



*Being careful when removing your golf ball from the hole can help to prevent damage that could impact playability for others.*

## BE CAREFUL AFTER MAKING THAT PUTT

BY STEVE KAMMERER | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, SOUTHEAST REGION

Under the new Rules of Golf, there is no penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits a flagstick left in the hole. As a result, leaving the flagstick in the hole while putting is becoming a popular option. Anecdotal reports suggest that pace of play has improved as a result of this change. However, an unintended consequence has also been observed at some courses – the edges of the holes are incurring more damage.

Some of the problems are attributed to golfers inadvertently damaging the edges of the hole with their hand as they attempt to retrieve their ball with the flagstick in the hole. Obviously, when the flagstick is in the hole there is less room available for your hand, so extra care is required to be sure you don't accidentally damage the edge of the hole. Golf course staff have also observed golfers using the base of the flagstick to remove their ball, or even inserting their putter alongside the flagstick and causing damage.

Whether the flagstick is in the hole or not, golfers should carefully remove the ball with their hand. Never use the flagstick as a tool to remove the ball because doing so can damage both the hole and the flagstick. Similar to the course care etiquette around repairing [ball marks](#) or [divots](#), being careful while removing our ball from the hole can help maintain good playability for others. The USGA article "[Course Conditions and the New Rules of Golf](#)" is a helpful resource to learn more about how the new Rules are making life easier for golfers and superintendents.

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