



2022 Rules of Amateur Status with Guidance Notes

Guidance Notes as of 26 October 2021

Updates to the Guidance Notes will be issued as necessary

Rule 1: Purpose of the Rules

Amateur golf has a well-established tradition in the game, including a history of competitions limited to amateur golfers. The Rules of Amateur Status define who is eligible to compete as an amateur golfer.

Golf is largely self-regulating, and to help protect the integrity of the game by minimising pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping, the Rules of Amateur Status limit the form and value of prizes an amateur golfer is allowed to accept based on performance in competition.

Guidance Notes for Rule 1

None at present

Rule 2: Amateur Golfer

All golfers are amateurs unless they:

- Accept a prize that is not allowed under Rule 3: Prizes,
- Play in a golf competition as a professional,
- Accept payment or compensation for giving instruction that is not allowed under Rule 4: Instruction,
- Are employed (including being self-employed) as a golf club or driving range professional, or
- Hold membership of an association for professional golfers.

An amateur who takes any of these actions becomes a non-amateur and remains a non-amateur until being reinstated as an amateur (see Rule 5: Reinstatement as an Amateur Golfer).

Guidance Notes for Rule 2

Playing or Employment as a Professional

Additional guidance is provided on bullet points 2, 4 and 5 from Rule 2 (Amateur Golfer) as follows:

- **Playing in a competition as a professional.**
 - An amateur who enters and plays in a competition as a professional loses their amateur status.
 - This includes when the golfer starts but does not finish the competition, such as when the player withdraws or fails to complete the round or rounds for any other reason.
 - This does not include an amateur golfer who enters a competition as a professional golfer but has yet to play in the competition.
 - This could occur when an amateur is planning to transition into professional golf and enters a future competition as a professional, but plans to continue to compete as an amateur golfer until that future competition.
 - An amateur may also withdraw a professional entry or change their entry status to amateur before playing in such a competition without affecting their amateur status.
 - A golfer who plays in a competition limited only to professional golfers loses their amateur status.
 - If a golfer is not required to select a status of amateur or professional to enter or play in a competition, then an amateur is allowed to play in such a competition without affecting their amateur status. Amateur status is only affected in such circumstances if the amateur decides to accept a prize not allowed under Rule 3.
 - Playing as a professional in competitions that are not tee-to-hole competitions (such as playing as a professional in a long-drive or putting competition) does not affect amateur status.
- **Employment as a professional at a golf club or a driving range facility.**
 - This includes being employed as a head professional, assistant professional or the like at a course, club or other golf facility.

- However, it does not include other positions and titles that are common within the golf industry. For a list of common positions and titles, see “Guidance on what an Amateur Golfer is Allowed to Do”.
- **Holding membership of any association for professional golfers.**
 - This includes holding any category of membership with that association, as well as being an apprentice or associate member of such an association.
 - But this does not include when an amateur golfer serves only in an administrative capacity, such as being on an executive board for such an association.

Guidance on what an Amateur Golfer is Allowed to Do

In relation to bullet points 2, 3 and 5 in Rule 2, an amateur golfer is allowed to take the following actions:

- **Playing related actions:**
 - Hold membership of a professional tour, provided they do not play as a professional.
 - Take and/or pass a playing ability test.
- **Education related actions:**
 - Enrol in or attend a professional golf management program, provided such a program does not require students to hold membership of an association for professional golfers or do anything else that would result in loss of amateur status (such as giving instruction for compensation).
- **Employment related actions and positions:**
 - Work as a golf shop or golf club retailer, club fitter, club maker or repair technician.
 - Work as a general manager or director of golf at a course, club or other golf facility.
 - Work as an employee of an equipment manufacturer.
 - Work as a caddie, even when caddying for a professional golfer or on a professional tour.
 - Work as a golf administrator, such as a golf association employee.

