

## **RULES OF GOLF**

As with every other sport, there are rules in the game of golf. A big difference with golf is that in principle you are your own referee. Together with your playing partners you are required to make decisions about applying the rules in the correct manner. Every player is therefore expected to be familiar with the rules of golf. In order for you to get an active handicap 54, (used to be called GVB), you need to pass your theory exam. In this document we attempt to explain the most occurring rules in a few pages, so that you can go to the course prepared.

## **GAMES IN GOLF**

**Strokeplay:** This game is predominantly played by the better golfers and professionals in tournaments. In Strokeplay every stroke that you make counts, and you play against all other participants in the competition. This implies that you are always required to hit your golf ball, and you are never allowed to pick up your ball prior to getting the ball in the hole. If you pick up your ball during a hole and don't replace it, the consequence is disqualification. In other words: you are never able to stop the hole prior to getting the ball into the hole.

**Matchplay:** With Matchplay you play against one person, and you either win/ lose or tie the hole against your opponent. This implies that you do not necessarily need to get the ball into the hole to finish the hole. You can also decide to forfeit/concede the hole to your opponent. The player that has won the most holes after 18 holes is the winner. The match can be over prior to reaching the full 18 holes. If you have won 4 more holes than your opponent and you only have three holes left to play, you win by 4 and 3.

**Stableford:** The most played game in golf. Every net par, in which your handicap is included, accounts for two points. If you finish the hole a stroke better than your net par, you receive an additional point (=3) and for every stroke worse than your net par you receive 1 point less. It's not possible to have negative points. This means that you can pick up your ball in stableford when you are already at the stroke that gives you zero points. The player that has the most points after playing 18 holes is the winner of the competition. This game is

invented to allow players of various levels to compete in the same competition. Every player plays against their own handicap and the one that does this the best wins the competition.

### **PLAY THE BALL AS IT LIES**

In the game of golf you are always required to play the ball as it lies. If you pick up the ball (for example to clean it) you will receive a penalty stroke. With the exception of the green, where you are always allowed to pick up your ball after marking the position, and clean it. Marking the position of the ball can be done with a coin or something similar. The only situation in which you are allowed to pick up your ball on any other surface than the green is when your ball is in the way of another ball. Then you are always allowed to mark your ball and pick it up, but please note: in this case you are also not allowed to clean your ball.

### **LOOSE OBJECTS ON THE GOLF COURSE**

On the golf course you are allowed to remove any loose objects, as long as you are not moving the ball when you pick up/ clean the loose objects. The only exception in this case is sand, which you are not allowed remove. The only surface on the golf course where you actually are allowed to remove sand is on the green.

If you put your club on the ground, it is called “grounding” the club. This is allowed on all different surfaces on the golf course except for the bunker. When you ground your club in the sand, you may improve the lie of the ball and is therefore forbidden in the bunker.

### **1 PENALTY STROKE**

Unfortunately, we have penalty strokes in the game of golf. This can either be 1 or 2 penalty strokes, dependent on the severity of breaking the rules. The most common cause for receiving 1 penalty stroke is the fact that you want to “buy out” your ball, and put your ball back into play. Some examples of this are:

- If you hit your ball out of bounds (the outside edges of the hole, marked with a **white** pole)

- If you hit your ball into a penalty area, and are unable to play the ball (marked red or yellow)
- If you unlawfully move your ball but replace it to its original spot. (there is no penalty: on the green, on the tee, while searching)
- If you want to declare your ball unplayable (for example: when your ball lies against a tree)
- If you have searched for your ball (for 3 minutes= maximum search time) and could not find it.

