

Implementation of Rule 14-1b (Anchoring)

The logo for the Rules of Golf, consisting of the letters 'R&A' in a white serif font on a dark blue square background.

Information
for Players,
Club Officials
and Tournament
Administrators

Rule 14-1b, which prohibits anchoring a club when making a stroke, takes effect on 1 January 2016, as part of the 2016 edition of the Rules of Golf. This document explains how the Rule applies to various methods of stroke (Part I below), and also addresses more general questions received by the The R&A and the USGA about whether it would be permissible under the Rules for players or competition committees to elect to waive the Rule (Part II below).

Additional resources, such as an infographic and an explanatory video, are available at www.randa.org/anchoring. Questions about Rule 14-1b can be forwarded to rulesmail@randa.org or your national golf association. Players with questions on how best to adopt a method of stroke that complies with the Rule are also encouraged to consult their local committee.

Playing in Conformance with Rule 14-1b

I. Guidance on playing in conformance with Rule 14-1b

A. Text of Rule 14-1b

Rule 14-1b focuses only on the method of stroke; it does not limit the conforming equipment that may be used. While making a stroke, a player may not anchor the club (i) “directly” or (ii) indirectly through use of an “anchor point”. These concepts are explained in the Rule:

14-1b Anchoring the Club

In making a stroke, the player must not anchor the club, either “directly” or by use of an “anchor point”.

Note 1: The club is anchored “directly” when the player intentionally holds the club or a gripping hand in contact with any part of his body, except that the player may hold the club or a gripping hand against a hand or forearm.

Note 2: An “anchor point” exists when the player intentionally holds a forearm in contact with any part of his body to establish a gripping hand as a stable point around which the other hand may swing the club.

Penalty: Match play – Loss of hole;
Stroke play – Two strokes

B. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The following FAQs respond to various questions received by The R&A and the USGA about the application of Rule 14-1b:

Does this Rule apply only to strokes made from the putting green?

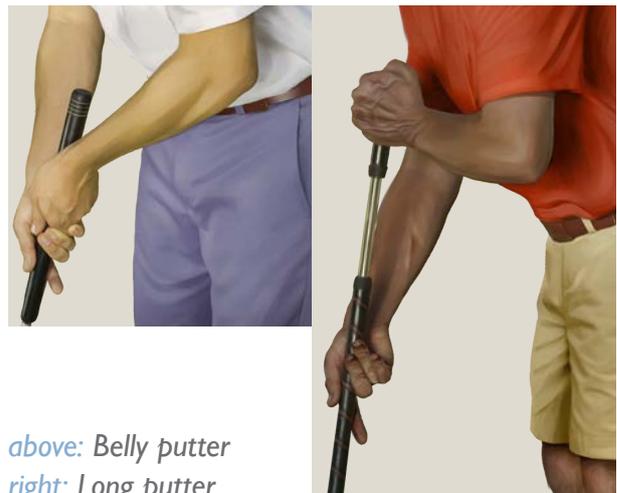
No. Rule 14-1b applies to all types of stroke (i.e. putts, chip shots, pitch shots, full-length shots, etc.), regardless of where those strokes are made (i.e. putting green, fringe, fairway, rough, tee, and everywhere else on the course).

Is this a ban on belly putters and long putters?

No. A player may still use any conforming belly

(mid-length) or long putter. Rule 14-1b addresses only the method of stroke, prohibiting a player from anchoring the club directly or by use of an anchor point while making a stroke.

The following images show players using belly and long putters in a permissible manner under Rule 14-1b.

