

R&A

USGA®



Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf

Effective January 2019



ROLEX

PROUD SUPPORTER OF
THE GAME OF GOLF



Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf

as approved by

Golf Canada,

R&A Rules Limited, and

The United States Golf Association

Effective January 2019

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Introduction

The “Player’s Edition of the Rules of the Golf” is the publication to be circulated to golfers worldwide. It is not a quick guide, but rather is an abridged version of the Rules of Golf that is written with a focus on you, the golfer.

Here are some of the key elements of the Player’s Edition:

- It is a functioning Rule book. It looks like the full Rules of Golf, with generally the same organization. Although its text is edited, it gives you the same answer that is in the full Rules of Golf.
- It focuses on the Rules that are most relevant to you as a player. This includes the Rules that describe the essential characteristics of golf - for example, playing by the Rules and in the spirit of the game, the different parts of the course and the equipment you may use - and the most commonly used Rules.
- Although it does not cover some of the less frequently occurring situations, it indicates that there is further information on the subject in the full Rules of Golf, with the following reference icon:



This icon means that you should refer to the full Rules of Golf (either in printed format or via The R&A’s Rules of Golf app or website – RandA.org), or consult with the Committee for an explanation of that situation.

- It is written in a style that refers to “you” the golfer. This golfer-focused style is another key step in making the Rules more user-friendly.
- Diagrams and charts are included to help visually explain the Rules.

The Player’s Edition aims to present the Rules in a way that is more easily understood and focused on what you, the golfer, need to know to play by the Rules.

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Foreword

The Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf is the first of its kind. It is an abridged version of the full Rules of Golf, aimed to help you, the golfer, with the Rules during your play. We hope you will carry it with you on the course, and also recommend that you read it to get an overall understanding of the Rules. It includes the Rules that are most relevant to you, and features diagrams and charts for easy application on the course. If you need additional information on less common situations, you will be directed to the full Rules.

The updates contained in the 2019 Rules are the result of the Rules Modernization Initiative conducted by past and present representatives of the Rules of Golf Committees of Golf Canada, The R&A and the USGA, along with representatives from all levels of the game, and reflect feedback from thousands of golfers worldwide. This work has been fundamental and far-reaching while preserving golf's essential principles and character, taking account of the needs of all golfers, and making the Rules easier for all golfers to understand and apply. The revised Rules are more consistent, simple and fair.

The Rules of Golf must be comprehensive and provide answers to the issues that arise in a game that is played worldwide on many different types of courses by players of all abilities. Referees, Committees and others wanting greater detail can access the full Rules of Golf in hard copy or digital versions. We have also created a new Official Guide containing Interpretations on the Rules and Committee Procedures with recommendations on how to organize general play and competitions.

We believe golfers will find the modernized Rules fairer, less complicated, more welcoming, and more aligned with issues facing the game such as pace of play and environmental stewardship.

We express our gratitude not only for the tremendous work done by our respective committees and staff, but also to everyone who has contributed to this historic revision.

Diane Barabé
Chair, Rules and Amateur Status Committee
Golf Canada



TIMELESS.

The Rules of Golf have existed for over 270 years. Consistently evolving the Rules is a central tenet of golf, but this current iteration is a significant and laudable change, one that aspires to make the game more inclusive, approachable and welcoming to all.





PASSION.

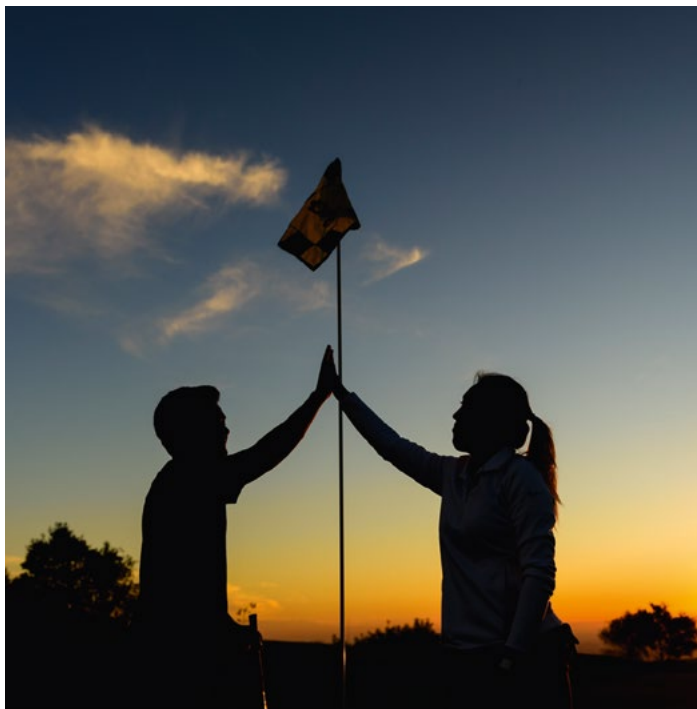
Golfers of all abilities are universally passionate about the game. The significant changes outlined in this year's Rules of Golf reflect and embrace that passion among all golfers who play, in every corner of the world.



PRECISION.

Golf is a game that requires a certain mindset. A game in which precision is met with reward. The Rules of Golf reflect this mindset—a set of precise standards to which every golfer holds themselves accountable. A code of honour and integrity, they are meant to be easily accessible so each golfer can be their own Rules authority.





CONNECTION.

The modernization of the Rules of Golf is the byproduct of listening to the voices of those who play the game. As a singular set of Rules, they embody and reinforce the special connections that exist among the golf community as a whole.



EVOLUTION.

Golf's greatest traditions will always reign, and the Rules will always evolve. Modernizing the Rules is integral to leading the game of golf into the future.





FOREVER GOLF.

A game universally beloved for its elegance and splendour, golf will always be a game of honour. Alongside The R&A and USGA, Rolex is proud to be a part of, and stand behind, golf's new rules and all that they represent for the future of the game, and those who love and play it.

R&A **USGA**


ROLEX

How to Use the “Player’s Edition of the Rules of Golf”

The Player’s Edition of the Rules of Golf is intended for you, the golfer. Much of the information from the full Rules of Golf that is intended for those administering golf competitions has been left out of the Player’s Edition. This means that the Player’s Edition has under half of the content of the full Rules, and it means that it is possible to read the entire Player’s Edition in a short period of time.

The Player’s Edition also serves as a helpful on-course resource that should assist you in resolving the vast majority of Rules situations that you are likely to encounter on the course, or at least encounter on a regular basis.

When looking to answer a question or resolve a Rules issue on the course, the Contents page (at the front of the book) can be a helpful tool to enable you to find the Rule that is relevant to your situation.

The Index (at the back of the book) can also help you to identify quickly the Rule that is relevant to your situation. For example:

- If you accidentally move your ball on the putting green, identify the key words in the question, such as “ball moved” or “putting green”.
- The relevant Rules (Rule 9.4 and Rule 13.1d) can be found under the headings “Ball Moved” and “Putting Green” in the Index.
- A reading of these Rules will confirm the correct answer.

In addition to using the Contents and the Index in the Player’s Edition of the Rules of Golf, the following points will assist you in using this Rule book efficiently and accurately:

Know the Definitions

There are over 70 defined terms (for example, abnormal course condition, general area, etc.) and these form the foundation around which the Rules are written. A good knowledge of the defined terms (which are italicised throughout the book and contained in one section near the back of the book) is very important to the correct application of the Rules.

Understand the Facts of the Case

To answer any question on the Rules you must consider the facts of the case in some detail.

You should identify:

- The form of play (are you playing match play or stroke play; is it single, foursome or four-ball; etc.).
- Who is involved (does the question involve you, your partner or caddie, your opponent or his or her caddie, or an outside influence).
- On what part of the course did the incident occur (was it in a bunker, in a penalty area, on the putting green, etc.).
- What actually happened.

Refer to the Book

As stated above, reference to the Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf should provide the answer to the majority of questions that you will encounter on the course. But, if you are in doubt, refer your question to the Committee on returning to the Clubhouse.

I

Fundamentals of the Game

RULES 1-4



RULE
1

The Game, Player Conduct and the Rules

Purpose of Rule: Rule 1 introduces these central principles of the game:

- Play the course as you find it and play your ball as it lies.
- Play by the Rules and in the spirit of the game.
- You are responsible for applying your own penalties if you breach a Rule, so that you cannot gain any potential advantage over your opponent in match play or other players in stroke play.

1.1 The Game of Golf

Golf is played by striking your ball with a club, and each hole starts from the *teeing area* and ends when your ball is *holed* on the *putting green*.

You should normally play the *course* as you find it and play your ball as it lies.

1.2 Standards of Player Conduct

All players are expected to play in the spirit of the game by:

- Acting with integrity – for example, by following the Rules, applying all penalties, and being honest in all aspects of play.
- Showing consideration to others – for example, by playing at a prompt pace, looking out for the safety of others, and not distracting the play of another player.
- Taking good care of the *course* – for example, by replacing divots, smoothing *bunkers*, repairing ball-marks, and not causing unnecessary damage to the *course*.

You should check to see whether the *Committee* has adopted a Code of Conduct, as you could get a penalty if you do not follow it.

1.3 Playing by the Rules

You are expected to recognize when you have breached a Rule and to be honest in applying your own penalties.

You may ask for help with the Rules from a *referee* or the *Committee*, **but** if help is not available in a reasonable time you must play on and raise the issue later.

There are times when you must make estimates, such as the spot where to replace your ball, the point where your ball crossed the edge of a *penalty area* or when taking relief under the Rules. You are expected to consider all available information and to make a reasonable judgment in the circumstances.

A penalty applies to you when a breach of a Rule results from your own actions, the actions of your *caddie*, or the actions of another person acting with your authority or knowledge.

Penalties are meant to cancel out any potential advantage. There are three main penalty levels:

- One-Stroke Penalty: Applies in both *match play* and *stroke play*.
- General Penalty: Loss of hole in *match play* and a two-stroke penalty in *stroke play*.
- Disqualification: Applies both in *match play* and *stroke play*.



See Full Rules

For more information on penalties, including how penalties are applied when multiple breaches have occurred.

RULE
2

The Course

Purpose of Rule: Rule 2 introduces the basic things you should know about the course:

- There are five defined areas of the course, and
- There are several types of defined objects and conditions that can interfere with your play.

It is important to know the area of the course where your ball lies and the status of any interfering objects and conditions, because they often affect your options for playing your ball or taking relief.

2.1 Course Boundaries and Out of Bounds

Golf is played on a *course*. Areas not on the *course* are *out of bounds*.

2.2 Defined Areas of the Course

There are five *areas of the course*. The *general area*, which covers the entire *course* **except** for these four specific *areas*.

- The *teeing area* of the hole you are playing (Rule 6.2),
- All *penalty areas* (Rule 17),
- All *bunkers* (Rule 12), and
- The *putting green* of the hole you are playing (Rule 13).

It is important to know the *area of the course* where your ball lies as this affects the Rules that apply in playing your ball or taking relief.



See Full Rules

For information on how to treat a ball that is lying on two parts of the course.

DIAGRAM 2.2: DEFINED AREAS OF THE COURSE

The **general area** covers the entire area of the course except for the following:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| ❶ The teeing area | ❸ Penalty areas |
| ❷ Bunkers | ❹ The putting green |

2.3 Objects or Conditions That Can Interfere with Your Play

Free relief (relief with no penalty) may be available from:

- *Loose impediments* (Rule 15.1),
- *Movable obstructions* (Rule 15.2), and
- *Abnormal course conditions*, which are *animal holes*, *ground under repair*, *immovable obstructions* and *temporary water* (Rule 16.1).

But you do not get free relief from *boundary objects* or *integral objects* that interfere with your play.

2.4 No Play Zones

A *no play zone* is a part of the *course* that you are not allowed to play your ball from. You must also take relief if the *no play zone* interferes with your *stance* or area of intended swing when playing a ball outside the *no play zone*.

RULE
3

The Competition

Purpose of Rule: Rule 3 covers the three central elements of all golf competitions:

- Playing either match play or stroke play,
- Playing either as an individual or with a partner as part of a side, and
- Scoring either by gross scores (no handicap strokes applied) or net scores (handicap strokes applied).

3.1 Central Elements of Every Competition

Forms of play. *Match play* and *stroke play* are very different forms of play:

- In *match play*, you and your *opponent* compete against each other based on holes won, lost or tied.
- In the regular form of *stroke play*, all players compete with one another based on each player's total score (Rule 21 covers other forms of *stroke play* that use a different scoring method).

You either play as an individual competing on your own or with a *partner* competing together as a *side*. Although Rules 1-20 focus on individual play, they also apply where *partners* and teams are included.

Gross or Net Scores. In a scratch competition, your “gross score” for a hole or the *round* is your total number of strokes. In a handicap competition, your “net score” for a hole or the *round* is your gross score adjusted for your handicap strokes.

3.2 Match Play

Purpose of Rule: Match play has specific Rules (particularly about concessions and giving information about the number of strokes taken) because you and your opponent:

- Compete solely against each other on every hole,
- Can see each other's play, and
- Can protect your own interests.

3.2a Result of Hole and Match

In *match play* the result of the hole or match is decided as follows:

- You win a hole when you complete the hole in fewer strokes than your *opponent*, your *opponent* concedes the hole, or your *opponent* gets the *general penalty* (loss of hole).
- You tie a hole (also known as “halved”) when you and your *opponent* complete the hole in the same number of strokes.
- You win a match when you lead your *opponent* by more holes than remain to be played, your *opponent* concedes the match, or your *opponent* is disqualified.
- If your match is tied after the final hole and you need to establish a winner, the match is extended one hole at a time until there is a winner.

3.2b Concessions

You may concede your *opponent's* next *stroke*, a hole or the match, but a concession is only made when it is clearly communicated.

A concession is final – you cannot withdraw it once made and your *opponent* cannot decline the concession.



See Full Rules

For more information on concessions, including how they are made.

3.2c Applying Handicaps in Handicap Match

You and your *opponent* should tell each other your handicaps before the match. If you declare a wrong handicap and don't correct the mistake before your opponent makes a stroke:

- If the declared handicap is too high and this affects the number of strokes you get or give, you are **disqualified**.
- If the declared handicap is too low, there is no penalty and you must play off the lower handicap.

Handicap strokes are given by hole, and the lower net score wins the hole. If a tied match is extended, handicap strokes are given by hole in the same way as in the round.

 [See Full Rules](#) For more information on applying handicaps in a match.


3.2d Your Responsibilities in Match Play

You have a responsibility to:

- Tell your *opponent* the right number of strokes you have taken when asked,
- Make your *opponent* aware as soon as reasonably possible after you get a penalty, and
- Know the match score.

In a match, you should protect your own rights and interests under the Rules:

- If you know or believe that your *opponent* has breached a Rule that has a penalty, you may act on the breach or choose to ignore it.
- **But** if you and your *opponent* deliberately agree to ignore a breach or penalty you both know applies, you are both **disqualified**.
- If you and your *opponent* disagree whether one of you has breached a Rule, you may protect your rights by asking for a ruling.

 [See Full Rules](#) For more information on responsibilities and when a penalty applies for giving the wrong number of strokes or failing to make your opponent aware of a penalty.

3.3 Stroke Play

Purpose of Rule: Stroke play has specific Rules (particularly for scorecards and holing out) because:

- You compete against all the other players in the competition, and
- All players need to be treated equally under the Rules.

After the round, you and your marker must certify that your score for each hole is right and you must return the scorecard to the Committee.

3.3a Winner in Stroke Play

The player who completes all *rounds* in the fewest total strokes is the winner.

3.3b Scoring in Stroke Play

Marker's Responsibility. After each hole during the *round*, your *marker* should confirm the number of strokes you took on that hole and enter that gross score on your *scorecard*.

When the *round* has ended, your *marker* must certify the hole scores on your *scorecard*. If you had more than one *marker*, each *marker* must certify the scores for those holes where he or she was your *marker*.

Your Responsibility. When the *round* has ended, you:

- Should carefully check the hole scores entered by your *marker* and raise any issues with the *Committee*,
- Must make sure that your *marker* certifies the hole scores on the *scorecard*,
- Must not change a hole score entered by your *marker* **except** with the *marker's* agreement or the *Committee's* approval, and
- Must certify the hole scores on the *scorecard* and promptly return it to the *Committee*, after which you must not change your *scorecard*.

If you breach any of these requirements, you are **disqualified**.

DIAGRAM 3.3b: SCORECARD RESPONSIBILITIES IN HANDICAP STROKE PLAY

Name: John Smith Handicap: 5 Date: 09/07/19

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out
PAR	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	37
SCORE	5	5	5	4	3	5	4	3	4	38

HOLE	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
PAR	3	4	5	3	4	5	3	4	4	35	72
SCORE	3	4	4	4	5	5	4	3	4	36	74
NET: 69											

Responsibilities

 Committee

 Player

 Player and marker

Marker's
Signature: 

Player's
Signature: 

Wrong Score for a Hole. If you return a *scorecard* with a wrong score for any hole:

- If your returned score for a hole is higher than your actual score, your higher returned score for the hole stands.
- If your returned score for a hole is lower than your actual score or no score is returned for a hole, you are **disqualified**.

Scoring in Handicap Competition. You are responsible for making sure that your handicap is shown on your *scorecard*. If you return a *scorecard* without the right handicap:

- If the handicap on your *scorecard* is too high and this affects the number of strokes you get, or no handicap is shown, you are **disqualified** from the handicap competition.
- If the handicap on your *scorecard* is too low, there is no penalty and your net score stands using the lower handicap.

[See Full Rules](#)

For information on the Exception for failure to include an unknown penalty on your scorecard.

3.3c Failure to Hole Out

You must *hole out* at each hole in a *round*. If you fail to do so, you must correct that mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the *round*, before returning your *scorecard*.

If you do not correct the mistake in that time, you are **disqualified**.

RULE

4

The Player's Equipment

Purpose of Rule: Rule 4 covers the equipment that you may use during your round. Based on the principle that golf is a challenging game in which success should depend on your judgment, skills and abilities, you:

- Must use conforming clubs and balls,
- Are limited to no more than 14 clubs and normally must not replace damaged or lost clubs, and
- Are restricted in the use of other equipment that gives artificial help to your play.

