

GREEN-SIDE ETIQUETTE (Reviewed: 27 April 2009)

Please – open the USGA Rule Book and get familiar with it. Don't be scared to use it in a league match to clarify issues or questions.

IF THERE ARE STILL ISSUES OR QUESTIONS IN A MATCH SITUATION, DON'T SIGN LEAGUE MATCH CARDS UNTIL ISSUE HAS BEEN RESOLVED BY THE SWGA HANDICAP COMMITTEE OR LEAGUE DIRECTOR.

(In stroke play the general penalty for a breach of a Rule is 2 strokes; in match play the general penalty is loss of hole; some infractions are a 1 stroke penalty in both forms of play. Practicing the Rules helps us learn the difference.)

PRE-TEE

- Make sure you have your equipment:
 - 14 clubs only, and no special practice clubs
 - 3-6 balls
 - 6-9 tees
 - Ball marker
 - Green tool

- Mark your ball distinctively, and show your fellow players
- Have water, sunscreen and hat if necessary. Don't down play the danger of sun poisoning during a typical New Mexico 2-2.5 hour match.

ON THE TEE

- Decide who plays first: generally by lot (flip of a coin or tee); suggest Team#, and alphabetically by first name, if you're stumped.
- Players may tee the ball anywhere between and behind the tee markers; up to two club lengths back (use any club to measure club lengths).
- If you are not hitting, stand behind the line of the tee markers. Whenever a player is ready to hit, stand quietly and still until after they hit. As a courtesy, try to follow the flight of the ball to help the other players find them (especially important in the afternoon when hitting into a low sun).
 - If you are getting ready to hit, and people standing in certain places bother you, it is a good idea to let everyone in your group know on the first tee.
- Be ready to hit when it is your turn.
- If you need to hit a provisional ball ANNOUNCE IT to your fellow competitors or opponent. As a courtesy, show one of your fellow competitors or opponent your provisional ball (note the type and number).
- (9-Hole) In mixed groups it is usually safer to let the men hit first, if the ladies tees are much farther in front of the men's (use common sense if there isn't much difference).
- Walking players always have the right of way crossing cart paths.
- Once hit, you must not touch your ball again until it is on the green, unless a Rule permits.
- Once a stroke is made at a ball on the teeing ground it is "in play." The ball is to be played into the hole by a stroke or successive strokes in accordance with the Rules. It should not be touched, lifted or moved unless a Rule permits.

DURING YOUR ROUND

- Keep up the pace of play.
- Be ready to hit when it is your turn – the player farthest away from the hole is always the hitting player.
- Think about your next shot - Note the yardage as you approach your ball: look for yardage markers, sprinkler heads, plants/trees/shrubs (used to designate yardages) etc. Be just about ready to pull a club by the time you get to your ball.
- Generally you should stay behind the hitting player until it is your turn. If your ball is ahead of the hitting player, you could walk further down the course in the interest of speeding play. Stay well off to the side of the player's line and pay extra close attention to the player hitting. When they're about to hit, stand still, behind any available cover (a tree, your bag, etc. – remember, there are a lot of beginners in the league, and even good players shank a ball now and then) until the player hits.
- If you need to look for your ball, according to the Rules of Golf, you are permitted 5 MINUTES to search. When 5 minutes is up, the ball is lost and player must proceed under penalty of stroke and distance or play the provisional ball he/she may have played. While the search goes on, other players ahead of you may hit in turn. As a courtesy, if a player is looking for a ball, and you have already hit, you can help look.
 - (USGA PG: 12-Lost Ball)
- Except in a hazard (bunker or water hazard), before you hit, you may remove any loose material (sticks, leaves, rocks, whatever you can pick up – you can't pull out a plant, or dig up a rock, it has to be unconnected to anything natural.) HOWEVER – if, after you've picked up anything in the vicinity of your ball and it caused your ball to move, you incur a 1 stroke penalty (except on the putting green) and you must replace your ball. If you fail to replace your ball, you incur a 2 stroke penalty in stroke play or loss of hole in match play.
 - (USGA 18-2 & 23-1)
- Player's may take free relief (one club length – you generally have to pay a stroke penalty for under a Rule permitting two club lengths) from manmade objects on the course like sprinklers, drains, yardage markers, cart paths and buildings, etc. There is no free (obstruction) relief from manmade objects defining out of bounds.
 - USGA Rule 24 and 28
- Taking relief:
 - Always have your fellow competitor or opponent observe you
 - Mark the position of your ball
 - Pick up your ball
 - Measure out a club length (one for free, two for 1 stroke) to one side or the other of your marker, mark that point with another tee.
 - Make sure to pick up club from ground, if ball hits club on ground when dropped, the ball must be redropped. There is no limit to the times the ball may be redropped in this situation. USGA Rule 20-2a.
 - Holding the ball at arms length, drop your ball at any point between the two tees (the ball may roll up to 2 club lengths from where it strikes a part of the course in the prescribed area). See USGA Rule 20-2c for redropped situations.
 - If the ball bounces CLOSER toward the hole, pick up the ball and re-drop one more time. If it again rolls closer to the hole again or into another redrop situation, place the ball where it first struck a part of the course in the prescribed area on the second drop. (note special cases)
 - (USGA 20-1: Lifting and Marking & 20-2: Dropping and Re-Dropping)

BUNKERS

- Try to enter the bunker at a low point, as close to your ball as you can.
- You must not touch the sand with your club or hand, prior to your stroke (forward movement). (2 STROKE PENALTY for testing the texture of the sand).
- Loose impediments, natural objects, may not be removed from bunkers (or any hazard for that matter).