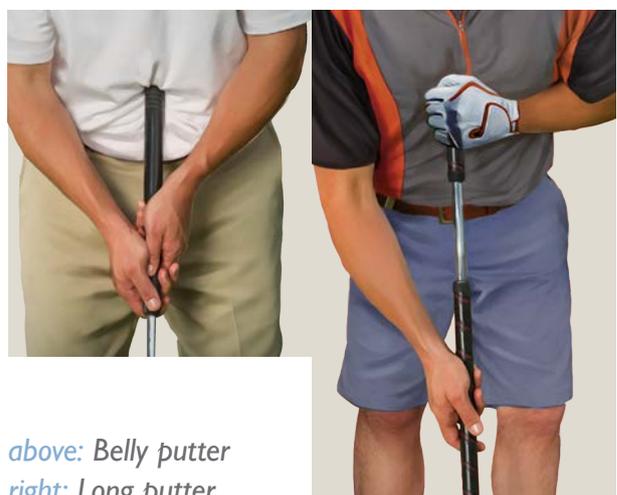


*above: Belly putter
right: Long putter*

What methods of stroke are prohibited?

Rule 14-1b prohibits only a few types of strokes in which the club is intentionally anchored, either directly or through use of a forearm to establish an anchor point against the body. All other currently permissible types of strokes and styles of grip will remain permissible.

The following images show the two most common types of stroke that are prohibited under the Rule.



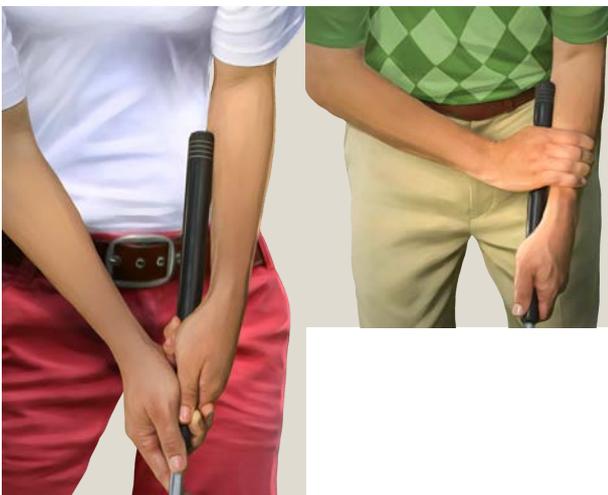
*above: Belly putter
right: Long putter*

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Rule 14-1b permits a player to hold his club against his hand or forearm in making a stroke. How is the “forearm” defined?

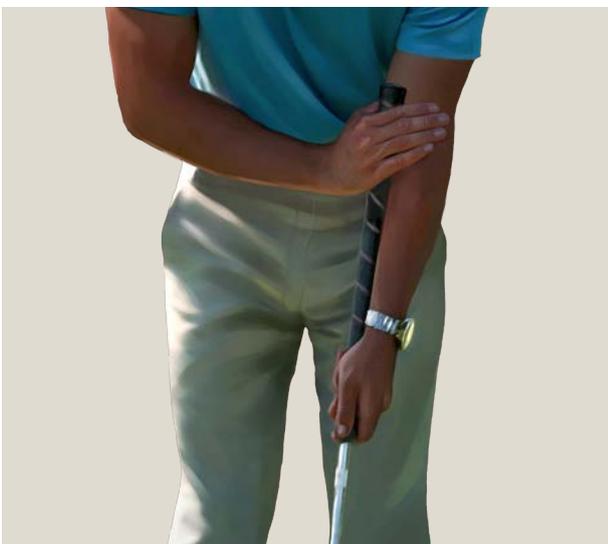
For purposes of Rule 14-1b, the “forearm” is the part of the arm below the elbow joint and includes the wrist.

The following images illustrate permissible strokes where the club is intentionally held against the forearm.



However, a player is in breach of the Rule if he or she makes a stroke while intentionally holding the club against any part of the arm at or above the elbow.

This is illustrated in the following image.



What does the term “anchor point” mean under this Rule?

The “anchor point” provision prohibits only a very specific type of stroke in which a forearm is intentionally held against the body to indirectly anchor the club.

