



The Rules of Amateur Status:

A Brief Guide for “Low Handicap” Golfers

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Introduction

For golfers in the “low handicap” category their greater skill raises their profile and increases the potential for problems with the Amateur Code. A number of the Rules of Amateur Status apply only to players with “golf skill or reputation”. A player is considered to have golf skill if he has had competitive success at a local or national level, he has gained representative honours at county or national level, or if he competes at an elite level, but it is a matter for the Governing Body to decide whether a particular amateur golfer has “golf skill or reputation”.

The following lists are intended to provide the briefest of guides in order to prevent an inadvertent breach of the Rules of Amateur Status.

It should be noted that some of the following prohibitions apply to all amateur golfers irrespective of ability and that there are certain exceptions to these guidelines which apply to events exclusively limited to junior golfers.

A “low handicap” golfer wishing to retain Amateur Status may not:

1. apply to become a professional golfer.
2. file an application to any stage of a qualifying competition for a Professional Tour without waiving his right to prize money.
3. play golf for prize money.
4. receive payment or compensation for giving instruction in playing golf (other than as part of an ‘approved programme’).
5. accept a prize or prizes of retail value in excess of £500.
6. exchange any prize or prize voucher for cash.
7. use a voucher for items such as travel or hotel expenses, petrol or a bar bill (unless the voucher has been submitted to a national or county union who may reimburse such expenses in connection with participation in a golf competition from the value of the voucher).
8. use a voucher to pay for all or part of a Club subscription.
9. accept a prize of an expenses paid trip to take part in a golf competition.
10. use his name or identity to advertise or sell anything.
11. display any advertising on his golf bag, bag cover or hold-all bag other than the name of the manufacturer of that item and/or his own name.
12. sell any equipment received free of charge from manufacturers.
13. have his own name, or if sponsored the sponsor’s name, on a motor car.
14. accept incentives to participate in a golf competition, such as free meals and remission of entry fees, which are not offered to all competitors.

15. accept payment or compensation for broadcasting, writing, or allowing his name to be used as author, on any material concerning golf unless he is actually the author of the commentary, article or books and instruction in playing golf is not included.
16. receive expenses to play as an individual in a golf competition from anyone other than a member of his family or his legal guardian, unless such funds are lodged with, and disbursed by, the national or county union.
17. accept honorary membership, or membership at a reduced rate, as an inducement to play for a Club.
18. conduct himself in a manner detrimental to the amateur game or take any action, including actions relating to golf gambling, which is contrary to the purpose and spirit of the Rules.

A “low handicap” golfer wishing to retain Amateur Status may:

1. enquire as to likely prospects as a professional golfer.
2. work as a shop assistant with a professional golfer, provided he does not infringe the Rules in any other way.
3. work as a caddie, golf administrator or golf course designer.
4. play in any stage of a qualifying competition for a Professional Tour provided he waives his right to any prize money, in writing and in advance of play.
5. enter a voluntary sweepstake.
6. give instruction in playing golf on a voluntary basis.
7. accept a prize of retail value of not more than £500.
8. accept symbolic prizes which are permanently and distinctively engraved and are, therefore, exempt from the prize limit.
9. accept equipment free of charge from a manufacturer, provided no advertising is involved.
10. have his name on his golf bag in addition to the name of the manufacturer of the bag.
11. accept free food and drink at a golf competition, provided the same is offered to all competitors.
12. receive financial support from a member of his family.
13. receive expenses while playing in a team event.
14. receive financial assistance for participation in individual events provided such funds are lodged with, and disbursed by, the national or county union.

15. receive expenses for participating in an exhibition in aid of a recognized charity.
16. accept a golf scholarship if its terms and conditions have been approved by the Governing Body of the golfer's country.
17. accept a grant or award to assist with golfing expenses provided such funds are lodged with, and disbursed by, the national or county union.

Application for Reinstatement

If a professional golfer wishes to be reinstated as an amateur golfer, he must complete an application for reinstatement and undergo a period awaiting reinstatement. Generally, the period awaiting reinstatement starts from the date of the player's last breach of the Rules.

Guidelines on periods awaiting reinstatement are contained in Rule 9-2b(i) in the Rules of Amateur Status, but normally no applicant is eligible for reinstatement until he has conducted himself in accordance with the Rules for at least one year.

Conclusion

It must be stressed that these guidelines do not cover all aspects of the Rules of Amateur Status.

Where any doubt arises concerning a proposed course of action, the Governing Body of the Rules in the player's own country should be consulted.

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The R&A is golf's world rules and development body and organiser of The Open Championship. It operates with the consent of more than 125 national and international, amateur and professional organisations, from over 110 countries and on behalf of an estimated 28 million golfers in Europe, Africa, Asia Pacific and The Americas (outside the USA and Mexico). The United States Golf Association (USGA) is the game's governing body in the United States and Mexico.

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