

# **The Modified Rules of Golf for Players with Disabilities**

### Introduction

As part of their governance of the game through writing and interpreting the Rules of Golf, the USGA and The R&A have authorized these Modified Rules for use by players with disabilities.

These Modified Rules only apply if adopted by the *Committee* in charge of a competition. They do not apply automatically to every competition involving players with disabilities.

It is up to each *Committee* to decide whether to adopt any of these Modified Rules for its own competitions.

The goal of these Modified Rules is to allow a player with a disability to play fairly with players who have no disabilities, the same disability or different types of disabilities. The USGA and The R&A have received valuable input from the community of players with disabilities, disability organizations and other sources to identify modifications that are fair and appropriate from all perspectives.

From a practical standpoint, players with certain disabilities often have the same or similar needs. Four such categories of disability have been identified:

- Players who are blind,
- Players who are amputees,
- Players who use assistive mobility devices, and
- Players with intellectual disabilities.

These authorized modifications adapt the Rules of Golf for these categories of disability.

All terms in *italics* are defined in the Rules of Golf, and all Rule number references are to the Rules of Golf.

## Modified Rule 1 – For Players Who Are Blind

### Purpose:

For a player who is blind, Modified Rule 1 provides recommendations to allow the player to be assisted by both an aide and a caddie at the same time and to give the player a limited exception to the prohibitions on touching sand in a bunker with a club.

The *Committee* may adopt one or more of these modifications for players who are blind:

### 1.1 Player May Get Help from an Aide

A player who is blind may get help from an aide:

- In taking a *stance*,
- In lining up before the *stroke*, and
- By asking for and getting *advice*.

An aide has the same status under the Rules as a *caddie* (see Rule 10.3), but with the exceptions described in Modified Rule 1.4.

For purposes of Rule 10.2a, a player may ask for and get *advice* from both an aide and a *caddie* at the same time.

### 1.2 Player May Have Only One Aide at a Time

A player who is blind may have only one aide at a time.

If the player has more than one aide at a time, the player gets the **general penalty** for each hole where that breach happened, in the same way as provided in Rule 10.3a(1).

### 1.3 Modification of Rule 10.2b(4) (Restriction on Caddie Standing Behind Player)

Rule 10.2b(4) is modified so that there is no penalty if the aide or *caddie* is deliberately positioned on or close to an extension of the *line of play* behind the ball at any time before or during the player's *stroke*, so long as the aide or *caddie* does not help the player in making the *stroke*.

**But** this does not modify Rule 10.2b(3) (Prohibition on Using Object Placed on Course to Help in Taking Stance).

## Modified Rule I

### I.4 Modification of Rule 10.3 (Caddies)

The aide of a player who is blind may also serve as the player's *caddie*, but is not required to do so.

The player may have both an aide and a *caddie* at the same time, in which case:

- That aide must not carry or handle the player's clubs **except** in helping the player in taking a *stance* or lining up before making the *stroke*, or in helping the player as a courtesy as provided in the definition of *caddie*. **But** this does not modify Rule 10.2b(3) (Prohibition on Using Object Placed on Course to Help in Taking Stance).
- If that aide carries or handles the player's clubs in breach of this Rule, the player has two *caddies* at the same time and gets the **general penalty** for each hole where that breach happened (see Rule 10.3a(1)).

### I.5 Modification of Rule 12.2b(1) (When Touching Sand Results in Penalty)

Before making a *stroke* at his or her ball in a *bunker*, a player who is blind may, without penalty, touch sand in the *bunker* with his or her club:

- In the area right in front of or right behind the ball, and
- In making the backswing for a *stroke*.

**But** in doing so, the player must not *improve* the *lie* of the ball more than would result from lightly grounding the club.

The player remains subject to the prohibitions in Rule 12.2b(1) on deliberately touching the sand in the *bunker* to test the condition of the sand or with a club in making a practice swing.

### I.6 Modification of Rule 14.1b (Who May Lift Ball)

When a player's ball lies on the *putting green*, Rule 14.1b is modified so that the player's aide, in addition to his or her *caddie*, may lift the ball without the player's authorization.

### Modified Rule 2 – For Players Who Are Amputees

#### Purpose:

For a player who is an amputee, Modified Rule 2 provides for the use of prosthetic devices, making a stroke while anchoring the club and authorization for any other person to drop, place and replace the player's ball.

