

The Rules of Golf
10 Golden Rules
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In 1982, GOLF Magazine teamed with the USGA to produce "The Golden Rules of Golf." These 10 fundamental guidelines, which still hold today with slight modifications due to Rules changes, summarize most situations you are likely to encounter on the course. If you learn them well (and keep a Rules book in your bag in case something really weird happens), you'll be ready for anything.

I Play the ball as it lies.

II Don't move, bend, or break anything growing or fixed, except in fairly taking your stance or swing. Don't press anything down.

III You may lift natural objects not fixed or growing, except in a water hazard or bunker. (No penalty.)

IV You may move man-made objects even in a bunker or water hazard. If they are immovable, you may drop within one clublength of the nearest point of relief (unless your ball is in a water hazard), no nearer the hole. In a bunker, you must drop in the bunker. (No penalty.)

V Unless your ball is in a water hazard, you may drop away from casual water, ground under repair, or burrowing animal holes or their casts. On the putting green, place at the nearest point of relief, no nearer the hole; otherwise drop within one clublength of the nearest point of relief, except that in a bunker the ball must be dropped in the bunker. If complete relief is impossible within the bunker, drop in the bunker at the point of maximum available relief. (In each case, there is no penalty.)

VI In a water hazard or bunker, don't touch the water or ground with your hand or club before the stroke.

VII If you hit your ball into a water hazard and cannot play it, either drop behind the hazard or at the place you played the shot. (One penalty stroke.) If you hit into a lateral hazard you may also drop within two clublengths of the point where the ball last crossed the hazard margin, or a point equidistant from the hole on the opposite margin. (One penalty stroke.)

VIII When you hit your ball out of bounds or lose it, add a penalty stroke, go back and drop a ball at the place you played the shot. (On the tee, you may tee the ball.) If you think you have hit your ball out of bounds or lost it outside a water hazard, play a provisional ball before searching for the first one.

IX When you have an unplayable lie, you may drop a ball at the place where you played the previous shot, adding a penalty stroke. (On the tee, you may tee the ball.) Alternatively, drop within two clublengths, no nearer the hole, or any distance behind the unplayable spot, keeping it between you and the hole. If the ball is in a bunker, you must drop in the bunker, under either of the alternative options.

X On the putting green, you may repair ball marks and old hole plugs on the line of the putt, but not spike marks.