

Advice and the Golf Rules: What Is - and Isn't – Allowed

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We all know what "advice" means in a general sense: Golfers offering one another information during a round. The reason golf requires a more specific definition of "advice" is that certain types of it are allowed, and other types not allowed, under the rules.

[Rule 8](#) is specifically devoted to this topic, but does not go in-depth on what is and isn't allowed as far as giving or seeking advice during a round of golf. We will here, but first:

The Official, Rule Book Definition of 'Advice'

The USGA and R&A are the governing bodies of golf, and in the [Rules of Golf](#) they define "advice" thusly:

"Advice is any counsel or suggestion that could influence a player in determining his play, the choice of a club or the method of making a stroke.

"Information on the Rules, distance or matters of public information, such as the position of hazards or the flagstick on the putting green, is not advice."

Examples of Advice That Is Permitted

When it comes to advice and the Rules of Golf, a good rule of thumb is this: Do not offer or seek advice during a round of golf played under the Official Rules unless you are sure what you are doing is allowed.

Which brings up the question: What's allowed? What kind of advice is it OK for golfers to exchange during a round?

First, note that a golfer is always allowed to seek advice from his [caddie](#), his [partner](#) and his partner's caddie. ("Partner," in this use, does not mean another golfer you happen to be playing with; it refers to a competition partner, as in your partner in a [fourball](#) or [foursomes](#).)

Also, you are always allowed to offer advice to a partner.

- "Matters of public information" means that, for example, asking about the position of [bunkers](#), or whether there's an unseen [water hazard](#) ahead, or what the [line of play](#) is on a [blind shot](#), are OK.
- It is OK to offer or seek advice about positions of [hazards](#), or where the [flagstick](#) is positioned on the [green](#).
- It is OK to offer or seek advice about the Rules of Golf.
- It is OK to indicate the line of play so long as no person or thing is placed in a position to do so during the [stroke](#).
- For a golf ball on the putting green, a partner or caddie can indicate the line of putt, so long as no person or object is placed to do so during the stroke.

- You can ask anyone about the distance between two objects, such as between your ball and the hole, or from the [teeing ground](#) to a water hazard. This falls under the "public information" clause in the definition above.
- It is OK for golfers to exchange info about clubs used on *previous* holes, or on *previous* strokes. You can also seek advice on club selection from a golfer who has already finished his round.
- It is OK to look into another golfer's bag to see what club they used before playing your stroke so long as that golfer's clubs are openly visible.

Examples of Advice That Is Not Allowed

- Giving advice about the swing, stance or anything else that can be considered "[golf tips](#)" or golf instruction to an opponent or fellow-competitor is a violation of Rule 8.
- Likewise, asking another golfer to advise you about your swing or offer other golf instruction topics during a round is not allowed.
- You cannot ask a golfer what club she used *before* you've played your stroke.
- While you can ask about yardages, you cannot ask for advice on which club to use for that shot. OK: "How far is it from my ball to the back of the green?" Not OK: "Do you think I should use a 9-iron or pitching wedge for this shot?"
- You cannot intentionally mislead an opponent or fellow-competitor about what club you just used, e.g., saying, in a manner meant to be overheard, "That was a 5-iron" when you actually played a different club.
- You cannot check a golfer's bag seeking information about club selection if a physical act - say, moving a towel out of the way - is required to see the other golfer's clubs.
- You can't advise a golfer to declare her [ball unplayable](#). This is assistance "in determining play," not "information on the rules," as stated in Decision 8-1/16. Telling another golfer what the options under the rules are *if they decide* to declare a ball unplayable is OK, but advising them to actually declare the ball unplayable is not.

Penalties for Breaching the Rules on Advice

In [match play](#), a breach of Rule 8 results in loss of hole; in [stroke play](#), a penalty of two strokes.

Read [Rule 8](#) for more info about giving or asking for advice. And see [Decisions on Rule 8](#) for more examples and details.