

AVOIDANCE OF SLOW PLAY AND THE NEW RULES FOR 2019

Bob Wilson's excellent 2017 note on Strategy to Avoid Slow Play still sets out the principals we should adopt as a courtesy to our playing colleagues, to ensure we all enjoy our round of golf. However, in light of the new rules coming into effect on January 1st 2019 it is worth restating the key points and highlighting the specific changes intended to help address this issue.

READY GOLF – IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO, AND YOU ARE READY, PLAY YOUR SHOT

Positive encouragement from the R&A, and the USGA, for players to play from the tee, on the fairway and on the putting green when they are ready as long as it is safe and legal for them to do so. Your committee wish you to adopt this as standard practice.

MAINTAIN A DECENT PACE

No need to run, but keep up with the group ahead, even if there is no pressure behind you. The people behind may have slowed down in order to avoid standing waiting to play their shots.

DON'T DAWDLE AT THE CABIN

Take your refreshments and get moving. Avoid a queue at the 7th to tee-off.

FORTY SECONDS MAX TO PLAY YOUR SHOT

Positive encouragement from the R&A, and the USGA, for players to minimise their pre-shot routine. Forty seconds is a maximum, not a target though. Do you really need to check the exact distance, choose your club, take a practice swing, step back and then play your shot? Use the distance markers maybe as you approach the ball, check your line as you walk up, have the right club in mind (in hand?).

THREE MINUTES SEARCH AND THE LOST BALL IS NO LONGER IN PLAY – EVEN IF THEN FOUND

It is frustrating for us all when we have played a good ball but cannot find it because of long grass and leaves, etc. The new rule is clear though, and failure to comply is a breach of the rules. Take your medicine for the sake of those behind and the other players in your group. Don't just call a group through in order to extend your search. You missed the fairway, get over it, move on!

PROVISIONAL, PROVISIONAL, PROVISIONAL

The dreaded long walk back is one of the key reasons for players extending their search. Leaves, long grass due to recent rain, fallen twigs due to wind, particularly in the winter, pose a risk that any shot which misses the fairway might be lost. Take the time to play a provisional if there is ANY doubt, don't just hope!

POSITION YOUR CLUBS FOR QUICK DEPARTURE AROUND THE GREEN

Assess the best position for your clubs as you arrive at the green so that, as soon as putting is complete, you can clear the area. Don't stand marking scores whilst the group behind is waiting.

YOU CAN PUTT WHEN YOU ARE READY EVEN WITH THE FLAGSTICK STILL IN

Another provision of the new rules is that there is no penalty for striking the flagstick when putting. No need to wait for other players to arrive if you are already on the green, unless you risk hitting another player's ball. No need to wait for someone to tend the flagstick.