Playing as an Amateur in a Competition with Cash Prizes Above Prize Limit

Competition organizers have various options in relation to amateur golfers and prize money that they should consider when establishing their terms of the competition. For example, a competition organizer may wish to:

- Stipulate that players entering as amateur golfers are not eligible to accept prize money (or are only eligible for prize money up to the limit in Rule 3).
- Require that players entering as amateur golfers declare before the start of the competition (for example, before starting their first round) whether or not they intend to accept any available prize money in excess of the limit should their performance give them that opportunity.
 - But even with this declaration, the amateur may still choose not to accept a prize not allowed by the Rules.
 - Should this occur, the competition organizer can determine how to distribute any prize that is not accepted.

When allowed by a competition organizer, an amateur golfer may play in a competition as an amateur while competing for a cash prize above the prize limit, without losing their amateur status. If they play well enough to win prize money above the prize limit, and decide to accept the prize money at the end of the competition, they would lose their amateur status.

Rule 3: Prizes

a. Scratch Competitions

An amateur playing in a scratch competition is allowed to accept any prize, including prize money, up to a limit of £700 or US\$1000 in value, per competition, unless the national governing body has set a lower limit.

For the purposes of these Rules, a scratch competition is a competition that does not have a net score element in any part of the competition and handicaps must not be used to separate players into different scratch categories. Any competition that is not a scratch competition is a handicap competition.

b. Handicap Competitions

An amateur playing in a handicap competition is not allowed to accept prize money, but may accept any other prize up to a limit of £700 or US\$1000 in value, per competition, unless the national governing body has set a lower limit.

c. General

For a non-monetary prize, the value of that prize is the price at which the item is generally available to purchase from a retail source at the time the prize is accepted.

The prize limit applies to the following:

- Any tee-to-hole golf competition involving a score for a hole, regardless of where that competition is played (for example, on a golf course or a golf simulator).
- Any skills competition where the shot is played during a tee-to-hole golf competition.
- The total prizes accepted in a single competition or multiple competitions being conducted at the same time (for example, individual and team competitions).

The prize limit does not apply to the following:

- The value of trophies and other similar prizes.
- Long drive competitions, target competitions, competitions involving specific skills, trick shots and competitions that solely involve putting (unless the competition or shot is played during a tee-to-hole golf competition).
- A prize for a hole-in-one made:
 - Outside a tee-to-hole golf competition or
 - During a tee-to-hole golf competition, provided the length of the shot is at least 50 yards.
- Gambling or wagering among individual golfers or teams of golfers.
- Expenses to compete in a subsequent stage of the same competition.

Guidance Notes for Rule 3

Scratch and Handicap Competitions

Rule 3 (Prizes) differentiates between the types of prizes an amateur golfer may accept when playing in a scratch competition versus those that may be accepted when playing in a handicap competition. The Rules of Amateur Status treat every competition as either a scratch competition or a handicap competition. A competition cannot be both a scratch and handicap competition for the purposes of applying Rule 3.

Scratch Competitions

For the purposes of Rule 3, a scratch competition must be conducted using scratch (gross) scores only. A player's handicap or their handicap index may not be used for any scoring-related functions.

- The Rules consider the following competitions to be handicap competitions:
 - Competitions where handicaps are used to divide a larger field into divisions or flights, even though only scratch (gross) scores are used to determine placing within divisions or flights.
 - Competitions using scratch (gross) and handicap (net) scoring in the same competition.
 - Competitions using player handicaps as a method to break a tie.
- But handicaps may be used in a scratch competition to limit who is eligible to enter, such as allowing entry only for players with a handicap index of 5.0 or less.

Handicap Competitions

For the purposes of Rule 3, any competition that is not a scratch competition is, by default, a handicap competition. Common examples of handicap competitions include competitions where:

- Handicaps are not applied to player scores, but divisions or flights are created based on player handicaps. While such a competition is played on a scratch (gross) scoring basis, the Rules treat such a competition as a handicap competition.
- The scratch (gross) and handicap (net) competitions are conducted at the same time as part of the same round or rounds.
- One or more rounds of the same competition are played as scratch and one or more rounds are played applying handicaps to scoring.
- Handicaps are applied to scoring at one stage, but not at all stages, of a multi-stage competition.

Currency and Prize Limits

Rule 3 refers to prize limits expressed in pound sterling (£) and US dollars (US\$). However, the national governing body in a country may set the prize limit for its own country, provided it does not exceed the local currency equivalent of the limit of £700 and US\$1000 in Rule 3 at the time the limit is established.

