

Teeing the Ball

The act of teeing the ball has changed significantly over the years. In the early days of the game, a golfer generally teed his ball from a small mound of sand or an irregularity in the surface of the ground. Today, there is a vast array of devices available to golfers on which to tee their ball and the modern Rules have had to cater for this by developing a definition of what constitutes a 'conforming' tee.



Whilst Rule 11-1 still permits the player to hit his tee shot from the surface of the ground (which includes an irregularity of surface) and from sand or other natural substance, any other object which has been placed in or on the surface of the ground in order to tee the ball must meet the definition of a tee – as detailed in Appendix IV, I:

New Equipment Rules

<https://www.randa.org/en/rulesequipment/equipment/equipmentrules>

“A tee is a device designed to raise the ball off the ground. A tee must not:

- be longer than 4 inches (101.6 mm);
- be designed or manufactured in such a way that it could indicate line of play;
- unduly influence the movement of the ball; or
- otherwise assist the player in making a stroke or in his play.”

It's important to get it right as a player will be disqualified if he makes a stroke at a ball from a non-conforming tee. This article tries to highlight some of the most common questions received in relation to tees and the Rules of Golf:

Traditional Tee Peg

Normally made from plastic or wood, consisting of a pointed, vertical peg which sticks into the ground and a small cup on which to place the ball. The peg can sometimes be shaped to incorporate a ridge to assist the player in obtaining a consistent teeing height. Conforming – as long as the total length of the tee does not exceed 4 inches.



Stacking two or more conforming tees on top of one another is also permitted – again, as long as the total height of the stacked tees does not exceed 4 inches.

Tees with Integrated Alignment Aids

Such tees are expressly prohibited by Appendix IV (as they indicate the line of play) and the photograph below depicts some of the designs that have been submitted to us in the past for a formal ruling – and ruled to be a breach of the Rules. As a general principle, if there is any feature on the tee which can be viewed by the player at address and used as an effective alignment aid, then such a tee is likely to be non-conforming.

Two or More Tees

Connected by a Length of Cord or String



This is a fairly common question and, if considered in the light of the above comments, then you might reasonably assume that such a configuration would be considered non-conforming – as the string could effectively be used to aid alignment. However, this is one of the Rules with an Exception.

In many countries, but particularly in the UK, the use of two or more tees tied together with string has been fairly common for many years – especially in the winter when the ground can be hard due to frost, or when winter mats are in use.

Therefore, within The R&A's area of jurisdiction (i.e. everywhere except the USA and Mexico) the use of a conforming tee which is connected to one or more other conforming tees by a length of cord or string is permissible – provided the cord or string and other tees are not used to aid the player in his alignment. Such a practice would render the player in breach of Rule 8-2a (Indicating Line of Play).

Tee Connected to a Weight or Other Anchor (e.g. a pitch mark repair tool)

A tee connected to a pitch mark repair tool or other weight or anchor by a length of cord or string would be regarded as non-conforming as it could be used to aid alignment. The distinction between this configuration and the above example of two or more connected tees is purely on 'traditional' grounds.



Brush Tee

Instead of having a plastic or wooden cup on which to place the ball, a brush tee would generally have a series of bristles extending upwards from the peg and forming a circle on which to place the ball (see image). These have become fairly common in recent years and often include claims of reduced friction. In the absence of any evidence to suggest that a brush tee does “unduly influence the movement of the ball”, as long as

such a tee meets all of the other requirements of a conforming tee, then they are permissible under the Rules.

Anti-Slice Tee

This is a plastic tee with a shield extending upwards from the tee-cup, which protects the ball from the club. This shield is designed to reduce the spin applied to the ball by the club and, hence, reduce the amount of slice, which is one of the most common problems faced by golfers. As this device is clearly intended to influence the movement of the ball, and it interferes with the impact between the club and the ball, it is a non-conforming tee.



Portable Teeing Mat

A section of artificial turf is not a natural substance and is not interpreted as being a tee. Therefore, playing a ball from such a device – without or without tee peg – would not be permitted. However, it should be noted that a Local Rule requiring the use of such mats on certain parts of the course is permitted for a limited duration, e.g. in the winter in order to protect the turf, and even all year round on sand courses (where clearly special rules apply).

Home-Made Tees

Home-made tees which have been fabricated out of materials such as rubber piping or bottle corks may be permissible, dependent on the design of the tee. Such a tee would need to be evaluated in accordance with the Rules of Golf – and this can be done via our submissions process. Using another object as a tee – for example a tin can, a bottle or a pencil – would not be permissible as such items were not designed to be tees.