4.1 Clubs

4.1a Clubs Allowed in Making a Stroke

You must use a club that conforms to the requirements in the *Equipment Rules*.

If your conforming club is damaged during your *round* or while play is stopped, you may continue to make *strokes* with the damaged club for the rest of the round, or have your club repaired by restoring it as nearly as possible to its condition before the damage happened.

[See Full Rules](#)

For more information on restrictions in repairing damage and deliberate changing of a club's performance characteristics.

Penalty for Making *Stroke* in Breach of Rule 4.1a: Disqualification.

4.1b Limit of 14 Clubs; Sharing, Adding or Replacing Clubs During Round

You must not start a *round* with more than 14 clubs or have more than 14 clubs during the *round*.

If you start a *round* with fewer than 14 clubs, you may add clubs during the *round* up to the 14-club limit.

When you become aware that you are in breach of this Rule by having more than 14 clubs, you must immediately take the excess club or clubs out of play, using the procedure in Rule 4.1c.



See Full Rules

For more information on sharing, adding or replacing clubs, including a limited exception for when you did not cause the damage.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 4.1b: The penalty applies based on when you become aware of the breach:

- While playing the hole: The penalty is applied at the end of the hole you are playing. In *match play*, you must complete the hole, apply the result of that hole to the match score and then apply the penalty to adjust the match score.
- Between two holes: The penalty is applied as of the end of the hole just completed, not the next hole.

Penalty in Match Play - Match Score Revised by Deducting Hole, Maximum of Two Holes:

- This is a match adjustment penalty – it is not the same as a loss of hole penalty.
- At the end of the hole you are playing or just completed, the match score is revised by deducting **one hole** for each hole where a breach happened, with a **maximum deduction of two holes** in the *round*.
- For example, if you started with 15 clubs and become aware of the breach while playing the 3rd hole and then win that hole to go three up in the match, the maximum adjustment of two holes applies and you would now be one up in the match.


Penalty in Stroke Play - Two Penalty Strokes, Maximum of Four Strokes:

You get the *general penalty (two penalty strokes)* for each hole where a breach happened, with a **maximum of four penalty strokes** in the *round* (adding two penalty strokes at each of the first two holes where a breach happened).

4.1c Procedure for Taking Clubs Out of Play

When you become aware during a *round* that you have more than 14 clubs or made a *stroke* with another player's club, you must immediately take an action that clearly indicates each club that you are taking out of play (such as by advising another player or turning the club upside down in your bag).

Penalty for Not Taking Immediate Action to Indicate Each Club that You are Taking Out of Play: Disqualification.

 [See Full Rules](#) For information on taking a club out of play shortly before you start your round.


4.2 Balls**4.2a Balls Allowed in Play of Round**

You must use a ball that conforms to the requirements in the *Equipment Rules*. You may get a conforming ball to play from anyone else, including another player on the *course*.

You must not make a *stroke* at a ball whose performance characteristics have been deliberately altered.

Penalty for Making *Stroke* in Breach of Rule 4.2a: Disqualification.

4.2b Ball Breaks into Pieces While Playing Hole

 [See Full Rules](#) For information on what to do when a ball breaks into pieces while you are playing a hole.

4.2c Ball Becomes Cut or Cracked While Playing Hole

If you reasonably believe that your ball has been cut or cracked while playing a hole, you may lift it to check. First, you must *mark* the spot of the ball and then lift it without cleaning it (**except** on the *putting green*).

If you lift your ball without having this reasonable belief, fail to *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it, or clean it when not allowed, you get **one penalty stroke**.

You may only *substitute* another ball (by *replacing* it on the original spot) if it can be clearly seen that your original ball is cut or cracked and this damage happened during the hole you are playing – **but** not if it is only scratched or scraped or its paint is only damaged or discoloured.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 4.2c: General Penalty.

4.3 Use of Equipment


Rule 4.3 applies to all types of *equipment* that you might use during your *round*.

This Rule only concerns how you use *equipment*. It does not limit the *equipment* that you may have with you during a *round*.


4.3a Allowed and Prohibited Uses of Equipment

You may use *equipment* to help your play during a *round*, **except** that you must not create a potential advantage by:

- Using *equipment* (other than a club or a ball) that artificially eliminates or reduces the need for a skill or judgment that is essential to the challenge of the game, or
- Using *equipment* (including a club or a ball) in an abnormal way in making your *stroke*. “Abnormal way” means a way that is fundamentally different than its intended use and is not normally recognized as part of playing the game.

 See Full Rules For common examples of uses of equipment that are allowed and not allowed during your round, such as the use of equipment to measure distance or wind conditions, the use of a device to provide club recommendations or the use of a training aid.

4.3b Equipment Used for Medical Reasons

 See Full Rules For information on requesting the use of equipment for medical reasons and the factors the Committee should consider.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 4.3:

- **Penalty for first breach: *General Penalty*.**
- **Penalty for second breach: *Disqualification*.** There are limited situations where a second breach is considered a related act to the first breach and therefore only the general penalty applies.

II

Playing the Round and a Hole

RULES 5-6



RULE

5

Playing the Round

Purpose of Rule: Rule 5 covers how to play a round – such as where and when you may practise on the course before or during your round, when your round starts and ends and what happens when play has to stop or resume. You are expected to:

- Start each round on time, and
- Play continuously and at a prompt pace during each hole until your round is completed.

When it is your turn to play, it is recommended that you make the stroke in no more than 40 seconds, and usually more quickly than that.

5.1 Meaning of Round

A “round” is 18 or fewer holes played in the order set by the *Committee*.



See Full Rules

For more information on the meaning of a round and how the Rules apply when play is stopped or when a round ends in a tie.

5.2 Practising on Course Before or Between Rounds

“Practising on the course” means playing a ball from anywhere or testing the surface of the *putting green* of any hole by rolling a ball or rubbing the surface.

5.2a Match Play

You may practise on the *course* before a *round* or between *rounds* of a *match-play* competition.

5.2b Stroke Play

On the day of a *stroke-play* competition:

- You must not practise on the *course* before a *round*, **except** that you may practise putting or chipping on or near your first *teeing area* and practise on any practice area.
- You may practise on the *course* after completing play of your final *round* for that day.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.2:

- **Penalty for first breach: General Penalty** (applied to your first hole).
- **Penalty for second breach: Disqualification.**

5.3 Starting and Ending Round

5.3a When to Start Round

You must start at (and not before or after) your starting time.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.3a: Disqualification, except in these three cases:

- **Exception 1 – You Arrive at Starting Point, Ready to Play, No More Than Five Minutes Late:** The **general penalty** is applied to your first hole.
- **Exception 2 – You Start No More Than Five Minutes Early:** The **general penalty** is applied to your first hole.
- **Exception 3 – Committee Decides that Exceptional Circumstances Prevented You from Starting on Time:** There is no breach of this Rule and no penalty.

5.3b When Round Ends



See Full Rules

For information on when your round ends.

5.4 Playing in Groups

You must play each hole with your *opponent* in *match play* or in the same group as set by the *Committee* in *stroke play*.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.4: Disqualification.

5.5 Practising During Round or While Play Is Stopped

While playing a hole and between two holes, you must not make a practice *stroke*.

Exception – Between holes you may practise putting or chipping on or near the *putting green* of the hole you just completed and any practice green, and the *teeing area* of your next hole. **But** such practice *strokes* must not be made from a *bunker* and must not unreasonably delay play.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.5: General Penalty. If the breach happens between two holes, the penalty applies to your next hole.



See Full Rules

For information on practice while play is suspended or otherwise stopped.

5.6 Unreasonable Delay; Prompt Pace of Play

5.6a Unreasonable Delay of Play

You must not unreasonably delay play, either when playing a hole or between two holes.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.6a:

- **Penalty for first breach: One penalty stroke.**
- **Penalty for second breach: General Penalty.**
- **Penalty for third breach: Disqualification.**

If you unreasonably delay play between two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.

5.6b Prompt Pace of Play

A *round* of golf is meant to be played at a prompt pace.

Your pace of play is likely to affect how long it will take other players to play their *rounds*, including both those in your group and those in following groups. You are encouraged to allow faster groups to play through.

Pace of Play Recommendations. You should play at a prompt pace throughout the *round*, including the time taken to:

- Prepare for and make each *stroke*,
- Move from one place to another between *strokes*, and
- Move to the next *teeing area* after completing a hole.

You should prepare in advance for your next *stroke* and be ready to play when it is your turn.

When it is your turn to play:

- It is recommended that you make the *stroke* in no more than 40 seconds after you are (or should be) able to play without interference or distraction, and
- You should usually be able to play more quickly than that and are encouraged to do so.

Playing Out of Turn to Help Pace of Play. In *stroke play*, play “ready golf” in a safe and responsible way.

In *match play*, you and your *opponent* may agree that one of you will play out of turn to save time.

5.7 Stopping Play; Resuming Play

5.7a When You May or Must Stop Play

During a *round*, you must not stop play **except** in these cases:

- The *Committee* suspends play.
- You believe there is danger from lightning, in which case you must report to the Committee.
- In *match play*, you and your *opponent* may agree to stop play for any reason, **except** if doing so delays the competition.

If you stop play for any reason not allowed under this Rule or fail to report to the Committee when required, you are **disqualified**.

5.7b What You Must Do When Committee Suspends Play

Immediate Suspension (Such as When There Is Imminent Danger).

If the *Committee* declares an immediate suspension of play, you must stop play at once and must not make another *stroke* until the *Committee* resumes play.

Normal Suspension (Such as for Darkness or Unplayable Course).

If all players in your group are between two holes, you must stop play and must not make a *stroke* to begin another hole until the *Committee* resumes play.

If any player in your group has started a hole, the group may choose either to stop play or to play out the hole. Once your group completes the hole or stops before completing the hole, you must not make another *stroke* until the *Committee* resumes play.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.7b: Disqualification.

5.7c What You Must Do When Play Resumes

You must resume play at the time set by the *Committee* and from where you stopped play on a hole or, if between two holes, at your next *teeing area*, even if play is resumed on a later day.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.7c: Disqualification.

5.7d Lifting Your Ball When Play Stops; Replacing and Substituting Your Ball When Play Resumes

When stopping play of a hole under this Rule, you may *mark* and lift your ball.

Either before or when play is resumed:

- You must *replace* the original ball or another ball on the original spot (which if not known must be estimated).
- If your ball was not lifted when play was stopped, you may play the ball as it lies, or may *mark* and lift the ball and *replace* that ball or another ball on the original spot.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 5.7d: General Penalty.

RULE 6

Playing a Hole

Purpose of Rule: Rule 6 covers how to play a hole – such as the specific Rules for teeing off to start a hole, the requirement to use the same ball for an entire hole except when substitution is allowed, the order of play (which matters more in match play than stroke play) and completing a hole.

6.1 Starting Play of a Hole

6.1a When Hole Starts

You have started a hole when you make a *stroke* to begin the hole.

6.1b Ball Must Be Played from Inside Teeing Area

When starting a hole, if you play a ball from outside the *teeing area* (including from a wrong set of tee markers on the same hole or a different hole):

Match Play. There is no penalty and you play your ball as it lies, **but** your *opponent* may cancel the *stroke*, in which case you must play from inside the *teeing area*.



See Full Rules

For more information on an opponent cancelling your stroke.

Stroke Play. You get the **general penalty (two penalty strokes)** and must correct the mistake by playing a ball from inside the *teeing area*. If you do not correct the mistake, you are **disqualified**.



See Full Rules

For more information on the status of strokes made from outside the teeing area and the disqualification penalty for failing to correct the mistake.

6.2 Playing Ball from Teeing Area

6.2a When Teeing Area Rules Apply

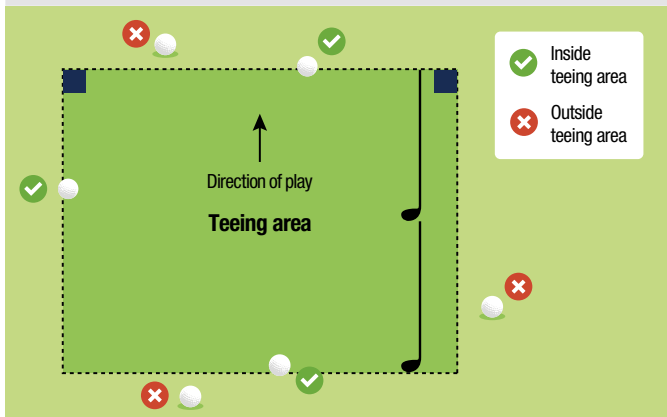
The *teeing area* Rules apply whenever you are required or allowed to play from the *teeing area*.

[See Full Rules](#) For more information on when the *teeing area* Rules apply.

6.2b Teeing Area Rules

Your ball is in the *teeing area* when any part of the ball touches or is above any part of the *teeing area*. You may stand outside the *teeing area* in making the *stroke* at a ball in the *teeing area*. You may play the ball from a *tee* placed on the ground or from the ground itself.

DIAGRAM 6.2b: WHEN BALL IS IN TEEING AREA



The dotted line defines the outside edges of the teeing area (see Definition of Teeing Area). A ball is in the teeing area when any part of the ball touches or is above part of the teeing area.

[See Full Rules](#)

For more information on the teeing area, including certain conditions that can be improved, the restrictions on moving the tee-markers and the treatment of a ball at rest within the teeing area after a stroke.

6.3 Ball Used in Play of Hole

Purpose of Rule: A hole is played as a progression of strokes made from the teeing area to the putting green and into the hole. After teeing off, you are normally required to play the same ball until the hole is completed. You get a penalty for making a stroke at a wrong ball or a substituted ball when substitution is not allowed by the Rules.

6.3a Holing Out with Same Ball Played from Teeing Area

You may play any conforming ball when starting a hole from the *teeing area* and may change balls between two holes.

You must *hole out* with the same ball played from the *teeing area*, **except** when:

- That ball is *lost* or comes to rest *out of bounds*, or
- You *substitute* another ball (whether or not allowed to do so).

You should put an identifying mark on the ball to be played.

6.3b Substitution of Another Ball While Playing Hole

When taking relief by *dropping* or placing, you may use either the original ball or another ball.

When playing again from where a previous *stroke* was made, you may use either the original ball or another ball.

When *replacing* a ball on a spot, you are not allowed to *substitute* a ball and must use the original ball, with certain exceptions contained in Rule 14.2a.

If you make a *stroke* at an incorrectly *substituted* ball:

- You get the **general penalty**.
- In *stroke play*, you must then play out the hole with the incorrectly *substituted* ball.

6.3c Wrong Ball

You must not make a *stroke* at a *wrong ball*.

 See Full Rules For information on the Exception for Ball Moving in Water.

Penalty for Playing Wrong Ball: General Penalty.

In *match play*:

- If you and your *opponent* play each other's ball during the play of a hole, the first to make a *stroke* at a *wrong ball* gets the **general penalty (loss of hole)**.
- If it is not known which *wrong ball* was played first, there is no penalty and the hole must be played out with the balls exchanged.

In *stroke play*, you must correct the mistake by continuing play with the original ball by playing it as it lies or taking relief under the Rules:

- The *stroke* made with the *wrong ball* and any more strokes before the mistake is corrected do not count.
- If you do not correct the mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the *round*, before returning your *scorecard*, you are **disqualified**.

6.4 Order of Play When Playing Hole

Purpose of Rule: Rule 6.4 covers the order of play throughout a hole. The order of play from the teeing area depends on who has the honour, and after that is based on which ball is farthest from the hole.

- In match play, the order of play is fundamental; if you play out of turn, your opponent may cancel that stroke and make you play again.
- In stroke play, there is no penalty for playing out of turn, and you are both allowed and encouraged to play “ready golf”, that is to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way.

6.4a Match Play

Starting First Hole. The honour is decided by the order of the draw or, if there is no draw, by agreement or by using a random method (such as tossing a coin).

Starting All Other Holes. The player who wins a hole has the *honour* at the next *teeing area*. If the hole was tied, the player with the *honour* at the previous *teeing area* keeps it.

After Both Players Start a Hole. The ball that is farther from the hole is to be played first.

In all cases, if you play when it is your *opponent's* turn to play, there is no penalty and you play your ball as it lies, **but** your *opponent* may cancel the *stroke*.

Exception – Playing Out of Turn by Agreement to Save Time: To save time, you and your *opponent* may agree to play out of turn.



See Full Rules

For more information on an opponent cancelling your stroke.

6.4b Stroke Play

Starting First Hole. The honour is decided by the order of the draw or, if there is no draw, by agreement or by using a random method (such as tossing a coin).

Starting All Other Holes.

- The player in the group with the lowest gross score at a hole has the *honour* at the next *teeing area*; the player with the second lowest gross score should play next; and so on.

- If two or more players have the same score at a hole, they should play in the same order as at the previous *teeing area*.
- The *honour* is based on gross scores, even in a handicap competition.

After All Players Start a Hole. The ball that is farthest from the *hole* should be played first.

In all cases, there is no penalty if you play out of turn, **except** that if you and another player agree to play out of turn to give one of you an advantage, you both get the **general penalty (two penalty strokes)**.

“Ready Golf”. In stroke play, you are both allowed and encouraged to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way, such as when:

- You agree with another player to do so for convenience or to save time,
- Your ball comes to rest a very short distance from the *hole* and you wish to *hole out*, or
- You are ready and able to play before another player whose turn it is to play under the normal order of play, so long as in playing out of turn you do not endanger, distract or interfere with any other player.

But if the player whose turn it is to play is ready and able to play and indicates that he or she wants to play first, other players should generally wait until that player has played.



See Full Rules

For information on order of play when playing another ball from the teeing area, a provisional ball or when taking relief.

6.5 Completing Play of a Hole



See Full Rules

For information on when a hole has been completed.

III

Playing the Ball

RULES 7-11



RULE
7

Ball Search: Finding and Identifying Ball

Purpose of Rule: Rule 7 allows you to take reasonable actions to fairly search for your ball in play after each stroke.

