

The United States Golf Association (USGA) and Royal and Ancient (R&A) have made changes to the Rules of Golf, beginning Jan. 1, 2019. The information below is taken from the USGA and provided for your information.

While the majority of Rules remain intact, important changes have been made.

- Dropping procedure: When taking relief (from an abnormal course condition or penalty area), golfers will now drop from knee height. This will ensure consistency and simplicity in the dropping process while also preserving the randomness of the drop. Rule 14.3
- Measuring in taking relief: The golfer's relief area will be measured by using the longest club in his/her bag (other than a putter) to measure one club-length or two club-lengths, depending on the situation, providing a consistent process for golfers to establish his/her relief area. Def. of club length
- Removing the penalty for a double-hit: The penalty stroke for accidentally striking the ball more than once in the course of a stroke has been removed. Golfers will simply count the one stroke they made in making the hit. Rule 10.1
- Balls Lost or Out of Bounds: Alternative to Stroke and Distance: A new local rule will be available permitting committees to allow golfer the option to drop a ball in the vicinity of where the ball is lost or out of bounds (including the nearest fairway area), under a two-stroke penalty. It addresses concerns raised about the pace of play. Rule 18.
- Moving or touching loose impediments: A player may now remove loose impediments in a bunker. There are still restrictions on touching sand in a bunker. See rule 12
- Penalty areas: The term "water hazard" is superseded by the term penalty area. Rule 17
- Search time: Only three minutes are allowed to search for a lost ball. Def. of Lost.
- Putting greens: You may repair damage to the green including spike marks. The flagstick may be left in the cup during a stroke made on the putting green. Rule 13.1 and 13.2

Note the "Balls Lost or Out of Bounds" section above. The Rules updates have specific guidelines under "Committee Procedures", "Model Local Rules", 8E, under E-5, "Alternative to Stroke and Distance for Lost Ball or Ball out of Bounds." Here's the link to the USGA site outlining the recommended procedures for consideration of this local rule:

<http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules/rules-2019/rules-of-golf/rules-and-interpretations.html#!ruletype=cp&section=rule&rulenum=8&subrulenum=5>

For those of you interested in a more in depth knowledge of the rules, visit:

<https://ncga.org/rules/rules-education/>

<http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/education.html>

<http://www.usga.org/RulesFAQ/rules2019.asp>