



GUIDANCE ON DISTANCE MEASURING DEVICES ("DMDs")

This paper aims to help Clubs and their members understand the rather complicated rules on DMDs. Technology changes rapidly and the interpretation of associated Rules also evolves. The following guidance reflects the 'state of play' at the time of writing. The guidance assumes a DMD is being used in competition.

1. **Local Rule.** You cannot use a DMD in competition at your Club unless the Club has introduced a Local Rule allowing DMDs. The Club should use the wording on page 136 of the new (2012-15) Rule Book. If your Club has introduced the Local Rule, it cannot then restrict the type of DMD you can use e.g. the Club cannot prevent mobile phones being used as DMDs (but see 6 below). If your DMD 'conforms', you can use it.
2. **A 'conforming' DMD measures distance only.** If your DMD can also give you information on other conditions which might affect your play, it doesn't conform and the penalty is disqualification, even if you didn't **use** that information.
3. **Non-conforming features.** If your DMD has e.g. a compass, spirit level or can gauge temperature or wind speed, the penalty is disqualification. Again, it doesn't matter whether or not you have actually used those features. Most 'usual' DMDs are fine e.g. GPS type DMDs or optical rangefinders because (or if) they only measure distance. However, be careful, some optical models can measure 'slope'. If yours can, it doesn't conform and the penalty is disqualification.
4. **Watches.** Some DMDs can be worn on the wrist. If it also tells the time, that's fine! No special rules here. You can wear a DMD on your wrist, on your belt, round your neck (!), carry it in your pocket, hang it on your bag or attach it to your trolley. However, it mustn't have a non-conforming feature, even if you don't use it or it's switched off. If it does have one, it's a 'DQ'.
5. **Trolleys.** Some have built-in DMDs. Not a problem as such. But, it mustn't have any non-conforming features (see 3 above). Some do. However, many modern ones can be switched to "competition mode". That's fine. Alternatively, England Golf accepts that if the non-conforming features – or displays – are "taped over" so they can't be seen, that's also fine. If there is evidence that, during a round, the trolley is switched back to "non-competition mode" or the tape covering a non-conforming feature is taken off so the "illegal" information can be seen, you'll face disqualification.
6. **Mobile phones used as DMDs.** Be very, **very** careful! Many people download a DMD "App" on to their phones. In itself, not a problem. The problem is this: If your phone has any other features or Apps which don't conform and the phone is used as a DMD, you will be disqualified whether or not such features or Apps are used. Just having one on the phone makes the use of that phone as a DMD "illegal". The owner may not realise it but many mobile phones have, for instance, a compass or spirit level as a feature. If your phone has a weather App or facility which gauges actual temperature or wind speed, it's a disqualification. Again, it doesn't matter whether that feature or App is used or not. It's worth quoting from the England Golf Men's "Hard Card" (Standard Local Rules etc.):

“Advice on the use of mobile phones as a distance measuring device: Because of problems over whether a particular phone conforms to the Local Rule and, therefore, to protect players from the risk of disqualification, (England Golf) **strongly recommends** that mobile phones are **not** used as distance measuring devices”.

7. **Mobile phones used as phones.** Clubs may not restrict the type of DMD a player uses, as long as it is a conforming DMD (1 above). However, a Club can have a “regulation” on using phones – as phones. England Golf has the following regulation:

“Mobile phones (including pagers and similar devices): May **not** be used on the course (including on practice days) by players or caddies for making/sending or receiving calls or texts, except in cases of emergency”.

England Golf would take disciplinary action against a player for breach of this regulation. England Golf is very happy for players to **carry** mobile phones in their golf bags, so that, if there is an emergency, they can phone the office, pro shop, emergency service etc.

8. **Other playing “aids”.** If your DMD has a feature or App which helps you, for instance, read/gauge/measure the slope on a green (such Apps can be downloaded on to some mobile phones), then, whether or not that feature or App is used, the penalty is disqualification.

England Golf Men’s Championship Committee.

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References:

- Rule 14-3 and the Note at the end of this Rule
- Specimen Local Rule on page 136 of the Rule Book
- Appendix IV on Distance Measuring Devices, page 162 of the Rule Book
- England Golf Men’s “Hard Card”, Local Rule 10 (The Hard Card can be viewed at and downloaded from England Golf’s website, under the ‘Championships’ section)
- R&A’s “The Rules Regarding Distance Measuring Devices” (can be viewed at and downloaded from the R&A’s website. Contains a very useful flowchart)