

THE RULES IN MATCH PLAY

1) **THE RULES** Match play has some of its own specific Rules because a player and their opponent compete solely against each other on every hole. Players can see each other's play and each can protect their own interests. Unlike in stroke play, there is no "field" to protect.

2) **HOW SHOULD THE PLAYER PROCEED WHEN UNCERTAIN ABOUT A RULE OR PROCEDURE?** In match play without a referee, a player and their opponent may agree on how to decide a Rules issue. (R20.1b1)

The agreed outcome is conclusive even if it turns out to have been wrong under the Rules, so long as the players did not deliberately agree to ignore any Rule or penalty. If an agreement cannot be reached, the player must decide what to do and play on. (R1.3b1 & C1.3b1/2)

If their opponent disagrees and wishes to request a ruling usually they must express their intention to request a ruling before starting the next hole. (R20.1b2)

In stroke play, players may not decide a Rules issue by agreement. (R20.1c1)

☛ In match play, a player who is uncertain about a Rule or procedure is not allowed to play out the hole with two balls. If they do play two balls and their opponent expresses their intention to request a ruling before starting the next hole, **the player will lose the hole.** (C20.1b4/1)

In stroke play, a player who is unsure about a Rule or procedure should play two balls and seek a ruling later. (R20.1c3)

3) **DID THE PLAYER SEE THEIR OPPONENT BREAK A RULE?** In match play without an assigned referee, if a player knows or believes that their opponent has breached a Rule, the player may choose whether or not to act on the breach.

However, the player and their opponent may not agree to ignore a breach or penalty they know applies. (R3.2d4)

☛ **2023 new Clarification 3.2d(4)/1 for match play** helps to define the meaning of "agree" in Rule 3.2d(4).

"For there to be an agreement, both players need to have been involved in the decision to ignore the breach or the penalty."

If a player and their opponent disagree whether one of them has breached a Rule, either player may protect their rights by asking for a ruling. Usually, they must express their intention to request a ruling before starting the next hole. (R20.1b2)

In stroke play, a player may not ignore another player's breach of a Rule. (R20.1c2)

4) **DID THE PLAYER GIVE WRONG INFORMATION TO THEIR OPPONENT?** If it's about the number of strokes they have taken or of any penalty strokes they may have incurred, and unless corrected in time, **the player may lose the hole.** (R3.2d)

In stroke play, corrections to a player's score can be made up until their scorecard has been "returned." (R3.3b2)

5) **DID THE PLAYER PLAY A WRONG BALL?** **The player loses the hole.** (R6.3c1)

In stroke play, the penalty is two strokes. A player must correct their mistake. (R6.3c1)

6) **DID THE PLAYER PLAY FROM A WRONG PLACE?** **The player loses the hole.** (R14.7a)

In stroke play, the penalty is two strokes. The player must play out the hole with the ball played from the wrong place unless they've committed a serious breach. (R14.7b)

7) **DID THE PLAYER PLAY FROM OUTSIDE THE TEEING AREA OR FROM THE WRONG TEES?** Their opponent may immediately recall the stroke and require that the player play from within the correct teeing area. Otherwise, the ball is played as it lies without penalty. (R6.1b1)

In stroke play, the penalty is two strokes. The player must correct their mistake. (R6.1b2)

8) **DID THE PLAYER PLAY OUT OF TURN?** Their opponent may immediately recall the stroke and require that the player play in the proper order. Otherwise, the ball is played as it lies without penalty. (R6.4a2)

When done for the purpose of saving time, a player whose turn it is to play may invite their opponent to play first. The opponent is not obligated to accept the offer. (R6.4a2, Exc.)

☛ In match play, players may not agree in advance to play "ready golf." (R1.3b1)

In stroke play, "ready golf" is encouraged. (R6.4b2)

☛ In four-ball, partners may play in the order the side considers best. This means that when it is the player's turn to play either the player or their partner may play next. (R23.6)

9) **DID THE PLAYER DELIBERATELY LIFT, TOUCH, OR MOVE THEIR OPPONENT'S BALL WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION?** The opponent's ball must be replaced. **The player may get one penalty stroke.** (R9.5b)

In stroke play, there is no penalty for anyone. (R9.6)

10) **DID THE PLAYER'S BALL ACCIDENTALLY MOVE THEIR OPPONENT'S BALL?** The player must play their ball as it lies. The moved ball must be replaced. No penalty for either player anywhere on the course. (R9.6 & R11.1)

In stroke play, if both balls are on the putting green when this happens, there is a two-stroke penalty for the player whose ball moved the other ball. (R11.1a, Exc.)

