



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

Last updated April 14, 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. When is golf reopening?

A. Following the announcement from the Irish Government on March 30, it has been confirmed that golf will be one of the first sports to resume for mass participation in the Republic of Ireland on April 26.

Q. How far can I travel to play golf?

A. From April 26 until further notice, you can travel within your county or 20kms from home to visit your home club.

Q. Can I visit my secondary/away club if I am a member?

A. Yes if it within the county you reside or 20km from your home.

Q. How many people can I play golf with?

A. In the initial phase of reopening in Level 5, 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.

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 in the initial phase of reopening. 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: <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 driving ranges open on the 26th April?

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

A. At this stage there are no set review dates for the resumption of sport. 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. Why is golf not opening on April 12?

A. As detailed in the government announcement on March 30, golf is one of the first sports to open for full participation on April 26. Prior to April 26 only elite sports are approved to take place in Ireland.

The Government easing of restrictions is taking a phased approach to reduce the risk of a 4th wave and prevent restrictions from needing to be re-introduced at a later stage.

Q. Why is GAA back before Golf?

A. The changes planned for April 19 are to allow Inter County Senior Panels to resume training only, comparable Golf training has continued throughout 2021. It does not include under 20, minor competitions or any club GAA activity.

Golf is amongst the first sports for non-elite participants allowed to return in Ireland in 2021 on April 26. Team sports training sessions or matches other than at elite level have not been included at this time.

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

A. Not currently. Members have priority access in the first phase of reopening whilst the country remains in Level 5 restrictions.

Visitors and members' guests will be permitted in later stages of reopening.

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. Golf Clubs have no potential for revenue with what is being proposed (no green fees) but increased costs by opening. What advice do you have?

A. Golf returning will allow members to enjoy their club facilities in the first instance and membership revenue is an important income stream for clubs. As restrictions on movement are eased there will be a return to visitors (see Golf Ireland Protocol Document).

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.



Q. Can a Professional Golfer give a lesson to a 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.

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. 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, subject to public health advice at the time. Guidance for clubs will be available [here](#).

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/>