



Additional Clarifications of the 2023 Rules of Golf

Updated 1 October 2025

New additions will normally be updated on a quarterly basis each January, April, July, and October and the next quarterly update will be in early January 2026.

No New Clarifications for October 2025

RULES

Rule 5:

Rule 5.2:

5.2b/3 – Application of Penalty for Practising on Course Before Round in Stroke Play

Rule 5.2b explains when a player is not allowed to practise on the course before a round in *stroke play*. The penalty statement in Rule 5.2b is not limited to making a *stroke* as the term “practising on the course” also includes testing the surface of the *putting green* by rolling a ball or rubbing the surface.

If a player rubs the surface of a single *green*, they have only breached Rule 5.2 once no matter how many times they rub the surface of the same *green*. (Added December 2022)

Rule 8

Rule 8.1:

8.1a/10 – Player Allowed to Put Movable Part of Immovable Obstruction Back in Intended Position

Rule 8.1a(2) prohibits placing a *movable obstruction* into position to *improve* the *conditions affecting the stroke*. However, this restriction does not apply to returning a movable part of an *immovable obstruction* to its intended position.

For example:

- If a sprinkler head is popped up, the player may push it down before playing the ball as the sprinkler head is not in its intended position.
- If a drain cover has been removed or dislodged, the player may return it to its intended position.

In both cases, there is no penalty under Rule 8 even if this *improves* the *conditions affecting the stroke*. (Added July 2023)



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Rule 10:

Rule 10.2:

10.2b/1 – Use of Self-Standing Putter for Alignment Help is Not Allowed

Provided a self-standing putter conforms to the *Equipment Rules*, it may be used to make a *stroke* (Rule 4.1a(1)). But the player (or their *caddie*) is not allowed to set such a putter down to get help in any way that would breach Rule 10.2b.

For example, the player must not set the putter down in a standing position right behind or right next to the spot where the ball lies on the *putting green* to show the *line of play* or to help the player in taking their *stance* for the *stroke* in breach of Rule 10.2b(3). **(Reinstated January 2025)**

10.2b(3)/1 – Setting Clubhead on Ground Behind Ball to Help the Player Take a Stance is Allowed

Rule 10.2b(3) does not allow a player to set down an object (such as an alignment rod or a golf club) to help the player take a *stance*.

However, this prohibition does not prevent a player from positioning their clubhead behind the ball, such as when a player stands behind the ball and places the clubhead perpendicular to the *line of play* and then, while still holding the club, walks around from behind the ball to take their *stance*. **(Reinstated January 2025)**

10.2b(3)/2 – Delay of Implementation for Certain Uses of Self-Standing Putters

(Withdrawn January 2025)

Rule 11:

Rule 11.1:

11.1b(2)/1 – Ball Played from Putting Green Hits Another Ball in Motion on the Putting Green

A ball is a *movable obstruction*, including when it is in motion on the *putting green*.

If it is *known or virtually certain* that a player's ball in motion played from the *putting green* accidentally hits another ball in motion on the *putting green*, the player must replay the *stroke* by playing the original ball or another ball from the spot where that *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6). **(Added January 2024)**



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Rule 14:

Rule 14.3:

14.3b(4)/1 – General Penalty Applies Under Rule 14.7a

In relation to the final bullet in Rule 14.3b(4), if a player gets the *general penalty* for making a *stroke* without correcting their mistake, the *general penalty* applies under Rule 14.7a for having played from a *wrong place*.

For example, when taking back-on-the-line relief, a player *drops* their ball almost one *club-length* to the side of the line. The ball is in a *wrong place* irrespective of where it comes to rest, even if it comes to rest on the line. The ball must be *dropped* again to avoid penalty under Rule 14.7a.

In *stroke play*, if the player makes a *stroke* from the *wrong place*, the player would need to correct this mistake if playing from a *wrong place* was a *serious breach*. (Added April 2023)

COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

Section 5A(5) - When Scorecard Has Been Returned

The following guidance has been added to the Committee Procedures based on several organizations adopting various policies that use a duration of time to further define when a scorecard is returned.

These policies are not a change to the Rules of Golf, but clarify that the Committee or competition organizer has the option of adopting a time-based policy when specifying when the scorecard has been returned, that means that once this has occurred, the player may no longer make any changes to their scorecard (see Rule 3.3b(2)).

This new guidance has been added to Section 5A(5)a, which is the section that provides ways a Committee may specify when a scorecard is considered returned in stroke play and offers several options of how this can be done.

a. Specify When Scorecard is Considered Returned

- During 2024 the governing bodies confirmed that the Rules of Golf allow for a policy that uses a duration of time (such as 15 minutes) to define when a scorecard is returned.
 - Such policies allow a player to return to the defined scoring area and correct a scorecard mistake within that duration of time, but do not change the requirement for the player to promptly proceed to the scoring area after they finish their round.
 - When using such a policy, the Committee should determine both how much time is allowed as well as when it begins, such as when:



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- the player left the defined scoring area
- the group completed their last hole of the round, or
- the player's scorecard was entered into an electronic scoring system.

