



THEN AND NOW

A
**REFRESHER
ON
CHANGES
TO THE
RULES
THIS
CENTURY**

If you recall all those times you were urged to memorise The Rules of Golf but said, “Forget it, that’s what carrying around the booklet is for,” congratulate yourself for smart procrastination. The rules of the game have been updated numerous times since 2000, including hundreds of revisions or additions – some fairly significant. So had you committed as much of the book to memory as possible a decade or more ago, you might be out of touch with current mandates. If you’d like to get up to speed, here are a handful of the key changes that have taken place this century. — **Cliff Schrock**

Illustration by James Yang

- **IT USED TO BE...** If your ball moved after you addressed it, you were penalised regardless of whether you caused it to move.
BUT NOW... You’re only penalised if it’s more likely than not that you caused your ball to move after you addressed it (RULE 18-2).
- **IT USED TO BE...** It was a penalty to smooth sand in a bunker before playing a shot from that bunker, no matter the intent.
BUT NOW... If the intent is to tidy and doesn’t improve conditions for your next shot in a bunker, you can smooth sand (RULE 13-4, EXCEPTION).
- **IT USED TO BE...** You couldn’t share distance information about how far the ball was from the hole.
BUT NOW... You can ask or give yardages to other golfers at anytime (DEFINITIONS).
- **IT USED TO BE...** Loose impediments could only be removed from a green by hand or by club, provided you didn’t press anything down.
BUT NOW... As long as you don’t press anything down on your line of putt, you can remove loose impediments by any means (RULE 16-1A).
- **IT USED TO BE...** Caddies and partners were allowed to stand behind you, on or close to your line of play as you hit a shot, but not a putt.
BUT NOW... Unless inadvertent, your caddie, partner or his caddie can’t stand close to your line of play as you hit a shot or putt (RULE 14-2B).
- **IT USED TO BE...** You addressed the ball when you took your stance and grounded the club, except in a hazard where only taking your stance constituted address.
BUT NOW... You’ve addressed the ball by grounding the club in front of or behind it. Generally, you can’t address a ball in a hazard without incurring a penalty (DEFINITIONS).
- **IT USED TO BE...** Listening to music for entertainment was not addressed, therefore legal as long as it didn’t assist in making a stroke or play.
BUT NOW... Listening to music that might assist in making a stroke or play, or for a prolonged period, is a penalty (DECISION 14-3/17).
- **IT USED TO BE...** Discovering a 15th club in your bag before a round, declaring it out of play but still carrying it during the round was a penalty.
BUT NOW... A 15th club discovered in your bag shortly before a round and declared to be out of play is still OK to carry (DECISION 4-4C/1).

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