Hole Completed and the Mistake Is Discovered Several Holes Later
- 3.2d(1)/3 Wrong Number of Strokes Given by Player After Hole Completed and the Mistake Is Discovered After Result of the Match Is Final
- 3.2d(1)/4 Changing Mind About Taking Penalty Relief Is Not Giving Wrong Number of Strokes Taken
- 3.2d(2)/1 “As Soon as Reasonably Possible” Is Not Always Before the Opponent’s Next Stroke
- 3.2d(3)/1 Deliberately Giving Incorrect Match Score or Failing to Correct Opponent’s Misunderstanding of Match Score May Result in Disqualification
- 3.2d(4)/1  Meaning of “Agree” in Rule 3.2d(4)
- 3.3b/1 Players Must Be Accompanied by a Marker for the Entire Round
- 3.3b/2 Information Put in Wrong Location on Scorecard May Still Be Acceptable
- 3.3b/3 Another Scorecard May Be Used If Official Scorecard Is Damaged or Misplaced
- 3.3b(2)/1 Players Are Required to Enter Only Scores on a Scorecard
- 3.3b(2)/2 Application of the Exception for Marker Failing to Carry Out Their Responsibilities
- 3.3b(3)/1 Scores on Scorecard Must Be Identifiable to Correct Hole
- 3.3b(4)/1  Penalty for Player Who Deliberately Fails to Alert Committee to an Administrative Mistake



## **RULE 4 - Clarifications**


- 4.1a(1)/1 Wear Through Normal Use Does Not Change Conformity
- 4.1a(1)/2 No Penalty for Stroke with Non-Conforming Club When Stroke Disregarded
- 4.1a(2)/1 Meaning of "Repair"
- 4.1b/1 How to Apply Adjustment Penalty Once Any Player Starts Hole During Match
- 4.1b(1)/1 Clubs Carried for Player Count Towards the 14-Club Limit
- 4.1b(2)/1 Multiple Players May Carry Clubs in One Bag
- 4.1b(2)/2 Sharing Clubs Is Not Allowed for Strokes That Count in a Player's Score
- 4.1b(4)/1 Club Components May Be Assembled When Not Carried by or for Player
- 4.2a(1)/1 Status of Ball Not on List of Conforming Golf Balls
- 4.2a(1)/2 Status of "X-Out", "Refurbished" and "Practice" Balls
- 4.2a(1)/3 No Penalty for Playing Non-Conforming Ball When Stroke Is Disregarded
- 4.3a/1  Limitations on Using Green-Reading Materials
- 4.3a/2  When Use of Alignment Device Results in Breach
- 4.3a(1)/1 Restrictions on Using Equipment to Gauge Slope

## **RULE 5 - Clarifications**

- 5.2/1  Meaning of "Course" in Rule 5.2
- 5.2b/1 Meaning of "Completing Play of Their Final Round for That Day" in Stroke Play
- 5.2b/2 Practising May Be Allowed on Course Before a Round in a Competition That Covers Consecutive Days
- 5.2b/3  Application of Penalty for Practising on Course Before Round in Stroke Play
- 5.3a/1 Exceptional Circumstances That Warrant Waiving Starting Time Penalty
- 5.3a/2 Meaning of "Starting Point"
- 5.3a/3 Meaning of "Ready to Play"
- 5.3a/4 Player at Starting Point but Then Leaves Starting Point
- 5.3a/5 Match Starts on Second Hole When Both Players Late
- 5.5a/1 Practice Stroke with Ball of Similar Size to Conforming Ball Is a Breach
- 5.5c/1 Extra Practice Permissions No Longer Apply When Stroke Play Round Resumed
- 5.6a/1 Examples of Delays That Are Considered Reasonable or Unreasonable
- 5.6a/2 Player Who Gets Sudden Illness or Injury Is Normally Allowed 15 Minutes to Recover
- 5.7a/1 When a Player Has Stopped Play
- 5.7b/1 Dropping a Ball After Play Has Been Suspended Is Not Failing to Stop Play
- 5.7b(1)/1 Circumstances That Justify a Player's Failure to Stop Play
- 5.7c/1 Players Must Resume When Committee Concludes There Is No Danger from Lightning
- 5.7d(1)/1 Whether Player Must Accept Improved or Worsened Lie in Bunker During a Suspension

## **RULE 6 - Clarifications**

- 6.1b(1)/1 Ball Played from Outside Teeing Area in Match Play and Stroke Not Cancelled by Opponent
- 6.2b(4)/1 Tee-Marker Moved Without Improvement
- 6.3a/1 What to Do When Balls Exchanged at Unknown Place
- 6.3c(1)/1 Meaning of "Penalty Strokes Solely from Playing That Ball"