## 2 PENALTY STROKES

If you (un)intentionally break the rules of golf, you will receive a 2 stroke penalty. Some examples of this are as follows:

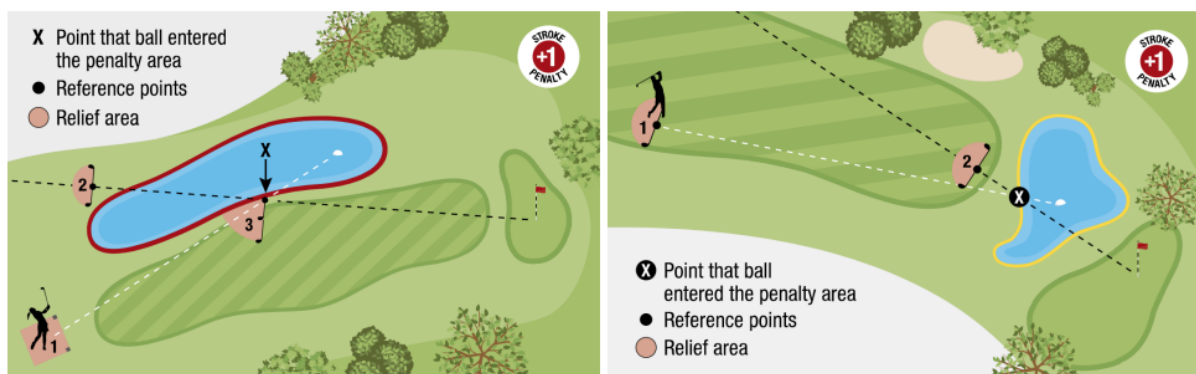
- If you ask any person for advice during a round (or give)
- If you play with more than the allowed 14 clubs in your golf bag
- If you (un)intentionally move your ball and fail to replace the ball prior to hitting it

In some more extreme cases, you can also be disqualified during a round of golf. This will happen when:

- You fill in and enter your scorecard with a lower score than you did.
- If you fail to finish a hole in Strokeplay and already started the next hole. Please note: the punishment for picking up your ball in Strokeplay is 1 penalty stroke, but if you hit a ball on the next hole without correcting your earlier mistake, you are disqualified.

## PENALTY AREAS

Unfortunately, everyone hits a ball into the penalty area (marked either red or yellow) every now and then. The penalty associated with hitting a ball into the penalty area is one penalty stroke. Also, we are required to bring a new ball back into play. The exact procedure of how to put your ball back into play is visualized below:



As is shown in the diagram above, there are always two options when you decide not to play the ball as it lies but instead you have to take relief.

- Stroke-and-distance relief. If a ball is lost or out of bounds, the player must take stroke-and-distance relief by adding one penalty stroke and playing the original ball or another ball from where the previous stroke was made.
- Take a straight line from the flag from the point of entry in the penalty area and take relief on this line. How far you want to go back on this exact line is for you to decide.

With a red penalty area, we have an additional option:

- Take relief sideways from the point of entry, never closer to the hole.

## DECLARING YOUR BALL UNPLAYABLE

In golf you are allowed to declare your ball unplayable. This is always an option, except for when the ball is out of bounds or in a penalty area. When would you declare your ball to be unplayable? For example, when your ball lies against a tree, and you are not able to hit the ball. The same three options described above for taking relief in a penalty area, are also applicable when you declare your ball unplayable.

## OUT OF BOUNDS/ LOST BALL

If you hit your ball out of bounds, there is, unfortunately, only one option. That is to take stroke-and-distance relief. The penalty for hitting the ball out of bounds is always 1 penalty stroke. You are allowed to search for your ball for three minutes, which is a “hard limit”. If you ever find yourself in the situation that you have searched for three minutes, and in the walk back to the previous position you still find your ball, it unfortunately is still considered lost.

Sometimes, however, you might not be sure whether you can find your ball or whether it is just out of bounds. In this case you are allowed to hit a “provisional” ball. The following situations can happen:

- You find your first ball within 3 minutes (all the shots that you have done with your provisional are voided, and do not count anymore). You can continue with your first ball.
- You do not find your first ball within 3 minutes (all the shots that you have done with your provisional count + the additional penalty stroke is added).

## HOW TO TAKE RELIEF

You can bring a new ball into play by dropping the ball. This is done from knee height into the dropping zone. Do you get one penalty stroke? Then the dropping zone is 2 club lengths, never closer to the hole. Did you get a free drop, then the dropping zone is 1 club length. The ball is required to fall and stay on the ground within the dropping zone, as is shown in the diagram below..

