

## 2025 GOLF BALL CONFORMANCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

### 1. Introduction

Following are the general policies and procedures regarding the submission process for manufacturers wishing to submit golf balls to the USGA for conformance evaluation, including the updated conformance testing submission deadlines.

**We ask that you review the entire document so that you are familiar with the most up-to-date submission information.** This will help to ensure that the processing of golf balls submitted to the USGA for conformance testing is performed in an accurate and timely manner. The golf ball testing protocols are available [here](#).

Please note that golf balls produced by manufacturers based in the United States, its territories or Mexico, or golf balls manufactured for sale primarily in these regions, should be submitted to the USGA for evaluation. Golf balls produced by manufacturers based in these regions, that are primarily intended for sale outside of these regions, should be submitted to R&A Rules, Ltd.

Finally, the USGA receives thousands of golf balls for conformance testing annually. It is our policy to retain the conforming samples for three years, after which we donate the golf balls to a variety of non-profit golf-related programs (e.g., junior golf programs, disabled golfer programs, etc.). **If you do not wish for a specific golf ball submission to be donated at the end of the three-year retention period, please notify us at the time of submission.**

### 2. General Submission Information, Procedures and 2025 Submission Schedule

#### **Ball Type Definition**

For our purposes, a “ball type” is defined as one in which all individual samples have been designed and manufactured to be identical, including external appearance, markings, construction, dimple pattern and/or material composition, except that the identification numbers may differ in value, form, and color. Any change in these or other key characteristics requires a change to the identification markings.

Since it is often difficult to visually distinguish the various colors used in markings (for example, black versus dark blue or dark gray), the color of the markings must not be so similar as to cause confusion. Likewise, ball types differentiated only by font style, size, or slight variations in the color of the markings will not be accepted. **When differentiating ball types using various symbols (e.g., stars, dots, dashes, etc.), the symbol must be of a significant size and must be easily recognizable.**

Based on our experience, golf balls consisting of the same construction but incorporating a variety of cover colors may exhibit varying performance characteristics. As a result, the USGA does not test colored golf balls by group and considers each color to be a separate submission. Accordingly, each color is listed separately on the List of Conforming Balls and the manufacturer incurs a testing fee for each color submitted. Additionally, for golf balls with colored covers, only one hue is allowed per individual color range. This also applies to all markings. For example, 'yellow' and 'lemon' or 'light blue' and 'dark blue' are not acceptable for identically marked golf balls. Also, the use of iridescent paint is strongly discouraged.

Finally, the USGA has experienced an increase in the number of ball types submitted with matte finishes. **Please note that two or more balls with identical constructions having, for example, a matte and gloss finish, are considered separate ball types. As a result, an identification marking is required to distinguish them.**

### **Alignment Markings and Customization**

Alignment arrows, lines or equivalent markings are generally regarded as identification markings. However, where a pole or seam marking incorporates an alignment arrow, line or equivalent marking, and no reference to the brand or model name, the arrow, line or equivalent marking may be printed in any color. Provided all other markings are identical, the balls will be regarded as one model. If the alignment arrow, line or equivalent marking is accompanied by a word(s) or phrase (other than the brand or model name), the color of these words or phrases will be described and different colors will, therefore, be considered to be different models requiring separate submission for inclusion on the List of Conforming Golf Balls.

If the arrow, line or equivalent marking is accompanied by the brand or model name, the strict application of the markings convention will apply for both the model name and the arrow, line or equivalent marking.

Custom logos, symbols and/or personalized markings (e.g., player name or initials) are permitted anywhere on the ball provided such logos or markings do not encroach on the pole or seam markings of the golf ball and could not be mistaken for an identification marking. Custom markings which include golf-related phrases or terminology are discouraged. Additionally, small scale lines associated with the player name or initials are permitted.

Identification numbers (sometimes called the player number) are considered custom markings and cannot be used to distinguish different ball types. The identification number may also be a symbol or other character. However, to avoid potential confusion, any numbers, symbols, or other characters that could be considered a major or minor identification marking of the golf ball are not permitted. We strongly encourage that any deviation from the standard player number format should be discussed with the USGA prior to production to ensure acceptability.

## **General Submission Guidance**

If, in the opinion of the USGA, it is difficult to distinguish a golf ball submitted for conformance evaluation from any other previous or current submission due to the marking color or size, cover color, or coating used, it will not be accepted. If there is any potential issue, question, or doubt regarding the acceptability of any golf ball marking or color, please send representative samples or accurate facsimiles to the USGA well in advance of formal submission. Failure to do so may result in the USGA delaying testing until the issue can be resolved.

