

# **Guidance for Playing Golf in Wales and UK Under COVID-19 Restrictions**

**Version 3. 18/05/2020**



Following recent Welsh Government announcements and the revision of certain Covid-19 related - restrictions, golf clubs are permitted to open if they so wish. It is entirely at each golf club's discretion as to whether they choose to open and if so when they choose to do so. We would advise that clubs that do wish to re-open do not do so immediately to ensure they have appropriate protocols in place to adhere to these guidelines, which Wales Golf is on hand to assist with. This would allow for a managed and co-ordinated reintroduction of golf across Wales from next Monday 18 May at the earliest.

*Members are reminded that current Government restrictions state;*

***'Exercise should be local to people's homes'***

*'which means people cannot drive to exercise outside their local area; people also cannot exercise with anyone other than a member of their own household.*

*'More than two people congregating in a public place is regarded as a gathering, which is an offence under the regulations.'*

Therefore, **golfers** can only **play local to their home**, alone (**a one-ball**) unless **playing with another person in their own household (a two-ball)**. Golfers in the car park, around the club and out on the course must stay in their one-ball or household two-ball to ensure there is **no congregating** which is an offence under the regulations.

The latest guidance from Welsh Government on leaving home to exercise can be accessed by [clicking here](#) . Please note that all the regulations referred to above are from Welsh Government and not from Wales Golf.

If golf continues to be allowed, the Protocol governing the safe playing of the game (below) may be updated in line with any changes to public health measures. For these reasons, we will continue to monitor developments very closely and will update our advice as required. It is essential, therefore, that golf clubs and golfers regularly check [www.walesgolf.org](http://www.walesgolf.org) for updates.

As one of the first sports to be allowed to resume, there is a **major responsibility for golf clubs and golfers** to ensure that our sport is conducted **safely** and **responsibly**. **Full adherence** to the provisions of this Protocol is essential. It should be noted that the Government continues to monitor the situation closely and retains the right to reintroduce restrictions **which could see golf clubs closed once again** if the **Protocol is not followed**.

**Juniors (in the initial back2golf phase).**

Juniors must be accompanied by an adult from their household (even if the other person is not playing they can supervise) in this initial phase. For **juniors aged 16 and 17 years only** (at the club's discretion):

- The club could gain signed consent from parent/ guardian (this must also contain an emergency contact for the parents/guardian) and ensure the junior has the number of the person based in the club-house in case of an emergency on the course. The club must ensure that all the safety rules and guidelines have been understood.

## **Risk Assessment linked to COVID-19**

Golf clubs must conduct a risk assessment to plan, prepare, and mitigate risk linked to COVID-19. It also must be adapted to the needs of the club and aligned and amended according to the correct Government advice and restrictions. A Wales Golf template risk assessment has been developed to support clubs in implementing the safest possible procedures. This is available by contacting the Wales Golf Development team by [clicking here](#).

PPE should also be used where applicable. Wales Golf can also put clubs in contact with several retailers who can provide this

## **Introduction to Updated Maintenance of the Course**

The following update (Version 3) to the Essential Maintenance Statement for Golf Courses has been produced in association with BIGGA and has been published in view of alteration to Government regulations in England and Wales.

### **Updated Maintenance of the Course**

#### **Safe Routine Maintenance Practices can be Restored in England and Wales**

Alterations to Government regulations in England and Wales mean golf clubs are re-opening. Consequently, routine maintenance practices can be restored in England and Wales, providing safe working practices are in place and all golf facilities implement stringent measures to ensure staff members are not at risk. The number of greenkeeping staff and the amount of time they spend at work should be tailored to fit with safe working practices. These include but are not limited to:

- Focus on hygiene and social distancing
- Ensure staff members work separately
- Allocate individual machinery to one worker only
- If multiple staff are on site, then stagger working hours and break times
- Limit or prohibit use of communal areas
- Regularly disinfect any surface that is contacted e.g. door handles, fuel pumps, communal machinery
- Ensure there is a robust lone working policy
- Ensure that golfers and greenkeepers are kept separate from each other and observe social distancing

[Click here](#) for previous essential maintenance guidance

The industry operational guidelines can also be found by [clicking here](#)

### **Toilet facilities**

Clubs should contact their **local Environment Health and Safety authority** for advice and guidance regarding **opening toilet facilities**. It is also recommended that clubs **check** everything with **their insurance companies**.

