

HOUSTON AMATEUR GOLF ASSOCIATION LOCAL RULES (March 2020)

Members can pick up a USGA Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf at the check-in table at any event. All tournaments are played in accordance with USGA rules and HAGA Local Rules. Each Player is responsible for knowing any additional rules for a specific tournament before play begins.

Some courses have a list of Local Rules on their scorecards. In general, rules identifying penalty areas and out of bounds and protecting young trees and flowers can be used. However, local rules which modify USGA rules are **NOT VALID for HAGA** tournaments (i.e. ball drops at penalty areas, free drops from ditches, winter rules, etc.). Unless the Tournament Director approves the use of drop zones at a tournament, they cannot be used.

1. CODE OF CONDUCT

Contestants (and their caddies/guests) are to observe proper golf etiquette at all times. Any abuse or disrespect of fellow competitors, employees and other players of the host facility, or other persons conducting or attending an HAGA sponsored event can be grounds for disqualification from the event and possible rejection of entry to future HAGA events. Such abuse may be verbal, physical or by threat and includes, but is not limited to, the use of obscene language, physical damage to property or equipment of the host facility, and abuse of alcohol or controlled substances during a competitive round.

Some courses have a particular dress code and this information may be obtained from the course prior to play. The HAGA dress code is straight forward; no cut off shorts, no sleeveless tee shirts and no tank tops. It is the responsibility of each Player to present themselves in accordance with golf course policy. Remember that we are guests at ALL courses!

2. PROMPT PACE of PLAY (RULE 5.6)

A group which finishes their round more than 20 minutes behind the group in front of them has violated the Prompt Pace of Play Rule and each Player in the group may be assessed a two stroke penalty. There is no penalty if the group's total time was 4 hours 30 minutes or less. If the first group finishes their round in a time which the Tournament Committee deems unreasonable, each Player in that group may be assessed a two stroke penalty. Any appeal of a slow play penalty must be made to the Rules Committee before all scores for the group are posted.

3. The HAGA occasionally plays courses that have not been marked to USGA guidelines. The following local rules have been established for such courses.

OUT OF BOUNDS

- A ball which comes to rest on or across a paved area, including roads and parking lots but not cart paths, is out of bounds.
- A ball, which comes to rest on property which is not part of the golf course, such as a residential yard, is deemed to be out of bounds.

MARGINS OF A PENALTY AREA

- If a penalty area is not marked with yellow or red stakes or lines, the margin is the natural limits of the penalty area (i.e., where the ground breaks down to form the depression containing the water).
- If the penalty area is not marked as yellow or red, it will be played as a red penalty area.

4. RELIEF from ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITIONS (RULE 16)

CRACKS IN THE EARTH - many courses, particularly in the dry summer months, have large cracks in the earth. If a Player's ball comes to rest in a crack at least one-quarter of an inch wide caused by hot dry conditions and the ball is not in a penalty area or bunker, the Player may take relief under Rule 16.1b. Interference does not exist if the crack only interferes with the Player's stance.

AERATION HOLES - if a Player's ball lies in or touches an aeration hole in the general area, the Player may take relief under Rule 16.1b. If the ball is on the putting green, the Player may take relief under Rule 16.1d. Interference does not exist if the aeration hole only interferes with the Player's stance or, on the putting green, the Player's line of play.

5. **ALTERNATIVE TO STROKE AND DISTANCE FOR A BALL LOST OR OUT OF BOUNDS (RULE 18)**

When a player's ball cannot be found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player has the option of taking a two-stroke penalty rather than proceeding under stroke and distance. This option cannot be used when the ball is known or virtually certain to be in a penalty area or the player has played a provisional ball. If neither the original ball nor the provisional ball can be found, this two-stroke penalty option may be used for the provisional.

For **two penalty strokes**, the player may take relief by dropping any ball inside the relief area formed by:

- a line from the hole through the ball reference point (where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest or it went out of bounds)
- a line from the hole through the point **on the fairway of the hole being played** that is nearest to the ball reference point. For purposes of this Local Rule, "fairway" means any area of grass in the General Area cut to fairway height or less.
- two club-lengths to the outside of either line.

The drop must be in the general area, and no nearer the hole than the ball reference point.

See attached Diagram.

6. **LIFT, CLEAN & PLACE** (LCP).

Only the Tournament Director (or acting Director) may make the decision to play LCP. Players may NOT elect to play LCP on their own.

- LCP in HAGA events are played in the general area.
 - This means it is permissible to LCP in the rough as well as the fairways.
 - LCP is not allowed in a penalty area or bunker.
- The ball may be cleaned when picked up.
- The ball is to be placed within 12" of the original position, no closer to the hole, that is not in a penalty area or bunker.
- If the ball does not stay on its original spot, the Player must try a second time. If the ball again does not stay on that spot, the Player must place the ball at the nearest spot where it will stay at rest that is not nearer the hole and is in the general area.
- If a ball has come to rest on the spot on which it is placed and it subsequently moves, there is no penalty and the ball must be played from its new spot, unless the provisions of any other Rule apply.

7. Players may typically bring guests or a caddie but there are exceptions so the Player should check with the course directly. The HAGA has adopted the following local rule regarding minors - Players may not bring onto the course any child under the age of 12. Breach of this rule is immediate disqualification and the Player will be asked to leave the course. The HAGA takes no responsibility for the safety and well-being of any Player and/or guest during an HAGA tournament.