

# The Doctor is in...

*Thoughts from Tournament Director,  
Max Doctoroff, PGA*



## Updating Local Rules for 2019:

Hello NEPGA Professionals, I hope you're enjoying some much-needed down time and staying fairly warm so far this winter! Surely you're all aware of the sweeping changes being made to the Rules of Golf, effective on 1/1/2019. While much has been made of the implications of these changes for golfers, I'd like to remind our NEPGA club professionals about one of the implications for you as golf administrators: it's time to update your course's Local Rules to reflect the new changes!

Of course, you'll need to adjust the language of your Local Rules to include new terminology, and make sure to change any references to the Rules book to the new Rule numbers, as they have all changed. Additionally, many of the Local Rules that have been in effect at your courses are now full

-time Rules of Golf, so in many cases, you'll be able to eliminate some Local Rules and simplify the back of your club's scorecard. The last thing you'll want to do is peruse the new options for Local Rules and see if there's anything new you'd like to use at your course. Please see the following for a quick guide to this process, and feel free to reach out to me at [mdoctoroff@pgahq.com](mailto:mdoctoroff@pgahq.com) for any clarification, or if you'd like a second opinion on your club's Local Rules before you send your scorecards off to the printers – I'm here to help.

## Terminology/Definition Changes:

- The term "through the green" will no longer be in use, and must be changed to the "general area" on all Rules sheets
- "Water hazards" and "lateral water hazards" must now be called "yellow penalty areas" and "red penalty areas," respectively. A note about these penalty areas as you set up your courses in the spring: you now have the discretion to mark any penalty area as red, regardless of where the relief options may be. If you think changing a yellow penalty area to red might speed up pace of play, go for it! You also now have the right to mark any area of the course as a penalty area, whether or not it contains water. Here's another chance to speed up play, if you have any areas where balls commonly get lost.
- "No play zones" are a new term going into effect as well. You have the right to define any area of the course (flowerbeds are common examples) as no play zones, if you'd like to prohibit play from those areas. Just remember that every no play zone must be designated as either an abnormal course condition (no penalty), or a penalty area (one stroke penalty), so it's clear to players how they should score the hole if they take relief from one.
- "Integral parts of the course" are now referred to as "integral objects," so be sure to update that terminology if you have any integral objects listed on your Local Rules.
- If you refer to any Rule numbers in your Local Rules, don't forget to update them to the new numbers!



## The 20 Most Important Changes to the Rules of Golf 2019

1. Search Time - Reduced from 5 minutes to 3 minutes.
2. Ball Moved During Search - Replace no penalty.
3. Embedded Ball - Free relief anywhere through the course.
4. Measuring a Drop - Use longest club (except putter).
5. Dropping - Drop from knee height rather than shoulder.
6. Taking stance on wrong green is not permitted.
7. Ball Unintentionally Hits Player or Equipment - No penalty.
8. Double Hit - No penalty, now only counts as the 1 stroke.
9. Touching sand in bunker incidentally is permitted.
10. Loose impediments can be removed anywhere including hazards.
11. Dropping a Ball Out of Bunker - 2 penalty strokes.
12. Water Hazards - Now called "penalty areas."
13. Touching Ground in Penalty Area - No penalty.
14. Ball Moves on Green After Being Marked - Replace without penalty.
15. Ball Accidentally Moved on Putting Green - Replace no penalty.
16. All damage to green can now be repaired.
17. Positioning a club for alignment is not permitted.
18. Caddie assisting with alignment is now not permitted.
19. Putting with flag stick in hole is now permitted.
20. Ball wedged against flag stick and side of hole is now deemed as holed.

*Continued...*

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**House Cleaning:** Several of the Local Rules that have become standard on our Rules Sheets over the years have now become full-time Rules of Golf. Here are a few things you can eliminate from your club's Local Rules, since they'll always be in effect going forward:

- Distance measuring devices: these are now allowed under the Rules of Golf, as long as they don't measure anything besides distance. You now have the option of writing a Rule that prohibits them.
- Stones in bunkers: players may remove loose impediments from bunkers under the new Rules, so you can delete any Rules that deem stones in bunkers to be movable obstructions.
- Accidental movement of ball on putting green: this will no longer be a penalty under the Rules, so you can eliminate any Local Rules waiving the penalty.
- Embedded ball: players will now get relief for embedded balls in the general area. Therefore, you can remove any Local Rules allowing relief for embedded balls through the green.

**New Options for Local Rules:** You'll find that there are now many more Local Rules available than in previous iterations of the Rules, and this list is too comprehensive to address in this article. However, I'll touch on one new Local Rule option that's been getting a lot of press lately, and point you in the direction of a couple good resources for choosing and writing your new Rules.

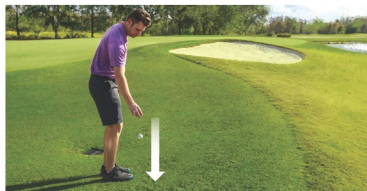
- Alternative to the stroke and distance penalty for a ball that is lost or out of bounds: please remember that this Rule is NOT intended for competitive golf, so it's wise to use your discretion about when to employ it. However, it might be a nice user-friendly option for some junior events, or perhaps an afternoon league for novice golfers. A summary of this Local Rule is that the player has the option to drop a ball near where their ball has been lost or gone out of bounds, instead of going back to the spot where the previous shot was played. This can help with pace of play, and will be less discouraging for beginner golfers, who are mostly just playing for fun, not intense competition. The full text of the optional Local Rule, including a video demonstration, can be viewed here: <http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/golfs-new-rules-stroke-and-distance.html>
- Here's a great resource from the R&A to help with writing your new Local Rules – you can select the Local Rules you'd like to use, add the applicable descriptions for your course, and it will generate a complete document for you to use: <https://www.randa.org/en/rog/2019/pages/local-rules-creator>
- The full list of available Local Rules can be found here: <http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules/rules-2019/committee-procedures/rule-8.html>

## GOLF'S NEW RULES: KEY CHANGES

The R&A and the USGA have released golf's new Rules, which will take effect on January 1, 2019. Here are five of the most significant changes.

### How to Drop a Ball

You will drop your ball from knee height into the relief area.



### Time for Ball Search

Three minutes will be the maximum allotted time to search for a ball, rather than the current five minutes.



### Repairing Spike Marks

You will be allowed to repair spike marks and any other damage on the putting green caused by a person, an animal or maintenance practices.



### Leaving Flagstick in the Hole

If you make a stroke from on the green and your ball hits the flagstick in the hole, there will be no penalty.



### Relaxed Rules in Penalty Area

You will be allowed to ground your club and move loose impediments in a penalty area (an expanded concept of water hazards that does not include bunkers).



For more information on golf's new Rules, please visit [usga.org](http://usga.org) or [randa.org](http://randa.org).

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R&A USGA

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