



Outcome Changes: 2019 Rules to 2023 Rules Comparison

This chart summarizes the substantive changes between the 2019 and 2023 Rules of Golf. While this document provides more detail than the principal changes noted in the front of both the Rules of Golf and Official Guide to the Rules of Golf, it does not detail every minor change that has been made. This chart does not detail points that were covered by the 2019 – 2022 Clarifications document as many of those points have been incorporated into the applicable Rule without the outcome changing.

Rules Reference	Topic	2019 Outcome	2023 Outcome	Additional Notes
1.3b(2)	Determining the area of the course where the ball lies, including whether the ball lies on the course. Determining whether the ball touches or is in or on an abnormal course condition	Unclear when "reasonable judgment" should be applied to these determinations.	"Reasonable judgment" applies when determining the area of the course where the ball lies, if it lies in or out of bounds, or if it touches or is in or on an abnormal course condition.	
1.3c(4)	A player breaches different Rules or the same Rule multiple times	While there are exceptions, a player gets multiple penalties if the breaches are unrelated. If the breaches are related, the player gets multiple penalties only when there has been an intervening event.	Committees no longer have to determine whether acts are related or unrelated. Intervening events are used to determine whether a player gets multiple penalties. There are only two intervening events: completion of a stroke and awareness of a breach..	Recommend reading the Rule and associated Clarifications in detail to understand the revised Rule.



Rules Reference	Topic	2019 Outcome	2023 Outcome	Additional Notes
C. 3.2c(1)/2	Meaning of “Handicap” a player is responsible for when declared to opponent	If a player tells the opponent the wrong (course) handicap before or during the match and does not correct the mistake before the opponent makes his or her next stroke, if the declared handicap is too high, the player is disqualified.	If a player gives the opponent incorrect information in relation to their handicap and this results in the player giving too few or getting too many strokes, the player is disqualified under Rule 3.2c(1).	Rule has been revised to be more accurately reflect handicap-related conversations during a match.
3.3b(1)	Player has more than one marker during the round	Each marker must certify the holes where they were the marker.	No requirement for multiple markers to certify the hole scores on the scorecard if the one marker sees the player play all of the holes.	
3.3b(4)	Requirements around showing handicap on scorecard	Player responsible for ensuring their handicap is on their returned scorecard as well as its accuracy.	Player not responsible for showing handicap on their returned scorecard (committee responsible for calculating the player's handicap strokes for the competition and using that handicap to calculate the player's net score).	MLR L-2 can be used to put responsibility back on the player.
4.1a(2)	Conforming club damaged during a round or while play is stopped (under Rule 5.7a)	A player normally must not replace a club damaged during a round (or while play is stopped) except in limited cases.	Except in cases of abuse, the player may repair or replace any damaged club with another club.	MLR G-9 may be used to limit when a damaged club may be replaced.

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4.1a(3)	Player starts round with non-permissible external attachment on club (such as a sticker on the clubface)	Player not allowed to use the club to make a stroke, even if external attachment is removed before use. Penalty - player disqualified if club used to make a stroke.	Player allowed to remove the external attachment before club is used to make a stroke without penalty. Penalty - no penalty if external attachment is removed before club used to make a stroke, player disqualified if club used to make a stroke with external attachment still attached.	
4.1b(4)	Building a club from parts being carried	Player must not build a club from parts being carried by or for them, but may build a club from parts being carried for someone else.	Player must not build a club from parts being carried by anyone on the course, regardless of who they are being carried for.	
C. 4.3a/1	Limitations on using green-reading material	The limitations apply to strokes made on the putting green and strokes made from off the green with a putter when the player is attempting to get the ball on the green.	The limitations apply only to strokes made on the putting green.	
5.2 & C. 5.2/1	Practice on course or holes not being used for competition allowed	Unclear if a player playing on one course at a venue would be considered to be 'practicing' in breach of Rule 5.2b when they are due to play on another course at the same venue (i.e. within the same boundary) later in the day.	There is no penalty for a player practicing on holes not being used for any rounds of the competition to be played on that day.	
6.3b	Player makes a stroke at an incorrectly substituted ball	Penalty - General Penalty	Penalty – One-stroke penalty	



