

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GOLFERS

BY

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The earliest written-down code of rules—that of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, dated 1744—contained only 13 items. The current code consists of 41 rules, all with clauses and sub-clauses.

And they can almost be summed up in the words of life's golden rule—do to your opponents and others on the course as you would they should do to you. It is really as simple as that!

Perhaps, however, I may expand golf's golden rule to suggest what might be called the ten commandments of golf. For these I have drawn on both etiquette and the rules:

1. Don't annoy your opponent or other players on the course. This covers such things as moving about while the other chap is playing his shot, driving into the chaps in front, and so on.

2. Play the ball as it lies. Unless there is a winter rule, don't do anything that might improve the lie of your ball. You cannot be too careful in this—for even a well-loved bishop was once told by his opponent: "My Lord, if you go on trampling the bracken down like that, I shall walk in!"

3. Remember your score—and remember it right. There is nothing more infuriating than, having asked your opponent how many he has taken, to be told: "Let me see now—my drive went off to the left; I fluffed my second in the rough; no, that was my third . . ." If you are marking a card, ask your fellow competitor what his score is after he has holed out—and take his word for it.

4. Don't delay. You needn't run around the course, but don't dawdle, particularly on chilly days.

5. Play strictly in turn. Many people have a bad habit of not looking where their opponent's ball is in relation to their own.

6. Don't mix match-play and stroke-play.

7. Tidy up bunkers after you. Smooth

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out your footprints and club marks. If your ball is in a bad place left by somebody else, grin and bear it—but ensure that the people behind don't have to do likewise.

8. Observe putting green etiquette strictly. Ask your opponent whether he wants the flagstick left in, attended or removed; don't shuffle about while he is putting; if he gives you a putt, pick your ball up gratefully—and don't waste time by putting out.

9. Pay your debts promptly and with a smile. If you are playing for a ball—and lose—ask your opponent what sort he likes and buy him one immediately in the pro's shop. A friend of mine, having won a ball, was once told: "Here you are, I have only played with it three times."

10. Learn the local rules. They are usually more likely to be needed during a round than the rules of golf.

Well, there are my ten commandments. I have often been asked by non-golfers how one can know that one's opponent has not improved his lie or otherwise transgressed. The answer is that one doesn't know—but you cannot legislate for cheats.

Reprinted from Golf Illustrated, March 5, 1959.