GOLF CANADA
LOCAL RULES FOR SAND GREENS
Revised October 2026

Play is governed by the Golf Canada Rules of Golf (effective January 2023), and, where applicable, by the following Local Rules and Terms of the Competition, subject to changes, additions or deletions for a particular championship(s). The player's attention is drawn to Terms of the Competition as printed on the forms accompanying applications for entry. Complete text of Local Rules may be found in the Golf Canada Official Guide to the Rules of Golf (effective January 2023). The Rules of Golf as approved by Golf Canada, so far as they are not at variance with these Local Rules, will apply, and they are to be read in conjunction with these special Rules for Sand Greens and any Sand Green competitions.

Unless otherwise noted, the penalty for a breach of a Local Rule is the general penalty.

Match play - Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes

Etiquette

1. The last player to hole her/his ball on the putting green should empty the hole of sand and ensure the flagstick is centered in the hole.
2. Someone other than the last player to hole out should prepare the putting green, for the following group(s), within three smoother widths of the hole (six feet).

Definitions: (See Figure 3 and 4)

- **Ball holed -** A ball is deemed to be holed within the meaning of Definition of "Holed" of the Rules of Golf when it lies wholly within the circumference of the hole even if the entire ball is not below the level of the lip of the hole due to sand left in the hole.
- **Hole –** For the purpose of Section II, Definitions of the Rules of Golf, a hole liner having an inner diameter of 4¼ inches (108 mm) may be used provided its upper edge is not more than ¼ inch (6 mm) below the surface of the putting green.
- **Hole Hook –** an implement approved by the Committee for a fellow competitor, opponent or another person authorized by the side, to remove the hole liner for emptying sand from the hole. A player is not penalized under Rule 8-1 for performing such an action.
- **Loose Sand –** Sand and/or loose soil on a sand green is not a loose impediment.
- **Putting Green –** The putting green is the sanded portion specially prepared for putting as defined by the Committee. The term "sand" in these Rules includes similar material composing the putting surface. The Putting Green includes any edging material around the putting green.
- **Smoother –** The smoother is the implement provided or approved by the Committee for use by players to smooth the putting green for putting. The blade of the smoother should not be less than 24 inches (61 cm) in length and provide an adequately smooth putting surface.
- **Smoother Stand** – a course may have a stand near the putting green to hold the Smoother and/or Hole Hook. These stands or the like, are Immovable Obstruction under Rule 16.1.

Rules

1. Smoothing the Putting green | Rules on the Putting Green

When the ball lies on the putting green, or within one club-length of the putting green, the line from the player's ball to the hole may be smoothed subject to the following:

1.1. When using the Smoother, Rake, and/or Hole Hook, in the accepted methods, a player ***is not penalized*** under the following Rules:

- Rule 8.1 For Improving the Conditions of the Stroke,
- Rule 13.1e Deliberately Testing the Greens, and
- Rule 14.2 For Not Replacing the Ball on the Exact Spot, once the ball is marked and/or lifted.

1.2. The smoother and/or rake may be used by the player or any person authorized by the player, but the player is always responsible for any breach of the Rules or Local Rules.

1.3. The smoother and/or rake must be drawn (or pulled) and not pushed towards the hole

1.4. The player is allowed a maximum of two smooths per putt. When both a rake and smoother are provided, the rake may be used for the first pass, but the final smooth must be made with the smoother.

1.5. A ridge and/or heaping of sand must not be created that could create a potential advantage for the player, when using a smoother or other action.

1.6. The player may be required by another player or opponent to remove any such ridge or heap of sand, without penalty.

1.7. If the player's ball is deflected by a ridge of sand at the edge of the smoothed portion, there is no penalty for the ball being deflected and the stroke must not be replayed. However, the player may still be subject to a penalty if they have breached Local Rule 1.4 and/or 1.5.

1.8. In the smoothing of the putting green, if a loose impediment causes a mark to be made on the surface that:

- In the opinion of another player or opponent will be of assistance to the player, the loose impediment may be removed and the surface re-smoothed.
- In the opinion of the player, may negatively impact his or her play, the loose impediment may be removed and the surface re-smoothed

1.9. Any damage to the putting green, caused by the impact of a ball or otherwise may be repaired. However, if a golf course uses a rake with tines to prepare the putting green for the following group(s), the tine marks left behind are not considered damage to the putting green.

1.10. Ball on the Putting green

- The putting green must be smoothed in this order or in reverse order at the option of the player:
  - In one consistently weighted and continuous action from a point beyond the spot where player's ball was lifted to the hole, and
  - In the same line at least one club-length beyond the hole.
  - If the player elects to make a second smooth, the second smooth must be made in the reverse direction of the first smooth.
  - Exception: when a player's ball lies within one club-length of the hole, the player is only required to smooth beyond the hole a distance equal to the length of the putt.
- **Use of Rake and Smoother**
  If a rake and/or smoother is provided, the rake may only be used for the first pass and should be used from the near side of the hole (not from beyond the hole, as to prevent damage). A second smooth with the smooth edge must then be made in the opposite direction, beyond the hole as in 1.8.1 above.
- **Ball on Putting green and Near Edge of Green**
  If a player's ball lies on the putting green and the area of the intended stroke is interfered with by the grass edge (or the like including any manufactured edging), the player may take relief as follows:
  - The player must find the nearest point of complete relief which may be on or off the putting green and place the ball on that spot.
  - If a player elects to take relief in this manner and the ball is now off the putting green, in the General Area, the player may proceed under Rule 1.11.1. below.

