

## Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment

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In the past, a college player's chief concerns about his clubs and other equipment were to be sure that he started with no more than 14 clubs, carried enough balls and tees in his bag to complete the round and perhaps also had a glove. Today, with all the different swing aides and other devices in use for training, stretching and practice, questions often arise about which of these items a player may take with him during a round as equipment and how they may be used, if at all.

The answers to most of these questions will be found in reading Rule 14-3 [Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment] and pouring over the details in the corresponding Decisions found in the USGA book, Decisions on the Rules of Golf.

As a general rule, it is not a violation to simply carry an artificial device such as a swing trainer unless it also could be classified as a non-conforming club, which would be a violation of Rule 4-1. The breach of Rule 14-3 comes when the swing trainer is used during the round in a practice swing or practice stroke. There are exceptions for medical reasons.

Devices that may be carried but not used include a compass to determine direction, a calibrated wind sock, or an electronic device to analyze data collected during a round on greens in regulation, sand saves or the like. On the other hand, there are many devices that may be carried and used, such as binoculars, hand warmers, ear plugs to keep out sound, a CD player and ear phones for music, or even an electronic device to recall information published prior to the round that might include swing tips or information about the course.

It is also permissible to use during a round a device designed for stretching, unless the device is specifically designed to be used in a golf swing and the player uses it in a practice swing or stroke, in which case there would be a violation.

A player may not use any ordinary equipment in an unusual way to make a stroke that counts in his score, such as placing a ball in his hand against the grip when putting or to steady himself by leaning on another club to hole a short putt on a windy day. A player may sometimes be permitted to use equipment for other than a stroke if that use is traditionally accepted, such as using a putter as a plumb-line to assist in determining the slope on a putting green. However, he may not use a bottled drink as a level as that is using equipment in an unusual manner that is not traditionally accepted.

Certainly, any questions should be resolved before play. For instance, if you have a doubt as to whether you may tuck the shirt that you have on under your arm to "stay connected" in making a stroke, ask an official for a ruling. The correct answer is that it is permitted.

## **Rule 14-3. Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment**

There are 17 Decisions covering the specifics of artificial devices. The logic present in these Decisions may be categorized in order to gain a clearer perspective of the principles present in these Decisions. The categories are displayed on the next page.

**14-3/1 Distance Meter Attached to Golf Cart** – artificial device

**14-3/2 Pencil or Score Card Used to Assist in Gauging Distance**

Not specially marked, use traditionally accepted / Exception 2 applies

Specially marked to gauge distance is artificial device

**14-3/3 Eyeglasses and Binoculars** – not artificial devices

**14-3/4 Compass** – artificial device

**14-3/5 Booklet Providing Distances Between Various Points** – artificial device but use traditionally accepted / Exception 2 applies

**14-3/5.5 Electronic Device Providing Distances Between Various Points** – same as booklet

**14-3/6 Holding Ball Against Hand When Putting** – use of equipment in an unusual manner

**14-3/7 Elastic Bandage for Medical Purposes**

Wear for medical purposes is OK, Exception 1

Insert thumb – use of equipment in an unusual manner

**14-3/8 Adhesive Tape Used on Hands or Glove**

Use for medical reasons [reduce blisters or skin splits] is OK

Must not be excessive [thickness must be that of standard golf glove]

Solely to aid in gripping – use of equipment in an unusual manner

**14-3/9 Uses Club to Steady Himself** - use of equipment in an unusual manner

**14-3/10 Use of Training or Swing Aid During Round** – artificial device

**14-3/11 Plumb-Line** – artificial device

**14-3/12 Club Used as Plumb-Line** - use traditionally accepted / Exception 2 applies

**14-3/12.5 Bottled Drink Used as Level** - use of equipment in an unusual manner

**14-3/13 Hand Warmer** - artificial device but use traditionally accepted / Exception 2 applies

**14-3/13.5 Golf Ball Artificially Warmed** – use of ball purposely warmed during round with artificial device is breach

**14-3/14 Electronic Instrument Used to Find Ball** – use of ball with receiver is breach

## **ARTIFICIAL DEVICE**

- distance meter attached to golf cart [14-3/1]
- pencil/score card used to assist in gauging distance, specially marked [14-3/2]
- compass [14-3/4]
- training or swing aid [14-3/10]
- plumb-line [14-3/11]

## **ARTIFICIAL DEVICE - USE TRADITIONALLY ACCEPTED / EXCEPTION 2**

- booklet providing distances between various points [14-3/5]
- electronic device providing distances between various points [14-3/5.5]
- hand warmer [14-3/13]

## **EQUIPMENT - USE TRADITIONALLY ACCEPTED / EXCEPTION 2**

- pencil or score card used to assist in gauging distance, not specially marked [14-3/2]
- club used as plumb-line [14-3/12]

## **USE OF EQUIPMENT IN AN UNUSUAL MANNER**

- holding ball against hand when putting [14-3/6]
- elastic bandage for medical purposes with thumb inserted [14-3/7]
- adhesive tape used on hands or glove solely to aid in gripping [14-3/8]
- uses club to steady himself [14-3/9]
- bottled drink used as level [14-3/12.5]

## **MEDICAL REASON TO USE EQUIPMENT OR DEVICE / EXCEPTION 1**

- elastic bandage for medical purposes [14-3/7]
- adhesive tape used on hands or glove to reduce blisters or skin splits [14-3/8]

## **NON CATEGORIZED BREACH**

- use of golf ball purposely warmed during round with artificial device is breach [14-3/13.5]
- use of golf ball with receiver [electronic instrument] to find ball is breach [14-3/14]