

The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

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Don't Ask, Don't Tell Do's and Don't's on Giving Advice

An often overlooked or easily broken rule in golf is Rule 10.2.a which states a player must not give advice to anyone in the competition or ask for advice. Some advice is allowed and some advice is not. Something so seemingly innocuous as cautioning a player to "take your time" on a putt can be construed as giving advice. Fortunately most of our tournaments at The Woods are team formats and giving advice is allowed among team mates. But this is an important rule to be familiar with if you play in tournaments such as our Club Championships or in a leagues such as Mason Dixon. What advice is or is not allowed is the topic for this issue of The Golf Rules Review.

What advice is **not** allowed

Any verbal comment or action that is intended to influence a player in choosing a club, making a stroke or deciding how to play a hole during a round is **not** allowed. Exceptions to this rule are:

- A golfer is always allowed to seek advice from their caddy or their partner in a team event (e.g Scrambles, Better Balls, Alternate Shot, Match Play competitions).
- Likewise in a team event, a player is always allowed to offer advice to their playing partner(s). This is team events provide good learning opportunities for new golfers when paired with experienced golfer.

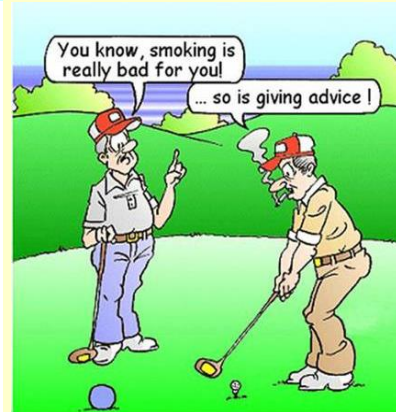
The Penalty for asking or giving advice is

- For the Player giving unsolicited advice - 2 strokes in stroke play and loss of hole in Match Play
- For the Player asking advice - 2 strokes in stroke play and loss of hole in Match Play
- For the Player giving advice when asked – 2 strokes in stroke play and no penalty in match play. In match play, the player that asks immediately loses the hole. At that point any answer given by the other player is moot, so there is no penalty for the Player that answers.

Don't do the following

1. Don't ask "What club should I use?", "What club did you use? or try to determine what club a player used by any means other than looking.
2. After you hit, don't you say to your foursome including players who haven't hit "I just hit a 9 iron"
3. Don't ask for instructions on how to hit a shot, such as "How do I stop" topping my ball, chunking my chips etc.

Note: Make sure the golfer is really asking for advice and not just moaning to themselves or the golf gods. You could saying to them "Are you asking me or the golf gods?"



If asked...Don't Answer

You will never be penalized if you don't answer, but will always be in breach of the advice rule if you ask.

What about... telling someone to move their mark back or to re-drop an incorrect drop or if they aren't in the tee box, is that advice okay?

Yes, that is okay. In fact, if you can, you should let them know before they make those errors. The fundamental challenge for a golfer is deciding strategy and tactics for their play, hence the rule on advice. Advice regarding a golf rule or potential breach of a rule is not meant to influence what club to use, how to make a stroke or how to strategically play a hole.

Continued on next page

Don't do the following

4. Don't provide instructions or tips on how to hit a shot at any time during the round. Even if both players have completed the hole, instruction at any time is not allowed. Examples are: "You're moving your head.", "You're swinging too fast.", or "You're not lining up."
5. During the round, don't watch a video to help you make a stroke or use a training club or use music to help with your swing tempo.
6. Don't ask for /getting help on alignment while taking your stance. Am I lined up okay? Likewise don't help a player line up or point out the line of play on a shot or a putt.
The 2019 rule changes consider alignment to be a key skill for playing golf. Therefore your caddie or partners in a team event can no longer help your alignment while you are taking your stance. They also cannot stand behind you while you putt. Only on the green can Players avoid the penalty by backing away from their ball and then re-taking their stance without assistance. Anywhere else on the course it is a 2 stroke penalty.
7. While a player is taking their stance, don't make comments such as "you know you have a lot of wind in your face" or "your ball wont fly as far when its cold."
8. Don't tell a player they don't have a shot and to take an Unplayable Lie.
9. Don't make a misleading statement about club selection that is intended to be heard by other players.
10. Don't get advice from another person even if they aren't playing. Advice does not even have to be spoken, it could be a gesture to indicate what club to use. If the player acts on the advice, then the player incurs the penalty. The Player is responsible for making the person stop after the first time or the player is regarded as asking for advice and is penalized for each occurrence thereafter.

Advice You Can Give or Ask for Without Penalty

1. Advice about the rules of golf... see side bar.
2. Public information about the course such as the location of the flagstick, "Is there water in front of the hole?", or "Is this a dogleg?" or on a blind shot "Where's the green?" or "Is this a red stake or yellow stake area?" or "How far is the pin?" or "Is this a par 5 or "Where's the pin?"
3. After everyone has hit their shots it is okay to ask about a player's club selection.
4. You can look in , but don't touch, another's player bag to determine what club they are playing.
5. Remember- some of the best "advice" can come from just watching your opponents to see what they do. There's no penalty for watching.

You may always ask for advice before a round, after a round or even when play is officially suspended during a round. Just don't ask while you are playing the round.

What Should I Do?

When a player asks "What should I do?" are they asking for advice about how to hit the ball or about the rules? Often the question is asked because their ball is in a difficult position. Rather than explore the question with the player, my "go to" response is "I can't tell what to do, but I can tell you what your options are for relief." This avoids penalty strokes for you and the player because they may have only wanted to know the rules for taking relief. If they pursue it, you can always advise them to be careful, asking for advice is a 2 stroke penalty.

You must be joking

...telling someone to "take your time" on a putt can't be giving advice

Tell that to Rory McElroy. The 2019 British Open was played at Portrush in Northern Ireland, for the only the second time in the Open's history. Rory McElroy a crowd favorite, born only a hour away, was anxious to play well. But he missed the cut by 1 stroke. The key miss... a short tap in putt. Thinking of his prior putt, he quickly went up to tap in his second putt and missed. He probably wished his caddy had advised "take your time".