

**Conditions of Play and Local Rules for 2026**

**Play is governed by the USGA Rules of Golf, any additional Notice to Players and, where applicable, by the following conditions of play and local rules. It is recommended that all players install the 2026 USGA Rules of Golf on their cell phones. The USGA no longer provides printed copies of the rules.**

**1. Doubt as to Procedure; Dispute or Claim:**

**In Match Play (Rule 3.2),** In match play, you must resolve any doubt or dispute as to procedure before you or your opponent plays from the next teeing ground after which the result of the hole stands. If a doubt or dispute arises that cannot be resolved, a player may make an immediate claim in accordance with Rule 20.1b. The *Committee* may consider a claim only if the player making the claim notifies his opponent (i) that he is making a claim, (ii) of the facts of the situation and (iii) that he wants a ruling. The claim must be made before any player in the match plays from the next teeing ground or, in the case of the last hole of the match, before all players in the match leave the putting green. Because of our match play format, no duly authorized representative of the *Committee* will normally be available within a reasonable time. Therefore, after a player makes a claim the match should be continued without delay and the claim reported to the *Committee* before the results of the match are posted.

**In Stroke Play (Rule 3.3),** if a player is doubtful as to his rights or the correct procedure, during play of a hole, he may, without penalty, complete the hole with two balls in accordance with Rule 20.1c(3). After the doubtful situation has arisen and before taking further action, the competitor must announce to his marker or a fellow-competitor that he intends to play two balls and which ball he wishes to count if the Rules permit. The competitor must report the facts of the situation to the *Committee* before returning his signed score card. If a player fails to do so, they are disqualified.

**2. Time of Starting:** For a player arriving late to the starting tee, see Rule 5.3a. If you arrive at the starting tee up to 5 minutes late for your starting time, you lose the hole in match play and receive a two-stroke penalty at the first hole in stroke play. If you arrive at the starting tee more than 5 minutes late you are disqualified except where a committee determines that exceptional circumstances have prevented a player from starting on time. If all players are present and the starter deems it necessary to start your group before your starting time, there is no penalty. If a match is extended in match play and the starting tee is not available, the match may continue on the tee of the other 9 holes that were originally played.

**3. Pace of Play:** One of our most significant issues has been the slow pace of play. Since the SAGA will have public play tee times that follow our tournament, this is an extremely important issue. Over the past few seasons we have encouraged players to play at a faster pace and the pace has improved significantly. We still need to continue to continue this trend. *The USGA Rules of Golf*, Rule 5.6, Unreasonable Delay; Prompt Pace of Play, states in part: "You must not unreasonably delay play, either when playing a hole or between holes and a round of golf is meant to be played at a prompt pace." **Complete Your Round in 4 Hours and 30 Minutes or Less and Maintain Your Position on the Course:**

Ultimately, each player is responsible for the pace of play in their group; therefore, all players (and groups) are expected to complete their round in 4 hours and 30 minutes (15 minutes per hole) or less and maintain their relative starting position on the course.

Past history indicates that groups of four players teeing off at the beginning of the day, regardless of their ability and whether or not walking or riding, are easily able to complete their round in 4 hours or less. The *Committee* has added an extra 30 minutes to compensate for the course becoming more crowded and time spent searching for lost balls and errant shots in water hazards and native areas at SAGC. Therefore, groups playing early should be more likely to complete their rounds in the 4 hour or less range than groups playing later in the day. Since SAGC tee time intervals are at 9-10 minutes and there is never an entire hole open when they begin their round, players are encouraged to play without delay and maintain the same position or gap that was established on the first hole between their group and the group in front of them.

**MONITORING OF PACE:** Monitoring pace of play is the sole responsibility of the committee and marshals on the course. A player who is concerned about a non-responsive player in his/her group should call the club house to request a marshal to monitor the group in case penalties are incurred and appealed.

The general rule is to take action against the entire group unless a majority of members in the group attest to who the slow player was AND that numerous attempts were made to speak with the member to speed up and get back in position.

Regardless of whether or not they are completing each hole in 15 minutes or less, if at any time during the round a group has completed play of a hole and approaches the teeing ground of the next hole, and the hole is open, the group will be deemed to be out of position (behind) and will be put "On Watch" (see definition below) by the course marshal who will ask them to improve their pace of play and get back in position relative to the remainder of the field.

Being put "On Watch" means that the group will have two holes (maximum of 30 minutes) to get back into position. The marshal will notify the group that they are "On Watch" (they will also be on the clock) and provided the marshal is going "against the grain," he will be able to tell them how much of a gap is needed to make up. If the group is playing at a pace to complete their round in under 4 hours (less than 13 minutes per hole), they will not be put "On Watch," but will receive a friendly suggestion to "try and close the gap."

