

1 The game

The game of golf consists of playing the ball with a club from the teeing ground (the tee) to the hole in successive strokes.

The holes on the course must be played in order (1 to 9, 10 to 18 or 1 to 18). The rules of golf are there for a reason, so play by them at all times.

You are not allowed to change them or make them up as you go along. In golf, the rules are sacrament. If you break them by mistake, you are expected to call a penalty on yourself, take it on the chin and see if you can limit the damage by playing a great recovery shot. If you break the rules on purpose, you will be labelled a cheat. There is no greater sin in golf.

2 Matchplay

In matchplay, each hole is a separate contest. If you win the first hole, you are '1 up', if you lose it, you are '1 down', if you tie,

you are 'all square'. You have won the match when there are too few holes left to play for your opponent to possibly win. For example, when you are 3 up and there are only two holes left to play.

3 Strokeplay

In strokeplay (also called medal play), your total score for the round (ie every shot you hit) is what counts, and you must play the ball into each hole before starting the next. Although common practice, you are not allowed to 'give' anyone a putt in a strokeplay competition. You are playing against the rest of the competition field, so hole your ball out, OK?

4&5 Clubs and the ball

You can't have more than 14 clubs in your bag – end of story. Those clubs should also be legal – if you're not sure, ask your club pro about your gear. Also, you cannot change balls during the playing of a hole. If you damage or cut your ball, however, you may change it, but first ask your opponent or fellow competitor.



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6 The player's responsibility

You, the player, are expected to:

- Read the notices given to you by tournament officials;
- Have and use your proper handicap;
- Know what time you are scheduled to tee off;
- Play your own ball – and make sure you put a mark on it in case someone else is using an identical ball. Also, if you can't positively identify a ball as yours, it counts as a lost ball;
- Make sure your score for each hole is correct before you turn in your card and try to keep the card neat and legible – it's not a doodle pad;
- Keep a good pace of play (ie keep up with the guys in front of you) unless there is lightning, you are ill or someone very important (like an official) tells you to stop.

7 Practice

During a hole you may make practice swings, but you can't play practice shots. Between holes you may practise chipping and putting on or near the green of the hole last played or the tee of the next hole.

NB: You may never practise in a water hazard or bunker.

8&9 Giving advice/ indicating the line of play

Don't ever ask anyone except your caddie or partner for advice on how to play. The only things you can ask about are the rules or



general information available to all, such as the position of hazards, yardage to the hole or position of the flagstick.

You are also not allowed to offer or give advice to your opponent or fellow competitor. If you do, it's a two-stroke penalty (in matchplay, you lose the hole).

When you're not on the green, you can ask anyone, even your opponent, to 'indicate your line of play' – for example, if you're behind a hill and you can't see the green.

The only thing to remember is that whoever shows you the line has to move out of the way when you actually hit the shot.

On the green, your partner or caddie may show you where to hit the putt, but they must make sure they don't touch the surface of the green while doing so (*as illustrated left*) – or make a mark of any sort. If they do, it's a two-shot penalty.

Under Rule 9, if you're playing matchplay, you are at any time allowed to ask your opponent how many strokes he's played on a hole and he has to tell the truth – or he loses the hole.

10 When to play a shot

On the 1st tee, the order of play is either determined by how you are listed on the timesheet or by ballot – ie toss a coin. From then on, the player who has the lowest score on a hole has the right to play his/her ball first on the next hole (it's called the 'honour').

While playing a hole, the player whose ball

is furthest from the hole plays first. In matchplay, if you play out of turn, your opponent may make you replay your shot. This is not so in strokeplay where there is no penalty for playing out of turn, but it's really bad manners – and if your opponents can prove that, by playing out of turn, you gained an advantage of some sort, you may be disqualified.

11 Teeing ground

Tee your ball between the tee-markers or a little behind them. You may tee your ball as far as two clublengths behind the markers. In matchplay, if you tee up outside the markers, there's no penalty, but your opponent has the right to ask you to replay the shot. In strokeplay, the rule is more harsh: you have to take a two-stroke penalty and then play three from the tee-box – ow!

