

## Best Practice Championships & Competitions During COVID -19

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Resources

Wales Golf COVID-19 Resource Hub - <https://www.walesgolf.org/covid-19/>

The PGA COVID-19 Resource Hub - <https://www.pga.info/covid-19-resource-hub/>

The R&A Golf during COVID-19 Pages - <https://www.randa.org/en/theranda/initiatives/golf-during-covid-19>

Welsh Government COVID-19 information - <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

---

#### General

**Q. Can competition golf commence in Wales?**

A. Yes. Although relevant and up-to-date guidance from Welsh Government and Wales Golf MUST be adhered to for the safety of all competitors

**Q. Does Social Distancing need to be enforced?**

A. Yes. Measures must be taken to remind all players of their obligations to social distancing. Signage and information should be used where required, and repeated non-adherence should be linked to the club's disciplinary process.

**Q. What else should I consider to make the competition safe?**

A. Working alongside existing risk assessments at the club, make sure appropriate protocols are in place for the practice facilities, arrival times, pro shop access and flow of the clubhouse (when open) and the facilities within. Ensure hand sanitiser is available in appropriate areas. If you are setting up a tournament office or an area from which operations of the event are taking place, consider entry and exit routes and ensure procedures are implemented to ensure social distancing.

**Q. Can "guests" of the golf club play competitions?**

A. Yes, but pay particular care to these players as they may be unfamiliar with the club and the facilities. Ensure signage is adequate and clear, and relevant information is communicated clearly.

**Q. Can competitions be handicap qualifying?**

A. Yes, although there are certain restrictions around local rules so please refer to this section later in this document for more information.

**Q. Welsh Government rules stipulate a maximum of 30 people in an organised sporting event. Does that mean 30 people maximum can play in a competition?**

A. No. The 30 person rule would apply to each hole of the course essentially, thus creating 18 separate playing fields. Therefore the maximum numbers who can play will be dictated by your group sizes and tee time intervals.

#### Local Rules

**Q. Are the Rules of Golf still relevant at this time?**

A. Yes. The COVID-19 specific guidance does not render the Rules of Golf themselves obsolete, they are additional options available to you.

- Q. Some of these rules seem a little over the top and are very unlikely to spread the virus.**  
A. It is important to assess these local rules as a collective set rather than individually and their impact on helping reduce the spread of the virus. When these measures are implemented together they have a far greater influence on ensuring all golfers can play socially and competitively in as safer environment as possible.
- Q. Can we use scorecards for competitions?**  
A. In a way, yes, but it is recommended that modifications are made. Cards should not be exchanged between players for both scoring and signing purposes, so players can mark their own scores. Cards can be "returned" if required however, alternative methods such as photographs & emailing or texting scores should also be accepted.
- Q. If players are responsible for their own scores, how do I check they are accurate?**  
A. It is not essential for cross-checking at this time, however, if some form of verbal confirmation (or otherwise) from playing partners is possible then it is recommended
- Q. If cards are handed in, what processes should I consider?**  
A. Cards could be left for 72 hours without being handled to enable decontamination, or another method of sanitising the cards should be used.
- Q. Can players input scores & enter competitions on a touch screen at the club?**  
A. Yes, provided systems are in place to ensure cross-contamination is prevented. Restricted use, disposable layers of cling film after each use or constant sanitising should all be considered if the screen is in use.
- Q. Do flagsticks still have to remain in the hole?**  
A. It is strongly recommended that this is enforced for all play at the club.
- Q. Is there any solution to removing the flagstick at will for competition play?**  
A. Other options can be pursued depending on resources, so for larger competitions and event volunteers or strict sanitising protocols could be used to allow flags to be removed. However any such protocols should prioritise in avoiding cross-contamination.
- Q. Are there any rules that can ensure the flagstick is centred in the hole while I putt?**  
A. Yes. Players can use their clubs to "hold" the flagstick in a centred position for others while they play. This will also assist on windy days with flagsticks buffeting. This must be done with equipment of the players and not with a hand, even if gloved or using a towel.
- Q. Should we still need to adapt the hole for competition play?**  
A. Yes. The hole should be shallowed in some form so that the ball is easier to retrieve once holed, or a device added to the flagstick so that players can use their putters to lift the ball from the hole without touching it.
- Q. The ball is more likely to bounce out when otherwise it would have gone in. Can I count this as holed?**  
A. No, the ball must still come to rest in the hole or against the flagstick with some part of the ball below the surface of the hole. If it bounces out of the hole, or off the flagstick, the ball is to be played as it lies.
- Q. Can we allow 'gimmes' for short putts?**  
A. Again, no. Normal rules in stroke play for holing out apply.
- Q. Should we reinstate rakes for bunkers in our competitions?**  
A. No. Rakes should remain off the golf course at this time
- Q. Can we implement Preferred Lies in bunkers because of the footprints?**  
A. Yes, you can implement preferred lies up to a club-length, no nearer the hole, should you wish to do so. Although to be handicap qualifying, the maximum distance allowed for preferred lies is 6 inches.