- But you must be careful, as a penalty will apply if you act excessively and cause improvement to the conditions affecting your next stroke.
- You get no penalty if your ball is accidentally moved in trying to find or identify it, but you must then replace the ball on its original spot.

7.1 How to Fairly Search for Ball

7.1a You May Take Reasonable Actions to Find and Identify Ball

You may fairly search for the ball by taking reasonable actions to find and identify it, such as:

- Moving sand and water, and
- Moving or bending grass, bushes, tree branches and other growing or attached natural objects, and also breaking such objects, **but** only if such breaking is a result of other reasonable actions taken to find or identify the ball.

If taking such reasonable actions as part of a fair search *improves* the *conditions affecting the stroke* there is no penalty. **But** if the *improvement* results from actions that exceeded what was reasonable for a fair search, you get the **general penalty**.

7.1b What to Do If Sand Affecting Lie of Your Ball Is Moved While Trying to Find or Identify It

You must re-create the original *lie* in the sand, **but** may leave a small part of the ball visible if the ball had been covered by sand.

If you play the ball without having re-created the original *lie*, you get the **general penalty**.

7.2 How to Identify Your Ball

You may identify your ball by seeing it come to rest or seeing your identifying mark on the ball.



See Full Rules

For more information on how your ball may be identified.

7.3 Lifting Your Ball to Identify It

If a ball might be yours but you cannot identify it as it lies, you may lift the ball to identify it. **But** the spot of the ball must first be *marked*, and the ball must not be cleaned more than needed to identify it (**except** on the *putting green*).

If the lifted ball is your ball or another player's ball, it must be *replaced* on its original spot.

If you lift your ball when not reasonably necessary to identify it, fail to *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or clean it when not allowed, you get **one penalty stroke**.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 7.3: General Penalty.

7.4 Ball Accidentally Moved in Trying to Find or Identify It

There is no penalty if your ball is accidentally *moved* by you, your *opponent* or anyone else while trying to find or identify it.

If this happens, the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated). In doing so:

- If the ball was on, under or against any *immovable obstruction*, *integral object*, *boundary object* or growing or attached natural object, the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot on, under or against such object.
- If the ball was covered by sand, the original *lie* must be re-created and the ball must be *replaced* in that *lie*. You may leave a small part of the ball visible if the ball had been covered by sand.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 7.4: General Penalty.

RULE 8

Course Played as It Is Found

Purpose of Rule: Rule 8 covers a central principle of the game: “play the course as you find it.” When your ball comes to rest, you normally have to accept the conditions affecting the stroke and not improve them before playing the ball. However, you may take certain reasonable actions even if they improve those conditions, and there are limited circumstances where conditions may be restored without penalty after they have been improved or worsened.

8.1 Your Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting Your Stroke

This Rule restricts what you may do to *improve* any of the “*conditions affecting your stroke*” (see Definition for the list of things that are protected).

8.1a Actions That Are Not Allowed

Except in the limited ways allowed in Rules 8.1b, c and d, you must not take any of these actions if they *improve* the *conditions affecting your stroke*:


- Move, bend or break any growing or attached natural object, or *immovable obstruction*, *integral object* or *boundary object*, or tee-marker for the *teeing area* when playing a ball from that *teeing area*.
- Move a *loose impediment* or *movable obstruction* into position (such as to build a *stance*).
- Alter the surface of the ground.
- Remove or press down sand or loose soil.
- Remove dew, frost or water.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 8.1a: General Penalty.

8.1b Actions That Are Allowed

In preparing for or making a *stroke*, you may take any of these actions and there is no penalty even if doing so *improves the conditions affecting your stroke*:

- Fairly search for your ball by taking reasonable actions to find and identify it.
- Take reasonable actions to remove *loose impediments* and *movable obstructions*.
- Take reasonable actions to *mark* the spot of your ball and to lift and *replace* your ball.
- Ground your club lightly right in front of or right behind your ball (**but** you cannot do this in a *bunker*).
- Firmly place your feet in taking a *stance*, including a reasonable amount of digging in with your feet in sand or loose soil.
- Fairly take your *stance* by taking reasonable actions to get to your ball and take your *stance*. **But** when doing so you are not entitled to a normal *stance* or swing and you must use the least intrusive course of action to deal with the particular situation.
- Make a *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* which is then made. **But** when your ball is in a *bunker*, touching the sand in the *bunker* in taking your backswing is not allowed.
- On the *putting green*, remove sand and loose soil and repair damage.
- Move a natural object to see if it is loose. **But** if the object is found to be growing or attached, it must stay attached and be returned as nearly as possible to its original position.

 See Full Rules [For information on permitted actions on the teeing area and in a bunker.](#)

8.1c Avoiding Penalty by Restoring Conditions Improved in Breach of Rule 8.1a

There are limited instances when you may avoid the penalty by restoring the original *conditions* before making a *stroke*. The determination as to whether the improvement has been eliminated will be made by the *Committee*.



See Full Rules

For more information on avoiding penalty by restoring improved conditions.

8.1d Restoring Conditions Worsened After Ball Came to Rest

If the *conditions affecting your stroke* are worsened by another player, an *animal* or an artificial object after your ball has come to rest, you have the ability to restore the original *conditions* as near as possible. However, you are not allowed to restore the *conditions* if they were worsened by you, a natural object or by *natural forces*.



See Full Rules

For more information on restoring conditions worsened after your ball came to rest.

8.2 Deliberate Actions to Alter Other Physical Conditions to Affect Your Ball at Rest or Stroke



See Full Rules

For more information on deliberate actions taken to alter other physical conditions to affect your own ball, including the Exception that allows actions to care for the course.

8.3 Deliberate Actions to Alter Physical Conditions to Affect Another Player's Ball at Rest or Stroke



See Full Rules

For information on deliberate actions taken to alter other physical conditions to affect another player's ball at rest or the stroke to be made.

RULE
9

Ball Played as It Lies; Ball at Rest Lifted or Moved

Purpose of Rule: Rule 9 covers a central principle of the game: “play the ball as it lies.”

- If your ball comes to rest and is then moved by natural forces such as wind or water, you normally must play it from its new spot.
- If your ball at rest is lifted or moved by anyone or any outside influence before the stroke is made, your ball must be replaced on its original spot.
- You should take care when near any ball at rest, and if you cause your own ball or your opponent’s ball to move you will normally get a penalty (except on the putting green).

9.1 Ball Played as It Lies

9.1a Playing Your Ball from Where It Came to Rest

You must play your ball at rest on the *course* as it lies, **except** when the Rules require or allow you:

- To play a ball from another place on the *course*, or
- To lift a ball and then *replace* it on its original spot.

9.1b What to Do When Your Ball Moves During Backswing or Stroke

If your ball at rest begins moving after you have begun the *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* and you go on to make the *stroke*:

- The ball must not be *replaced*, no matter what caused it to *move*.
- Instead, you must play the ball from where it comes to rest after the *stroke*.

- If you caused the ball to *move*, see Rule 9.4b to find out if there is a penalty.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 9.1: General Penalty.

9.2 Deciding Whether Your Ball Moved and What Caused It to Move

9.2a Deciding Whether Your Ball Moved

Your ball at rest is treated as having *moved* only if it is *known or virtually certain* that it did.

If your ball might have *moved* but this is not *known or virtually certain*, it is treated as not having *moved* and you must play it as it lies.

9.2b Deciding What Caused Your Ball to Move

The Rules recognize only four possible causes for your ball at rest to *move* before you make a *stroke*:

- *Natural forces*, such as wind or water,
- You, including your *caddie*,
- Your *opponent* in *match play*, including your *opponent's caddie*, or
- An *outside influence*, including any other player in *stroke play*.

You, your *opponent* or an *outside influence* are treated as having caused the ball to *move* only if it is *known or virtually certain* to be the case. If not, the ball is treated as having been *moved* by *natural forces*.

9.3 Ball Moved by Natural Forces

If *natural forces* (such as wind or water) cause your ball at rest to *move*, there is no penalty, and your ball must be played from its new spot.

Exception – If your ball on the *putting green* *moves* after you have already lifted and *replaced* it, the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 9.3: General Penalty.

9.4 Ball Lifted or Moved by You

9.4a When Lifted or Moved Ball Must Be Replaced

If you or your *caddie* lift your ball at rest or cause it to *move*, your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated), **except**:

- When you lift the ball under a Rule to take relief or to *replace* the ball on a different spot, or
- When your ball *moves* only after you have started the *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* and then go on to make the *stroke*.

9.4b Penalty for Lifting or Deliberately Touching Your Ball or Causing It to Move

If you lift or deliberately touch your ball at rest or cause it to *move*, you get **one penalty stroke**.

But there are four exceptions where you get no penalty for doing so:

Exception 1 – When You are Allowed to Lift or Move Ball.

Exception 2 – Accidental Movement Before Ball Is Found.

Exception 3 – Accidental Movement on Putting Green.

Exception 4 – Accidental Movement Anywhere Except on Putting Green While Applying Rule.



See Full Rules For further explanation of these Exceptions.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.4: General Penalty.

9.5 Ball Lifted or Moved by Your Opponent in Match Play



See Full Rules For information on when your ball is lifted or moved by your opponent in match play.

9.6 Ball Lifted or Moved by Outside Influence

If it is *known or virtually certain* that an *outside influence* lifted or moved your ball there is no penalty. The ball must be replaced on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.6: *General Penalty*.

9.7 Ball-Marker Lifted or Moved

9.7a Ball or Ball-Marker Must Be Replaced

If your *ball-marker* is lifted or moved in any way (including by *natural forces*) before your ball is *replaced*, you must either:

- *Replace* your ball on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated), or
- Place a *ball-marker* to *mark* that original spot.

9.7b Penalty for Lifting Ball-Marker or Causing It to Move

Before your ball is *replaced*, if you lift your *ball-marker* or cause it to move, you get **one penalty stroke**. If your *opponent* does so, he or she gets **one penalty stroke**.

Exception - Rule 9.4b and Rule 9.5b Exceptions Apply to Lifting Ball-Marker or Causing It to Move

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.7: *General Penalty*.

**RULE
10**

Preparing for and Making a Stroke; Advice and Help; Caddies

Purpose of Rule: Rule 10 covers how to prepare for and make a stroke, including advice and other help you may get from others (including your caddie). The underlying principle is that golf is a game of skill and personal challenge.

10.1 Making a Stroke

Purpose of Rule: Rule 10.1 covers how to make a stroke and several acts that are prohibited in doing so. A stroke is made by fairly striking at a ball with the head of a club. The fundamental challenge is for you to direct and control the movement of the entire club by freely swinging the club without anchoring it.

10.1a Fairly Striking the Ball

In making a *stroke*:

- You must fairly strike at the ball with the head of the club such that there is only momentary contact between the club and the ball and you must not push, scrape or scoop the ball.
- If your club accidentally hits the ball more than once, there has been only one *stroke* and there is no penalty.

10.1b Anchoring the Club

In making a *stroke*, you must not anchor the club either directly or indirectly.


 **See Full Rules** For more information on anchoring the club, including the exception for a gripping hand or club merely touching clothing or the body.

DIAGRAM 10.1b: ANCHORING THE CLUB

Allowed



Not Allowed



10.1c Making Stroke While Standing Across or on Line of Play



See Full Rules

For the prohibition and penalty for making a stroke while deliberately standing across or on the line of play.

10.1d Playing Moving Ball

You must not make a *stroke* at a moving ball.

But there are three **exceptions** where there is no penalty:

Exception 1 – Ball Begins to Move Only after You Begin Backswing for Stroke.

Exception 2 – Ball Falling Off Tee.

Exception 3 – Ball Moving in Water.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 10.1: General Penalty.

In *stroke play*, a *stroke* made in breach of this Rule counts and you get **two penalty strokes**.

10.2 Advice and Other Help

Purpose of Rule: A fundamental challenge for you is deciding the strategy and tactics for your play. So there are limits to the advice and other help you may get during a round.

10.2a Advice

During a *round*, you must not:

- Give *advice* to anyone in the competition who is playing on the *course*, or
- Ask anyone for *advice*, other than your *caddie*.
- Touch another player's *equipment* to learn information that would be *advice* if given by or asked of the other player.

10.2b Other Help

Pointing Out Line of Play for Ball Anywhere Except on Putting Green.

This is allowed, **but** any person must move away or any object must be removed before your *stroke* is made.

Pointing Out Line of Play for Ball on Putting Green. You or your *caddie* may do this, **but**:

- Although you or your *caddie* may touch the *putting green* with a hand, foot or anything you are holding, you must not *improve* the *conditions affecting your stroke*, and
- You or your *caddie* must not set an object down anywhere on or off the *putting green* to show your *line of play*. This is not allowed even if that object is removed before your *stroke* is made.

While the *stroke* is being made, your *caddie* must not deliberately stand on or close to your *line of play* or do anything else (such as pointing out a spot on the *putting green*) to point out the *line of play*.

Exception – Caddie Attending Flagstick: The *caddie* may stand in a location on or close to the player's *line of play* to attend the *flagstick*.

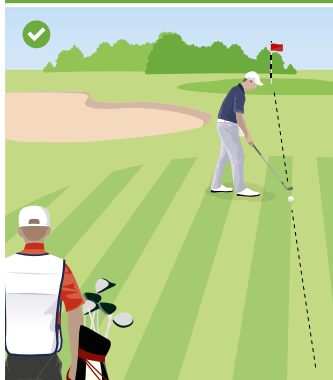
No Setting Down Object to Help in Taking Stance. You must not take a *stance* for the *stroke* using any object that was set down to help in lining up your feet or body.

Restriction on Your Caddie Standing Behind You. When you begin taking your *stance* for the *stroke* and until your *stroke* is made:

- Your *caddie* must not deliberately stand on or close to an extension of your *line of play* behind your ball for any reason.
- If you take a *stance* in breach of this Rule, you cannot avoid penalty by backing away.

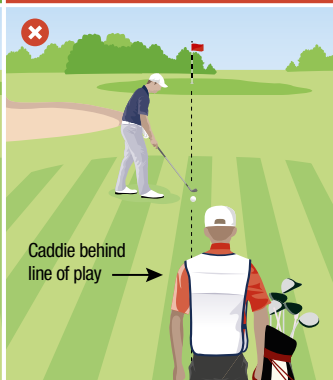
DIAGRAM 10.2b: CADDIE STANDING IN LOCATION ON OR CLOSE TO LINE OF PLAY BEHIND BALL

Allowed



The caddie is not standing in a location on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball when the player begins taking the stance for the stroke and, provided the caddie does not move into such a position prior to the stroke being made, there is no breach of Rule 10.2b.

Not Allowed



The caddie is standing in a location on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball when the player begins taking the stance for the stroke, so there is a breach of Rule 10.2b.

Exception – Ball on Putting Green: When your ball is on the *putting green*, there is no penalty under this Rule if you back away from the *stance* and do not begin to take your *stance* again until after your *caddie* has moved away.

Physical Help and Protection from Elements. You must not make a *stroke*:

- While getting physical help from your *caddie* or any other person, or
- With your *caddie* or any other person or object deliberately positioned to give you protection from sunlight, rain, wind or other elements.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 10.2: General Penalty.

10.3 Caddies

Purpose of Rule: You may have a caddie to carry your clubs and give you advice and other help during your round, but there are limits to what your caddie is allowed to do. You are responsible for your caddie's actions during your round and will get a penalty if your caddie breaches the Rules.

10.3a Your Caddie May Help You During Round

You may have a *caddie* to carry, transport and handle your clubs, give you *advice* and help you in other ways allowed during a *round*, **but** you must not have more than one *caddie* at any one time or change *caddies* temporarily for the sole purpose of getting *advice* from the new *caddie*.



See Full Rules

For an explanation of how the Rules apply to the actions of a shared caddie.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 10.3a:

You get the **general penalty** for each hole during which you were helped by more than one *caddie* at any one time. If the breach happens or continues between two holes, you get the **general penalty** for the next hole.

10.3b What Your Caddie May Do



See Full Rules

For the list of actions that your caddie is allowed and not allowed to do.

10.3c You Are Responsible for Caddie's Actions and Breach of Rules

You are responsible for your *caddie's* actions during your *round* but not before or after your *round*. If your *caddie's* action breaches a Rule, or would breach a Rule if the action was taken by you, you get the penalty under that Rule.

**RULE
11****Ball in Motion Accidentally Hits Person, Animal or Object; Deliberate Actions to Affect Ball in Motion**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 11 covers what to do if your ball in motion hits a person, animal, equipment or anything else on the course. When this happens accidentally, there is no penalty and you normally must accept the result, whether favourable or not, and play the ball from where it comes to rest. Rule 11 also restricts you from deliberately taking actions to affect where any ball in motion might come to rest.

This Rule applies any time your ball *in play* is in motion (whether after a *stroke* or otherwise), **except** when your ball has been *dropped* in a *relief area* and has not yet come to rest. That situation is covered by Rule 14.3.

11.1 Your Ball in Motion Accidentally Hits Person or Outside Influence**11.1a No Penalty to Any Player**

If your ball in motion accidentally hits any person or *outside influence*, including you, any other player or any of your *caddies* or *equipment*, there is no penalty to any player.

Exception – Ball Played on Putting Green in Stroke Play: If your ball in motion hits another ball at rest on the *putting green* and both balls were on the *putting green* before your *stroke*, you get the **general penalty (two penalty strokes)**.

11.1b Ball Must Be Played as It Lies

If your ball in motion accidentally hits any person or *outside influence*, your ball must be played as it lies, **except** in two situations:

Exception 1 – When Your Ball Played from Anywhere Except Putting Green Comes to Rest on Any Person, Animal or Moving Outside Influence.

Exception 2 – When Your Ball Played from Putting Green Accidentally Hits Any Person, Animal or Movable Obstruction (Including Another Ball in Motion) on Putting Green.



See Full Rules

For more information on these two Exceptions.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 11.1: *General Penalty*.

11.2 Ball in Motion Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Person

If a ball in motion has been deliberately deflected or stopped by a player or if it hits *equipment* that has been deliberately positioned, there is normally a penalty and the ball must not be played as it lies.



