



**METROPOLITAN
GOLF ASSOCIATION**

**Guide to
Officiating
MGA
Championships**

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to develop the unity, consistency and effectiveness of the team of Rules Officials, also known as “MGA Committee Members”, who represent the Metropolitan Golf Association at championships and other events.

With a common frame of reference and objective guidelines, MGA Committee Members are better prepared to exercise sound judgment during the golf tournament.

The guide is intended to supply that common denominator which is necessary for the many MGA Committee Members to act as **one team** - a team we can all take justifiable pride in.



THE SPIRIT OF OFFICIATING

Participants in an event are keenly aware of the spirit in which a tournament is conducted. There is no more certain way to injure the reputation of a tournament and the MGA than lax management. It may be difficult and unpleasant to be totally precise in the enforcement of The Rules of Golf, but it is a rare golfer who does not prefer to compete in a well-run event. Authority should be exercised for the sole purpose of helping to insure that an event will be fairly played under sporting conditions.

Officials should remember that as members of the Committee, their **primary role** is to lend assistance and offer counsel so as to help contestants **avoid unnecessary penalties** and to **obtain relief when entitled** under the Rules.

There are **three rules** to live by for a rules official to ensure that a championship is professionally administered:



1. Officials are cautioned **not** to use their position simply to watch play; this is very distracting and quickly recognized by the players and your fellow officials. **Be involved and be active.**
2. **Fear of Embarrassment** which keeps officials from seeking outside help when they are legitimately uncertain how to handle a situation. If you don't know, ask!
3. **Time Pressure** which an official places on himself in the mistaken belief that he is expected to make all Rules decisions instantaneously and without the use of backup material. Do not rush to an answer simply to get play moving. Make sure your answer is correct by using your radio to check with the official-in-charge.

The legal profession has established a very worthwhile premise in dealing with clients. Lawyers do not always know the law that applies to a particular case, but they do know where to find it and how to apply it correctly. Rules officials would do well to apply this philosophy to their officiating technique.

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

In speaking with and polling players, the MGA knows that customer service plays a large part in our success. Maintaining the proper attitude and communicating effectively with players are **key characteristics** of the best officials.

