



Golf and Living with COVID-19
in the Republic of Ireland



Return to Golf Protocol



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Following continuing engagement with the relevant Government departments and agencies, Golf Ireland can confirm the following measures apply in the Republic of Ireland during the month of September 2021.

- Golf Clubs can open for members and visitors with no inter-county travel restrictions. Casual golf and formal organised competitions can take place. [CLICK HERE](#) for measures which can be taken for activities accepted for handicap purposes.
- Timesheets can be set up for two-balls, three-balls or four-balls at the club's discretion.
- In order to facilitate a greater number of players clubs can choose to implement 8-minute starting intervals on their timesheets for groups of up to four golfers. However, clubs are strongly advised to consider [The R&A Pace of Play manual](#) on starting intervals, and maintain as wide a starting interval as possible.
- Tee times must be booked in advance online or over the telephone. Clubs must ensure that players' names are recorded on timesheets and timesheets must be kept for a period of at least six weeks to assist with contact tracing should the need arise.
- Non-contact outdoor training in pods of 15 or fewer is permissible. For full details of how this will apply to golf [CLICK HERE](#)
- From September 20, all restrictions relating to group sizes for outdoor training are removed.
- From July 23, Golf Clubs may reintroduce standard flagsticks and bunker rakes, removing modifications previously introduced. Please see Golf Course Measures detail on page 5 of this document for full details on how to implement these changes. Hand sanitiser should be made available on entry and exit to the course. Golfers are strongly advised to bring their own pocket hand sanitiser and to sanitise hands after each hole following handling of the flagstick and/or rake.
- From September 6, the number of spectators for outdoor events increased
 - Up to 75% capacity with appropriate protective measures with those with proof of immunity.
 - Where patrons have mixed immunity status, e.g with and without proof of immunity, spectators must be limited to 50% capacity (subject to appropriate protective measures including social distancing between groups, face masks etc.)

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- From 26 July, changes took effect which allow serving of food and beverages indoors in line with the sectoral guidance for the hospitality industry. Please consult <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/41f70-reopening-hospitality> for specific details.
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- From 6 September, organised indoor events and mass gatherings can take place at the below capacities:
 - 60% of venue capacity where all patrons are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months), or accompanied minors (under 18), in line with sectoral guidance.
 - Where patrons have mixed immunity status, there will be no change to the current restrictions during September therefore indoor events should not be hosted.
 - Please consult www.gov.ie for full details. *Please note easing of capacity limit restrictions does not apply to large privately organised social events*
 - From September 20, organised indoor group activities (coaching, yoga, bridge etc) can take place at the below capacities:
 - Limits of 100 people (with appropriate protective measures) where all patrons are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months), or accompanied minors (under 18).
 - Where patrons have mixed immunity status, pods of up to 6 participants will be permitted (excluding adult leaders/teachers).
 - Multiple pods will be permissible subject to protective measures. Number of pods will have regard to the size of venue and substantial social distance between individual pods.
 - Please consult www.gov.ie for full details.
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- From September 20, all club committee meetings should continue to be held remotely or outdoors unless all participants are considered immune (i.e., fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months) in which case meetings can take place indoors at 60% of venue capacity. Where members have mixed immunity status, indoor meetings will not be permitted. The Government have signalled Oct 22nd as a date on which this may change. Clubs will be advised in advance of this date of any changes.
 - Please see [Sport Ireland Return to Sport Guidance Note September 2021](#) for full detail.
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- From September 20 Showers & Changing Rooms can begin to reopen with protective measures in place. Recommended protective measures which clubs may choose to implement are included in the [Sport Ireland Return to Sport Guidance Note September 2021](#)
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This Protocol will be reviewed dependent on the public health situation and in line with the Irish Government's COVID-19: Re-framing the Challenge, Continuing Our Recovery and Reconnection plan. Based on the criteria of at or close to 90% of people 16 or over being fully vaccinated in the coming weeks, and having regard to the incidence and behaviour of the disease at that time, the Government plan to remove further statutory restrictions in respect of events and activities from 22nd of October. Golf Ireland will provide further updates to clubs in as timely a manner as possible.