See Full Rules

For information on where to play a ball that has been deliberately deflected or stopped and whether any penalty applies.

11.3 Deliberately Moving Objects or Altering Conditions to Affect Ball in Motion

While a ball is in motion, you must not deliberately alter physical conditions or lift or move a *loose impediment* or *movable obstruction* to affect where the ball might come to rest.

Exception – You may move a removed *flagstick*, a ball at rest on the *putting green* or any other player's *equipment* (other than a ball at rest anywhere except the *putting green* or a *ball-marker* anywhere on the *course*).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 11.3: *General Penalty*.

IV

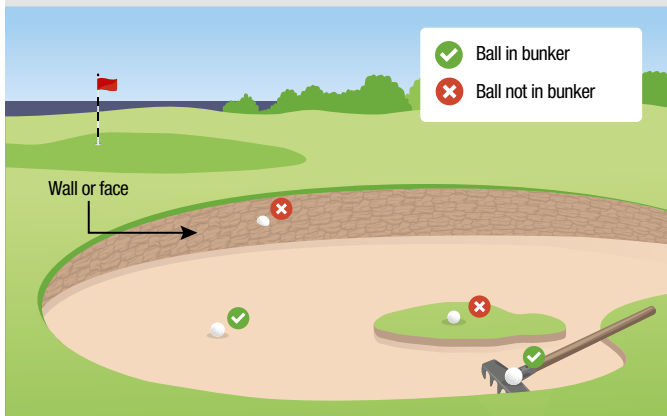
Specific Rules for Bunkers and Putting Greens

RULES 12-13



**RULE
12****Bunkers**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 12 is a specific Rule for bunkers, which are specially prepared areas intended to test your ability to play a ball from the sand. To make sure you confront this challenge, there are some restrictions on touching the sand before your stroke is made and on where relief may be taken for your ball in a bunker.

12.1 When Your Ball Is in Bunker**DIAGRAM 12.1: WHEN BALL IS IN BUNKER**

In line with the Definition of Bunker and Rule 12.1, the diagram provides examples of when a ball is in and not in a bunker.

Your ball is in a *bunker* when any part of it touches sand on the ground inside the edge of the *bunker*.

Your ball is also in a *bunker* if it is inside the edge of the *bunker* and rests:

- On ground where sand would normally be, or
- In or on a *loose impediment, movable obstruction, abnormal course condition or integral object* in the *bunker*.

If your ball lies on soil or grass or other growing or attached natural objects inside the edge of the *bunker* without touching sand, your ball is not in the *bunker*.

12.2 Playing Your Ball in Bunker

12.2a Removing Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions

Before playing your ball in a *bunker*, you may remove *loose impediments* and *movable obstructions*.

12.2b Restrictions on Touching Sand in Bunker

Before making a *stroke* at your ball in a *bunker*, you must not:

- Deliberately touch sand in the *bunker* with your hand, a club or rake or any other object to test the condition of the sand and learn information for your next *stroke*, or
- Touch sand in the *bunker* with your club:
 - » In the area right in front of or right behind your ball (**except** as allowed in fairly searching for your ball or in removing a *loose impediment or movable obstruction*),
 - » In making a practice swing, or
 - » In making your backswing for a *stroke*.

Except as covered in the two bullets above, the following actions are allowed:

- Digging in with your feet to take a *stance* for a practice swing or the *stroke*,
- Smoothing the *bunker* to care for the *course*,
- Placing your clubs, *equipment* or other objects in the *bunker* (whether by throwing or setting them down),
- Measuring, *marking*, lifting, *replacing* or taking other actions under a Rule,
- Leaning on a club to rest, stay balanced or prevent a fall, or
- Striking the sand in frustration or anger.

But you get the **general penalty** if your actions in touching the sand *improve the conditions affecting your stroke*.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 12.2: General Penalty.

12.3 Specific Rules for Relief for Ball in Bunker

When your ball is in a *bunker*, specific relief Rules may apply when you have interference by an *abnormal course condition* (Rule 16.1c) or a dangerous *animal* condition (Rule 16.2), or when your ball is unplayable (Rule 19.3).

**RULE
13**

Putting Greens

Purpose of Rule: Rule 13 is a specific Rule for putting greens. Putting greens are specially prepared for playing your ball along the ground and there is a flagstick for the hole on each putting green, so certain different Rules apply than for other areas of the course.

13.1 Actions Allowed or Required on Putting Greens

Purpose of Rule: This Rule allows you to do things on the putting green that are normally not allowed off the putting green, such as being allowed to mark, lift, clean and replace your ball and to repair damage and remove sand and loose soil on the putting green. There is no penalty for accidentally causing your ball or ball-marker to move on the putting green.

13.1a When Your Ball Is on Putting Green

Your ball is on the *putting green* when any part of it:

- Touches the *putting green*, or
- Lies on or in anything (such as a *loose impediment* or an *obstruction*) and is inside the edge of the *putting green*.

13.1b Marking, Lifting and Cleaning Your Ball on Putting Green

Your ball on the *putting green* may be lifted and cleaned. The spot of your ball must be *marked* before it is lifted and the ball must be *replaced*.

13.1c Improvements Allowed on Putting Green

During a *round*, you may take these two actions on the *putting green*, no matter whether your ball is on or off the *putting green*:

- Sand and loose soil on the *putting green* (**but** not anywhere else on the *course*) may be removed without penalty.
- You may repair damage on the *putting green* without penalty by taking reasonable actions to restore the *putting green* as nearly as possible to its original condition, **but** only:
 - » By using your hand, foot or other part of your body or a normal ball-mark repair tool, *tee*, club or similar item of normal *equipment*, and
 - » Without unreasonably delaying play.

But if you *improve* the *putting green* by taking actions that exceed what is reasonable to restore the *putting green* to its original condition, you get the **general penalty**.

“Damage on the *putting green*” means any damage caused by a person or *outside influence*, such as:

- Ball marks, shoe damage (such as spike marks) and scrapes or indentations caused by *equipment* or a *flagstick*,
- Old *hole* plugs, turf plugs, seams of cut turf and scrapes or indentations from maintenance tools or vehicles,
- *Animal* tracks or hoof indentations, and
- Embedded objects (such as a stone, acorn or *tee*).

But “damage on the *putting green*” does not include any damage or conditions that result from:

- Normal practices for maintaining the overall condition of the *putting green* (such as aeration holes and grooves from vertical mowing),
- Irrigation or rain or other *natural forces*,
- Natural surface imperfections (such as weeds, bare or diseased areas or areas of uneven growth), or
- Natural wear of the *hole*.

13.1d When Your Ball or Ball-Marker Moves on Putting Green

There is no penalty if you, your *opponent* or another player in *stroke play* accidentally *move* your ball or *ball-marker* on the *putting green*.

You must *replace* your ball on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) or place a *ball-marker* to mark that original spot.

Exception – Your Ball Must Be Played as It Lies When It Begins to Move During Your Backswing or Stroke and the Stroke Is Made.

If *natural forces* cause your ball on the *putting green* to *move*, where you must play from next depends on whether your ball had already been lifted and *replaced* on its original spot:

- Ball already lifted and replaced – Your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).
- Ball not already lifted and replaced – The ball must be played from its new spot.

13.1e No Deliberate Testing of Greens

If, during a *round*, you deliberately rub the surface or roll a ball to test the *putting green* or a *wrong green*, you get the **general penalty**.

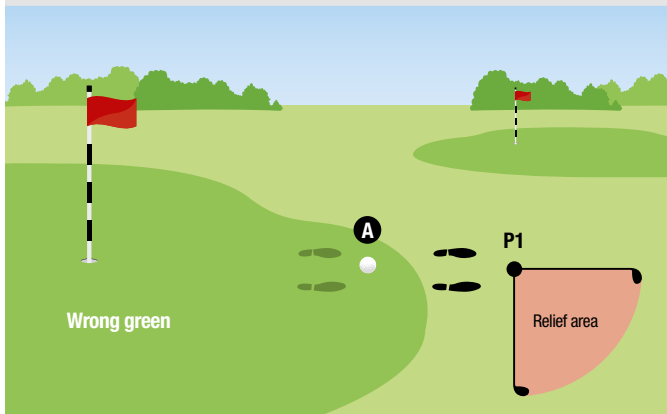
Exception – Testing Green of Hole Just Completed or Practice Green When between Two Holes is Allowed.

13.1f Relief Must Be Taken from Wrong Green


Interference under this Rule exists when your ball is on a *wrong green* or a *wrong green* physically interferes with your area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing.

When there is interference by a *wrong green*, you must not play the ball as it lies. Instead, you must take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in the *relief area* as shown in Diagram 13.1f.

There is no relief under this Rule if interference exists only because you choose a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

DIAGRAM 13.1f: FREE RELIEF FROM WRONG GREEN

When there is interference by a wrong green, free relief must be taken. The diagram assumes a right-handed player. Ball A lies on the wrong green, and the nearest point of complete relief for Ball A is at P1, which must be in the same area of the course where the original ball came to rest (in this case, the general area).

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The nearest point of complete relief (P1)	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the same area of the course as the reference point

Player Notes:

You must take complete relief from all interference by the wrong green.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 13.1: General Penalty.

13.2 The Flagstick

Purpose of Rule: This Rule covers your choices for dealing with the flagstick. You may leave the flagstick in the hole or have it removed (which includes having someone attend the flagstick and remove it after your ball is played), but you must decide before making a stroke. There is normally no penalty if a ball in motion hits the flagstick.

This Rule applies to a ball played from anywhere on the *course*, whether on or off the *putting green*.

13.2a Leaving Flagstick in Hole

If you make a *stroke* with the *flagstick* left in the *hole* and the ball in motion then hits the *flagstick*, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies.

The decision to have the *flagstick* in the *hole* must be made before your *stroke*, by either leaving the *flagstick* in the *hole* or having a removed *flagstick* put back.

In either case, you must not try to gain an advantage by deliberately moving the *flagstick* to a position other than centred in the *hole*.

If you do so and the ball in motion then hits the *flagstick*, you get the **general penalty**.



For information on moving or removing a flagstick left in the hole while a ball is in motion.

13.2b Removing Flagstick from Hole

You may make a *stroke* with the *flagstick* removed from the *hole*, so that your ball in motion will not hit the *flagstick* in the *hole*.

You must decide this before making the *stroke*, by either having the *flagstick* removed from the *hole* before playing your ball, or authorizing someone to attend the *flagstick*.



See Full Rules

For situations where you are treated as having authorized the flagstick to be attended and for more information on what to do if your ball hits the flagstick or person who removed or is attending it.

13.2c Ball Resting Against Flagstick in Hole

If your ball comes to rest against the *flagstick* left in the *hole*, and any part of your ball is in the *hole* below the surface of the *putting green*, your ball is treated as *holed*.

If no part of your ball is in the *hole* below the surface of the *putting green*:

- Your ball is not *holed* and must be played as it lies.
- If the *flagstick* is removed and your ball *moves* (whether it falls into the *hole* or moves away from the *hole*), there is no penalty and it must be *replaced* on the lip of the *hole*.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 13.2c: *General Penalty*.

13.3 Ball Overhanging Hole

13.3a Waiting Time to See If Your Ball Overhanging Hole Will Fall into Hole

If any part of your ball overhangs the lip of the *hole*, you are allowed a reasonable time to reach the *hole* and ten more seconds to wait to see whether your ball will fall into the *hole*.

If your ball falls into the *hole* in this waiting time, you have *holed out* with the previous *stroke*.

If your ball does not fall into the *hole* in this waiting time:

- Your ball is treated as being at rest.
- If your ball then falls into the *hole* before it is played, you have *holed out* with the previous *stroke*, **but** get **one penalty stroke** added to your score for the hole.

13.3b What to Do If Your Ball Overhanging Hole Is Lifted or Moved Before Waiting Time Has Ended



See Full Rules

For information on what to do if your ball overhanging the hole is lifted or moved before the 10-second waiting time has ended.

V

Lifting and Returning a Ball to Play

RULE 14



**RULE
14****Procedures for Ball: Marking, Lifting and Cleaning; Replacing on Spot; Dropping in Relief Area; Playing from Wrong Place**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 14 covers when and how you may mark the spot of your ball at rest and lift and clean your ball and how to put it back into play so that your ball is played from the right place.

- When your ball has been lifted or moved and is to be replaced, the same ball must be set down on its original spot.
- When taking free relief or penalty relief, you must drop a substituted ball or the original ball in a particular relief area.

You may correct a mistake in using these procedures without penalty before your ball is played, but you get a penalty if you play the ball from the wrong place.

14.1 Marking, Lifting and Cleaning Ball**14.1a Spot of Ball to Be Lifted and Replaced Must Be Marked**

Before lifting your ball under a Rule requiring it to be *replaced* on its original spot, you must *mark* the spot, which means to:

- Place a *ball-marker* right behind or right next to your ball, or
- Hold a club on the ground right behind or right next to your ball.

If you lift your ball without *marking* its spot, *mark* its spot in a wrong way or make a *stroke* with a *ball-marker* left in place, you get **one penalty stroke**.

When you lift your ball to take relief under a Rule, you are not required to *mark* the spot.

14.1b Who May Lift Ball

Your ball may be lifted under the Rules only by you or anyone you authorize, **but** you must give such authorization each time before your ball is lifted rather than giving it generally for the *round*.

Exception – Your Caddie May Lift Your Ball on Putting Green Without Authorization.

14.1c Cleaning Lifted Ball

When you lift your ball from the *putting green* it may always be cleaned. When you lift your ball from anywhere else it may always be cleaned **except** when you lift it:

- To see if it is cut or cracked – cleaning is not allowed.
- To identify it – cleaning is allowed only as needed to identify it.
- Because it interferes with play – cleaning is not allowed.
- To see if it lies in a condition where relief is allowed – cleaning is not allowed, unless you then take relief under a Rule.

If you clean a lifted ball when not allowed, you get **one penalty stroke**.

14.2 Replacing Ball on Spot

14.2a Original Ball Must Be Used

When your ball must be *replaced* after it was lifted or *moved*, your original ball must be used.

Exception – Another ball may be used when:

- You cannot recover your original ball with reasonable effort and in a few seconds,
- Your original ball is cut or cracked,
- You are resuming play after a suspension, or
- Your original ball was played by another player as a *wrong ball*.

14.2b Who Must Replace Ball and How It Must Be Replaced

Your ball must be *replaced* under the Rules only by you or any other person who lifted your ball or caused it to *move*.

If you play a ball that was *replaced* in a wrong way or *replaced* by someone not allowed to do so, you get **one penalty stroke**.

14.2c Spot Where Ball Is Replaced

Your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) except when the Rules require you to *replace* your ball on a different spot.

If your ball was at rest on, under or against any *immovable obstruction*, *integral object*, *boundary object* or growing or attached natural object:

- The “spot” of your ball includes its vertical location relative to the ground.
- This means that your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot on, under or against such object.

14.2d Where to Replace Ball When Original Lie Altered

If the *lie* of your ball that has been lifted or *moved* is altered, you must *replace* the ball in this way:

- Ball in Sand:
 - » You must re-create the original *lie* as much as possible.
 - » In re-creating the *lie*, you may leave a small part of the ball visible if the ball had been covered by sand.

If you fail to re-create the *lie* in breach of this Rule, you have played from a *wrong place*.

- Ball Anywhere Except in Sand: You must *replace* the ball by placing it on the nearest spot with a *lie* most similar to the original *lie* that is:
 - » Within one *club-length* from its original spot (which if not known must be estimated)
 - » Not nearer the *hole*, and
 - » In the same *area of the course* as that spot.

If you know that the original *lie* was altered but do not know what the *lie* was, you must estimate the original *lie* and *replace* your ball.

Exception – For Lies Altered While Play is Stopped and Ball Has Been Lifted, see Rule 5.7d.

14.2e What to Do If Replaced Ball Does Not Stay on Original Spot

If you try to *replace* your ball but it does not stay on its original spot, you must try a second time.

If your ball again does not stay on that spot, you must *replace* the ball by placing it on the nearest spot where it will stay at rest, **but** with these limits depending on where the original spot is located:

- The spot must not be nearer the *hole*.
- Original spot in *general area* – the nearest spot must be in the *general area*.
- Original spot in *bunker* or *penalty area* – the nearest spot must be either in the same *bunker* or in the same *penalty area*.
- Original spot on *putting green* – the nearest spot must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 14.2: *General Penalty*.

14.3 Dropping Ball in Relief Area

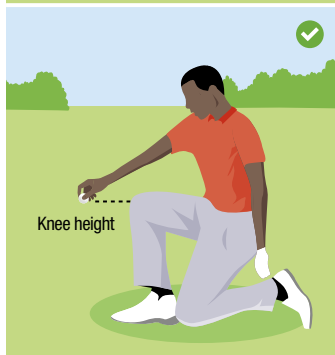
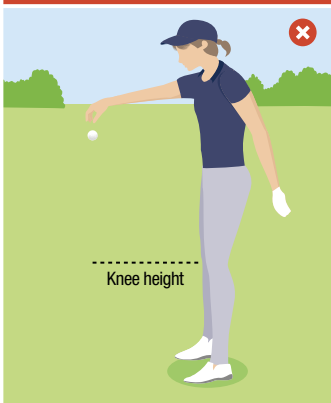
14.3a Original Ball or Another Ball May Be Used

You may use any ball each time you *drop* or place a ball under this Rule.

14.3b Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way

You must *drop* a ball in the right way, which means all three of these things:

- You must drop the ball (neither your *caddie* nor anyone else may do so).
- You must let go of your ball from a location at knee height so that the ball:

DIAGRAM 14.3b: DROPPING FROM KNEE HEIGHT**Allowed****Not Allowed**

A ball must be dropped straight down from knee height. "Knee height" means the height of a player's knee when in a standing position. But the player does not have to be in a standing position when the ball is dropped.

- » Falls straight down, without you throwing, spinning or rolling it or using any other motion that might affect where your ball will come to rest, and
- » Does not touch any part of your body or *equipment* before it hits the ground.

