

NEW GOLF RULES FROM JANUARY 1, 2019
ROLE OF THE CADDIE

Under Rule 10.2b(4):

- The current Rule that prohibits a player from making a stroke with their caddie (or their partner or partner's caddie) positioned behind the ball will be extended. So, once the player begins taking a stance for their stroke, and until the stroke is made, the player's caddie (or their partner or partner's caddie) must not deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball for any reason.
- There will be no penalty if the caddie (or partner or partner's caddie) accidentally stands on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball.

Under Rule 14.1b:

- The player's caddie will be allowed to mark and lift the player's ball on the putting green any time the player is allowed to do so, without needing authorisation.
- The caddie will continue to be allowed to replace the player's ball only if the caddie was the one who had lifted or moved the ball.

Reasons for change

Although a player may get advice from a caddie on the shot to be played, the line of play and similar matters, the ability to line up one's feet and body accurately to a target line is a fundamental skill of the game for which the player alone should be responsible. Allowing a caddie to stand behind a player taking a stance so as to direct the player how to line up undermines the player's need to use his or her own alignment skills and judgement.

This practice has been controversial for other reasons: Many players and others consider it to be distracting whilst also it may delay play, such as when players wait for the caddie to confirm they are correctly aligned as part of their set-up routine.

There is no compelling reason to prohibit a caddie from performing the purely mechanical acts of lifting and marking the player's ball when the ball is on the putting green. A player is already free to mark, lift, clean and replace a ball on the putting green at any time, and this happens routinely. The elimination of the penalty for a player who accidentally causes his or her ball to move on the putting green will eliminate any risk that allowing a caddie to mark, lift and replace the ball will result in unforeseen consequences to the player.

In many places, it is common practice for caddies to mark, lift, clean and replace the player's ball when it first comes to rest on the putting green without authorisation from the player, even though this is not permitted under the current Rules. In some areas of the world, this is a cultural expectation relating to the role of a caddie. In other places, this is done to help with pace of play - for example, where a caddie is shared by two players, the caddie may mark, lift, clean and replace one player's ball (so that he or she can be ready to play) before going to help the other player.

This change will also benefit players who have physical limitations that make it difficult to bend down to mark and lift the ball, without needing to give the caddie specific permission each and every time.

Giving the caddie this authority is consistent with the limited role of a caddie:

- Any player who prefers not to have the caddie mark and lift the ball will simply be able to tell the caddie not to do so.
- A caddie will still be prohibited from making strategic choices for the player, such as deciding to take relief under a Rule, deciding where to drop a ball, etc