If your ball accidentally falls off the tee, or you knock it off with your club while addressing it, you may replace it without penalty.

12 Identifying your ball

If a player has reason to believe a ball at rest is his and it is necessary to lift the ball in order to identify it, he may lift the ball, without penalty, in order to do so, even in a hazard. What's important here is that you must inform your opponent or fellow competitor before you do so and, once identified, you must replace it as you found it, even if it means covering it with loose impediments, if that is how you found it.

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13 Playing the ball as it lies

One of golf's basic rules is that you must play the ball as it lies – ie you may not move it to a better spot.

Don't ever improve your lie by pressing down behind the ball and don't improve the area of your intended swing or line of play by bending or breaking any tree limbs or weeds that might be in your way.

If you're in a hazard, you may not touch the sand, ground or water with

the club before or during your backswing. And importantly, in a hazard, you may not remove natural things such as leaves or twigs (called loose impediments). The only things you can move are artificial 'obstructions' – like bottles or rakes.

The penalty in these cases is two shots – in matchplay, you lose the hole.



In a hazard, you must play the ball as it lies or take a penalty drop.

14 Striking the ball

You must strike the ball fairly with the head of the club. You may not push, scrape or rake the ball and you're not allowed to hit it while it is moving. If you do, add a two-stroke penalty.

15 Playing a wrong ball

In matchplay, if at any point you play a ball that isn't yours, you immediately lose the hole. In strokeplay, you must take a two-stroke penalty and then go back and play your own ball. If you fail to correct the mistake before your next tee shot, you will be disqualified. The only exception to this rule is if you make a stroke at a wrong ball that is moving in a hazard, since it is assumed that you would be unable to identify a moving ball.

16 The putting green

If any part of your ball is touching the closely mown and prepared area of grass defined as the green, it is 'on the green'. When your ball is on the green, you may brush away or pick up leaves and other loose impediments on the line of your putt with your hand or a club or fan them with a cap or towel – but don't ever press anything down while doing so.

NB: Dew and frost are not considered to be loose impediments.

You may lift and clean your ball once it is on the green, but always mark your ball by



placing a small coin or other marker behind it when you want to pick it up to clean it or get it out of another player's way. Remember to replace it in the exact same spot before you play.

You are allowed to repair ball-marks or old pitchmarks if they are within your line of putt, but you may not repair marks made by spikes or shoes. Don't ever test the surface of the green by rolling a ball or scraping the surface.

If your ball is hanging on the lip of the hole and you can't believe it hasn't actually dropped, the rules require you to walk to it without reasonable delay and then allow an additional 10 seconds wait before you have to tap it in. If you wait longer and the ball falls in, you have to add a penalty stroke.

The standard two-shot penalty in strokeplay or loss of hole in matchplay applies when you contravene one of these rules.



17 The flagstick

If your ball strikes the flagstick when you're playing from off the green, provided no-one is 'attending' or holding the flagstick, there's no problem. But if your ball is on the green, do not putt with the flagstick in the hole. Either take it out or ask another player to do so when you play your ball. If you do hit the stick, it's a two-shot penalty (in matchplay, you lose the hole).

18 Ball at rest moved

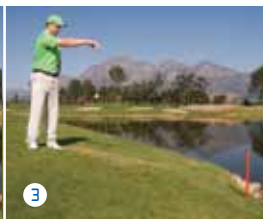
If you or your partner move either of your balls, on purpose or accidentally, add a penalty stroke to your score, replace it and play.

If someone or something else like, say, your opponent's golf ball, moves your ball (ie an outside agency) there is no penalty, but you must replace it. If the ball is moved by wind or water, you must play it as it lies.

Once you address the ball (in other words, you take up a stance and ground the club behind the ball), if it moves, add a penalty stroke and replace the ball. The exception is if the movement of the ball occurs after you have begun the stroke or the backward movement of the club for the stroke and the stroke is made.