“Knee height” means the height of your knee when in a standing position.

- The ball must be *dropped* in the *relief area*. You may stand either inside or outside the *relief area* when *dropping* your ball.

If your ball is *dropped* in a wrong way in breach of one or more of these three requirements, you must *drop* your ball again in the right way, and there is no limit to the number of times you must do so.

A ball *dropped* in the wrong way does not count as one of the two *drops* required before your ball must be placed.



See Full Rules

For information on making a stroke at a ball dropped in a wrong way and whether one penalty stroke or the general penalty applies.

14.3c Ball Dropped in Right Way Must Come to Rest in Relief Area

This Rule applies only when a ball is *dropped* in the right way under Rule 14.3b.

When You Have Completed Taking Relief. You have only completed taking relief when your ball *dropped* in the right way comes to rest in the *relief area*.

It does not matter whether your ball, after hitting the ground, touches any person, *equipment* or other *outside influence* before coming to rest:

- If your ball comes to rest in the *relief area*, you have completed taking relief and must play the ball as it lies.
- If your ball comes to rest outside the *relief area*, see below “What to Do if Ball Dropped in Right Way Comes to Rest Outside Relief Area”.

In either case, there is no penalty to any player.

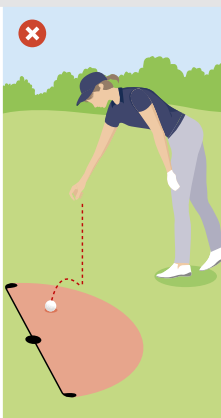
DIAGRAM 14.3c: BALL MUST BE DROPPED IN AND COME TO REST IN RELIEF AREA



The ball is dropped in the right way under Rule 14.3b and the ball comes to rest in the relief area, so the relief procedure is complete.



The ball is dropped in the right way under Rule 14.3b, but comes to rest outside the relief area, and so the ball must be dropped the right way a second time.



The ball is dropped in the wrong way as it is dropped outside the relief area, and so the ball must be dropped again in the right way.

Exception – When Ball Dropped in Right Way is Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Any Person

What to Do if Ball Dropped in Right Way Comes to Rest Outside Relief Area. You must *drop* a ball in the right way a second time, and if that ball also comes to rest outside the *relief area*, you must then complete taking relief by:

- Placing a ball on the spot where the ball *dropped* the second time first touched the ground.
- If the placed ball does not stay at rest on that spot, you must place a ball on that spot a second time.

- If the ball placed a second time also does not stay on that spot, you must place a ball on the nearest spot where the ball will stay at rest, subject to the limits in Rule 14.2e.

14.3d What to Do if Ball Dropped in Right Way is Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Person



See Full Rules

For information on what to do if you have dropped your ball in the right way but it has been deliberately deflected or stopped.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* or Playing Ball that was Placed Instead of *Dropped* in Breach of Rule 14.3: *General Penalty*.

14.4 When Your Ball is Back in Play after Your Original Ball Was Out of Play



See Full Rules

For information on when your ball is back in play, including when you substitute a ball but this is not allowed or you use a procedure that does not apply.

14.5 Correcting Mistake Made in Substituting, Replacing, Dropping or Placing Your Ball

You may lift your ball without penalty and correct your mistake before playing your ball:

- When you have *substituted* another ball for the original ball when not allowed, or
- When you have *replaced*, *dropped* or placed your ball (1) in a *wrong place* or it came to rest in a *wrong place*, (2) in a wrong way or (3) by using a procedure that did not apply.



See Full Rules

For more information on correcting a mistake before your ball is played.

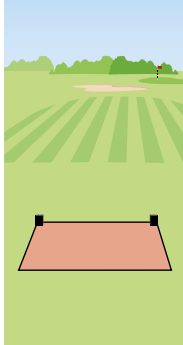
14.6 Making Next Stroke from Where Previous Stroke Made

This Rule applies whenever you are required or allowed to make your next *stroke* from where a previous *stroke* was made (that is, when taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, or playing again after a *stroke* that is cancelled or otherwise does not count).

DIAGRAM 14.6: MAKING NEXT STROKE FROM WHERE PREVIOUS STROKE MADE

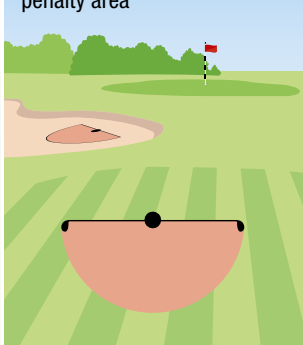
When a player is required or allowed to make the next stroke from where the previous stroke was made, how the player must put a ball into play depends on the area of the course where that previous stroke was made.

Teeing area



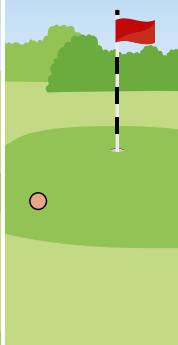
The previous stroke was made from the teeing area, so a ball must be played from anywhere inside the teeing area.

General area, bunker or penalty area



The previous stroke was made from the general area, a bunker or a penalty area, so the reference point is the spot where the previous stroke was made. A ball is dropped within one club-length of that reference point, but in the same area of the course as the reference point and not nearer the hole than the reference point.

Putting green



The previous stroke was made from the putting green, so a ball is placed on the spot where the previous stroke was made.

14.6a Previous Stroke Made from Teeing Area

Your original ball or another ball must be played from anywhere inside the *teeing area* (and may be teed).

14.6b Previous Stroke Made from General Area, Penalty Area or Bunker

Your original ball or another ball must be *dropped* in this *relief area*:

- Reference Point: The spot where your previous *stroke* was made (which if not known must be estimated).
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: One *club-length*, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of *Relief Area*:
 - » Must be in the same *area of the course* as your reference point, and
 - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than your reference point.

14.6c Previous Stroke Made from Putting Green

Your original ball or another ball must be placed on the spot where your previous *stroke* was made (which if not known must be estimated).

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 14.6: *General Penalty*.

14.7 Playing from Wrong Place

14.7a Place from Where Ball Must Be Played

After starting a hole you must make each *stroke* from where your ball comes to rest, **except** when the Rules require or allow you to play a ball from another place.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 14.7a: *General Penalty*.

14.7b How to Complete a Hole after Playing from Wrong Place in Stroke Play

If you have played from a *wrong place* but it is not a *serious breach*, you get the **general penalty** under Rule 14.7a and must continue play of the hole with the ball played from the *wrong place*.

If you have played from a *wrong place* and it is a *serious breach*, you must correct the mistake by playing out the hole from the right place. If you don't correct the mistake, you are **disqualified**.



See Full Rules

For an explanation of what to do when your playing from a wrong place is a serious breach, or if you are not sure if it is a serious breach.

A full-page background image showing the silhouettes of a golfer and a caddy on a grassy hill. The golfer is in the foreground, captured mid-swing with a golf club. The caddy stands to the right, holding a golf bag. The sun is positioned directly behind the golfer, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene. The sky is a deep blue with scattered white clouds.

VI

Free Relief

RULES 15-16

**RULE
15****Relief from Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions (including Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play)**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 15 covers when and how you may take free relief from loose impediments and movable obstructions.

- These movable natural and artificial objects are not treated as part of the challenge of playing the course, and you are normally allowed to remove them when they interfere with your play.
- But you need to be careful in moving loose impediments near your ball off the putting green, because you will get a penalty if moving them causes your ball to move.

15.1 Loose Impediments**15.1a Removal of Loose Impediment**

You may remove a *loose impediment* without penalty anywhere on or off the *course*, and may do so in any way (such as by using your hand or foot or a club or other *equipment*).

But there are two **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Removing Loose Impediment Where Ball Must Be Replaced.

Exception 2 – Restrictions on Deliberately Removing Loose Impediments to Affect Ball in Motion.



See Full Rules

For more information on the Exceptions.

15.1b Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediment

If your removal of a *loose impediment* causes your ball to *move*, your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).

If your *moved* ball had been at rest anywhere except on the *putting green* or in the *teeing area*, you get **one penalty stroke**.

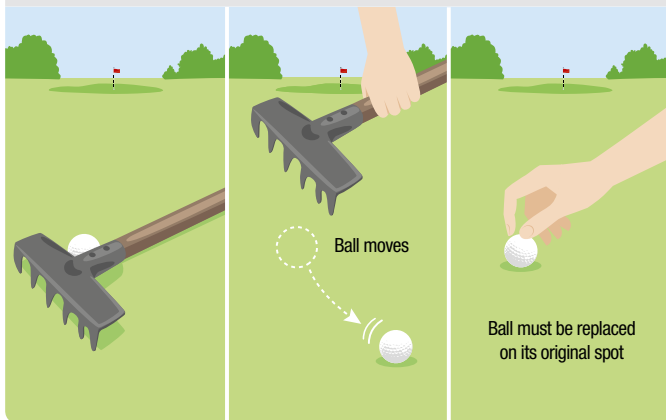
15.2 Movable Obstructions

15.2a Relief from Movable Obstruction

Removal of Movable Obstruction. You may remove a *movable obstruction* without penalty anywhere on or off the *course* and may do so in any way.

If your ball *moves* while you are removing a *movable obstruction*, there is no penalty and your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).

DIAGRAM #1 15.2a: BALL MOVES WHEN MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION REMOVED (EXCEPT WHEN BALL IN OR ON OBSTRUCTION)



But there are two **exceptions** when *movable obstructions* cannot be removed:

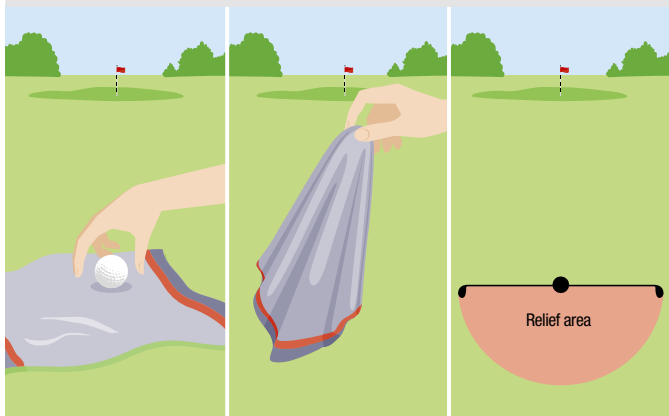
Exception 1 – Tee Markers Must Not be Moved When Ball Will Be Played from Teeing Area.

Exception 2 – Restrictions on Deliberately Removing Movable Obstruction to Affect a Ball in Motion.


 See Full Rules [For more information on the Exceptions.](#)

When Your Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction Anywhere on Course Except on Putting Green. You may take free relief by lifting your ball, removing the *movable obstruction* and *dropping* your original ball or another ball as shown in Diagram #2 15.2a.

DIAGRAM #2 15.2a: BALL IN OR ON MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION



When a ball is in or on a movable obstruction (such as a towel) anywhere on the course, free relief may be taken by lifting the ball, removing the movable obstruction and, except on the putting green, dropping that ball or another ball.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the movable obstruction	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the same area of the course as the reference point

[See Full Rules](#)

For information on how to take free relief when your ball is on a movable obstruction on the putting green.

15.2b Relief for Ball Not Found but in or on Movable Obstruction

[See Full Rules](#)

For information on how to take relief if your ball is in or on a movable obstruction but has not been found.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 15.2: *General Penalty*.

15.3 Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

15.3a Ball on Putting Green Helping Play

This Rule applies only to a ball at rest on the *putting green*.

If you reasonably believe that a ball on the *putting green* might help anyone's play (such as by serving as a possible backstop near the *hole*), you may *mark* and lift the ball if it is your own, or if the ball belongs to another player, require the other player to *mark* and lift the ball.

In *stroke play* only:

- A player who is required to lift a ball may play first instead, and
- If you and another player agree to leave a ball in place to help one of you, and that player then makes a *stroke* with the helping ball left in place, each player who made the agreement gets the **general penalty (two penalty strokes)**.

15.3b Ball Anywhere on Course Interfering with Play

If another player reasonably believes your ball might interfere with his or her play:

- The other player may require you to *mark* the spot and lift your ball, which must not be cleaned (except when you lifted it from the *putting green*).

- If you do not *mark* the spot before lifting your ball, or you clean the lifted ball when not allowed, you get **one penalty stroke**.
- In *stroke play* only, if you are required to lift your ball under this Rule, you may play first instead.

You are not allowed to lift your ball under this Rule based only on your belief that your ball might interfere with another player's play.

If you lift your ball when not required to do so by another player (**except** when lifting the ball on the *putting green*), you get **one penalty stroke**.

15.3c Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

If a *ball-marker* might help or interfere with play, you may:

- Move the *ball-marker* out of the way if it is your own, or
- If the *ball-marker* belongs to another player, require that player to move the *ball-marker* out of the way, for the same reasons as you may require a ball to be lifted.

The *ball-marker* must be moved out of the way to a new spot measured from its original spot, such as by using one or more clubhead-lengths.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 15.3: General Penalty.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 15.3: General Penalty.

**RULE
16****Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions
(Including Immovable Obstructions),
Dangerous Animal Condition, Embedded Ball**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 16 covers when and how you may take free relief by playing a ball from a different place, such as when you have interference by an abnormal course condition or a dangerous animal condition.

- These conditions are not treated as part of your challenge of playing the course, and you are generally allowed free relief except in a penalty area.
- You normally take relief by dropping a ball in a relief area based on the nearest point of complete relief.

This Rule also covers free relief when your ball is embedded in its own pitch mark in the general area.

16.1 Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions)

This Rule covers free relief that is allowed from interference by *animal holes*, *ground under repair*, *immovable obstructions* or *temporary water*.

These are collectively called *abnormal course conditions*, but each has a separate Definition.

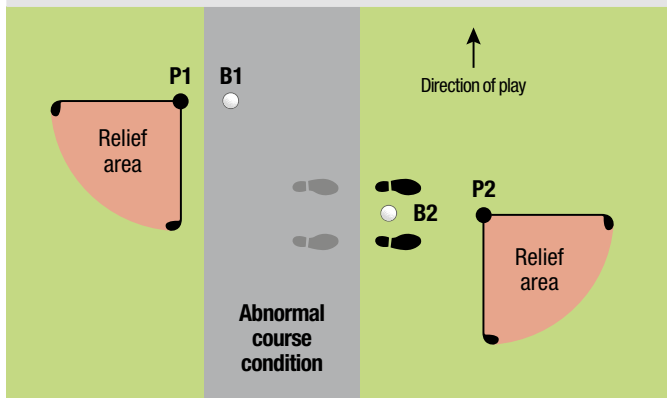
16.1a When Relief Is Allowed

Interference exists when any one of these is true:

- Your ball touches or is in or on an *abnormal course condition*,
- An *abnormal course condition* physically interferes with your area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing, or
- Only when your ball is on the *putting green*, an *abnormal course condition* on or off the *putting green* intervenes on your *line of play*.

There is no free relief from an *abnormal course condition* when the *abnormal course condition* is out of bounds or your ball is in a *penalty area*.

DIAGRAM 16.1a: WHEN RELIEF IS ALLOWED FOR ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION



The diagram assumes the player is right-handed. Free relief is allowed for interference by an abnormal course condition (ACC), including an immovable obstruction, when the ball touches or lies in or on the condition (B1), or the condition interferes with the area of intended stance (B2) or swing. The nearest point of complete relief for B1 is P1, and is very close to the condition. For B2, the nearest point of complete relief is P2, and is farther from the condition as the stance has to be clear of the ACC.

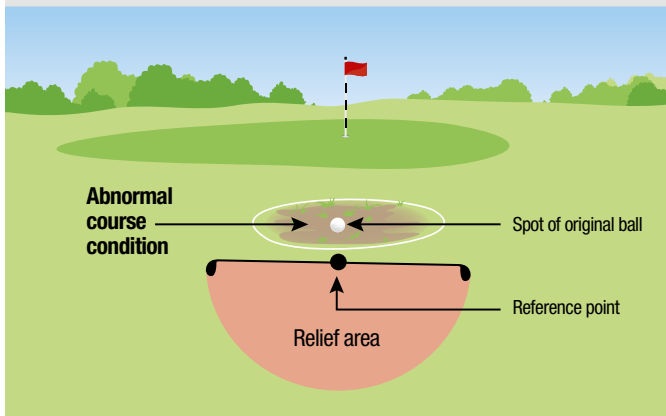
No Relief When Clearly Unreasonable to Play Your Ball. There is no relief:

- When playing your ball as it lies is clearly unreasonable because of something other than an *abnormal course condition* (such as, when you are standing on an *immovable obstruction* but you are unable to make a *stroke* because of where your ball lies in a bush), or
- When interference exists only because you choose a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.


16.1b Relief for Ball in General Area

If your ball is in the *general area* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, you may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball as shown in Diagram 16.1b.

DIAGRAM 16.1b: FREE RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN GENERAL AREA



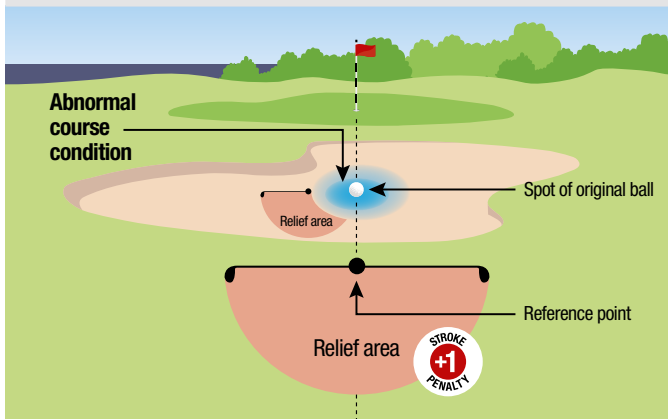
Free relief is allowed when the ball is in the general area and there is interference by an abnormal course condition. The nearest point of complete relief should be identified and a ball must be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The nearest point of complete relief	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the general area

Player Notes:


When taking relief, you must take complete relief from all interference by the abnormal course condition.

