

Match Play Guidelines

1. Match Play vs Stroke Play

- a. Match play has specific Rules (particularly about concessions and giving information about the number of strokes taken) because you and your opponent compete solely against each other on every hole, can see each other's play, and can protect your own interests.
- b. Match play is a form of play where a player (or players) play directly against an opponent (or opponents) in a head-to-head match. You win a hole by completing it in the fewest number of strokes, and you win a match when you are winning by more holes than remain to be played.
- c. Differences between match play and stroke play involve such things as completion of a hole by the ball in the cup (required in stroke play, but not in match play). In stroke play, a correct scorecard must be returned. There is no scorecard requirement in match play, however they may be used to help remember the match score and any net score adjustments. Rules of
- d. Competition for a particular event may require a scorecard. In stroke play, a breach of a Rule must result in the appropriate penalty. In match play, breach of a Rule may be disregarded provided there is no agreement to waive a Rule. But if the player and opponent deliberately agree to ignore a breach or penalty they know applies, both players are disqualified
- e. A match is typically 18 holes (unless otherwise stipulated for a particular event). If the match is "tied" after 18 holes, the match is extended one hole at a time until there is a winner, the match is conceded, or unless otherwise stipulated in the notice to Players.
- f. In match play you may practice before your round or between rounds (see Rule 5.2a). Between the play of two holes, unless otherwise restricted by the rules of competition, you may practice putting or chipping near the putting green of the hole just completed, any practice green, or the teeing area of the next hole (see Rule 5.5b). You must not make any practice strokes during play of a hole. You may not practice if you are holding up play.
- g. A player plays a wrong ball and the Committee becomes aware of this after the conclusion of play. In match play, if a timely claim was not made, the Committee must rule the result of the match stands as played. But, in stroke play, the Committee must penalize the player either two strokes or disqualification, whichever is correct under the circumstances.

2. Order of Play:

- a. Order on the tee for first hole are determined by the draw or as otherwise assigned by The Committee.
- b. During the play of a hole, the ball farther from the hole plays first. If that cannot be determined, the ball to be played first should be determined by lot - flip a coin.
- c. If a player plays out of turn, his opponent may immediately require the player to cancel the stroke and play in the correct order. In match play players can agree, for each occurrence, to play out of turn to save time in which case that stroke cannot be cancelled
- d. If both balls in GUR or Penalty Area, the ball farther from the hole plays first; order of play determined before relief taken.
- e. Both balls lost in a Penalty Area, order determined by lot – flip a coin.
- f. On the tee, play of a provisional ball is as usual. If playing a provisional ball from someplace other than the tee, play it immediately before opponent plays.
- g. If a player asks for a ruling, and the ruling could have an effect in determining who has the honor at the next hole. Determine honor by lot – flip a coin.
- h. If a player who has the honor asks his opponent to hit first – perhaps to save time – the opponent may do so, but the player may NOT recall the stroke.

- i. Balls in the fairway and players request Referee to determine who is away. If the Referee is unable to do so, determine honor by lot – flip a coin.

3. Advice:

- a. Rule 24.4: The Committee may, in team competition, permit each team to appoint one person who may give advice to members of that team.
- b. Teammates may NOT give each other advice unless they are partners in a particular format.
- c. Distance information is NOT advice. Rules information is not advice. An inadvertent statement of incorrect information on the Rules is NOT wrong information. No penalty is involved. It is the player's responsibility to know the Rules.

4. Information as to Strokes Taken:

- a. An opponent is entitled to know the number of strokes taken both during play of a hole and after completion of the hole.
- b. If the player fails to respond or gives wrong information, and the mistake is not corrected before the opponent takes their next stroke, the penalty is loss of hole.
- c. A player must inform his opponent that he has incurred a penalty stroke before his opponent makes his next stroke, unless it is obvious from observation that a penalty stroke was taken (e.g., you see a player at the red line of a Red Penalty Area measure two club lengths and drop a ball to put that ball into play.)

5. Scoring:

- a. The player who completes the hole in the fewest number of strokes (including strokes made and penalty strokes) wins the hole. If you and your opponent have the same number of strokes (including strokes made and penalty strokes), the hole is halved (see Rule 3.2a)

6. Concession of Match, Hole or Next Stroke.

- a. A player may concede a match at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that match.
- b. A player may concede a hole at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that hole.
- c. A player may concede his opponent's next stroke at any time, provided the opponent's ball is at rest. The opponent is considered to have holed out with his NEXT STROKE, and the ball may be removed by either side.
- d. A concession may not be declined or withdrawn.
- e. A player may putt out after their shot has been conceded, unless doing so will assist their partner (see Interpretation 5.5b/1). In singles, four-ball, or foursomes, the putt may be made AFTER the outcome of the hole has been determined.

