



Championships: Covid-19

Best Practice Guidelines

The following procedures should be read in conjunction with up to date guidelines from the government and England Golf's Play Safe, Stay Safe guidelines:

Useful Links:

England Golf Play Safe, Stay Safe: <https://www.Englandgolf.org/playsafe/>

England Golf Coronavirus Updates: <https://www.Englandgolf.org/coronavirus/>

England Golf Coronavirus FAQs: <https://www.Englandgolf.org/coronavirus-faqs/>

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb96e8e86650c278b077616/Keeping-workers-and-customers-safe-during-covid-19-restaurants-pubs-bars-takeaways-230620.pdf>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Championship/Tournament golf has a number of elements that are different to normal club competition. These include registration requirements and procedures associated with the scoring and score recording processes, pin positions, additional local rules, referees etc. This often involves more face-to-face contact with officials and volunteers.

The following guidelines are produced to assist in the running of championship events only, whilst considering social distancing/sanitisation guidelines that are in place.

Social Distancing

It will be imperative for the organising committee to make competitors aware of their obligations regarding social distancing in advance of their arrival at the host venue.

Championship Risk Assessment

Prior to any championship and as part of the organisation, the organising committee should undertake a risk assessment of the host facility. This assessment should include all areas where those attending the championship will congregate - clubhouse, practice ground, car park and the golf course. Bear in mind that some of those attending this venue may be doing so for the first time. Special consideration should be made towards the following examples:



- Frequency in which public areas are cleaned throughout the championship
- Locations of hand sanitising stations
- Area used for a tournament office, registration or score recording area, including its entry/exit routes
- Permitted numbers available on practice grounds or putting greens
- Pro Shop access
- Clubhouse access and people flow

The golf club concerned will already have their own procedures in place and these should be used alongside your own championship risk assessment.

For further information please visit the England Golf Play Safe, Stay Safe guidelines:

<https://www.Englandgolf.org/playsafe/>

Tournament Office

Normally, the organising committee take up an area of the clubhouse or a room for use as a tournament office during the event. This area should be in a ventilated area and doors and windows left open where possible. Ideally, the area or room used will be adjacent to doors leading to outdoors which can be opened and from which the players can access the area. If this is not possible, consider where players are able to congregate and if social distancing protocols can be implemented.

In addition to normal equipment used, the organising committee should ensure the area is fitted with protective screens and that hand sanitiser is available. Remove any chairs that will give players the opportunity of sitting.

Championship Software

It is now commonplace that organising committees use specialised software to run championship events. This software often includes the opportunity to receive entries online, including entry fee payment and the ability to collect key data on the entrant i.e. handicap, golf club, email address, mobile no. etc. Depending on the software used it will also allow the committee to communicate with each entrant electronically from registration right through to receiving scores via a mobile device and determining start lists and producing results.

Player Registration

It is encouraged that players should register for the championship in advance either online or via telephone. If this is not possible then an on-site registration area should be located which ensures



maximum ventilation and allows for social distancing measures to be in place (see Tournament Office). If weather permits, consideration should be given to using an open-sided gazebo outdoors as the registration area.

During the registration process (ideally in advance) players should be asked to complete a simple health questionnaire that is returned to the organising committee prior to their arrival at the host venue.

Players should also be encouraged to bring their own hand sanitiser.

Championship Documentation

Through the entry/registration process it should be possible to acquire the email addresses of all competitors. To avoid printed material, it is recommended that any additional local rules, pin positions or other documentation pertinent to the event i.e. 'Hard Card' should be emailed to all competitors. Copies should also be posted on any official notice board. If posted on a notice board, it is recommended that any document is laminated so that it can be cleaned in the event of being touched.

It is recommended that no printed copies of start sheets and/or result sheets are available and that everyone is directed online for information.

