

Rule Tip of the Week

Inalienable Rights

Our Founding Fathers wrote in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”



Did you know that the USGA has endowed you with certain inalienable rights to assist you in your pursuit of happiness on the golf course? Here are just a few examples, along with references, in italics, to relevant Definitions, Rules or Decisions:

In most cases, you have the right to use a ball that has been stamped “Practice” even where the Committee has adopted the condition that the ball that you play must be named on the List of Conforming Golf Balls. *Decision 5-1/4 [Status of ‘X-out’, ‘Refurbished’ and ‘Practice’ Balls].*

During a stipulated round, you have the right to practice putting or chipping on or near the putting green of the hole last played, any practice putting green, or the teeing ground of the next hole to be played in the round, provided your practice stroke is not made from a hazard and does not unduly delay play. *Rule 7-2 [Practice During Round].*

You have the right to give or ask for advice when play has been suspended. *Decision 8-1/20 [Asking Advice When Play Suspended].*

In match play, you have the right to ascertain from your opponent, during play of a hole, the number of strokes he or she has taken and, after play of a hole, the number of strokes taken on the hole just completed. *Rule 9-2 [Match Play: Information as to Strokes Taken].*

You have the right to stand outside the teeing ground when putting a ball into play from within the teeing ground. *Rule 11-1 [Teeing].*

You have the right to move a tee-marker after making your first stroke from the teeing ground. *Decision 11-2/1 [Status of Tee Markers After First Stroke].*

You have the right to break off or pull grass out that may be growing behind your ball on the teeing ground. *Decision 13-2/3 [Breaking Off Grass Behind Ball on Teeing Ground].*

You have the right to restore the lie, stance and/or line of play that you had when your ball came to rest. *Decision 13-2/8 [Player’s Lie or Line of Play Affected by Pitch-Mark Made by Partner’s, Opponent’s or Fellow-Competitor’s Ball], Decision 13-2/8.5 [Player’s Lie Affected by Sand from Partner’s, Opponent’s or Fellow-Competitor’s Stroke from Bunker], and Decision 13-2/8.7 [Player’s Area of Intended Stance Affected by Another Player’s Stroke].*

You have the right to place your feet firmly in taking your stance provided you do not build a stance. *Rule 13-3 [Building Stance].*

You have the right to leave the flagstick in the hole when playing a stroke from off the putting green. *Rule 17-3c [Ball Striking Flagstick or Attendant].*

If your ball comes to rest against the flagstick in the hole and your ball is not holed, you have the right to move or remove the flagstick, and if the ball falls into the hole, you are deemed to have holed out with your last stroke. *Rule 17-4 [Ball Resting Against Flagstick].*

Except when a ball is in motion, you have the right to have any ball lifted if you consider that ball is in a position to assist any other player. *Rule 22-1 [Ball Assisting Play].*

You have the right to search for your ball for five (5) minutes before it is deemed to be lost. *Definition of “Lost Ball” and Rule 27-1c [Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes].*