

A REVISED APPROACH TO WRITING AND PRESENTING THE RULES OF GOLF FOR 2019 – MARCH 2018 UPDATE

In addition to proposing many substantive Rule changes, the Rules Modernization Initiative focused on changing how the Rules are written and presented. This resulted in a new writing style and format, a reorganization of the Rules and the introduction of a “Player’s Edition” of the Rules.

A. New Writing Style and Format

- A Simpler Writing Style: There is a deliberate move away from the legalistic drafting style used in previous editions of the Rules. The new writing style uses more commonly used and spoken words. Where possible, shorter sentences, bulleted lists and additional white space are used. The new style also includes more explanatory headings and easier to read formatting. The Rules of Golf are translated into over 30 languages, and we feel that the simpler, more consistent writing style will make the Rules easier to translate for those undertaking this important task. While our goal has been to make the language less complex, we realize that the Rules need to be clear and accurate to ensure consistency of application, and this does create some limitations on how simple the wording in the book can be.
- Referring to the Player as “He or She”: In the current edition of the Rules, the player is referred to as “he” and there is a statement at the front of the book indicating that this should be understood to include both males and females. The new Rules for 2019 are written to refer to “he or she” throughout.
- Using Examples to Explain What the Rules Mean and How They Work: We are adding examples to many of the Rules to help show what is meant by the words. One such instance is in Rule 16.3a where we state:

“A ball is not *embedded* if it is below the level of the ground as a result of anything other than the player’s previous *stroke*, such as when:

- The ball is pushed into the ground by someone stepping on it,
- The ball is driven straight into the ground without becoming airborne, or
- The ball was *dropped* in taking relief under a Rule.”

While providing this type of explanatory text increases the length of the Rules, it makes them easier to read and understand, which is the principal aim.

- Using Visual Tools to Explain Key Concepts and Procedures: Even with a simpler style of writing and the use of examples, some key concepts and procedures in the Rules are not easily explained in words. In recognition of this, the new format will include diagrams and illustrations to deal with common situations that lend themselves to visual explanations, such as identifying the nearest point of complete relief and taking relief for an unplayable ball.

Rule 16

Rule 16

FIGURE 16.1: RELIEF WITH PENALTY FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN BUNKER

When there is interference from an abnormal course condition in a bunker, relief may be taken outside the bunker for one penalty stroke. A reference point on the reference line is chosen, with no limit to how far back on the line the reference point may be. A ball must be dropped in and played from the relief area, which is within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the reference point.

FIGURE 16.1: RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION ON PUTTING GREEN

When a ball is on the putting green and there is interference by an abnormal course condition (ACC), relief without penalty may be taken by placing a ball on the spot of the nearest point of complete relief. That point must be either on the putting green or in the general area. Whether the ball is placed on the putting green or in the general area, relief must also be taken for interference from the line of play.

16.1d Relief for Ball on Putting Green

If a player's ball is on the *putting green* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take free relief by placing the original ball or another ball on the spot of the *nearest point of complete relief*, using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rule 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

- The *nearest point of complete relief* must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.
- If there is no such *nearest point of complete relief*, the player may still take this free relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* as the reference point, which must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.

16.1e Relief for Ball Not Found but in or on Abnormal Course Condition

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may use this relief option instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief:

- The player may take relief under Rules 16.1b, c or d, using the estimated point where the ball last crossed the edge of the *abnormal course condition* on the *course* as the spot of the ball for purposes of finding the *nearest point of complete relief*.

