

## «The Flagstick» - Historien om flagget på Greenen

The ubiquitous flagstick has rather humble origins. The Rules define the flagstick as “a movable straight indicator with or without bunting or other material attached, centred in the hole to show its position . It must be circular in cross section. Padding or shock-absorbent material that might unduly influence the movement of the ball is prohibited”. The evolution of this definition did not happen overnight. The circular reference was added when it was realised that flagsticks could be craftily positioned in the hole for an advantage, as was the prohibition on using padding material.

Today’s golfers fly into a rage when they see a flagstick removed by the previous group, inadvertently not put back into the hole. Spare a thought for our forefathers who had no such luxuries with Rules such as the 1783 Aberdeen Code stating, “When the hole is distinctly in view of the player, no person shall be allowed to stand at it for direction”.

It wasn’t till 1875 that the word flagstick appeared in the Rules and has, over the years, finally settled to the modern Rule where a player is penalised 2 strokes if he strikes the flagstick while it is being attended.

### The Flagstick

First mention [1875](#), but certainly in use before then.

1875 either party may have the flagstick removed when approaching the hole. This stayed in force until [1956](#).

R&A [1882](#) when a ball is within 20 yds of the hole, the flagstick must be removed (in stroke play) - [1899](#) rules included a one stroke penalty for a breach. No penalty in match play for hitting the flagstick, attended or not.

R&A [1882](#) when a ball rests against the flagstick, the stick may be removed.

[1902](#) Loss of hole for striking a flagstick that had been removed by player's own side. In stroke play, the flagstick must be removed before playing when ball from within 20 yards, penalty 1 stroke.

[1908](#) Stroke play, rule changed to 2 strokes penalty for hitting the flagstick or a person standing at the hole. [1912](#) word change to read 'strikes, or is stopped by...'

[1933](#) loss of hole for striking a flagstick removed or held by the player's own side - if held or removed by opponents, then THEY lost the hole. Stroke play rule unchanged.

The [1952](#) code restated that striking an unattended flagstick from anywhere carried no penalty in match play, or from over 20 yards from the hole in stroke play. Striking the flagstick or the person attending it from within 20 yards carried a 2 stroke penalty.

[1956](#) Rule was rewritten. Now the responsibilities and penalties fell to the player, and match and stroke play were treated the same. Two strokes or loss of hole if the player's ball struck the flagstick or the person attending it. No penalty for striking an unattended flagstick from any distance.

[1960](#) In adjusting the flagstick, the player may leave it at whatever angle it is found at, or set it upright. He cannot tilt the stick to his advantage (decision, 1956).

[1968](#) penalty of loss of hole or 2 strokes for hitting an unattended flagstick with stroke from the putting green.

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**Why It Was Changed:** The USGA cited its main reason for changing this rule as pace of play. "Allowing a player to putt with the flagstick in the hole without fear of penalty should generally help speed up play," the organization [posted on its website](#). Because most golfers don't play with caddies, the process of taking the flagstick out to putt out can delay play, and the USGA added that it does not anticipate the rule resulting in a scoring advantage. (2019)

Arguments posted by a golf instructor:

The rule is proposed among many to speed up play, and while I admire the USGA's/R&A's desire to speed up play, I'm not even sure it will do that - many have said it may *slow* play in most instances because where we currently take the flagstick out and put it back in once per hole on most holes, we may find situations where different players prefer the flag in or out and change its status when it is their turn to putt.

Ellers mener han t det er en fordel å putte med flagget i, men bør ikke det trekke i retning av ikke å tillate at flagget er i. For det er neppe et poeng i seg selv at det skal bli lettere å putte? USGA og R&A mener det speeder opp spillet, og det er en god grunn, men stemmer det? Neppe! Se instruktørens oppfatning.