Scorecards

Scorecards are fundamental to golf and to ensuring accurate collection of players scores. Due to Covid-19, however, alternatives need to be found to manage this important aspect of the game. The R&A has given authorisation for a committee to modify Rule 3.3b and determine an alternative method of returning a score. CONGU has also updated their guidance on returning qualifying scores which can be found here: <https://www.congu.co.uk/returning-of-qualifying-scores/>. The following are recommended options:

- Send all competitors a copy of the scorecard in advance via email asking them to print off at home. The scorecard would then be completed by the player whilst also recording a fellow competitor's score on the same scorecard. On completion of the round this would be returned to the organising committee with verbal confirmation that the scores returned are correct.
Alternatively, the scorecard can be photographed by the player and sent to the organising committee via email.
- If available via the software in use, players can enter their scores online via their mobile phones. Verbal confirmation of the score is then given to the organising committee on completion of the round. If this procedure is adopted, it is recommended that players



record the score of a nominated fellow competitor so that accurate verbal confirmation can be given. This can be done by allocating each individual with a scorecard, which is used to record a score but is not passed between players.

Should a county not have access to such software that allows players to enter scores in this way then please contact the England Golf Championship department championships@englandgolf.org as we may be able to offer free use of our own championship software.

Starting/Starting Intervals/Two-Tee Starts

Starting

A championship will typically have a starter to ensure players arrive on time, receive the appropriate information and ensure they tee off at their allocated time.

It is recommended that the starter does not pass on any documentation to the competitors. Scorecards, local rules and pin positions should be managed as per the guidelines in a previous section of this document.

Hand sanitiser should be located on the 1st tee.

The starter should reiterate to competitors the rules on social distancing paying particular attention to teeing areas and the putting green. Players should also be reminded not to shake hands on conclusion of the round.

Under current circumstances it is not recommended to give players bag tags or make available tee pegs/pencils that would normally be located on the 1st tee.

Starting Intervals

As of 1 June, government guidelines allow golf to be played in 3 and 4 balls. It is recommended that an organising committee commence 3 balls in no less than 10min intervals. This not only allows for appropriate social distancing, but also assists in a suitable pace of play. Two balls can be anything between 8-10min intervals. It has been found that the larger the starting interval the quicker the pace of play. This will of course be dependent on the number in the field and the daylight hours available.

Two-Tee Starts

These are commonly used in a championship event when the course allows it and gives the organising committee the opportunity of getting maximum players on the course in a relatively short space of time. It also significantly encourages a better pace of play.



Whilst these have merit, the organising committee should review the knock-on effect that a two-tee start has on other areas of the facility. Practice facilities, car parks and clubhouses may become busier and there could be issues relating to social distancing.

Practice Areas/Putting Greens

Championship golf puts added emphasis on practice facilities at the host club. Elite players will wish to warm up appropriately and may wish to practice on conclusion of their rounds.

Driving Range/Practice Ground

Depending on the facility at the host venue, the organising committee should ensure there are appropriate social distancing measures in place to allow a number of players to practice at any one time. If it is a driving range, this will likely already be the case. If it is a practice ground, then 'bays' will need to be created by use of rope or range dividers to ensure social distancing.

It is recommended that the organising committee arranges for the distribution of practice balls to be managed by a volunteer to restrict players coming into contact with baskets/ball dispensing machines etc. To provide a professional experience, practice balls could be set up in the appropriate bays.

Putting Greens

It is recommended all flagsticks are removed and that the hole cups are raised to prevent the ball falling into the hole and to permit easy retrieval.

Depending on the size of the green, the club should be asked to provide hole locations that makes it easier for social distancing to occur whilst players are practicing on the putting green.

If the putting green is small, consider restricting its use to the next one or two groups scheduled to tee off.

Caddies

It is recommended at this time that caddies are not permitted under the Terms of Competition.

Trolleys

Unless the club can guarantee that trolleys are fully sanitised both before and after use, they should not be made available for hire and that players should be encouraged to bring their own.

On-Course Scoring

This is widely used in championship events to keep players and spectators informed of scores



being returned and is particularly important at the latter stages of the championship. If on-course scoring is being implemented the following is recommended:

- Via the championship software, players are asked to enter their own scores on conclusion of each hole. These scores would then get verified on conclusion of the round. Any on-course leaderboard would then be updated by a volunteer through an electronic device such as a mobile phone or tablet, which is connected to the championship software or associated webpage. This will eliminate any contact between the volunteer and the players.