11) **DID THE PLAYER BREACH A "RELIEF" RULE SUCH AS ONE OF THOSE ON LOOSE IMPEDIMENTS, MOVABLE OBSTRUCTIONS, ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITIONS, PENALTY AREAS, BALL LOST OR BALL OUT OF BOUNDS, OR BALL UNPLAYABLE?** Just as in stroke play, the player may get penalty strokes.

MATCH PLAY CONCESSIONS

12) **A PLAYER MAY CONCEDE THEIR OPPONENT'S NEXT STROKE, A HOLE OR THE MATCH AT ANY TIME.**

☛ Players may not agree to tie a hole until after at least one of them has started play of that hole. (R3.2a2)

☛ Players may not agree in advance to concede certain strokes, such as all putts "inside the leather." (*Only "next" strokes may be conceded.*) (R3.2b1)

☛ Players may not agree to concede holes to each other to deliberately shorten the match. (R3.2b1)

☛ A concession is final and cannot be declined or withdrawn. (R3.2b2)

MATCH PLAY PENALTIES

13) A one-stroke penalty that applies to the same Rules breaches or penalty relief situation penalties as in stroke play. (*See R23.9 for four-ball match play.*)

A loss of hole penalty that is the equivalent of the two-stroke general penalty in stroke play. (*See R23.9 for four-ball match play.*)

A two-stroke penalty that applies to R19.3b, Extra Relief Option, the fourth relief option for an unplayable ball in a bunker. (*And, maybe MLR E-5, Alternative to Stroke and Distance, if that's in effect.*)

A match adjustment penalty for a breach of the Rule 4.1b, Limit of 14 Clubs.

A disqualification penalty that applies to many of the same Rules breaches as in stroke play.

A REFEREE'S DUTIES AND AUTHORITY DEPEND ON THE REFEREE'S DESIGNATED ROLE

14) **FOR THE REFEREE DESIGNATED TO MONITOR MULTIPLE MATCHES OR CERTAIN HOLES OR SECTIONS OF THE COURSE:** The roving referee has only limited authority to intervene in play and should avoid becoming involved in a match unless:

- 1) A player asks for help with the Rules or asks for a ruling, or
- 2) A player may be in breach of a Code of Conduct provision, or
- 3) A player or players may be in breach of Rule 1.3b, Players Agreeing to Ignore a Rule or Penalty, or
- 4) A player may be in breach of Rule 5.6, Unreasonable Delay of Play, Prompt Pace of Play, or
- 5) A player arrives late to the tee for their starting time, or
- 6) A player's search for a ball reaches three minutes.

The roving referee who sees a player about to breach a Rule should not intervene. And, if a player does breach the Rule, a roving referee should not try to apply a penalty unless the opponent requests a ruling. (Definition of Referee)

15) **FOR THE REFEREE ASSIGNED TO ONE MATCH:**

The assigned referee will be with the match to its conclusion and is responsible for acting on any breach of the Rules that they see or are told about. (Definition of Referee)

While an assigned referee is not obliged to warn a player who is about to breach a Rule, it is recommended that they should do so whenever possible. (Committee Procedures, 6C3)

Three suggestions for the assigned referee:

- 1) Keep a scorecard and take notes.
- 2) When giving a ruling, invite the opponent to listen in.
- 3) At each hole, when the match reaches the green you should stand near the green so that you can hear any concessions, confirm the hole scores and the state-of-the-match with the players. You will also be in position to make a result-of-the-hole and state-of-the-match announcement to the spectators.

16) **FOR THE REFEREE DESIGNATED AS AN "OBSERVER":**

The observer works with an assigned referee. Generally they should position themselves ahead of the players in a location near where balls might be expected to come to rest.

The observer should notify the referee if a Rules breach is observed, but should not make rulings or provide Rules advice to players.

17) **BALL SEARCHES** Referees and observers should time any ball searches that they come upon.

And, unless an opponent objects, referees and observers should assist with any search.