- 6.4b(1)/1  Meaning of “Same Order” in Rule 6.4b(1) When Players Played Out of Turn at Previous Teeing Area
- 6.4c/1 Stroke Can not Be Cancelled When Provisional Ball Played Out of Turn from Teeing Area
- 6.5/1 When a Player or Side Has Completed a Hole

### **RULE 7 - Clarifications**


- 7.1a/1 Examples of Actions Unlikely to Be Part of a Fair Search
- 7.2/1 Identifying Ball That Cannot Be Retrieved
- 7.4/1 Estimating Original Spot on Which to Replace Ball Moved During Search
- 7.4/2 Meaning of “Trying to Find”
- 7.4/3 Ball Moved When Search Temporarily Stopped

### **RULE 8 - Clarifications**




- 8.1a/1 Examples of Actions That Are Likely to Create Potential Advantage
- 8.1a/2 Examples of Actions Unlikely to Create Potential Advantage
- 8.1a/3 Player Who Improves Conditions for Intended Stroke in Breach Even If Different Stroke Is Made
- 8.1a/4 Example of Moving, Bending or Breaking an Immovable Obstruction
- 8.1a/5 Building Stance by Positioning Object Such as Towel Is Not Permitted
- 8.1a/6 Altering Surface of Ground to Build Stance Is Not Permitted
- 8.1a/7 Player May Probe Near Ball to Determine If Tree Roots, Rocks or Obstructions Are Below Surface of Ground, but Only If This Does Not Improve Conditions
- 8.1a/8 Altering Surface of Ground in Relief Area Is Not Allowed
- 8.1a/9 When Divot Is Replaced and Must Not Be Removed or Pressed Down
- 8.1a/10  Player Allowed to Put Movable Part of Immovable Obstruction Back in Intended Position
- 8.1b/1 Player Allowed to Dig in Firmly with Feet More Than Once in Taking Stance
- 8.1b/2 Examples of “Fairly Taking a Stance”
- 8.1b/3 Examples of Not “Fairly Taking a Stance”
- 8.1b/4 Improving Conditions in Teeing Area Is Limited to Ground
- 8.1b/5 Player Smooths Bunker to “Care for the Course” After Playing Out of Bunker
- 8.1b/6 When Damage That Is Partially On and Partially Off Putting Green May Be Repaired
- 8.1d(1)/1 Examples Where Player Is Allowed to Restore Conditions Altered by the Actions of Another Person or Outside Influence
- 8.1d(1)/2 Player Is Entitled to Have Loose Impediments or Movable Obstructions Left Where They Were When Ball Came to Rest
- 8.1d(2)/1 Examples of Conditions Altered by a Natural Object or Natural Forces Where Player Is Not Allowed to Restore Worsened Conditions
- 8.1d(2)/2 Player Is Not Allowed to Restore Conditions Affecting the Stroke When Worsened by Caddie or Another Person at Player’s Request
- 8.1d(2)/3 If Player Enters a Bunker on the Line of Play They Must Not Restore Worsened Conditions
- 8.2b/1 Examples of Player’s Deliberate Actions to Improve Other Physical Conditions Affecting Their Own Play

- 8.3/1 Both Players Are Penalized if Physical Conditions Are Improved with Other Player's Knowledge



### **RULE 9 - Clarifications**

- 9.2a/1 When a Ball Is Treated as Having Moved
- 9.2a/2 Player Responsible for Actions That Cause Ball to Move Even When Not Aware Ball Moved
- 9.2b/1  Determining Whether the Player's Actions Caused the Ball to Move When Equipment Is Involved
- 9.4a/1 Procedure When Player's Ball Is Dislodged from Tree
- 9.4b/1 Ball Deliberately Touched but Not Moved Results in Penalty to Player
- 9.4b/2 Meaning of "While" in Rule 9.4b Exception 4
- 9.4b/3 Meaning of "Reasonable Actions" in Rule 9.4b Exception 4
- 9.4b/4 Player Lifts Ball Under Rule 16.1b That Allows Free Relief but Then Decides Not to Take Free Relief
- 9.5b/1 Player Declares Found Ball as Theirs and This Causes Opponent to Lift Another Ball That Turns Out to Be the Player's Ball
- 9.6/1 Outside Influence Moved by Wind Causes Ball to Move
- 9.6/2 Where to Replace Ball When It Was Moved from Unknown Location
- 9.6/3 Player Learns That Ball Moved After Stroke Made
- 9.6/4 Ball at Rest Played and Then Discovered to Have Been Moved by Outside Influence; Ball Turns Out to Be Wrong Ball

