

20 BIGGEST RULE CHANGES ACCORDING TO EVE TANTA FROM EXPERT GOLF

1. **SEARCH TIME (Rule 18):** from 2019 you'll only have three minutes to search for a ball -previously it was five minutes. Please take a quick look at your watch before you start the search as this will speed up the game considerably.
2. **BALL MOVED DURING A SEARCH (Rule 7):** when you're looking for your ball in high grass you might accidentally tread on it and move it. You used to get a penalty for doing so. Now, there is no longer a penalty for this - the ball must be put back.
3. **EMBEDDED BALL (Rule 16):** if the ground is wet the ball may become embedded in the ground when it lands. Until now, you only got relief from embedded balls in closely mown areas like the fairway and the fringe. Now, you can take a free drop from all embedded balls in the general area, including in the semi rough and rough.
4. **CLUB LENGTH (definition):** until now the player could use any of his clubs to measure out Club lengths. Now, a club length is defined as the player's longest Club except for his putter.
5. **DROPPING (Rule 14):** until 1984 you had to drop backwards over your shoulder. Then from shoulder height – now, you have to drop from knee height. If you drop from shoulder height out of habit, don't worry, just pick the ball up and drop it again correctly without penalty.
6. **WRONG GREEN (Rule 13):** if the ball lands on the wrong green you're not allowed to play it from there as this would most likely damage the green. Previously, the player was allowed to take his stance on the wrong green and the nearest point of relief was always on the fringe. Now, you're also not allowed to stand on the wrong green, meaning that the spot for dropping is usually a bit further away from the green.
7. **BALL HITS THE PLAYER OR EQUIPMENT (Rule 11):** if the player hits himself or his own equipment, this used to result in a one stroke penalty. Now, there's no penalty. However, it must have happened accidentally. You're not allowed to use your equipment or foot as a ball stopper.
8. **DOUBLE HIT (Rule 10):** if your club gets stuck when you play a shot and you hit the ball more than once, you used to incur one penalty stroke. Now, there's no penalty, and the double hit just counts as one stroke.

9. TOUCHING SAND IN THE BUNKER (Rule 12): in a bunker the condition of the sand must not be tested before the stroke is played. The club must not be grounded behind the ball and you're not permitted to touch the sand during practice swings. This is still the case from 2019, but the rules are more relaxed when it comes to touching the sand. Incidentally, for instance, marks can be smoothed out as long as they are not on the line of play and you're now also permitted to lean on a club for example.
10. LOOSE IMPEDIMENTS (Rule 15): previously, you were not allowed to touch twigs, leaves, stones, branches and other loose impediments in hazards. Now, they can be removed anywhere, including in bunkers and penalty areas, which is what water hazards are called from 2019. Please bear in mind that the ball is still not supposed to move when removing loose impediments; otherwise it must be put back, and one penalty stroke is incurred.
11. UNPLAYABLE BALL IN THE BUNKER (Rule 19): if you declare your ball unplayable in a bunker you used to have three dropping options - each incurring one penalty stroke. The ball usually had to be dropped in the bunker, unless you return to the spot where you played your last stroke, whereby you lost the entire distance of that stroke. Now, there's a fourth option available - you can drop the ball directly behind the bunker, but this will then cost you two penalty strokes, instead of just one.
12. PENALTY AREAS (Rule 17): water hazards are now called penalty areas and no longer have to contain water. This means that golf clubs are free to mark other zones as penalty areas to enable players to take a sideways drop, and thus speed up the game.
13. TOUCHING THE GROUND AND WATER IN PENALTY AREAS (Rule 17): if you decide to play the ball from a penalty area this is now significantly simpler because you're allowed to ground the club. You can even set it down behind the ball in the water.
14. BALL MOVES ON THE GREEN AFTER BEING MARKED AND PUT BACK (Rule 13): if you mark your ball on the green, and then put it back, and it moves either by itself or by wind, it no longer has to be played from the new spot. It has to be put back again.
15. BALL ON THE GREEN MOVED ACCIDENTALLY BY THE PLAYER (Rule 13): previously, accidentally moving the ball on the green was already without penalty in lots of cases. Now, this type of mishap is without penalty all the time. It doesn't matter whether the club slips out of your hands, or you make a practice swing too

close to the ball, and the ball moves as a result. Just put the ball back without penalty.

16. REPAIRING DAMAGE ON THE GREEN (Rule 13): until now, you weren't allowed to repair the line of putts apart from a few exceptions, such as pitch marks and old hole plugs. Now, nearly all damage on the green can be repaired, including spike marks. But this isn't free license to smooth out the entire line of putts as natural imperfections are part of the game.
17. NO POSITIONING THE CLUB TO HELP LINE UP THE SHOT (Rule 10): some players have the habit of laying the club down on the ground to line up their shots. The new rule state that this is no longer allowed.
18. NO HELP FROM THE CADDIE TO LINE UP THE SHOT (Rule 10): this rule change mainly affects professionals. On TV, you have no doubt seen caddies kneeling behind their player to help them line up the putt. This is no longer allowed, and will hopefully speed up the game.
19. HITTING THE FLAG STICK (Rule 13): the most major rule change in my opinion concerns the flag. Hitting the flagstick is now without penalty, which means you can always leave the flag in the hole.
20. BALL WEDGED ON THE FLAGSTICK (Rule 13): previously, the flag had to be removed, in this case to let the ball fall into the hole. Now, the ball is classed as having been holed if part of the ball is below the lip.