



# Proposed Rules of Amateur Status for 2022

---

## Overview, Draft Rules and Explanation of Proposals

R&A Rules Limited and the United States Golf Association  
February 2021

---

FEEDBACK PERIOD IS OPEN FROM FEBRUARY 22 – MARCH 26, 2021

To provide feedback, please email:

The R&A at [AmateurStatusFeedback@randa.org](mailto:AmateurStatusFeedback@randa.org)



## **Overview of the Rules of Amateur Status Modernisation Initiative**

The R&A and the USGA are pleased to announce proposals for significant changes to the Rules of Amateur Status. These changes result from a multi-year modernisation initiative that has identified a clear need to bring the Rules up to date to reflect today's global amateur game and ensure that the Rules are easier to understand and apply.

**Background:** In 2017, The R&A and the USGA agreed in principle to undertake a modernisation initiative for the Rules of Amateur Status that would analyse the current Rules, research the history of each Rule and establish which of the current provisions remain important to protect the amateur game.

The principal concerns that have been raised in relation to the current Rules can be summarised as follows:

- The Rules don't reflect the fact that the elite amateur game is a progression for the many young players who aspire to be successful tournament professionals.
- Too many players who are unsuccessful in the pursuit of their goal lose their amateur status through participation on cash prize tours without making any impact on the professional game.
- The line between cash and non-cash prizes has become increasingly blurred to the point where the logic of the distinction is questionable.
- There are too many barriers for elite amateur golfers seeking funding to participate in elite amateur competition, which is often quite expensive.
- The Rules that cover the use of golf skill and reputation for personal benefit are very difficult to understand and have been made even harder to administer by the widespread use of social media.

**Purpose of Review:** The stated purpose for the review was to determine whether the Rules of Amateur Status are needed in the modern game and, if so, produce a code that:

1. Is in the best interests of the game.
2. Reflects the modern game.
3. Is easily understood and applied.

An initial analysis of "open golf" – meaning that the Rules of Amateur Status would be eliminated entirely – highlighted the following principal concerns:

- The detrimental impact on handicap golf that unlimited prizes could produce, in terms of pressure it would place on both the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping.
- The inevitable eradication of historic amateur competitions, with the removal of the concept of an amateur golfer resulting in such championships ceasing to exist.

- The negative impact that the loss of such elite amateur events would have on the development of young golfers, given the important platform and clear and well understood pathway they provide for the majority of elite players wishing to make their way in the game.

The consideration of “open golf” was important in reinforcing the key role the Rules play in protecting the integrity of the amateur game at all levels. The modern amateur game remains self-regulating and the limit on prizes plays an important role in minimising pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping.

Ultimately, and in line with the purpose of the review, The R&A and the USGA concluded that retaining the Rules of Amateur Status is in the best interests of the game.

**Proposed New Rules:** The proposed Rules would continue to maintain a distinction between amateur and professional golf and provide a standardized condition of eligibility – amateur status – for amateurs who compete in golf competitions.

They would continue to recognize that golf is largely self-regulating and the Rules exist to help protect the integrity of the game by minimizing pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping by limiting the value of prizes an amateur golfer is allowed to accept based on performance in competition.

As part of the modernization effort to provide a code that is in the best interests of the amateur game and reflects the modern game, while being easier to understand and apply, it is proposed that the new Rules would:

- Eliminate the distinction between cash prizes and other prizes.
- Remove competitions such as long-drive events, putting competitions and skills competitions that are not played as part of a tee to hole competition from the scope of the Rules.
- Eliminate all sponsorship-related restrictions.
- Provide a shorter minimum period awaiting reinstatement.

In simple terms, the only acts that would result in a golfer losing his or her amateur status are accepting:

- A prize in excess of the prize limit (which means that playing in a competition with excessive prizes, whether as an amateur or professional, would not, of itself, impact on a player’s amateur status).
- Payment for giving instruction.
- Employment as a golf club professional or membership of an association of professional golfers.