England Golf can provide this facility. Please see 'Championship Software' above.

Should this process be adopted it also allows easier confirmation of the score at the conclusion of the round as scores have already been entered by the players. It also minimalizes the contact time between player and score recorder.

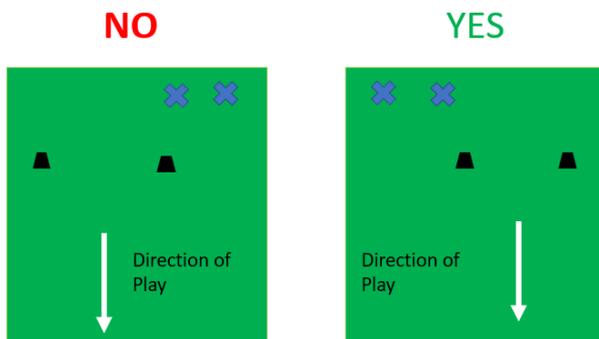
Golf Course

An assessment of the course should be made in advance focusing on how the course is marked and set up. This will allow for appropriate social distancing and help eliminate potential contact with fixed objects.

Teeing Grounds

Consider where tee markers are positioned so that competitors can socially distance on or around the area of play.

Consider where players would normally congregate when others are teeing off.



Most players are right-handed and will not like players behind them on the tee. Ensure tee markers are placed so that playing partners can position themselves to the right as indicated in the diagram. If teeing areas are small consider using an alternative tee to allow for social distancing.





Bunkers

As per Play Safe, Stay Safe guidelines all bunker rakes should be removed from the course. Whilst players are asked to make every effort to smooth the sand after playing from a bunker it is inevitable that bunkers will not be in their normal condition and will often result in many poor lies.

Through the relaxation of the rules, the organising committee may assist the player by introducing a local rule (using Model Local Rule E-3) to allow preferred lies in the bunker. For the competition to be qualifying for handicap purposes the distance must be six inches from where the ball originally lay and must not be nearer the hole. The area cannot be smoothed before the ball is placed.

Although not recommended for championship golf, the organising committee may deem all bunkers as Ground Under Repair if the bunkers are in a poor condition (but not combined with preferred lies as detailed above). Scores will also be acceptable for handicap purposes.

Alternatively, the organising committee may consider recruiting volunteers who would maintain the bunkers or provide the competitors with rakes. Competitors should also be encouraged to bring along their own personal mini rakes. Alternatively, the organising committee could offer rakes either to buy or rent, which are then fully sterilised after use.

Useful links:

<http://www.tacitgolf.co.uk/tacit-players-foldable-carry-rake.html>

Flagsticks

Guidelines dictate that flagsticks should not be touched by competitors and must be left in the hole at all times. Penalties for the touching/removal of the flagstick can be included in any Code of Conduct for the championship. Clubs have adopted various techniques to prevent the ball from falling into the hole and to allow players to remove the ball without touching the flagstick. The ball shall be considered holed if any part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green, even if not lodged against the flagstick (relaxation of Rule 13-2c). Scores will also be acceptable for handicap purposes under these circumstances.

Due to the nature of a championship and that these events are likely to be for elite players, consideration should be given that many of the players would remove the flagstick from short distance. If possible, the organising committee may seek volunteers who are responsible for the removal of the flagstick on the request of the player.

Flagsticks should be sanitised on conclusion of each day's play.



150-yard markers

If these are movable and/or are in a position that is likely to interfere with a player's stroke it is likely during a round that these will get removed/replaced during play. Consider removing them from the course. The majority of competitors now have distance-measuring devices!

Penalty Areas

These are often defined/indicated by either red or yellow stakes. These are deemed movable obstructions and may get removed if they interfere with play. If it is practicable to do so, and the penalty areas are clearly visible to players, consideration should be made to removing the stakes and defining the boundary of the penalty area by a painted line.

