

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

30. Use of Distance-Measuring Devices

Current Rule: Rule 14-3b, Appendix IA (section 7) and Appendix IV (section 5) cover distance-measuring devices (DMDs):

- The Rule itself prohibits use of DMDs to measure distance during a round.
- But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule allowing such use of DMDs.

2019 Rule: The current default position in the Rules will be reversed:

- Rule 4.3 will allow players to use DMDs to measure distance.
- But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting such use of DMDs.

Reasons for Change:

- Allowing DMD use is consistent with the principles of the game:
 - Figuring out the distance to the hole or to another location on the course is not one of the decisions that the Rules expect players to make using only their own skill and judgment or only with a caddie's advice.
 - Distance is public information a player may get from anyone; and on most courses, this information is found on sprinkler heads, markers, posts, etc.
- DMD use has become widespread in the 10 or so years since they were introduced, and they are allowed at most clubs throughout the world and in most amateur competitions, including (since 2014) at USGA and R&A amateur championships.
- Given that in many countries the DMD Local Rule has been adopted by most Committees, it will be sensible for this to be a Rule of Golf rather than being permitted by Local Rule.
- Reversing the default position will help avoid the confusion that sometimes exists today when clubs or players do not realize that DMD use requires adoption of a Local Rule.
- At the same time, Committees that are not comfortable with allowing use of electronic devices such as DMDs on their course generally or during a particular competition may still prohibit their use.
- The revised approach will align the Rules with the reality that golfers of all ages increasingly expect to be able to use electronic devices on the course for other purposes that are allowed by the Rules such as looking up a Rule of Golf or checking the weather.
- Embracing and encouraging the use of DMDs should also benefit pace of play as has been the experience at most amateur championships and clubs that have adopted the Local Rule.