### **RULE 10 - Clarifications**

- 10.1a/1 Examples of Pushing, Scraping or Scooping
- 10.1a/2 Other Material May Intervene Between Ball and Clubhead During Stroke
- 10.1b/1 Player Must Not Anchor the Club with Forearm Against Body
- 10.1b/2 Deliberate Contact with Clothing During Stroke Is a Breach
- 10.1b/3 Inadvertent Contact with Clothing During Stroke Is Not a Breach
- 10.2a/1 Player May Get Information from Shared Caddie
- 10.2a/2 Player Must Try to Stop Ongoing Advice That Is Given Voluntarily
- 10.2b/1  Use of Self-Standing Putter for Alignment Help Is Not Allowed
- 10.2b(3)/1  Setting Clubhead on Ground Behind Ball to Help the Player Take a Stance is Allowed
- 10.2b(3)/2  Delay of Implementation for Certain Uses of Self-Standing
- 10.2b(4)/1 Caddie in Restricted Area Provides Help Before Player Begins To Take Stance
- 10.2b(5)/1 Player May Ask Another Person Who Was Not Deliberately Positioned to Move or Remain in Place
- 10.2b(5)/2 Player May Wear Protective Clothing
- 10.3a/1 Player Transports Clubs on Motorized Golf Cart and Hires Individual to Perform All Other Functions of a Caddie
- 10.3a/2 Player May Caddie for Another Player When Not Playing a Round

## **RULE 11 - Clarifications**

- 11.1b/1 Playing from Where Ball Came to Rest When Stroke Must Be Replayed Is Not Playing from Wrong Place
- 11.1b/2 What to Do When Ball Moves After Being Accidentally Deflected or Stopped
- 11.1b/3  What to Do When Ball Played from Anywhere Except Putting Green Is Deflected or Picked Up by an Animal
- 11.1b(2)/1  Ball Played from Putting Green Hits Another Ball in Motion on the Putting Green
- 11.2a/1 Equipment Left in Position After Player Realizes It Could Be Helpful If the Ball Were to Hit It
- 11.3/1 Outcome of Deliberate Actions to Affect Ball in Motion Is Irrelevant




## **RULE 12 - Clarifications**

- 12.2a/1 Improvement Resulting from Removing Loose Impediment or Movable Obstruction from a Bunker
- 12.2b/1 Rule 12.2b Applies to a Mound of Sand from an Animal Hole in a Bunker
- 12.2b/2 Whether Player May Probe in Bunker
- 12.2b/3 Rule 12.2 Continues to Apply When Player Has Lifted Their Ball from Bunker to Take Relief but Has Not Yet Decided Whether to Take Relief In or Out of Bunker

## **RULE 13 - Clarifications**


- 13.1c(2)/1 Damaged Hole Is Part of Damage on the Putting Green
- 13.1c(2)/2 Player May Request Help from Committee When Unable to Repair Damage On Putting Green
- 13.1d(2)/1 Ball Must Be Replaced If It Moves After Placing a Ball to Take Relief
- 13.1e/1 Deliberately Testing Any Putting Green Is Not Allowed
- 13.2a(1)/1 Player Has the Right to Leave Flagstick in Position Preceding Group Left It
- 13.2a(4)/1 Unattended Flagstick Removed Without Player's Authority May Be Replaced
- 13.2b(1)/1 Player May Make Stroke While Holding Flagstick
- 13.3a/1 Meaning of Reasonable Time for Player to Reach Hole
- 13.3b/1 What to Do When Player's Ball Overhanging Hole Moves When Player Removes Flagstick

## **RULE 14 - Clarifications**


- 14.1a/1 Marking Ball Correctly
- 14.1c/1 Player Must Be Careful When Lifted Ball May Not Be Cleaned
- 14.1c/2  When a Moved Ball May Be Cleaned
- 14.2b(2)/1 Player Drops Ball When Ball Is to Be Replaced
- 14.2c/1 Ball May Be Replaced in Almost Any Orientation
- 14.2c/2 Removal of Loose Impediment from Spot Where Ball to Be Replaced
- 14.2c/3  Ball Must Not Be Pushed into Ground When Replacing It
- 14.2d(2)/1 Altered Lie Might Be "Nearest Spot with Lie Most Similar"
- 14.2e/1 Player Must Take Penalty Relief When Spot Where Ball Will Remain at Rest Is Nearer Hole
- 14.3b(2)/1 Ball Dropped from Knee Height in Uneven Area
- 14.3b(4)/1  General Penalty Applies under Rule 14.7a
- 14.3c/1 Relief Area Includes Everything in Relief Area
- 14.3c/2 Ball May Be Dropped in No Play Zone

