



October 4, 2019  
Notice to Manufacturers

## Definition of Alignment Device and Treatment of Ball-Markers

### **Introduction of Definition**

For many years, The R&A and USGA have evaluated a variety of ball-markers and alignment devices. Generally, the governing bodies have determined that objects classified as alignment devices, which include certain ball-markers, may not be used by the player in a specific manner because such devices artificially eliminate or reduce a skill or judgment that is essential to the game. This was formerly covered under Rule 14-3 and, in the revised Rules of Golf, use of such devices in a manner that creates a potential advantage for the player is a breach of Rule 4.3.

In order to facilitate consistent decisions by The R&A and USGA, and to provide manufacturers of ball-markers and other similar objects with guidance as they continue to develop product in this area, following is a definition of *alignment device* that will appear as an addition to Part 6 of the next update of the Equipment Rules:

### ***Alignment Device Definition***

*The following criteria are used to determine when an object manufactured to mark the spot of a ball is an alignment device. Features include, but are not limited to:*

- *The object incorporates features designed to measure, gauge or interpret slope, green speed or other conditions, or includes optical or electronic components or,*
- *The vertical height of the object, in any orientation or configuration, is greater than 1.0" or,*
- *The maximum dimension in any horizontal direction exceeds 2.0" and incorporates any of the features noted below (or similar features):*
  - *the object incorporates painted, etched or inscribed line(s) or similar features greater than or equal to 2.0" in length ("line" includes any line, arrow or other straight marking that could be solid or broken, but has a defined start, a defined end and whose length can be measured),*
  - *the object has an appendage(s) or an extended features(s) greater than 2.0" in length or that extends a feature of the object to a length greater than 2.0".*

*Note 1: An object is an alignment device if it exceeds the dimensional specifications listed above and advertising, marketing or intellectual property descriptions or claims related to the object indicates that it is primarily for the purpose of showing the line of play.*

*Note 2: An object is an alignment device if it is modified in any manner that would satisfy any of the above provisions.*

If an "alignment device" is placed by the a player to show the line of play and the player places his or her ball based on the orientation of the alignment device, the player is in breach of Rule 4.3a, which prohibits a player from creating "a potential advantage by using equipment (other than a club or a ball) that artificially eliminates or reduces the need for a skill or judgment that is essential to the challenge of the game."

Ball-marker and other similar submissions, use of which have previously been ruled in breach of the Rules of Golf, will be re-evaluated at the request of the submitter or manufacturer.

Please provide any comments or suggestions regarding the proposed definition by November 15, 2019 to Carter Rich, Senior Director of Equipment Rules and Conformance, at [jcrich@usga.org](mailto:jcrich@usga.org).

Regards,

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