

The Notes

The Notes that appear in the Rules are every bit as important as the Exceptions and whether you are preparing to work as a Rules Official or preparing to take a Rules Exam it is a very worthwhile exercise to review all the Notes that can be found. There are 92 distinct Notes in 57 Definitions, Rules or subsections. Like the Exceptions, the Notes can be categorized into several groupings: Notes that permit or specify Committee action, Notes that permit substitution under a Rule, Notes that refer to an applicable Rule, Notes that further clarify the Rule or Notes that refer to special situations.

Committee Action Notes:

Ground Under Repair | Lateral Water Hazard (3) | Obstructions | Out of Bounds (2) | Water Hazard | 4-1 | 5-1 | 6-4 | 6-6d | 6-7 | 6-8b | 7-1 | 7-2 | 8-2 | 14-3 | 24-2b | 25-1a | 25-2 | 32-1b | 33-2b | 33-5

The Note to the **Definition of Ground Under Repair** permits the Committee to make a Local Rule that prohibits play from ground under repair or an environmentally-sensitive area defined as ground under repair.

Note 1 to the **Definition of Lateral Water Hazard** specifies that any water hazard or part of a water hazard to be defined as lateral must be marked with red stakes or lines.

Note 2 permits the Committee to prohibit play from an environmentally-sensitive area defined as a lateral water hazard.

Note 3 permits the Committee to define a lateral water hazard as a [regular] water hazard.

The Note to the **Definition of Obstructions** permits the Committee to declare a movable obstruction to be an immovable obstruction.

Note 1 to the **Definition of Out of Bounds** recommends that stakes or lines used to define or identify out of bounds should be white. This is a recommendation because it is known that other golf associations around the world use other colors to define out of bounds.

Note 2 permits the Committee to declare stakes that identify but do not define out of bounds to be obstructions.

Note 1 to the **Definition of Water Hazard** specifies that [regular] water hazards must be marked with yellow stakes or lines.

Note 2 permits the Committee to prohibit play from an environmentally-sensitive area defined as a water hazard.

The Note to **Rule 4-1** permits the Committee to require in the Conditions of Competition that any driver a player carries have a club head named on the List of Conforming Driver Heads.

The Note to **Rule 5-1** permits the Committee to require in the Conditions of Competition that the player's ball be on the Conforming Golf Balls list.

The Note to **Rule 6-4** allows the Committee to limit who can and cannot caddie for a player. In the U.S. Junior and U.S. Girls' Junior, the USGA specifies that parents, guardians or step-parents may not caddie for a player. This is one of my favorite Notes and Conditions...

Note 1 to **Rule 6-6d** stipulates that the Committee is responsible for the addition of scores and application of handicaps. Fortunately, the Note does not stipulate that this must be done by hand.

Note 2 to **Rule 6-7** permits the Committee to establish pace of play guidelines. It also provides an alternate penalty statement that the Committee may choose to implement. The unwritten law of this Note is that the penalty statement only applies once the Committee is issuing penalties. Just because warnings are not listed anywhere in the Rules, neither the Rule nor the Note prohibit the Committee from using a pace of play policy using warnings.

The Note to **Rule 6-8b** allows the Committee to stipulate that players must suspend play immediately in potentially dangerous situations in the Conditions of Competition. This Condition is typically used in most association Hard Cards.

The Note to **Rule 7-1** allows the Committee to prohibit practice on the competition course during any day of a match play competition or permit practice on the competition course on any day or between rounds of a stroke play competition. Typically we see this used to designate practice areas on the golf course at facilities where the practice areas are either limited, non-existent or are not defined as out of bounds.

Note 2 to **Rule 7-2** allows the Committee to prohibit practice or rolling a ball on or near the putting green of the hole last played during a round. Remember that the Committee is not permitted to prohibit practice on or near any practice putting green or the teeing ground of the next hole.

The Note to **Rule 8-2** is what I call the "College Note." It permits the Committee to allow teams to appoint one person to give advice to members of the team. Prior to 2012, there was a USGA only decision that extended this Note to permit two appointees. In 2012 with the complete joint Decisions book, because the R & A would not adopt that decision, it has been moved to How to Conduct a Competition. The NCAA Hard Card has this Note in effect so that teams may appoint both a coach and assistant coach to give advice during collegiate events.