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6.4b(1)	Player plays out of turn in stroke play to give another player an advantage	If two or more players agree to play out of turn to give one of them an advantage, each of them gets the general penalty.	If two or more players agree to play out of turn to give one of them an advantage and one of them plays out of turn with the agreement in place, each of them gets the general penalty.	Disqualification still applies under Rule 1.3 if players are aware this agreement is not allowed.
8.1d(2)	A referee worsens a player's conditions affecting the stroke	Unclear whether a player is allowed to restore worsened conditions when those conditions have been worsened by a referee during a ruling.	Conditions affecting the stroke that have been worsened by a referee may be restored as allowed by Rule 8.1d(1).	
9.3	Ball at rest moved by natural forces	If a ball at rest is moved by natural forces (except after being replaced on the putting green), the ball is to be played from where it comes to rest.	If a ball at rest is moved by natural forces after being dropped, placed or replaced and comes to rest in a different area of the course or out of bounds, the ball must be replaced and played from its original spot. A ball on the putting green must still be replaced if moved after being replaced.	
10.2b(1) & (2)	Getting help with line of play	Other than on putting green, player is allowed to set object down to show the line of play so long as object is removed before making the stroke.	Regardless of area of the course, a player is not allowed to set an object down to show the line of play.	
10.2b(3)	Setting object down to help with taking stance	Player must not take a stance for the stroke with an object set down.	Regardless of area of the course, a player is not allowed to set an object down to show the line of play or to help with taking stance.	

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10.2b(4)	Caddie standing behind player once they start to take their stance	Three Clarifications were released in 2019 to explain and limit the operation of the Rule.	<p>The Rule has been re-written to incorporate the relevant 2019 Clarifications and provide two outcomes depending on whether the caddie is standing behind the player to (1) help with aiming, or (2) help with something other than aiming.</p> <p>The area in which the caddie must not stand behind the player to help them has been given a term (the “restricted area”).</p> <p>The Rule now allows for someone other than the player's caddie (or partner) to stand in the restricted area to track the flight of their ball.</p>	
C. 10.2b/1	Using Self-Standing Putter for Alignment Help	Player allowed to set a self-standing putter down in a standing position right behind or right next to the ball and either leave it there or realign it to show the line of play or to help take the stance.	A player (or their caddie) is not allowed to set a self-standing putter down to get help in any way that would breach Rule 10.2b.	

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11.1b(2)	When ball played from putting green hits something on putting green	The player's stroke does not count if the ball in motion hit any person, animal or movable obstruction on the putting green. Model Local Rule D-7 was introduced to limit the instances when the stroke does not count.	<p>If the player does not replay the stroke when required to do so under this Rule, they get the general penalty and the stroke counts, but the player has not played from a wrong place.</p> <p>If a ball played from the putting green hits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the player, • the club the player used to make the stroke, or • a worm, an insect or a similar animal <p>the stroke counts and the ball is played as it lies. This change brings the concepts from Model Local Rule D-7 into the Rules.</p>	
11.2c(2)	Player fails to replay stroke made from putting green when required to do so	If the player fails to replay their stroke after their stroke did not count, they have played from a wrong place.	If the player fails to replay the stroke when required to do so, they get the general penalty and the stroke counts but the player has not played from a wrong place.	
14.1c	Cleaning ball	Unclear if cleaning a ball that is not lifted results in a penalty and under what Rule.	Cleaning a ball that is not lifted results in a one-stroke penalty.	
14.2d	Re-creating altered lie in sand	Player has played from a wrong place if they fail to re-create their original lie.	If player plays from the right place but fails to re-create their original lie, they get the general penalty.	

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14.3b	Back-on-the-line relief	While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player may drop the ball one club-length away from the line and if the ball rolls forward of the reference point the ball must be dropped a second time. Model Local Rule E-12 allowed the ball to be played from forward of the reference point.	While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player must drop the ball on the line and the ball must come to rest within one club-length in any direction of where it first touched the line.	
14.7	Reporting to the committee after trying to fix a serious breach of playing from a wrong place	If a player tries to play from a right place to fix their mistake, they must report to the committee before returning their scorecard. If not, they are disqualified.	A player must report to the committee only when they have played two balls to fix their mistake.	
16.1c(2)	Back-on-the-line relief	While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player may drop the ball one club-length away from the line and if the ball rolls forward of the reference point the ball must be dropped a second time. Model Local Rule E-12 allowed the ball to be played from forward of the reference point.	While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player must drop the ball on the line and the ball must come to rest within one club-length in any direction of where it first touched the line.	



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16.3b & C. 16.3b/1	Embedded ball relief	There is no requirement for the reference point to be in the general area. In some situations, relief is not available if no part of the relief area is in the general area.	The reference point must be in the general area. If the spot right behind the ball is not in the general area, the player must find the nearest spot (no closer to the hole) in the general area and use that as the reference point - see Clarification 16.3b/1.	
17.1d(2)	Back-on-the-line relief	While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player may drop the ball one club-length away from the line and if the ball rolls forward of the reference point the ball must be dropped a second time. Model Local Rule E-12 allowed the ball to be played from forward of the reference point.	While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player must drop the ball on the line and the ball must come to rest within one club-length in any direction of where it first touched the line.	
18.2a(1) & C. 18.2a(1)/3	Meaning of “reasonable time” when identifying a ball found within search time	A player is allowed a reasonable time to identify a ball after the search time expires so long as it was found within the search time. What is considered "reasonable" is up to each committee.	A new Clarification has been added to clarify that one minute is the most time a player should be given by the committee to identify a found ball when it is found toward the end of the search time.	



