

Grooves Rule Explanation

The new groove rules and specifications are geared toward golfers at the highest levels of golf (PGA Tour, U.S. Open, European Tour, LPGA Tour, Champions Tour, etc.). The new groove specifications must be adopted through a condition of competition (see [USGA Decision 4-1/1](#)). Unless this condition of competition is adopted then equipment that currently conforms to the USGA Rules of Golf are allowed. The USGA and SCAGA recommend that this condition not be adopted until at least 2014 for expert amateur competitions. It is recommended that local and club competitions should not implement this condition.

New Groove Regulations Questions and Answers:

When does the new groove regulations go into effect?

USGA Championships

2010: U.S. Open Sectional Qualifying, U.S. Senior Open Sectional Qualifying, U.S. Women's Open Sectional Qualifying

2011: U.S. Open Local Qualifying

2014: All USGA Amateur Championships

SCAGA Championships and Tournaments

No final decision has been made but 2014 would be the earliest that the condition of competition would be implemented.

All Golfers

2024: The groove specifications will likely be adopted into the Rules of Golf for all players.

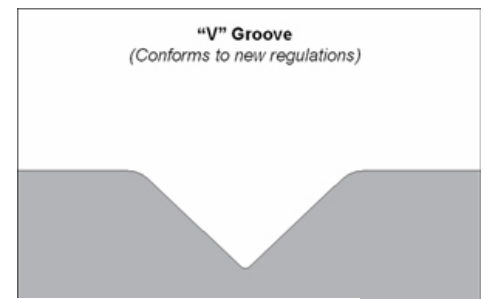
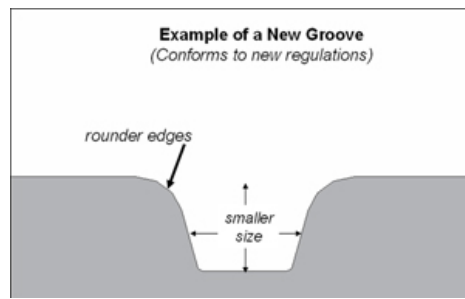
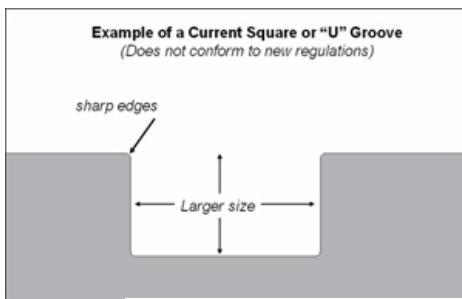
What are the basics of the new groove regulations?

Although the complete technical specifications of the new groove requirements are more detailed, the following statements summarize the key changes:

- The volume of grooves is reduced.
- Groove edge sharpness is reduced for clubs with lofts greater than or equal to 25 degrees.

A common misconception is that "V" shaped grooves will be required under the new specifications and that "U" shaped grooves will no longer be allowed. This is not the case. However, any "U" shaped groove must conform to the new specifications for both cross sectional area/spacing and edge radius.

The complete technical specifications can be found on the USGA's [Test Protocols for Equipment](#) section online.



Why were the rules changes made?

The changes are designed to reduce spin on shots played from the rough by highly skilled golfers, and thereby restore the challenge of shots played from the rough to the green. This should result in an increase in the importance of driving accuracy.

What is the effect of the new grooves on the average player?

The changes are expected to have little impact on the general golfing population for three reasons. First, USGA research shows that average golfers playing from the rough hit the green in regulation only 13 percent of the time. Second, two-thirds of golf balls sold are surlyn-covered balls which show little spin effect from different groove designs. Finally, all existing clubs that presently conform to the rules will continue to be deemed conforming through at least 2024, when the condition of competition is expected to become a permanent equipment specification. Consumer research shows that only 2 percent of irons are in use for more than 15 years.

How does a player determine if a club or set of clubs conforms to the new specifications?

The USGA has developed a [database](#) that helps players determine if clubs conform to the new specifications, provided the club or set of clubs has not been altered and is "as manufactured." The database lists all irons and wedges, as well as hybrids and fairway woods with lofts greater than or equal to 25 degrees, which have been evaluated for conformance to the 2010 Rules of Golf. The database will be available at [by late October 2009](#). Alternately, a player may contact the manufacturer of the clubs for information regarding conformance to the 2010 Rules of Golf.

What has been the timeline in making the change?

Work on this subject has been ongoing at the USGA and R&A for many years. The following is an outline of key dates in the process, as well as future milestones:

2005	USGA and R&A announce they will be studying the effect of grooves.
August 2006	USGA publishes first of two major research reports on groove performance/characteristics. (Spin Generation I pdf)
January 2007	USGA publishes second major research report on groove performance/characteristics. (Spin Generation II pdf)
February 2007	USGA and R&A propose limits on groove volume and edge radius, seeking feedback from manufacturers.
August 2008	USGA and R&A adopt a revised proposal, incorporating manufacturer comments.
January 2010	All new clubs submitted to USGA for approval must conform to new specifications. PGA Tour, major championships and international federation tours will adopt the rule as an "expert" condition of competition. Manufacturers are allowed to produce existing clubs and exhaust inventory until the end of 2010.
2014	USGA and R&A have announced they will implement condition of competition at expert amateur competitions. Other golf organizations (for example, state and regional associations) are expected to follow the USGA and R&A timeline for their expert competitions.
2024	Earliest date the condition of competition will become a permanent equipment specification in the Rules of Golf.

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What is the complete text of the new condition of competition?

4-1/1 Condition Requiring Clubs Conforming with Groove and Punch Mark Specifications Effective January 1, 2010

"The player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Rules of Golf that are effective from January 1, 2010.

***PENALTY FOR CARRYING, BUT NOT MAKING STROKE WITH, CLUB OR CLUBS IN BREACH OF CONDITION:**

- Match play - At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round - Two holes.
- Stroke play - Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round - Four strokes.
- Match or stroke play - In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.
- Bogey and par competitions - See Note 1 to Rule 32-1a.
- Stableford competitions - See Note 1 to Rule 32-1b.

*Any club or clubs carried in breach of this condition must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his marker or a fellow-competitor in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a breach has occurred. If the player fails to do so, he is disqualified.

**PENALTY FOR MAKING STROKE WITH CLUB IN BREACH OF CONDITION:
Disqualification.**

Exception: Clubs manufactured before March 31, 1990 that meet the criteria of USGA Decision USGA/4-1/100, such as the Ping Eye 2 irons, will be permitted for play when the above Condition Requiring Clubs Conforming with Groove and Punch Mark Specifications Effective January 1, 2010 is in effect.

*Information courtesy of USGA and PGA of America