



Scottish Golf

**Golf now included in Government's
relaxing of lockdown restrictions**

Phase 1 – 29 May 2020

Introduction

We understand that a break from the game we miss will have had a significant impact on both the physical and mental health of thousands of golfers in Scotland.

These safe golf procedures focus on how golf clubs can re-introduce golf as part of the Government's Phase 1 relaxed restrictions in the first instance and have been prepared in consultation with Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland.

The golf community has been extended the opportunity to be an early sporting recipient that benefits from the relaxed restrictions. We urge everyone to be respectful of the preliminary guidelines and to apply good individual judgement, to ensure that in time we can move to a fully phased reintroduction of the game as we all know and love it.

It should be noted that the Scottish Government continues to monitor the situation closely and has not ruled out the reintroduction of restrictions, which could see golf suspended once again if public health measures dictate, or if the guidelines are not followed.

It is therefore imperative that golf clubs take the necessary steps outlined in this document prior to opening their courses for play and adhere to the guidelines, which could be subject to update or change at any time.

To support all golf clubs and golfers during this period, we have set up a designated area on the Scottish Golf website to ensure updates are clear and accessible to all. Click [here](#) to access our COVID-19 updates and through time additional phases of the re-introduction to golf in Scotland.

There may be a variance in guidelines and procedures throughout the UK, it is therefore important that golf clubs and golfers in Scotland follow procedures outlined by Scottish Golf and the Scottish Government.

Procedures for “Golf Clubs”

The following safe golf procedures set out the basis on how golf clubs can open and provide a safe environment for golfers as outlined by the Scottish Government’s Phase 1 relaxation of restrictions. Procedures are subject to change, and we would ask all golf clubs to regularly check [here](#) for updates.

For Golf Clubs to open their course they should first ensure that:

- All activity should be consistent with current guidance on health, physical distancing and hygiene – facilities should also make sure they can adapt to changes in guidance at short notice.

General Guidelines:

- Travel restrictions outlined by the Scottish Government should always be adhered to by members. [Click Here](#)
- Physical distancing rules outlined by the Scottish Government should always be adhered to. [Click Here](#).
- Members who are in the highest risk (shielding) group outlined by the Government should stay away from the golf club. Categories are outlined - [Click Here](#).
- Members with colds or any symptoms of COVID-19 should not be allowed on the premises of the golf club.

Preparing the Golf Course:

- Golf courses have been permitted to carry out essential maintenance during the period of course closure. As Golf Clubs prepare to open, routine maintenance practices can be restored, with the primary consideration being to ensure staff safety. Guidelines are available here - [Click Here](#)

Tee Times and Access to Course:

- Tee-times should be managed and booked in advance – there should be no turn up and play allowed.
- Daily timesheets and intervals are at the discretion of the golf club – the following groupings will be permitted on resumption of play:
 - Individuals playing golf on their own.
 - Two ball games, with household members or with a non-household member so long as they adhere to the Government’s physical distancing rules.
 - At the discretion of the golf club and subject to adherence of only mixing with one other household group play in groups of three or four-balls is permitted.
- If the golf course(s) are set up accordingly, two-tee start times are permitted.

- Competition play is not recommended in phase 1 of re-introduction. If clubs choose to run any competition, they should be for members only, and should follow the R&A guidelines set out in **schedule 1**
- Tee timesheets should be kept for a period of at least 6 weeks to assist with contact tracing should the need arise.

Clubhouse, Equipment and Course Set-up:

- All clubhouse facilities must remain closed. Starter facilities can operate, providing that all physical distancing measures are adhered to and appropriate measures are put in place.
- Risk assessment – should be carried out and documented.
- Physical distancing – the 2m rule applies to all these settings. Facilities need to adapt to encourage social distancing.
- Workforce – ensure the relevant workplace guidance is followed for staff, and any existing health and safety advice is maintained and aligned.
Cleaning – hand and respiratory hygiene are core measures and provision should be made for these. Clear guidance and plans are needed for cleaning facilities and equipment, and waste disposal. More detail is available in the governments non-healthcare guidance [Click Here](#) and we would encourage more detail to be provided/signposted to on this.
- There are no social gatherings, of any size, at the facility.
- Buggies, electric or pull trolleys, clubs should not be available for hire unless safe sanitising practices can be guaranteed.
- Where practice putting greens are open, the holes should be filled in, covered, or the cup raised and procedures for use should be considered, for example giving priority of use to the players in the next group due to tee off.
- Signage should be erected to reinforce physical distancing rules.
- Hand sanitisers should be made available.
- Bins, fountains, ball washers, rakes, benches, divot boxes and non-essential furniture are removed from the course. Where such fixtures are permanent, they should be taken out of use.
- Holes/cups should be altered to facilitate easy retrieval of golf balls.

Advance Planning and Communication with Golfers:

- Agree to put in place proper management procedures to ensure golfers comply to this protocol.
- Communication to all members that they should follow the “Procedures for Golfers.” Provide golfers with regular updates on any changes made.
- Members are instructed not to touch the flag / flagstick, or the flagstick should be removed.

- Caddies are not permitted (exception: where the group of golfers and the caddies are from the same household).
- One-off appointments for members who need to retrieve equipment from the locker rooms and/or trolley store should be agreed in advance of booking a tee-time. The locker rooms will not be in use and the appointment would be to ensure safe removal of all equipment from the facility.

