

20 Most Important Rules Changes for Golf 2019

1. Search for a lost ball is now maximum 3 minutes (used to be 5 minutes).
2. Ball moves while searching for a ball in the rough – no longer a penalty but you have to move the ball back.
3. Embedded ball – used to only apply if the ball was in the fairway or closely mowed areas. Now it applies in all areas, semi-rough and rough.
4. When measuring club length for dropping a ball you now need to use the longest club in your bag except for the putter.
5. To drop a ball you do it from knee height now.
6. If your ball lands on the wrong green, you can no longer take your stance on the green. The relief has to be a few steps off the green.
7. If a ball accidentally hits the player or equipment there is no longer a penalty.
8. If the club hits the ball more than once there is no longer a penalty. A double hit now counts as one stroke.
9. You cannot take a practice swing touching the sand in a bunker or feel the sand to determine the consistency but you can touch the sand incidentally (i.e. lean on a club in the sand or rake an area that does not improve your ball position).
10. You can remove loose impediments in sand, hazards and rough but must be careful not to move the ball. If the ball does move, it has to be replaced and there is a one-stroke penalty.
11. There are more options for an unplayable ball in a bunker. You can go back and hit the ball from the original spot of drop the ball in the sand no closer to the hole incurring a one-stroke penalty or you can drop the ball outside/behind the bunker but this is a two-stroke penalty.
12. Water hazards are now called penalty areas whether there is water or not to allow sideways drop to speed up play.
13. If you decide to play the ball from a penalty you can now ground the club in the penalty area (even in water).
14. If your ball moves on the green after you have marked it and replaced it, it has to be put back to the original spot. (If a ball moves on the green before marking and replacing because of natural causes such as wind or water, you play the ball where it ends up).
15. If a ball accidentally moves on the green due to dropping a club or a practice swing there is no penalty but the ball must be put back to where it was.
16. You can now repair nearly all damage marks on the green including spike marks.
17. You cannot use/lie a club down to line up your shot.
18. Caddies can no longer kneel down behind the player's putt to help the player line it up.
19. You can leave the flagstick in the hole when putting and incur no penalty if you hit it. You have to determine before you putt whether you want it in or out.
20. If the ball gets wedged between the flagstick and the hole it is considered holed if any part of the ball is below the putting green.