DIAGRAM 16.1c: RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN BUNKER



The diagram assumes a right-handed player. When there is interference from an abnormal course condition in a bunker, free relief may be taken in the bunker under Rule 16.1b.

Relief may be taken outside the bunker for one penalty stroke. Relief outside the bunker is based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through the spot of the original ball in the bunker.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
A point on the course outside the bunker chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the hole than the original spot (with no limit on how far back on the line)	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • May be in any area of the course
Player Notes: In choosing this reference point, you should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).		

16.1c Relief for Your Ball in Bunker

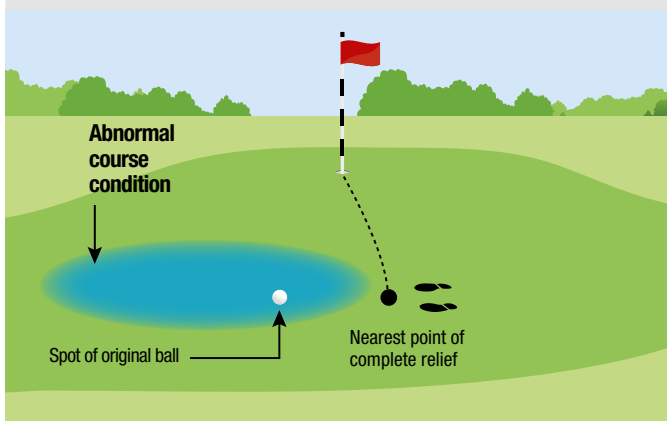
If your ball is in a *bunker* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, you may take either:

- Free Relief: Under Rule 16.1b, **except** that:
 - » The *nearest point of complete relief* and the *relief area* must be in the *bunker*.
 - » If there is no such *nearest point of complete relief* in the *bunker*, you may still take this relief, by using *the point of maximum available relief* in the *bunker* as the reference point.
- Penalty Relief by Playing from Outside Bunker (Back-On-the-Line Relief): For **one penalty stroke**, you may *drop* a ball as shown in Diagram 16.1c.

16.1d Relief for Ball on Putting Green

If your ball is on the *putting green* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition*, you may take free relief by placing the original ball or another ball as shown in Diagram 16.1d.

DIAGRAM 16.1d: FREE RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION ON PUTTING GREEN



The diagram assumes the player is left-handed. When a ball is on the putting green and there is interference by an abnormal course condition, free relief may be taken by placing a ball on the spot of the nearest point of complete relief.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The nearest point of complete relief	Ball must be placed on the spot of the nearest point of complete relief	The nearest point of complete relief must be either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the putting green, or • In the general area

Player Notes:

- When taking relief, you must take complete relief from all interference by the abnormal course condition.
- If there is no such nearest point of complete relief, you may still take this free relief by using the point of maximum available relief as the reference point, which must be either on the putting green or in the general area.

16.1e Relief for Your Ball Not Found but in or on Abnormal Course Condition

If your ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that your ball came to rest in or on an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, you may take relief under Rule 16.1b, c or d. You do this by using the estimated point where the ball last crossed the edge of the *abnormal course condition* on the *course* as the reference point.



See Full Rules

For more information on how to take relief if your ball is in or on an abnormal course condition but has not been found.

16.1f Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Abnormal Course Condition

In each of these situations, your ball must not be played as it lies:

- If your ball is in a *no play zone* that is in an *abnormal course condition*, you must take relief under Rule 16.1b, c or d.
- If your ball is outside a *no play zone* and a *no play zone* (whether in an *abnormal course condition* or in a *penalty area*) interferes with your area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing. You must either take relief under Rule 16.1 or, unless your ball is in a penalty area, take unplayable ball relief under Rule 19.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.1: General Penalty.

16.2 Dangerous Animal Condition

A “dangerous animal condition” exists when a dangerous animal (such as a poisonous snake or an alligator) near your ball could cause you serious physical injury if you had to play the ball as it lies.



See Full Rules

For information on how to take relief from a dangerous animal condition.

16.3 Embedded Ball

16.3a When Relief Is Allowed

Relief is allowed only when your ball is *embedded* in the *general area*. **But** if your ball is *embedded* on the *putting green*, you may *mark* the spot of your ball, lift and clean it, repair the damage, and *replace* your ball on its original spot.

DIAGRAM 16.3a: WHEN A BALL IS EMBEDDED



Ball is embedded

Part of the ball (embedded in its own pitch-mark) is below the level of the ground.

← Level of Ground



Ball is embedded

Despite the fact that the ball is not touching the soil, part of the ball (embedded in its own pitch-mark) is below the level of the ground.



Ball is NOT embedded

Even though the ball is sitting down in the grass, relief is not available because no part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

Exceptions – When Relief Not Allowed for Ball Embedded in General Area:

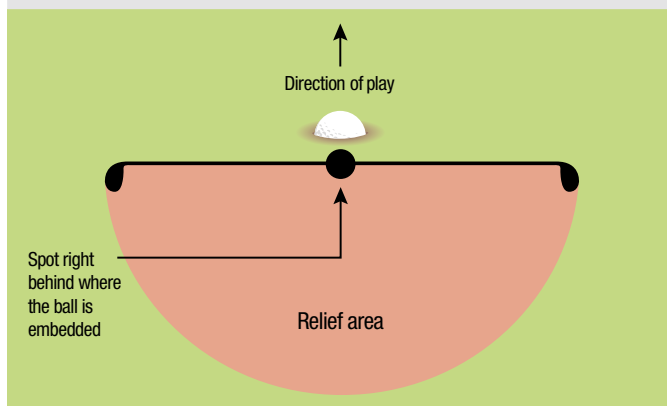
- When your ball is *embedded* in sand in a part of the *general area* that is not cut to fairway height or less, or
- When interference by anything other than your ball being *embedded* makes your *stroke* clearly unreasonable (for example, when you are unable to make a *stroke* because of where your ball lies in a bush).

Your ball is *embedded* only if it is in its own pitch-mark made as a result of your previous *stroke* and part of your ball is below the level of the ground.


16.3b Relief for Embedded Ball

When your ball is *embedded* in the *general area*, you may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball as shown in Diagram 16.3b.

DIAGRAM 16.3b: FREE RELIEF FOR EMBEDDED BALL




When a ball is embedded in the general area, free relief may be taken. The reference point for taking relief is the spot right behind where the ball is embedded. A ball must be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The spot right behind where the ball is embedded	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the general area

Penalty for Playing a Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.3: General Penalty.

16.4 Lifting Your Ball to See If It Lies in Condition Where Relief Allowed

If you reasonably believe that your ball lies in a condition where free relief is allowed under the Rules, but you cannot decide that without lifting your ball, you may *mark* the spot and lift the ball to see if relief is allowed. The lifted ball must not be cleaned (**except** when it is on the *putting green*).

 See Full Rules For more information on lifting your ball to see if it lies in a condition where free relief is allowed, including the penalty for lifting your ball without reasonable belief.

VII

Penalty Relief

RULES 17-19



**RULE
17**

Penalty Areas

Purpose of Rule: Rule 17 is a specific Rule for penalty areas, which are bodies of water or other areas defined by the Committee where a ball is often lost or unable to be played. For one penalty stroke, you may use specific relief options to play a ball from outside the penalty area.

17.1 Options for Your Ball in Penalty Area

Penalty areas are defined as either red or yellow. This affects your relief options (see Rule 17.1d).

You may stand in a *penalty area* to play a ball outside the *penalty area*, including after taking relief from the *penalty area*.

17.1a When Your Ball Is in Penalty Area

Your ball is in a *penalty area* when any part of it lies on or touches the ground or anything else inside the edge of the *penalty area*, or is above the edge or any other part of the *penalty area*.

17.1b You May Play Ball as It Lies in Penalty Area or Take Penalty Relief

You may either play the ball as it lies without penalty or play a ball from outside the *penalty area* by taking penalty relief.

Exception – Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area.

17.1c Relief for Your Ball Not Found but in Penalty Area

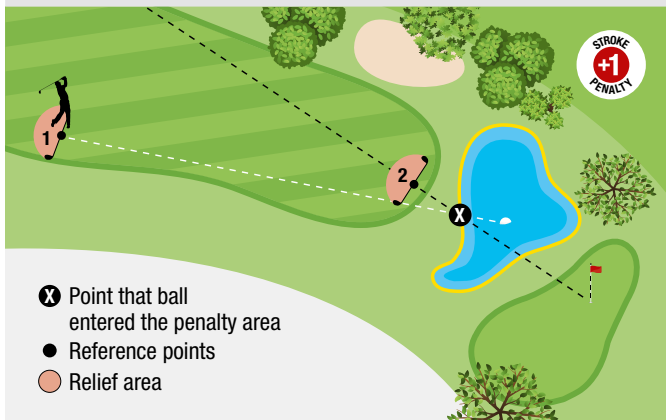
If your ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that it came to rest in a *penalty area* you may take penalty relief under this Rule.

But if it is not *known or virtually certain* that your ball came to rest in a *penalty area* and the ball is *lost*, you must take *stroke-and-distance* relief.

17.1d Relief for Your Ball in Penalty Area


You have the relief options shown in Diagram #1 17.1d (relief for yellow penalty area) and Diagram #2 17.1d (relief for red penalty area), each for **one penalty stroke**.

DIAGRAM #1 17.1d: RELIEF FOR BALL IN YELLOW PENALTY AREA




When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a yellow penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **two options**, each for one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6).

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The spot where the player's previous stroke was made (which if not known must be estimated)	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the same area of the course as the reference point

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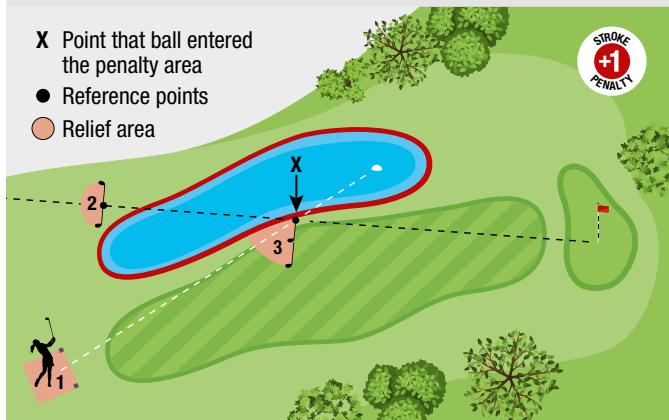
- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
A point on the course chosen by the player that is on the reference line through point X (the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the yellow penalty area). There is no limit on how far back on the line the reference point may be	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • May be in any area of the course except the same penalty area

Player Notes:

In choosing this reference point, you should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).


DIAGRAM #2 17.1d: RELIEF FOR BALL IN RED PENALTY AREA



Continued opposite.

When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a red penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **three options**, each for one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief (see point (1) in Diagram #1 17.1d).
- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief (see point (2) in Diagram #1 17.1d).
- (3) The player may take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking lateral relief is point X.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area (point X)	Two club-lengths from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • May be in any area of the course except the same penalty area

17.1e Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area

In each of these situations, your ball must not be played as it lies:

- When your ball is in a *no play zone* in a *penalty area*.
- When a *no play zone* on the *course* interferes with your *stance* or swing for your ball in a *penalty area*.



See Full Rules

For an explanation of the relief procedure for a *no play zone* in a *penalty area*.

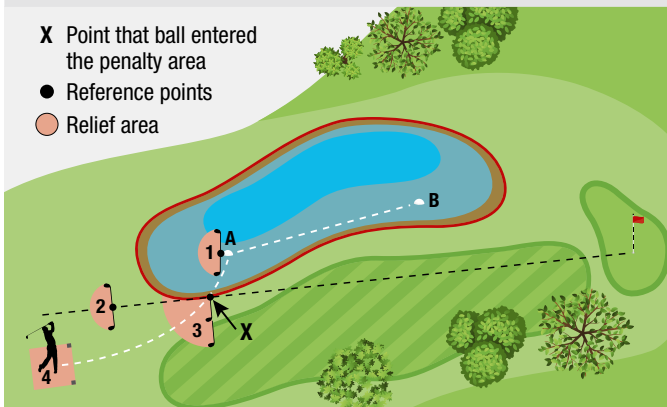
17.2 Options After Playing Your Ball from Penalty Area

17.2a When Your Ball Played from Penalty Area Comes to Rest in Same or Another Penalty Area

If your ball played from a *penalty area* comes to rest in the same *penalty area* or another *penalty area*, you may play the ball as it lies.

Or, for **one penalty stroke**, you have the relief options shown in Diagram #1 17.2a and Diagram #2 17.2a.

DIAGRAM #1 17.2a: BALL PLAYED FROM PENALTY AREA COMES TO REST IN SAME PENALTY AREA

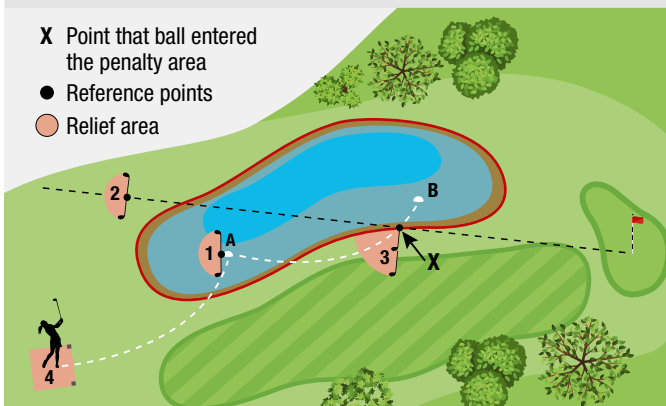


A player plays from the teeing area to point A in the penalty area. The player plays the ball from point A to point B. If the player chooses to take relief, for one penalty stroke there are **four options**. The player may:

- (1) Take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made at point A (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6) and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (2) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (3) Take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking relief is point X, and the original ball or another ball must be dropped in and played from the two club-length relief area, and the player is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (4) Play the original ball or another ball from the teeing area as that was where he or she made the last stroke from outside the penalty area, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

If the player selected option (1) and then decided not to play the dropped ball, the player may take back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in relation to point X, or play again from the teeing area, adding an additional penalty stroke for a total of two penalty strokes, and would be playing his or her 5th shot.

DIAGRAM #2 17.2a: BALL PLAYED FROM PENALTY AREA COMES TO REST IN SAME PENALTY AREA HAVING EXITED AND RE-ENTERED




A player plays from the teeing area to point A in the penalty area. The player plays the ball from point A to point B, with the ball exiting the penalty area but crossing back into the penalty area at point X. If the player chooses to take relief, for one penalty stroke there are **four options**. The player may:

- (1) Take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made at point A (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6) and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (2) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (3) Take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking relief is point X, and the original ball or another ball must be dropped in and played from the two club-length relief area, and the player is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (4) Play the original ball or another ball from the teeing area as that was where he or she made the last stroke from outside the penalty area, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

If the player selected option (1) and then decided not to play the dropped ball, the player may take back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in relation to point X, or play again from the teeing area, adding an additional penalty stroke for a total of two penalty strokes, and would be playing his or her 5th shot.

17.2b When Your Ball Played from Penalty Area Is Lost, Out of Bounds or Unplayable Outside Penalty Area

 See Full Rules For information on how to take relief when your ball played from a penalty area is lost, out of bounds or unplayable outside a penalty area.

17.3 No Relief Under Other Rules for Your Ball in Penalty Area

When your ball is in a *penalty area*, there is no relief for interference by an *abnormal course condition* (Rule 16.1), an *embedded* ball (Rule 16.3), or an unplayable ball (Rule 19).

Your only relief option is to take penalty relief under Rule 17.

**RULE
18****Stroke-and-Distance Relief; Ball Lost or Out of Bounds; Provisional Ball**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 18 covers taking relief under penalty of stroke and distance. When your ball is lost outside a penalty area or comes to rest out of bounds, the required progression of playing from the teeing area to the hole is broken; you must resume that progression by playing again from where the previous stroke was made.

This Rule also covers how and when a provisional ball may be played to save time when your ball in play might have gone out of bounds or be lost outside a penalty area.

18.1 Relief Under Penalty of Stroke and Distance Allowed at Any Time

At any time, you may take *stroke-and-distance* relief. Once you put another ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*, your original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played. This is true even if your original ball is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time.

18.2 Ball Lost or Out of Bounds: Stroke-and-Distance Relief Must Be Taken**18.2a When Your Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds**

When Ball Is Lost. Your ball is *lost* if not found in three minutes after you or your *caddie* begin to search for it. If a ball is found in that time but it is uncertain whether it is your ball:

- You must promptly attempt to identify the ball and are allowed a reasonable time to do so, even if that happens after the three-minute search time has ended.

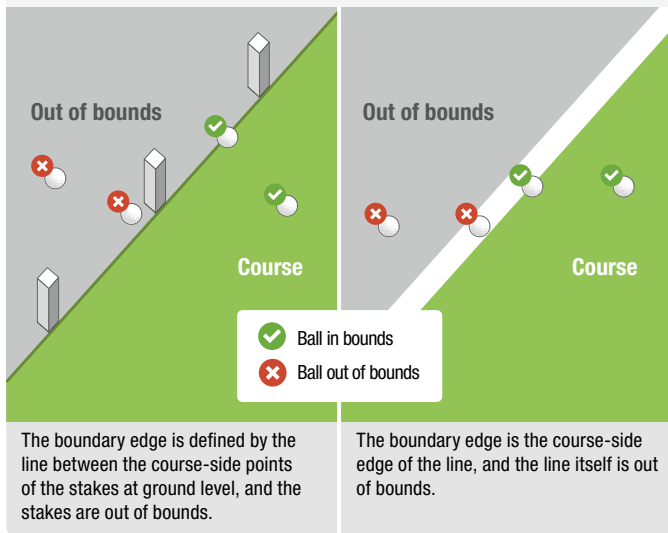
- This includes a reasonable time to get to the ball if you are not where the ball is found.

If you do not identify your ball in that reasonable time, the ball is *lost*.

When Ball is Out of Bounds. Your ball at rest is *out of bounds* only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the *course*.