The *Committee* may adopt one or more of these modifications for players who are amputees (which means both those with limb deficiencies and those who have lost a limb):

#### 2.1 Status of Prosthetic Devices

Use of an artificial arm or leg is not a breach of Rule 4.3a provided the player has a medical reason to use it and the *Committee* decides that its use does not give the player any unfair advantage over other players (see Rule 4.3b). Players in doubt about the use of a device should raise the matter as soon as possible with the *Committee*.

#### 2.2 Modification of Rule 10.1b (Anchoring the Club)

If a *Committee* finds that a player who is an amputee is unable to hold and swing clubs without anchoring because of limb deficiencies or limb loss, the player may make a *stroke* while anchoring the club, without penalty under Rule 10.1b.

#### 2.3 Player Who is an Amputee May Get Help with Dropping, Placing and Replacing Ball

Because physical limitations may make it difficult or impossible for a player who is an amputee to *drop*, place or *replace* his or her own ball, all Rules that require the player to *drop*, place or *replace* a ball are modified so that the player is also allowed, without limitation, to give a general authorization to any other person to *drop*, place and *replace* the player's ball.

## Modified Rule 3

### Modified Rule 3 – For Players Who Use Assistive Mobility Devices

#### Purpose:

For a player who uses an assistive mobility device, Modified Rule 3 provides recommendations on how the player may use an assistive mobility device, such as a wheelchair or other wheeled mobility device or a cane or a crutch, to help in taking a stance, making a stroke and otherwise in his or her play.

The *Committee* may adopt one or more of these modifications for players who use assistive mobility devices, such as wheelchairs and other wheeled mobility devices and canes or crutches:

Modified Rules 3.1 to 3.10 apply to all assistive mobility devices, including wheelchairs and other wheeled mobility devices.

Modified Rule 3.11 applies only to wheeled mobility devices.

#### 3.1 Player Using an Assistive Mobility Device May Get Help from an Aide or Any Other Person

A player who uses an assistive mobility device may get help from an aide or any other person, including another player, in these ways:

- **Lifting Ball on Putting Green:** When the player's ball lies on the *putting green*, Rule 14.1b is modified so that the player's aide, in addition to his or her *caddie*, may lift the ball without the player's authorization.
- **Dropping, Placing and Replacing Ball:** Because physical limitations may make it difficult or impossible for a player using an assistive mobility device to *drop*, place or *replace* his or her own ball, all Rules that require the player to *drop*, place or *replace* a ball are modified so that the player is also allowed, without limitation, to give a general authorization to any other person to *drop*, place and *replace* the player's ball.
- **Positioning Player or Device:** Although there is no modification to Rule 10.2b(5), before making a *stroke*, the player may get physical help from any person to help position the player or position or remove the assistive mobility device.

### 3.2 Player Using an Assistive Mobility Device May Get Advice from an Aide

A player who uses an assistive mobility device may ask for and get *advice* from his or her aide in the same way that a player asks for and gets *advice* from a caddie under Rule 10.2a.

An aide has the same status under the Rules as a *caddie* (see Rule 10.3), but with the exceptions described in Modified Rule 3.9.

For purposes of Rule 10.2a, a player may ask for and get *advice* from both an aide and a *caddie* at the same time.

### 3.3 Player May Have Only One Aide at a Time

A player who uses an assistive mobility device may have only one aide at a time.

If the player has more than one aide at a time, the player gets the **general penalty** for each hole where that breach happened, in the same way as provided in Rule 10.3a(1).

### 3.4 Modification of Definition of “Stance”

A player’s use of an assistive mobility device may affect his or her *stance* for purposes of various Rules, such as in determining the area of intended *stance* under Rule 8.1a and deciding if there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* under Rule 16.1.

To address this, the definition of *stance* is modified to mean “the position of a player’s feet and body, and the position of an assistive mobility device if one is used, in preparing for or making a *stroke*”.

### 3.5 Application of Rule 4.3 (Use of Equipment)

Rule 4.3 applies to the use of assistive mobility devices:

- The player may use assistive mobility devices to help in his or her play if that is allowed under the standards in Rule 4.3b, and
- The player using an assistive mobility device is still subject to the prohibitions in Rule 4.3a against using *equipment* in an abnormal way.