**Once a manufacturer applies a specific marking or set of markings to a ball type, the markings must not be applied to a different ball type, except that:**

**(i) If a previously submitted ball was tested and deemed to be conforming, then the ball must have been out of production, not included on the List of Conforming Golf Balls, and not included in any marketing material for a period of at least three (3) years.**

**(ii) If a previously submitted ball was tested and deemed to be non-conforming (or otherwise deemed non-conforming), then the ball must have been out of production, not sold or distributed at any level, and not included in any marketing materials for a period of at least five (5) years.**

Whether a new or repeat submission, **please submit two dozen balls of each ball type.** *These balls must not be pre-selected, rather they must be a representative sample of those balls intended for tournament play and/or the marketplace and should be selected from the most recent production lot.* Additionally, the submission should be boxed, without sleeves, and the outside of the box should be properly identified with the name of the golf ball.

Please do not send golf balls in plastic bags or containers other than standard ball boxes. Improper packaging may result in a delay in processing and listing.

When submitting golf balls, manufacturers are required to complete a separate Ball Submission Form for each ball type submitted. Please note that the [Ball Submission Form](#) requires that you identify any special characteristic(s)/features(s) of the ball, including but not limited to unique coatings, markings, construction, artificial or electronic devices. We continue to ask that you include information regarding general ball construction and spin performance. Additionally, complete identification of the ball type must be achieved by the specific contents of the pole (major) and seam (minor) markings. Failure to complete all fields on the Ball Submission Form may delay testing of the ball. Please remember to sign the completed Ball Submission Form and send with each ball type, a copy of which is attached. Please use this most recent version for all submissions. The form may be reproduced if additional copies are required, or you may request that we send you a copy by e-mail.

**Submission Schedule**

**All submissions should be sent to the USGA Test Center, Attn: Equipment Standards, 3 Carolina Vista, P.O. Box 3029, Pinehurst, NC, 28374. Golf ball submissions for each expiration/publication date must be received no later than the submission deadline provided in the following table:**

<b>Deadline Date for Submissions</b>	<b>Publication Date of Subsequent List</b>
November 06, 2024	January 01, 2025
December 04, 2024	February 05, 2025
January 08, 2025	March 05, 2025
February 05, 2025	April 02, 2025
March 05, 2025	May 07, 2025
April 02, 2025	June 04, 2025
May 07, 2025	July 02, 2025
June 04, 2025	August 06, 2025
July 02, 2025	September 03, 2025
August 06, 2025	October 01, 2025
September 03, 2025	November 05, 2025
October 01, 2025	December 03, 2025
November 05, 2025	January 07, 2026
December 03, 2025	February 04, 2026

### 3. The List of Conforming Golf Balls

To ensure that the List of Conforming Golf Balls works efficiently and effectively, it is our goal to minimize the number of golf balls listed. To that end, manufacturers should only request that brands falling into the following two categories be considered for inclusion on the List:

- (a) Brands that are currently being marketed, or that are planned for the marketplace within the next two months; and,
- (b) Brands that are currently being used on the PGA Tour, DP World Tour, LPGA Tour, and other elite levels of play, or that are scheduled to be used at the tour level within the next two months.

To ensure that this condition is being adhered to, the USGA will continue to perform random checks, and, in some circumstances, may notify a manufacturer and request evidence that a certain brand (or brands) satisfies one of the above two conditions.

Those brands that do not satisfy one of the above listed conditions for inclusion on the List of Conforming Golf Balls may continue to be submitted for testing and included on the *'Reserve List'*. This list is designed for those balls that are not currently planned for the marketplace or for use at the professional and/or elite amateur level but that may be introduced in the future and provides a mechanism for manufacturers to submit balls for testing in preparation for appearance on the List.

Conforming balls included on the *'Reserve List'* are not included on the published List. Use of any ball included on the *'Reserve List'* is not permitted when the List of Conforming Golf Balls has been adopted as a Local Rule (see Committee Procedures, [Model Local Rule G-3](#)).

Finally, a brand of ball that is saved on the *'Reserve List'* may be transferred onto a subsequent published edition of the List when, and if, it becomes a ball that the manufacturer has decided to market and/or put into play at the professional or elite amateur level. A manufacturer wishing to move a ball from the *'Reserve List'* onto the List of Conforming Golf Balls must notify the USGA Test Center at least two weeks prior to the publication date of the next List. **If a ball submitted for inclusion on the 'Reserve List' is modified in any manner, the manufacturer must contact the USGA to discuss prior to moving the ball to the List because it will likely require submission of the modified ball and a change in identification marking.**

## 4. Fee Structure

**The fee for all golf ball submissions is as follows:**

### **Official Conformance Testing**

New Submission	\$1,200.00 for (24 sample balls)
Annual Resubmission	\$1,200.00 for (24 sample balls)
Symmetry Re-Test	\$ 600.00 for (24 sample balls)

### **Optional Test Services Available**

ITR	\$ 800.00 for (6 sample balls)
ALC Only	\$ 200.00 for (12 sample balls)
Initial Velocity	\$ 300.00 for (12 sample balls)
Size, Weight, and Initial Velocity	\$ 450.00 for (12 sample balls)

**\*Optional Test Services Available at New ODS Test Conditions** (Please see [Notice of Decision](#) dated December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023)