The Note to **Rule 14-3** permits the Committee to allow distance-measuring devices. Remember that the local Rule permitted by this Note must be in effect in order for distance-measuring devices to be allowed. This Note is not likely to become the Rule as the USGA and R & A do not and will not allow distance-measuring devices in their open competitions.

Note 3 to **Rule 24-2b** allows the Committee to make a local rule requiring a player to determine the nearest point of relief without crossing through or under an obstruction. This is useful when protective fences are on a golf course between holes.

The Note to **Rule 25-1a** allows the Committee to state that interference with a player's stance by an abnormal ground condition is not interference by itself. This local rule is useful when burrowing animal holes are frequent throughout a course and it would be prudent for the player to only obtain relief if the ball comes to rest in the hole.

Note 3 to **Rule 25-2** was added in 2016 to remind the Committee that they may implement the Local Rule in the Appendix permitting relief for an embedded ball through the green.

Note 4 to **Rule 32-1b** establishes an alternate pace of play penalty statement for Committees to use in stableford competitions using point deductions rather than strokes.

The Note to **Rule 33-2b** allows the Committee to locate holes and teeing grounds in different locations on each day of a competition during a single round so long as all players complete each hole with the teeing grounds and holes in the same location. I always thought of this as the AT&T Note, but it really refers to situations where the field has not played the entire course on a single day and the Committee wants to relocate holes that no competitors have played.

The Note to **Rule 33-5** allows the Committee to have the competitor record the date and name on his score card rather than having it already done. We can call this the "lazy Committee" or "inkless Committee" Note.

Notes Permitting Substitution:

Note 1 to **Rule 18**, Note 2 to **Rule 20-2c**, the Note to **Rule 24-1**, Note 2 to **Rule 24-2b** and Note 2 to **Rule 25-1b** all permit the player to substitute a ball if the original ball is not immediately recoverable. Decision 18/11 tells us that a ball is not immediately recoverable if it cannot be retrieved within a few seconds.

Notes Referring to Another Applicable Rule:

Forms of Play | 5-3 | 6-6d | 12-2 | 18 (2) | 19-5 | 20-7a | 23-1

The Note to the **Definition of Forms of Play** refers us to Rule 32-1 for bogey, par and stableford competitions.

Note 2 to **Rule 5-3**, the Note to **Rule 12-2** and Note 2 to **Rule 18** all remind us that if the lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered Rule 20-3b applies and the player must follow the procedure outlined in that Rule.

Note 2 to **Rule 6-6d** refers us to Rules 31-3 and 31-7a, which govern a player's requirements concerning their score card in four-ball stroke play. Specifically, those Rules require individually identifiable scores and that one player from a side sign the score card.

Note 3 to **Rule 18** reminds us that if it is impossible to determine the spot on which a ball is to be placed or replaced Rule 20-3c applies and the player must follow the procedure outlined in that Rule.

The Note to **Rule 19-5** specifies that nothing in 19-5 overrides Rule 10-1 or 16-1f. Specifically, if a player has played out of turn in match play, the opponent still has the opportunity to recall the stroke even if the ball in motion was deflected by another ball in motion, or a player who has made a stroke on the putting green while another ball is in motion after a stroke from the putting is still subject to penalty even if the balls collide and the strokes must be cancelled and replayed. This Note is the basis for a complex but comprehensive chart outlining the different scenarios that could happen under 19-5 and 16-1f that is available on the NCGA TOCR page (for NCGA officials only) or the NCGA Rules Resources page (2016).

The Note to **Rule 20-7a** refers back to Rule 11-4 is the ball was played from a wrong place because it was played from outside the teeing ground or from a wrong teeing ground.

The Note to **Rule 23-1** refers back to Rule 13-4 which is a more specific Rule governing what a player may do with loose impediments in a hazard (nothing).

