

PACE OF PLAY

R & A

The new Rules of Golf 2019 took effect on 1st January 2019. The key changes include:

Pace-of-play support

- Encouragement of **Ready Golf** in Stroke Play.
- Recommended maximum 40 seconds to play a shot.
- Reduced search time, alternative to stroke & distance and putting with the flagstick in the hole (see below for more details)
- Players may agree to play out of turn in Match Play.

Relaxed Putting Green rules

- No penalty if a ball hits an **unattended flagstick** in the hole.
- Players may **repair damage** to the green, whether their ball is on the green or not. This includes old hole plugs, spike marks and damage made by shoes, animals and maintenance practices.
- No penalty for **touching the line** of putt.
- A ball **resting against the flagstick** is deemed holed as long as part of the ball is below the surface of the ground.
- Interference by a **Wrong Green** now includes the player's stance.

READY GOLF

“Ready golf” is not appropriate in match play due to the strategy involved between opponents and the need to have a set method for determining which player plays first. However, in stroke play formats it is only the act of agreeing to play out of turn to give one of the players an advantage that is prohibited. On this basis, it is permissible for administrators to encourage “ready golf” in stroke play, and there is strong evidence to suggest that playing “ready golf” does improve the pace of play. For example, in a survey of Australian golf clubs conducted by Golf Australia, 94% of clubs that had promoted “ready golf” to their members enjoyed some degree of success in improving pace of play, with 25% stating that they had achieved 'satisfying success'.

When “ready golf” is being encouraged, players have to act sensibly to ensure that playing out of turn does not endanger other players.

“Ready golf” should not be confused with being ready to play, which is covered in the Player Behaviour section of this Manual.

The term “ready golf” has been adopted by many as a catch-all phrase for a number of actions that separately and collectively can improve pace of play. There is no official definition of the term, but examples of “ready golf” in action are:

- Hitting a shot when safe to do so if a player farther away faces a challenging shot and is taking time to assess their options
- Shorter hitters playing first from the tee or fairway if longer hitters have to wait
- Hitting a tee shot if the person with the honour is delayed in being ready to play
- Hitting a shot before helping someone to look for a lost ball
- Putting out even if it means standing close to someone else's line

- Hitting a shot if a person who has just played from a greenside bunker is still farthest from the hole but is delayed due to raking the bunker
- When a player's ball has gone over the back of a green, any player closer to the hole but chipping from the front of the green should play while the other player is having to walk to their ball and assess their shot
- Marking scores upon immediate arrival at the next tee, except that the first player to tee off marks their card immediately after teeing off