

## Introduction

I am pleased to provide you with '*99 Tips on the Rules of Golf*', which I hope will help you to improve your scores by avoiding penalties during your rounds of stroke play golf. Even golf professionals find it most frustrating to incur a penalty for breaching a Rule that they are not aware of, or have forgotten. I think that the following list of tips, conveniently broken down into sections that you will recognise and can easily reference, will help improve your understanding of the Rules of Golf and make your games more enjoyable.

Good golfing,

*Barry Rhodes*

## 99 Tips on Using the Rules of Golf to Your Advantage

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## Before Commencing a Round

1. Ensure that you arrive at the course well before your starting time. If you step onto on the 1<sup>st</sup> tee between 1 second and 5 minutes after your official start time you incur a penalty of two strokes; if you are more than 5 minutes late you are disqualified. Rule 6-3a.
2. Check that your score card contains your name, the date and your full handicap, in case you forget to enter them when you finish your round. Remember that it is always your full handicap that has to be entered on your score card, even if you are playing a shortened course competition, or are in a four-ball competition where three-quarters of your handicap applies. Rule 6-2b.
3. Check the exact format of the competition that you are about to play, and the tee markers that you are to play from. For example, is it strokes, stableford or vPar? Is it foursomes of four-ball better ball? Are you playing from the white stakes or the yellow stakes? I cannot be the only golfer that has incurred a penalty stroke for lifting my ball on the 1st putting green, thinking that I could not score any Stableford points, and then being informed that it was a strokes competition! Definition of Forms of Stroke Play.
4. My next tip is one of the most important of the 99. Familiarise yourself with the Local Rules that are in operation. They can usually be found on the back of the score card, but there may be additional temporary Local Rules on the course notice board. Before you start your round, you need to know whether preferred lies are in operation, whether you may drop away from staked trees, whether you may remove stones from bunkers, whether you may take line of play relief from sprinkler heads close to the putting green, whether any immovable obstructions have been made integral parts of the course (as with the road on the 17th hole at St. Andrews), and so on. Rule 33-8.
5. Always carry a current copy of the Rules of Golf book in your golf bag. Every player is responsible for knowing the Rules. Rule 6-1. Being able to reference the Rules book during a round can assist you in avoiding a penalty.
6. If you arrive at the course early, as I recommended in my first tip, you can use the time to prepare for your round by taking a few swings in the nets, or putting on the practice putting green. You may not practice on the course before a round on any day of a stroke play competition, but you may practice putting and chipping on or near the first teeing ground. Rule 7-1b.