

Rules of Golf - Rule 3: Stroke Play

3-1. General; Winner

A stroke-play competition consists of [competitors](#) completing each hole of a [stipulated round](#) or rounds and, for each round, returning a score card on which there is a gross score for each hole. Each competitor is playing against every other competitor in the competition.

The competitor who plays the stipulated round or rounds in the fewest [strokes](#) is the winner.

In a handicap competition, the competitor with the lowest net score for the stipulated round or rounds is the winner.

3-2.

Failure to Hole Out

If a competitor fails to hole out at any hole and does not correct his mistake before he makes a stroke on the next [teeing ground](#) or, in the case of the last hole of the round, before he leaves the [putting green](#), *he is disqualified*.

3-3. Doubt as to Procedure

a. Procedure

In stroke play, if a competitor is doubtful of his rights or the correct procedure during the play of a [hole](#), he may, without penalty, complete the hole with two balls.

After the doubtful situation has arisen and before taking further action, the competitor must announce to his [marker](#) or a [fellow-competitor](#) that he intends to play two balls and which ball he wishes to count if the Rules permit.

The competitor must report the facts of the situation to the [Committee](#) before returning his score card. If he fails to do so, *he is disqualified*.

Note: If the competitor takes further action before dealing with the doubtful situation, Rule 3-3 is not applicable. The score with the original ball counts or, if the original ball is not one of the balls being played, the score with the first ball put into play counts, even if the Rules do not allow the procedure adopted for that ball. However, the competitor incurs no penalty for having played a second ball, and any penalty strokes incurred solely by playing that ball do not count in his score.

b. Determination of Score for Hole

(i) If the ball that the competitor selected in advance to count has been played in accordance with the Rules, the score with that ball is the competitor's score for the hole. Otherwise, the score with the other ball counts if the Rules allow the procedure adopted for that ball.

(ii) If the competitor fails to announce in advance his decision to complete the hole with two balls, or which ball he wishes to count, the score with the original ball counts, provided it has been played in accordance with the Rules. If the original ball is not one of the balls being played, the first ball put into play counts, provided it has been played in accordance with the Rules. Otherwise, the score with the other ball counts if the Rules allow the procedure adopted for that ball.

Note 1: If a competitor plays a second ball under Rule 3-3, the strokes made after this Rule has been invoked with the ball ruled not to count and penalty strokes incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.

Note 2: A second ball played under Rule 3-3 is not a [provisional ball](#) under [Rule 27-2](#).

3-4. Refusal to Comply with a Rule

If a competitor refuses to comply with a Rule affecting the rights of another competitor, *he is disqualified*.

3-5. General Penalty

The penalty for a breach of a Rule in stroke play is two strokes except when otherwise provided.