ITR	\$ 600.00 for (6 sample balls)
ALC Only	\$ 150.00 for (12 sample balls)

*\*The Optional Test Service charges apply to golf balls being sent in separately for test service only or requests for additional testing of golf balls submitted for evaluation at the current test conditions. Effective in 2026, the Optional Test Service pricing will revert to the standard Test Service pricing.*

**When needed, and on a limited basis, a manufacturer may submit golf balls for conformance testing after the submission deadline date at a premium charge of \$1,500 per ball type (24 sample balls). The manufacturer must contact the USGA to determine if a late submission can be processed and to obtain the deadline for late submissions for that particular submission cycle.**

Please note that if a ball submitted for conformance testing cannot be fully evaluated due to its performance during testing, the ball will not be included on the List of Conforming Balls. The manufacturer will be permitted to submit one subsequent sample for conformance testing at no additional cost. Additionally, there is no charge for one symmetry retest (see below).

## 5. Symmetry Failure

If a new conformance submission fails at least one of the symmetry requirements (i.e., time or carry), our policy states as follows:

- 1) The manufacturer will receive written notice that it has up to six months from the time of posting to the List of Conforming Balls to submit further samples which either pass or demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in symmetry (i.e., the improvement is based upon the conformance submission). This means that the manufacturer may make sequential resubmissions until the publication date of the List prior to the month in which the ball would be removed (for example, the deadline for resubmission of samples submitted to appear on the January 2025 list is June 4, 2025).
  - (a) If the ball fails both criteria (i.e., time and carry), then there must be significant improvement in at least one of the criteria by the end of the six-month period to remain on the list. The other criteria must remain at or improve from the previous level.
  - (b) If the ball fails one criterion and passes the other, then there must be significant improvement in the failed criteria at the end of the six-month period and the other criteria must continue to pass. If the ball fails the other criteria during resubmission, regardless of whether the failing criteria passes or significantly improves, then the ball would be considered to have not significantly improved.
- 2) If the manufacturer cannot achieve a significant improvement within the six-month period, then the ball will be removed from the List of Conforming Balls.
- 3) If the manufacturer achieves a significant improvement within the six-month period, then the manufacturer is given an additional period that extends to the annual submission deadline to manufacture and submit samples that pass all standards. For example, the deadline for submitting passing samples for a ball submitted to appear on the January 2025 List that failed symmetry, but significantly improved within the six-month period, is November 5, 2025. Balls submitted at that deadline would be tested for the January 2026 List.
- 4) If the manufacturer does not submit conforming samples by the annual deadline, then the manufacturer must change the marking on any resubmission for subsequent postings on the List of Conforming Balls (i.e., it must be distinguished from the original submission with the appropriate identification marking and will be considered a new ball type).

## 6. Notification Procedure

If during conformance testing, a ball type fails any of the required standards and/or returns results above the published limit but within the test tolerance, you will be contacted. If you do not receive such notification, the ball types submitted prior to the submission deadline will be published on the subsequent publication date and will expire at the end of twelve (12) months, unless it was noted to be included on the “Reserve List”. A brand of ball must be submitted once a year to remain on the current List of Conforming Golf Balls.

**Please note that once a ball appears on the List, you are authorized to make the following statements in advertisements or promotional materials: "Conforms with the Rules of Golf." Use of statements such as "USGA Approved" or "USGA Tested" is prohibited. Publication of any test results and use of the USGA seal or logo is also prohibited.**

## 7. Check Tests

As you are aware, at various times during the year, balls are collected for testing from retail outlets and by Rules Officials at various competition sites. In recent check tests, we have seen an increasing number of balls that are extremely close to exceeding one or more of the conformance limits. We remind you that balls collected for check test are subjected to the same conformance tests as regular submissions. If the check test balls fail any of the conformance tests, other than symmetry, that listing may be immediately removed from the List of Conforming Golf Balls, and, if removed, we will notify various tours and golf associations. If the test results indicate a reasonable likelihood that non-conforming golf balls are in play, larger samples of that ball type may be taken from subsequent competitions and the marketplace.

There have also been instances where check test samples perform and/or appear, upon dissection or otherwise, to be different from the ball with the identical markings that was submitted for conformance evaluation. Balls submitted for conformance evaluation must be a representative sample of those balls intended for play in competition and the marketplace.

If a check test sample of balls with identical markings performs and/or appears significantly different from the submitted conformance samples, we may conclude that the samples submitted are not representative of production. In this situation, the manufacturer assumes the risk that such a ball will be removed from the List.

## 8. Conclusion

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Adam Coneys, Senior Coordinator, Golf Ball Conformance ([aconeys@usga.org](mailto:aconeys@usga.org)), or Rob Ockenfuss, Assistant Director, Equipment Rules and Conformance ([rockenfuss@usga.org](mailto:rockenfuss@usga.org)).

The USGA Equipment Standards department is ISO 9001:2015 certified.

