

# 2021 Updated COVID-19 Safety Guidelines & Policies



## **COVID-19 Social Distancing & Safety Procedures**

The safety and well-being of junior golfers and their families is the #1 priority of the Gateway PGA Junior Tour. The following includes social distancing guidelines, safety procedures, and local rules that the PGA REACH Gateway Foundation Board of Directors and Gateway PGA Junior Golf Staff have adopted for the foreseeable future. These procedures align with the official Back2Golf Guidelines, CDC guidelines, and state & county regulations. Any updates or changes to these procedures will be communicated accordingly. Information or policies that are specific to an individual tournament or golf course will be communicated to participants by email prior to the event.

If you have felt sick or presented symptoms of COVID-19, have been knowingly exposed to the virus, or have test positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, please stay home. Contact [nlong@pgahq.com](mailto:nlong@pgahq.com) as soon as possible. Your registration will be cancelled and fully refunded.

### **COVID-19 Safety Reminders :**

- Wash & sanitize your hands regularly
- Practice social distancing in public settings
- Cover your mouth & nose when sneezing or coughing
- Avoid touching common surfaces (sanitize your hands after doing so)
- Do not touch other players' golf clubs, equipment, or other personal belongings. Please do not shake hands on the first tee or after your round.
- Players and spectators are highly encouraged to wear face masks in settings where 6 feet of social distancing cannot be kept.
- Bring your own golf tees, divot repair tools, and pencils. These items will be available on the 1<sup>st</sup> tee upon request. However, to avoid additional touchpoints, please come prepared with your own.

### **Gateway PGA Junior Tour's Precautions to help keep everyone safe:**

- Zero tolerance for sick staff members. Staff and interns are encouraged to stay home if they are not feeling well.
- Staff will disinfect commonly touched surfaces and equipment throughout and after each event.
- Staff are required to wear masks in settings where distancing of at least 5-10 feet is not possible.
- Staff will regularly wash and sanitize their hands throughout each event.
- Hand sanitizer will be available at the 1<sup>st</sup> tee and scoring area.
- "Touchless scoring" available at every event

### **Social Distancing Policy:**

All staff, junior golfers, and spectators are required to practice social distancing while onsite at a Gateway PGA Junior event (exceptions to household family members). Please be careful to avoid congregating in common areas (examples: the 1st tee, driving range, scoring, etc.). Warnings will be provided to those who do not follow social distancing policies. Gateway PGA staff and host facility staff members reserve the right to ask those who are noncompliant to leave.

## **Spectators:**

There is no limit on the number of spectators that a player may have at a Gateway PGA Junior Tour event. Spectator cart availability and rules are fully at the discretion of the host facility. Spectators should stay on the cart paths area and maintain social distancing throughout the event.

## **Food & Beverage**

Players and spectators are asked to **come to events prepared with their own water bottles**. For the safety of their customers, many golf facilities removed self-service water stations from their golf courses during the pandemic. Due to this, water availability on the golf course may be limited during Gateway PGA Junior Tour tournaments. With high summer heat indexes and players' safety front of mind, the Gateway PGA Junior Tour may offer water bottles or water refill stations for players at select summer tournaments. If water is provided by the Gateway PGA, sanitation precautions will be put in place to safely distribute water to players.

The sale of food & beverage for purchase is at the availability and discretion of the host facility and may vary event by event. Most host facilities will have food & beverage options available for purchase. However, we recommend that players and spectators come prepared with their own snacks/lunches if needed.

## **Flagstick (UPDATED 2021): DEPENDENT ON THE HOST FACILITY**

**If a host facility allows the flagstick to be touched**, players may touch or remove the flagstick at their discretion.

- The flagstick rules will be communicated in the pre-event email, in the announcements given to players on the 1<sup>st</sup> tee, and on the Notice to Competitor given on the 1<sup>st</sup> tee.
- Please remember, if a player/family is uncomfortable touching the flagstick, the player may choose to leave the flagstick in under Rule 13.2.
- To avoid additional unnecessary touchpoints, we *recommend* that the same player in the group who removes the flagstick on a hole puts it back in place after the group finishes the hole. Players may also choose to use a gloved hand or towel to handle the flagstick.

**If a host facility does not allow the flagstick to be removed**, players must NOT touch the flagstick.

- Local rules regarding the flagstick will be explicitly communicated to the players via pre-event emails, 1<sup>st</sup> tee signage and announcements, and the Notice to Competitors.
- If a player removes the flag stick **deliberately** when this rule is in place, they will be in violation of Rule 1.2b (Code of Conduct) and may be given a general penalty (2 strokes) at the discretion of the tournament committee. The player is not penalized under this local rule for accidentally touching the flagstick.
- The only exception to this rule is if the flag stick has been moved or is being blown by the wind in a way that could prevent the ball from being holed. In this case, a player may ask that the flagstick be attended by a playing partner so that it is centered in the hole (please use a towel or glove to hold the flag stick if possible). Players still must not to remove the flagstick from the hole in this situation.