Marshals will report pace of play status and facts to the *Committee* for appropriate action. If an "On Watch" group does not improve their pace of play in accordance with the above policy, the entire group may incur a one stroke penalty in accordance with Rule 5.6. The second violation may result in an additional two stroke penalty and the third violation may result in disqualification.

Note that even though a group may not have been officially warned or put "On Watch," players with finish times in excess of 5 hours may incur a one stroke penalty unless there are mitigating circumstances.

**APPEALS:** Prior to returning his/her scorecard, any player who has incurred a penalty under these guidelines may file an appeal with the Committee. An appeal will only be

considered if the delay was caused by; (1) the Committee, (2) circumstances beyond the player's control, (3) another player in his/her group. The decision made by the Committee will be final.

**4. Annotating and Returning Scorecards:** Each player should annotate their actual starting time on their scorecard when they tee off. If no time is annotated, the time printed on the card will be assumed to be the start time. The finish time should also be annotated on the official scorecard at the completion of the round. If no finish time is annotated, the actual turn-in time minus 5 minutes will be used as the finish time.

Scorecards should be returned to the *Committee* (at the scoring table) or to the Pro Shop as soon as possible after a round is completed, but not later than 15 minutes after the round is completed. If at least one person from each group does not return a signed scorecard within 15 minutes of completion of play of the last hole, the entire group may be subject to a two-stroke penalty.

You are not required to put your handicap on your scorecard and there is no penalty if you return your scorecard in a competition with an incorrect handicap, as this is now the Committee's responsibility.

**Helpful Hints:** Here are some hints to help you improve and maintain your pace of play:

- **Play Ready Golf** – In all stroke play events, the committee endorses playing "Ready Golf" in a safe and responsible way. **There is no penalty for disregarding "honors."**
- **Continuous putting** is encouraged.
- **Practice Putting is Prohibited** – In stroke play, practicing or putting on the hole last played during a competition round is PROHIBITED. (see 15 below)
- **Search for a lost ball for a maximum of three minutes. Search less (1-2 min)** if you have been warned, put "On Watch" or are falling behind the group in front of you.
- Calculate yardage and club selection early and read putts or complete any other "pre- shot routine" while others are playing their shot.
- When riding in a cart, always drop partner off at their ball and proceed to your ball in order to play your shot as soon as possible after they play theirs. Always take the club you intend to use, and two extra clubs (example: 6 iron, and 5, 7 irons), to avoid having to return to the cart.
- When leaving your cart/bag to search for a ball in the native areas, always take clubs (same as above, with the addition of a wedge for "chipping out") to avoid having to return to the cart.
- Always leave equipment (carts, bags, extra clubs, etc.) beside and/or behind the green and towards the next tee.
- Always write down scores at the next tee while other players tee off (not the previous green).
- If you anticipate the need to use the men's room on the course, or visit the restaurant in between nines, as you approach the green, inform playing partners that you would like to go ahead and putt out in order to do so (even if you are not the furthest from the hole). Afterwards, immediately proceed to the next hole to tee off, or to be ready if your group has not yet completed the previous hole. This option is not available on the last hole

of an event or for any other circumstances where it is clear that the player may gain a competitive advantage from this action, and that it is the main reason for doing so.

- When exercising the options listed above, take care of business, gather food and drinks as quickly as possible and proceed to the next tee. Do not stop to eat at the clubhouse.

**5. BALL LOST or OUT OF BOUNDS (Rule 18.2):** When a player's ball has not been found (lost) or is *known or virtually certain* to be *out of bounds*, the player may proceed as follows rather than proceeding under *stroke and distance*.

For **two penalty strokes**, the player may take relief by dropping the original ball or a substituted ball in this relief area (see rule 14.3):

*Two Estimated Reference Points:*

**a. Ball Reference Point:** The point where the original ball:

Is estimated to have come to rest on the *course*, or

Last crossed the edge of the *course* boundary to go *out of bounds*.

**b. Fairway Reference Point:** The point of fairway of the *hole* being played that is nearest to the ball reference point, **but** is not nearer the *hole* than the ball reference point.

For purposes of this Local Rule, "fairway" means any area of grass in the *general area* that is cut to fairway height or less.

*Size of Relief Area Based on Reference Points:* Anywhere between:

A line from the *hole* through the ball reference point (or within two *club-lengths* to the outside of that line), and

A line from the *hole* through the fairway reference point (or within two *club-lengths* to the outside of that line).

**But** with these limits:

*Limits on Location of Relief Area:*

Must be in the *general area*, and

Must not be nearer the *hole* than the ball reference point.

**But**, the player may not use this option when:

The ball is *known or virtually certain* to have come to rest in a *penalty area*, or

The player has played another ball provisionally under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 18.3).