And here's an important one: if you move a loose impediment (stone, twig, etc) that causes your ball to move, it's a one-stroke penalty, you have to replace the ball where it was and continue. The only exception is when you are on the putting green, then there is no penalty.





19 Ball in motion deflected or stopped

If your ball hits an outside agency (such as a bird, rake, etc), it is called a 'rub of the green'. There is no penalty and the ball is played as it lies.

If your ball hits you, your partner, your caddie or your equipment, in matchplay you lose the hole. In strokeplay, you are penalised a stroke and you must play your ball as it lies.

If your ball hits your opponent, his caddie or his equipment, there is no penalty – you may play the ball as it lies or replay the shot.

If your ball hits anyone else on the course, or any other piece of equipment in strokeplay, there is no penalty and the ball is played as it lies. These are considered to be the same as outside agencies in strokeplay.

If your ball hits another ball and moves it, you must play your ball as it lies. The owner of the other ball must replace it. If your ball is on the green when you play and the ball, which your ball hits, is also on the green, you are penalised two strokes in strokeplay. Otherwise, there is no penalty.

20 Lifting and dropping the ball

If you are permitted to lift your ball and the rule requires that the ball be replaced, you must put a ball-marker behind the ball before you lift it. If you don't, it's a one-shot penalty.

When you drop a ball, you must do so 'fairly': ie stand erect, hold your arm out straight at shoulder height and drop it. You are not allowed to spin it or flip it sideways – just drop it straight down.

If you don't do this – and one of your playing partners points it out to you, you must re-drop the ball without penalty.

There are a number of instances when you could drop the ball and the result is not deemed to be 'fair', and in these cases the rules allow you to simply re-drop without penalty – for example:

- if a dropped ball hits the ground and rolls into a hazard;
- if you are in a hazard, take a drop and the ball rolls out of the hazard;
- if the ball comes to rest more than two clublengths from where it first struck a

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part of the course;

- if the ball ends up nearer the hole than it was;
- if you are dropping away from an immovable obstruction or ground under repair etc, and the ball rolls back into the obstruction or ground under repair. If this happens when you re-drop the ball, the rules require you to then place the ball where it struck the ground when it was re-dropped.



21 Cleaning the ball

Unless you are lifting your ball to identify it, you are allowed to clean your ball whenever the rules permit you to lift it (eg when you're on the green or taking a drop from an unplayable lie). Sometimes, particularly in winter or when courses are wet, a local rule will be in play allowing you to 'lift, clean and place' your ball by hand on the fairway. If this happens, you may obviously clean the ball while doing so.

22 Ball interfering with or assisting play

If another ball interferes with your swing or is in your line of putt, you may ask the owner of the ball to lift it. If your ball is near the hole and you think another player might benefit from using it as a 'backstop', you may mark and lift your ball.



23 Loose impediments

Loose impediments are natural objects that are not growing or fixed – such as leaves, twigs, branches, worms and insects. You may remove a loose impediment except when your ball and the impediment lie in a bunker or water hazard. Always be careful not to cause the ball to move.

24 Obstructions

Movable obstructions are artificial or man-made objects like bottles, tin cans and rakes. Sprinkler heads, shelter houses, cart paths, etc, are immovable obstructions.

Movable obstructions anywhere on the course may be removed. If the ball moves when moving an obstruction, it must be replaced without penalty.

You may drop your ball away from an immovable obstruction if it interferes with your swing or stance.

Find the nearest point, not nearer the hole, where you can play without interference with your swing or stance and stick a peg into the ground to mark that spot. Then drop the ball within one clublength of that point. Always establish the nearest point of relief before lifting your ball.



1



2



3



25 Abnormal ground conditions

Abnormal conditions relate to three specific things: casual water (any temporary puddle of water caused by rain or over-watering), ground under repair (damaged areas of the course specifically marked with a 'GUR' sign) and holes or casts made by burrowing animals, reptiles and birds (eg molehills).

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If your ball or your stance is in abnormal ground, you may either play the ball as it lies or find the nearest point of relief, not nearer the hole, and drop the ball within one clublength.

