

Reasons for change

By giving players affirmative guidance, support and encouragement on prompt play, these proposed Rule changes will:

- Make clear what is considered prompt play, by both beginners and experienced players. This includes the maximum amount of time it should normally take to make a stroke.
- Encourage players to play faster by using ready golf.

Enforcing pace of play will continue to be primarily up to each Committee, as there are limits to the ways the Rules can insist that players play promptly.

For example, it is impractical for the Rules to impose penalties whenever a player does not complete a round or a hole or make a stroke in a fixed time:

- Golf is played in so many different settings and by so many different people that time limits may naturally differ for any competition or course.
- There is also no practical way to require all players to follow, and to enforce against one another, any form of shot clock for each stroke.

These changes will enable Committees to point to specific expectations set by the Rules when using their authority to enforce prompt play. They will also encourage every Committee to adopt a pace of play policy so that all players on the course, whatever their ability, will know what is expected of them.

Limiting the search period to three minutes is more consistent with the underlying principle that golf is to be played in a prompt and continuous way, without long pauses in play.

In most cases, if the ball is going to be found, it will be found within the first three minutes.

The total delay for a lost ball can be much longer than the search time alone. For example, it may take 10 minutes or longer to look unsuccessfully for a tee shot by adding up the five minutes for search, the walk back to the tee to play another ball under penalty of stroke and distance, and the walk back down the hole to where that ball comes to rest.

The time taken in each ball search can also have a negative impact on the pace of play of following groups. When there are multiple long ball searches, the cumulative delay can be major for all those playing on the course.

Although this change may increase the number of lost balls, on average the overall impact should be to speed up play.

Knowing that the search time is limited to three minutes should encourage players to play a provisional ball when they believe there is a chance their ball may not be found.