

TTSGA Playing Guidelines for 2026

General Guidelines

Enforce these rules within your playing group to protect the integrity of the game on the field. If your group cannot agree on a rule interpretation, play two balls from the location in question until holed, then bring the question to a member of the Rules Committee. The maximum time allowed for searching for a ball is 3 minutes.

1. Marking and Identifying Your Ball

You must be able to identify your golf ball with your own mark. On the 1st tee, it is recommended that each player identify their ball and show it to their playing partners. If two players hit the same ball into the same area and cannot identify their balls, both are considered lost balls. Be sure to identify your ball before playing each shot.

- **Ball in Your Own Fairway:** Your ball may be bumped with the clubhead within one grip length.
- **Maximum Score:** The maximum score on any hole is : 7 on a par 3, 8 on a par 4, and 9 on a par 5.

2. Abnormal Ground Conditions

If your ball comes to rest in what the playing group agrees is an abnormal ground condition, you may drop one club length away, no closer to the hole, and play without penalty. Note that a "bad lie" or a poorly maintained area is not considered an abnormal ground condition. This should be a relatively rare occurrence.

- If your ball is in your own fairway but rests on rocks or a bare spot, you may move your ball without penalty to the nearest area of grass (not necessarily the nicest area or best position), no closer to the hole.
- If your ball is not in your own fairway, it must be played as it lies. If rocks, gravel, or other conditions prohibit a shot or threaten damage to a club, you may take an unplayable lie with a 1-stroke penalty.

3. Penalty Areas

You may either hit your ball as it lies, without improving your stance or lie, with no penalty, or drop out two club lengths from where your ball entered the penalty area and play from there, or anywhere along the line from the flagstick through where your ball entered the penalty area, with a 1-stroke penalty.

4. Out of Bounds

If your ball goes out of bounds (OB), drop a ball two club lengths in your fairway, equidistant from where the OB occurred, and play from there. This results in a 2-stroke penalty (if a tee ball, you are now hitting 4). If you choose to hit a provisional ball from the tee (only for a ball believed to be OB), you cannot elect this option. The decision must be made from the tee.

5. Lost Ball

1. **If lost in rough or grassy areas without penalty area markings:** If your ball cannot be found within 3 minutes, estimate where your ball crossed into the area, drop a ball within two club lengths of that point (no closer to the hole), and play with a 1-stroke penalty.
2. **If lost in a non-mowed area:** Use your best judgment to identify where the ball was lost entering the area. Drop a ball two club lengths from that point into the next lower cut of grass, no closer to the hole, and play from that spot with a 1-stroke penalty.
3. **After a 3-minute search:** Your ball is considered lost and must be played as such. If it is subsequently found, it remains "lost" and must be played under penalty for a lost ball. Once you have taken a penalty drop for a lost ball, the dropped ball is the ball in play. If your original ball is later found, it is considered the "wrong ball."

6. Hitting from the Wrong Tee

If you hit from the wrong tee, there is a 1-stroke penalty if corrected before leaving the teeing ground on that hole. If not corrected, a 2-stroke penalty applies.

7. Hitting the Wrong Ball

Hitting the wrong ball incurs a 1-stroke penalty if corrected before leaving the green on that hole. If not corrected, the penalty is 2 strokes.

8. Ball in a Bunker

Whether a bunker is maintained (has rakes) or not, you may drop out of and behind (not beside) the bunker on a line from the pin through the original ball position for a penalty of 1 stroke. This includes an unplayable lie.

- If your ball is in a depression in the bunker (such as a footprint, plugged lie, animal track, etc.) or packed from rain and not properly raked, you may smooth the area (with a rake or your foot) and replace the ball.
- If your ball is in an area of casual water or mud within the bunker, find the nearest point of relief within the bunker and play from that point without penalty. Only if the bunker is completely full of water may you drop out of the bunker on a straight line from the pin through the original ball position. If you are taking outside relief, announce this to your playing partners for their agreement.
- If there has been rain immediately before play, an announcement will be made about whether the bunkers will be in play. If they are, the above rules apply. Players are not entitled to relief from a bunker that is merely wet or has muddy areas. Relief from muddy areas within the bunker is allowed as above. No relief is given for wet sand, but you may rake or smooth the area as noted. If bunkers are not in play, drop the ball out of the bunker as if it is full of water, without penalty, along the line from the flagstick through the original ball position.

9. Number of Clubs

Members must comply with the USGA limit of 14 clubs in their bag and may not use any club from another player's bag. Using another player's club results in a 1-stroke penalty.

10. Ball Hit into Body of Water (Excluding Tee Shots on Par 4 and Par 5)

Drop your ball on the other side of the water on a line from the flagstick to where the ball entered the water, unless there is a designated "drop zone." Either drop incurs a 1-stroke penalty.

11. Ball Hit into and Found in a Non-Mowed Weed Area

The ball can be played from that spot without penalty or dropped two club lengths outside the nearest border of the non-mowed area with a 1-stroke penalty.

12. Moveable and Immovable Obstructions

- **Moveable obstructions:** These obstructions can be moved by the player without penalty.
- **Immovable obstructions:** (Anything artificial or temporary, including sprinkler heads) Players receive free relief, including for ball, stance, and swing.
- **No relief is available from:** Natural growing things, such as trees, shrubs, vines, bushes, tall grass, etc. Additional free relief is available within two club lengths of a sprinkler head in a closely mowed area (fairway length) where it is on the line of play and within two club lengths of the green. Relief in all such cases is a free drop within one club length, no closer to the hole, in the same length of grass.

13. Ball Unplayable

A player may declare a ball unplayable at any place on the course except in a penalty area. The Association follows USGA Rules except that you may not go back and replay the shot under a 1-stroke penalty.

14. Slow Play

You are not entitled to play at your own pace in the Association. Your group must keep up with the group ahead. The following required guidelines are:

- If your group finishes play in more than 4.5 hours and is 15 minutes behind the finishing time of the group ahead, each member of your group will be penalized 1 stroke.
- If your group is 20 minutes behind, each member will be penalized 2 strokes.
- If a player is identified with three such violations, they may not be invited back into the Association the following year. Five violations result in immediate dismissal from all remaining tournaments, and the Association entry fee will be refunded on a prorated basis.

15. Disqualification

Submitting a score under your name that ignores relevant penalties will result in disqualification for reporting a lower score than you achieved. Players caught practicing on the course during the event day, including chipping or putting on any course greens, will also be disqualified.