

HOUSTON AMATEUR GOLF ASSOCIATION LOCAL TOURNAMENT RULES (revised Jan. 2017)

Each member receives a current USGA rule book from HAGA (pick up at the check-in table at any event). All tournaments are played in accordance with the current USGA rules, HAGA local rules, and any additional rules for a specific tournament as announced.

It is the responsibility of each player to obtain the tournament conditions and rules for each event before play begins.

1. The HAGA occasionally plays **COURSES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MARKED** to USGA guidelines. The following local rules have been established for such courses.

OUT OF BOUNDS

- A ball which comes to rest on or across a paved area, including Roads and Parking Lots and excluding cart paths; is OUT OF BOUNDS.
- A ball, which comes to rest on property which, is not part of the golf course, such as a residential yard; is deemed to be OUT OF BOUNDS.

MARGINS OF A WATER HAZARD

- In the event a water hazard on the course is not marked with yellow or red stakes, the margin is defined to be the natural limits of the hazard, i.e. where the ground breaks down to form the depression containing the water. If the water hazard is not marked with yellow or red stakes (line), the water hazard will be played as a lateral water hazard.

2. Since ants are not considered by the USGA to be burrowing animals the following local rules have been established.
FIRE ANT MOUNDS – A ball which comes to rest on or so near active fire ant mound where the player is in danger when playing a normal shot, the ball is considered to be in GROUND UNDER REPAIR and may be dropped without penalty. See Rule 25.

3. The HAGA has adopted the following local rule, which extends the undue delay rule, Rule 6-7.
20 MINUTE RULE – Any group which finishes their stipulated round 20 minutes behind the group in front of them is considered to have violated the UNDUE DELAY RULE and each player in the group will be assessed a TWO STROKE PENALTY. Also, if the first group of the tournament finishes their stipulated round in time which the tournament committee deems as unreasonable for the course and circumstances being played, the tournament committee may assess a TWO STROKE PENALTY to each player in that group. If a group finishes their round in 4 hours and 30 minutes (or less) but more than 20 minutes behind the group in front, they will not be penalized.

45 MINUTE RULE-When using Shotgun Tee Start, the time that the first foursome finishes their stipulated round will be noted and each player that finishes 45 minutes behind the posted time is considered to have violated the UNDUE DELAY RULE and will be assessed a TWO STROKE PENALTY.

4. Many courses, particularly in the hot dry summer months, have large cracks in the earth. The following local rule has been established. **CRACKS IN THE EARTH** – If a player's ball comes to rest in a crack at least one-quarter of an inch wide caused by hot dry conditions, and the ball is not in a hazard, the player may obtain relief by lifting the ball and dropping as close to the original spot, no closer to the hole, as deemed practical which gives relief from the ball being in the crack.

5. Some courses have a list of **LOCAL RULES** on the back of their scorecards. In general, the identification of WATER HAZARDS and OUT OF BOUNDS and /or protect young trees and flowers can be used. However, local rules which modify the USGA rules are **NOT VALID for HAGA** Tournaments (i.e., local rules declaring "winter rules", free drops from ditches, ball drops at water hazards, etc. are not played by the HAGA).

6. The HAGA has adopted the local rule which defines **STONES LOCATED IN A BUNKER** to be moveable obstructions. See Rule 24.

7. The HAGA has adopted the USGA recommended local rule regarding **AERATION HOLES**. "Through the green, a ball which comes to rest in or on an aeration hole may be lifted without penalty, cleaned and dropped, as near as possible to the spot where it lay not nearer the hole. The ball when dropped must first strike a part of the course through the green. On the putting green, the player shall place the ball at the spot nearest the hole which avoids such situation, no closer to the hole.

8. Players may bring **GUESTS OR A CADDIES** at most courses we play; however, there are exceptions. Player should check with the course directly. The HAGA has adopted the following local rule regarding minors. Players may not bring onto the course any child under the age of 12 years old. Breach of this rule is immediate disqualification and the player will be asked to leave the course. The HAGA takes no responsibility for the safety and well-being of any player and/or guest during an HAGA tournament. It should also be noted that a player is allowed only one caddie at a time and a person who transports the players clubs is considered to be the players caddie. See Rule 6-4.
9. Some courses we play in HAGA have a particular **DRESS CODE**. Dress code information may be obtained from the course prior to play. The HAGA dress code is straight forward; no cut off shorts, no sleeveless tee shirts and no tank tops. It is the responsibility of each player to present themselves in accordance with golf course policy. Remember that we are guests at ALL courses!
10. The HAGA has adopted the local rule that Through the green, a ball that is **EMBEDDED IN ITS OWN PITCH MARK** in the ground, other than sand, may be lifted without penalty, cleaned and dropped as near as possible to where it lay but not nearer the hole. The ball when dropped must first strike a part of the course through the green. This does NOT apply to a ball in a hazard or bunker.
11. **CODE OF CONDUCT:** Contestants (and their caddies/guests) are to observe proper golf etiquette at all times. Any abuse or disrespect of fellow competitors, employees and other players of the host facility, or other persons conducting or attending an HAGA- sponsored event can be grounds for disqualification from the event, and possible rejection of entry for future HAGA events. Such abuse may be verbal, physical or by threat and includes, but is not limited to: the use of obscene language, physical damage to property or equipment of the host facility, and abuse of alcohol or controlled substances during a competitive round.
12. The use of **DEVICES THAT MEASURE DISTANCE ONLY** is permitted in HAGA tournaments. If the device measures anything other than distance (grade, wind speed, direction, etc.) you may not use it during a tournament even if the features are disabled. The penalty is disqualification. Players may share distance measuring devices. Distances are considered public information and may be shared with fellow competitors.
13. **“ACCIDENTAL MOVEMENT OF A BALL AT REST ON THE PUTTING GREEN”** - Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1 are modified as follows;
“When a player’s ball lies on the putting green, there is no penalty if the ball or ball marker is accidentally moved by the player, his opponent, or any of their caddies or equipment. The moved ball or ball-marker must be replaced as provided in Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1”.
This Local Rule applies only when the player’s ball or ball-marker lies on the putting green and any movement is accidental.
Note: It is determined that a player’s ball on the putting green was moved as a result of wind, water or some other natural cause such as the effects of wind, water, rain, or gravity, the ball must be played as it lies from its new location. If only the ball-marker is moved in such circumstances, the marker may be replaced.
14. On occasions when the course conditions require it, HAGA events may be played under a local rule for **“LIFT, CLEAN & PLACE”** (LCP). Here are the specific guidelines for that practice:
 - Only the Tournament Director (or acting Director) may make the decision for the local rule to be in effect for the event.; Players may NOT elect to play LCP on their own
 - LCP in HAGA events are played “through the green”
 - This means it is permissible to LCP in fairways as well as in the rough
 - LCP is not allowed in a hazard, bunker or if your ball is out of bounds
 - Prior to lifting the ball, the ball must be marked
 - The ball may be cleaned when picked up
 - The ball is to be placed within 12” of the original position, no closer to the hole, that is not in a hazard
 - A Player may place his ball only once and it is in play when it has been placed (Rule 20-4).
If the ball when placed fails to come to rest on the spot on which it was placed, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced. If it still fails to come to rest on that spot, it must be placed at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the hole and not in a hazard
 - If a ball when placed comes to rest on the spot on which it is placed, and it subsequently moves, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, unless the provisions of any other Rule apply.