You cannot lose your ball in abnormal ground. If your ball lands in it and you cannot find it, determine where the ball entered the area and drop a ball within one clublength of that place without penalty.

Also included in Rule 25 is what happens if you hit your ball onto the wrong green. You should find the nearest place off the green, which is not nearer the hole, and drop the ball within one clublength without penalty.

Finally, the rule covers an embedded or 'plugged' ball (ie it sinks into the ground or stays in its pitchmark) on any 'closely mown area' of the course – ie fairways and greens. In this case, you may lift and drop your ball without penalty.

Free vs penalty drops

For free relief, eg from an immovable obstruction, casual water or GUR, you must drop within one clublength of the nearest point of relief, not nearer the hole. For a penalty drop, eg from an unplayable lie or a lateral water hazard, you may drop within two clublengths of where the ball came to rest, for an unplayable lie, or from where the ball last crossed the margin of a lateral water hazard, not nearer the hole.



26 Water hazards

Water hazards are common hazards and golfers often get confused about what to do if a ball lands in water, but it's really simple.

There are two different kinds of water hazards. Natural water hazard margins are identified by yellow stakes or lines. Lateral water hazard margins are identified by red stakes or lines.

If your ball is in any water hazard, you have a few options:

- Play it as it lies;
- If you cannot find it or do not wish to play it, add a penalty stroke, go back to where you last played from and drop and play another ball;
- Take a penalty stroke and drop a ball behind the water hazard (ie keeping the hazard between you and the pin) as far back as you wish. In this case, find the point where the ball last crossed the hazard and drop the ball so there is a straight line between the hole, the point your ball last crossed the

hazard and where you drop the ball;

- If there's a 'drop zone', you may drop there, but don't have to – another option may be better.

If your ball goes into a lateral water hazard (red stakes) you have two further options:

- Take a one-stroke penalty, find the last point of entry and drop a ball within two club-lengths of that point, no nearer to the hole;
- Take a one-stroke penalty, establish a point on the opposite side of the water, equidistant from the hole and drop a ball there.

Many golfers are unaware of this option and it can be really useful!

27 Ball lost or out of bounds/provisional ball

A ball is lost if it is not found within five minutes from when you first begin to search for it. A ball is out of bounds when all of it lies beyond the inside line of markers like white stakes, fences or walls that define the boundaries of the golf course.

If your ball is lost or out of bounds, you must add a penalty stroke to your score and play another ball from where you played your last shot (this is known as a 'stroke and distance' penalty).

If you think your ball may be lost or out of bounds, you may play another ball (provisional ball) from the place where your first ball was played.

The intent behind the provisional is quite simply to speed up play, but there are some

golden rules to remember. Very importantly, you must tell your opponent or fellow competitor that you are 'playing a provisional'. If you cannot find your first ball or if it is out of bounds, then you add a penalty stroke and play out the hole with the provisional ball. If you find your first ball in bounds within five minutes, simply continue with it and pick up the provisional ball.



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28 Ball unplayable

If your ball is under a tree or in some other horrible situation and you decide you cannot play it, add a penalty stroke and do one of the following:

- Go back to where you played the last shot and play a ball from there (stroke and distance);
- Measure two clublengths from the unplayable lie (not nearer the hole), drop a ball and play from there.
- Mark the spot where your ball was lying unplayable, keep that spot between you and the pin and go back as far as you wish on a straight line before dropping the ball and continuing to play.

29-34 Format of play, the committee, disputes and decisions

Rules 29, 30 and 31 are there to define various formats of competition such as threesomes

and foursomes, threeball, bestball and fourball matchplay. Rule 32 covers Stableford competition, including the scoring format – if you're unsure, a net par (ie your score on the hole less your handicap allowance) scores two points, birdie three, eagle four, etc. If you score 1 over, you get one point and anything higher gets you a big, fat zero!

The final two rules, 33 and 34 describe the function of the committee (as in the tournament committee not your local club gathering!) and how disputes and decisions are settled. As you play more golf and learn to love the game even more, you will want and need to learn all of this stuff, but, unlike the other 28 rules, it's not really going to come into play every time you tee up.