Rules Reference	Topic	2019 Outcome	2023 Outcome	Additional Notes
20.2d(2)	Wrong handicap on scorecard results in the wrong player winning the competition	Player is responsible for the correct handicap on the scorecard. If the handicap was too high, the player would be disqualified from the handicap competition, if the handicap was too low, that handicap is used to calculate the player's net score.	As per Rule 3.3b(4), the committee is responsible for calculating the player's handicap strokes for the competition and using it to calculate the player's net score. If the committee miscalculates either, this is an administrative mistake and there is no time limit for correcting the player's net score and the result of the competition.	
21.1c	Penalties in Stableford	If a player breaches any of the three Exceptions, they get points deducted from their total points.	All penalties are applied as they are in regular stroke play, except for the five times a player gets zero points on the hole instead of being disqualified. That means the penalty may not impact on the player's score (for example if the player would have scored 0 on the hole before they got the penalty).	
21.3c	Penalties in Par/Bogey	If a player breaches any of the three Exceptions, they get holes deducted from their total holes won.	All penalties are applied as they are in regular stroke play, except for the five times a player loses the hole instead of being disqualified. That means the penalty may not impact on the player's score (for example if the player would have "lost" the hole before they got the penalty).	



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22.1	Requirements around showing handicap on scorecard	Players responsible for ensuring their individual handicaps are on their returned scorecard.	Players not responsible for showing handicaps on their returned scorecard (committee responsible for calculating the players' handicap strokes for the competition and using that handicap to calculate the players' net score).	MLR L-2 can be used to put responsibility back on the players.
22.6	Standing behind partner	A player is in breach of Rule 10.2b(4) if their partner stands behind them once they start to take their stance for the stroke unless the player takes the stance again. In Foursomes, the penalty will therefore apply to the side.	New Rule 22.6 prohibits a partner from standing behind the player to gain information for the side's next stroke and if the partner does so, the side gets the general penalty. This is in addition to the limitations in Rule 10.2b(4) on the player.	
23.2b(1)	Requirements around showing handicap on scorecard	Players responsible for ensuring their individual handicaps are on their returned scorecard.	Players not responsible for showing handicaps on their returned scorecard (committee responsible for calculating the players' handicap strokes for the competition and using that handicap to calculate the players' net score).	MLR L-2 can be used to put responsibility back on the players.



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23.8	Standing behind partner	<p>If a player in Four-Ball breaches Rule 10.2b(4) due to the positioning of their partner behind them, the player gets the general penalty under Rule 10.2b(4).</p> <p>The partner gets no penalty unless the breach helped them.</p>	<p>New Rule 23.8 prohibits a partner from standing behind the player to gain information for their own next stroke and if the partner does so, the partner gets the general penalty</p> <p>This is in addition to the limitations in Rule 10.2b(4) on the player.</p>	
24.4b	Restrictions on giving help for advice givers	The player does not automatically get a penalty under Rule 10.2b(4) for their advice giver standing behind them once they start to take the stance for the stroke.	The player's advice giver is held to the same standards for applying Rule 10.2b(4) that their caddie, partner and partner's caddie are.	
25	General - Modifications for players with disabilities	The modifications are treated as local rules and are not in effect unless put into effect by a committee who may choose which of the modifications to put into effect.	The modifications have the same status as any other Rule and are in effect for all competitions.	
25.2c	Rule 10.2b(3) for visually impaired players	A visually impaired player must not take a stance for the stroke in relation to an object they set on the ground.	A visually impaired player may set an object on the ground to help with taking a stance, but the object must be removed before making the stroke.	
25.4k	Status of assistive mobility device in relation to Rule 11.1b	Unless clarified by a committee, the player's stroke does not count if their ball played from the putting green accidentally hits their assistive mobility device.	If a ball played from the putting green accidentally hits their assistive mobility device, the ball must be played as it lies.	