Procedures for “Golfers”

The following procedures, which have been established to ensure a safe environment for all golfers and all on-site staff, set out the basis on how golfers can return to the fairways in a safe environment as outlined by the Scottish Government’s Phase 1 relaxation of restrictions. Not only are Golfers expected to comply with the rules they must also observe the government and public health restrictions [Click Here](#). Both sets of regulations / procedures are subject to change, we would ask all golfers to regularly check with Scottish Golf and their Golf Clubs for regular updates.

To ensure the safe return to golf in Scotland, golfers should adhere to the guidelines:

In advance of play:

- Travel to the golf course from your home must be in line with Scottish Government guidelines – in phase 1 local travel is noted as broadly 5 miles from home [Click Here](#)
- If you are in the highest risk (shielding) group outlined by the Government, then you should stay at home.
- If you are ill or have any symptoms of COVID-19 then stay at home.
- Schedule your tee-time in the manner prescribed by your golf club. Under no circumstances should you arrive at the club without booking in advance.
- Tee group sizes will be determined by the Golf Club.
- Ensure you have enough golf balls, tees etc. as the facilities at the Golf Club may be closed and you should not exchange equipment with other members.
- Aim to arrive at the Club no more than 15 minutes prior to play.
- Park your car in such a way as to facilitate physical distancing.
- Change your shoes in the car park

On the course:

- Do not arrive at the first tee more than 5 minutes before your allotted tee time.
- Always observe social distancing rules on the course.
- With no rakes allowed on the course, golfers to make their very best efforts to smooth the sand using their club and/or their feet.
- Following play of a hole, do not enter the next teeing area until the all members of the group in front have played their tee- shots and exited the teeing area.
- Do not share equipment, food or drink with other players during your round.
- Do not use on-course water fountains, ball cleaners etc.
- Do not touch the flag or flagstick. Putt with the flagstick in and remove your own ball from the hole. Remember not every putt needs to be holed out in casual golf.

After your round:

- Return directly to your car, change your shoes, put your equipment in your car and leave. Do not store your equipment in your locker.

In addition, following guidelines should be observed:

- Use toilet facilities at home before you leave.
- Bring your own hydration / food to the course.
- Bring your own hand sanitiser to the course and use regularly during the round.

Closing Remarks

Scottish Golf will remain in regular dialogue with Scottish Government, with regards to the procedures outlined in this document that are for playing golf during Phase 1 of relaxed restrictions. In addition, we will continue to work collaboratively with the UK Golf Industry for the safe return of our sport as and when it is determined by Scottish Government that it is acceptable for restrictions to be further eased in Scotland as outlined in the roadmap published on 21 May.

As we take to the fairways again, we must remember that it is our shared duty as custodians of golf to ensure that we all play our part in following the protocols set out in this document to ensure that a phased return to the game is managed in line with Scottish Government guidelines.

Given the fluidity of the current situation there may be a requirement to update and re-issue this guidance at regular intervals to reflect future government advice.

Schedule 1

R&A - Rules of Golf Related Matter

Until further notice, R&A have released the following provisions as acceptable rule changes on a temporary basis

Forms of Play and Scoring

- It is recommended that non-competition play is used during the initial period of golf being played, and that stroke play competitions involving players in different groups are avoided.
- If competitive stroke play is played, a method of scoring needs to be used that does not require any handling or exchanging of scorecards.
- Committees may choose to allow methods of scoring in stroke play that do not strictly comply with Rule 3.3b, or do not comply with the normal methods used under Rule 3.3b. For example:
 - Players may enter their own scores on the scorecard (it is not necessary for a marker to do it).
 - It is not necessary to have a marker physically certify the player's hole scores, but some form of verbal certification should take place.
 - It is not necessary to physically return a scorecard to the Committee provided the Committee can accept the scores in another way.
- As provided in the Rules of Golf, scorecards can be electronic, which could include emailing or texting scores to the Committee if acceptable to the committee.

Bunkers

- If golfers take due care when smoothing bunkers, there should be no need to provide a Local Rule for bunkers. But if the Committee feels that the enjoyment of the game is being significantly affected by there being no rakes, it may introduce preferred lies in bunkers and provide that a player may place a ball in the bunker within one club-length of the original spot and not nearer to the hole than that spot.

Flagstick

- Golfers are always required to leave the flagstick in the hole and not to touch it. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it establishes this policy by way of a Code of Conduct or Local Rule, and whether it provides a penalty under the Code of Conduct or for a breach of the Local Rule.
- As a temporary provision, flagsticks can be used for the purpose of player safety which do not meet the specifications in Part 8 of the Equipment Rules.

Hole and Holed

- The hole liner (sometimes referred to as the hole 'cup') is to be set in a way that means that all of the ball cannot be below the surface of the putting green, so the ball is considered holed if any part of it is below the surface of the putting green.
- To minimise the need to lift the ball from the hole, it is recommended that the Committee provides that a ball is holed with the next stroke if it is within 12 inches of the hole (which is just over the length of a standard putter grip). This does not prevent a player in match play conceding a stroke that is outside this length.
- The Committee may decide to have the hole liner sitting above the surface of the green and treat a ball as holed if it strikes the liner.