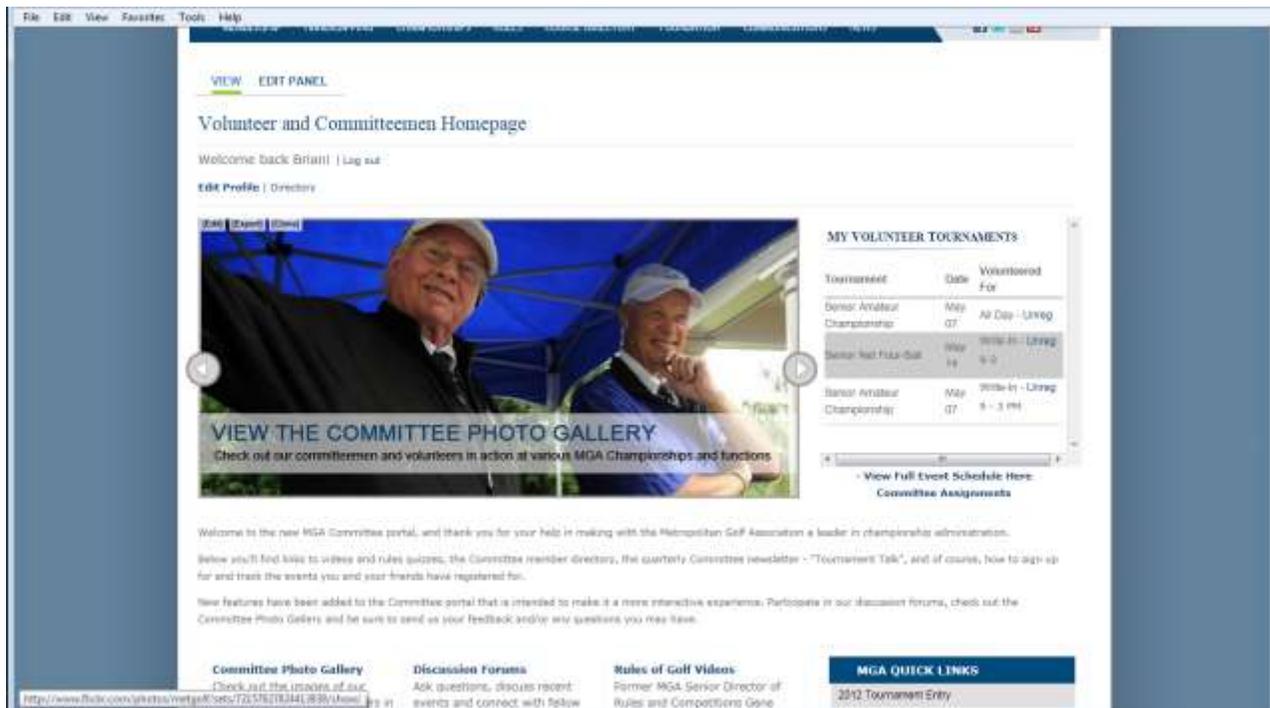


When you're officiating an MGA tournament, make sure you adhere to the following guidelines:

- Be alert and be quiet!
- Be friendly and be willing to help, but don't intrude in a situation. Ask if you can be of assistance.
- Be professional and confident in your communication of rulings to players. Determine the facts of the situation and confirm with the players involved. Walk the player through his alternatives and explain their options.
- Be civil and courteous; **never** be confrontational. Once you communicate the ruling, step away but stay close enough to observe how the player proceeds.

PRIOR TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP

- Periodically throughout the season, you will receive reminder e-mails/mailings listing up-coming events.
- Please log on to the “Committee Portal” of the MGA website (www.mgagolf.org) to volunteer for tournaments and respond by the deadline date.



- You will receive your Committee assignment within a couple of weeks of the event that you register to volunteer for via e-mail and regular mail. You'll also receive the Notice to Players as well as the pairings and starting times.
- If you are unable to attend an event you signed up for, please contact the MGA Championship Department immediately.

DRESS CODE AND EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Dress Code



- The MGA Committee uniform consists of:
 - Khaki-colored slacks
 - MGA Committee shirt
 - MGA tie (optional)
 - MGA Committee hat
 - Navy blue blazer with MGA patch (only for Starting Officials)
 - Dark shoes
 - Name badge
- You should bring appropriate clothing and materials necessary to cope with harsh weather (hat, sunglasses, sunblock, umbrella, MGA rain gear, etc.)
- **Only** hats, visors, and rain gear with an MGA logo may be worn.

Equipment

- All MGA Committee Members will be assigned a radio. ***Radios are very expensive and should be carefully handled.*** Please return radios to an MGA staff member when you're done volunteering for the day.
- Please bring your Rules of Golf and Decisions on the Rules of Golf books to all tournaments.
- **Don't forget** to bring a watch with a second hand.
- It may also be useful for you to bring your "Gotcha" string for measuring if a ball is out of bounds, as well as binoculars for spotting golf balls.

MGA COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee Member Assignments

The primary officiating assignments at tournaments conducted by the MGA are:

- **Starting Official** on starting holes, typically the 1st and 10th tees.
- **“On-Course” Rules Officials** to monitor play and assist players with rulings.
- **Scorecard Collection Officials** to accept score cards in a secured area nearby finishing holes, typically the 9th and 18th greens.
- **Scoreboard Calligrapher** to post results on the public scoreboard.



Instructions for Starting Officials

- Perform a roll-call by calling players for instructions ten minutes prior to their scheduled tee-time. Introduce yourself to the players and make sure they meet each other.
- Coordinate with MGA staff and keep them informed about players not reporting to the Starting Tee for their scheduled tee-time.
- Call the players attention to the notices on the starting table, particularly the conditions established for the competition.



