

Rule 25 - Guidance for National Governing Bodies

Introduction to Rule 25

The introduction of Rule 25 to the 2023 Rules of Golf is an important statement in terms of the inclusivity of the Rules of Golf and the accessibility of the game. Prior to the 2023 edition of the Rules of Golf, “The Modified Rules for Players with Disabilities” were separate from the Rules of Golf and acted as Local Rules that would apply only if the Committee in charge of a competition adopted them. From 1 January 2023, the Modified Rules become Rule 25 and the modifications in Rule 25 will apply automatically in all competitions and general play for anyone who is eligible to use them. There are no major changes to the substance of the Modified Rules from 2019.

Rule 25 does not alter the existing responsibility of organizers in relation to safety considerations, course conditions, player access to the golf course or on the use of golf carts or other mobility devices on the golf course. These are matters for the Committee running the golf course to determine for all players, regardless of whether they are eligible to use Rule 25, and may be impacted by national legislation.

Explanation of Eligibility for Rule 25

It is a player’s category of disability and eligibility that determine whether they can use the specific modifications in Rule 25.

Eligibility decisions under Rule 25 are required only for players who have impairments that fall within one of the four categories of disability covered in the Rule. These are:

- Players who are blind (which includes certain levels of vision impairment),
- Players who are amputees (which means both those with limb deficiencies and those who have lost a limb),
- Players who use assistive mobility devices, and
- Players with intellectual disabilities.

It is recognized that there are many players with other types of disabilities (such as players with neurological conditions, players with orthopaedic conditions, players of short stature and players who are deaf). These additional categories of disability are not covered in Rule 25 as, to date, no requirement has been identified for modification of the Rules of Golf for these players.

More information regarding eligibility for Rule 25 can be found in Section 5D of the Committee Procedures within the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf.

Method for Determining Eligibility

The National Governing Body (NGB) should provide a method that all Committees within their country should use to determine the eligibility of individual players to use Rule 25, including what evidence (if necessary) a player may be required to provide to the Committee. Such evidence could be in the form of a medical certificate, confirmation from the NGB, a pass issued by an officially accredited medical authority (e.g. EDGA Access or WR4GD Pass), or something similar. If all Committees use the same method, this will lead to greater consistency in these determinations within a country. The NGB itself may choose to take on the role of determining eligibility for individual players, but this will be a decision for each NGB to make.

An example of guidance that an NGB can send to Committees within their country for determining eligibility is provided below (see Example Guidance from National Governing Body to Committees on Method for Determining Eligibility).

Determining Player Eligibility

Any player who believes they are eligible and wishes to use Rule 25 should communicate this to the Committee at their golf club and/or the Committee running an event. The Committee should use the method that has been decided by their NGB to determine that a player is eligible to use Rule 25, which may involve the player providing evidence of their disability. It is recommended that a Committee keeps a record of players that it determines are eligible to use Rule 25, including the specific sub-Rule(s) of Rule 25 for which they are eligible (for example, a player who is blind would be eligible to use sub-Rule 25.2). The Committee should be familiar and comply with applicable laws and regulations relating to the proper collection, handling and storage of personal health information. Ideally the determination should be done prior to a player using the modifications in Rule 25, but a Committee may also confirm eligibility retrospectively if necessary. While a player may be eligible to use the modifications in Rule 25, it is not a requirement that an eligible player does so.

Players need to confirm eligibility with the Committee only and there is no requirement to provide proof to playing partners or an opponent in match play, though they may choose to do so. Any Rules issues during a round should be resolved using Rule 20.1b (for match play) and Rule 20.1c (for stroke play).

Model Local Rules for Players With Disabilities

In addition to the modifications included in Rule 25, the Committee Procedures section of the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf now contains Model Local Rules that, if adopted by the Committee, apply specifically to players with disabilities (see Section 8M).

Permission to Use an Artificial Device

Rule 25 includes multiple sub-Rules that refer to Rule 4.3b, which may allow a player to use certain equipment to help them with a medical condition provided it is allowed under the standards in that Rule. In addition to the specific references within Rule 25 (such as the use of assistive mobility devices or prosthetics), any player may ask the Committee in charge of a competition for permission to use an artificial device and, under Rule 4.3b, a player is not in breach of Rule 4.3 for using equipment to help with a medical condition if the Committee finds that:

- The player has a medical reason for using the equipment, and
- The use of that equipment would not give the player an unfair advantage over other players.

Example Guidance from National Governing Bodies to Committees on Method for Determining Eligibility

The following text is an example of an eligibility decision method that can be provided by NGBs as guidance to Committees for determining eligibility for the use of Rule 25. This template is simply an example, and each NGB may amend the text as necessary or choose to provide their own guidance.

(EXAMPLE) Committee Guidance for Determining Player Eligibility for Use of Rule 25

In some cases where clearly evident without the need for medical proof or exam that a player is eligible for use of the modifications under Rule 25 (such as visible loss of a limb), the Committee may accept a player's eligibility without the need for any additional documentation. Equally, if the Committee has previously confirmed a player's eligibility to use the Modified Rules, then it may continue to accept a player's eligibility to use the modifications in Rule 25 without the need for an additional or ongoing review.

If there is any doubt on whether a player is eligible for use of the modifications under Rule 25, or if a Committee decides that players must provide a formal proof of their eligibility, then the Committee may choose to make that request and require that players provide proof of their eligibility.

The following list contains guidance for the Committee on the criteria that would make a player eligible to use the modifications in Rule 25 and examples of proof that is acceptable to confirm eligibility:

General

Players may present an EDGA WR4GD or an Access Pass, approval from National Governing Body, **[insert other methods]**, which will detail a player's eligibility and category within Rule 25.

Player who is Blind or has a Visual Impairment

- Any player who is legally blind or registered blind (as determined by country).
[insert proof requirements]
- Result of:
 - Snellen Test – **[insert proof requirements]**
 - LogMAR test – **[insert proof requirements]**
- An EDGA Access or WR4GD Pass under "Visual Impairment".

Player who is an Amputee

- Amputation of:
 - Lower limb – An amputation at Syme level (through ankle) or above on at least one side.
 - Upper limb – An amputation of any part of the upper limb leading to a complete lack of grip on either side, or where a grip cannot be maintained.**[insert proof requirements]**
- An EDGA WR4GD Pass under "Limb Deficiency" or "Leg length Difference".

Player who uses an Assistive Mobility Device

- The device must be required for the player to move around the course and also in making a stroke.
[insert proof requirements]
- An EDGA WR4GD Pass under "Impaired Muscle Power" or relevant "Neurological conditions" where an assistive device is needed.

Player who has an Intellectual Disability

Any intellectual disability covered by: EDGA WR4GD or Access pass, a Virtus International Pass (II1, II2 or II3), a Virtus National Pass (II1), a pass from national intellectual disability organisation, psychological assessment for **[listed]** intellectual disabilities. **[insert proof requirements]**

Further Guidance

If the Committee requires any further guidance on determining player eligibility for Rule 25, they should contact: the NGB **[insert relevant contact details]**