

GOLF RULES & ETIQUETTE

Golf is a game unlike any other. It is the only game where the true test of a person's character is revealed during a round of golf and especially during competition. You are expected not only to know and observe the rules of golf, but to "self police" yourself and if circumstances warrant it, to call a penalty on yourself if you have violated a rule either intentionally or unintentionally.

One of the greatest golfers of all time, Bobby Jones illustrated what makes this game unique in a tournament in the 1920's when he was the best player in the world. While addressing his ball (this means taking your stance and grounding your club behind the ball) for a shot from the middle of the woods, his ball rolled over from where it was lying. The rules dictate that after a player takes his/her stance that they are deemed to move the ball even if there is no intention to do so. Mr. Jones hit his shot and emerged from the woods and told his marker (scorekeeper) that he had incurred a stroke penalty for his ball moving. No one else had seen the infraction and Mr. Jones was congratulated for his honesty and integrity. His reply was, "you might as well congratulate a thief for not stealing". His point was that this is the expected behaviour that golfers should exhibit and he should not have been congratulated for doing what is right. This is different than many other sports where for example, a hockey player is not expected to come out of a corner and tell the referee that he should be assessed a penalty for elbowing.

You as a competitor in tournament golf have a responsibility to not only self police and call rules infractions on yourself if the need arises (knowing the rules of golf well eliminates the need for this in many cases). You also have the responsibility to "protect the field". This means you are responsible for keeping an eye on fellow players and make sure they are following the rules of golf. Cheating (lying about ones' score, improving one's lie of their ball, etc.) has long been a problem in junior golf and we would like to see our competitions as an opportunity to learn about the rules and what the game of golf is all about and eliminate cheating entirely. An occurrence of cheating will result in disqualification in any tournament.

Etiquette

- Dress appropriately for the weather conditions and follow the dress code of the host club. Hat must be worn appropriately.
- Play ready golf! Be ready to play your shot without delay. Despite there being a provision in the rules of golf that states player farthest from the hole has the "honour", players can play out of turn if another player is not ready and the result of such will speed up play. Your group should always stay up to the pace set by the group in front of you. You should never have more than one full open hole in front of you.
- Refrain from talking and moving when other players are ready to play.
- Mark your ball with a small round object when your ball is on the green.
- Continue to putt out after you hit your approach putt if you are confident of success and you will not be standing on another player's line.

Golf Ontario Code of Conduct

Golf Ontario has a goal of having all of its tournaments recognized as the best Amateur Golf Tournaments in Ontario. To ensure that this is achieved, it is essential that the groundwork is developed at the Junior Golf level in order that the players who move on to the Amateur level demonstrate respect for the game, for the host clubs who provide their facilities for events, and for the communities in which the events are conducted.

In order to continue to make Golf Association of Ontario Junior Tournaments an enjoyable experience for all who participate and all volunteers who assist in organizing the events, the Association requires that all of the participants in its events adhere to a Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Code is to assist those participants in Golf Association of Ontario Junior events, to learn, grow and mature, through understanding and accepting accountability for their actions.

1. The Code of Conduct requires that, while **on** the Golf Course, all players:
 - a) will strictly adhere to the Rules of Golf
 - b) will adhere to the dress code during practice and competitive rounds
 - c) will complete all competitive rounds of golf, unless otherwise approved by the GO Tournament Committee
 - d) will demonstrate respect for volunteers, spectators, tournament officials, the host course, and the host community
 - e) will not throw clubs
 - f) will not use tobacco products, drugs, or alcohol
 - g) will not use abusive language
 - h) will not demonstrate any other conduct not becoming of a GO member
2. The Code of Conduct requires that, while **off** the Golf Course, all players:
 - a) will avoid any association with drugs, tobacco, and alcohol
 - b) will not be associated with vandalism at the host or accommodation facilities
 - c) will not demonstrate abusive behaviour to any fellow competitors, tournament officials, host club members, or community officials
 - d) will avoid any other conduct not becoming of a GO member
3. Proper attire is required at all times while at the golf facility. Failure to comply may result in disqualification. Golf Ontario Dress Code prohibits tank tops, t-shirts, and blue jeans. In addition, all headgear must be worn properly, all shirts must be tucked in, and all players must wear collared shirts or turtlenecks.

Common Rules of Golf

You should be familiar with the following rules of golf in order to compete in tournament golf.

Procedure when you hit a ball that may be lost or out of bounds (Provisional Ball):

- Tell your marker that you are playing a provisional ball in case it is lost or out of bounds. Failure to do so results in you abandoning your original ball and now playing this new ball under the stroke and distance rule (meaning you are now playing your third stroke and cannot play that original ball).
- You may play your provisional ball until you get to the area where the original ball lies (you could hit your second shot or third IF your provisional shot is much shorter than the original).
- You have THREE (3) minutes (NEW 2019 rule) to search for your ball starting when you arrive at the area. After such time the ball must be declared lost and you must play your provisional ball.
- If you did not hit a provisional ball, but either determine the ball is out of bounds or lost when you arrive at the ball, you must then go back and play under the stroke & distance penalty (play your third shot from where you last hit including re-teeing).

