

Rule Adjustments for Acceptable Scores during COVID-19 Restrictions (Competition and General Play Scores)

UPDATE: 13/07/2021

As our Governments reduce/repeal COVID restrictions, the advice from the Home Unions is changing in response. The current advice from the Home Unions is to remove situations where the touching of course furniture or score cards is not permitted, along with rule adjustments to accommodate this. The new advice, as restrictions are lifted, is to once again allow those touchpoints – flagsticks may be touched/removed, bunker rakes are to be allowed and score cards can be exchanged once more. Accordingly, as each Home Union provides this updated advice, **all** adjustments to the rules (as set out below) are rescinded and play will be according to the Rules of Golf and Rules of Handicapping.

Current Situation (as at 13/07/2021)

All adjustments to the Rules of Golf continue to be in place for all Unions not identified below.



ENGLAND GOLF – From Monday 19th July 2021

All restrictions on touch points are removed. All adjustments to the Rules of Golf to cover the COVID pandemic are rescinded.

Flagsticks may be removed and the hole must conform to the Rules of Golf such that the definition of a Ball Holed is once more enforced (noting the exception in Rule 13.2 – Ball Resting Against Flagstick).

With no restrictions on bunker rakes on the course, a local rule to allow preferred lies in bunkers is not permitted (apart from situations already covered under the Rules of Golf and the appropriate Model Local Rules utilised) and generally making all bunkers GUR is no longer permitted.

Rule 3.3b (scoring in Stroke Play) is reinstated fully and a return to a 'normal' method of attestation must be used for physical scorecards. Any use of electronic scorecards must fully implement the requirements of this rule.

CONGU Decision 23/3/2020 (Updated 05/05/2020, 11/05/2020, 01/07/2020 and 11/11/2020)

Following on from The R&A's guidance on the Rules of Golf issued on Friday 20 March (<https://www.randa.org/en/news/2020/03/covid-19-related-guidance-on-the-rules-of-golf>) and further advice on 29th June (<https://www.randa.org/News/2020/04/Golf-in-the-UK-under-COVID-19-restrictions>), CONGU has now discussed the implications for scores for handicap qualifying competitions (and general play scores) and can confirm the following:

Holes

If clubs have made the decision to modify the depth of the hole to allow players to remove the ball without touching the flagstick, scores will be acceptable for either competition or general play purposes. In such cases, the ball is considered holed if any part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green, even if not lodged against the flagstick. However, in line with R&A advice, if any of the following provisions are used, play is not in accordance with the Rules of Golf and any scores submitted would **not** be an acceptable score for handicap purposes:

- Treating a ball as holed or holed with the next stroke if it is within a certain distance of the hole.
- Having the hole liner sitting above the surface of the green and treating a ball as holed if it strikes the liner.
- Treating a ball as holed when it has bounced out of the hole for any reason (for example, when it has bounced off the flagstick, a tray attached to the flagstick or the hole liner).

Flagsticks

Clubs may make a decision to use any of the following policies temporarily. Scores returned when using such policies will be acceptable for acceptable scores (either competition or general play) purposes. Allowable policies are:

- Require that players leave the flagstick in the hole at all times. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it establishes this policy by way of a Code of Conduct or Local Rule, and whether it provides a penalty under the Code of Conduct or for a breach of the Local Rule.
- Not have flagsticks at all.
- As a temporary provision, flagsticks can be used for the purpose of player safety which do not meet the specifications in Part 8 of the Equipment Rules. For example, a Committee may temporarily decide to use a flagstick that has an added movable platform or tray to help prevent touching the flagstick when removing the ball from the hole.
- Allow players to centre the flagstick in a safe manner which does not involve using the hand, even when wearing a glove or using a towel (for example, by using a club). The centring of the flagstick may be allowed while another player putts (this may be desirable in windy conditions when the flagstick is required to be left in the hole and is leaning towards the player making the stroke). The flag should be held in an upright position, rather than bending it away from the player making the stroke.

Bunkers

If clubs introduce a Local Rule to allow preferred lies in bunkers, scores will be acceptable for competition or general play purposes. (Using Model Local Rule E-3)

Please note: The distance for preferred lies in the bunker is limited to 6 inches and the area cannot be smoothed before placing.

As an alternative (but not combined with the preferred lies detailed above) if the condition of bunkers is so poor that it interferes with the proper playing of the game, a club Committee may declare all bunkers to be Ground Under Repair, scores will be acceptable for competition or general play purposes.

Note: These temporary provisions are applicable until further notice.