



3 October 2022
Changes to Rule 10.2b(3) of the Rules of Golf

Rule 10.2b(3) in the Rules of Golf currently reads as:

(3) **No Setting Down Object to Help in Taking Stance**. A player must not take a *stance* for the *stroke* using any object that was set down by or for the player to help in lining up his or her feet or body, such as a club set down on the ground to show the *line of play*.

The following Interpretation under this Rule adds further clarification:

10.2b(3)/1 – Setting Clubhead on Ground Behind Ball to Help the Player Take a Stance is Allowed

Rule 10.2b(3) does not allow a player to set down an object (such as an alignment rod or a golf club) to help the player take a *stance*.

However, this prohibition does not prevent a player from setting his or her clubhead behind the ball, such as when a player stands behind the ball and places the clubhead perpendicular to the *line of play* and then walks around from behind the ball to take his or her *stance*.

Since 2019, the second paragraph of this Interpretation has not been applied to the manner in which self-standing putters have been used (that is, when a player stands the putter up behind the ball, releases the putter and then moves behind the putter to determine if the club is aligned to the line of the putt).

Please be advised Rule 10.2b(3) will change effective January 1, 2023. The revised Rule will read as follows:

(3) **No Setting Down Object to Help in Taking Stance or Swinging**. A player must not set an object down to help with aiming or to help in taking a *stance* for the *stroke* to be made (such as a club set down on the ground to show where the player should aim or position their feet).

“Set an object down” means that the object is in contact with the ground and the player is not touching the object.

If the player breaches this Rule, they cannot avoid penalty by removing the object before the *stroke* is made.

This Rule also applies to taking an action for a similar purpose, such as a player putting a mark in sand or dew to help with their swing.

This Rule does not apply to a *ball-marker* when used to mark the spot of a ball or to the ball when it is placed on a spot. **But** a *ball-marker* that meets the definition of “alignment device” in the Equipment Rules is covered under Rule 4.3.

Under the revised Rule, a player using a self-standing putter may continue to stand the putter up behind the ball, but the player must maintain continuous contact with the putter when determining the line of the putt or using the putter to help in taking their stance as explained in the following two Clarifications that will also go into effect on January 1, 2023.

10.2b/1 – Use of Self-Standing Putter for Alignment Help is Not Allowed

Provided a self-standing putter conforms to the *Equipment Rules*, it may be used to make a *stroke* (Rule 4.1a(1)). But the player (or their *caddie*) is not allowed to set such a putter down to get help in any way that would breach Rule 10.2b.

For example, the player must not set the putter down in a standing position right behind or right next to the spot where the ball lies on the *putting* green to show the *line of play* or to help the player in taking their *stance* for the *stroke* in breach of Rule 10.2b(3). (New)

10.2b(3)/1 – Setting Clubhead on Ground Behind Ball to Help the Player Take a Stance is Allowed

Rule 10.2b(3) does not allow a player to set down an object (such as an alignment rod or a golf club) to help the player take a *stance*.

However, this prohibition does not prevent a player from positioning their clubhead behind the ball, such as when a player stands behind the ball and places the clubhead perpendicular to the *line of play* and then, while still holding the club, walks around from behind the ball to take his or her *stance*.

It's important to note that this is a change to the Rules of Golf, not the Equipment Rules. There is no change to the conformance status of any self-standing putters previously submitted to the R&A or USGA for conformance evaluation.

Should you have comments or questions regarding this Rules of Golf change, please contact Craig Winter, USGA Senior Director, Rules of Golf and Amateur Status at cwinter@usga.org or 908-326-1971.