## GOLF'S NEW RULES: STROKE AND DISTANCE

A new Local Rule will provide an alternative to stroke-and-distance relief for a ball that is lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds. This new Local Rule will be available beginning January 1, 2019.

### BALL OUT OF BOUNDS



### LOST BALL



If the Local Rule is in effect, you can still take stroke-and-distance relief, but you will now have the following additional option that comes with a penalty of two strokes:

**A**

**DETERMINE SPOT** where your ball went out of bounds (left diagram) or is likely to be lost (right diagram).

**B**

**FIND NEAREST FAIRWAY EDGE** no closer to the hole.

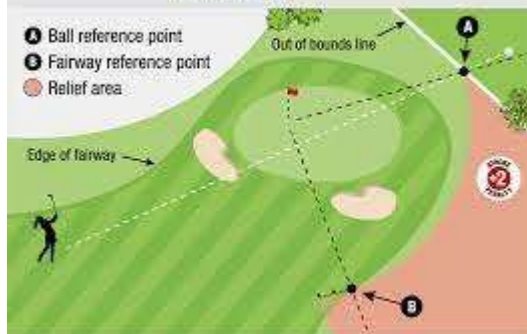
**C**

**DROP YOUR BALL IN SHADED AREA** as defined on one side by a line from the hole through point A and on the other side by a line from the hole through point B, and not nearer the hole. The relief area is extended on both sides by two club-lengths.

This Local Rule is not intended for higher levels of play, such as professional or elite amateur level competitions.

R&A USGA

MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 3: BALL NOT FOUND OR OUT OF BOUNDS CLOSE TO GREEN



**6. Technology Use: Cellular Telephones and Pagers:** In the spirit of Rule 1.2 of the USGA Rules of Golf, except for summoning emergency help (e.g. heart attack, heat stroke, fire, notifying the Pro Shop of a dead cart or for slow play where there is greater than one hole open in front of the slow play group) on the course, cellular telephone use is strongly discouraged during a stipulated tournament round. Exceptions are areas such as in or within 50 feet of the clubhouse complex, inside on-course rest rooms or in the course parking lot and only when you are not interfering with or delaying play (see interfering with or delaying play (see rule 5.6.)) Pagers should also be silenced or put on vibrate.

If your cellular telephone or pager use interferes with or delays play, the first offense is a one-stroke penalty, the second offense will be a two-stroke penalty, and any subsequent offenses will result in event disqualification.

**Audible Audio or Video:** Rule 4.3a(4) is modified in this way: During a tournament round, a player may listen to audio or watch video on matters unrelated to the competition; however, they must not audibly broadcast content of any nature from an audio or video device.

Penalty for the first breach is the general penalty and event disqualification for a second breach.

**7. Abnormal Course Conditions: Blacktop cart paths** are Immovable Obstructions; all other paths are considered Integral Parts of the Course where relief without penalty is not permitted, but Loose Impediments may be removed. (Rule 16.1)

All large **rocky drainage areas and red gravel areas** (eg. around Cheena 7 teeing ground, restrooms near Cheena 7 fairway and left of Tamaya 6 teeing ground, etc.) may be played as an Immovable Obstruction. Drop without penalty, one club length from nearest relief no closer to the hole. If the ball is lost in the Immovable Obstruction and it is known or virtually certain that the ball entered the Immovable Obstruction you may substitute another ball and take relief without penalty.

**Stakes, ropes and fishing line in Penalty Areas** have been designated immovable obstructions. Play the ball as it lies or proceed in accordance with the Rule 17-1, Penalty Areas. Penalty for removing, cutting or untying these stakes, ropes or fishing lines is two strokes whether they are replaced or repaired, or not.

**Bunkers** - Players are encouraged to rake all bunkers. If you find your ball in a footprint or other disturbed or unraked bunker area you may, without penalty, lift your ball and place it in the bunker within one club length of its original position, no nearer the hole. You may not lift the ball, smooth the bunker, and then replace it. Please rake the bunker after you play.

**8. Ground Under Repair (GUR):** Areas defined by white lines. (Rule 16.1)

- a. French drains (filled with stones or gravel) are GUR.
- b. Ropes and stakes (Movable Obstructions) on the golf course outside of a hazard are for cart control only.
- c. When the course is not marked for GUR, the following principles will be followed for relief:
  - i. Decisions should be made by all players in the group.
  - ii. The area in question should be clearly "Under Repair" or,
  - iii. The area should be such that fair play is not possible and only "grossly" unfair lies due to poor maintenance would be obtained.
  - iv. In stroke play, the player may also invoke Rule 3-3 and consult the Committee following play.