## Driving Ranges

Driving Ranges should not open in the initial phase, driving ranges contain a number of hard surfaces and remain a high risk area for the spread of COVID-19.

## Retail and Coaching

Wales Golf and The PGA would today (15 May) would like to clarify the following points for PGA Members based in Wales.

We would like to remind you that you must abide by the Welsh Government restrictions, and not those of England.

### Retail

- Golf retail shops are currently not listed on the Welsh Government list of premises that can open for retail purposes therefore must remain closed.
- Essential access to a building such as a Professional shop for Clubs which operate a booking system to regulate tee times, registration and take payment, is permissible provided appropriate social distancing precautionary measures are put in place.
- Further detail can be found here: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-closure-businesses-and-premises-0>

### Coaching

- Under current Welsh Government restrictions, coaching is not permissible because of laws against 2 or more members of the public congregating.
- In preparation for coaching to start when restrictions are lifted, it is recommended that PGA professionals complete a comprehensive risk assessment and refer to the coaching guidelines on the PGA COVID-19 resource hub [<https://www.pga.info/covid-19-resource-hub/>]

### Further Guidance

- Where there is room for doubt, our advice would be to pursue the safest option. For any further clarification, we suggest that clubs check with their local Trading Standards and Health and Safety authorities.

## Coping with Demand

Demand for golf will be high initially and is likely to continue and as we progress through the phases. Members will need to be aware of the limited basis at which they have the opportunity to play.

Clubs could consider:

- 9 hole golf only (e.g. front 9 or back 9)
- The first tee times to be available for players from the same household (only if implemented) Golfers in households to adhere to social distancing guidelines to avoid confusion as we progress through the stages.
- Additional tee times for single use only (initial phase).

- Opening and closing the course at a time that will enable the greenkeepers to maintain the course safely. E.g. the back 9 holes Monday to Friday at 9am opening and Saturday – Sunday at 8am opening. Some clubs may even start earlier if this suits arrangement with green-keepers and that daylight allows.
- The number of days in advance members can book e.g. 3 days
- The restriction of booking one tee time per day
- Names to be provided of all golfers
- Staff to ensure players on the course match the booked tee sheet.
- Juniors to be accompanied by an adult from within their household.
- Member-only booking and introducing member's guests and visitors (at a premium at a later date)
- Non-compliance linking to the club's code of conduct and disciplinary and government policies allow, larger numbers may be allowed and clubs could revert back to an 18 hole format procedures
- As soon as demand for tee times reduces

Ensure members have clear booking guidelines:

For example:

- Members must book a tee time online using your online system or telephone line where online booking is not applicable (member cannot just turn up)
- State how tee times will be spaced e.g. 10 min intervals or more
- Members can only play in one (or two balls if players are from the same household)
- Members can only book for themselves or household two ball.
- Membership categories need to be adhered to and booking for days/times usually available e.g. 5-day memberships for those days only.

### **Industry Protocol**

UK Golf Industry (led by the R&A) has carefully considered how to ensure the safe management of a golf facility when government COVID-19 restrictions are eased. These detailed industry guidelines have been issued for the benefit of all staff, including greenkeepers, club professionals and golf facility managers, administrators and, of course, all golfers (see <https://www.pga.info/covid-19-resource-hub/>).

Golfers will be required to comply with the rules on social distancing throughout. Some temporary provisions in relation to the Rules of Golf will also be necessary to ensure safe play (see below).

While each club/facility will need to adapt its procedures to ensure compliance with government restrictions, the following aspects of the golfer experience, divided into the five following categories, will need to be considered:

- a. Course Set Up
- b. Before the Round
- c. During the Round
- d. After the Round
- e. Rules of Golf Related Matters

## **a. Course Set-Up**

For up to date guidance on essential maintenance, please refer to the most current version of the "Essential Maintenance Statement for Golf Courses during COVID-19 Outbreak". Visit [www.walesgolf.org](http://www.walesgolf.org)

### On-Course Items

- All rakes and ball-retrievers to be removed
- Ball washers and drinking fountains to be covered up
- Benches and bins to be removed, covered or sign-posted in such a way that players don't touch them.
- All other removable items to be removed, except that stakes defining areas of the course can be treated as immovable obstructions.

