

The USGA and R&A announced a series of proposed changes to the Rules of Golf, which would take effect in 2019. Here's a complete list of the topics addressed, including what the new rule would be and what the current rule is.

BALL AT REST: Topics	Description of change
Player accidentally moves his or her ball during search	New rule: No penalty.
Player accidentally moves his or her ball or ball-marker on the putting green	New rule: No penalty.
Standard for deciding whether the player caused his or her ball to move	New rule: The player will be found to be the cause only when it is known or virtually certain (meaning at least 95%) to be the case.
How to replace a ball lying off the putting green when it moves and its exact original spot isn't known	New rule: Replace the ball on its estimated spot; if that spot was on, under or against attached natural objects, replace the ball on that spot on, under or against those objects.
BALL IN MOTION: Topic	Description of change
Player's ball in motion accidentally hits the player, his or her caddie, the person attending the flagstick or the attended or removed flagstick	New rule: No penalty.
TAKING RELIEF: Topics	Description of change
Where a ball must be dropped	New rule: Drop in a defined relief area. Current rule: Sometimes the drop is in a specified area, sometimes it is on or as near as possible to a spot or a line.
Where a dropped ball must come to rest	New rule: The ball must come to rest in the relief area where it was dropped, or else the ball must be re-dropped.
Measuring the size of the relief area where a ball must be dropped and played	Measured by using 1 or 2 club-lengths (with any length club the player chooses).

How to drop a ball	New rule: The only requirement is for the player to hold the ball above the ground without it touching any growing thing or other natural or artificial object, and let it go so that it falls through the air before coming to rest; to avoid any doubt, it is recommended that the ball be <i>dropped</i> from at least one inch above the ground or any growing thing or object.
Time allowed for a ball search	New rule: A ball is lost if not found in three minutes.
Substituting ball	New rule: A player may always substitute a ball when taking relief.
Embedded ball	New rule: A player may take relief without penalty for an embedded ball anywhere (except in sand) in the “general area” (new term for “through the green”),
AREAS OF THE COURSE: Topics	Description of change
Replacing a ball on the putting green when it moves from its spot after it already had been lifted and replaced	New rule: The ball must always be replaced on its original spot, even if it was blown by the wind or moved for no clear reason.
Repairing damage on the putting green	New rule: A player may repair almost any damage (including spike marks and animal damage but not including natural imperfections) on the putting green.
Player touches the line of putt or touches the putting green in pointing out a target	New rule: No penalty, so long as doing so does not improve the conditions for the player’s stroke.
Putting with an unattended flagstick left in the hole	New rule: No penalty if a ball played from the putting green (or anywhere else) hits the unattended flagstick in hole.

Areas the Committee may mark as a penalty area (where relief with 1-stroke penalty is allowed)	New rule: Red- and yellow-marked “penalty areas” may now cover areas of desert, jungle, lava rock, etc., in addition to areas of water.
Player moves loose impediments, touches the ground with hand or club or grounds the club in a penalty area when the ball is in the penalty area	New rule: No penalty.
Expanded use of red-marked penalty areas	New rule: Committees are given the discretion to mark all penalty areas as red so that lateral relief is always allowed (but they may still mark penalty areas as yellow where they consider it appropriate).
Elimination of the opposite side relief option for red penalty areas	New rule: A player is no longer allowed to take relief from a red penalty area on the opposite side from where the ball last entered that penalty area, unless the Committee adopts a Local Rule allowing it.
Player moves or touches a loose impediment in a bunker when the ball is in the bunker	New rule: No penalty.
Player touches sand in a bunker with his or her hand or a club when the ball is in the bunker	New rule: No penalty except when a player touches sand (1) with his or her hand or club to test the conditions of the bunker or (2) with the club in the area right behind or in front of the ball, in making a practice swing or in making the backswing for the stroke.
Unplayable ball relief options	New rule: A player may take relief outside the bunker back on a line from the hole through where ball was at rest for 2 penalty strokes.
EQUIPMENT: Topics	Description of change
Use of clubs damaged during round	New rule: A player may keep using any damaged club, even if the player damaged it in anger.

Adding clubs to replace a club damaged during round	New rule: A player may not replace a damaged club, unless the player was not responsible for the damage.
PLAYING A BALL: Topics	Description of change
WHEN TO PLAY DURING ROUND: Topics	Description of change
Recommendations on how to play promptly	New rule: Recommends that players make each stroke in no more than 40 seconds, and usually in less time.
Playing out of turn in stroke play	New rule: No penalty (as today), and “ready golf” is encouraged when it can be done in a safe and responsible way.
Other changes to help pace of play	Other new rules: Simplified dropping rules, allowing more areas to be marked as penalty areas, expanded use of red penalty areas and allowing a player to putt with the flagstick in the hole.
PLAYER BEHAVIOR: Topics	Description of change
Eliminating announcement requirements before lifting a ball under certain Rules	New rule: When a player has good reason to mark and lift a ball to identify it, check for damage or see if it lies in a condition where relief is allowed (such as to see whether it is embedded), the player is no longer required first to announce to another player or his or her marker the intent to do so or to give that person an opportunity to observe the process.
Player's reasonable judgment in estimating and measuring under a Rule	New rule: When estimating or measuring a spot, point, line, area or distance under a Rule, a player's reasonable judgment will not be second-guessed