Specifically Point Out:

- That we are playing USGA Rules. Throw in a phrase like, “that means playing it down”, to eliminate any doubts.
- The color of the tee markers they are playing from.
- Local Rules and Conditions of Competition.
- Drop Zones and whether or not they are in effect.
- Internal Boundaries between holes.
- One Ball Rule and whether or not it is in effect.
- Whether or not Electronic Measuring Devices are permitted.

Instructions for Starting Officials

- Distribute the official MGA scorecard to players and markers.
- Remind players to count the clubs in their bag and to mark their ball with an identification mark.
- Instruct the players of the order of play.
- Point out Pace of Play policy in effect for the tournament.
- Mark the Pairings with the actual starting time for each group; also mark all Withdrawals (WD's) and Did Not Shows (DNS's).
- Make every effort to keep the tables at the starting tees as clean as possible. It is important that each contestant see and read the notices of the day on the starting table. Committee Members are asked to keep such items as briefcases, jackets, rain gear, food and beverages off these tables.
- Spectators and friends are **not** permitted to sit with Committee Members at the starter's table as such distractions can affect a rules official's performance.



Instructions for Starting Officials

Late Appearance for Start of Play

- Under Rule 6-3a, if the player arrives at his starting point, ready to play, within five minutes of his starting time, the penalty for failure to start on time is **loss of first hole in match play or two strokes at the first hole in stroke play**. Otherwise the penalty for breach of this rule is **disqualification**. Unless the Committee determines that exceptional circumstances have prevented a player from starting on time, there is no penalty.



- The determination as to whether a player has a valid excuse for being late is the sole responsibility of the Rules and Competitions Committee, and all rules officials must refer such matters to a member of this Committee.

Instructions for “On-Course” Rules Officials

“On-Course” Rules Officials are assigned to cover specific hole(s) on the golf course. Committee Members should determine the most appropriate spot to position themselves on their assigned hole.



- “On-Course” Rules Officials responsibilities include:
 - Find out if your hole has any balls drops, ground under repair, out of bounds, obstructions or water hazards in order to anticipate rulings.
 - Be a ball spotter and inform players with hand signals indicating the status of their ball.
 - Be prepared to assist players in search for their ball.
 - Keep in touch with the field as they play through your assigned hole. Mark the time players arrive at the tee and complete play of the hole.
 - Stay visible but out of the way. Don’t position yourself too close to landing areas, tees or greens.
 - Do not roam your assigned hole. Keep your movement to a minimum.
 - Never drive golf carts in restricted areas.
 - Do not give rides to spectators.
 - Never leave keys or radios in an unattended golf cart.

Instructions for Scorecard Collection Officials

- Mark the time that players complete play and be visible in order to invite them to the Scorecard Collection Area.
- Remind players of their responsibility to report their hole-by-hole scores and the requirement that the player **and** their marker must sign the scorecard.
- Inform players about the number of qualifying spots. **Do not guess the cut line** as this can create confusion. If there is a playoff, remind players to remain near the score board for any announcements.
- Inquire if there were any Rules issues that possibly occurred during the round.
- Request that players remain in the scorecard collection area while tallying each players score. If a discrepancy exists and is due solely to an addition mistake, have the player correct the total. ***Any other error on the scorecard should be promptly brought to the attention of a member of the Rules and Competitions Committee.***
- Each scorecard should be initialed by the Scorecard Collection Official with a colored pen to indicate that the card is an official scorecard and that the total score has been verified.
- All scorecards, including those marked “No Card” or “Withdrawal” must be sent to the Scoreboard for posting.
- Keep spectators away from the scorecard collection area.



Instructions for Scoreboard Calligraphers

- **Scoreboard Calligraphers** are assigned to post scores from the official scorecards onto the scoreboard.
- Their responsibilities include:
 - Double-check the addition of the Scorecard Collection Official.
 - Make sure your handwriting is legible.
 - Indicate that the score has been posted on the scoreboard by checking the appropriate spot on the official scorecard.
 - Do not guess the cut; this can create confusion.