- 14.3c(1)/1 What to Do When Dropped Ball Moves After Coming to Rest Against a Player's Foot or Equipment
- 14.3c(2)/1 Where to Place Ball Dropped in Right Way Twice in Relief Area with a Bush in It
- 14.4/1 Placed Ball Is Not in Play Unless There Was Intent to Put It in Play
- 14.4/2 Test Drops Are Not Allowed
- 14.5b(1)/1 Player May Change Where Ball is Dropped on Line When Dropping Again for Back-On-the-Line Relief
- 14.5b(1)/2 Player May Change Areas of the Course in the Relief Area When Dropping Again
- 14.7b/1 Player Gets Penalty for Each Stroke Made from Area Where Play Is Not Allowed
- 14.7b/2 Ball in Wrong Place If Club Strikes Condition Relief Was Taken from

### **RULE 15 - Clarifications**

- 15.1a/1 Removal of Loose Impediment from Relief Area or Spot Where Ball to Be Dropped, Placed or Replaced
- 15.3/1  Methods for Moving Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play
- 15.3a/1 Breach of Rule for Leaving Helping Ball in Place Does Not Require Knowledge
- 15.3a/2 Players Allowed to Leave Helping Ball in Match Play

### **RULE 16 - Clarifications**

- 16.1/1 Relief from Abnormal Course Condition May Result in Better or Worse Conditions
- 16.1/2 If Interference by Second Abnormal Course Condition Exists After Complete Relief Taken from First Condition, Further Relief May Be Taken
- 16.1/3 Player May Choose to Take Relief from Either Condition When Interference by Two Conditions Exists
- 16.1/4 How to Take Relief When Ball Lies on Elevated Part of Immovable Obstruction
- 16.1/5 How to Measure Nearest Point of Complete Relief When Ball Underground in Abnormal Course Condition
- 16.1/6 Player May Wait to Determine Nearest Point of Complete Relief When Ball Is Moving in Water
- 16.1a(3)/1 Obstruction Interfering with Abnormal Stroke May Not Preclude Player from Taking Relief
- 16.1a(3)/2 Player May Not Use Clearly Unreasonable Stroke to Get Relief from Condition
- 16.1a(3)/3 Application of Rule 16.1a(3) When Ball Lies Underground in Animal Hole
- 16.1b/1 Relief Procedure When Ball Lies in Underground Abnormal Course Condition
- 16.1c/1 Player Takes Maximum Available Relief; Then Decides to Take Back-on-the-Line Relief
- 16.1c/2 After Lifting Ball Player May Change Relief Options Before Putting a Ball in Play
- 16.3a(2)/1 Concluding Whether Ball Is Embedded in Its Own Pitch-mark
- 16.3b/1  Taking Embedded Ball Relief When Spot Immediately Behind Ball Is Not in General Area

### **RULE 17 - Clarifications**

- 17.1a/1 Ball Lost in Either Penalty Area or Abnormal Course Condition Adjacent to Penalty Area
- 17.1d(3)/1 Player May Measure Across Penalty Area In Taking Lateral Relief
- 17.1d(3)/2 Player Drops Ball Based on Estimate of Where the Ball Last Crossed Edge of Penalty Area That Turns Out to Be the Wrong Point
- 17.2b/1 Examples of Options for Relief Allowed by Rule 17.2b



## **RULE 18 - Clarifications**

- 18.1/1** Teed Ball May Be Lifted When Original Ball Is Found Within Three-Minute Search Time
- 18.1/2** Penalty Cannot Be Avoided by Playing Under Stroke and Distance
- 18.2a(1)/1** Time Permitted for Search When Search Temporarily Interrupted
- 18.2a(1)/2** Caddie Is Not Required to Start Searching for Player's Ball Before Player
- 18.2a(1)/3** Meaning of "Reasonable Time To Do So" When Identifying Ball
- 18.2a(2)/1** Ball Moved Out of Bounds by Flow of Water
- 18.3a/1** When Player May Play Provisional Ball
- 18.3a/2** Playing Provisional Ball After Search Has Started Is Allowed
- 18.3a/3** Each Ball Relates Only to the Previous Ball When It Is Played from That Same Spot
- 18.3b/1** Statements That "Clearly Indicate" That a Provisional Ball Is Being Played
- 18.3c(1)/1** Actions Taken with Provisional Ball Are a Continuation of Provisional Ball
- 18.3c(2)/1** Estimated Spot of the Original Ball Is Used to Determine Which Ball Is in Play
- 18.3c(2)/2** Opponent or Another Player May Search for Player's Ball Despite the Player's Request
- 18.3c(2)/3** When Score with Holed Provisional Ball Becomes the Score for Hole
- 18.3c(2)/4** Provisional Ball Lifted by Player Subsequently Becomes the Ball in Play