It is recognized that £700 and US\$1000 are unlikely to be exactly the same value at any given time. A national governing body has the choice of which currency it uses to align its own limit.

While it is not realistic to realign the local currency equivalent on a day-to-day basis, it should be reviewed regularly to ensure it is not significantly out of line with the limits in Rule 3.

Meaning of Tee-to-Hole Golf Competitions

Rule 3 applies only to a tee-to-hole golf competition involving a score for a hole, regardless of where that competition is played (for example, on a golf course or golf simulator).

Rule 3 also applies to any skills competition where the shot is played during a tee-to-hole golf competition. For example, longest drive or nearest the hole competition when it is contested while playing a hole from tee to green as part of the competition round.

However, Rule 3 does not apply to competitions that are not part of a tee-to-hole golf competition, even when they take place on a golf course or a golf simulator. Common examples include, longest drive competitions, nearest the hole competitions, putting competitions and skills competitions where the stroke or strokes do not count as part of a round of golf. These competitions, where Rule 3 does not apply, can be conducted in conjunction with a tee-to-hole golf competition.

Prize of Expenses Provided by Competition Organizer to Subsequent Stage of Competition

When a competition organizer awards a prize for the winner or a select number of participants to receive expenses to play in a subsequent stage of the same competition, the prize limit in Rule 3 does not apply.

All or any portion of actual expenses may be paid on behalf of the player or reimbursed, including, but not limited to, entry fees to subsequent stages, travel, accommodation, meals and caddie fees.

In addition to covering actual expenses, a competition organizer may also award prizes provided they are within the limits set in Rule 3.

Deferring or Indirectly Accepting a Prize

An amateur golfer may not defer or delay the acceptance of a prize that is not allowed under Rule 3 in order to retain their amateur status. Deferring or delaying acceptance would be treated as if the prize had been accepted at the time it was won.

Additionally, an amateur golfer is not able to avoid losing their amateur status by indirectly accepting a prize through another person or redirecting a prize through their golf club or business. However, in certain circumstances the donation of a prize to charity is allowed (see "Donation of Prize to Charity")

Meaning of Prize Money

For the purposes of Rule 3, prize money may come in many forms, and includes cash, physical or digital currency, cheques, bank deposits, and shares, stocks and bonds. Gift cards and debit cards that may be redeemable for cash or can be used to withdraw cash are also considered prize money.

Prize money does not include vouchers, gift certificates and gift cards that can be exchanged for products and services in retail outlets and/or a golf course or club.

Donation of Prize to Charity

An amateur golfer who wins a prize that is not allowed by the Rules may choose not to accept that prize, but instead offer to donate that prize to a recognized charity.

It is up to the Committee in charge of the competition to decide if it will allow prizes won by amateur golfers to be donated to a recognized charity.

Policy on Raffles, Prize Draws, etc.

Rule 3 does not apply to a raffle prize or a prize draw run in conjunction with a golf event provided it is not being used to circumvent the prize limit.

Team Competitions

Each individual player in a team competition may accept a prize up to the prize limit in Rule 3.

For example, in an 18-hole team handicap competition, each player on a four-person team may accept a prize, other than prize money, up to the prize limit.

Multiple Competitions Being Conducted at the Same Time

The prize limit in Rule 3 applies on a per competition basis and includes the primary competition as well as any secondary contests (such as longest drive or nearest to the hole competitions while playing a hole from tee to green as part of the competition round).

The prize limit in Rule 3 also applies to the total prizes won in multiple competitions being conducted at the same time (such as individual and team events), even if there is a separate entry fee for each one.

- For example, in an 18-hole individual competition, where gross and net prizes are awarded, a player who wins \$700 in shop credit for the gross competition may accept only \$300 in additional shop credit for the net competition.

If a competition has one or more stages of qualifying, each stage is considered a separate competition provided there is an entry fee at each stage.

In the case of an aggregate competition where the winner is determined based on the combined results of two separate competitions, the prize limit applies to the aggregate prize plus the total value of any prize won in the separate competitions.

