



Frequently Asked Questions in relation to the Protocol for the safe re-introduction of golf in the Republic of Ireland.

Last updated April 30, 2021

Please note that Golf Ireland continue to engage with all relevant government departments with the priority being the full reopening of all golf activities as soon as the public health situation allows.

Q. How far can I travel to play golf?

A. From April 26 until May 9, you can travel within your county or 20kms from home to visit your home club. From May 10 there are no domestic travel restrictions within Ireland therefore you can travel to any golf club within the country.

Q. How many people can I play golf with?

A. from April 26, the Irish Government have decided that participants in sport and exercise activity must be from no more than two households. Therefore, groups playing on golf courses during this initial phase must be confined to a maximum of two households. This means that all tee times must be either two- balls, or alternatively three-balls and four-balls where players in the group are from no more than two households.

From May 10, you can play in groups of 4 with no household restrictions

Q. Can I pay a green fee to play at my local course?

A. Visitors and Member guests will be permitted from May 10

Q. Why is golf limited to members only until May 9?

Prioritising golf club members across the island of Ireland has always been part of the planning for the early stages of the resumption of golf, as it was in 2020.

Golf Ireland is strongly of the view that the members who have loyally supported their clubs through this very difficult period should have priority access to golf courses in this initial period and the feedback from many clubs is that there is very high demand from their members for slots on time sheets.

An initial “members only” provision was part of Golf Ireland’s submission to government seeking the resumption of golf in Level 5 and it is part of the Return to Golf Protocol which was approved recently by the Government’s Expert Group on Sport. This measure also ensures that clubs can effectively manage the Government travel restrictions, limits of no more than two households per group and contract tracing.

Q. Can I play handicap qualifying golf?

A. Sport Ireland and the Expert Group on Sport have stipulated in their sectoral guidance regarding the sports that are resuming on 26th April that no formal competitions should be organised or promoted by clubs until June 7. Clubs are permitted to administer handicap-qualifying activities which may involve collection of entry/registration fees (which should be done online), a procedure for players registering to play a counting round, and collation of scores and handicap adjustments in accordance with the Rules of Handicapping. However, all such golf activities should be solely based on “arrival-play- depart without delay”. Measures which can be taken for activities accepted for handicap purposes can be found under related links here: <https://www.golfireland.ie/covid-19>

Q: Can our club run internal competitions as part of the handicapping activities that are permitted in the initial phase?

A: A club can facilitate handicap-counting activities that occur based on the principle of “arrival-play-depart without delay”, as set out in the protocol.

As the Government Expert Groups on Sport for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland has stipulated that no formal organised competitions can take place in the initial phase, clubs must not promote any activities as competitions, or that meet the definition of competitive sport in a golf club setting, including but not limited to organised stroke/stableford/v-par events and rounds of internal club match play tournaments or club championships.

However, not all activities in the golf club setting are organised in such a competitive manner, and regular handicap-counting activities that involve players arriving, playing golf and departing the facility without delay are generally permitted. Therefore, clubs may facilitate a form of play that involves the submission of scores for handicapping purposes, which under the Rules of Handicapping may take the form of either a) General Play with scores submitted in a manner prescribed by the club, which may include the Golf Ireland App or b) with the computer system set up for a competition, for the purposes of collating all scores on the day and calculating a PCC (Playing Condition Calculation).

In either of these forms, the following associated activities are permitted:
an entry fee may be charged (which should be online),
registration to compete (ie, sign-in) may be taken at a club terminal or in a golf shop.
submission of scores is made, and results are published internally to membership databases along with handicap adjustments.

To ensure clear differentiation between these activities and competitive sport, in the initial phase the following must also be observed:

Such activities must not be promoted as competitions. If set up on the computer system, the title of the activity should be the form of play (ie, “Singles Stableford”, “Singles Stroke” etc).

Prize presentations must not be organised, and results must not be promoted in public media.

Q. Can clubs organise their Inter-Club matches?

A. Matches can only be scheduled from June 7th.

Q. Can driving ranges open?

A. Outdoor practice facilities and driving ranges can reopen on the 26th April. Sport Ireland and the Expert Group on Sport have defined outdoor as:

- Unenclosed / unroofed ranges and practice areas
Covered ranges, no more than 50 per cent of which are enclosed.
- Any activity that takes place in driving ranges must be socially distanced and in line with the restrictions currently in place.

