

GROTON SENIOR GOLF LEAGUE RULES

1/8/2026

The play is according to the USGA Rules of Golf that became effective 1/1/19. You will find them easier and friendlier. A summary of the most important Rules follows. The links at each of the Rules below are to USGA videos that help explain the new rules. There are additional videos about other new rules on the following index page for your viewing pleasure
<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/major-changes.html>

The GSGL local rules include **Rule #4** and make the exceptions on the next page.

New Rules:

1. Dropping ball for relief: Drop from knee height.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/new-procedure-for-dropping-a-ball.html>

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/where-a-dropped-ball-must-come-to-rest.html>

2. Measuring relief distance: Use longest club (not putter).

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/measuring-the-size-of-the-relief-area.html>

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/taking-relief.html>

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/procedure-for-taking-lateral-relief.html>

3. Double-hits: No penalty.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/ball-accidentally-struck-more-than-once.html>

4. Ball lost or OB: Drop in vicinity of where it went out (including into the fairway); **2-stroke** penalty.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/golfs-new-rules-stroke-and-distance.html>

5. No penalties if ball is accidentally moved

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/ball-moved-during-search.html>

6. No penalty if putt hits flagstick (so can leave flag in). (Great for 2nd and 8th greens!).

However, if the ball bounces off the flagstick, it's not considered holed. The ball must fall in the hole.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/ball-played-from-the-putting-green-hits-unattended-flagstick-in-hole.html>

7. No penalty for touching ground, vegetation, or water in penalty areas (hazards) or for moving loose impediments.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/touching-or-moving-loose-impediments-or-ground.html>

8. No penalty for moving loose impediments in a bunker or for accidentally touching the sand, but you cannot "test" the sand surface. You can't "ground your club" behind the ball. You can drop outside bunker with two-stroke penalty.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/moving-or-touching-loose-impediments-or-sand-in-a-bunker.html>

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/unplayable-ball-in-a-bunker.html>

9. Can only search for a lost ball for 3 minutes! Play all strokes in less than 40 seconds.

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/reduced-time-for-search-before-a-ball-is-lost.html>

<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/encouraging-prompt-pace-of-play.html>

GSGL Exceptions:

1. Stroke limit: Pick up after 5 strokes over par, mark "P". Hole tied if both Pickup. Actual +5 wins over a "P".

2. Preferred lies: Ball may be marked, lifted, cleaned & placed (within one club length, but no nearer the hole) anywhere except teeing areas, bunkers, penalty areas, and putting greens. (no longer any restriction against moving from rough to fairway or fringe, but not onto the green!)

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3. Provisional ball: You may announce & hit a Provisional Ball but **must** use it if the original is lost or OB; you then would no longer have the new 2-stroke penalty drop option described above in #4. So think carefully; you probably only want to hit a Provisional Ball if the lost or OB ball is just a short distance away (or you are supremely confident that your Provisional Ball will be hit superbly).
4. “Ground under repair”: Bare or rocky ground (no grass). Free placement within 1 club length of nearest point of relief, no nearer hole. Note that large areas of bare ground (or casual water) may require a long move backwards or laterally to reach grass. **If** you opt to move it, you must move to the nearest, not necessarily the “nicest” point (the nearest point could be a steeper slope, a worse angle, or even blocked by a tree or bush).
5. Forward (Red & Yellow) Tees: Men 80 or older by April 1 may play from the Red tees. Handicaps will be lowered by nominal GHIN calculations: 2 strokes for handicaps 6 to 10, 3 strokes for handicaps 11-19, and 4 strokes for handicaps over 20. Men 87 and older and Women 80 and older, may play from the Yellow tees with a 7-stroke reduction in handicap.
6. Screens, Netting, Fences, Tee Box timbers: Free stance or swing relief. Fences also include line-of-ball-flight relief for next shot. Place within one club-length of the nearest point of relief, no nearer the hole.
7. Drop Zone #4: If your drive goes in the pond (or nearby woods) you may re-tee or hit from Drop Zone left of cart path just beyond the water. That next hit is your third shot either way.
8. Out of Bounds #6 & #7: The white stakes along the left side of #6 and #7 mark Out of Bounds (OB). If your entire ball is outside the inner edge of that line, it is OB. You are not allowed to hit a ball that is OB. See Rule #4 above, or Exception #3.
9. Out of Bounds #9: On/over the road or in the parking area is OB. See **Rule #4** and Exception #3.
10. Played the Wrong Ball: If you play the wrong ball, you receive a two-stroke penalty on that hole. (It is not an automatic loss of hole as in normal match play because our scoring has both match play and stroke play aspects, and it would be a double penalty to incur both).
11. Penalty Area Exception: “Conway’s Creek” is the ditch on #9. Free placement on a line back from the pin through the point where the ball entered the penalty area.