

The Rules of Recreational Golf
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The USGA's rule book is meant for competitions and establishing a USGA handicap. If you are playing outside of those environments, those rules really have no force. Use these rules instead and go have fun.

Playing the Game

1. Play from tees appropriate for you. If you do not break 100 regularly, use the red tees. If you do not break 85 regularly, use the white tees. Use blue tees only if, in addition to these scoring guidelines, you regularly drive the ball 250 yards or more.
2. Tee up your ball inside the teeing box, defined as a rectangle between the tee markers and two club-lengths deep. Once you have hit the ball outside of this box, you must play the ball as it lies, except under these conditions:
 - a. If you hit the ball into a water hazard, defined by red or yellow stakes, remove the ball if you can find it, or use another ball if your ball is lost in the hazard, and drop it outside the hazard at another spot no nearer to the hole than where the ball crossed the hazard's boundary. Penalty: one stroke. If you think you can play your ball from inside the hazard, go ahead. There is no penalty in that case.
 - b. If you hit the ball out of bounds, defined by white stakes, you *must* remove your ball, even if you find it, and drop it in bounds at another spot no nearer to the hole than where the ball went out of bounds. Penalty: one stroke.
 - c. If you have looked for your ball for two minutes and cannot find it, your ball is lost. Drop another ball at another spot no nearer to the hole than where you last saw it. Penalty: one stroke.
 - d. At any time, you may declare your ball to be unplayable, pick it up, and drop it at another spot no nearer to the hole. Penalty: one stroke.
 - e. If heavy rain or flooding has caused water to collect in a place where there normally is no water, you may pick up your ball and drop it at another spot no nearer to the hole at remove from this casual water. No penalty.
 - f. If your ball is in a part of the course that is enclosed by a white circle, that is ground being worked on by the maintenance crew. Pick up your ball and drop it at another spot no nearer to the hole. No penalty. Note: picking up is not an option here; you *must* drop your ball outside the marked area.
3. If you play someone else's ball, play your 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.
4. If your ball is on the wrong putting green, pick it up and drop it within two club-lengths of the nearest spot off the green but not nearer to the hole of the correct green. No penalty.
5. If an artificial object (including a cart path or a road) that is fixed interferes with your swing or stance, you may pick up your ball and drop it at another spot no nearer to the hole. No penalty.
6. A natural object that is fixed or growing and which interferes with your swing or stance may not be moved, bent, broken, or detached except as you are making your stroke. Penalty: one stroke
7. Artificial and natural objects that are not fixed (soda pop can, twig) may be moved without penalty.
8. If mud adheres to your ball, you may mark it and clean it.
9. Finish the hole with the same ball you started with unless it became lost or unfit for play.
10. If you swing at the ball with intent to hit it and you miss, you must count that as one stroke. If you accidentally knock the ball off a tee when not intending to hit it, that does not count as a stroke. Re-tee the ball and play on.

Good Manners

1. Do not make noise or move around when someone near you is making their stroke.
2. If someone else's ball might be lost, play your ball and then go help them look.
3. If a ball you hit is heading for players in front of you, yell, "Fore!"
4. Make sure greenskeepers ahead of you are aware that you are about to hit.
5. Take a break from portable electronic devices. Leave them turned off and give your attention to the people you're playing with.
6. Be aware of where everyone else's ball is so you don't accidentally get in the way of their shot.
7. Repair divot holes you make by replacing the sod and stepping on it.
8. Repair ball marks you make on the green by pushing the edges of the gouge toward the center.
9. Follow the guidelines below for efficient play.

Efficient Play

Move your group along. You don't have to rush, just keep things moving. If your group is slow, you don't hold up just the group behind you. You hold up the entire course behind you. Your green fees do not include that privilege.

1. On the tee, be standing beside the tee box, club and ball in hand, ready to hit after the player already on the tee hits.
2. Watch your ball until it stops so you don't have to ask someone else where it is.
3. Go directly to your own ball. Do not go to everyone's ball in turn as a group.
4. Check the ball before you hit it to make sure it is yours.
5. When you get to your ball, get ready to make your next stroke make it if no one else is making theirs.
6. If someone else is making their stroke, use that time to get ready for yours.
7. In general, prepare for and play your stroke without delay.
8. Take one practice swing if you want to, then hit the ball. Avoid taking multiple practice swings.
9. After you make your stroke, start walking immediately. You can clean your club and put it back in the bag when you get to your ball and are waiting for someone else to hit.
10. When you get to the green, put your bag or cart on the side of the green nearest the next tee.
11. Recreational golf is a social game. Have your conversations, though, when you are walking, and not when the person you want to talk to should be getting ready for their shot.
12. Similarly, after everyone has holed out, leave the green immediately. Talk and record scores on the way to the next tee.
13. If you have hit the ball five times and it is not on the green, pick up your ball and drop it on the green when you get there. If you have hit the ball eight times and it is still not in the hole, pick it up and cease play on that hole.
14. On the green, read your putt without too much delay. If you cannot decide, make your best guess and play the stroke.
15. If your group is slow anyway, or a faster group is behind you, let groups behind you play through in this manner: Your group tees off, then waits for the following group. That group tees off. Stay at the tee box until that group has hit their second shots. Then your group may start down the fairway.