Note: If the area in question is a normal condition on the course, it should NOT be considered GUR ( i.e. Bare ground or patchy turf is not Ground Under Repair at Santa Ana GC as that is a normal condition on many parts of the course).

**9. Penalty Areas:** The ponds fronting Tamaya holes 6 and 9, Cheena holes 5, 6, and 9, and Star holes 5, 8, and 9, are Penalty Areas (may be identified by red stakes and/or red lines). (Rule 17.1). Drop zones may be provided during some tournaments as an additional relief option. (Model Rule B5)

**10. Out of Bounds:** Identified by boundary fencing and white stakes are defined by inside points at ground level. (Rule 18)

- a. Note: On holes with old wooden rail boundary fences, as well as white stakes, white stakes identify the Out of Bounds.

- b. Note: Wire boundary fences that are built for the protection of property or during construction are considered part of the boundary. Relief without penalty is not permitted.
- c. Note: The Out of Bounds stakes to the right of Cheena hole 9 fairway are for Cheena hole 6 only.
- d. Note: The solar panel complex including fencing left of the Star 5 teeing ground are out of bounds.

**11. No Play Zone:** The maintenance area to the left of the Tamaya 3 fairway has been designated a No Play Zone where play is not allowed. The no play zone boundary is designated by **blue** stakes. Relief without penalty may be taken in accordance with Rule 16-1.

**12. Immovable Obstructions (sprinkler heads and valve boxes) near the green:**

Relief may be provided for immovable obstructions close to a putting green in a player's line of play. If and only if, all of the criteria below for intervention on a player's line of play, then the player may lift and drop the ball **AT** the nearest point of relief that is not nearer the hole, avoids intervention, and is not in a penalty area or on a putting green.

- a. The ball must lie in the general area (not in a bunker or a penalty area); and
- b. The immovable obstruction (sprinkler head or valve box etc.) must be on or within two club-lengths of the putting green; and
- c. The immovable obstruction must be within two club-lengths of the ball; and
- d. The immovable obstruction must intervene on the line of play between the ball and the hole.

**13. The General Area of the Course:** Includes any paths NOT made of blacktop and cables, rods, wires, or wrappings, when closely attached to trees. Liners in bunkers, artificial walls, and pilings located in penalty areas are integral parts of the course and no relief without penalty is permitted unless otherwise provided for in a Notice to Players – (Rule 2)

**14. Restrooms** are located on Tamaya Holes 3 and 7, Cheena Hole 3, and Star hole 6. They are considered “Immovable Obstructions.” Relief may be taken in accordance with Rule 16-1. Note: Relief is for interference only and no “Line of Sight” relief is allowed.

**15. Practice Putting:** During stroke play competitions only, practice on or near the putting green of the hole last played or rolling a ball on the putting green of the hole last played is PROHIBITED. That means no practice putting. Penalty for breach is 2 strokes.

**16. Returning a Scorecard in Competition:** For the purposes of any competition, a scorecard is considered turned-in after any doubtful points have been settled by the *Committee* and it is then presented to the designated member of the *Committee* at the scorer's table, collection box or front desk. The competition is final when all scores have been posted on the official scoreboard unless an error occurs in posting the final results.

**17. Ties:** Ties for gross and net prizes will be broken using a scorecard playoff starting on a hole designated by the committee and then going backward. If the completion has a shotgun start or play commences on holes 1 and 10, the designated playoff hole will be the same for all players or teams. Ties for the blue gross Club Championship will be broken by a sudden death playoff starting on whichever course and hole the committee designates.

**18. Conditions for Tournament Play at Santa Ana Golf Club:** In accordance with Players Club policies, the *Committee* reserves the right to reduce or raise any player's handicap before, during, or after any tournament participated in at Santa Ana Golf Club or Twin Warriors Golf Club.

**19. Player Conduct:** When available, the SAGC marshals will be helping the *Committee* monitor the pace of play during our tournaments. Marshals have been instructed to be professional, courteous and friendly when approaching groups. Any bad conduct by a player (e.g. rude comments, verbally abusive behavior) anywhere on the course or towards marshals with regards to how the marshals are conducting pace of play monitoring may result in a two stroke penalty. Extremely bad conduct (e.g. profane language, obscene gestures, physical abuse) anywhere on the course may result in disqualification and possible suspension from future SAGA tournaments for a period of time specified by the *Committee*. Repeat offences may result in expulsion from the SAGA.

**20. The *Committee*:** The *Committee* is comprised of the Santa Ana Golf Club's Head Golf Professional and all board members of the Santa Ana Golf Association as well as any individuals designated by the Board.

**21. The *Committee* recommends use of these principles that define the Rules of Golf:**

**Play at a prompt pace and without delay**

**Play the ball as it lies.**

**Play the course as you find it.**

**When neither can be done, do what is equitable to all concerned.**