

# **RULES CHANGES YOU SHOULD KNOW**

## **1. Search Times**

Now only 3 minutes (was 5 minutes)

## **2. Ball moved during search**

Put it back without penalty

## **3. Embedded ball**

Free drop anywhere in the “general area.” (Used to be closely mown areas only). The “general area” does NOT include (1) the teeing area you must play from in starting the hole you are playing, (2) all penalty areas (3) all bunkers (4) the putting green of the hole you are playing.

## **4. Club Length Definition**

Longest club in your bag excluding the putter

## **5. Dropping**

Must drop from knee high (Used to be shoulder height)

## **6. Wrong green**

Cannot play from wrong green and cannot stand on wrong green when taking relief.

## **7. Ball hits player or equipment**

NO penalty. Must have occurred accidentally. Must count stroke taken.

## **8. Double Hit**

No penalty. Double hit counts as one stroke

## **9. Touching sand in bunker**

Relaxed rule for incidental touching.

OK (1) smooth out marks not in line of play (2) lean on club in sand

CANNOT (1) Test condition of sand (2) ground club behind the ball (3) touch sand during practice swing.

## **10. Loose Impediments**

Can be removed anywhere, including bunkers and penalty areas. See 12 below regarding “penalty areas.”

Ball still cannot move. If it does, replace ball with 1 stroke penalty.

**11. Unplayable ball in bunker**

Added 4<sup>th</sup> relief option

Under penalty of one stroke

(1) Stroke and distance relief (2) back-on-the-line relief in the bunker or (3) lateral relief (2 club lengths) in bunker

Under penalty of 2 strokes – back-of-line relief outside the bunker

**12. Penalty Areas**

Water hazards are now called red and yellow penalty areas and may or may not contain water

**13. Touching water and ground in penalty areas**

NO penalty. OK to ground the club or place the club in the water

**14. Ball moves on the green after being marked and put back**

NO penalty – must put back

**15. Ball on the green moved accidentally by the player**

NO penalty, ALL THE TIME. Put ball back with no penalty

**16. Repairing damage on the Green**

Nearly all damage can be repaired, including spike marks

**17. Positioning club to help line up the shot**

NOT allowed on any shot

**18. Caddie helping to line up the shot**

NOT allowed on any shot

**19. Hitting the flagstick in the hole**

NO penalty from on or off the green

**20. Ball wedged on the flagstick**

No longer must remove the flag. Ball is “treated as holed.” If any part of the ball is below the lip, just pick it up.

## **6 MAJOR RULE CHANGES FOR 2026**

### **1. Unaware Ball movement penalty reduced**

If a player unknowingly causes the ball to move and plays it, the penalty is 1 stroke instead of 2 strokes. The ruling depends on player awareness, not video evidence.

### **2. Expanded embedded ball relief**

Free relief is allowed if a ball embeds in any unrepaired pitch mark, not only the player's own, provide the area is cut to fairway height or less. (A pitch mark is made by a ball).

### **3. Internal out of bounds restricted**

Internal out of bounds applies only to tee shots. After the tee shot, internal O.B. markers are treated as obstructions, not boundaries. (The rule does not apply on our course).

### **4. Extra relief near putting green**

Players may take free relief from immovable obstructions near greens when putting from the fringe or apron. This applies when both the ball and obstructions are within two club lengths of the putting green. (We already have this rule as one of our local rules).

### **5. Damaged club replacement clarified**

A significantly damaged club may be repaired or rebuilt mid-round using spare components from the player's bag. The replacement does not count as a 15<sup>th</sup> club, provided damage was not caused by abuse. (Unless you carry an extra shaft or club head in your bag, this will not apply to you).

### **6. Preferred lies relief reduced**

Preferred lies relief is reduced from one club length (approximately 46 inches) to one scorecard length (approximately 11 inches). A few examples include: Lift clean and place or when you get to drop if you land in a pitch mark.