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MLR E-11	Local Rule: Ball deflected by power line	A player's stroke does not count if the ball is deflected by a power line. If the player does not replay the stroke, they have played from a wrong place but the stroke does not count.	A player must replay their stroke if it is deflected by a power line. If they do not, the stroke counts and they get the general penalty but have not played from a wrong place.	
MLR E-12	Local Rule: Permitting the use of mats on parts of the general area cut to fairway height or less	This Local Rule was available on request.	This Local Rule is now included in the Model Local Rules in the Official Guide for completeness.	
MLF F-5	Local Rule: Restricting the use of MLR F-5 to situations where both the ball and the obstruction are in part of the general area cut to fairway height or less	This option is within the principles of the Model Local Rule and is used by several Tours and National Associations.	This Local Rule is now included in the Model Local Rules in the Official Guide for completeness.	
MLF F-22	Local Rule: Ball hits temporary elevated line or cable	A player's stroke does not count if it is known or virtually certain that it hits a temporary elevated line or cable. If the player does not replay the stroke, they have played from a wrong place but the stroke does not count.	A player must replay their stroke if it is known or virtually certain that it hits a temporary elevated line or cable. If they do not, the stroke counts and they get the general penalty but have not played from a wrong place.	

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MLR F-23	Local Rule: Temporary immovable obstructions (TIOs)	A committee can allow players to take relief from interference by TIOs on the either side of the TIO rather than limiting relief to the nearest side. But when taking relief on the other side for physical interference using the procedures in Rule 16.1, the committee must determine what is the other side or the committee can limit relief so that relief on the other side is not available when using the procedures in Rule 16.1.	A committee can allow players to take relief from interference by TIOs on either side of the TIO. But this additional option does not apply when a player takes relief using the procedures in Rule 16.1.	
MLR F-24	Local Rule: Relief from immovable obstructions in penalty areas	When a player's ball is in a penalty area, they are not allowed to take relief from immovable obstructions.	A committee can allow players relief from immovable obstructions when their ball is in a penalty area. They should specify which obstructions relief is allowed from, rather than allowing relief from all obstructions.	
MLR F-25	Local Rule: Player has interference from abnormal course condition such as a narrow fence or wall where the nearest point of complete relief may be on the other side of the abnormal course condition	No Model Local Rule detailed, though such a Local Rule is allowed.	Local Rule available to state that the nearest point of complete relief must be determined without crossing over, through or under the abnormal course condition.	



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MLR F-26	Local Rule: Gates in boundary fences and walls	Gates in boundary fences and walls are not part of the boundary object and are obstructions unless the committee defines them to be integral. But even when integral, if the gate is movable, it is treated as a movable obstruction.	A committee can treat closed gates as part of the boundary object, not allowing them to be moved when in such position. If a gate is open, it is treated as a movable obstruction and may be moved.	
MLR G-4	Local Rule: One ball Rule	Penalty – General Penalty	Penalty – One-stroke penalty	
MLR G-9	Local Rule: Restricting when a broken or significantly damaged club may be replaced	Rule 4.1a(2) states that a player normally must not replace a club damaged during a round (or while play is stopped) except in limited cases. MLR G-9 allows a player to replace a club that has been broken or significantly damaged by the player or caddie except in cases of abuse.	<p>Rule 4.1a(2) states that except in cases of abuse, the player may repair the club or replace it with another club.</p> <p>MLR G-9 limits replacement to cases where the club is broken or significantly damaged, which does not include a club that is cracked.</p>	The outcome of introducing MLR G-9 under the 2023 Rules is the same as when it was introduced under the 2019 Rules.
MLR G-12	Local Rule: Prohibiting use of written, printed, electronic or digital materials	Unless MLR G-11 is in effect, players may use any written, printed, electronic or digital materials so long as it meets the size, scale and other requirements of Interpretation 4.3a/1 when the limitations apply.	A committee can prohibit players from using any written, printed, electronic or digital materials to help read their line of play on the putting green.	
MLR I-2	Local Rule: Prohibiting practice on or near previous putting green	A committee cannot prohibit practice on practice putting greens.	A committee may prohibit practice on practice putting greens.	



Rules Reference	Topic	2019 Outcome	2023 Outcome	Additional Notes
MLR K-2	Local Rule: Bad times in multiple-round stroke-play competitions	No permission detailed in Model Local Rule to carry bad times throughout the competition, though this would be allowed.	Bad times may carry throughout the stroke-play competition.	
MLR L-1	Local Rule: Modification of penalty under Rule 3.3b(2) when scorecard missing player or marker certification	If a player returns their scorecard without their certification or their marker's certification, they are disqualified.	A committee can modify the disqualification penalty to two penalty strokes in the event it is returned without the player or marker certification.	
MLR L-2	Local Rule: Making player responsible for handicap on scorecard	See Rule 3.3b(4) above.	Rule 3.3b(4) states that there is no requirement for a player's handicap to be shown on the scorecard. However, a committee can put this responsibility back on the player.	
MLR M-3	Local Rule: Committee determines that there is clear evidence that a player's ability to putt is significantly and negatively impacted by ataxia or athetosis, and the player holds a WR4GD pass or EDGA Access pass	Unpublished position that in the limited circumstances detailed, the player is exempt from penalty under Rule 10.1b (Anchoring the Club).	Now published in the Official Guide.	