**Feedback and Implementation Process:**

- The R&A and USGA have engaged with the golf community in feedback sessions throughout the review process including: national federations and state golf associations,

worldwide professional golf associations (PGAs), worldwide Tours, NCAA, and elite-level amateurs.

- A public feedback period is open from February 22 – March 26, 2021.
- After this period ends, we will continue to evaluate the Rule changes, make any appropriate changes and obtain final approval from our respective Amateur Status Committees and boards.
- The new Rules of Amateur Status are scheduled to go into effect in January 2022.
- To provide greater insight into the draft of the proposed Rules of Amateur Status, it is accompanied by explanations which detail the current Rule, the proposed new Rule, and our rationale for why changes are being proposed or why a Rule or part of a Rule would remain the same. Topics covered include:
  - Prizes
  - Expenses
  - Promotions and Advertising
  - Instruction
  - Professionalism
  - Reinstatement
- To provide feedback, please contact The R&A by email at:  
[AmateurStatusFeedback@randa.org](mailto:AmateurStatusFeedback@randa.org)

## PROPOSED RULES OF AMATEUR STATUS FEBRUARY 2021

### Rule 1: Purpose of the Rules

Amateur golf has a well-established tradition in the game, including a history of competitions limited to amateur golfers. The Rules of Amateur Status define who is eligible to compete as an amateur golfer.

Golf is largely self-regulating and to help protect the integrity of the game by minimising pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping, the Rules of Amateur Status limit the value of prizes an amateur golfer is allowed to accept based on performance in competition.

The Rules of Amateur Status also make a distinction between amateur golfers and non-amateur golfers who accept employment as a golf professional or give instruction for compensation.

### Rule 2: Amateur Golfer

All golfers are amateurs unless they accept:

- A prize above the **[\$750 USD]** limit (see Rule 3: Prizes);
- Payment or compensation for giving instruction (see Rule 4: Instruction);
- Employment (including being self-employed) as a golf club or driving range professional; or
- Membership of an association for professional golfers.

An amateur who takes any of these actions becomes a non-amateur and remains a non-amateur until being reinstated as an amateur (see Rule 5: Reinstatement as an Amateur Golfer).

### Rule 3: Prizes

An amateur is allowed to accept any prize, including money or other currency, up to a limit of **[\$750 USD]** in value, per competition, unless the national governing body has set a lower limit. For a non-monetary prize, the value of that prize is the price that the item is generally available to purchase from a retail source at the time the prize is accepted.

The prize limit applies to the following:

- Any tee to hole golf competition involving a score for a hole, regardless of where that competition is played (for example, on a golf course or a golf simulator).
- Any skills competition where the shot is played during a tee to hole golf competition
- The total prizes accepted in a single competition or multiple competitions being conducted at the same time (for example, scratch and handicap competitions).

The prize limit does not apply to the following:

- The value of trophies and other similar prizes.
- Long drive competitions, target competitions, competitions involving specific skills, trick shots and competitions that solely involve putting (unless the shot is played during a tee to hole golf competition).
- A prize for a hole-in-one made during a round of golf on a golf course or during contests held outside a round of golf, provided the length of the shot is at least 50 yards.
- Gambling or wagering among individual golfers or teams of golfers. See the **["R&A and USGA Policy on Gambling"]**.
- Expenses to compete in a subsequent stage of the same competition (but for handicap competitions with prizes to compete at subsequent stages, see the **["R&A and USGA Policy on Handicap Competitions with Prizes to Compete in Subsequent Stage of Competition"]**).

## **PROPOSED RULES OF AMATEUR STATUS FEBRUARY 2021**

### **Rule 4: Instruction**

Instruction means teaching the mechanics of swinging a golf club and hitting a golf ball. The Rules of Amateur Status do not apply to other forms of teaching or coaching (for example, physical fitness and mental aspects of the game).

An amateur who accepts payment or compensation for giving instruction, including as part of salaried duties, becomes a non-amateur.

But, an amateur may accept payment or compensation for giving instruction in the following circumstances:

- As part of a programme that has been approved in advance by a national governing body (see **[The R&A and USGA guidelines on approved programmes]**).
- As an employee of a school, college, or camp, provided the time spent giving instruction is less than 50% of the time spent in performance of all duties as an employee.
- When the instruction is given in writing or online, and not to a specific individual or group.