**Q. Can bunkers be classed as Ground Under Repair?**

A. Some or all of your bunkers can be classed as ground under repair during this time. However, do consider the natural challenge these add to the course before doing so; it is recommended to use the preferred lies option wherever possible.

**Q. Can you use clip-on rakes which players can take round with them?**

A. Yes, if resources allow you to do this, then this would be permitted. If clip-on rakes are provided but the club then they must be thoroughly sanitised before and after use.

**Q. Can we use Foursomes or Greensomes as a format at the moment?**

A. The short answer is yes, but other options may be more appropriate. If you are set on foursomes or greensomes, it is recommended procedures are in place to ensure only one player is handling the golf ball throughout.

**Q. The local rules in place at the moment can influence the result at times. Should we run all competitions?**

A. Difficult to answer. Consider what is best for your club and the prospective players in your competition. It is certainly important to consider the impact of these restrictions on each competition individually. Some competitions may be more appropriate to run than others at this time.

**Q. Are there any other things to consider on the golf course specifically relating to COVID-19?**

A. Within the rules of golf, any obstruction can be deemed immovable. It may be appropriate at your club to change the status of movable obstructions to immovable to prevent people from touching and moving objects. For example, safety signage, ropes and posts and GUR fencing could be deemed immovable if you wished to do so.

**Q. How often should our local rules be assessed?**

A. There is no hard and fast rule here, but you can change local rules at any time if it is appropriate for your club to do so. You can continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the local rules through this time.

**Q. How long will we need to keep these rules in place?**

A. There is no time limit available at present, however, to ensure maximum safety for all and to demonstrate to the government that golf can be played safely, these rules should be implemented and adhered to whilst the COVID-19 pandemic remains active.

**Q. What penalties should we enforce to ensure these local rules are upheld?**

A. Often the Rules of Golf will suffice, so the breach of these local rules would result in a general penalty (i.e. removing the flagstick). However, additional penalties can be applied via the implementation of a code of conduct (Rule 1.2b) if deemed relevant.

## **Handicapping**

**Q. If there is a delay in processing cards due to COVID-19, do players need to self-cut?**

A. Yes, players should cut themselves before they play in other competitions based on the SSS score of the course.

**Q. Can new members put in 3 cards to gain a new handicap?**

A. Yes, the process for this from a handicapping rules perspective is the same as before. You do need to bear in mind procedures at the club for collecting and processing the scorecards

**Q. Can category 1 golfers put in supplementary scores if as we have missed a lot of competition golf this summer?**

A. No

- Q. If we choose to run non-qualifying competitions because the rules we are using are not suitable or we are sticking to social golf, can we cut players handicaps who are putting in good scores?**
- A. No, the rules regarding pre-registration for supplementary scores and assessment of handicaps in non-qualifying competitions remain.
- Q. Can we retrospectively enter a supplementary score**
- A. No
- Q. Are players going to lose their 'c' status on their handicap if they don't manage to play 2 qualifiers this year?**
- A. No, we will move to the World Handicap System in November, and you will no longer have or need a 'c' status.

### **Other Procedures**

- Q. When clubhouses open will noticeboard entry be permitted?**
- A. It is recommended not to do so as there are contamination risks and also the notice board would act as a congregation point. Online entry and booking continues to be strongly recommended.
- Q. How should we do a competition sign-in on the actual day?**
- A. This is no set procedure here, but any processes should have all other factors relating to COVID-19 in consideration, where possible contactless sign up is strongly advisable.
- Q. Do we need to continue with 10 minute tee time intervals?**
- A. This does depend on your course layout and group size rules at your club. If you have a straight away gentle hole to start, then intervals could potentially be shorter but should continue to be monitored to ensure congestion both at the 1<sup>st</sup> tee and on the course is avoided wherever possible.
- Q. Are we allowed to open locker rooms prior to the clubhouse opening?**
- A. No, not for the use of changing and storing items, however they can be opened to allow people to access the toilet facilities. When doing this, ensure entry and exit routes have been considered, regular cleaning is in place, appropriate signage and social distancing can be maintained etc.