Local rules

Most golf clubs have 'local' rules – established by the club – that pertain to particular circumstances on the golf course. They can have a large impact. If, for example, a course is extremely wet, the club may allow a 'free drop' or 'placing' on fairways. This, of course, goes against the idea of 'playing the ball as it lies', so it's fair to say that local rules can override the rules of golf. Be careful to read local rules, normally printed on the scorecard or listed on the notice board, before starting play.

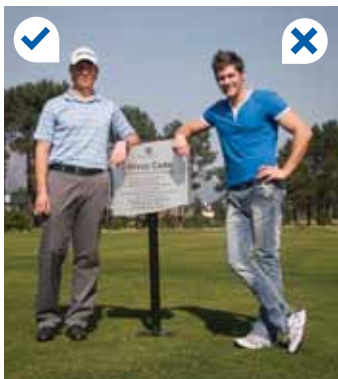
Before the game

To begin with, remember that most golf clubs are private facilities where some aspirant members will have spent many hours of diligent service (on the course as well as in the 19th hole!) in order to make office. These people deserve a parking spot of their own and don't take kindly to finding their space taken. Heed the signs, look out for visitors parking signs and don't be pig-headed about it.



Booting up

The car park is not a locker-room. Keep to the simple rule that you should always put on your golf shoes and clothing in the locker-room or arrive with them already on and you should be OK. Although there probably aren't too many metal spikes in play these days (except on the professional tours), make sure your spikes conform to the club rules. 'Soft spikes only' is hardly ambiguous and the same goes for areas in the clubhouse that say, 'No spikes.'



Dress codes

This one's a bit tricky. Dress codes are a continuous matter of debate for clubs depending on the age of the committee in question! Every club has its own dress code and, while most of them are coming to their senses about things like collared shirts and 'no pants with knee-pockets', the fact remains that many older clubs can't see past their jackets and ties long enough to realise that 'dress appropriately' is a better option than trying to define exactly what a collar is. Nevertheless, it is wise to phone any club beforehand and ask for details about its dress code – it might save you a potentially embarrassing incident on the first tee. Avoid denim jeans and T-shirts at all costs and, if you want to play it safe, ensure you have belted trousers and a conventional, collared golf shirt.



Checking in

You must pay greenfees before playing. In general, club members get the best rates, followed by members' guests, affiliated visitors and then non-affiliated visitors.

PS: To be 'affiliated' means that you are a member of a club that is formally affiliated to the South African Golf Association (SAGA) and are therefore in possession of an official handicap.

Timekeeping

It is a cardinal sin in golf to be late for your tee time. If you are, expect an unpleasant altercation with the starter or, at worst, disqualification from the day's play.

As Jim Furyk proved in the 2010 Barclays pro-am, this rule extends to everyone – even

if you are a former US Open champion!

Remember that you are playing for enjoyment and there's nothing worse than rushing to the golf course, rushing into the pro shop and rushing off to the tee-box, then teeing it up without even a practice putt or two.

So get to the club with 30 minutes to spare, give yourself time to relax and spend a few minutes on the putting green – or leave time to warm up with a bucket of balls on the driving range.

What is a handicap?

Golf's handicap system allows players of different abilities to compete on equal terms. For example, if your average score over a par-72 course is 92, your handicap would be 20. (In fact, the system allows for 96 percent of the 10 best 'differentials' – the number of shots over the course rating that you score – of the last 20 rounds, but let's leave it at 20 for now). So, if you played against a 2-handicap, shooting 74, and you played 1 under your handicap, scoring a total of 91, you would win, despite taking a higher score. In matchplay, he would give you 18 strokes, so you would receive a stroke per hole. Therefore, if he takes four on the first hole and you take five, the hole is halved. If you both take four, you win.



Warming up

OK, you've made it to the first tee on time, you've done some stretching exercises and now you need to warm up. When making practice swings:

- Use common sense and be aware of where other people are standing. Never make practice swings at sticks or stones.
- Don't take 'practice' divots. That is tantamount to adding insult to the green-keeper's injury.