Benches/Ball Washers

As per the Play Safe, Stay Safe guidelines these should either be removed or covered to prevent their use.

Refereeing

Championship golf often involves rules officials on the course to assist the players in any Rules of Golf matters and to monitor the pace of play.

Rulings

An assigned referee should provide assistance to a competitor as and when required. When required to do so the referee and competitor should abide by the relevant social distancing measures in place. If the referee is in a buggy it is recommended that the referee remains in the buggy during the ruling unless the ruling requires the referee to make a closer inspection of the situation.

Buggy Use

Buggies are often used by referees to assist them in covering the area of the golf course quickly. If used, the organising committee should allocate a buggy to each referee individually (not shared) and the same buggy should be used during the championship day(s). On completion of each day's play the buggy should be appropriately cleaned paying attention to the pedals, steering wheel, seats and buggy frame. It is recommended a 'sign in/sign out' policy is adopted to track usage.

Referees should not transport competitors on their buggies unless for emergency situations.

Radios

Where multiple referees are used in bigger championships, radios are used to communicate between referees and to the championship organiser. Should radios be used, each referee should be assigned the same radio (and earpiece) throughout the championship and should ensure all



equipment is cleaned thoroughly on completion of each day's play. It is recommended a 'sign in/sign out' policy is adopted to track usage.

Referee Documentation

To assist the referee in their duties they are often provided with documentation such as local rules and pace of play guidelines. Where at all possible these documents should be sent to referees electronically and accessed via the referee's mobile phone or tablet device. If a referee does not have access to online resources, then it would be recommended that documentation is laminated to allow this to be easily cleaned.

Suspension of Play

Sometimes it will be necessary to call a suspension of play either for a dangerous situation i.e. lightning, or due to a course becoming unplayable due to flooding or darkness.

Dangerous Situation

An organising committee should have a policy to deal with suspension of play for a dangerous situation. These procedures should result in players evacuating the course before any impending thunderstorm.

The organising committee should review the facility as part of a pre-event risk assessment to determine the number of people it can accommodate under social distancing guidelines if all players on the course were required to evacuate. If the facility cannot facilitate then it is recommended players go to their transport and remain there until contacted by the organising committee. It is worthy to note that before making this decision consider the time of day and daylight hours available as a typical suspension for a dangerous situation lasts for a least one hour, taking into account getting people both on and back onto the golf course. A resumption should only be made when it is safe to do so. Remember also that all practice facilities should be closed during this kind of suspension.

Non-Dangerous Situation

In an example where a course has become unplayable due to flooding it would be recommended that the players are held in position on the golf course until a resumption of play can occur. This allows for social distancing measures to be retained. Shelters, however, should not be used. Only where play becomes impossible should players be brought from the course and be required to leave the premises.

Foursomes/Greensomes

Should you wish to play foursomes golf the following is recommended:

- Each partner should use their own golf ball, which is only handled by that player. For example, the player teeing off from hole 1 is the only one that touches the ball from teeing



off through to completion of the hole. The partner teeing off from hole 2 does likewise with their ball. Under the Rules of Golf, a partner is permitted to drop the side's ball in taking relief. It is also permissible to drop another ball when taking relief.

- When marking and replacing the ball on the putting green this should be conducted by the partner to which the ball belongs.

In addition, we also recommend that each player carries their own hand sanitiser in case they touch their partners golf ball in error.

Prize Presentations

Prize presentations are an opportunity for a significant number of people to congregate in one place and, more often than not, indoors. Subject to the up to date government guidelines at the time, the organising committee should consider whether or not to host a prize presentation. If a presentation goes ahead, this should be outdoors wherever possible and in a location where social distancing protocols can be implemented.

If trophies are being awarded these should be sanitised in advance and the presenter of the trophy should wear protective gloves when presenting the trophy to the winner.

If vouchers are being awarded these should be sent electronically to the winners rather than handed to them at the presentation.

The shaking of hands should not take place.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact the Championship department at championships@englandgolf.org.

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