



COVID-19 Related Guidance on The Rules of Golf

As we move into Alert Level 2, the playing of golf starts to return to some form of normality. The key difference between Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 is that under Alert Level 2 the New Zealand Golf Handicapping System is live again and golf can be played outside your bubble.

Scores can be returned but clubs must ensure that they are following the strict hygiene practices outlined by the Government and Ministry of Health.

The following are modifications to the rules of golf and local rules that allow for scorecards to be returned for handicapping and for social / casual club competition. If a club is going to run a competition, they must ensure that this is undertaken within the Alert Level 2 guidelines around gatherings and clubhouse activity.

Scoring in Stroke Play

The principle of this is in view of concerns around handling and exchanging scorecards (which may be in paper or electronic form as already provided in the Rules) this change will allow cards to be submitted that haven't been filled out or signed by a fellow competitor.

On a temporary basis, Committees should choose to allow methods of scoring in stroke play that do not strictly comply with Rule 3.3b, or do not comply with the normal methods used under Rule 3.3b.

For example:

- Players may enter their own hole scores on the scorecard (it is not necessary for a marker to do it).
- Players may enter their own score into the DotGolf Scoring App.
- It is not necessary to have a marker physically certify the player's hole scores, but some form of verbal certification should take place. If a fellow competitor's name or 7 digit ID appears on the scorecard it is deemed that verbal certification has been agreed upon.
- It is not necessary to physically return a scorecard to the Committee provided the Committee can accept the scores in another way. The use of the DotGolf Scoring App or emailing in a player's score would be examples of this.

Flagsticks and Holing out

The principles of these rules are to avoid players touching the flagstick and the hole wherever possible as this is a hygiene risk. A local rule around short "gimmie" putts is recommended in the situation where it is extremely likely that the ball would be holed. This is an act that adds another unnecessary occasion where a ball must be retrieved from the hole and should be avoided.

Committees should choose to adopt the following policy:

- Requiring that players leave the flagstick in the hole at all times. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it establishes this policy by way of a Code of Conduct or Local Rule, and whether it provides a penalty under the Code of Conduct or for a breach of the Local Rule.



Committees may choose to adopt the following policies:

- The hole liner (sometimes referred to as the hole 'cup') is to be set in a way that the hole is not as deep as the current rules require (4 inches 101.6mm). This means that all of the ball might not be able to be at rest below the surface of the putting green. In this instance the ball is considered holed if any part of it is below the surface of the putting green.
- a ball is holed with the next stroke if it is within 12 inches (30cm) of the hole (which is just over the length of a standard putter grip). This does not prevent a player in match play conceding a stroke that is outside this length.

Bunkers

While it is not a requirement under level 2 to have bunker rakes off the course the following local rule allows for bunker rakes to be removed from the course. It is recognised that if a club chooses to remove bunker rakes it may be difficult for some players to smooth their footprints leaving a poor lie for other players. Even with a place in the bunker, the skill requirement to play a shot properly is retained and it is expected to have little effect to players handicaps.

Committees may choose to introduce the following Local Rule relating to bunkers if bunker rakes have been removed from the course.

MODEL LOCAL RULE FOR BUNKERS – DUE TO COVID-19

"When a player's ball lies in a bunker which has had the rake removed, the player may take free relief once by placing the original ball or another ball in and playing it from this relief area:

Reference Point: Spot of the original ball.

Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: one club-length
but with these limits:

Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and must remain in the bunker.

Please note these modifications are recommended for handicapping and social club competition purposes only.

If you have any questions please on this Rules of Golf guidance, please contact:

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