

The Rules of Recreational Golf in One Page

by

Bob Jones

The Recreational Golfer

The golf rule book has 97 pages, and there is a 437-page book of decisions that explain unusual situations the rules do not specifically cover. It takes special training and years of experience to become familiar with all of it.

This body of rules knowledge is so great that many recreational golfers are only vaguely aware of the the rudiments, if that. The rules are complex, interconnected, and interact in unexpected ways. And, unlike other sports, the competitors are expected to know them and enforce them. Golfers who want to play by the rules have serious difficulty.

Here, then is a simplified set of rules. I gave myself a limit of one page. Most of what will happen on the course is covered. In these rules the out-of-bounds rule is changed, and several rules that are similar are collapsed into one rule.

While there are gaps in these rules, and no doubt ways players could take advantage of situations these rules do not adequately address, for the most part they cover everything that will come up in a recreational round of golf.

If you are turning your score for a handicap or are playing in a tournament, stick like glue to the USGA rule book. Otherwise, I think there's no reason you shouldn't play by these rules. They're simpler, fair, and can be learned in an afternoon.

Play well, and have fun.

The Rules of Golf in One Page

1. Tee up your ball within the rectangle between the tee markers and two club-lengths back.
2. Every attempt to hit the ball, whether or not successful, counts as a stroke, but if you accidentally knock the ball off a tee while addressing it, no stroke is counted and there is no penalty.
3. If you accidentally move the ball while addressing it (except on a tee) or in taking a practice stroke, replace the ball in its original spot. Penalty: one stroke.
4. You may not improve the lie of your ball. Penalty: two strokes.
5. If your ball is found (a) **out of bounds**, (b) in a **water hazard** (or is not found but is known to be in the water hazard), or (c) in a spot where it is **unplayable**, drop it within two club-lengths of the nearest spot (a) in bounds, (b) outside the water hazard, or (c) from where it lies, but in no case nearer to the hole. Penalty: one stroke.
6. In the three situations above you may choose to play a ball from the spot where the ball was last played. Penalty: one stroke.
7. If your ball is **lost** (but not in a water hazard), you must play another ball from the spot where you last hit the ball that got lost. Penalty: one stroke.
8. If you play the **wrong ball**, play the correct ball and take a one-stroke penalty. The player whose ball was incorrectly played is to drop another ball at the spot from where you hit it.
9. If your ball is on the **wrong putting green**, drop it within two club-lengths of the nearest spot off the green but not nearer to the hole. No penalty.
10. If an artificial object (including a cart path) that is fixed interferes with your swing, you may take two-club lengths relief, but not nearer to the hole. No penalty.
11. A natural object that is fixed and which interferes with your swing may not be moved, bent, broken, or detached. Penalty: one stroke.
12. Artificial and natural objects that are not fixed may be moved, but a natural object in a sand bunker or water hazard may not be moved. The ball must not move when the object is moved. Penalty: one stroke.
13. You may not ground the sole of your club in a sand bunker or a water hazard. Penalty: one stroke.
14. You may mark and clean your ball on the green.
15. Finish the hole with the same ball you started with unless it became lost, unfit for play, or was abandoned.