

Bayside Institute: Rules of Golf with Bob Crowther

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If you golf, you are a golfer. Remember, you can exhaust yourself but not the subject.

The basic premise of golf is to get the ball in the hole in as few strokes as possible.

As a beginner, it is okay to not play by all of the rules as it can be overwhelming. Just know you are not able to post these scores for your handicap.

The first Rules of Golf were established in 1744. Although it is speculated golf originated in Scotland, it is debated if this is actually true.

Match Play vs. Stroke Play

Match play – you play your opponent hole by hole. Each hole of the stipulated round is won by a golfer, and the round is determined by who wins the most holes of the round. Original rules were formed around match play. Thought to be the purest form of golf. Better (and more fun) to play this way when first learning to golf.

In match play, the hole can be conceded.

Stroke play – based off of your entire stipulated round and how many total strokes were taken to play the complete round.

In stroke play, the hole cannot be conceded and each golfer's ball has to fall to the bottom of the hole.

USGA vs. The RA

USGA is the United States governing body of golf – United State Golf Association

The R&A is the worldwide governing body of golf

Together, The R&A and USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, and Equipment Standards. The rules of golf are ever changing.

Handicap

The handicap allocation does not always coincide with difficulty.

For example, if your handicap is 18, you receive one stroke handicap on each hole. However, if your handicap is over 18, you receive one stroke per hole plus an additional stroke on the first allocated hole, then the second allocated hole, and so on.

If your handicap is 9, you receive a stroke on handicap allocated holes 1-9.

Ladies handicap hole allocations are different than men's handicaps hole allocations

Handicap season is run by each states governing body of golf. Bayside's is the Delaware State Golf Association. **The active golf season in which you are required to post your scores for handicap calculation runs from April 1st through November 14th.**

Local Rules

The back of your score card always features local rules – play by those!

For example, Bayside's 16th hole is an environmentally friendly area. The stakes are tipped in green to indicate this.

An Unplayable Lie

The player may declare his ball unplayable. Where can an unplayable lie occur? Any place on the golf course, but it costs you a penalty stroke.

Where can an unplayable lie not occur? On the teeing ground, putting green, and in water hazards.

Immoveable vs. Moveable – If it is not fixed or growing, and you can move it yourself, it is considered moveable.

Immoveable obstructions include cart path, grandstand, etc.

Moveable obstructions include stones in the bunker, 150 yard marker, etc.

If your ball is behind a manmade object, such as a utility box, etc., you may only take relief if it interferes with your swing or your stance. If it interferes with the flight path of the ball, you are welcome to take relief at a penalty.

Cart Path

A ball on the cart path offers free relief.

Before you pick your ball up, know what you are going to do. This goes for a ball on the cart path, or any other time you are picking your ball up to move it.

What to do -

Determine where the nearest point of relief is. This may not always be the most obvious point. In determining this, keep in mind that you must be free and clear of the path, your feet cannot be on the path or you may play it where it lies.

Red Stakes, Yellow Stakes, White Stakes

Red stakes determine a lateral water hazard

Yellow stakes determine a water hazard

White stakes mark boundaries of play – out of bounds. If your ball goes in to this area, you must go back to where you took your last stroke, and hit again. If you hit your ball, and you think it may have gone out of bounds, you can hit a provisional ball. A "provisional ball," often shortened just to "provisional," is a second golf ball played by a golfer who believes his first ball (the stroke he just played) may be lost (but not in a water hazard) or out of bounds.

If your ball is in a RED staked off area (hazard), you can:

- Hit it, if you can find it

- Pick your ball up and go to the last place it crossed over the red hazard line, and take two club lengths to drop your ball for a new lie.
- Go back to where you just hit your ball from and try again.
- You do incur a penalty when you take your ball out of a hazard.

The total amount of time allowed to search for a lost ball is 5 minutes, however, a 3 minute time-cap has been proposed.

Course Care

Good rule of thumb is to fix your ball marks plus one or two others.

Whether to fill the divot or replace the divot depends on a few factors including season and current environmental conditions.

For more information on course care, visit <http://www.usga.org/course-care.html>