## Modified Rule 3

### 3.6 Modification of Rule 8.1b(5) to Allow Use of an Assistive Mobility Device in Taking a Stance

Under Rule 8.1b(5), there is no penalty if a player *improves* the *conditions affecting the stroke* by firmly placing his or her feet in taking a *stance*, “including a reasonable amount of digging in with the feet in sand”.

For a player who uses an assistive mobility device, Rule 8.1b(5) is modified so that a “reasonable amount of digging in with the feet” includes:

- A reasonable amount of digging in with an assistive mobility device, or
- Taking reasonable actions to position an assistive mobility device in taking a *stance* and to try to avoid slipping.

**But** this modification does not allow the player to go beyond that by building a *stance* so that the assistive mobility device will not slip during the swing, such as by creating a raised mound of soil or sand against which to brace the device.

If the player does so, he or she gets the **general penalty** for altering the surface of the ground to build a *stance* in breach of Rule 8.1a(3).

### 3.7 Modification of Rule 10.1b (Anchoring the Club)

When a *Committee* finds that a player is unable to hold and swing clubs without anchoring because of the use of an assistive mobility device, the player may make a *stroke* while anchoring the club, without penalty under Rule 10.1b.

### 3.8 Modification of Rule 10.1c (Making Stroke while Standing Across or on Line of Play)

To cover a player’s use of an assistive mobility device in taking a *stance* to play a ball, Rule 10.1c is modified to read:

“c. Making Stroke while Standing Across or on Line of Play

The player must not make a *stroke* from a *stance* with a foot or any part of an assistive mobility device deliberately placed on each side of, or with either foot or any part of an assistive mobility device deliberately touching, the *line of play* or an extension of that line behind the ball.

For this Rule only, the *line of play* does not include a reasonable distance on either side.

**Exception – If Stance is Taken Accidentally or to Avoid Another Player’s Line of Play:** There is no penalty.”

### 3.9 Modification of Rule 10.3 (Caddies)

The aide of a player using an assistive mobility device may also serve as the player's *caddie*, but is not required to do so.

The player may have both an aide and a *caddie* at the same time, in which case:

- That aide must not carry or handle the player's clubs **except** in helping the player in taking a *stance* or lining up before making the *stroke*, or in helping the player as a courtesy as provided in the definition of *caddie*. **But** this does not modify Rule 10.2b(3) (Prohibition on Using Object Placed on Course to Help in Taking Stance).
- If that aide carries or handles the player's clubs in breach of this Rule, the player has two *caddies* at the same time and gets the **general penalty** for each hole where that breach happened (see Rule 10.3a(1)).

### 3.10 Application of Rule 12.2b(1) in Using Assistive Mobility Device to Test Conditions of Sand in Bunker

Under Rule 12.2b(1), a player must not “deliberately touch the sand in the *bunker* with a hand, club, rake or other object to test the condition of the sand to learn information about the next *stroke*”.

This applies to using an assistive mobility device to deliberately test the condition of the sand.

**But** the player may touch the sand with his or her assistive mobility device for any other purpose, without penalty.

### 3.11 Modification of Lateral Relief Option for Ball in Red Penalty Area and for Unplayable Ball for Player Using a Wheeled Mobility Device

When a player with a wheeled mobility device takes lateral relief for a ball in a red *penalty area* or for an unplayable ball, Rules 17.1d(3) and 19.2c are modified to expand the size of the allowed *relief area* from using two *club-lengths* for measurement to using four *club-lengths* for measurement.

## Modified Rule 4

### Modified Rule 4 – For Players with Intellectual Disabilities

#### Purpose:

For a player who has an intellectual disability, Modified Rule 4 provides recommendations to allow the player to be assisted by both an aide and a caddie at the same time and to get advice from that aide.

The *Committee* may adopt one or more of these recommended modifications for players with intellectual disabilities:

#### 4.1 Use of an Aide or Supervisor to Help with Play

The extent of help that players with intellectual disabilities may need will be unique to each individual and will depend on the nature of the disability.