- For example, Competition A and Competition B are both 36-hole scratch (gross) competitions played on two consecutive weekends, each with its own entry fee. Competition C is a 72-hole aggregate competition based on the results of Competitions A and B together. A player who wins a prize of \$700 in either Competition A or B may only accept up to \$300 for Competition C.

Order of Merit

An amateur golfer may accept a prize up to the limit in Rule 3 for winning an “Order of Merit” or “Golfer of the Year” award, in addition to any other competition prizes won during the order of merit period.

Trophies

Trophies and other symbolic prizes that are permanently and distinctively engraved may be accepted even if the value exceeds the prize limit in Rule 3.

Trophies made of gold, silver, ceramic, glass or similar materials that are not permanently and distinctively engraved are subject to the prize limit.

Items such as a rare watch or vintage jewellery must not be used to circumvent the prize limit in Rule 3.

Policy on Mementoes and Gifts

A sponsor or competition organiser may give a memento or gift to the players competing, irrespective of their value, provided it is not used to circumvent the prize limit.

Testimonial Awards

Testimonial awards are prizes awarded for notable performances or contributions to golf and are distinguished from a competition prize. The prize limit in Rule 3 does not apply to such awards.

Rule 4: Instruction

Instruction means teaching the mechanics of swinging a golf club and hitting a golf ball. The Rules of Amateur Status do not apply to other forms of teaching or coaching (for example, physical fitness and psychological aspects of the game).

An amateur who accepts payment or compensation for giving instruction, including as part of salaried duties, becomes a non-amateur.

But, an amateur may accept payment or compensation for giving instruction in the following circumstances:

- As part of a programme that has been approved in advance by the national governing body.
- As an employee of a school, college, or camp, provided the time spent giving instruction is less than 50% of the time spent in performance of all duties as an employee.
- When the instruction is given in writing or online, and not to a specific individual or group.

Guidance Notes for Rule 4

Instruction – General

An amateur golfer who is an employee of a golf course or club, such as golf shop retailer, must not give instruction as a part of their employment. The absence of any direct payment for the golf instruction or the proportion of time spent on golf instruction is irrelevant.

The term “compensation” in Rule 2 and Rule 4 is not limited to monetary compensation, and includes any exchange for goods or services, such as accepting playing or practice privileges at a golf course or club.

Biometrics, Movement Performance and Body Strengthening

Golf instruction involves teaching the mechanics of swinging a golf club and hitting a golf ball. The collection of biomechanical information, assistance with movement performance and guidance on strengthening the body for golf are not, of themselves, forms of instruction as contemplated by Rule 4. But if these disciplines are used or combined with teaching the mechanics of the swing, that person is giving golf instruction.

Golf Instruction as Part of Approved Programme

Rule 4 allows an amateur golfer to accept payment or compensation for giving instruction as part of a programme that has been approved in advance by the national governing body.

The intention of the Rule is to encourage involvement in programmes aimed at introducing people to golf, with such involvement providing support to qualified members of a professional golfers’ association. It is considered reasonable to pay or compensate individuals for their time in coaching as part of such a programme.

The programme must be approved in advance by the national governing body to ensure that the programme is coordinated or sanctioned appropriately.

The appropriate national governing body decides whether a particular programme qualifies for approval under Rule 4 and the national governing body may set certain criteria for a programme to follow for it to be approved. For example, it may limit the number of hours that an amateur golfer may coach as part of the programme, or it may limit the amount payable in a given period.

The following guidelines should be considered by the national governing body in determining the approval of such a programme:

- Consulting the national professional golfers' association in the country or area concerned and, where possible, co-ordinating the programme between that association and the national governing body.
- Limiting the length of time an amateur golfer may coach as part of the approved programme, such as the number of hours in any week, month or year, and/or putting a limit on the amount of payment made to an amateur, such as the maximum amount in any week, month or year.
- An annual review of the programme's approval by the national governing body.

Instruction Given by Employee of a School, College or Camp

An amateur golfer who is employed by a school, college, or other educational institution or camp including a teacher or coach, may receive payment or compensation for golf instruction to students at the school, college or camp, provided that the total time devoted to that instruction is less than 50% of the time spent in the performance of all duties as an employee at the school, college or camp.