(Added January 2025)

Model Local Rule E-13:

E-13 – Player May Remove Animals Not Defined As Loose Impediments From Near Ball

Purpose. When an animal is touching or is near a player's ball, the player may encourage it to move, and if the animal causes the ball to move when it is being encouraged by the player, Rule 9.6 applies.

If the animal does not move, the player can choose between removing the animal and risking penalty if they cause the ball to move (Rule 9.4b), taking penalty relief (Rules 17.1 or 19.1) or playing the ball as it lies while the animal is still touching or is near the ball.

This Local Rule allows the player to remove animals that are not defined as loose impediments without penalty under Rule 9.4.

Model Local Rule E-13

"A player may remove an *animal*, other than those defined as a *loose impediment*, that is touching or near their ball without penalty and may do so in any way.

If the player's ball *moves* while they are removing the *animal*:

- There is no penalty, and
- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Local Rule: *General Penalty Under Rule 14.7.*" (Added July 2023)

Model Local Rule G-9:

Note: The following Model Local Rule replaces the version of MLR G-9 published in the printed edition of the 'Official Guide to the Rules of Golf, Effective January 2023' starting on 1 January 2025.

G-9 – Broken or Significantly Damaged Club Replaced with Similar Club

Purpose. Rule 4.1a(2) allows a player to repair or replace a club that is damaged during the round, except in cases of abuse. But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule to restrict replacement to cases where the club is broken or significantly damaged.



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Model Local Rule G-9

“Rule 4.1a(2) applies but is modified in these ways:

1. A club damaged by the player or their caddie during the round or while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a may only be replaced if the damage was not caused by abuse and if the club is broken or the damage is significant.

For the purposes of this Local Rule, examples of when a club is “broken or the damage is significant” include:

Shaft:

- The shaft is in pieces, or it is bent, dented, kinked or splintered.

Clubhead (except Club Face):

- The clubhead is visibly cracked or substantially deformed (but not when it is only scratched, chipped or has a minor dent),
- The clubhead is loose or no longer attached to the shaft, or
- A part inside the clubhead is loose (such as when there is an audible rattle).

Club Face:

- The club face is visibly cracked or deformed (including when it has a chip or minor dent but not when it is only scratched).

Grip:

- The grip or part of it is loose.

2. To ensure the progression of the set is maintained, the replacement club must fill the gap created when the player took the broken or damaged club out of play.

Penalty for Breach of Local Rule – See Rule 4.1b.” (Revised January 2025)

Model Local Rule M-4:

M-4 – Limited Relief for Ball in Bunker for Players Using Wheeled Mobility Devices

Purpose. The design and shape of bunkers often create situations where it is either not possible or it would require unreasonable effort for a player using a wheeled mobility device to position themselves to make a stroke on their intended line of play due to the size and limited manoeuvrability of wheeled mobility devices.

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Examples of such situations include when the wall, lip or slope around the bunker prevents a player from taking their stance or the severity of the slope of sand in the bunker requires the player to make unreasonable efforts to take their stance, even though playing the ball as it lies would generally be possible if the player was not using a wheeled mobility device.

When such a situation exists, this Local Rule allows the player the option of taking free relief within the same bunker.

This Local Rule requires the player to make an honest assessment as to when it would require unreasonable effort for them to take a stance to play the ball as it lies as there will be times when the player will be able to take their stance with reasonable effort even though taking free relief elsewhere in the bunker is more desirable. There will also be times when the player is not allowed to take free relief because playing the ball as it lies would be clearly unreasonable for every player in the field whether or not they would be making a stroke from a seated position.

Model Local Rule M-4

“When a player’s ball comes to rest in a *bunker*, a player using a wheeled mobility device may take free relief in the same *bunker* when taking a *stance* to play the ball as it lies and on the intended *line of play* is either:

- Not possible (such as when the wall, lip or slope around the *bunker* interferes with the positioning of the player’s wheeled mobility device), or
- Requires unreasonable effort (such as when the player is unable to drive their wheeled mobility device up a sandy slope).

The player may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in and playing it from this *relief area*:

- Reference Point: The nearest point where the player’s ball can be positioned in the *bunker* that would allow their wheeled mobility device to be positioned without unreasonable effort, which may be nearer the *hole*.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: One *club-length* in any direction, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
 - Must be in the same *bunker*.

Exception – No Relief Even Though Stance Not Possible. Free relief is not available under this Local Rule when:

- Playing the ball as it lies is clearly unreasonable because of something other than the player being unable to take a *stance* or taking a stance requiring unreasonable effort (such as when the ball is buried in a steep sandy faced *bunker*).
- The player creates a situation where free relief would be available, but does so only because:



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- They choose a clearly unreasonable direction of play (such as playing a ball directly out of bounds or into a penalty area when taking a stance would take unreasonable effort), or
- They choose a clearly unreasonable club or type of swing.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Local Rule: *General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.*" (Added January 2024)

To view a document detailing the application of Model Local Rule M-4, including example situations where the exception would apply click [here](#). (Added January 2024).