## **RULE 19 - Clarifications**

- 19.2/1** No Guarantee Ball Will Be Playable After Taking Unplayable Ball Relief
- 19.2/2** Ball May Be Dropped in Any Area of the Course When Taking Unplayable Ball Relief
- 19.2/3** Stroke-and-Distance Reference Point Does Not Change Until Stroke Is Made
- 19.2/4** Player May Take Relief Without Penalty If They Lift Ball to Take Unplayable Ball Relief and Discover Ball Was in Ground Under Repair Before Dropping
- 19.2/5** Player Must Find Ball to Use Back-on-the-Line or Lateral Relief Options
- 19.2a/1** Player May Take Stroke-and-Distance Relief Even When Spot of Previous Stroke Is Nearer Hole Than Where Ball Lies
- 19.2a/2** Stroke-and-Distance Relief Is Allowed Only at Spot of the Last Stroke

## **RULE 20 - Clarifications**

- 20.1b(2)/1** Request for Ruling Must Be Made in Time
- 20.1b(2)/2** Ruling Made After Completion of the Final Hole of the Match but Before the Result of the Match Is Final May Result in Players Resuming the Match
- 20.1b(4)/1** Playing Out Hole with Two Balls Is Not Allowed in Match Play
- 20.1c(3)/1** No Penalty for Playing a Ball That Was Not in Play When Two Balls Are Being Played
- 20.1c(3)/2** Player Must Decide to Play Two Balls Before Making Another Stroke
- 20.1c(3)/3** Player May Lift Original Ball and Drop, Place or Replace It When Playing Two Balls
- 20.1c(3)/4** Player's Obligation to Complete Hole with Second Ball After Announcing Intention to Do So and Choosing Which Ball Should Count
- 20.1c(3)/5** Provisional Ball Must Be Used as Second Ball When Uncertain
- 20.1c(3)/6** Player Allowed to Play One Ball Under Two Different Rules

## **RULE 21 - Clarifications**

- 21/1 Player May Compete in Multiple Stroke-Play Formats at Same Time
- 21.4/1 In Three-Ball Match Play Each Player Is Playing Two Distinct Matches

## **RULE 22 - Clarifications**

- 22.3/1 When Playing Again from Teeing Area in Mixed Foursomes Ball Must Be Played from Same Teeing Area
- 22.3/2 Determining Which Ball Is in Play When Both Partners in Foursomes Tee Off from Same Teeing Area
- 22.3/3 Player May Not Purposely Miss Ball so Their Partner Can Play
- 22.3/4 How to Proceed When Provisional Ball Played by Wrong Partner

## **RULE 23 - Clarifications**

- 23.2a/1 Result of Hole When No Ball Is Correctly Holed Out
- 23.2b/1 Score for Hole Must Be Identified to the Correct Partner
- 23.2b/2 Application of Exception to Rule 3.3b(3) for Returning Incorrect Scorecard
- 23.4/1 Determining Handicap Allowance in Match Play If One Player Unable to Compete
- 23.6/1 Abandoning Right to Play in Any Order Side Determines Best
- 23.6/2 Partners Must Not Unreasonably Delay Play When Playing in Advantageous Order
- 23.6/3 When Side in Match Play May Have Stroke Cancelled by Opponent
- 23.7/1 Partners May Continue to Give Advice and Share Clubs After Concurrent Match Ends
- 23.8/1 Application of Penalty When Player Stands on or Close to an Extension of the Line of Play Behind Partner
- 23.9a(2)/1 Examples of When Player's Breach Helps Partner's Play
- 23.9a(2)/2 Example of When Player's Breach Hurts Opponent's Play
- 23.9a(2)/3 Giving Wrong Number of Strokes Taken or Failing to Tell Opponent about Penalty Is Never Considered to Hurt Opponent When Player Is Out of Contention




## **RULE 24 - Clarifications**

- 24.4/1 Committee May Establish Limits for Team Captains and Advice Givers

## **RULE 25 - Clarifications**

None

## **DEFINITIONS**

- [Advice/3](#)  When statements that include public information **are** advice
- [Committee/1](#)  Limiting a Committee Member's duties and responsibilities
- [Relief Area/1](#)  Determining whether ball is in the relief area