- Statement of Purpose of Each Rule: A statement of purpose will be included to give guidance on the key concepts in each particular Rule. This should help golfers understand the background of the Rule they are reviewing. For example, Rule 12 in the Rules of Golf concerning bunkers has the following statement describing a bunker and reasoning for the special provisions that apply when a ball lies in a bunker:

***Purpose:** Rule 12 is a specific Rule for bunkers, which are specially prepared areas intended to test the player's ability to play a ball from the sand. To make sure the player confronts this challenge, there are some restrictions on touching the sand before the stroke is made and on where relief may be taken for a ball in a bunker.*

- Embracing Technology: The number of golfers and referees accessing the Rules of Golf on smart phones, tablets and computers is increasing all the time. We are embracing technology and will present the new Rules on various digital platforms, compatible with various electronic devices. Even greater use of links, videos and search capabilities will give fast and efficient access to Rules answers and other explanatory material, on and off the course. We also aim to take advantage of technological advances when providing digital resources for the implementation of the new Rules.
- Written Using International English: The new Rules have been written using a version of International English known that is used by many international organizations including the United Nations and NATO. This will allow the same spelling to be used across all English Rules of Golf publications going forward.

B. Reorganizing the Rule Book

- Focus on What the Player Needs to Know: The new Rule book will focus on what the typical player needs to know. Information that is only relevant to Committees who organize competitions or oversee the golf course is moved to a separate “Committee Procedures” document that will form part of “The Official Guide to the Rules of Golf”. The Committee Procedures will cover all matters about running a competition (such as marking the course and giving out scorecards) and adopting Local Rules and their recommended wording. The Official Guide to the Rules of Golf will be available later in 2018.
- Number of Rules Reduced from 34 to 24: This has been achieved by restructuring the Rules, combining certain relief procedures and removing the Committee specific information. The basic Rules for individual match play and individual stroke play are covered in Rules 1-20. Other forms of play (including those involving play with a partner) are covered in Rules 21 to 24.
- Moving Key Decisions into the Rules: It has been a valid criticism that there are some “hidden Rules” that are found only in the Decisions book. An example would be the current Decisions dealing with restoring conditions that are altered after a player’s ball has come to rest (such as the specific case when another player’s stroke from a bunker deposits sand on the player’s ball lying just off the putting green);

nothing in the current Rules themselves alerts the player to the fact that he or she is entitled to the relief of restoring the situation back to the way it was. To address this concern, we are moving the contents of more than 300 key Decisions into the body of the Rules. This approach makes the Rule book itself longer, but reducing the word count in the book is much less important than allowing the reader to find all Rule answers in a single document.

- The Official Guide to the Rules of Golf: The traditional “question and answer” Decisions book will be replaced with the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf. This publication will give interpretations on each Rule where needed rather than using “Decisions” as the sole method of providing interpretations of the Rules. The Official Guide will be available later in 2018.

C. The Player’s Edition

- A Shorter Edition of the Rules: A major change in our approach to presenting the Rules is issuing a shorter “Player’s Edition” of the Rules. This will be widely circulated to golfers worldwide, as it is intended to be the version of the Rules that golfers should use to find answers to questions that arise on the course. We hope that the Player’s Edition will encourage many more golfers to read and understand the Rules and will make it easier to find answers when situations arise on the course.
- Written in the Second Person: The Player’s Edition will be written in the second person with the focus on “you” the golfer. This golfer-focused style is another key step in making the Rules more accessible. An example of this golfer-focused style is as follows:

a. When Lifted or Moved Ball Must Be Replaced

If you lift your ball at rest or cause it to *move*, your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated), **except**:

- When you lift your ball to take relief under a Rule or to *replace* your ball on a different spot, or
- When your ball *moves* only after you have started the *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* and then go on to make the *stroke*.



- It is a Rule book: The Player’s Edition will be an actual Rule book, not merely a summary or a “Quick Guide”. It will look like the full Rules of Golf publication and, although the text of the Player’s Edition will be condensed, it will give the reader, the same answer that is found in the full Rules of Golf. The Player’s Edition will include the Rules that describe the essential characteristics of the game of golf – for example, the fundamentals of the game, such as playing by the Rules, the different parts of the course and the equipment to be used. It also covers the most commonly used Rules. For the less frequently occurring situations that are not included, the Player’s Edition will tell the golfer where to find those answers in the full Rules of Golf.