### **Rule 5: Reinstatement as an Amateur Golfer**

A non-amateur may be reinstated as an amateur by the applicable national governing body.

Each national governing body has the sole authority to:

- reinstate a non-amateur who lives within its area of authority,
- require a waiting period prior to reinstatement, or
- deny reinstatement.

A national governing body's decision on reinstatement is final, subject to any appeal process established by that body.

### **Rule 6: Applying the Rules**

The national golf union or association is the national governing body responsible for administering and applying the Rules of Amateur Status within its area of authority, including issues that arise in another area but involve a person or people who live within its area of authority.

If there is uncertainty or doubt about the application of the Rules, including whether a person is an amateur or non-amateur, the national governing body has the authority to make a final decision but it may also refer the matter to The R&A [USGA] prior to making a decision.

The national governing body's decision about the application of the Rules is final, subject to any appeal process established by that body.

# Proposed Rules of Amateur Status Explanations

## Prizes

**Current Rule:** Prizes come in two forms (i) cash prizes (and their equivalent) and (ii) non-cash prizes, each with different restrictions.

Current Rule 3 prohibits an amateur golfer from:

- Playing for a cash prize of any amount; or
- Accepting a non-cash prize in excess of the \$750 prize limit (or a lower limit if one has been set by the national governing body).

Rule 3 currently applies to almost all competitions in which players use a club and a ball.

**Proposed New Rule:** The proposed new code would:

- Retain a prize limit maximum of \$750 but would no longer differentiate between cash and non-cash prizes.
- Make acceptance of a prize the standard factor in determining when a player has lost amateur status (which means that entering or playing a competition as a professional would not, of itself, result in the loss of amateur status - see "Professionalism").
- Apply the prize Rule only to competitions that require a player to play from a teeing area into a hole (including such simulator-based competitions), and would no longer apply to other competitions such as long-drive events, putting competitions, and skills competitions that are not played as part of a tee to hole competition.

### **Explanation for Proposal:**

- As golf is largely self-regulating, to help protect the integrity of the game by minimizing pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping, the Rules of Amateur Status limit the value of prizes an amateur golfer is allowed to accept based on performance in competition.
- For this reason, the code would retain the prize limit of \$750 (US dollar or lesser value in a local currency set by the national governing body in the territory).
- Allowing Cash Prizes:
  - The permissible use of vouchers has been liberalized considerably in recent codes to the extent that there is virtually no limit on their allowable use which means that vouchers are very much the equivalent of cash.
  - Payment systems have continued to evolve and have created a number of complications in differentiating between a cash prize and one that is equivalent to cash (which is also currently prohibited in any amount).
  - These include the ever-increasing popularity of gift cards and mobile and app-based payment systems.
  - Because these forms of payment will only become more common, an amateur golfer would be able to accept any prize (including cash prizes), provided the value of such a prize does not exceed the prize limit.

- Acceptance of Prizes:
  - In the current code, playing for a cash prize of any amount is prohibited, regardless of whether the golfer plays well enough to win such a prize.
  - However, the current code treats non-cash prizes differently, where an amateur may play for large prizes but is in breach only if he or she accepts a non-cash prize in excess of the prize limit.
  - Recognizing that, for the reasons above, cash prizes would be permitted, loss of amateur status would occur only when an amateur golfer accepts a prize in excess of the prize limit.
  
- These two proposed changes would produce a Rule with a clearly defined “bright line” that is easy to explain and understand, namely that an amateur golfer may not accept any prize with a value in excess of the prize limit.
  
- The Rules would no longer apply to competitions in which the player’s score on a hole is not the primary goal, as prizes in such events, like long driving contests or other skills challenges, do not impact the self-regulating nature of the game as they don’t put pressure on the Rules of Golf or the Rules of Handicapping.



