



Rules Modernisation - Summary of the 20 Most Important Changes

1. RULE 18. The time to search for a lost ball is reduced from five to THREE minutes - glance at your watch before you start looking. Remember to always play a provisional if there is a chance your ball may be lost or out of bounds.
2. RULE 7. If your ball is moved accidentally while searching for it, it should be REPLACED without penalty.
3. RULE 16. If your ball is embedded anywhere in the general area, you may take a FREE drop within one club length of the nearest point of relief within the general area that is no nearer the hole.
4. The definition of a club length is that of the player's longest club excluding their putter.
5. RULE 14. Dropping procedure is changed to be from knee height - if you mistakenly drop from shoulder height you should drop again from knee height with no penalty. The ball must come to rest in the relief area - if not you must drop it again.
6. RULE 13. You must not play a shot OR TAKE A STANCE from a wrong green - take a free drop.
7. RULE 11. If your ball hits yourself or your equipment accidentally there is NO penalty - you cannot place equipment deliberately as a 'ball-stopper'.
8. RULE 10. A double hit now counts as one stroke - there is NO penalty.
9. RULE 12. Touching the sand in a bunker - you are still not allowed to test the condition of the sand in a bunker before the stroke is played, the club cannot be grounded behind the ball nor can it touch the sand during practice swings. However, there is now NO penalty if you touch the sand INCIDENTALLY (e.g. smoothing the bunker to take care of the course, placing your clubs in the bunker, leaning on a club to rest).
10. RULE 15. Loose impediments can be removed from anywhere on the course including bunkers and penalty areas but if the ball moves it must be replaced and ONE penalty stroke is incurred.
11. RULE 19. If you declare your ball to be unplayable within a bunker there used to be three options each costing one penalty stroke:
 - a. Return to the place you played your last shot - stroke and distance.
 - b. Within two club lengths within the bunker.
 - c. Within one club length of a point back on line but still within the bunker.

There is now a fourth option to drop behind the bunker at the cost of TWO penalty strokes.

12. RULE 17. Water hazards are now called red and yellow 'Penalty areas' and no longer need to contain water. If you are 'virtually certain' that your ball lands in an area marked as a red penalty (previously lateral water hazard) you may take a sideways drop at the cost of ONE penalty stroke.
13. RULE 17. Touching the ground and water in a penalty area is now permitted WITHOUT penalty.
14. RULE 13. If your ball moves after being marked and replaced on the green, it must be put back again - you DO NOT play it from the new spot.
15. RULE 13. If the ball is moved accidentally on the green, just put it back WITHOUT penalty.
16. RULE 13. It is now permitted to repair nearly all damage on the green (e.g. pitch marks, spike marks, old hole plugs) WITHOUT penalty. 'Natural imperfections' such as aeration holes, weeds or diseased areas and natural wear of the hole are part of the game and MAY NOT be repaired without penalty.
17. RULE 10. You may not set a club down on the ground to help with the alignment of your stance.
18. RULE 10. A caddie (or playing partner) is no longer allowed to stand behind you to help line up your putt.
19. RULE 13. Hitting the flag is WITHOUT penalty - you can always leave the flag in the hole.
20. RULE 13. If the ball comes to rest against the flagstick and any part of the ball lies below the surface of the putting green it is treated as holed and may be picked up.