DIAGRAM 18.2a: WHEN BALL IS OUT OF BOUNDS

A ball is out of bounds only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the course. The diagrams provide examples of when a ball is in bounds and out of bounds.



18.2b What to Do When Your Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds

If your ball is *lost* or *out of bounds*, you must take *stroke-and-distance* relief by adding **one penalty stroke** and playing a ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

Exception – Player May Substitute Another Ball under Other Rule When It Is Known or Virtually Certain What Happened to Ball.



See Full Rules [For more information on when the Exception applies.](#)

18.3 Provisional Ball

18.3a When Provisional Ball Is Allowed

If your ball might be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or be *out of bounds*, to save time you may play another ball provisionally under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

But if you are aware that the only possible place your original ball could be *lost* is in a *penalty area*, a *provisional ball* is not allowed and a ball played from where the previous *stroke* was made becomes your ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

18.3b Announcing Play of Provisional Ball

Before the *stroke* is made, you must announce that you are going to play a *provisional ball*.

It is not enough for you only to say that you are playing another ball or are playing again.

You must use the word “provisional” or otherwise clearly indicate that you are playing the ball provisionally under Rule 18.3.

If you did not announce this (even if you intended to play a *provisional ball*) and played a ball from where the previous *stroke* was made, that ball is your ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

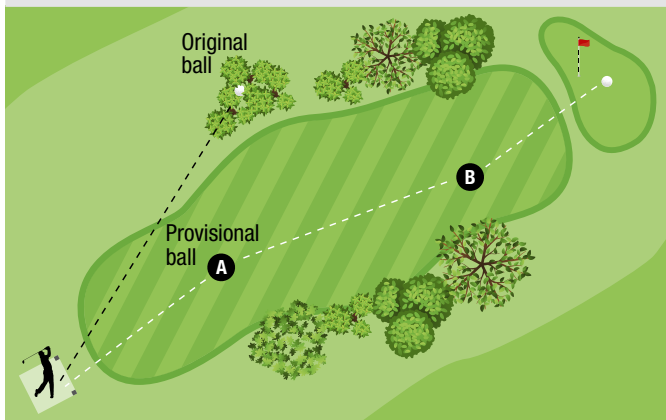
18.3c Playing Provisional Ball Until It Becomes the Ball in Play or Is Abandoned

Playing Provisional Ball More Than Once. You may continue to play the *provisional ball* without it losing its status as a *provisional ball* so long as it is played from a spot that is the same distance or farther from the *hole* than where your original ball is estimated to be.

When Provisional Ball Becomes Ball in Play. Your *provisional ball* becomes your ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* in either of these two cases:

- When your original ball is *lost* anywhere on the *course* except in a *penalty area* or is *out of bounds*.
- When your *provisional ball* is played from a spot nearer to the *hole* than where your original ball is estimated to be.

DIAGRAM 18.3c: PROVISIONAL BALL PLAYED FROM SPOT NEARER HOLE THAN WHERE ORIGINAL BALL IS ESTIMATED TO BE



A player's original ball played from the teeing area may be lost in a bush, so the player announces and plays a provisional ball, and it comes to rest at point A. As point A is farther from the hole than where the original ball is estimated to be, the player may play the provisional ball from point A without it losing its status as a provisional ball. The player plays the provisional ball from point A to point B. As point B is nearer the hole than where the original ball is estimated to be, if the player plays the provisional ball from point B, the provisional ball becomes the ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance.

Exception – Player May Substitute Another Ball Under Other Rule When It Is Known or Virtually Certain What Happened to Ball.



See Full Rules

For more information on when the Exception applies.

When Provisional Ball Must Be Abandoned. When your *provisional ball* has not yet become your ball *in play*, it must be abandoned in either of these two cases:

- When your original ball is found on the *course* outside a *penalty area* before the end of the three minute search time.
- When your original ball is found in a *penalty area* or is *known or virtually certain* to be in a penalty area. You must either play your original ball as it lies or take penalty relief.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 18.3: *General Penalty*.

**RULE
19**

Unplayable Ball

Purpose of Rule: Rule 19 covers your relief options for an unplayable ball. This allows you to choose which option to use – normally with one penalty stroke – to get out of a difficult situation anywhere on the course (except in a penalty area).

19.1 You May Decide to Take Unplayable Ball Relief Anywhere Except Penalty Area

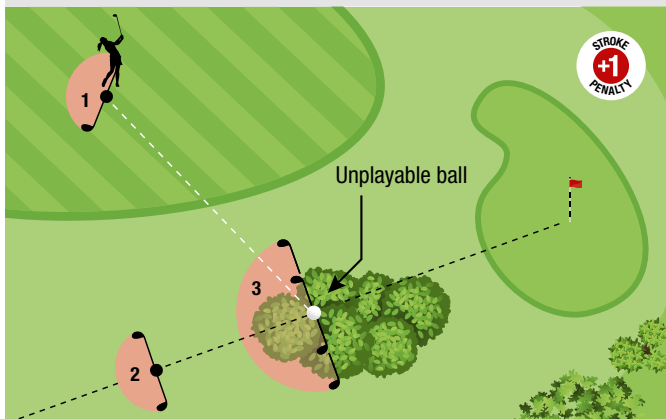
You are the only person who may decide to treat your ball as unplayable. Unplayable ball relief is allowed anywhere on the *course*, **except** in a *penalty area*.

19.2 Relief Options for Unplayable Ball in General Area or on Putting Green

You may take unplayable ball relief using one of the three options shown in Diagram 19.2, in each case adding **one penalty stroke**.


Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 19.2: *General Penalty*.

DIAGRAM 19.2: RELIEF OPTIONS FOR BALL UNPLAYABLE IN GENERAL AREA




A player decides that his or her ball in a bush is unplayable. The player has **three options**, in each case adding one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6).

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The spot where the previous stroke was made (which if not known must be estimated)	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the same area of the course as the reference point

Continued overleaf.


- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through the spot of the original ball.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
A point on the course chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the hole than the spot of the original ball (with no limit on how far back on the line)	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • May be in any area of the course

Player Notes:

In choosing this reference point, you should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

- (3) The player may take lateral relief.

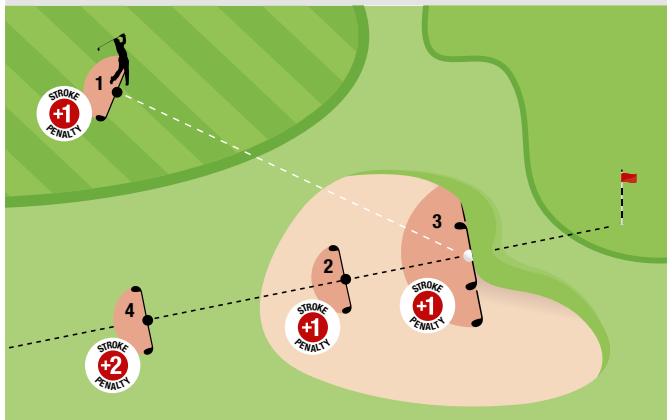
Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The spot of the original ball	Two club-lengths from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • May be in any area of the course

19.3 Relief Options for Unplayable Ball in Bunker

When your ball is in a *bunker*, you may take unplayable ball relief using one of the four options shown in Diagram 19.3.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 19.3: General Penalty.

DIAGRAM 19.3: RELIEF OPTIONS FOR BALL UNPLAYABLE IN BUNKER



A player decides that his or her ball in a bunker is unplayable. The player has **four options**:

- (1) For one penalty stroke, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief.
- (2) For one penalty stroke, the player may take back-on-the-line relief in the bunker.
- (3) For one penalty stroke, the player may take lateral relief in the bunker.
- (4) For a total of two penalty strokes, the player may take back-on-the-line relief outside the bunker based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through the spot of the original ball.

VIII

Procedures for Players and Committee When Issues Arise in Applying the Rules

RULE 20



**RULE
20**

Resolving Rules Issues During Round; Rulings by Referee and Committee

Purpose of Rule: Rule 20 covers what you should do when you have questions about the Rules during a round, including the procedures (which differ in match play and stroke play) allowing you to protect your right to get a ruling at a later time.

The Rule also covers the role of referees who are authorized to decide questions of fact and apply the Rules. Rulings from a referee or the Committee are binding on all players.

20.1 Resolving Rules Issues During Round

20.1a You Must Avoid Unreasonable Delay

You must not unreasonably delay play when seeking help with the Rules during a *round*. If a *referee* or the *Committee* is not available in a reasonable time to help with a Rules issue, you must decide what to do and play on.

You may protect your rights by asking for a ruling in *match play* or by playing two balls in *stroke play*.

20.1b Rules Issues in Match Play

Deciding Issues by Agreement. During a *round* without a *referee* assigned to your match, you and your *opponent* may agree how to decide a Rules issue.

The agreed outcome stands provided you and your *opponent* did not deliberately agree to ignore any Rule or penalty you both knew applied.

Ruling Request Made Before Result of Match Is Final. When you want a *referee* or the *Committee* to decide how to apply the Rules but neither is available in a reasonable time, you may make the request for a ruling by notifying your *opponent* that a later ruling will be sought when a *referee* or the *Committee* becomes available.



See Full Rules

For information on making a request in time and how your ruling request will be handled by the referee or Committee.

20.1c Rules Issues in Stroke Play

No Right to Decide Rules Issues by Agreement. If a *referee* or the *Committee* is not available in a reasonable time to help with a Rules issue you have no right to decide a Rules issue by agreement and any such agreement you may reach is not binding on any player, a *referee* or the *Committee*.

You should raise any Rules issues with the *Committee* before returning your *scorecard*.

You Should Protect Other Players in the Competition. If you know or believe that another player has breached the Rules and does not recognize or is ignoring this, you should tell that player, the player's *marker*, a *referee* or the *Committee*. You should do this promptly, and certainly before the player returns his or her *scorecard*. Your failure to do so could be serious misconduct resulting in disqualification.

Playing Two Balls. If you are uncertain about the right procedure while playing a hole, you may complete the hole with two balls without penalty:

- You must decide to play two balls after the uncertain situation arises and before making a *stroke*.
- You should choose which ball will count if the Rules allow the procedure used for that ball, by announcing that choice to your *marker* or to another player before making a *stroke*.
- If you do not choose in time, the ball played first is treated as the ball chosen by default.
- You must report the facts of the situation to the *Committee* before returning your *scorecard*, even if you score the same with both balls. You are **disqualified** if you fail to do so.

[See Full Rules](#)

For more information on playing two balls in stroke play, including how the Committee will determine your score for the hole.

20.2 Rulings on Issues Under the Rules

[See Full Rules](#)

For information on rulings by referees, Committees, the use of the “naked eye” standard, the correction of wrong rulings and disqualification after the result of the match or competition is final.

20.3 Situations Not Covered by the Rules

Any situation not covered by the Rules should be decided by the *Committee*.

IX

Other Forms of Play

RULES 21-24



**RULE
21**

Other Forms of Individual Stroke Play and Match Play

Purpose of Rule: Rule 21 covers four other forms of individual play, including three forms of stroke play where scoring is different than in regular stroke play: Stableford (scoring by points awarded on each hole); Maximum Score (your score for each hole is capped at a maximum); and Par/Bogey (match play scoring used on a hole by hole basis).

21.1 Stableford

21.1a Overview of Stableford

A form of *stroke play* where:

- Your score or your *side's* score for a hole is based on points awarded by comparing your number of strokes or your *side's* number of strokes on the hole to a fixed score for the hole set by the *Committee*, and
- The competition is won by the player or *side* who completes all *rounds* with the most points.

21.1b Scoring in Stableford

You are awarded points for each hole by comparing the number of strokes you have taken (including strokes made and penalty strokes) to the fixed target score for the hole. See the following chart for how you are awarded points in relation to the fixed target score:

Hole Played In	Points
More than one over fixed target score or no score returned	0
One over fixed target score	1
Fixed target score	2
One under fixed target score	3
Two under fixed target score	4
Three under fixed target score	5
Four under fixed target score	6

DIAGRAM 21.1b: SCORING IN SCRATCH STABLEFORD

Name: John Smith

Date: 01/03/19

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out
Yardage	445	186	378	387	181	533	313	412	537	3372
Par	4	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	5	36
J.Smith	3	3	5	4	4	7	5	4	5	40
Points	3	2	1	2	1	0	1	2	2	14

Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Yardage	206	424	397	202	541	150	593	137	401	3051	6423
Par	3	4	4	3	5	3	5	3	4	34	70
J.Smith	3	4	6	3	4	3	4	5	4	36	76
Points	2	2	0	2	3	2	3	0	2	16	30

Responsibilities

- Committee
- Player
- Player and marker

Marker's Signature:

Player's Signature:

If you do not *hole out* under the Rules for any reason, you get zero points for the hole.

To help pace of play, you are encouraged to stop playing a hole when your score will be zero points.

To meet the requirements for entering hole scores on your *scorecard*:

- If you *hole out* and the number of strokes would result in points being awarded, your *scorecard* must show the actual number of strokes.

- If you *hole out* and the number of strokes would result in zero points, your *scorecard* must either show no score or any number of strokes that results in zero points being awarded.
- If you do not *hole out* under the Rules, your *scorecard* must show either no score or any number of strokes that results in zero points being awarded.

21.1c Penalties in Stableford

All penalty strokes are added to your score for the hole where the breach happened.

Exception 1 – Excess, Shared, Added or Replaced Clubs.

Exception 2 – Time of Starting.

Exception 3 – Unreasonable Delay.

For each exception, you must report the facts about the breach to the *Committee* before returning your *scorecard* so that the *Committee* may apply the penalty. If you fail to do so, you are **disqualified**.



See Full Rules


[For more information on these three Exceptions.](#)

Disqualification Penalties. If you breach any of these four Rules, you are not disqualified **but** you get **zero points** for the hole where the breach happened:

- Failure to *hole out*,
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from outside *the teeing area* in starting a hole,
- Failure to correct mistake of playing a *wrong ball*, or
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from a *wrong place* when there is a *serious breach*.

If you breach any other Rule with a penalty of disqualification, you are **disqualified**.

21.1d Exception to Rule 11.2 in Stableford

 See Full Rules For information on when Rule 11.2 does not apply in Stableford.

21.1e When Round Ends in Stableford

 See Full Rules For information on when a round ends in Stableford.

21.2 Maximum Score

A form of *stroke play* where your score or your *side's* score for a hole is capped at a maximum number of strokes set by the *Committee*, such as two times par, a fixed number or net double bogey.

 See Full Rules For more information on the Maximum Score form of play.

21.3 Par/Bogey

A form of *stroke play* that uses scoring as in *match play* where:

- You or your *side* win or lose a hole by completing the hole in fewer strokes or more strokes (including both strokes made and any penalty strokes) than a fixed target score for that hole set by the *Committee*, and
- The competition is won by the player or *side* with the highest total of holes won versus holes lost (that is, adding up the holes won and subtracting the holes lost).

 See Full Rules For more information on the Par/Bogey form of play.

21.4 Three-Ball Match Play

A form of *match play* where each of three players plays an individual match against the other two players at the same time, and each player plays one ball that is used in both of his or her matches.



See Full Rules

For more information on the Three-Ball match play form of play.

21.5 Other Forms of Playing Golf



See Full Rules

For more information on other forms of play.

RULE 22

Foursomes (Also Known as Alternate Shot)

Purpose of Rule: Rule 22 covers Foursomes (played either in match play or stroke play), where two partners compete together as a side by alternating in making strokes at a single ball. The Rules for this form of play are essentially the same as for individual play, except for requiring the partners to alternate in teeing off to start a hole and to play out each hole with alternate shots.

A form of *match play* or *stroke play* where you and a *partner* compete as a *side* by playing one ball in alternating order on each hole. You and your *partner* must alternate in teeing off to start each hole.

Any penalty strokes do not change which of you or your *partner* must play the next *stroke*.



See Full Rules

For more information on the Foursomes form of play.

RULE
23**Four-Ball**

Purpose of Rule: Rule 23 covers Four-Ball (played either in match play or stroke play), where you and your partner compete as a side with each of you playing a separate ball. Your side's score for a hole is the lower score of the two of you on that hole.

23.1 Overview of Four-Ball

Four-Ball is a form of play (in either *match play* or *stroke play*) involving *partners* where you and your *partner* compete together as a *side*, with each of you playing your own ball, and your *side's* score for a hole is the lower score of the two of you on that hole.

23.2 Scoring in Four-Ball**23.2a Your Side's Score for Hole in Match Play and Stroke Play**

- When both *partners hole out* or otherwise complete the hole under the Rules, the lower score is your *side's* score for the hole.
- When only one *partner holes out* or otherwise completes the hole under the Rules, that *partner's* score is your *side's* score for the hole. The other *partner* does not need to *hole out*.
- When neither *partner holes out* or otherwise does not complete the hole under the Rules, your *side* does not have a score for that hole, which means:
 - » In *match play*, your *side* **loses the hole**, unless the opposing *side* already had conceded or otherwise lost the hole.
 - » In *stroke play*, your *side* is **disqualified** unless the mistake is corrected in time.

23.2b Your Side's Scorecard in Stroke Play

Your *side's* gross scores for each hole must be entered on a single *scorecard* and, in a handicap competition, each *partner's* handicap must be entered on the *scorecard*.

For each hole:

- The gross score of at least one *partner* must be entered on your *scorecard*.
- There is no penalty for entering more than one *partner's* score on the *scorecard*.
- Each score on the *scorecard* must be clearly identified as the score of the individual *partner* who made it; if this is not done, your *side* is **disqualified**.

Only one *partner* needs to certify the hole scores on the *side's scorecard*.

DIAGRAM 23.2b: SCORING IN SCRATCH FOUR-BALL STROKE PLAY

Names: John Smith and Kate Smith Date: 10/05/19

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out
Kate	4		5	4	6	4	3		6	
John	5	3	5		6	4		3	5	
Side Score	4	3	5	4	6	4	3	3	5	37


Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Kate	5	4	4	4		4	5	3	4		
John	5	3		4	4	4		3	5		
Side Score	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	36	73

Responsibilities

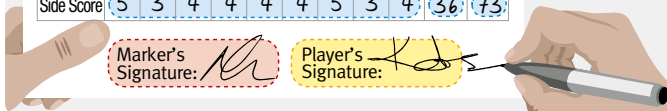
 Committee

 Player

 Player and marker

Marker's Signature: 

Player's Signature: 



23.2c Exception to Rule 11.2 in Four-Ball



See Full Rules

For information on when Rule 11.2 does not apply in Four-Ball.