Notes Referring to Special Situations:

Equipment | 6-8d | 10-1b | 10-2b | 19-1 | 20-2c | 20-3b | 20-7c | 22-1 | 22-2 | 24-2b | 25-1b | 26-2b | 27-2a | 32-1a (2) | 32-1b (2)

Note 3 to the **Definition of Equipment** tells us who a shared cart or shared equipment belongs to in a given Rules situation. A cart belongs to either the person whose ball (or partner's ball) is involved or the person who is currently moving it. Other shared equipment belongs to the person who last used, wore, held or carried it.

The Note to **Rule 6-8d** is a special situation when it is impossible to determine where a ball to be placed following a suspension that spot must be estimated and the ball placed on that spot. This Note gives us the general rule that we always place the ball when resuming play.

The Notes to **Rule 10-1b** and **Rule 10-2b** cover the special situation when a ball will not be played as it lies and the player must proceed under stroke and distance. It clarifies that the order of play is determined by the original spot in that special situation, or by where the ball came to rest if the player has an option where he may play the ball.

The Note to **Rule 19-1** explains how to proceed when a ball has been deliberately deflected by an outside agency. This Note is why we estimate where the ball would have come to rest when deliberately deflected. It also reminds us that Rule 1-2 would apply if the outside agency were a fellow-competitor or his caddie.

Note 1 to **Rule 20-2c** covers the special situation where a dropped or re-dropped ball comes to rest and then subsequently moves. In that situation we play the ball as it lies from where it rolled to unless another Rule applies (i.e. if it rolls into a hazard or out of bounds).

The Note to **Rule 20-3b** covers the unique situation when the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered AND it is impossible to determine the spot where the ball is to be placed or replaced. If the original lie is known, Rule 20-3b applies. If the original lie is not known, Rule 20-3c applies.

Note 3 to **Rule 20-7c** is an important Note as it eliminates many double-penalties that would otherwise occur. It covers special situations when a player plays from a wrong place and in the process also breaches other Rules. This Note specifies if a player has played from a wrong place there is no additional penalty if a player substitutes when not permitted, drops when required to place or vice versa, drops a ball in an improper manner or the ball is put into play by someone not permitted (2+2+2+2=2) or (GP+GP+I+I=GP).

The Note to **Rule 22-1** and Note 2 to **Rule 22-2** cover when another ball is in motion. They prohibit a player from moving a ball that might influence the movement of a ball in motion.

Note 1 to **Rule 24-2b** and Note 1 to **Rule 25-1b** cover when a ball lies in a water hazard. They stipulate that a player must play the ball as it lies or proceed under Rule 26-1 and may not take relief from an immovable obstruction if the ball lies in a water hazard or lateral water hazard.

Note 2 to **Rule 26-2b** covers the special situation when a ball played from a water hazard is deemed unplayable outside the hazard. In this case the player is permitted to proceed under Rule 28b or c in addition to his options under Rule 26-2.

The Note to **Rule 27-2a** covers when a provisional ball may be lost outside a water hazard or out of bounds and the player wishes to play another provisional. It specifies that the second provisional has the same relation to the first provisional as the first provisional has to the original ball.

Note 2 to **Rule 32-1a** clarifies the penalty if a player breaches Rule 6-3a (but within 5 minutes of the starting time) or 6-7 in a Bogey or Par competition. The player will deduct one hole from the aggregate total rather than apply a two-stroke penalty to the first hole.

Note 3 to Rule 32-1a clarifies the penalty in a bogey or par competition when incurring the penalty under the new Exception to Rule 6-6d. Again this involves a deduction of holes.

Note 2 to **Rule 32-1b** clarifies the penalty if a player breaches Rule 6-3a (but within 5 minutes of the starting time) or 6-7 in a Stableford competition. The player deducts two points from the total points scored for the round rather than apply a two-stroke penalty to the first hole.

Note 3 to Rule 32-1b clarifies the penalty in a stableford competition when incurring the penalty under the new Exception to Rule 6-6d. Again this involves a deduction of points.

