

A QUICK GUIDE TO...

The Rules of Golf

10 Rules You Should Know, by Shona McRae, Manager – Rules of Golf for the R&A

1. The Teeing Ground

Tee-markers should be about six to seven yards apart with the front line of the teeing ground set up at right angles to the centre of the drive zone. As the Rules state that the teeing ground is an area of two club-lengths in depth, the tee markers should always be at least two club-lengths from the back edge of the tee. A player should be allowed to tee the ball as far back in the two club-length area and still make an unobstructed swing. Remember to take account of left-handed players.

2. Hole Positions

There is no Rule stating the distance the hole should be from the edge of the green, but generally, it is recommended that the hole be at least four paces from any edge of the green. Ideally, an area of two to three feet around the hole should be as level as possible, ensuring that the hole is not within three paces of a very severe slope or of a recently used hole.

3. The Hole

To conform to the Definition of a "hole", the hole must be 4¼ inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least 4 inches (101.6 mm) deep. Often collars/inserts are used on practice putting greens to help protect the hole from overuse and as a result, are not sunk one inch below the surface. This is permitted on practice greens, however, on the actual course, a plastic collar or insert is considered to be part of the hole liner and as a result, both the liner and plastic insert/collar must be at least 1 inch (25.4 mm) below the surface.

4. Relocating the Hole during a Competition

In a stroke-play competition the Committee is prohibited from relocating one or all of the holes and from moving the tee-markers (Rule 33-2). If the locations of the hole or tee-markers are moved, generally the round should be declared null and void. If the area around a hole contains casual water, in stroke play, the course should be considered unplayable and the Committee should suspend play until such time the conditions improve. In match play, the Committee is permitted to relocate the hole.



5. Bunker Rakes

It may be argued that there is more likelihood of a ball being deflected into or kept out of a bunker if the rake is placed outside the bunker. However, in practice, players who leave rakes in bunkers frequently leave them at the side which tends to stop a ball rolling into the flat part of the bunker, resulting in a more difficult shot. This is most prevalent where the bunkers are small. Alternatively, if a rake is in the middle of a large bunker, it is either not used or the player is obliged to rake a large area of the bunker, resulting in unnecessary delay. Therefore, on balance, it is felt there is less likelihood of an advantage or disadvantage to the player if rakes are placed outside of bunkers in areas where they are least likely to affect the movement of the ball.

6. Water Hazards

There are two different forms of water hazard – normal and lateral. A common example of a lateral water hazard would be a body of water running parallel to a hole with the ground on the far side of the hazard being wooded or overgrown. As provided in the Definitions of the Rules of Golf, stakes and/or lines used to define the margins of a water hazard must be yellow and, in the case of lateral water hazards, they must be red. Stakes or lines defining the margins of a water hazard should be placed as near as possible along the natural limits of the hazard, ie. where the ground breaks down to form the depression containing the water.

7. Grass Cuttings

Grass cuttings are GUR only if they have been piled for removal. If cuttings piled for removal interfere with a player's stance or swing, the player is entitled to relief under Rule 25-1b. Grass cuttings are loose impediments, whether or not they are piled for removal, and may be removed by the player – Rule 23-1. Try to keep grass cuttings away from playing areas.

8. Bunker Totally Under Repair

If a bunker is being renovated, it does not lose its status as a hazard. However, it is recommended that the Committee should define the bunker as GUR and classify it as "through the green". This means that the player is entitled to take relief under Rule 25-1b, which allows the player to drop the ball out of the bunker without penalty.

9. Defining Course Boundaries

It is essential that course boundaries are clearly defined so that there can be no doubt as to whether a ball is in or out of bounds. Different methods can be used to mark the boundary such as fences, stakes, lines or walls but it is not recommended to use a hedge or line of trees due to their irregular growth. When stakes are used, they should be positioned sufficiently close to each other so that it is possible to draw an imaginary line between the two stakes to determine if the ball is out of bounds. If possible, bushes or trees should not obscure stakes. Stakes and/or lines must be painted white.

10. Flagstick

It is permitted to have thin discs or sleeves attached to the flagstick to indicate the distance from the front of the green, provided that the attachments are circular in cross-section. Similarly, the use of different coloured flags is permitted to indicate when the hole position is at the front, middle or back of the green.