**Match Play - Tips**

**The Way It's Played**

In this sense, match play is a whole different game than stroke play. In stroke play, golfers accumulate strokes over the [course of 18 holes](http://golf.about.com/cs/historyofgolf/a/hist_18holes.htm). The golfer with the fewest strokes at the completion of the round wins.

In match play, each [hole](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/ss/golf-course_2.htm) is a separate competition. The player with the fewest strokes on an individual hole wins that hole; the player winning the most holes wins the match.

The stroke total for 18 holes simply doesn't matter in match play. Stroke play is more a player vs. the course approach; match play is directly player vs. player, or side vs. side. There is one opponent you must beat, and that's the opponent you're facing in the match you're playing right now.

• [More on Scorekeeping in Match Play](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayscore.htm)

**Conceded Putts**

In friendly rounds of golf, golfers often ask for and give "[gimmies](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_gimmie.htm)," very short putts that one simply picks up rather than holing out. Gimmies, needless to say, are illegal under the [Rules of Golf](http://golf.about.com/od/rulesofgolf/a/faq_rules.htm), but many [recreational golfers](http://golf.about.com/cs/tipslessons/a/opposites.htm) use them anyway.

In [match play](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplaystrat.htm), however, [conceded putts](http://golf.about.com/od/golfterms/g/bldef_concededp.htm) are perfectly legal. Your opponent can concede a putt to you at any point, whether it's six inches from the cup or 60 feet. But conceded putts almost always come, of course, on very short putts.

Conceded putts should only be offered, they should never be requested. That's why in some match play matches you'll notice a golfer lingering over a very short putt - the golfer is hoping his opponent will tell him to just pick it up.

**Fellow-Competitor vs. Opponent**

This is a semantic difference. In stroke play, the golfers you are playing against are your "fellow-competitors." In match play, the golfer you are playing against is your "opponent."

**Hit That One Again**

There are several scenarios in match play where a transgression might result in your opponent canceling your shot and requiring you to replay it; whereas in stroke play, the same transgression would result in a 2-stroke penalty or no penalty at all.

*A few examples*:

• Playing out of turn: In stroke play, [order of play](http://golf.about.com/cs/rulesofgolf/a/rulefaq_order.htm) is a matter of [etiquette](http://golf.about.com/cs/beginnersguide/a/golfetiquette.htm). If you hit out of turn, it's a breach of etiquette, but there is no penalty. In match play, if you hit out of turn your opponent can require you to replay the shot in the proper order. And if your first shot was a great one, you can bet that you'll be replaying.

• Hitting from outside the teeing ground: In stroke play, teeing off from outside the [teeing ground](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_teeinggr.htm) ([the teeing ground](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/ss/golf-course_3.htm) is between the tee markers and up to two club lengths behind the tee markers) results in a 2-stroke penalty. In match play, there is no [stroke penalty](http://golf.about.com/cs/rulesofgolf/g/rules_penaltyst.htm), but your opponent can cancel your shot and require you to replay it.

• Hitting an opponent: In stroke play, if your ball hits a fellow-competitor or his equipment (if it is accidently stopped or deflected by same), it's [rub of the green](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_ruboftheg.htm). In match play, you have the option to replay the shot.

• [Hitting a ball](http://golf.about.com/cs/rulesofgolf/a/rfaq_practicehi.htm) at rest on the green: In stroke play, if your putt strikes another ball on the [green](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_green.htm), you get a 2-stroke penalty. In match play, there is no penalty.

**The Big Penalty**

In the rule book, just about every section concludes with a warning: "Penalty for Breach of Rule." If a golfer fails to follow the proper procedures set forth in the rules, he will incur a penalty in addition to any penalties set forth in that rule.

That penalty in stroke play is usually 2 strokes, and in match play is usually loss of hole.

*Example:* Let's say a player violates one of the tenets of [Rule 19](http://golf.about.com/cs/rulesofgolf/a/rule19.htm). There will likely be a penalty spelled out for that violation. But the golfer compounds his error by failing to follow the proper procedure for continuing play (maybe he doesn't assess himself the proper penalty; maybe he drops incorrectly; etc.) spelled out in that rule. The big penalty kicks in: 2 strokes in stroke play, loss of hole in match play.