An anchor point exists if both of the following are true:

- (1) the player intentionally holds a forearm (i.e. the part of the arm below the elbow, including the wrist) against the body; and
- (2) the player grips the club so that the hands are separated and work independently of one another (i.e. the top hand effectively secures the club in place as if attached to the body to establish a stable point, while the bottom hand is held down the shaft to swing the lower portion of the club around that point).

The following images are two examples of the hands being separated and the forearm being used to create an “anchor point” in breach of the Rule.



Does Rule 14-1b mean that a player is always prohibited from intentionally resting one or both forearms against his or her body while making a stroke?

No. Intentionally holding a forearm against the body is prohibited only where done to create an anchor point. Otherwise, intentionally holding the forearms against the body while making a stroke is not a breach of Rule 14-1b.

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For example, the following image shows a player holding his forearms against his side in a permissible manner under Rule 14-1b; because his hands are not separated and are not working independently of one another, he has not created an “anchor point” (see previous question).



However, if a player intentionally holds a forearm against his body, and the hand attached to that forearm is the top gripping hand and holds the club with an inverted grip (i.e. any grip other than the traditional style in which the gripping hand hangs below the player’s wrist), an anchor point is deemed to exist.

The following image shows a player intentionally holding his forearm against his body and using an inverted grip to create an anchor point.



To avoid all doubt, a player who chooses to rest one or both forearms against the body during the stroke should also grip the club with the hands generally together, and the player who chooses to hold the club with his hands separated should generally avoid holding a forearm against his body and stabilising the top gripping hand.

Is use of a “side-saddle” stroke permitted?

Yes, so long as the player does not anchor the club directly or intentionally hold a forearm against the body to create an anchor point.



The above image shows a player permissibly using a “side-saddle” method of stroke.

However, the player would be in breach of Rule 14-1b if he or she were to create an anchor point by intentionally holding a forearm against the body in a manner that allows the hands to operate independently of each other.

Playing in Conformance with Rule 14-1b

The following image shows a player using a forearm to create an anchor point while putting side-saddle, in breach of Rule 14-1b.



Is it a breach of the Rule if the player intentionally holds the club or a gripping hand against the body only prior to the stroke, such as at address?

No. The prohibition against anchoring in Rule 14-1b only applies while the player is making the stroke (i.e. the forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking at and moving the ball). Intentional contact prior to the stroke is permitted.

Is it a breach of the Rule if the club, a gripping hand or a forearm inadvertently touches the body during the stroke?

No. The prohibition in Rule 14-1b applies only when, in making a stroke, the player intentionally anchors a club, either directly or through use of an anchor point. There is no penalty if the player inadvertently brushes his or her body with a club, gripping hand or forearm during a stroke.

What if the player touches clothing (and not the body) with a club, a gripping hand or a forearm during the stroke?

Merely touching an article of clothing with the club, a gripping hand or a forearm while making

a stroke is not a breach. This might occur in various situations, such as when the player is wearing loose fitting clothes or raingear; when the player's physical size or build causes his or her arms naturally to rest close to the body; when the player holds the club close to the body or when the player for some other reason touches his or her clothing in making a stroke.

What if a player intentionally uses a club, a gripping hand or a forearm to press an article of clothing against the body?

An article of clothing (e.g. jacket, shirt, glove, etc.) that is held against the body by a club, a gripping hand or a forearm is treated as if it is part of the player's body for the purpose of Rule 14-1b.

Can a player use a piece of clothing to secure the club or a gripping hand?

No. Intentionally using a gripping hand to hold an article of clothing worn on any part of the body while making a stroke is a breach of Rule 14-3 (use of equipment in an abnormal manner). The same would be true if a player used a piece of clothing to secure the club, such as by wrapping part of a shirt or jacket around the grip end of the club to create a connection between the body and the club.

What happens if two players disagree about whether one has anchored or there is uncertainty about whether the Rule has been breached?

