



## **Frequently Asked Questions in relation to the Protocol for the safe re-introduction of golf in the Republic of Ireland.**

*Last Updated: 21 July 2021*

Please note that Golf Ireland continue to engage with all with all relevant government departments with the priority being the full reopening of all golf activities as soon as the public health situation allows.

### **Q. How far can I travel to play golf?**

A. Currently there are no domestic travel restrictions within Ireland therefore you can travel to any golf club within the country.

### **Q. How many people can I play golf with?**

A. You can play in groups of 4 with no household restrictions

### **Q. Can I pay a green fee to play at my local course?**

A. Visitors and Member guests are permitted

### **Q: Can our club run internal competitions?**

A. All forms of competitive golf may be undertaken, including so called 'Major' competitions, internal club matchplay & club open competitions.

### **Q. Is there pace of play guidance?**

A. 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 as wide a starting interval as possible.

### **Q. How many spectators can attend a golf event?**

A. A maximum of 200 people may attend organised outdoor events and this will apply to organised inter-club matches. This number does not include players, officials and any parents in attendance for safeguarding purposes.

### **Q. Can we play Scrambles?**

A. Scramble formats are permissible. However, as there continues to be restrictions from government, relating to the number of people you can meet outside, clubs must ensure that if this format is played in a shotgun/simultaneous start, there is a maximum of one group/team allocated to each tee box and that social distancing is maintained during play. Teams must be reminded to socially distance themselves from each other while playing this format. In addition, clubs must ensure that any outdoor dining or gatherings provided before or after the tournament are within the permitted limits outlined by Fáilte Ireland. These are detailed in full in the Business Support Hub visible here: <https://covid19.failteireland.ie/business-conference-business-events>

### **Q. What is the guidance on shot-gun starts?**

A. Shot gun starts are permissible. However, as there continues to be restrictions from government, relating to the number of people you can meet outside, clubs must ensure



there is a maximum of one group/team allocated to each tee box.

In addition, clubs must ensure that any outdoor dining or gatherings provided before or after the shotgun start are within the permitted limits outlined by Fáilte Ireland. These are detailed in full in the Business Support Hub visible here:

<https://covid19.failteireland.ie/business-conference-business-events/>

**Q. Can flagsticks be reintroduced to the course?**

A. From July 23, 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.

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.

**Q. Can bunker rakes be reintroduced to the course?**

A. From July 23, rakes may be reintroduced to the course. Where golf clubs reintroduce bunker rakes, the application of a local rule permitted placing within a bunker should no longer be operated. 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.

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.

**Q. Can members of the same household share a buggy?**

A. Where a golf buggy is being used, it must be thoroughly sanitised after each use. Buggies that are open (without doors) can be shared, however where a 2 meter social distance cannot be maintained, players should wear a face covering when seated in the buggy. Similarly, where a player, because of the nature of a disability, requires another individual to drive a golf buggy for them, the player and driver should wear face coverings when seated in the buggy. Every effort must be made to avoid handling of



communal surfaces and regular hand-washing must be observed by both individuals

**Q. Can driving ranges open?**

A. Outdoor practice facilities and driving ranges reopened on the 26<sup>th</sup> April. Sport Ireland and the Expert Group on Sport have defined outdoor as:

- Unenclosed / unroofed ranges and practice areas
- Covered ranges, no more than 50 per cent of which are enclosed.
- Any activity that takes place in driving ranges must be socially distanced and in line with the restrictions currently in place.

**Q. Can the pro shop open?**

A. Pro-Shops may be open with social distancing and the use of masks by all customers being enforced at all times.

**Q. Are the locker rooms open?**

A. At this time Sport Ireland and the Expert Group on Sport advice is that locker rooms should remain closed.

**Q. I have received both doses of my vaccine, are the rules different for me?**

A. No, the protocols for participation in golf activities are the same for those who vaccinated and those who are not. If the restrictions for those who have received both doses of their vaccine change, and it is possible for these to be adopted into the return to Golf protocol this will be communicated to clubs.

**Q. Is Golf Ireland recommending these restrictions?**

A. The protocol will set out the basis on which golf has been permitted as an activity can be played in accordance with the measures announced by the Government and set out in detail on [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie). Golf Ireland commends clubs for having shown a high level of compliance thus far and encourages all golfers and clubs to continue to follow protocols issued in accordance with these measures.

**Q. Are golfers exempt from the national restrictions and public health measures that have been put in place by the Government?**

A. No, golfers are expected to observe the underlying public health guidance set out at: [www.hse.ie/coronavirus](http://www.hse.ie/coronavirus) and [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) including any restrictions which apply on travel from home.

**Q. Can we advertise membership at this time?**

A. Yes. Clubs should be mindful not to undermine their existing membership and be conscious that existing members may want to avail of any discounted package that would be available to new members. In the coming weeks Golf Ireland will run a promotion campaign to enhance public awareness of golf club membership opportunities. In addition, Golf Ireland Development & Club Support Officers will be delivering webinars to clubs on engaging with new and existing members.

**Q. Can a Golf Club issue temporary membership to golfers?**

A. A club is entitled to offer memberships to individuals in line with its own



constitution/byelaws. As above clubs need to be mindful of the value of each category of membership and ensure members do not switch to a cheaper membership category that is perceived as better value.

**Q. What should our club do for employees coming back to work?**

A. The Work Safely Protocol is a revision of the Return to Work Safely Protocol published in May 2020. The revised Protocol incorporates the current advice on the Public Health measures needed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community and workplaces as issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), the Department of Health and Government.

The Protocol is a general document applicable to all sectors. It sets out the minimum measures required in every place of work to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to facilitate the re-opening of workplaces following temporary closures and the ongoing safe operation of those workplaces.

The revision of the Protocol was necessary to reflect the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 Plan for Living with COVID-19, which was published in September.

The protocol can be accessed here: [https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Work-Safely- Protocol.html](https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Work-Safely-Protocol.html)

Golf Clubs with employees should ensure that they have the necessary policies and practices in place relating to Covid-19. An overview of the key areas that employers (Golf Clubs) must assess to ensure compliance and to minimise risk to employees can be found on the [HSA Website](#)

**Q. Can a Professional Golfer give a lesson to an adult member?**

A. Yes, from May 10, outdoor adult coaching is permitted in groups of up to 15.

**Q. Are juniors allowed to play on the course?**

A. Yes, as outlined in the protocol document juniors are encouraged to return to golf.

**Q. Can junior group activity resume?**

A. Yes, Underage non-contact outdoor training in pods of 15 recommenced from April 26. Guidance for clubs is available [here](#).

**Q. Where can we get the signage mentioned in the protocol document?**

Posters and resources can be found here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19- updates/partner-resources/>