Notes of Clarification or Definition:

Burrowing Animal | Equipment (2) | Nearest Point of Relief | 1-2 (2) | 2-5 (2) | 3-3(3) | 4-3a | 5-3 | 6-2b | 6-7 | 6-8a | 7-2 | 13-4 | 17-1 (3) | 18-1 | 20-1 | 20-7c (2) | 22-2 | 25-2 (2) | 26-2a | 26-2b | 27-2c | 32-1a | 32-1b

The Note to the **Definition of Burrowing Animal** clarifies that a hole made by a non-burrowing animal is not an abnormal ground condition unless marked as ground under repair by the Committee.

Note 1 to the **Definition of Equipment** clarifies that a ball played on that hole which has been lifted and not put back into play is equipment.

Note 2, added in 2016, clarifies that objects such as rakes which are placed for the purpose of caring for the course, are equipment when being held or carried.

The Note to the **Definition of Nearest Point of Relief** tells us how the player should determine the point using the club with which he would have made his next stroke if the condition did not exist.

Note 1 to **Rule 1-2** gives us our first internal definition in the Rules of Golf. This Note defines a serious breach of Rule 1-2 and for the first time we have the generously ambiguous term of significant advantage applied to serious breach. For further clarification we must turn to Decision 1-2/0.5.

Note 2 clarifies the procedure when a serious breach of 1-2 occurs. This Note could perhaps be categorized as referencing another Rule as it points us to the Note to Rule 19-1 which tells us what to do when a ball has been deliberately stopped or deflected by a fellow-competitor (remember that Note states 1-2 applies if the outside agency is a fellow-competitor).

Note 1 to **Rule 2-5** is my favorite Note in Golf. This Note permits a player in match play to disregard a breach of the Rules by an opponent so long as there is no agreement to waive the Rules. Whenever I play golf with my brother we play match play, so when he bumps the ball or breaches a Rule that I'm sure he wasn't aware of, I don't have to say anything and just play on. Note 2 clarifies that a player is not permitted to play two balls when in doubt of a procedure. Remember Rule 3-3 is under Stroke Play for a reason; it only applies in stroke play. In match play, a player in doubt may make a claim but the match must be continued without delay.

Note 1 to **Rule 3-3** was added in 2016 to further clarify what the Rule means by "Rules permit the procedure used for a ball."

Note 2 has been added with the re-write of Rule 3-3 to clarify what ball is considered the "original" when the original ball is not being played. In this case, the first ball put into play is deemed to be the "original" ball.

Note 3 is the first Note of several of its kind. This Note explains that strokes and penalties made solely by playing the ball ruled not to count do not count in his score. We'll see this with Rules 20-7 and 27-2. The term "solely by playing the ball ruled not to count" is somewhat ambiguous, and Decision 20-7c/5 gives us some insight on how it applies. This is also combined with the former Note 2 to specify that a ball played under Rule 3-3 is not a provisional ball.

The Note to **Rule 4-3a** gives us the internal definition for a club “unfit for play.” If the shaft is dented, significantly bent or broken, the clubhead is loose, detached or deformed or if the grip is loose the club is unfit for play. Remember, a player only has the option to replace a club damaged in the normal course of play if it is unfit for play.

Note 1 to **Rule 5-3** gives us a timeframe for a fellow-competitor, marker or opponent to dispute whether a ball is unfit. They must do so before the player [replacing the unfit ball] plays another ball.

The Note to **Rule 6-2b** tells us that it is the player’s responsibility to know which holes handicap strokes are given or received.

Note 1 to **Rule 6-7** explains the application of the penalty for undue delay. If the breach occurs between the play of two holes the penalty applies to the next hole. It also points us to Rule 32 for Bogey, Par and Stableford competitions (deduction of holes/points).

The Note to **Rule 6-8a** clarifies that leaving the course is not of itself discontinuing play. Think about it, if a player walks off the course to his car to grab a club or sunscreen, but does so without any delay, this is not discontinuing play.

Note 1 to **Rule 7-2** clarifies that a practice swing is not a practice stroke, and so long as no other Rule is breached a practice swing may be taken at anytime, anywhere.