### **When is my ball considered holed?**

According to The Rules of Golf, a ball is considered holed when the ball is at rest in the hole after a stroke and the entire ball is below the surface of the putting green. A ball resting against the flagstick and partially below the surface of the putting green is considered holed (Rule 13.2c). A ball resting against the hole liner and partially below the surface of the putting green is also considered holed.

Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, some golf courses have opted to use modified holes to prevent player from having to reach to the bottom of the hole to retrieve their ball on the putting green (for example: foam inserts at the bottom of the cup, “EZ Lift” ball retrievers, etc.). Gateway PGA Junior Tour tournaments will comply with the set up that the respective host facility has in place. Any details regarding COVID-19 related hole modifications will be communicated to players on the 1<sup>st</sup> tee prior to beginning the competition. The USGA Rules of Golf definition of a ball considered to be “holed” referenced above will govern any questions related to hole modifications unless stated otherwise by the tournament committee.

### **Preferred Lies in the Bunkers (2020 & 2021):**

The following rule will be in place to prevent players from having to use commonly touched bunker rakes, to accommodate players who prefer to not touch the bunker rakes, and to remedy solution for host facilities that have removed bunker rakes from the golf course altogether. When a player’s ball comes to rest in a bunker, that player may mark, lift their ball, smooth the sand, and replace their ball one scorecard length from where it was lifted, no closer to the hole. Players may use their feet or hands to smooth the sand (NOT a golf club). The player’s ball MUST remain in the bunker. The player may mark and clean their ball during this procedure.

### **Mobile Scoring:**

Players WILL NEVER trade scorecards. One player in each group will be the score keeper for the group. The score keeper for the group will keep everyone in the group’s hole-by-hole score on the Golf Genius Mobile App. Each player will still be provided a physical scorecard to keep their fellow competitor’s score and their own score. Scores entered in the Golf Genius App Mobile App are not official until players have finalized and attested their scores in the Scoring Area following completion of their round.

If no players in the group have a cell phone, players should keep one another scores on their provided score cards. At the end of the round, those players will individually read off their hole-by-hole scores to the Scoring Official.

At the end of the round, players will report to the designated Scoring Area to check scores. As a reminder, players DO NOT need to physically trade scorecards. The scoring official will display each player’s score on a monitor for confirmation. Players will check hole-by-hole scores with their fellow competitors by referencing the monitor. Each player must verbally attest that their hole-by-hole scores are correct before leaving the scoring area. All scores are deemed final upon players leaving the designated scoring area.

*SEE PLAYER HANDBOOK TOURNAMENT POLICIES FOR COMPLETE MOBILE SCORING INSTRUCTIONS.*

**Awards:**

Awards (medals, ribbons, trophies, etc.) will be presented to the Top 3 finishers of each division after all the players in the division have finalized scores. Players and spectators who choose to stay for their division's awards presentations are required to practice social distancing. Gateway PGA and host facility staff members have the right to ask those not complying to social distancing to leave. The Gateway PGA staff member presenting awards will be required to wear a face mask. Awards will be placed on a table for the awarded player to pick up when their name is called by the staff member. Individual pictures will be taken of the award winners after the division's awards presentation.

**Weather Delays (Social Distancing Precautions):**

The safety of junior golfers and families is the number one priority of the Gateway PGA Junior Tour. Gateway PGA Junior Tour Staff is always monitoring weather forecasts and conditions to ensure players' safety in the chance of severe weather.

Please note: Play will always continue in the case of only rain and golf course conditions remain playable. For more on the Gateway PGA's general policies & procedures on weather and dangerous conditions, please refer to the Gateway PGA Junior Tour Player Handbook.

In the past weather delays have commonly led to close contact and crowding of staff, players, and spectators. The following changes & procedures have been put in place to ensure social distancing and COVID-19 prevention in the situation of a weather delay:

- When necessary, safety from imminent danger will take precedence over recommended social distancing guidelines (example: shuttling players in golf carts off the golf course).
- Text updates & emails updates will be utilized heavily. This will be the ONLY means of communication in the case of a weather delay (horn blast will notify suspension of play).
- Players and spectators are asked to wait in their car on site if possible. We ask that players do not crowd into non-family members' cars.
- Players without cars will be permitted to enter the designated shelter area(s) where social distancing will be required.
- For the safety of everyone, we ask that all players & spectators remain in their cars/shelter zone until notified by text or email otherwise. Updates will be sent as often as possible. Your cooperation and patience are greatly appreciated.