Golf and Living with COVID-19 in the Republic of Ireland

The following guidance applies to all golf club activities in accordance with the Republic of Ireland's government plan *COVID-19: Reframing the Challenge, Continuing Our Recovery and Reconnecting*.

As our economy and society continues to gradually reopen on a phased basis, it is essential that all golf clubs operate within this guidance – and in doing so continue to show the high levels of safety consciousness that has been a feature since reopening.

It is essential that all club officials and members familiarise themselves with this guidance, and play their part in ensuring our sport remains open and accessible throughout this reopening pathway.

General Guidance For Golf Clubs

Clubs must ensure that the following protocols are observed:

Player Behaviour

- **Members and staff** with colds or any symptoms of COVID-19 stay away from the golf course/ clubhouse.
- **Physical distancing rules** are observed by all members and their guests at all times in the car park, clubhouse and on the course. Signage should be erected to reinforce this message.
- **Players are advised to** use hand sanitiser after each hole following handling of the flagstick and/or rake.
- **Groups should adhere** to the current guidelines regarding household mixing outdoors.
- **Clubs will have to consider** ways in which social distancing can be facilitated in practice facilities. If such facilities are open, golfers must warm up on their own.

Management Practices

- **Personnel are on hand** to monitor adherence with physical distancing rules and the rules for golfers set out in this document.
- **Tee times are booked in advance** online or over the telephone. Clubs must ensure that players names (including visitors and members' guests once permitted) are recorded on timesheets and timesheets must be kept for a period of at least 6 weeks to assist with contact tracing should the need arise.
- **Locker Rooms and Toilet facilities**, when open must be regularly cleaned and sanitised.
- **Risk assessments** must be conducted when implementing any changes to Covid protocols. Clubs should consult with their health & safety advisor and insurance provider when making these changes



ACCESS TO GOLF

During the pandemic, certain levels of public health restrictions affect not only the ability to play golf but how it is played. While these restrictions apply, it is essential that golfers adhere to them. It is also important that golf clubs play their part in helping to ensure golfers follow these rules.

It is also important that golfers in counties on either side of the Northern Ireland border adhere to the restrictions that apply in both jurisdictions.

- Hand sanitisers should be made widely available throughout the facilities, and located near any communal touchpoints.
- **Tee Time Intervals:** In order to facilitate a greater number of players clubs can now choose to implement 8-minute starting intervals on their timesheets for groups of up to four golfers. However, clubs are strongly advised to consider The R&A Pace of Play manual on starting intervals, and maintain s wide a starting interval as possible.

Golf Course Measures:

- [CLICK HERE](#) for measures which can be taken for activities accepted for handicap purposes.
- **Flagsticks:** Golf Clubs may reintroduce standard flagsticks and hole depths, removing modifications previously introduced. Where a golf club removes modifications, the standard rules of golf for the flagstick should be reintroduced (see Rules 13.2 and 13.3 in particular). Where a golf club reintroduces conventional flagsticks, a strong and renewed emphasis on hand-washing both before and after play must be reinforced. Hand sanitisers should be available at entry and exit points to the course. Only one player should handle the flagstick on each hole. Should a Golf Club wish to continue to persist with COVID-related modifications, this would be permissible as The R&A are continuing at this time to make the COVID-19 Rules of Golf available.
- **Bunker Rakes** may be reintroduced to the course. Where golf clubs reintroduce bunker rakes, the application of a local rule permitted placing within a bunker is no longer permitted. Should a Golf Club wish to continue with bunker rakes removed, they may do so and may continue to apply such a local rule for handicapping purposes. Only one player should handle the rake where more than one player's ball is played from a bunker.
- **Bins:** Clubs that wish to restore bins on the course should ensure they are contactless to operate, are emptied frequently and the area sanitized regularly.
- **Divot Bags:** Clubs that wish to promote divoting among their members in this way may wish to consider allocating personal bags and trowels to members so that they can collect divot mix for the repair of any divots during their round. Where such a scheme is operated bags and trowels must not be shared.