Instruction in Writing or Online

An amateur golfer may receive payment or compensation for instruction when the instruction is given in writing (such as a published book or a magazine) as that form of instruction requires those reading it to determine whether it applies to them and, if so, how best to incorporate the instruction into their own swing.

An amateur golfer may also provide similar instruction online. This means an amateur golfer may post blogs or videos on instruction. But they must not respond directly to specific individuals or groups of golfers to assist them with the mechanics of swinging a golf club and hitting a golf ball, meaning that the golfers have to determine for themselves how best to incorporate the instruction into their own swing.

Rule 5: Reinstatement as an Amateur Golfer

A non-amateur may be reinstated as an amateur by the applicable national governing body.

Each national governing body has the sole authority to:

- reinstate a non-amateur,
- require a waiting period prior to reinstatement, or
- deny reinstatement.

The national governing body's decision on reinstatement is final, subject to any appeal process established by that body.

Guidance Notes for Rule 5

Reinstatement Guidance

A player requesting reinstatement as an amateur golfer should follow the application process for the national governing body of the country where they reside, which may involve submitting an application for reinstatement to that national governing body.

Having an application process ensures the appropriate national governing body has an opportunity to review each application and determine what it considers to be the appropriate outcome based on the circumstances.

Once a player requests reinstatement from the applicable national governing body, that person is considered an applicant for reinstatement, but remains a non-amateur until being reinstated.

Waiting Period Prior to Being Reinstated

It is recommended that the national governing body require a minimum waiting period of at least six months.

In deciding the waiting period for reinstatement, the national governing body can consider whether additional waiting time would be appropriate based on the applicant's length of time as a non-amateur.

The national governing body should determine when the waiting period starts and the length of the waiting period based on a number of factors:

- Start Date

It is recommended that the waiting period starts on the date of the player's last action that was not allowed by the Rules, such as the date the player was last employed as a golf professional, last played as a professional, or last accepted payment or compensation for instruction when not allowed. The national governing body retains the discretion to use a different date if it wishes.

- Playing Performance

A national governing body should consider an applicant's previous performance and success when determining a waiting period and may decide to extend the waiting period based on that performance and success.

Factors a national governing body may consider include the level at which the applicant competed (such as the strength of tours or fields) and performance in those competitions (such as cuts made, prizes won and high-placed finishes).

The length of time that has passed since the player last competed may also be considered when deciding how long the waiting period should be.

- Multiple Acts as a Non-Amateur

A player can become a non-amateur in multiple ways, so a national governing body may wish to treat these actions equally.

The following examples demonstrate how the waiting period can be applied to multiple actions:

Example 1:

- Employed as a golf professional from January 1, 2010 to January 1, 2022
- Held membership of a professional golfers' association from January 1, 2010 to June 30, 2022
- Accepted payment for instruction from January 1, 2010 to January 1, 2022

The date of last act is June 30, 2022, and the player should be required to wait a minimum of six months, starting June 30, 2022, and would be eligible for reinstatement no sooner than December 30, 2022.

Example 2:

- Employed as a golf professional from January 1, 2010 to January 1, 2022
- Held membership of a professional golfers' association from January 1, 2010 to June 30, 2022
- Accepted payment for instruction from January 1, 2010 to January 1, 2022
- Played as a professional from January 1, 2010 to June 1, 2022

The date of last act is June 30, 2022, and the player should be required to wait a minimum of six months, starting June 30, 2022, and would be eligible for reinstatement no sooner than December 30, 2022. The player may also be required to wait an additional period of time based on their playing performance.

Multiple Reinstatements

The Rules allow for a non-amateur to be reinstated more than once.

The national governing body can decide to extend an applicant's waiting period when they are being reinstated for the second or third time. For example, it might determine that the minimum waiting period for a second reinstatement is increased to at least one year, as opposed to six months for a first reinstatement.

For subsequent reinstatements after a second reinstatement, it would be a matter for the national governing body to decide whether to approve another reinstatement, and if so, what the waiting period should be.