## Proposed Rules of Amateur Status Explanations

### Promotions and Advertising; Using Name, Image and Likeness

**Current Rule:** Rule 6 restricts an amateur who plays at an elite level from using his or her name, image or likeness to appear in promotions or advertising in exchange for financial gain or personal benefit. This Rule does not apply to an amateur who does not compete at an elite level.

- An elite amateur golfer cannot obtain payment, compensation, personal benefit or any financial gain, directly or indirectly, for promoting, advertising or selling anything or for allowing his or her name or likeness to be used by a third party for the promotion, advertisement or sale of anything.
- This Rule also applies when no compensation is received by the amateur because he or she is considered to receive a personal benefit for taking part in such promotions or advertising activities.
- There are a number of exceptions to the Rule, including allowing:
  - Promotions and advertising for the benefit of an amateur's national, regional, state or county golf association or a recognized charity.
  - Broadcasting and writing provided instruction is not included.
  - The receipt of a scholarship (such as tuition and living expenses to attend a college or university).

**Proposed New Rule:** The proposed Rules would no longer include any restrictions on how an amateur may benefit from his or her name, image or likeness, including but not limited to the receipt of expenses (see Expenses).

#### **Explanation for Proposal:**

- The introduction of social media has created a landscape where the current Rule's prohibition on an amateur receiving financial or personal benefit (including raising one's profile) is unworkable and impossible for national governing bodies to monitor.
- Finding a middle ground between permissible and non-permissible activities would introduce additional complexity for players, sponsors, and national governing bodies, and does not meet the goal for the revised code to be easy to understand and apply.
- Amateurs selected to a national squad or collegiate program are currently allowed to receive significant benefits that are not available to most other amateur players (including not having to cover the costs of travel, entry fees, instruction, equipment, and living expenses as well as receiving free or discounted tuition) and there is also much greater scope for a sponsor to gain publicity for the assistance provided to such a squad or program.
- An amateur who fails to qualify for a national or collegiate program must currently find a way to cover expenses while being restricted by this Rule from lending his or her name, image or likeness in exchange for expenses or other assistance from a potential sponsor.
- Removing the current restrictions, and allowing an amateur and the sponsor to publicly disclose the assistance being provided, would allow all amateurs the same opportunity to seek assistance with their expenses and help introduce additional equity in the amateur game.

## Proposed Rules of Amateur Status Explanations

### Expenses

**Current Rule:** Rule 4 generally prohibits an amateur from receiving assistance in covering expenses related to golf competitions. However, receiving assistance is allowed in some cases, provided the expenses are reported and approved by a national, regional, or state golf association.

If an amateur plays at an elite level, the source of such assistance must not be promoted or advertised.

Several exceptions allow for the receipt of expenses, including expenses related to school or club teams and sponsored handicap competitions, as well as more general golf-related expenses.

**Proposed New Rule:** The proposed Rules would no longer include any restrictions on how an amateur covers his or her expenses, including whether such assistance is provided to the amateur in exchange for involvement in promotional or advertising activities (see Promotions and Advertising; Name, Image and Likeness)

### **Explanation for Proposal:**

- While recreational golfers can manage their expenditures on the game by limiting how often they play, elite-level competitive golf requires a significant investment to cover costs, including entry fees, transportation and accommodation, instruction and practice, fitness and equipment.
- The current permission allowing an amateur to receive outside assistance was only introduced in 2012 and this was done in the belief that the limited restrictions that remained would eventually be removed entirely, as is currently being proposed.
- The change that was made in 2012 was based on the belief that, generally, the extent of any assistance being provided would self-regulate, meaning that an outside source would only cover what was reasonably required for the amateur to compete at the elite level, and this has proved to be the case.
- The elimination of restrictions does mean that a highly marketable amateur talent may receive significant support, in excess of golfing expenses. This type of exceptional case is considered a necessary consequence of allowing elite and other amateurs to access much more modest funds to assist their development in the game.
- The related elimination of restrictions related to promotional and advertising activities provides further rationale for no longer needing to regulate or monitor the source of an amateur's assistance with expenses - if an amateur can receive direct financial compensation for promoting a company, regulating how expenses are paid is no longer necessary.
- Amateurs selected to a national squad or collegiate program are currently allowed to receive significant expenses that are not available to most amateur players.
- An amateur who fails to qualify for a national or collegiate program must currently find a way to cover expenses while being required to report the source to a national, regional or state golf union or association, but being unable to publicly reference the source of the assistance.
- It is believed that removing the current complex reporting procedures and restrictions would allow all amateurs the same opportunity to seek assistance with their expenses and help introduce additional equity in the amateur game.