The *Committee* may provide or allow for an on-course aide or supervisor to help players with intellectual disabilities:

- An aide is someone who helps an individual player with an intellectual disability in his or her play and in applying the Rules:
  - » An aide has the same status under the Rules as a *caddie* (see Rule 10.3), but with the exceptions described in Modified Rule 4.3.
  - » For purposes of Rule 10.2a, a player may ask for and get *advice* from both an aide and a *caddie* at the same time.
- A supervisor is someone designated by the *Committee* to help players with intellectual disabilities during the competition:
  - » The supervisor is not assigned to a specific player, but rather is there to help any player as needed.
  - » A supervisor is an *outside influence* for purposes of the Rules.
  - » A player may not ask for or get *advice* from a supervisor.

#### 4.2 Player May Have Only One Aide at a Time

A player with an intellectual disability may have only one aide at a time.

If a player has more than one aide at a time, the player gets the **general penalty** for each hole where that breach happened, in the same way as provided in Rule 10.3a(1).

### 4.3 Modification of Rule 10.3 (Caddie)

The aide for a player with an intellectual disability may also serve as the player's *caddie*, but is not required to do so.

The player may have both an aide and a *caddie* at the same time, in which case:

- That aide must not carry or handle the player's clubs **except** in helping the player in taking a *stance* or lining up before making the *stroke* (if authorized by the *Committee*), or in helping the player as a courtesy as provided in the definition of *caddie*. **But** this does not modify Rule 10.2b(3) (Prohibition on Using Object Placed on Course to Help in Taking Stance).
- If that aide carries or handles the player's clubs in breach of this Rule, the player has two *caddies* at the same time and gets the **general penalty** for each hole where that breach happened (see Rule 10.3a(1)).

### 4.4 Modification of Rule 14.1b (Who May Lift Ball)

When a player's ball lies on the *putting green*, Rule 14.1b is modified so that the player's aide, in addition to his or her *caddie*, may lift the ball without the player's authorization.

### 4.5 Players with Both Intellectual and Physical Disabilities

For players with both intellectual and physical disabilities, it is recommended that the *Committee* use a combination of the Modified Rules so that both types of disabilities are addressed.

## All Categories of Disability

### Unreasonable Delay

In applying Rule 5.6a's prohibition on unreasonable delay to players with disabilities:

- Each *Committee* should use its discretion and set its own reasonable standards taking into account the difficulty of the *course*, the weather conditions (in view of the impact they could have on the use of assistive mobility devices), the nature of the competition and the extent of the disabilities of the players competing.
- Taking these factors into account, it may be appropriate for *Committees* to use a more relaxed interpretation of what constitutes unreasonable delay.

### Dropping

In applying Rule 14.3b (Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way), because physical limitations may make it difficult or impossible for players with certain disabilities to know whether they have *dropped* the ball from knee height, the *Committee* should accept the player's reasonable judgment that he or she has done so. Also, the *Committee* should accept all reasonable efforts to drop the ball from knee height, taking account of the player's physical limitations.

### Players with Other Disabilities

These Modified Rules cover the categories of disability and associated challenges that have been identified to date as appropriate for modifying the Rules of Golf to serve the purpose of enabling players with disabilities to play on a fair basis with all other players. As is the case with the Rules of Golf generally, these Modified Rules are regularly reviewed for possible revision on a periodic basis. If *Committees* or players believe that other authorized modifications should be considered, they should contact The R&A.

Many players have physical limitations that may result in some degree of disability and that may affect their ability to play the game. Examples include players who are partially sighted and players who have difficulty gripping a club because of severe arthritis. The above Modified Rules do not specifically apply to such players.

However, any player may ask the *Committee* in charge of a competition for permission to use an artificial device, such as a brace or a gripping aid, to help with a medical condition. Under Rule 4.3b, a player is not in breach of Rule 4.3 for using *equipment* to help with a medical condition if the *Committee* finds that:

- The player has a medical reason for using the *equipment*, and
- The use of that *equipment* would not give the player an unfair advantage over other players.

Alternatively, upon request, The R&A will review and issue a preliminary opinion, on a case-by-case basis, about whether the use of a device for medical reasons is allowed under Rule 4.3. Any player may submit a written request to The R&A for its opinion on a device he or she wishes to use for medical reasons. It remains up to the *Committee* to decide whether the device gives the player any unfair advantage over other players and therefore whether to allow its use or not.