Denying Reinstatement

The national governing body can choose to deny an applicant's reinstatement in limited circumstances. This may be appropriate when a player has attained a certain standard of prominence or achieved a certain level of accomplishments in the game.

Defining a standard to deny reinstatement on a global level is not possible as circumstances vary from country to country. It is a matter for each national governing body to establish its own guidelines for making this decision, but it may also consult The R&A before making a decision.

Status While Awaiting Reinstatement

A non-amateur who has applied for reinstatement must follow the Rules of Amateur Status as if they were an amateur golfer. They must not enter and play in competitions as an amateur golfer until being reinstated.

However, a non-amateur may enter competitions that are not limited to amateur golfers during their waiting period, including among members of a club where they are a member, provided the applicant:

- does not play as a professional,
- is allowed by the competition organizers to enter and play even though they are still a non-amateur,
- does not accept a competition prize that is not allowed under Rule 3, and
- does not accept any prize reserved for an amateur golfer in that competition.

A Committee in charge of an amateur competition may accept an entry from non-amateur who has applied for reinstatement, provided the applicant is scheduled to be reinstated before the start of the competition, including any qualifying rounds.

Rule 6: Applying the Rules

The R&A and USGA are the governing bodies for the Rules of Amateur Status and reserve the right to change the Rules at any time and to make and change interpretations of the Rules at any time.

The national golf union or association is the national governing body responsible for administering and applying the Rules of Amateur Status within its area of authority, including issues that arise in another area but involve a person or people who come under its authority.

If there is uncertainty or doubt about the application of the Rules, including whether a person is an amateur or non-amateur, the national governing body has the authority to make a final decision but it may also refer the matter to The R&A prior to making a decision.

The national governing body's decision about the application of the Rules is final, subject to any appeal process established by that body.

Guidance Notes for Rule 6

National Governing Body When Player Has Multiple Residencies

The Rules of Amateur Status are administered by an amateur golfer's national governing body, which is the national governing body for golf in the country where the player resides and plays the majority of their golf, regardless of nationality.

When a player has dual or multiple residencies, the respective national governing bodies should coordinate to determine which body should have responsibility for the person concerned. If a decision cannot be reached, the national governing bodies should consult The R&A before making a decision.

General Guidance Notes

Contracts

The Rules do not restrict an amateur golfer from entering into a contract or agreement and receiving financial compensation from that contract or agreement while an amateur golfer. However, anyone entering into a contract or agreement should ensure that it does not impact on any other eligibility criteria applied by another organization or institution, such as a university or college.

Before entering a contract relating to their golf activities, it is recommended that an amateur golfer consult with their national governing body and obtain appropriate guidance from an independent advisor on any contractual terms and conditions.

Accepting Compensation for Use of Name, Image and Likeness

An amateur golfer may accept payment or compensation, including expenses, for using or allowing the use of their name, image or likeness to promote or sell a product or service.

While such actions are not contrary to the Rules, it may be contrary to the regulations of other organisations or institutions. For example, a player in receipt of a university or college scholarship should ensure that accepting payment of any kind does not conflict with their eligibility for such a scholarship.

Student-athletes and prospective student-athletes are advised to consult their national governing body, their educational institution's compliance office or the appropriate national educational body for guidance.

Restrictions on Commercial Identification on Clothing or Equipment

The Rules do not place any restrictions on the number or size of commercial logos that amateur golfers may have on their clothing or equipment. But organizers of competitions where the players competing are likely to be commercially sponsored may wish to place restrictions on the commercial identification allowed on clothing and equipment.

For example, competition organizers could limit the size and location of commercial logos that are displayed on amateur golfers' clothing or equipment (or caddies' clothing or equipment) or they could stipulate that players and their caddies must not promote or advertise within certain categories of businesses.

Gambling

An amateur golfer may participate in gambling or wagering when playing golf, provided that the gambling or wagering does not lead to abuse of the Rules of Golf and/or the Rules of Handicapping.

Forms of gambling or wagering that are considered acceptable are where:

- The players generally know each other.
- Participation in the gambling or wagering is not required.
- All money won is contributed by the participants.

If the national governing body considers certain gambling or wagering to be detrimental to the integrity of the game, the national governing body may review the amateur status of the participants.