## Proposed Rules of Amateur Status Explanations

### Instruction

**Current Rule:** An amateur may not receive any compensation for providing golf instruction, including when instruction is provided as part of salaried job or in exchange for other services or goods.

Instruction is narrowly defined as teaching the actual mechanics of swinging a golf club and hitting a golf ball.

The following exceptions allow an amateur to receive compensation for giving instruction:

- When employed by an educational institution or a camp, provided the instruction does not exceed half of the total time spent performing that job.
- While working as part of a program that has been approved by the national governing body.
- Providing instruction in writing (such as publishing a book or writing a magazine article).

**Proposed New Rule:** The Rule would remain largely unchanged, except that an amateur would be allowed to receive compensation for providing instruction in digital forms (such as social media), provided the instruction is “one-way”, meaning the amateur is showing how to perform a skill but is not giving instruction by using two-way communication to a specific individual or group (such as occurs in a traditional lesson).

### **Explanation for Proposal:**

- Instruction remains very much part of the traditional role of the golf professional, noting that learning how to provide proper instruction is a standard and fundamental part of the curriculum in PGA education programs.
- Any change to the Rules of Amateur Status that could be seen as providing an opportunity for untrained persons to provide instruction for payment is seen as potentially detrimental to the game. In general terms, allowing amateurs to give instruction for payment has such potential. This applies not only to the instruction being given, but issues relating to insurance, customer protection and the use of club practice ranges and public driving ranges to provide such instruction.
- The current exception related to approved programs allows an amateur to give instruction for payment provided the program has been approved by the national governing body, and this approach avoids the potential risks identified above.
- An amateur would still be allowed to be employed by an educational institution or camp. This exception is a practical solution that allows a team coach to give limited instruction, in addition to other tasks performed as a coach, as long as those other tasks make up at least half of that person’s role as a coach. The exception provides young golfers who are part of the many golf teams and sports camps around the world the opportunity to learn the basics of the game under the tutelage of someone familiar with the game.
- The current Rules allowing an amateur to write a book on golf instruction would be extended to apply this same principle to more modern digital formats. This enables an amateur to raise his or her profile in line with the relaxations on name, image and likeness, and may assist the amateur in gaining sponsor support for their golfing activities. But such instruction is only allowed when being given to a non-specific audience, and retains the principle that instruction for payment to an individual or specific group is the remit of the golf professional.

## Proposed Rules of Amateur Status Explanations

### Professionalism

**Current Rule:** An amateur may not take any action to identify or work as a professional golfer; amateurs may not enter into a golf-related contract except as it applies to future plans as a professional golfer.

Rule 2 defines a professional golfer as one who:

- Plays the game as his or her profession;
- Works as a professional golfer;
- Enters a golf competition as a professional;
- Holds or retains membership of any Professional Golfers' Association (PGA); or
- Holds or retains membership of a Professional Tour limited exclusively to professional golfers.

**Proposed New Rule:** The proposed new code no longer defines a "professional golfer." Rule 2 prohibits an amateur golfer from accepting:

- Employment (including being self-employed) as a golf club or driving range professional; or
- Membership of an association for professional golfers (such as a PGA).

Simply identifying oneself as a professional golfer would, of itself, no longer result in loss of amateur status, including entering and playing in a competition as a professional, and there would no longer be any restrictions on an amateur golfer entering into a contract and receiving benefit from that contract as an amateur.

