



Rules of Amateur Status

as approved by R&A Rules Limited and
the United States Golf Association
Effective 1 January 2012

Foreword – To the 2012 Rules of Amateur Status

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Amateurism in sport is much less common today than in the past. As the governing authorities for the Rules of the game, R&A Rules Limited (“R&A”) and the United States Golf Association (“USGA”) have, therefore, conducted a fundamental review of the Rules of Amateur Status (“the Rules”) over the past four years.

The R&A and USGA have concluded that the distinction between amateur and professional golf should be maintained and that the wholesale removal of the limits and restrictions placed on amateur golfers is not in the best interests of the modern game. In particular, it is agreed that because amateur golf is largely self-regulating, both in terms of the playing Rules and handicapping, uncontrolled financial incentive could place too much pressure on these important features and could be detrimental to the integrity of the game.

The fundamental aims of the new Rules are:

- an internationally accepted position that is in the best interests of the game;
- a modern Code that, where appropriate, is faithful to the traditions of the game;
- a Code that has longevity and is enforceable; and
- a Code that works for all aspects of the game (i.e. club golf, elite amateur golf and professional golf (at its various levels)).

Through appropriate limits and restrictions, the Rules are intended to encourage amateur golfers to focus on the game's challenges and inherent rewards, rather than any financial gain.

The R&A and USGA believe that this new Code strikes the right balance in preserving the traditional character of the amateur game whilst acknowledging that young, talented golfers may need more support. At the same time, it recognises that varying social and economic conditions create different challenges for individuals and organisations from country to country and that emerging golfing countries, in particular, may need more liberal and flexible structures to help the game develop. The principal changes are summarised on pages 7 and 8.

It is against that background that the R&A and USGA have formulated these new Rules of Amateur Status.

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Principal Changes Introduced in the 2012 Code

Rules of Golf

Definitions

Addressing the Ball

The Definition is amended so that a player has addressed the ball simply by grounding his club immediately in front of or behind the ball, regardless of whether or not he has taken his stance. Therefore, the Rules generally no longer provide for a player addressing the ball in a hazard. (See also related change to Rule 18-2b)

Rules

Rule 1-2. Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions

The Rule is amended to establish more clearly that, if a player intentionally takes an action to influence the movement of a ball or to alter physical conditions affecting the playing of a hole in a way that is not permitted by the Rules, Rule 1-2 applies only when the action is not already covered in another Rule. For example, a player improving the lie of his ball is in breach of Rule 13-2 and therefore that Rule would apply, whereas a player intentionally improving the lie of a fellow-competitor's ball is not a situation covered by Rule 13-2 and, therefore, is governed by Rule 1-2.

Rule 6-3a. Time of Starting

Rule 6-3a is amended to provide that the penalty for starting late, but within five minutes of the starting time, is reduced from disqualification to loss of the first hole in match play or two strokes at the first hole in stroke play. Previously this penalty reduction could be introduced as a condition of competition.

Rule 12-1. Seeing Ball; Searching for Ball

Rule 12-1 is reformatted for clarity. In addition, it is amended to (i) permit a player to search for his ball anywhere on the course when it may be covered by sand and to clarify that there is no penalty if the ball is moved

in these circumstances, and (ii) apply a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a if a player moves his ball in a hazard when searching for it when it is believed to be covered by loose impediments.

Rule 13-4. Ball in Hazard; Prohibited Actions

Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 is amended to permit a player to smooth sand or soil in a hazard at any time, including before playing from that hazard, provided it is for the sole purpose of caring for the course and Rule 13-2 is not breached.

Rule 18-2b. Ball Moving After Address

A new Exception is added that exonerates the player from penalty if his ball moves after it has been addressed when it is known or virtually certain that he did not cause the ball to move. For example, if it is a gust of wind that moves the ball after it has been addressed, there is no penalty and the ball is played from its new position.

Rule 19-1. Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped; By Outside Agency

The note is expanded to prescribe the various outcomes when a ball in motion has been deliberately deflected or stopped by an outside agency.

Rule 20-7c. Playing from Wrong Place; Stroke Play

Note 3 is amended so that if a player is to be penalised for playing from a wrong place, in most cases the penalty will be limited to two strokes, even if another Rule has been breached prior to his making the stroke.

Appendix IV

A new Appendix is added to prescribe general regulations for the design of devices and other equipment, such as tees, gloves and distance measuring devices.

Rules of Amateur Status

Definitions

Amateur Golfer

The Definition is amended to establish more clearly that an “amateur golfer”, regardless of whether he plays competitively or recreationally, is one who plays golf for the challenge it presents, not as a profession and not for financial gain.

Golf Skill or Reputation

A time limit of five years is introduced for the retention of “golf reputation” after the player’s golf skill has diminished.

Prize Vouchers

The Definition is expanded to allow prize vouchers to be used for the purchase of goods or services from a golf club.

Rules

Rule 1-3 Amateurism; Purpose of the Rules

Rule 1-3 is amended to re-state why there is a distinction between amateur and professional golf and why certain limits and restrictions are needed in the amateur game.

Rule 2-1 Professionalism; General

The existing Rules on professionalism are consolidated and re-formatted into new Rule 2-1.

Rule 2-2 Professionalism; Contracts and Agreements

National Golf Unions or Associations – New Rule 2-2(a) is added to allow an amateur golfer to enter into a contract and/or agreement with his national golf union or association, provided he does not obtain any financial gain, directly or indirectly, while still an amateur golfer.

Professional Agents, Sponsors and Other Third Parties - New Rule 2-2(b) is added to allow an amateur golfer, who is at least 18 years of age, to enter into a contract and/or agreement with a third party solely in relation to the golfer’s future as a professional golfer, provided he does not obtain any financial gain, directly or indirectly, while still an amateur golfer.

Rule 3-2b Hole-in-One Prizes

New Rule 3-2b excludes from the general prize limit prizes (including cash prizes) awarded for achieving a hole-in-one while playing a round of golf. This exception is specific to prizes for holes-in-one (not longest drive or nearest the hole) and neither separate events nor multiple-entry events qualify.

Rule 4-3 Subsistence Expenses

New Rule added to allow an amateur golfer to receive subsistence expenses to assist with general living costs, provided the expenses are approved by and paid through the player’s national golf union or association.