**Better Late than Never**

In stroke play, disqualification is the result if you miss your [tee time](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_teetime.htm). In match play, you can show up late and still play ... as long as you make your match by at least the second tee. You'll have forfeited the first hole, but you can pick up the match on No. 2. If you fail to make it by the No. 2 tee, you're disqualified.

The differences between match play and stroke play, where they exist, are elucidated in the [Rules of Golf](http://golf.about.com/library/weekly/blgolfrules.htm). If there is a difference, that difference will be spelled out in the applicable section. So browse through the [rule book](http://golf.about.com/library/weekly/blgolfrules.htm) to learn more about match play rules.

[Match play](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_matchplay.htm) is one of the main forms of competition in golf. It pits players one against another, rather than one against the field as in [stroke play](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_strokepla.htm). Opponents compete to win individual holes, and the player who wins the most holes wins the match.

Match play can be played by two individuals, one on one, and that is known as Singles Match Play. Or teams of two players can square off, with [Foursomes](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_foursomes.htm) and [Fourball](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_fourball.htm) the most common formats for team play.

To learn more about match play, explore the topics below:

[**Keeping Score in Match Play**](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayscore.htm)

1-up, 2-down, 3-and-2, 5-and-3 ... dormie, halved, all square ... what does it all mean? This article explains [how score is kept](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayscore.htm) in match play, and what all those numbers mean.

[**Match Play Formats**](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayformat.htm)

The most common match play formats are singles, foursomes and fourballs. This articles explains the basics of [how each format works](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayformat.htm).

[**Rules Differences in Match Play**](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayrules.htm)

The rules for match play and stroke play differ in key ways, the most basic being the very way the two types of golf are played.

This article explores some of the [differences](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayrules.htm), large and small, in the rules for match play and stroke play.

[**Match Play Strategy**](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplaystrat.htm)

Many golfers love match play for its different strategies. Golfers have a lot to consider when playing match play, and this article goes into the different [strategies and tactics](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplaystrat.htm) that are employed.

**Match Play Terms**

Our [glossary of golf terms](http://golf.about.com/od/golfterms/a/golfglossary.htm) includes a few definitions that beginners may need in order to understand match play. Click on a term to get its definition:

• [All Square](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_allsquare.htm): Match is tied

• [Conceded Putt](http://golf.about.com/od/golfterms/g/bldef_concededp.htm): A conceded putt is one that your opponent gives you - you don't have to hole out the ball.

• [Dormie](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_dormie.htm): a match is said to reach "dormie" when one of the golfers achieves a lead that matches the number of holes remaining (i.e., three holes up with three holes to play).

When a match reaches a state of dormie, there a couple ways the term can be applied: The match will "go dormie" or "has gone dormie"; the match has "reached dormie"; the player who leads has "taken the match dormie."

• [Halved](http://golf.about.com/od/golfterms/g/bldef_halved.htm): "Halved" is a golf term used in [match play](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplay.htm) (but not [stroke play](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_strokepla.htm)) to indicate a tie score on either an individual hole or a completed match.

• [Good-good](http://golf.about.com/od/golfterms/fl/Good-Good.htm): "Good-good" is an expression heard in [match play](http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplay.htm) and refers to a situation in which Golfer A offers to [concede](http://golf.about.com/od/golfterms/g/bldef_concededp.htm) his opponent's (Golfer B's) putt if Golfer B reciprocates by conceding Golfer A's own putt. In match play, golfers have the option of condeding an opponent's putt. For example, let's say you've already made your par putt and your opponent has a 2-foot putt left for [par](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_par.htm). You can, if you choose, concede that putt (the person receiving a concession picks up the ball and moves on, counting the putt as made even though the ball wasn't [holed](http://golf.about.com/cs/golfterms/g/bldef_holed.htm)). Now let's say you are facing a putt that you'd really rather not have to make, while your opponent also has a testing putt remaining. "Good-good?" you ask your opponent. If the opponent replies in the affirmative, you both pick up your balls and move on to the next hole, counting those putts as made. (If your opponent declines, sorry, you have to putt the ball.) So a "good-good" in match play means that one golfer says to the other, "I'll give you your putt if you give me mine," and the opponent agrees.

Go to these links for further information regarding Match Play.

<http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplay.htm>

<http://golf.about.com/od/beginners/a/matchplayrules.htm>

For further clarification of rules, please refer to your PGA Guides.