### **Explanation for Proposal:**

- The proposed Rules for 2022 look to reduce the ways in which an amateur becomes a non-amateur, but certain acts remain very much part of the traditional role of the professional.
- This is most clear with respect to employment – that is, someone employed as a golf professional is not considered an amateur, and this also applies to someone who is a member of an association for professional golfers.
- This employment-related distinction would remain present in the modernized code, largely so that the code can be simplified in other areas while carrying forward this well understood principle that employment as a golf professional is distinct from an amateur.
- However, while the above distinctions both relate to employment and membership, the proposed new Rules would treat the manner in which one plays the game differently, and instead would rely solely on whether or not a golfer has accepted a prize above the prize limit (see "Prizes").
- This means that simply identifying oneself as a professional golfer or competing as a professional in a competition would not, by themselves, change an individual's status under the proposed new Rules (see "Prizes").
- Contracts primarily define how an individual's use of a product or service is compensated and or relate to playing the game, and as the proposed Rules no longer restrict an amateur golfer from benefiting from lending his or her name, image or likeness, all contract-related restrictions in this area have been removed (see Promotions; Name, Image and Likeness).

## Proposed Rules of Amateur Status Explanations

### Reinstatement

**Current Rule:** Rule 9 establishes the process by which a non-amateur can apply for reinstatement, as well as recommending guidelines for national governing bodies handling such applications.

Rule 9 also provides:

- Recommendations that non-amateurs who have gained national prominence or who have been reinstated twice are not normally eligible for reinstatement, and
- A framework for applicants who are awaiting reinstatement by clarifying they are not amateurs until the process is completed, but may have some additional playing opportunities at the discretion of a committee or tournament organizer.

**Proposed New Rule:** The important administrative processes contained in the current Rule would remain largely unchanged in the proposed Rules.

However, the minimum recommended waiting period has been reduced from one year to six months, with a national governing body left to assess whether additional time would be appropriate based on the nature of the applicant's history as a non-amateur (such as adding time based on a review of the applicant's playing record as a non-amateur).

### **Explanation for Proposal:**

- The reinstatement process provides a vital function in maintaining the distinction between amateurs and non-amateurs, and ensures golfers are not able to arbitrarily move back and forth between amateur and non-amateur status.
- A waiting period is assigned to each applicant (see the guidance note below) to allow for a certain period of time between a player's last action as a non-amateur and his or her reinstatement date and becoming eligible to compete as an amateur.
- This waiting period helps ensure amateurs give pause for thought before deciding to become a non-amateur (for example by accepting a prize above the prize limit), knowing that such an act will require a waiting period should they decide to apply to regain their amateur status.
- Lowering the minimum waiting period will allow many golf professionals and instructors the opportunity to regain amateur status more quickly, while also providing each national governing body the discretion to add additional time for applicants who have achieved success as demonstrated by their playing record as a non-amateur.
- This provides a more logical balance as compared to the current recommendations that treat all actions the same (currently, a two-year waiting period for a career golf professional is recommended regardless of his or her playing success).
- The application process itself provides a necessary framework to ensure each national governing body has an opportunity to review each application and then apply what it considers to be the appropriate waiting period based on the circumstances.
- Denying reinstatement would remain an option but is applied in limited circumstances only, such as when a player is considered to have gained national prominence.

- A decision to deny reinstatement could also be applied to an individual seeking a third reinstatement, but the applicant's national governing body would normally review the applicant's entire application history and the circumstances of previous reinstatements.

As the governing bodies' guidelines on reinstatement are not currently intended to form part of the new Rules of Amateur Status, the following draft guidance note is likely to accompany the Rules:

**Reinstatement Guidance Note:**

The Rules of Amateur Status make a distinction between amateur golfers and non-amateur golfers. Consequently, there needs to be a reinstatement process for non-amateur golfers who wish to regain their amateur status.

The reinstatement process should involve the non-amateur submitting an application for reinstatement to their national governing body, with the national governing body requiring a waiting period prior to reinstatement or, in exceptional cases, denying reinstatement.

It is recommended that the minimum waiting period for reinstatement is six months, but a national governing body may wish to increase the period based on, for example, an applicant's success in terms of prizes won in competition.

In deciding the waiting period for reinstatement, the national governing body is not required to consider the length of time the applicant was a non-amateur.