

Houston Senior Travelers League (HSTL)

General Rules of Play

(Revised November 13, 2023)

HSTL abides by the United States Golf Association (USGA) Rules except as noted below.

Scorecards: League scorecards (the official scorecard) will be distributed before each round. Each group, not each Player, will have one scorecard. Each group picks a player with neat, legible handwriting to keep score. Unreadable cards may result in the group being disqualified. Regardless of who does the scoring, **each individual player is responsible for VERIFYING that their score is correct.** All scorecards will be initialed by each player next to their score prior to being turned in. Whether initialed or not, a turned-in scorecard will be deemed to mean that each golfer has signed/attested to his or her score on the card.

In addition to the official scorecard, each group must keep a back-up scorecard. The official and back-up scorecards are to be reconciled before the official card is turned in.

Scorecards are to be turned in **immediately** upon completion of play and **before** going to the parking area.

If the official scorecard is not turned in for the group, all players are disqualified unless a back-up card is verified and turned in for the group. If a back-up is used, the player responsible for the official scorecard is disqualified.

If the official scorecard shows that a group is to retrieve a Closest-to-the-Pin (“CTP”) marker at the end of a round, the scorecard will not be accepted unless it is accompanied by the CTP marker.

Format: Regular weekly tournaments will be stroke play. During the 6-week Match Play Event, match play will overlap with the regular stroke-play tournament.

Speed of Play: We obviously don't have Tournament Officials to monitor pace of play. **Slow play will kill the League!**

Play Ready Golf: Always be prepared for **your** next shot. Honors are waived for stroke play. **USGA implemented a 40 second time limit to play once it is your turn.** Under the guidelines for Rule 6-7, a Player is permitted 40 seconds to play a stroke. This 40-second time includes the first to play from the teeing ground, from the fairway and from around and on the putting green plus an additional 10% (4 seconds) maximum. **The timing of a Player's Stroke begins when it is the Player's turn to play without interference or distraction.**

Search Time: The maximum lost ball search time is three (3) minutes.

Time Position Rule: Groups that finish in more than 4 ½ hours and 15 minutes or more behind the Group in front of them will be considered "Out of Position". Each member of the Group may be assessed a two (2) stroke penalty.

Lost Ball or Out of Bounds Ball (OB): An OB shot cannot be played where it lies. As a local rule, HST plays lost balls and balls OB similar to balls entering a red-staked penalty area: a one-stroke penalty, not stroke and distance.

A player drops a ball within two club lengths, no closer to the hole, from where he or she fairly thinks the ball was lost or from where the ball crossed the OB Line. Take a one stroke penalty and play on (so, for example, if either the OB or lost ball occurred on a tee shot, the player now lies 2 and is hitting shot number 3).

A player also retains the following two options:

(a) for a two-stroke penalty, move the lost or OB ball to the fairway, no more than two club lengths from the edge of the fairway and no closer to the hole (so, for example on a tee shot that is lost or OB, the player now lies 3 in the fairway and will be hitting shot number 4), or

(b) use the original USGA stroke and distance penalty of re-playing from the original spot with a one (1) stroke penalty.

All of the foregoing options are abandoned if a provisional ball has been played and the original ball is lost or OB. Instead, the provisional ball must be played and the stroke and distance penalty applies to the provisional ball (so, for example, on a tee shot that is lost or OB, the provisional ball lies 3 and the player will be hitting shot number 4).

Maximum Hole Score: A maximum score on any Hole is Double Par.

Score Tiebreakers: HSTL will use the USGA-recommended scorecard playoff, as follows:

- (1) Net total back nine (10-18) score, followed by
- (2) Net total last 6 hole (13-18) score, followed by
- (3) Net total last 3 hole (16-18) score, followed by
- (4) 18th hole score, followed by
- (5) #1 handicap hole score.

If a tie still exists after the foregoing, then comparing total gross per handicap hole, hardest to easiest will be used to determine a winner.

For handicap purposes, both players receive one-half, one-third, one-sixth, or one-18th of their Course handicap, respectively, to calculate the net. Fractions of one-half stroke or more count as a full Stroke; any lesser fraction will be disregarded.

Preferred Lies (aka Lift, Clean, and Place): The Tournament Director will normally announce in advance if we are playing preferred lies due to Course conditions. If at any time during the round, the course stipulates “Cart Path Only” for the remainder of the Tournament, then HSTL local rules immediately allow “Lift, Clean and Place” through the green. **This excludes Penalty Areas.** Mark your ball, clean it and place it at the nearest relief within one (1) Club length (unless a shorter distance is specified in the announcement), no closer to the Hole. Relief may **not** be taken from the fringe to the green or from the rough to the fairway, or vice versa.

Tree Roots: Even when not playing preferred lies, if at least one other player in the group verifies that a player’s swing will make contact with or be impeded by a tree root, the player may move the ball a distance ***no more than is necessary*** to be able to safely make a swing.

HSTL Local Rules Concerning Sand Bunkers: A ball in a sand bunker may be lifted, cleaned, and the bunker raked. The ball is then replaced as close as possible to the original spot within the Bunker.

Standing Water anywhere in Bunker: If there is standing water anywhere in the bunker in which the Ball lies, the Bunker is considered to be “Ground Under Repair”. Unless otherwise announced by the Tournament Director, the player has the following options:

- (1) play the ball from the bunker per the HSTL Local bunker rule stated above.
- (2) take free relief with the ball dropped outside the bunker at the closest point of relief, no closer to the hole.

Penalty Areas: Penalty Areas (formerly called Hazard Areas) are any body of water (including lateral ones) or other areas on the course marked with red or yellow stakes or lines. In addition, unmarked areas that are made up of woods, non-casual water, swamp, or other similar obstacles, are played as red penalty areas. Balls entering penalty areas are played per USGA rules.

The most common options for a penalty area are as follows:

For no penalty, the player may play the ball as it lies (***no lift, clean and place even if in effect for other areas of the course***). Before playing the stroke, a player may remove loose impediments, ground the club, and take practice swings.

Options with a one (1) Stroke Penalty:

1. Under “Stroke and Distance Rule”, re-play from original spot, or
2. Choose a spot straight back on an imaginary line **from the hole** to the spot where the ball last crossed into the penalty area. Take a drop one (1) club length from the imaginary line, no closer to the Hole, or
3. In a red-staked penalty area or an unmarked area declared a penalty area, from the spot where ball last crossed into the penalty area, drop within two (2) club lengths no closer to the hole, or
4. If a hole has a designated “Drop Zone”, the drop zone.