



Golf and Living with COVID-19
in the Republic of Ireland





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The following guidance applies to golf club activities in clubs situated in counties assessed at Levels 1, 2, 3 or 4 in the Irish Government's 'Living with COVID' plan.

At a time when the trajectory of the disease not where we want it to be, it is essential that all golf clubs operate within this guidance – and in doing so continue to show the high levels of safety consciousness that has been a feature since reopening.

It is essential that all club officials and members familiarise themselves with this guidance, and play their part in ensuring our sport remains open and accessible at this uncertain time.

General Guidance For Golf Clubs

Clubs must ensure that the following protocols are observed:

Player Behaviour

- **Members, their guests, visitors and staff** with colds or any symptoms of COVID-19 stay away from the golf course/clubhouse.
- **Physical distancing rules** are observed by all members and their guests at all times in the car park, clubhouse and on the course. Signage should be erected to reinforce this message.
- **Players are instructed** not to touch the flag or flagstick.
- **Members of the same household** should play together, rather than split into mixed groups.
- **Clubs will have to consider** ways in which social distancing can be facilitated in practice facilities. If such facilities are open, golfers must warm up on their own.

Management Practices

- **Personnel are on hand** to monitor adherence with physical distancing rules and the rules for golfers set out in this document.
- **Tee times are booked in advance** online or over the telephone. Clubs must ensure that players names (including visitors and members' guests) are recorded on timesheets and timesheets must be kept for a period of at least 6 weeks to assist with contact tracing should the need arise.
- **If toilet facilities are open**, clubs should adopt a one-in, one-out approach. When taking a decision to close toilet facilities, consideration should be given to those with medical conditions that may require access to facilities, both on and off-course. Toilets in the clubhouse and course, if open, must be regularly cleaned.



TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND ACCESS TO GOLF

During the pandemic, certain levels of public health restrictions apply limitations on travel and movement (e.g. 'stay within your county'). When these restrictions apply, it is essential that golfers adhere to them. It is also important that golf clubs play their part in helping to ensure golfers follow these rules.

In some situations, such restrictions will mean golfers can no longer play at the club where they are a member. This does not mean that golfers are precluded from playing golf, however, as visitors will be generally allowed (unless otherwise stated and subject to the policies of each individual club).

We are aware of certain instances in which two or more golf clubs from either side of county borders have partnered with each other to ensure golfers are able to continue to play while obeying the domestic travel restrictions. This might involve preferential green fee rates for non-members from the same county, or reciprocal playing rights as temporary members for those who find themselves on the wrong side of the county border to that of their home club.

During phases of restrictions where there are limitations on domestic travel, it is also important that golfers in counties either side of the Northern Ireland border adhere to the restrictions that apply in both jurisdictions. For instance, if you live in the Republic of Ireland and are currently subject to a domestic travel restriction, travelling to Northern Ireland to play golf is not permitted. The same is the case if you live in Northern Ireland and are currently subject to lockdown restrictions or limitations on travel.

- Hand sanitisers should be made widely available throughout the facilities, and located near any communal touchpoints.
- **Tee Time Intervals:** It remains imperative for all clubs to observe the minimum tee times intervals documented below (10 minutes for four-balls, 9 minutes for three-balls and eight minutes for two-balls). As golf courses generally remain incredibly busy at weekends, any erosion of these intervals creates the conditions for larger groups of people congregating before rounds – in contravention of current public health advice.

Golf Course Measures:

- **Rakes are removed from the course.** Players are requested to smooth bunkers using their feet or a club. Clubs may introduce a local rule providing placing in bunkers within six inches not nearer the hole.
- **Holes/cups** should be altered to facilitate easy retrieval of golf balls.
- **See the following link** for measures which can be taken in qualifying competitions:
www.golfnet.ie/News%20Listing%20Assets/Covid-19%20Qualifying%20Competitions%20Guide.pdf
- **Where possible** ball washers, sand bags, benches, divot boxes and non-essential furniture should be taken in off the course. Where such fixtures are permanent, they should be taken out of use. This measure will help ensure the safety and wellbeing of course workers even as the virus is in suppression.
- **Bins:** Some Clubs that withdrew bins from circulation at the outset of the pandemic have asked for guidance on returning them to use. Clubs that wish to restore bins on the course should ensure they are contactless to operate, are emptied frequently and the area sanitized regularly.”
- **Divot Bags:** A number of Clubs that withdrew divot bags from circulation at the outset of the pandemic have asked for guidance on ongoing course maintenance. Clubs that wish to promote divoting among their members in this way may wish to consider allocating personal bags and trowels to members so that they can collect divot mix for the repair of any divots during their round. Where such a scheme is operated bags and trowels must not be shared.