The Note to **Rule 13-4** helps to clarify and define what is considered touching the hazard. This Note permits the player to touch any obstruction, integral part of the course or grass, bush tree or other growing thing in a hazard at any time. Therefore, grounding your club on a staircase in a hazard would not be a breach of Rule 13-4, nor would touching the grass without grounding the club.

All three Notes to **Rule 17-1** clarify and define statements made in the Rule itself. Note 1 defines what attending the flagstick is. Note 2 defines what authorizing the attendance means. Note 3 defines the timeframe of attendance by stating that attendance of the flagstick does not cease until the ball comes to rest.

The Note to **Rule 18-1** is a known or virtually certain (KVC) Note. It explains that a player must be KVC that a ball has been moved by an outside agency in order for Rule 18-1 to apply.

The Note to **Rule 20-1** is a procedural Note. This is where we see how we ought to mark a golf ball prior to lifting it. WE should use a ball-marker, small coin or similar object. We should also move the marker if it might interfere with the play of another player. Decision 20-1/16 explains all permissible methods of marking the golf ball, including ones that are not recommended by the Note. Like the nearest point of relief Note, this is a “should” and therefore there is no penalty if we mark the ball using one of the non-recommended methods within the guidelines of Decision 20-1/16.

Note 1 to **Rule 20-7c** is another serious breach internal definition. Again we see the term significant advantage applied to the term serious breach. A serious breach of 20-7c is even more ambiguous than a serious breach of 1-2 as a significant advantage could be gained in many more ways. Decision 26-1/21 tells us about a serious breach of the water hazard Rule in terms of a distance advantage. Decision 28/10 tells us that dropping outside a bunker when required to drop in the bunker would be a serious breach of Rule 28 if it is not near where stroke and distance would allow the player to play. These decisions combined imply that a serious advantage could be gained if there is a significant change for the better of a player's lie in terms of the lie itself or distance to the hole.

Note 2 to Rule 20-7c is another ball ruled not to count Note. Strokes and penalty strokes made solely by playing the ball ruled not to count when a second ball is played under Rule 20-7c do not count in the player's score. Again see Decision 20-7c/5 for further explanation.

Note 1 to **Rule 22-2** explains that (except on the putting green, because a player is permitted to lift his ball there) a player may not lift his ball because he considers it might interfere with another player. In order to lift the ball under Rule 22-2 it must be requested by the player (or partner) who thinks it might interfere. It also softens a potential double-whammy. If the player does lift the ball without being asked, Rule 18-2 would apply, but there would be no penalty for the "breach" of Rule 22-2.

Note 1 to **Rule 25-2** was added in 2016 to clarify when a ball is considered "embedded." This was formerly (and is still) in Decision 25-2/0.5 but has been brought into the Rule by the new Note.

Note 2 internally defines the meaning of "closely-mown area" as any area cut to fairway height or less. This was formerly in Rule 25-2 itself.

The Note to **Rule 26-2a** is a procedural Note explaining how the player should proceed if they first drop a ball under stroke and distance (26-1a) but then decides they cannot play the ball from that position. It then specifies how the penalty strokes will be applied in this situation.

Note 1 to **Rule 26-2b** is a procedural Note explaining that a player is not required to first drop a ball under Rule 27-1 or 28a to proceed under Rule 26-2b. And if he does, that does not prohibit the player from proceeding under the other provisions of the Rule. In 2016, it was expanded to clarify the penalty strokes involved when using this Rule.

The Note to **Rule 27-2c** is our final solely by playing the ball Note. This is slightly different because it doesn't refer to a ball ruled not to count, but rather a provisional that is abandoned. Any strokes or penalties made solely by playing the provisional that is abandoned do not count in the player's score.

Note 1 to **Rule 32-1a** explains how to apply the penalty for a breach of Rules with maximum penalties in Bogey or Par competitions. Players must deduct holes from the aggregate total and must report the breach to the Committee or be disqualified.

Note 1 to **Rule 32-1b** explains how to apply the penalty for a breach of Rules with maximum penalties in Stableford competitions. Players must deduct points from their total points and must report the breach to the Committee or be disqualified.