### Hole and Flagstick

- Flagsticks can be retained but it is strongly recommended that a sign is put on the flagstick stating that it is not to be touched.
- A method of inserting the hole liner to be used that means that all of the ball does not fall below the surface of the putting green and can be easily retrieved by handling the ball only.

### Practice Areas

- Practice areas, including practice nets, to be closed unless safe sanitising practices can be guaranteed.

## **b. Before the Round**

### Bookings

- Clubs/facilities to organise a system of booking and allocation of tee times that ensures the safety of staff and golfers.
- The maximum number of golfers in a group per tee time to be confirmed by the club/facility and must be in accordance with any government requirements (as set out above, currently this is a 1 ball unless players are from the same household)
- There is to be a minimum of 10-minute intervals between tee times, but longer intervals may be more appropriate depending on the club/facility.

### Arrival and Waiting to Play

- The clubhouse and locker room facilities will be closed.
- Limited essential access (for example to use the toilets where applicable) may be allowed by the club/facility.
- Clubs/facilities to communicate in advance with golfers to advise on social distancing requirements that are being applied on arrival at the club/facility, for example not leaving cars until a certain time before their tee time.
- Clubs/facilities to have procedures in place to ensure social distancing requirements in the area of the professional's shop or starter's building in advance of golfers teeing off.

- No trolleys, carts or other items to be available for hire unless safe sanitising practices can be guaranteed.
- Clubs/facilities to have procedures in place for the practice putting green, for example giving priority of use to the player(s) in the next group due to tee off.

### **c. During the Round**

- Guidance and reminders should be provided by clubs/facilities to golfers is to ensure that they keep at least 2 metres apart during the round.
- Teeing Areas
- Remind golfers to keep 2 metres apart at teeing areas due to the normal close proximity of golfers to one another when tee shots are being played.

#### General

- Remind golfers to stay more than 2 metres apart when walking to the ball, searching for a ball and playing shots.
- Remind golfers not to touch stray balls.

#### Bunkers

- With no rakes allowed on the course, remind golfers to make their very best efforts to smooth the sand using their club and/or their feet.

#### Putting Green

- Remind golfers to keep 2 metres apart on the putting greens and not to touch the flagstick.

### **d. After the Round**

- Remind golfers that social distancing is as important after a round as it is during the round, so when the round is over they must leave the course and the club/facility immediately so that there are no gatherings around the clubhouse area.

### **e. Rules of Golf Related Matters**

Until further notice, the following provisions are considered acceptable 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 hole 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.

#### 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 required to leave the flagstick in the hole at all times 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.

Note: Consult the relevant handicapping authority on whether scores using any of the above provisions are acceptable for handicapping purposes

Below is the Wales Golf Stay Safe Guidance for Golfers info-graphic, produced using the industry guidance. This is a resource to help you communicate with club members and players. It is available to download by [clicking here](#).





EVERYONES GAME. ANYWHERE



**GOLFERS STAY SAFE GUIDANCE**

**2 METRE SOCIAL DISTANCING AT ALL TIMES!**

**1 BEFORE YOUR ROUND**

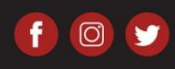
**2 DURING YOUR ROUND**

**3 AFTER YOUR ROUND**

- BEFORE YOUR ROUND**
  - Book your round of golf online if possible
  - If you are ill or have symptoms, stay at home
  - Use the toilet facilities before you leave home
  - Bring your own hydration/ food to the course
  - Arrive at the facility 15 minutes before tee time and change shoes etc. in the car park
  - Do not arrive at the first tee more than 5 minutes before your allotted tee time
  - No roll ups or groups to congregate around the club or tee area
- DURING YOUR ROUND**
  - 1 player on the tee box
  - Smooth the sand with your club or foot
  - Keep 2 metres social distancing at all times across the course
  - Do not touch the flagstick
  - Do not exchange equipment with other e.g. borrowing tees or balls
- AFTER YOUR ROUND**
  - Do not shake hands
  - Leave the venue as soon as your game is complete

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**13.05.2020**

**SUPPORTED BY WALES GOLF STAFF TO DEVELOP YOUR CLUB.**  
MEET THE TEAM HERE [WWW.WALESGOLF.ORG](http://WWW.WALESGOLF.ORG)



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