Q. Can the pro shop open?

A. From May 10th, retail stores can offer click and collect services with appointments. From May 17th all retail stores can open.

Q. When will any reviews of the current protocols take place?

A. At this stage we have visibility on easing of restrictions to June 7th. Any changes to protocol will be communicated to clubs as soon as they are known.

Q. I have received both doses of my vaccine, are the rules different for me?

A. No, the protocols for participation in golf activities are the same for those who vaccinated and those who are not. If the restrictions for those who have received both doses of their vaccine change, and it is possible for these to be adopted into the return to Golf protocol this will be communicated to clubs.

Q. Is Golf Ireland recommending these restrictions?

A. The protocol will set out the basis on which golf has been permitted as an activity can be played in accordance with the measures announced by the Government and set out in detail on www.gov.ie. Golf Ireland commends clubs for having shown a high level of compliance thus far and encourages all golfers and clubs to continue to follow protocols issued in accordance with these measures.

Q. Are golfers exempt from the national restrictions and public health measures that have been put in place by the Government?

A. No, golfers are expected to observe the underlying public health guidance set out at: www.hse.ie/coronavirus and www.gov.ie including any restrictions which apply on travel from home.

Q. Whose role is it to monitor members coming to our club?

A. It is the responsibility of individuals to observe society-wide public health guidelines. Whilst golf clubs must ensure that the game is played safely, it is not the responsibility of golf clubs to ensure that members adhere to the laws of the land.

Q. Can we advertise membership at this time?

A. Yes. Clubs should be mindful not to undermine their existing membership and be conscious that existing members may want to avail of any discounted package that would be available to new members. In the coming weeks Golf Ireland will run a promotion campaign to enhance public awareness of golf club membership opportunities. In addition, Golf Ireland Development & Club Support Officers will be delivering webinars to clubs on engaging with new and existing members.

Q. Can a Golf Club issue temporary membership to golfers?

A. A club is entitled to offer memberships to individuals in line with its own constitution/byelaws. As above clubs need to be mindful of the value of each category of membership and ensure members do not switch to a cheaper membership category that is perceived as better value.

Q. What should our club do for employees coming back to work?

A. The Work Safely Protocol is a revision of the Return to Work Safely Protocol published in May 2020. The revised Protocol incorporates the current advice on the Public Health measures needed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community and workplaces as issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), the Department of Health and Government.

The Protocol is a general document applicable to all sectors. It sets out the minimum measures required in every place of work to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to facilitate the re-opening of workplaces following temporary closures and the ongoing safe operation of those workplace.

The revision of the Protocol was necessary to reflect the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 Plan for Living with COVID-19, which was published in September.

The protocol can be accessed here: <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Work-Safely-Protocol.html>

Golf Clubs with employees should ensure that they have the necessary policies and practices in place relating to Covid-19. An overview of the key areas that employers (Golf Clubs) must assess to ensure compliance and to minimise risk to employees can be found on the following website [HSA Website](#)

Q. I work at a golf club as an administrator/sales assistant/manager but live 21km away and in another county. Can I travel to work now that the golf club is open?

A. Yes. Your employer should provide you with a letter stating you are required to attend work at a golf club facility.

After May 10, there are no domestic travel restrictions therefore you will not require this letter.

Q. Can a Professional Golfer give a lesson to an adult member?

A. Sport Ireland and the Expert Group on Sport have stipulated that adult 1:1 coaching is prohibited in the first phase of reopening from April 26 to May 9.

From May 10, outdoor adult coaching is permitted in groups of up to 15.

Q. Are juniors allowed to play on the course?

A. Yes, as outlined in the protocol document juniors are encouraged to return to golf.

Q. Can junior group activity resume?

A. Yes, Underage non-contact outdoor training in pods of 15 can recommence from April 26. Guidance for clubs will be available [here](#).

Q. Can members of the same household share a buggy?

A. Yes, if it is sanitized prior to and after use and is not used by any other person during your round.

Q. Where can we get the signage mentioned in the protocol document?

Posters and resources can be found here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>