7. Doubt as to Procedure / Disputes and Claims / Asking for a ruling (Rule 20.1a & Rule 20.1b)

- a. Playing two balls is only allowed in stroke play - NOT in match play
- b. Must be made in a timely manner.
 - i. Before any player plays from the next teeing ground.
 - ii. If the last hole of the match, before all players leave the putting green.
 - iii. If the circumstances are discovered after having left the final putting green and before the results of the match are officially announced.
 - iv. Relating to a prior hole may only be considered if it is based upon facts previously unknown to the player making the claim.
- c. Player notifies his opponent that he is making a claim or wants a ruling (e.g., "I want a ruling.") once the facts upon which the claim or ruling is to be made are known and before the start of the next hole/before the result of the match is final.

8. General rule regarding penalties:

- a. If it's a one stroke penalty in stroke play, it is probably the same in match play.
 - i. Lost ball or ball out of bounds
 - ii. Relief from a Penalty Area
 - iii. Improper dropping procedure.
 - iv. Failure to mark location of the ball when lifting it.
 - v. Failure to "announce" what you intend to do (lift ball for identification or lift ball to see if it is unfit for play).
- b. If it is a two stroke penalty in stroke play, it is probably loss of hole in match play.
 - i. Wrong ball
 - ii. Wrong place
 - iii. Not always true. A player's ball in motion after a stroke on a putting green strikes another player's ball at rest on that same putting green. In stroke play, penalty is two strokes. In match play, there is no penalty (Rule 11.1a). Another exception is when taking relief from a bunker outside a bunker (Rule 19.3b)

9. Ball Lifted or Moved by Opponent

- a. If known/virtually certain opponent lifted player's ball, ball must be replaced EXCEPT: when next stroke is conceded, or done at player's request, or if done accidentally (e.g., during search or on putting green, or while applying a rule) – one stroke penalty
- b. Also, no penalty if opponent does so when mistakenly marking wrong ball on putting green

10. Match Play Rule Scenarios/Questions:

- a. Rule 1: Player refuses to comply with a Rule. Penalty is loss of hole.
- b. Rule 3.2: During play of a hole, players agree to consider the hole halved. Is this OK? YES. This is not an agreement to waive a Rule.
- c. May a player putt out after his next stroke has been conceded. OK to do that; no penalty. BUT, if the putt assists the player's partner, the partner is disqualified for that hole .
- d. Player A has played two strokes, his second out of the rough, and his ball is on the green. Player B lies 5 and concedes the hole. Player A picks up his ball and realizes he has played a wrong ball. Ruling? A lost the hole BEFORE B conceded the hole. Therefore, player B wins the hole.

11. Rule Breaches that Require an Adjustment to the State of the Match

"Playing Penalties," are those that occur during play as a result of breach of a Rule (e.g., the ball moves after address or a player grounds his club in a bunker while his ball is in that bunker, etc.)

- a. Carrying 15 or more clubs, Non-conforming grooves; driver with a non-conforming head (Rule 4.1)
- b. Breach of the "One Ball Condition" if such is specified in the Notice to Players.
- c. Club playing characteristics changed; foreign material applied to a club (Rule 4.2).
- e. Breach of transportation condition; Practicing in Breach of Rule 5.2.a
- e. Using caddie when caddie use is not authorized.
- f. Using a club that was damaged during the round, but NOT as a result of normal course of play. Club is now non-conforming.

12. Referee Duties: If a Referee has NOT been assigned to a match but is on the course while a number of matches are being played on various parts of the course, the Referee has no authority to intervene in a match other than in relation to the following Rules situations:

1. Rule 1.3. Agreement to deliberately waive a Rule of Golf, (e.g., deliberately agreeing to concede short putts, etc.)
2. Rule 5.6 - Undue delay (a.k.a. Pace of Play), (e.g., a search for a lost ball extending well past three minutes)

3. Rule 1.3c -Disqualification Penalty, which may result from a player being guilty of a serious breach of etiquette
4. **IF ASKED by players**, answer questions on or apply the Rules of Golf