
Golf Rules: Learning the Basics for Beginners



If you enjoy playing golf, you are aware that there are a number of golf rules that one should adhere to. If you're new to the game, learning all the rules can be overwhelming at first. The "official rules of golf" published by the USGA and R&A are about 100 pages in length. So if you are looking for a full detailed version, you may want to continue with your research. The golf rules published here are a quick overview of the basics and are designed to give beginners a quick overview of standard golf rules and proper etiquette before they hit the course. This brief overview should provide a good understanding of what to do (and what not to do) on the course. Keep in mind that in addition to this basic overview, there are also different golf rules for the various types of [golf formats](#) (i.e. Scramble vs. Alternate Shot vs. Modified Stableford). Golf rules may also vary slightly depending on the group you are playing with and the course you play. Lastly, don't forget that golf is not only about the game, but there is also a certain etiquette that players are expected to follow on the course and during play. Please note that this summary should never be used to settle disputes. Consult the full official rules to sort out any disagreement.

Golf Rules — An Overview of the Basics

The Top 10 Golf Rules – Source [GolfRegistrations.com](#)

Rule 1: Preparing for the Game

- **Equipment:** Bringing the right equipment is part of the rules in a game of golf. There is a limit of 14 clubs in each golfer's bag. And typically borrowing clubs from other players is not advisable. Make sure you also have plenty of golf tees and golf balls. If it's your first time out, there's a good chance you'll be losing some balls and you'll want to be prepared to replace them.
- **Dress Code:** Typically golf courses require collared shirts and dress pants or khaki shorts. It is also a good idea to wear golf shoes. A golf glove is optional, although may not be a bad thing to have in your bag to prevent blisters on your hands.
- **Tipping:** Find out if tipping is common practice. If you are playing at a private course, it is often necessary to tip cart jockeys, people running beverage carts, caddies, etc.
- **Tee Time:** Before showing up at a course, you'll always want to call ahead to reserve a tee time. Then, once a tee time is reserved, make sure you are on time. If a tee time is missed, your group may lose its spot.

Rule 2: The Basics

- The holes on the course must be played in order, either 1 through 9, or 1 through 18.
- Always use your correct handicap.
- Mark your ball so you will be able to identify it on the course.
- You may only strike the ball with the head of the club. You may not push, scrape or rake the ball, or hit the ball while it is moving.

Rule 3: Teeing off — Who Goes First?

- Place your ball between the tee markers, usually small colored cones. The ball can be even with the markers or up to two clubs lengths behind them, but never in front.

- The player who has "honors" tees off first. For the first hole, his can be determined randomly. On remaining holes, the player with the best score on the preceding hole typically goes first.
- On all other shots from the tee markers to the green, the player whose ball is furthest from the hole plays first.

Rule 4: How to Play Your Ball

- One of the most fundamental principles of golf is the rule "play it as it lies." Which is pretty self-explanatory. Don't move or touch the ball. Where it comes to rest, is where you should play your next shot.

Rule 5: Out of Bounds & Lost Balls

- The penalty for hitting your ball out of bounds (or losing your ball) is "stroke-plus-distance" – that is, add one stroke to your score, and then go back to where you hit the shot from to hit it again.
- If you hit the ball out of bounds, rather than retracing your steps (especially at a busy course), you can play a second ball called a "provisional ball" off the tee. Wait until everyone else tees off before you hit your provision ball, and then count this as your third stroke.

Rule 6: Water Hazards

- Water hazards are typically marked on golf courses with yellow or red lines or stakes.
- If your ball ends up in the water, take a 1-stroke penalty and drop the ball at a point behind the spot where your ball crossed into the water.

Rule 7: The Putting Green

- When your ball is on the green, you may brush away any loose impediments such as leaves or sticks.
- You may not test the surface of the green by rolling a ball or scraping the surface.
- If you pick up your ball to get it out of the way for another ball or clean it, always mark it with a coin.
- If the ball overhands the edge of the hole, a player can wait for 10 seconds to see if it will drop in.

Rule 8: Keep Moving

- Be aware of your place of play. You don't want to keep other golfers behind you waiting.
- Be prepared to play when its your turn. Have your club selected, and ball and tee in advance.
- If your group is slower than the group behind you, it's good etiquette to allow the faster group to play through.

Rule 9: Asking Advice

- During any round, you may not ask advice on "how to play" from anyone on the course except for your caddie or partner. You may however ask for reminders about rules, boundaries or positions of hazards.
- Similarly, you may not give advice to your opponent.

Rule 10: Course Care & Safety

- Part of your responsibility when golfing is to take care of the course you are playing.
- Be aware of the whereabouts of other golfers before you swing.
- If you use a golf cart, observe the posted cart rules and keep the cart on the paths at all times as carts can damage grass.
- Repair your pitch marks on the green and divots in the fairway.
- To smooth out the sand after landing in a bunker, use the rake to smooth out your footprints.

Be sure to take a thorough read through the Official Rules of Golf for more details about any of these topics, and always refer to these Official Rules to settle any disputes