As with many other Rules, the determination of whether Rule 14-1b has been breached must be made in light of all of the available facts. As the Rule only prohibits intentional anchoring, the critical question is whether, in making a stroke, the player purposely anchored the club, either directly or by use of an anchor point, or whether any contact with the body was unintentional.

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II. Questions concerning whether, under the rules, individual players, clubs or competitions may elect to waive Rule 14-1b

Because some golfers have expressed concern about no longer being able to anchor, certain questions have been asked about whether it would be permissible under the Rules of Golf for individual players, clubs or competition committees to disregard Rule 14-1b.

The following section provides the answers to those questions under the Rules, and also sets forth some additional considerations.

Can my club or the committee in charge of a competition make a Local Rule or adopt a Condition of Competition declining to enforce Rule 14-1b?

No. A Local Rule to permit anchoring is not authorised under the Rules of Golf. Under Rule 33-8, "A Rule of Golf must not be waived by a Local Rule." Local Rules are intended to address local abnormal conditions at a specific course and must be consistent with the policy expressed in the Rules.

A "Local Rule" purporting to eliminate Rule 14-1b would be an impermissible waiver of a Rule defining a fundamental characteristic of the game, i.e. how a stroke is to be made.

Likewise, a Condition of Competition to permit anchoring is not authorised under the Rules. In establishing the conditions of play, the committee in charge of a competition or a course "has no power to waive a Rule of Golf" (Rule 33-1).

Accordingly, an individual club or competition committee would be acting contrary to the Rules of Golf if it declared that Rule 14-1b could be ignored, whether this was characterised as a Local Rule, Condition of Competition or in any other way.

It should be noted that any such waiver of the Rule would create an uneven and unfair playing environment and would likely lead to significant confusion and controversy at the club level, such as:

WITHIN A CLUB:

- Disagreement and dissension among members who previously anchored but now follow Rule 14-1b and feel at a disadvantage as compared with those who choose to not follow the Rule; or among members generally regarding a decision to waive a Rule of Golf in club events; etc.
- Pressure on club officials to adopt other unauthorised Local Rules or Conditions of Competition, such as seeking permission to use non-conforming equipment; it would be awkward and difficult for a club committee to explain why certain Rules can be waived and others cannot.

BETWEEN CLUBS:

- Unfairness to players who altered their putting styles to conform to Rule 14-1b and then play in an event at another club where members have been permitted to anchor without regard to the Rule.
- Inconsistency for golfers who continue to anchor because their own club has chosen to waive Rule 14-1b but then find that they are unable to anchor when playing at other clubs that follow the Rules.
- General confusion and uncertainty about when and where players would be permitted to choose to follow the Rules of Golf. Similar issues would exist in competitions at all levels of play.

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Can my club “grandfather” individual golfers who used an anchored stroke before

1 January 2016?

No. This would be a waiver of a Rule of Golf for particular players, and as such it would be impermissible under Rule 33-1. Not only would such “grandfathering” be contrary to the Rules of Golf, it also would be unmanageable and create serious unfairness among players in a competition, leading again to confusion and controversy among members of a club, members of different clubs participating in a competition with one another, and golfers in general.

Can a player request and receive permission from the committee in charge of a club or competition to anchor without penalty under Rule 14-1b based on a medical condition?

No. There is no provision in the Rules of Golf to permit a player to avoid a playing Rule on the basis of a medical condition. The Rules define the integral characteristics of a golf competition, and Rule 14-1b represents an essential definition of how a stroke is to be made.

Can a player rely on Rule 14-3 to anchor?

Rule 14-3, which addresses devices and equipment that can be used in the play of the game, is not applicable; although that Rule permits a player to request permission to use a device or equipment that would not otherwise be permitted based on his or her medical condition, it does not authorize any player to waive a playing Rule. Any attempt to permit committees to decide on a player-by-player basis whether they have an individual condition that should permit them to waive Rule 14-1b would lead to the same types of confusion, controversy and unfairness as discussed above.