Amenities:

- **Hire trolleys** (electric and pull trolleys) must be sanitised prior to each use.
- **Caddying on a casual/friendly** basis continues to be discouraged unless by a member of the player's own household. Where golf clubs normally offer caddying services to members or visitors, the resumption or commencement of these services must be in accordance with the Return to Work Safely Protocol



available on www.gov.ie. It is recommended that before performing their duties, a player's equipment and clubs should be cleaned with disinfectant spray or wipes. In performing their duties, caddies should regularly sanitise their hands, keep a two-meter physical distance from their player wherever possible (including in advising the player generally on the course and also on the line of putts). After the round, the player's equipment should again be cleaned with disinfecting spray/wipes. Payment for caddying services should be contactless wherever possible.

- **The use of golf buggies** is discouraged. Where a golf buggy must be used, it should be used by one person only and cannot be exchanged between people during the round, however members of the same household may share a buggy. Buggies must be sanitized thoroughly after each use.
- **In a circumstance where a player**, because of the nature of a disability, requires another individual to drive a golf buggy for them, the player and driver should wear face coverings when seated in the buggy. Every effort must be made to avoid handling of communal surfaces and regular hand-washing must be observed by both individuals.
- **If necessary, defibrillators** should be moved to an accessible area and members should be notified of their new location.
- **Use of Computer Terminals:** Clubs should take action to try to avoid any communal touch- points - this includes not using the terminal and trying to find alternative ways for players to submit scores, such as by mobile phone, etc.

Where a Club feels they have no choice but to use the terminal they should still take note of the general point which is to discourage people gathering in an enclosed indoor area for the purpose of signing in or entering scores. Ways of managing this might include having the area attended, instituting queuing systems with one person in the area at a time only, and surfaces regularly cleaned. Relying on players to sanitise their hands after use – while an important measure in its own right – is not sufficient on its own to ensure infection control in this setting.

- **Clubs should require the use of face coverings** in any settings where two-meter physical distancing is not always possible, including on entry to the clubhouse and at all times before being seated for dining.



General Guidance For Golfers

To ensure that the game is played safely, golfers must observe the rules below.

There is a danger of complacency setting in regarding social/physical distancing which every golfer has a responsibility to address. Golfers should keep in mind that it is entirely possible to play a round of golf with others in a friendly and sociable manner without coming into close physical contact. Unnecessary physical contact negates this and should be avoided, including:

- Avoid shaking hands, hugs, putting your arm around someone else, etc.
- Avoid huddles in groups before, during or after rounds.

In addition to this point, the following must be observed:

In advance of play:

- If you are ill or have symptoms, stay at home.
- Schedule your tee-time in the manner prescribed by the club you are playing at. Under no circumstances should you arrive at the club without booking in advance.
- Ensure that your group size is no greater than that allowed by your club.
- Ensure that you have sufficient numbers of golf balls, markers, tees to avoid having to exchange equipment with others.
- Wash your hands and your golf equipment before you leave home.
- Aim to arrive at the Practice Area, if open at your club, no more than 15 minutes prior to play.
- It is recommended that, wherever possible, you travel to and from the golf course on your own or with members of your own household only.

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- Park your car in such a way as to facilitate physical distancing.
- Observe physical distancing rules at all times following your arrival at the club.
- If necessary, retrieve your clubs, shoes and other equipment from your locker.
- Change your shoes in the car park.
- Warm-up alone. Observe physical distancing rules on practice range and on the practice putting green. If your club has taken the decision to close practice facilities, this must be strictly adhered to.

On the course:

- Do not arrive at the first tee more than 5 minutes before your allotted tee time.
- Observe physical distancing at all times on the course.
- Following play of a hole, do not enter the next teeing ground until all members of the group in front have played their tee-shots and exited the teeing ground.
- The use of golf buggies is discouraged. Where a golf buggy must be used, it should be used by one person only and cannot be exchanged between people during the round, however members of the same household may share a buggy. Buggies must be sanitized thoroughly after each use.
- Do not exchange or share equipment, food or drink with other players during your round.
- Do not pick up another player's equipment or golf ball.
- Do not use on-course water fountains, ball cleaners etc.
- Do not use rakes in bunkers.
- Do not touch the flag or flagstick. Putt with the flagstick in and remove your own ball from the hole.

In addition, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Use the toilet facilities before you leave home.
- Bring your own hand sanitiser to the course & use regularly during the round.

Golfers with Disabilities/Additional Needs

- Golfers with disabilities or additional needs should be able to continue to play once they adhere to all necessary risk minimisation measures.
- If there are concerns regarding an individual's susceptibility to COVID-19 due to an underlying illness, the individual/parent/carer should discuss this with their medical practitioner.

