



# Game, General Rules, Exceptions, and Updates

Last Update: Feb 13, 2025

From "Those Bothersome Rules of Golf," a Bill Pennington column in the NY Times

"The rules of golf are endlessly confusing and sometimes downright unfair. And those are some of the nicest things golfers say about the rules. // But it is a sport played on countless different outdoor golf courses around the world, under changeable weather conditions, and so over the decades the game's leadership has painstakingly devised rules meant to keep the playing field equitable to all, especially in a competition."

## General Rules

- **1 ball off first tee! Play it down! Putt it out!**
- \$25 buy-in (unless otherwise noted).
- No maximum score; if your ball counts, finish the hole.
- Skins are NET and require a NET PAR to confirm; a skin on Hole 18 requires that the player scored a net par (or better) on Hole 1. If you think you may have made a skin, be sure to putt out on the following hole; otherwise (cue the refrain), "Awwwww."
- POST YOUR SCORES. ALL OF THEM. Failure to post may result in your exclusion from future solicitations for players, or, worse, handicap adjustments from the Secret Handicap Committee (SHC).
- Players are expected to keep pace. Our target is to beat 4:00. Slow players may be punished with awkward (or no) team pairings in future games, not to mention the disdain they will undoubtedly suffer in the bar afterwards from everyone playing in their group's wake.

## Typical Game

\$25 entry for all players

Low 2 net balls in foursome EXCEPT designated holes where 3 balls may be required

Exception holes score total will serve to break any ties

Net skins, requiring net par on next hole to confirm; skin on Hole 18 requires a net par on Hole 1

[USGA Rules](#) apply, including 14-club limit.

[USGA Rules](#) // [Rules Clarifications](#) // [Rules FAQs](#)

## Special rules and notes

- \* No maximum score for the 2 balls that count; at least two players must complete each hole.
- \* If it counts, putt 'em out; no gimmies if your score is one of those that counts; no exceptions.
- \* Handicaps will be collected and assigned on day of play and indicated on scorecards.
- \* Please correct me as soon as possible if preferred tee marker is incorrect for your game.
- \* Scorekeeper is responsible for collecting entry \$ and delivering card to bar after round.
- \* Side games — either within or outside your group ... or both — encouraged.
- \* If you find you can't make it, please let me know as soon as possible so I can search for a substitute.
- \* No [OWGR](#) points for LIV players.

**Drop Areas.** As usual, on Holes 4 and 13. On Hole 17, however, I suggest you take advantage of the drop area just the other side of the pond, whether your ball cleared the pond or not. In other words, if you do as I often have

your ball cleared the pond or not. In other words, if you do as I often have and dribble the ball off the tee into the pond, you may take your penalty and relief in the designated drop area.

**Immovable Obstruction, Green-side:** What is generally known as the “2-and-2” is in effect as a local rule. If your ball is within two club lengths of a sprinkler head or other maintenance contraption and said head is within two club lengths of the putting surface, and your intended line and trajectory of play are obstructed by said head or contraption, you are entitled to full relief plus up to one club length, no closer to the hole. It is not required that your ball be dropped “in the same condition,” and its original position must be in [the general area and in grass of fairway length or less](#). **For example, you may drop a ball resting in the fairway onto the fringe (but not on the green) as long as your dropped ball is no closer to the hole.** For more, [watch the video](#).

**Stroke and Distance:** When a player’s ball cannot be found or is known or virtually certain to be lost or out of bounds, the player may proceed as follows rather than proceeding under stroke and distance: For two penalty strokes, the player may take relief by dropping the original ball or a substituted ball in the relief area (see Rule 14.3). Determining factors: (1) Ball reference point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest on the course, or where it last crossed the edge of the course boundary to go out of bounds; (2) Fairway reference point: The point of fairway of the hole being played that is nearest to the ball reference point, but no nearer the hole. This option may not be used if the ball is known or virtually certain to have come to rest in a penalty area, or if the player has already played a provisional ball under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 18.3). [Watch video](#).

**THERE IS NO “ROOT RULE.”** (There is no “LEAF RULE” either.) Play a dangerous root either (a) as an [unplayable lie](#) or (b) as it lies (good luck with this option).

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“Golf was for Updike what chess was for Nabokov: a recreation but also a restorative; a discipline but also a drug; a muse and a mistress; a personal quest for simplicity, self-mastery, perfection, and grace.” — Christopher Carduff in his Foreword for [Higher Gossip](#), Updike’s final collection of essays and criticism (2011).



You’ll be changing **your golf balls by 2030**. Apparently, we “recreational golfers” are hitting it too far: “The longest hitters will lose 13-15 yards, the USGA said, while LPGA players may [lose] 5-7 yards. The average recreational golfer will lose less than 3-5 yards, according to the USGA.” (From [The Athletic](#).)

[Jimmy] Dunne became emotional discussing golf as a force of good, an

idea that had always led to much eye-rolling whenever Greg Norman

brought it up. 'Golf is very important to me,' Dunne said. 'It's been a very important part of my life. Anything I can do to unite the game, get some of these issues behind us, and to bring golf to every corner of the world, I think the world will be a better place. I don't mean to be that idealistic about it, but I do believe it's hard to dislike people that you play golf with. The more we can share experiences, the more we can get to know each other, the more we can improve our whole world.'" (From LIV and Let Die, by Alan Shipnuck, p. 324)

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