Order of play

As you'll see from Rule 10, the order of play in golf is actually a rule of golf. In matchplay

it's more important and playing out of turn before your opponent means he or she can ask you to replay your shot. In short, it could cost you the game. In normal play (ie strokeplay) it's more a matter of good manners, aka etiquette, that the guy who's furthest away plays first. Especially on the greens, remember to always ask your partners if they don't mind you 'putting out' or finishing off the hole when you've left a putt just a tap-in distance away.

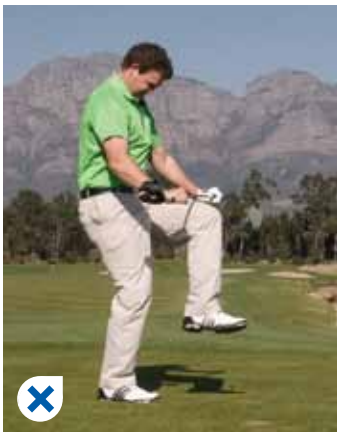
The only exception to this 'rule' is when you agree for the purposes of speeding up play to play 'ready golf' – ie when you're ready to hit your shot, you do. Very American.



Waiting your turn

The correct place to stand when a fellow player is teeing off or hitting from the fairway is always to the side and behind the right angle of the intended targetline of the ball.

Golf balls can come off clubfaces at weird angles, but if you stand behind the line, as shown, your chances of getting hit are minimal. This position also ensures that you will not distract the player.



Mind your manners

Golfers are at all times expected to treat their playing companions, other players on the course and the course itself with courtesy and respect.

Although you'd never believe it watching some of the top pros, it's a breach of golf etiquette to throw or break clubs, slam them into the ground, swear like a trooper or behave like a brat.

This game will test your character in many, many ways and losing control of your temper is nothing less than an admission of failure.

If you are a club-tosser, don't expect too many invitations to the links!

Shhhhhhhh...

Causing a distraction or making noises while a fellow player is preparing to or making a shot is not acceptable. Don't open the fastener on your glove, don't open zips on your bag and try to avoid making any noises. Most importantly, leave your cellphone in your car – or turned off in your kitbag.



Fore!

Golf balls are deadly weapons – literally – and you need to be on the lookout at all times. If you hit your ball and it looks like it might hit someone else on the course, the correct thing to do is shout 'Fore!' as a warning. At the same time, don't just scream 'Fore!' willy-nilly – if the ball isn't going to hit another player and you



do, all that's likely to happen is that the player in question will run into your ball! Once again, use common sense. Where possible, watch your playing partners' golf balls.

Why 'fore'?

There are two competing theories as to the origin of the term 'fore.' Some historians claim it derives from a military term whereby riflemen in the back rows of firing lines would shout to warn those ahead of them to get their heads down (as in, 'Watch out afore!'). The second – more widely accepted – explanation is that, in the early days of golf, players would employ the services of a 'fore-caddie' whose job it was to walk up the fairway and watch where the players' balls landed – much like the ball-spotters at modern tournaments. When they hit the ball off-line, they would shout, 'Fore-caddie!' to alert the young fellows and, over the years, the term simply shortened into the modern 'Fore!'



The 19th hole

Clubhouses are traditional beasts, so acquaint yourself with local customs before heading off to the bar still wearing your golf clothes. Generally, wearing of caps is frowned upon – together with golf spikes, although these days, soft spikes seem common in the 19th. Oh, and if you get a hole-in-one, remember that it is common courtesy to buy whoever is in the bar a round of drinks.

