

## **Major Changes in the Rules of Golf for 2019**

- The flagstick may be left in for putts without penalty.
- Players may now repair spike marks & animal damage on their green.
- A ball is lost if not found within three minutes of the start of a player's search.
- A player may take relief without penalty for a ball embedded in its own pitch mark anywhere on the course except in penalty areas (water hazards) or sand bunkers. "Through the green" is now called "general area".
- No penalty if a player accidentally hits his ball more than once during a stroke.
- No penalty if a player accidentally moves his ball during a search. Replace the ball to the spot or your best estimate. The original lie must be recreated as best as possible so if the ball was under long grass, it must be replaced under long grass.
- No penalty if a player accidentally moves his ball or marker on the green. Replace the ball or marker to the original spot.
- If your ball moves on a putting green after marking, replace it to the original spot, regardless of why it moved.
- No penalty if a ball in motion accidentally hits a player, caddie or removed flagstick.
- Ball drops **must** be from knee height.
- A ball dropped must remain in the "relief area". You must re-drop if the ball comes to rest outside the "relief area". A player may now substitute a ball when taking relief. "Relief area" is typically a roughly semi-circular area of one or two club length radius.
- Red and yellow marked "penalty areas" replace "water hazards" and can include areas where no water is present. "Opposite side relief" is no longer a standard relief option.
- You may not touch the sand near your ball, in front or behind, or when making the backswing of a shot. There is no penalty for touching the sand with your club or hand away from your ball, or for moving loose impediment in the bunker unless your purpose is to test conditions or to make a practice swing. If the ball moves because of the permitted actions, it is a 1-stroke penalty. Replace the ball to its original spot.
- No penalty for moving loose impediments, touching the ground with a hand or club, or grounding a club in a penalty area when the ball is in the penalty area. If the ball moves because of these actions, it is a 1-stroke penalty. Replace the ball to its original spot.
- All players are encouraged to make each stroke in 40 seconds or less.
- All players are encouraged to play "Ready Golf" in a safe and responsible way.
- All players are encouraged to read and study the 2019 Rules of Golf.

**For more specifics, go to the GAM website <https://www.gam.org> and click on 2019 Rules of Golf in the upper right side**