Golf Moldova

The Rules of Golf: a cheat-sheet

The rules you will meet most often, in plain language. Golf is usually played without a referee: know the basics and apply your own penalties.

The basics

- Play the course as you find it and the ball as it lies.
- Be considerate, keep up the pace and look after the course.
- Take no more than about 40 seconds for a stroke once it is your turn.

On the tee

- Tee your ball between the markers and up to two club-lengths behind them. You may stand outside the area.
- In stroke play, "ready golf" is encouraged: whoever is ready plays, if it is safe.

Lost ball and out of bounds

- You have 3 minutes to search for a ball.
- Lost or out of bounds (white stakes or lines): add one penalty stroke and play again from where you hit the last shot.
- Not sure? Hit a provisional ball first, and say that it is a provisional.
- Some courses allow an alternative (Local Rule E-5): drop near where the ball was lost or on the fairway edge, for two penalty strokes.

Penalty areas

- Yellow or red stakes or lines. Play the ball as it lies, or take relief for one penalty stroke.
- Yellow and red: replay from the last spot, or drop on a line straight back from the hole through where the ball crossed in.
- Red only: you may also drop within two club-lengths of where it crossed in, no nearer the hole.

Unplayable ball

- Anywhere except a penalty area, for one penalty stroke: replay from the last spot, drop on a line straight back, or drop within two club-lengths, no nearer the hole.
- In a bunker, the ball must stay in the bunker, unless you take two penalty strokes to drop outside it.

Bunkers

- You may remove loose stones, leaves and rakes.
- Do not touch the sand with your hand or club to test it, or right in front of or behind the ball, or in a practice swing or backswing.
- Rake the sand when you leave.

On the green

- Mark, lift and clean your ball.
- Repair pitch marks, spike marks and old hole plugs.
- No penalty if you accidentally move your ball or marker: put it back.
- Putt with the flagstick in or out: no penalty if the ball hits it.

Dropping a ball

- Hold the ball at knee height and let it fall straight down into the relief area, usually one or two club-lengths and never nearer the hole.
- If it rolls out twice, place it.

Before you play

- Read the scorecard or notice board for local rules and course boundaries.
- For the full Rules on your phone, get The R&A's free app "Rules of Golf 2023" from the App Store or Google Play.

Summary only, not the official text. The Rules of Golf are written by The R&A and the USGA: randa.org