1.11. Ball Not on the Putting green

- **Ball Within One Club-length of the Putting green**
  If the player's ball lies in the General Area, within one club-length of the putting green, the player may smooth the putting green once, in one consistently weighted and continuous action from the defined perimeter of the putting green on a line from the ball to the hole to at least one club-length beyond the hole or in the reverse direction at the option of the player.
- **Ball Within Two Club-lengths of the Smoother Stand**
  In the General Area, if a player's ball is within two club-lengths of the smoother stand it interferes with the player's line of play, the player may take relief under Rule 16.1b.

1.12. A player is permitted to remove weeds and other plants growing in or on the putting green. (The action does not breach Rule 8.1)

2. IMMOVABLE OBSTRUCTIONS NEAR THE PUTTING GREEN

2.1. Model Local Rule F-5.2 is in effect. For a ball in the general area, relief may be taken under Rule 16.1b when both the ball and obstruction lie in an area cut to fairway height or less. The ball must be within ***two club-lengths*** of the obstruction and the obstruction must be located:

- on or within two club-lengths of the putting green, (see Exception 1.11.2 above); and
- on the player's line of play.

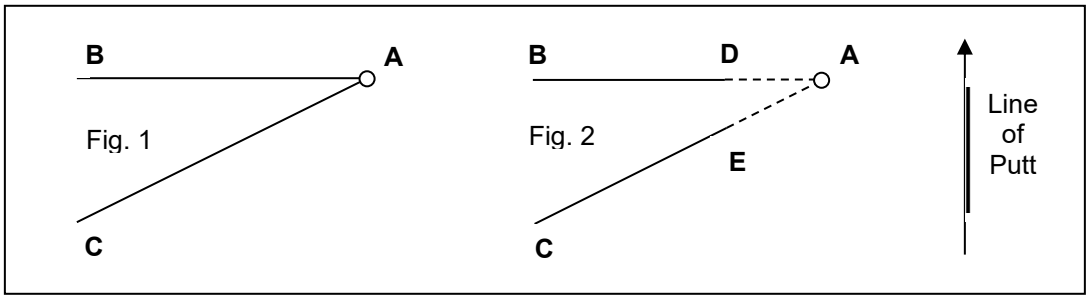
3. LIFTING, MARKING AND REPLACING THE BALL

3.1. In preparation for smoothing, the ball must be marked and lifted in accordance with Rule 14.1 of the Rules of Golf.

3.2. If the player does not wish to smooth the putting green prior to playing a ball at rest on the putting green after any stroke, the ball may be lifted and placed within 2 inches (5 centimetres) of where it last came to rest but not nearer the hole.

3.3. The recommended method of marking the ball is illustrated in the diagrams reproduced below:

- Before lifting the ball, two straight lines (AB and AC) are scratched in the sand as shown in ***Fig. 1***.
- These lines should extend sideways from the ball. "A" is the marked position of the ball.
- When smoothing is completed, the dotted portions of the lines (represented by AD and AE) in ***Fig. 2*** will no longer exist. This creates the line of play putting pathway shown in ***Fig. 4*** below.
- "A" can readily be located by projecting the lines (BD and CE) until they meet/intersect.
- The point of intersection will be "A" (in ***Fig. 2***) and the ball must be replaced on that spot.
  - NOTE: A player is not allowed to substitute the ball. The original ball must be used.



4. EXCESS SAND IN HOLE

Players are permitted to empty the hole of excess sand subject to Local Rules above and the Definition.

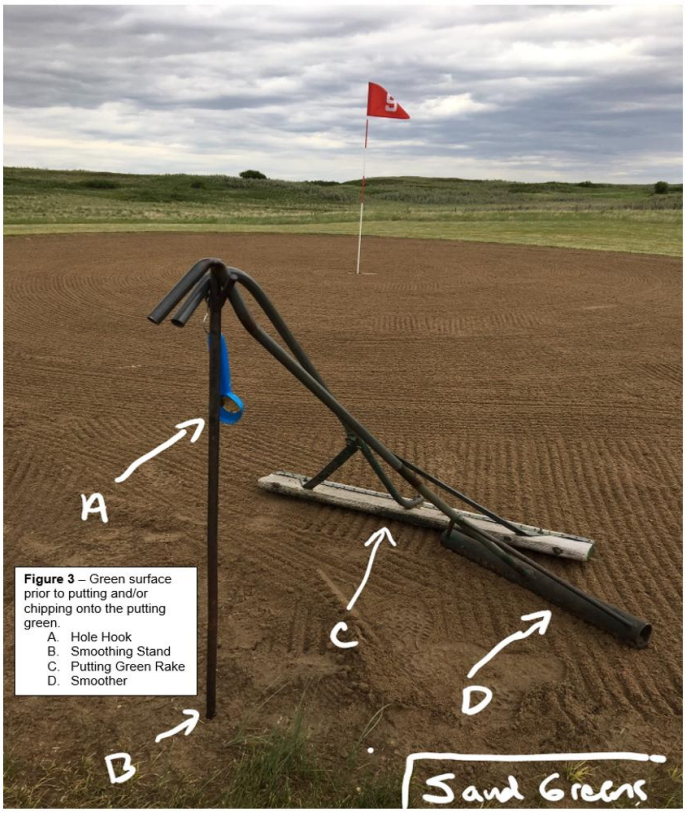


Figure 3 – Green surface prior to putting and/or chipping onto the putting green.
A. Hole Hook
B. Smoothing Stand
C. Putting Green Rake
D. Smoother



Figure 4: Smoothed Line of Play For Putting
As shown below, the smoothed line of play extends beyond the hole at least two club lengths.