

Law 33

February 2018

Law 33 describes the action to be taken when a player leaves the green during the course of play.

There are multiple reasons why a player may have to leave the green and multiple situations in which this may occur. The Laws Committee (LC) does not consider it appropriate to describe all of these within the Laws (even if it could!). Rather, its approach is to define a 'broad brush' law which Controlling Bodies can supplement by including more detailed / specific procedures in their Conditions of Play.

In the light of uncertainty being expressed by Controlling Bodies about what can be included in their procedures, the LC would like to clarify some elements of the law, give examples of what are and what are not permissible reasons for leaving the green and provide guidelines on how the law should be applied.

Laws Committee Clarification:

Law 33.1 states that "No player must delay play by leaving the rink of play or their team unless their opponent agrees, and then only for no more than 10 minutes.". To clarify:

- regardless of the reason, a player who wishes to leave the rink of play must receive their opponent's agreement before doing so. By giving their agreement, the opponent accepts that some delay to play may occur as a result.
- the requirement to receive the opponent's agreement applies even if there is no perceived risk of play being delayed as a result. (For example, a Lead in a Fours game who has delivered their two bowls in a specific end would be complying with this law if, having received their opponent's agreement, they leave the rink of play for a 'toilet break' and return in sufficient time to play their first bowl of the succeeding end.)
- if the opponent does not give their permission, the matter should be referred to an umpire (law 40.1.5)
- if there is a risk that play will be delayed as a result of a player leaving the rink, the remaining sections of law 33 come into consideration.

Laws 33.2 (leaving the green in a team or side game) and 33.7 (leaving the green in a Singles game) state that a player can only leave the green due to illness or some other reasonable cause. To clarify:

- examples of illness include any suffering caused by pre-existing medical conditions and potential health emergencies arising during the game (e.g. bee or wasp stings, heat stroke)
- examples of other reasonable causes include injuries sustained during the course of play and responding to an emergency 'phone call
- examples of causes which are not reasonable include taking a cigarette break, making a non-urgent 'phone call and taking repeated toilet breaks when there is no underlying medical condition.

Laws Committee Guidelines:

The Controlling Body for an event must decide on, and publicise in advance, the Conditions of Play (COP) for that event (reference law A.1 in Appendix A of the Laws). To address any issues which may arise when a player delays play by leaving the green, the LC recommends that Controlling Bodies include the following in their COP (the LC acknowledges that approaches taken by Controlling Bodies will differ - for example, due to the use of slow-play regulations and the need for time-limits to be stringently applied):

1. Procedures for dealing with the situation in which a player has to leave the green on more than one occasion. For example, a statement such as “If a player wishes to leave the rink of play, Law 33.1 will apply. However, if on more than one occasion, then on each occasion after the first they can only do so with their opponent’s and the umpire’s permission. If either the player’s team manager or coach are present, the umpire will consult with them before deciding whether or not to grant permission.”
2. If appropriate, procedures for dealing with the situation in which, having received the opinion of a medically qualified person present at the game, the player, opponent, umpire and Controlling Body (when present) agree that it would be acceptable to allow a player slightly longer than 10 minutes to return to the green. (For example, in the situation in which on-site medics advise that a player suffering from dehydration should be allowed 15-minutes from the start of treatment to recover.)
3. If appropriate, procedures for dealing with situations in which a player may be adjudged to be abusing law 33 (for example, in the LC’s experience, the most common form of abuse is taking frequent toilet breaks in an attempt to slow down a game). The procedures may include a statement such as “During any game, players must not act in a manner adjudged to being deliberate slow play in order to gain an unfair advantage. A player adjudged to be acting in an unfair manner will be in breach of law 36 (Deliberate non-sporting action)”.
4. Procedures for the introduction of a substitute (as permitted in law 33.9). The procedures may include, for example,
 - a. A statement as to whether or not the introduction of a substitute is permissible
 - b. A statement that a substitute (if eligible and available) should get ready to play as soon as it becomes apparent that there was a risk that the game could be delayed for more than 10 minutes
 - c. Any time-limit to be applied for a substitute to be ready to play following the decision that a player is no longer able to continue
 - d. A statement as to whether or not the substituted player can return later in the same game
 - e. A statement as to whether or not the substituted player can return in any subsequent games
 - f. A statement as to whether or not the substitute is required to comply with the footwear and attire regulations in force for the game in which they are to act as a substitute