On the tee

The rules of golf (rules 6-7) states that, 'The player must play without undue delay and in accordance with any pace of play guidelines that the committee may establish.' Any penalty for slow play would obviously be decided by a rules official, but in terms of day-to-day play, it's good manners not to dilly-dally about on the golf course while, at the same time, not rushing about like a madman. The unwritten rule is that, if you get more than a hole behind the group in front, it's time to hit the accelerator and catch up (although trying to catch up doesn't mean you can hitch a ride on the back of a mate's golf cart – a big no-no!). **Here are some pointers:**

- Wait for the group in front to clear and then proceed to play without undue delay.
- Don't take it for granted that it is safe for you to play once the group in front have all played their second shots. You need to use common sense and assess your own skill levels before playing.
- If you think there's a good chance your first shot might be lost, play a provisional ball (and remember to announce that you are doing so).



On the fairway

- Assess your next shot as you approach your ball. To get a distance on your shot, look out for marked sprinkler heads or distance markers as you walk. Don't stand around watching everyone else play before deciding what shot you to hit or which club to play.
- Find an economic pre-shot routine and stick with it. There is nothing worse than watching a fellow player meticulously make four or five practice swings and stand over the ball for ages before making a swing.
- If you are being constantly pressed by the group behind, it is common courtesy to let them 'play through'. The best place to let players through is on the tee-box, where you can let them tee off after you and then follow on behind them. If you are on the fairway, stand aside, call them through and wait to resume your game when they are clear in front.



On the green

Thanks to professional golf, the putting green is the scene of some of the worst time wasting in the amateur game. Just because the pros mark, lift, clean and replace their golf balls on every putt doesn't mean that you will benefit from the same routine. You should only mark your ball when:

- It is interfering with the line of another player's putt, in which case the player would most likely ask you to mark the ball.
- It is dirty, in which case you need to mark, lift and clean it to make sure the dirt doesn't adversely affect the putt.

- It lies in such a position that, if you were to take up a stance and putt the ball, you would be standing on the putting line of another player.

Unless you're a professional, studying your putt from every angle and deliberating endlessly about the line of the putt will only frustrate your playing partners. Have a good look, but don't prowl around like a caged tiger.

If you hit a putt to a tap-in distance, tap it in! Only mark the ball if you would have to stand on someone else's line in order to putt. The player who putts out first should tend the flag and return it to the cup when the rest are finished.

Filling in your scorecard

After finishing a hole, move swiftly off the putting surface and proceed directly to the next tee-box.

There is no need to fill in the scorecard on the green, as this will only hold up and frustrate the group behind you, who are waiting to play their approach shots. Rather do it on the move or on the next tee while your partners are teeing off.



Off the green

Whether carrying a bag, pulling a trolley or driving a golf cart, you should at all times give due consideration to where you leave your equipment so you don't waste time. Generally speaking, you should leave your bag/car/cart on the side of the green between the hole and the path to the next tee.

Be careful when using motorised carts: keep them well off the greens and tees and make sure you come to a complete halt while others are playing. Keep to the cart paths where possible.

Never leave your bag/car/cart in front of the green – it's only going to hold up players behind you when you've finished putting out.

If you are just off the green and need to chip, take your wedge and putter with you to avoid having to make a return trip to the bag.

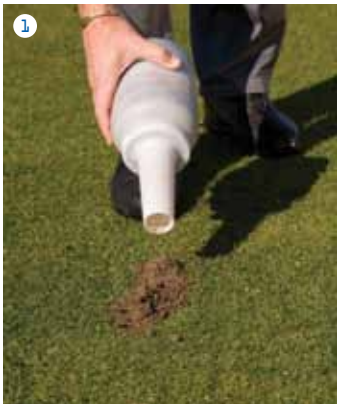
Halfway house

Play in most countries in the world and you realise that stopping at halfway for a leisurely pie and gravy washed down with a cold energy drink is a quaintly local tradition. Unfortunately, it's also a great way to add 20 minutes onto your round. Some clubs are starting to phase out the halfway, but most still encourage it, so if you do stop, order quickly, feast briskly and move on to the 10th tee.

