

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

Version 5. 29/05/2020



Red text indicates updated text since the last document

Following Welsh Government announcements on 29th May 2020, which will come into force on the 1st June 2020, we have updated Wales Golf guidelines. [Click here](#) for further information on the Welsh Government announcement.

What is the new 'Local' travel guidance?

The Welsh Government states:

'As a general rule, for most people anything within about five miles of your home is considered local.'

[Click here](#) for latest Welsh Government Local Travel advice.

Can I play golf with people outside my household?

The Welsh Government states:

'Members of two separate households to meet outdoors at any one time as long as they stay local and maintain social distancing.'

[Click here](#) for latest Welsh Government advice around meeting different households.

Taking this information into consideration, the following groupings are allowed when playing golf and when travel is 'local':

- Individuals playing golf on their own.
- Two balls:
 - Two players from one household
 - Two players from different households
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At the discretion of the golf club, play in groups of three or four-balls is permitted in the following forms;

- Three balls:
 - Three players from one household
 - Two players from one household with one from another household
- Four balls:
 - Four players from one household
 - Two players from one household with two from another household
 - One player from one household and three from another household

Physical distancing guidelines and industry guidelines must be adhered to before, during, and after the round.

Congregating outside of two household groups is an offence under the new regulations.

The latest guidance from the 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 that golf clubs and golfers regularly check 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

At the club's discretion, juniors should be accompanied by an adult until the club, and their parents/guardians are confident the junior(s) can adhere to the new guidelines and protocol.

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 4) to the Essential Maintenance Statement for Golf Courses has been produced in association with BIGGA. It 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

Safe Routine Maintenance Practices for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland Alterations to Government regulations mean golf clubs have either reopened or are reopening. Consequently, routine maintenance practices can be restored, providing safe working practices are in place that are in line with Government safe working guidelines, 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 the 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

For current maintenance, guidance [click here](#).

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

Maintaining hygiene, through handwashing, sanitisation facilities, and toilets

To help everyone maintain good hygiene, consideration should be given to:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into your arm
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms
- Enhancing cleaning for busy areas
- Sufficient provision of automated hand sanitising dispensers in public places

Toilet and Washroom 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**.

Based on the above if the club decides to open the washrooms:

- A full risk assessment should be carried out
- A one in one out system and 2 metre queueing point could be implemented outside the building which can help ensure physical distancing.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible
- More frequent rubbish collection
- Replacing hand dryers with paper towels in handwashing facilities

Retail, Coaching and Driving Ranges

Wales Golf and The PGA 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

- From today's announcement, no changes were confirmed regarding non-essential retail. Non-essential retailers are encouraged to prepare over the next three weeks ahead of the following review. Golf retail shops are currently not listed on the Welsh Government list of premises that can open for retail purposes, therefore, they must remain closed. Essential access to a building such as a Professional shop for Clubs that 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

- With the changes to Welsh Guidelines, coaching is now permissible under strict infection control measures, observing 2-metre physical distancing and must take place outside. Coaching must be either one coach to one household individual or one coach with a household group.
- To comply with this regulation, you should enforce strict hygiene measures, and 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/>

Driving Ranges

- Driving ranges contain several hard surfaces and remain a high-risk area for the spread of COVID-19.
- We are awaiting further clarification concerning driving ranges opening. Some driving ranges may be able to open if they can operate outdoors - E.g., on a grass area, with outdoor access points, and not under-cover.
- If relevant authorities agree it is safe to open, facilities MUST conduct a full risk assessment.

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, and full risk assessments must be carried out.

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:

- Nine-hole golf only (e.g., front nine or back 9)
- Opening and closing the course at a time that will enable the greenkeepers to maintain the course safely. E.g., the back nine holes Monday to Friday at 9 am opening and Saturday – Sunday at 8 am 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., three days
- The restriction of booking one tee time per day
- Names to be provided of all golfers
- Checks to take place regarding two household groups within each three or, 4-ball.
- 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)
- 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

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 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 one 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 does 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

Competition

Wales Golf guidance regarding club competition is available by [clicking here](#).

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



WALES GOLF
EVERYONES GAME. ANYWHERE

BACK2GOLF

GOLFERS STAY SAFE GUIDANCE

2 METRE SOCIAL DISTANCING AT ALL TIMES!
SANITISE YOUR HANDS AND GOLF BALL BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER YOUR ROUND

1 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
- Sanitise equipment before and after play
- Bring your own hand sanitiser 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

2 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

3 AFTER YOUR ROUND

- Do not shake hands
- Leave the venue as soon as your game is complete

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18.05.2020

USE ALONG WITH CURRENT CLUB, GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY ADVICE. WWW.WALESGOLF.ORG/COVID-19/

Want to know more about Wales Golf? Log on to the website and click on www.walesgolf.org/findoutmore