Options when taking your penalty stroke drop for a penalty area (formerly a hazard) include:

- Playing from any drop area when available.
- Drop as close as possible from the spot where you last hit including re-teeing.
- Drop anywhere back along an imaginary line aligned with the flagstick and the last point your ball crossed into the penalty area. This drop is always taken behind the hazard even if your ball landed over and rolled back in the hazard.
- You may play your ball as it lies within the penalty area.
If you do and fail to hit out of the hazard boundary, now you have 3 choices.
 1. You may hit the ball where it lies.
 2. Drop at the previous ball spot within the hazard
 3. Drop at the last spot which the ball was struck outside the hazard.

For red staked penalty areas you have an additional option.

- You may drop your ball within 2 club lengths from the point last crossed by your ball where it entered the penalty area, no closer to the hole.

NOTE: As of January 2019 in the new rules, you may “ground your club” (touch the ground behind the ball at address) in a penalty area if you play from it. You cannot do this in a sand bunker.

Unplayable Lie

- If your ball ends up in an unplayable lie “in the general playing area” (any area of the golf course outside of penalty areas (penalty areas & sand traps), you must inform your marker that you are proceeding under the unplayable lie rule. Your options are listed below and all include counting your original stroke and a penalty stroke.
- Stroke and Distance Penalty (go back after you declare your ball unplayable and play your third shot (if your tee shot was the stroke that became unplayable) from where you last hit including re-teeing.
- Drop anywhere back along an imaginary line aligned with the flag stick.
- You may drop your ball within 2 club lengths from where the ball lay no closer to the hole.

Doubt as to Procedure

If you have a situation where you and your group are unclear of a rule and do not know how to proceed, play the original ball as it lies. Then play another ball according to the ruling that your group collectively thinks is correct. Both balls must be played into the hole. Both scores must be recorded for that hole and the group must inform the Convenor immediately after finishing play about the situation and a ruling will be made and the correct score for that hole will count.

Maximum Number of Clubs

The maximum number of clubs is fourteen. All players should count the number of clubs before starting play. Penalty is 2 shots per hole for a maximum of 4 shot penalty for the first two holes. If error is not discovered before teeing off the third hole — disqualification.

Free Drops vs. Penalty Drops

The general rule of thumb is that if you are entitled to a free drop (from a “staked” tree or a cart path for example), you get stance and one club length relief. This means that you are entitled to take a stance away from the obstruction and get another club length relief from there.

If you are taking a penalty drop (from a penalty area or from an unplayable lie), you get two clubs length relief. The easier way to remember is that if you “pay” for the “relief” (are charged a penalty shot), you get two club lengths relief.

Scoring and Score Cards

All players in each group shall keep a score card for all players in the group. Scores will be checked carefully with each member of the group after each hole. All members of the group must agree on their totals on nine (9) holes and after eighteen (18) holes to identify any potential errors. Ultimately, the player is responsible for the individual scores on all eighteen holes, but not the addition of those holes (the Convenor will be responsible for the addition of the card). When the scorecards have been checked carefully upon the completion of play, the player must sign their official score card before handing it into the Convenor.

If a player signs for a score higher on a hole than that player took (eg. player made par on a hole, but signed for a bogey), the score for that hole will count. If a player signs for a score lower on a hole, the penalty is disqualification (eg. player made par on a hole, but signed for a birdie)

Here are notes and examples of how some of the local rules at Twenty Valley apply:

#2, Hydro Pole and wires - If your ball hits the wires you MUST replay the shot without penalty even if your ball goes in the hole!

#4 Trees – You have the option to take relief from all trees under 2 driver lengths as well as stakes and guide wires. Relief does not guarantee line of sight.

#3 Penalty Area - On 15, 16 or 17 the ball can roll down the hill as much as 2 club lengths from where it hit the ground on your drop. If further, you must re-drop.

#6 Line of Sight Relief - Taking line of sight relief behind the pump house on 17 is from your closest point of sight relief without consideration to the trees.

Ground Under Repair - A ball on a dirt spot which is not marked or meeting the definition of abnormal ground condition must play as it lies or declared unplayable taking penalty drop options.

#5 Obstructions - Relief is from the closest point from where your ball lies. If some other item comes into play, first you take relief from the obstruction then from the next situation if allowed.

#7 Stakes (White) - A ball hit left on 12 that does not fly clearly over or through the trees and can not be found is lost playing stroke and distance, not in a hazard unless it carried past the first red stake some 260 yards off the white tee markers. Play a provisional.

Slow play affects us all at 20 Valley often. The policy for pace of play is 4 hours and 15 minutes. To help keep track, that's about 11 minutes for a par 3, 14 minutes for a par 4 and 18 minutes for a par 5. Try not to let a hole open in front of you although that can be difficult if your walking in a foursome and the group ahead is a twosome in a cart.

Out of bounds is sometimes hard to define on a few locations on our course. Some of these locations are to the right of #4 just off the tee, to the left of #13, to the left of #17. When a ball is hit over an area where there is both the possibility of it landing either in a hazard or out of bounds behind the hazard it is a matter of evidence to determine what the procedure is. For example, a shot taken on #17 from the fairway is pulled far left over the red hazard stakes. It is not correct to just assume the ball is in the hazard unless it is found in it or it was very clear from the flight path that someone was able to see that it stopped in the hazard back from the out of bounds border behind. If not you must play it as either out of bounds or a lost ball which carries the same penalty of stroke and distance. This is why it is always important that all players in a group watch every shot.