RULES & ETIQUETTE

LOOKING AFTER THE COURSE

Greenkeepers put a great deal of time, money and effort into living up to their titles and the onus lies with the golfer to help them in every possible way. Here's how:



Fairways and tees

When you take a divot (ie that small piece of real estate you dig up when you play a shot) you should do one of two things, depending on the course:

- Replace the divot and tramp it firmly back into the hole you've made.
- Fill the hole with sand or sand mix provided by the course. Don't sprinkle the sand and don't build sand castles – just fill in the divot so the grass can grow back.
- Some grasses will not rejuvenate from having the divot replaced and, these days, most clubs will require you to have a sand bag and fill your divots, but check before play starts.

On the greens

This is the 'biggie'. Putting surfaces are hallowed ground and should be treated as such. There's nothing like a beautiful, smooth putting surface to make for a pleasant day with the flatstick – and few things are worse than putting on surfaces that look like small, green scale models of the moon.

Have a social conscience and be sure to pick up any rubbish that lesser humans have left lying around. This includes broken and discarded tees that, apart from being messy, can cause damage to mowers and other greenkeeping equipment.



Hallowed turf

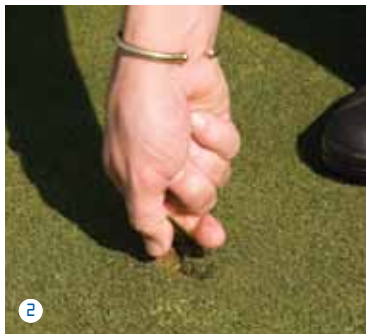
Don't do anything on the green that might damage the surface, including:

- Dragging your feet. According to the rules, you are not allowed to repair spike-marks on your putting line so be careful not to drag or twist your feet on the green. If you do, be sure to fix it.
- Leaning on your putter. This is a class-A felony, whether you're using it as a walking stick or a lever to help you bend down and pick your ball out of the hole.
- Throwing the pin around – remember it is not a javelin! When removing and replacing the pin, be careful not to damage the hole in any way. Where possible, try to leave it on the fringe of the green.



How to **REPAIR** **PITCHMARKS**

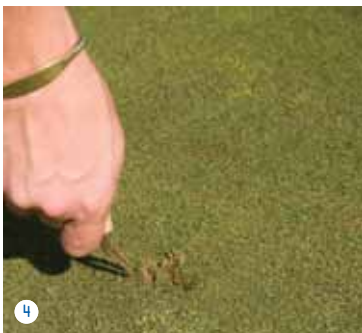
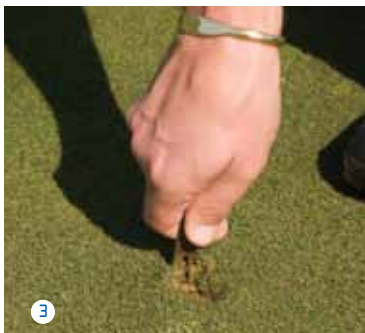
- Repairing a pitchmark on the green only takes a few seconds but can save weeks of healing to the turf. Fix your pitchmarks immediately by using your pitchfork to push the edges of the hole in towards the centre, thereby covering the hole. Don't insert the pitchfork into the middle of the pitchmark and don't prise up the middle of



the hole from underneath – this will only break more roots and harm the surface. Remember that the green is a fragile thing, so no amateur gardening out there, please.

- Once you've covered the hole, use your putter to tap down and smoothe over to create a nice, flat surface that won't interfere with other golfers' play.

RULE NO 1: Repair your pitchmarks and any others you find. Studies have shown that pitchmarks repaired immediately heal within hours, whereas pitchmarks left take weeks to recover. Always carry a pitchmark repairer with you.



Bunkers

Let's face facts here: if you play golf, you will spend a lot of time in the sandpits.

Like bathrooms, bunkers should always be left in the same state as you'd wish to find them.

Don't jump into the bunker, rather enter it from the flattest part and be sure to rake over all marks you've made once you've played your shot.

If you have ever found your ball lying in a huge, unraked footprint, you will understand why this 'rule' exists – it's not pleasant and will annoy just about anyone.

Most clubs will ensure that there are rakes in all bunkers, but if not, you can always smooth over the sand with the back of your sandwedge.

Always remember, it helps to take the shortest route to your ball in the bunker.