Amenities:

- **Hire trolleys** (electric and pull trolleys) must be sanitised prior to each use.
- **Caddying on a casual/friendly** can occur, however where the caddy and player are not from the same household, and cannot maintain a 2 meter social distance, both should wear a face covering. Where golf clubs normally offer caddying services to members or visitors, the resumption or commencement of these services must be in accordance with the Workplace Safety Guidelines. It is recommended that before performing their duties, a player's equipment and clubs should be cleaned with disinfectant spray or wipes. In performing their duties, caddies should regularly sanitise their hands, keep a two-metre physical distance from their player wherever possible (including in advising the player generally on the course and also on the line of putts). After the round, the player's equipment should again be cleaned with disinfecting spray/wipes. Payment for caddying services should be contactless wherever possible.
- **Where a golf buggy is being used**, it must be thoroughly sanitised after each use. Buggies that are open (without doors) can be shared by patrons who are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months) Where patrons have mixed immunity status, both the driver and passenger should wear a face covering when seated in the buggy.
- **If necessary, defibrillators** should be moved to an accessible area and members should be notified of their new location.
- **Use of Computer Terminals:** Scoring terminals can be used however clubs should take action to try to avoid any communal touch points and trying to find alternative ways for players to submit scores, such as by mobile phone, etc. Clubs that do use the scoring terminals should ensure that appropriate hygiene and safety measures in place including ensuring that surfaces are regularly cleaned between uses.
- **Clubs should require the use of face coverings** in any settings where two-metre physical distancing is not always possible.



General Guidance For Golfers

To ensure that the game is played safely, golfers must observe the rules below.

There is a danger of complacency setting in regarding social/physical distancing which every golfer has a responsibility to address. Golfers should keep in mind that it is entirely possible to play a round of golf with others in a friendly and sociable manner without coming into close physical contact. Unnecessary physical contact negates this and should be avoided, including:

- Avoid shaking hands, hugs, putting your arm around someone else, etc.
- Avoid huddles in groups before, during or after rounds.

In addition to this point, the following must be observed:

In advance of play:

- If you are ill or have symptoms, stay at home.
- Schedule your tee-time in the manner prescribed by the club you are playing at. Under no circumstances should you arrive at the club without booking in advance.
- Ensure that your group size is no greater than that allowed by your club.
- Ensure that you have sufficient numbers of golf balls, markers, tees to avoid having to exchange equipment with others.
- Wash your hands and your golf equipment before you leave home.
- Aim to arrive at the Practice Area, if open at your club, no more than 15 minutes prior to play.
- It is recommended that, wherever possible, you travel to and from the golf course on your own or with members of your own household only.

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- Park your car in such a way as to facilitate physical distancing.
- Observe physical distancing rules at all times following your arrival at the club.
- If necessary, retrieve your clubs, shoes and other equipment from your locker.
- Change your shoes in the car park.
- Warm-up alone. Observe physical distancing rules on practice range and on the practice putting green. If your club has taken the decision to close practice facilities, this must be strictly adhered to.

On the course:

- Do not arrive at the first tee more than 5 minutes before your allotted tee time.
- Observe physical distancing at all times on the course.
- Following play of a hole, do not enter the next teeing ground until all members of the group in front have played their tee-shots and exited the teeing ground.
- Where a golf buggy is being used, it must be thoroughly sanitized after each use. Buggies that are open (without doors) can be shared, however where a 2 metre social distance cannot be maintained, players should wear a face covering when seated in the buggy.
- Do not exchange or share equipment, food or drink with other players during your round.
- Do not pick up another player's equipment or golf ball.

In addition, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Use the toilet facilities before you leave home.
- Bring your own hand sanitiser to the course & use regularly during the round.

Golfers with Disabilities/Additional Needs

- Golfers with disabilities or additional needs should be able to continue to play once they adhere to all necessary risk minimisation measures.
- If there are concerns regarding an individual's susceptibility to COVID-19 due to an underlying illness, the individual/parent/carers should discuss this with their medical practitioner.