After the shot, rake the bunker to remove footprints and your club mark.

USGA Rule 13-4

USGA Rule Book: pg 110 #5: Stones in Bunkers (if approved by match contestants)

WATER HAZARDS / HAZARDS (no water on the par 3 course)

If your ball is in a water hazard (yellow stakes and/or lines) you may play the ball as it lies or, under penalty of one stroke:

- Play a ball from where you hit the ball into the hazard, or
- Drop any distance behind the water hazard keeping a straight line between the hole, the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard and the spot on which the ball is dropped.

If your ball is in a lateral water hazard (red stakes and or lines), in addition to the options for a ball in a water hazard (see above), under penalty of one stroke, you may drop within two club-lengths of, and not nearer the hole than:

- The point where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard or a point on the opposite side of the hazard equidistant to the hole from the point where the ball last crossed the margin.

AROUND THE GREEN

Carts (Walking) & CARTS (Driving)

Be aware of where the next TEEING GROUND is and try to leave your pull cart, or PARK, in that direction away the green.

- Don't pull your cart across the green.
- Don't drive a CART up close to a green – follow the signs, or keep 10 yards away if no signs are posted.

Away Etiquette Waiver

In the US, especially in casual rounds, the etiquette is to let everyone hit onto the green before the putting starts, even if a player on the green may be away. This speeds up play because a player hitting from off the green is entitled to have the flag in the hole, and players on the green generally have the flag removed.

- Hitting the flag stick with a shot from off the green carries no penalty, unless with permission of the player, it is being attended or held up to indicate the hole.
- Hitting the flag stick with a shot from on the green:
 - 2-stroke penalty if putt hits flag stick - attended, unattended or removed (on or off the green)
 - 2 stroke penalty if strikes person attending the flag stick if authorized by player
 - **USGA Rule Book: pg 55 (17-3: Ball Striking against Flag Stick or Attendant)**
- If you are off the green, you have the option of having the flagstick removed, attended or held up by anyone you authorize (give permission to).

ON THE GREEN

- **USGA Rule book: pgs. 52-54 (16-1: The Putting Green – General)**
- Be aware of the positions of the other players balls when stepping onto the green and try not to step on their line of putt (the path between the ball and the hole)
- Marker placement
 - **USGA Rule book: pg.61-62 (20-1: Lifting and Marking)**
 - Place marker BEHIND ball according to hole placement
 - Do not pick up ball BEFORE placing the ball marker correctly
- Marking the ball:
 - Normal procedure is to place your mark behind the ball, on the side opposite the hole. Then the ball may be picked up and cleaned.
 - If your marker is in the way of another player – on their line of putt – they may ask you to move it to one side or the other. To do this:
 - Place the heel of your putter against your ball mark
 - Choose something off of the green (a tree, bush, etc.) as a landmark and line up your putter head with it
 - Pick up your ball mark and place it at the toe of your putter (you may have to do this more than once, if so repeat the procedure)
 - As soon as possible after the player putts, reverse the procedure and replace your mark to its original spot (as a courtesy, the player that requested the mark be moved should remind the other player to replace the mark).
 - If you forget to replace your marker to the original position, there is a two stroke penalty if you putt out from this wrong place. **(USGA Rule 20-7)**
- Line of Play
 - **USGA Rule book: pg: 37 (8-1: Advice on Line of Play)**
 - **USGA Rule book: pg. 37 (8-2: Indicating Line of Play)**
- Players may mark and clean their balls, fix ball marks or old hole plugs, and remove debris from their line of putt. Spike marks or footprints may not be smoothed, which is why it is so important not to step on another player's putting line.
 - What can and CANNOT be repaired on the green
 - **USGA Rule Book: pg 52 (16-1 a: Touching the Line of the Putt)**
- Fix your ball mark with your green tool, and any other ball mark that you may want to fix as well.
- The furthest away player goes first, and may continue putting until they sink the putt, being careful of the putting lines of the other players (this tends to speed up play). If after the putt, the player is still on the green and no longer furthest from the hole, and does not wish to immediately continue, they may mark their ball and await their next turn to play.
- If the player wishes to have the flagstick tended, a member of the group may do so. It is a good idea to loosen the flagstick and to stand far to one side of the hole not in the putting line of any of the other players.
- If the flagstick is removed, place it far enough from the hole so that there is little chance of a player hitting their ball into it.
 - 2-stroke penalty if putt hits flag stick lying on or off the green
 - **USGA Rule Book: pg 55 (17-3: Ball Striking against Flag Stick or Attendant)**