APPLYING THE RULES

Rules Decisions relating to play on the course should be made by an MGA Committee Member provided they are **absolutely sure** of their ruling and only after consulting their Rules of Golf book. It is a good officiating technique to point out to the player the applicable Rule of Golf in the book.



Each Committee Member should highlight a Rules of Golf book that they will carry with them to each tournament. A personalized Rules of Golf book will increase familiarity with the Rules and facilitate locating the applicable rule quickly. Committee Members should also seriously consider purchasing a current copy of Decisions on The Rules of Golf book. The better informed a rules official is, the better they can serve the game of golf.

Issues with the following Rules are most frequently encountered by officials at a golf tournament. Consequently, Committee Members should be thoroughly familiar with these Rules and their points of emphasis:

- Lifting, Dropping and Placing (Rule 20)
- Obstructions (Rule 24)
- Casual Water, Ground Under Repair (Rule 25)
- Water Hazard (Rule 26)
- Ball Lost or Out-of-Bounds; Provisional Ball (Rule 27)
- Ball Unplayable (Rule 28)

Rules Decisions relating to any of the following matters may be made **only** by the Rules and Competitions Committee:

- Disqualification
- Penalty for delay in start of play
- Slow play
- Scorecard infractions

APPLYING THE RULES

The MGA's guidelines for officials to apply The Rules of Golf are as follows:



- Don't intrude in a situation. Ask if you can be of assistance.
- Determine the facts of the situation and confirm with the players involved.
- Walk a player through their alternatives and explain their options.
- Once you've communicated your ruling, step away, but stay close enough to observe procedure.
- If a rules official is unable to reach a decision on the course, they should advise the player in stroke play to proceed under the second ball provision (Rule 3-3).
- Remember that we're trying to prevent penalties, **not** assess them.
- Radio transmission should be kept brief and to the point.
- **Use your radio earpieces** as players should **never** hear Committee Member conversations.

PACE OF PLAY

MGA Committee Members on the course should be aware of a player's *Pace of Play*.

- The most obvious indication of possible slow play is when there is more than one hole open ahead of a playing group.



- Determine whether the group in question started play on time and check their elapsed time.
- Advise a member of the MGA Championship Department staff of the situation and follow their recommendation.
- When directed by an MGA Championship Department staff member to contact a group of players who appear to be playing slowly, remember that there may be a justified reason for their place in the field. Ask them to account for the open hole(s) and to attempt to close the gap.
- MGA Committee Members must use **extreme** tact when approaching a group of players about slow play. ***There is no more delicate subject for a rules official.***
- Keep the MGA Championship Department staff informed as the situation continues. **Do not penalize the players.** This is the province of Rules and Competitions Committee.

TRAINING OF MGA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A well-prepared and professional Rules and Competitions Committee is the goal of the MGA. In order to maintain and improve the level of officiating, the MGA has implemented the following recommendations for those interested in learning more about The Rules of Golf.

- ***Rules of Golf Review:*** Mandatory open-book test intended to cover general rules of situations that Committee Members might encounter on a regular basis.
- ***Rules of Golf Quiz:*** Distributed each February. An internationally known, open-book quiz which will challenge beginner and expert alike. Provides practice in the use of the Decisions Book.
- ***Regional Rules Discussion Groups:*** Three regional meetings usually held in February or March. They provide an informal setting for Committee Members to meet and discuss Rules and procedures.
- ***Handicap/Rules Seminars:*** Three regional meetings held in mid-March. These meetings are well attended and geared to the Club Handicap and Tournament chairpersons. Committee Members attendance is welcome and encouraged.
- ***USGA/PGA Rules Workshops:*** Two and four day events held November – March around the country. Committee Members should consider attendance once every four years.
- ***MGA/Met PGA Rules Workshops:*** Usually held in March, featuring highly regarded national Rules experts. This event is conducted by the MGA in cooperation with the Metropolitan and New Jersey Sections of the PGA.
- ***Tournament Officials Seminar:*** Review sessions on MGA Championship Department procedures. Includes (on-course) Rules seminar and a round of golf.