

# The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

Issue V

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## Thanks USGA!

### 12 Penalties the Revised 2019 Rules Eliminated

#### On the Putting Green

- 1. You repair a spike mark or other shoe damage on the putting green.**  
No penalty, no problem, fix all those marks for the best roll!  
*Sometimes it was hard to tell which was what.*
- 2. Your ball is on the green and another player's ball is headed your way so you quickly mark your ball before it gets hit.**  
No penalty, no problem. Do it if you are quick enough. If the other ball was the player's putt you will save them a 2 stroke penalty.  
*Good riddance to this breach! Some years back during a mixed partner tournament, one team called this on the other team and they were assessed a 2 stroke penalty. It seemed unfair but that was the rule.*
- 3. You accidentally move your ball on the putting green or the ball moves (wind or gravity ) after you have marked your ball.**  
No penalty, no problem, just move your ball back to its original lie.  
*If you're on the tee and your ball moves such as during your practice swing, your ball wasn't in play so just re-tee it and there was no stroke. If you're anywhere else except the green or the tee, put your ball back where it was and take a 1 stroke penalty for moving a ball in play.*
- 4. During your putt, your ball hits the flagstick whether it is in the hole or laying in the green.**  
No penalty, no problem, but if you deliberately place the flagstick to deflect the ball, then a 2 stroke penalty applies.
- 5. Touching your line of putt.**  
No penalty no problem as long as you are not trying to test the feel of the green or trying to improve your lie of line of putt.  
*You still can't use your towel to wipe dew or frost under your ball or to clear a path to your ball, but you can use your towel to brush leaves or bunker sand (loose impediments) on the green.*

#### In the Bunkers

- 6. You lean on your club in the bunker while waiting for others to play.**  
No penalty, no problem, you may ground your club anywhere except in front or behind your ball and you cannot hit/brush the sand on your practice swings or back swings.

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#### Why were they Eliminated?

**Some changes were to speed up play**, such as putting with the flagstick in the hole.

**Some penalties were eliminated because they seemed unfair.** Such as the 2 stroke penalty when the Player's putt hit an attended flagstick. This was often the fault of the person attending the flagstick, yet the player got the penalty.

**Accidents happen.** The USGA and RA decided if it wasn't intentional (to double hit, move a ball during a search or hit yourself or your equipment with your ball) you should not get penalized for it. The outcomes resulted in an advantage for the player just as much as a disadvantage for the player.

**Some rules were inconsistent.** For example, if a Player accidentally cause their ball to move during a search, it was a penalty. It wasn't a penalty if someone else in their group cause the player's ball to move during the search.

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## 12 Penalties the Revised 2019 Rules Eliminated

### 7. You move loose impediments in the bunker, e.g. throw out pebbles or leaves.

No penalty, no problem, the challenge is to hit from sand, not pebbles or leaves.

*You still get a 1 stroke penalty if your ball moves when you remove the loose impediment and you must put your ball back.*

*Due to the Covid Virus safe practices, rakes have been temporarily removed from the bunkers. If your ball lands in a footprint or divot, you may lift your ball, smooth sand and replace your ball without penalty.*

## In the Penalty Areas

### 8. Your ball lies within a staked penalty area where you think you have a shot out so you clear loose impediments around your ball.

No penalty, no problem, just as you can on the fairway.

*You still get a 1 stroke penalty if your ball moves when you remove the loose impediment and you must put your ball back.*

### 9. Your ball lies playable within a staked penalty area and you ground your club when you set up to play.

No penalty, no problem, just as you can ground your club on the fairway.

## Anywhere on the Course

### 10. You accidentally move your ball while searching for it.

No penalty, no problem, go ahead, drag your feet or your clubs to help you find the ball. If your ball moved during the search, simply replace the ball where it was including recreating the lie.

### 11. You accidentally hit the ball twice.

No penalty, no problem, just count the actual stroke made, not the second accidental hit. Double hits most often occur on chips or bunker shots.

### 12. Your ball hits you or your equipment after your stroke.

No penalty, no problem, simply play the ball where it landed and count only the stroke.

*You still can't use your foot or a club as a stopper nor deliberately place your equipment to deflect the ball ( e.g. front of the bunker to make sure your missed chip/putt would not roll off the green into a bunker). If you do, it is a 2 stroke penalty and the ball must be dropped where the ball would have been if the equipment was not in the way.*

*To be practical.* A strict prohibition on removing loose impediments or grounding the club in penalty areas was never practical and exceptions created confusion.

## Did You Know...

The Rules of Golf are the same around the world and have been since 1968 when the USGA and the R&A reconciled their differences. However each governing body continued to issue their own decisions about the interpretations of rules which sometimes differed. In 1980, they started issuing a joint decision book on the Rules of Golf. It was also in 1980 when they prohibited players from making a full practice shot from the side of the tee while waiting to play.