23.3 When Round Starts and Ends; When Hole Is Completed



See Full Rules

For information on when a round starts and ends and when a hole is completed in Four-Ball.

23.4 One or Both Partners May Represent Your Side

Your *side* may be represented by one *partner* during all or any part of a *round*. It is not necessary for both you and your *partner* to be present or, if present, for both to play on each hole.

23.5 Your Actions Affecting Your Partner's Play

23.5a You Are Allowed to Take Any Action Concerning Your Partner's Ball That Your Partner May Take

Although you and your *partner* each play your own ball:

- You may take any action concerning your *partner's* ball that your *partner* is allowed to take before making a *stroke*, such as to *mark* the spot of the ball and *lift*, *replace*, *drop* and place the ball.
- You and your *caddie* may help your *partner* in any way that your *partner's caddie* is allowed to help.

In *stroke play*, you and your *partner* must not agree to leave a ball in place on the *putting green* to help either of you or any other player.

23.5b Your Partner Is Responsible for Your Actions

Any action taken by you concerning your *partner's* ball or *equipment* is treated as having been taken by your *partner*.

If your action would breach a Rule if taken by the *partner*, your *partner* is in breach of the Rule and gets the resulting penalty.

23.6 Your Side's Order of Play

You and your *partner* may play in the order your *side* considers best. This means that when it is your turn to play, either you or your *partner* may play next.

Exception – Continuing Play of Hole After Stroke Conceded in Match Play:

- You must not continue play of a hole after your next *stroke* has been conceded if this would help your *partner*.
- If you do so, your score for the hole stands without penalty, **but** your *partner's* score for the hole cannot count for your *side*.

23.7 Partners May Share Clubs

You and your *partner* are allowed to share clubs, so long as the total number of clubs you have together is not more than 14.

23.8 When Penalty Applies to One Partner Only or Applies to Both Partners

23.8a Penalties Other Than Disqualification

When you get a penalty other than disqualification, that penalty normally applies only to you and not also to your *partner*.

In *match play*, if you get the **general penalty (loss of hole)**, you have no score that can count for your *side* on that hole; **but** this penalty has no effect on your *partner*, who may continue to play for your *side* on that hole.

There are three situations where your penalty also applies to your *partner*:

- (1) When you breach Rule 4.1b (Limit of 14 Clubs; Shared, Added or Replaced Clubs).
- (2) When your breach helps your *partner's* play.
- (3) In *match play*, when your breach hurts your *opponent's* play.

Exception – If You Make a Stroke at Wrong Ball, it is Not Treated as Having Helped Your Partner's Play or Hurt Your Opponent's Play.

23.8b Disqualification Penalties

 [See Full Rules](#) For information on disqualification penalties in Four-Ball.

RULE 24

Team Competitions

Purpose of Rule: Rule 24 covers team competitions (played in either match play or stroke play), where multiple players or sides compete as a team with the results of their rounds or matches combined to produce an overall team score.

 [See Full Rules](#) For information on Team Competitions.

X

Definitions



Abnormal Course Condition: An *animal hole*, *ground under repair*, an *immovable obstruction*, or *temporary water*.

Advice: Any verbal comment or action (such as showing what club was just used to make a *stroke*) that is intended to influence you or another player in choosing a club, making a *stroke*, or deciding how to play during a hole or *round*. **But** *advice* does not include public information, such as the location of things on the course, the distance from one point to another, or the Rules.

Animal: Any living member of the animal kingdom (other than humans).

Animal Hole: Any hole dug in the ground by an *animal*, **except** for holes dug by *animals* that are also defined as *loose impediments* (such as worms or insects).

The term *animal hole* includes:

- The loose material the *animal* dug out of the hole,
- Any worn-down track or trail leading into the hole, and
- Any area on the ground pushed up or altered as a result of the animal digging the hole underground.

Areas of the Course: The five defined areas that make up the *course*: (1) the *general area*, (2) the *teeing area* you must play from in starting the hole you are playing, (3) all *penalty areas*, (4) all *bunkers*, and (5) the *putting green* of the hole you are playing.

Ball-Marker: An artificial object when used to *mark* the spot of your ball to be lifted, such as a *tee*, a coin, an object made to be a *ball-marker* or another small piece of *equipment*.

Boundary Object: Artificial objects defining or showing *out of bounds*, such as walls, fences, stakes and railings, from which free relief is not allowed.

This includes any base and post of a boundary fence, **but** does not include angled supports or guy wires that are attached to a wall or fence, or any steps, bridge or similar construction used for getting over the wall or fence.

Boundary objects are treated as immovable even if they are movable or any part of them is movable (see Rule 8.1a).

Boundary objects are not *obstructions* or *integral objects*.

Bunker: A specially prepared area of sand, which is often a hollow from which turf or soil has been removed. These are not part of a *bunker*:

- A lip, wall or face at the edge of a prepared area and consisting of soil, grass, stacked turf or artificial materials,
- Soil or any growing or attached natural object inside the edge of a prepared area (such as grass, bushes or trees),
- Sand that has spilled over or is outside the edge of a prepared area, and
- All other areas of sand on the *course* that are not inside the edge of a prepared area (such as deserts and other natural sand areas or areas sometimes referred to as waste areas).

Caddie: Someone who helps you during a *round* to carry, transport or handle your clubs and/or give you *advice*. A *caddie* may also help you in other ways allowed by the Rules (see Rule 10.3b).

Club-Length: The length of the longest club of the 14 (or fewer) clubs you have during the *round* (as allowed by Rule 4.1b(1)), other than a putter. For example, if the longest club (other than a putter) you have during a *round* is a 43-inch (109.22 cm) driver, a *club-length* is 43 inches for you for that *round*.

Committee: The person or group in charge of the competition or the *course*.

Conditions Affecting the Stroke: The *lie* of your ball at rest, the area of your intended *stance*, the area of your intended swing, your *line of play* and the *relief area* where you will *drop* or place a ball.

Course: The entire area of play within the edge of any boundaries set by the *Committee*. The boundary edge extends both up above the ground and down below the ground.

Drop: To hold the ball and let go of it so that it falls through the air, with the intent for the ball to be *in play*. Each relief Rule identifies a specific *relief area* where your ball must be *dropped* and come to rest.

In taking relief, you must let go of the ball from a location at knee height so that the ball:

- Falls straight down, without you throwing, spinning or rolling it or using any other motion that might affect where the ball will come to rest, and
- Does not touch any part of your body or *equipment* before it hits the ground (see Rule 14.3b).

Embedded: When your ball is in its own pitch-mark made as a result of your previous *stroke* and where part of the ball is below the level of the ground. Your ball does not necessarily have to touch soil to be *embedded* (for example, grass and *loose impediments* may be between your ball and the soil).

Equipment: Anything used, worn, held or carried by you or your *caddie*. Objects used for the care of the *course*, such as rakes, are *equipment* only while they are being held or carried by you or your *caddie*.

Equipment Rules: The specifications and other regulations for clubs, balls and other *equipment* that you are allowed to use during a *round*. The *Equipment Rules* are found at RandA.org/EquipmentStandards.

Flagstick: A movable pole provided by the *Committee* that is placed in the *hole* to show you where the *hole* is.

General Area: The *area of the course* that covers all of the *course* **except** for the other four defined areas: (1) the *teeing area* you must play from in starting the hole you are playing, (2) all *penalty areas*, (3) all *bunkers*, and (4) the *putting green* of the hole you are playing.

The *general area* includes all *teeing* locations on the *course* other than the *teeing area*, and all *wrong greens*.

General Penalty: Loss of hole in *match play* or two penalty strokes in *stroke play*.

Ground Under Repair: Any part of the *course* the *Committee* defines to be *ground under repair* (whether by marking it or otherwise).

Ground under repair also includes the following things, even if the *Committee* does not define them as such:

- Any hole made by the *Committee* or the maintenance staff in:
 - » Setting up the *course* (such as a hole where a stake has been removed or the *hole* on a double green being used for the play of another hole), or
 - » Maintaining the *course* (such as a hole made in removing turf or a tree stump or laying pipelines, **but** not including aeration holes).
- Grass cuttings, leaves and any other material piled for later removal. **But:**
 - » Any natural materials that are piled for removal are also *loose impediments*, and
 - » Any materials left on the *course* that are not intended to be removed are not *ground under repair* unless the *Committee* has defined them as such.
- Any *animal* habitat (such as a bird's nest) that is so near your ball that your *stroke* or *stance* might damage it, **except** when the habitat has been made by *animals* that are defined as *loose impediments* (such as worms or insects).

The edge of *ground under repair* should be defined by stakes or lines:

- **Stakes:** When defined by stakes, the edge of the *ground under repair* is defined by the line between the outside points of the stakes at ground level, and the stakes are inside the *ground under repair*.
- **Lines:** When defined by a painted line on the ground, the edge of the *ground under repair* is the outside edge of the line, and the line itself is in the *ground under repair*.

Hole: The finishing point on the *putting green* for the hole you are playing.

Holed: When your ball is at rest in the *hole* after your *stroke* and the entire ball is below the surface of the *putting green*. When the Rules refer to “*holing out*” or “*hole out*,” it means when your ball is *holed*.

For the special case of a ball resting against the *flagstick* in the *hole*, see Rule 13.2c (your ball is treated as *holed* if any part of your ball is below the surface of the *putting green*).

Honour: Your right to play first from the *teeing area* (see Rule 6.4).

Immovable Obstruction: Any *obstruction* that cannot be moved without unreasonable effort or without damaging the *obstruction* or the *course*, and otherwise does not meet the definition of a *movable obstruction*.

Improve: To alter one or more of the *conditions affecting your stroke* or other physical conditions affecting your play so that you gain a potential advantage for your *stroke*.

In Play: The status of your ball when it lies on the *course* and is being used in the play of a hole.

Your ball first becomes *in play* on a hole:

- When you make a *stroke* at it from inside the *teeing area*, or
- In *match play*, when you make a *stroke* at it from outside the *teeing area* and your *opponent* does not cancel the *stroke* under Rule 6.1b.

That ball remains *in play* until it is *holed*, **except** that it is no longer *in play*:

- When it is lifted from the *course*,
- When it is *lost* (even if it is at rest on the *course*) or comes to rest *out of bounds*, or
- When another ball has been *substituted* for it, even if not allowed by a Rule.

A ball that is not *in play* is a *wrong ball*.

When a *ball-marker* is in place to *mark* the spot of your ball *in play*:

- If your ball has not been lifted, it is still *in play*, and
- If your ball has been lifted and *replaced*, it is *in play* even if the *ball-marker* has not been removed.

Integral Object: An artificial object defined by the *Committee* as part of the challenge of playing the *course* from which free relief is not allowed.

Artificial objects defined by the *Committee* as *integral objects* are treated as immovable (see Rule 8.1a). **But** if part of an *integral object* (such as a gate or door or part of an attached cable) meets the definition of *movable obstruction*, that part is treated as a *movable obstruction*.

Integral objects are not *obstructions* or *boundary objects*.

Known or Virtually Certain: The standard for deciding what happened to your ball – for example, whether your ball came to rest in a *penalty area*, whether it *moved* or what caused it to *move*.

Known or virtually certain means more than just possible or probable. It means that either:

- There is conclusive evidence that the event in question happened to your ball, such as when you or other witnesses saw it happen, or
- Although there is a very small degree of doubt, all reasonably available information shows that it is at least 95% likely that the event in question happened.

Lie: The spot on which your ball is at rest and any growing or attached natural object, *immovable obstruction*, *integral object*, or *boundary object* touching your ball or right next to it. *Loose impediments* and *movable obstructions* are not part of the *lie* of a ball.

Line of Play: The line where you intend your ball to go after a *stroke*, including the area on your line that is a reasonable distance up above the ground and on either side of your line.

The *line of play* is not necessarily a straight line between two points (for example, it may be a curved line based on where you intend the ball to go).

Loose Impediment: Any unattached natural object such as:

- Stones, loose grass, leaves, branches and sticks,
- Dead *animals* and *animal* waste,
- Worms, insects and similar *animals* that can be removed easily, and the mounds or webs they build (such as worm casts and ant hills), and
- Clumps of compacted soil (including aeration plugs).

Such natural objects are not loose if they are:

- Attached or growing,
- Solidly embedded in the ground (that is, cannot be picked out easily), or
- Sticking to the ball.

Special cases:

- Sand and loose soil are not *loose impediments*.
- Dew, frost and water are not *loose impediments*.
- Snow and natural ice (other than frost) are either *loose impediments* or, when on the ground, *temporary water*, at your option.
- Spider webs are *loose impediments* even though they are attached to another object.

Lost: The status of a ball that is not found in three minutes after you or your *caddie* (or your *partner* or *partner's caddie*) begin to search for it.

Mark: To show the spot where a ball is at rest by either placing a *ball-marker* right behind or right next to the ball, or holding a club on the ground right behind or right next to the ball.

Marker: In *stroke play*, the person responsible for entering your score on your *scorecard* and for certifying that *scorecard*. The *marker* may be another player, **but** not your *partner*.

Match Play: A form of play where you or your *side* plays directly against an *opponent* or opposing *side* in a head-to-head match of one or more *rounds*.

Movable Obstruction: An *obstruction* that can be moved with reasonable effort and without damaging the *obstruction* or the course.

If part of an *immovable obstruction* or *integral object* (such as a gate or door or part of an attached cable) meets these two standards, that part is treated as a *movable obstruction*. **But** this does not apply if the movable part of an *immovable obstruction* or *integral object* is not meant to be moved (such as a loose stone that is part of a stone wall).

Moved: When your ball at rest has left its original spot and come to rest on any other spot, and this can be seen by the naked eye (whether or not anyone actually sees it do so).

This applies whether your ball has gone up, down or horizontally in any direction away from its original spot.

If your ball only wobbles (sometimes referred to as oscillating) and stays on or returns to its original spot, your ball has not *moved*.

Natural Forces: The effects of nature such as wind, water or when something happens for no apparent reason because of the effects of gravity.

Nearest Point of Complete Relief: Your reference point for taking free relief from an *abnormal course condition* (Rule 16.1), dangerous *animal condition* (Rule 16.2), *wrong green* (Rule 13.1f) or *no play zone* (Rules 16.1f and 17.1e), or in taking relief under certain Local Rules.

It is the estimated point where your ball would lie that is:

- Nearest to your ball's original spot, **but** not nearer the *hole* than that spot,
- In the required *area of the course*, and
- Where the condition does not interfere with the *stroke* you would have made from the original spot if the condition was not there.

Estimating this reference point requires you to identify the choice of club, *stance*, swing and *line of play* you would have used for that *stroke*.

No Play Zone: A part of the *course* where the *Committee* has prohibited play. A *no play zone* must be defined as part of either an *abnormal course condition* or a *penalty area*.

Obstruction: (see also *immovable* and *movable obstruction*): Any artificial object **except** for *integral objects* and *boundary objects*.

Examples of *obstructions*:

- Artificially surfaced roads and paths, including their artificial borders.
- Buildings and vehicles.
- Sprinkler heads, drains and irrigation or control boxes.
- Player *equipment*, *flagsticks* and rakes.

Opponent: The person you compete against in a match. The term *opponent* applies only in *match play*.

Outside Influence: Any of these people or things that can affect what happens to your ball or *equipment* or to the *course*:

- Any person (including another player), **except** you or your *caddie* or your *partner* or *opponent* or any of their *caddies*,
- Any *animal*, and
- Any natural or artificial object or anything else (including another ball in motion), **except** for *natural forces*.

Out of Bounds: All areas outside the boundary edge of the *course* as defined by the *Committee*. All areas inside that edge are in bounds.

The boundary edge of the *course* extends both up above the ground and down below the ground.

The boundary edge should be defined by *boundary objects* or lines:

- **Boundary objects:** When defined by stakes or a fence, the boundary edge is defined by the line between the *course*-side points of the stakes or fence posts at ground level (excluding angled supports), and those stakes or fence posts are *out of bounds*.

When defined by other objects such as a wall or when the *Committee* wishes to treat a boundary fence in a different way, the *Committee* should define the boundary edge.

- **Lines:** When defined by a painted line on the ground, the boundary edge is the *course-side* edge of the line, and the line itself is *out of bounds*.

When a line on the ground defines the boundary edge, stakes may be used to show where the boundary edge is, **but** they have no other meaning. Boundary stakes or lines should be white.

Partner: A player who competes together with another player as a *side*, in either *match play* or *stroke play*.

Penalty Area: An area from which relief with a one-stroke penalty is allowed if your ball comes to rest there.

There are two different types of *penalty areas*, distinguished by the colour used to mark them:

- Yellow *penalty areas* (marked with yellow lines or yellow stakes) give you two relief options ((Rules 17.1d(1) and (2)).
- Red *penalty areas* (marked with red lines or red stakes) give you an extra lateral relief option (Rule 17.1d(3)), in addition to the two relief options available for yellow *penalty areas*.

If the colour of a *penalty area* has not been marked or indicated by the *Committee*, it is treated as a red *penalty area*.

The edge of a *penalty area* extends both up above the ground and down below the ground.

The edge of a *penalty area* should be defined by stakes or lines.

- **Stakes:** When defined by stakes, the edge of the *penalty area* is defined by the line between the outside points of the stakes at ground level, and the stakes are inside the *penalty area*.
- **Lines:** When defined by a painted line on the ground, the edge of the *penalty area* is the outside edge of the line, and the line itself is in the *penalty area*.

Point of Maximum Available Relief: Your reference point for taking free relief from an *abnormal course condition* in a *bunker* (Rule 16.1c) or on the *putting green* (Rule 16.1d) when there is no *nearest point of complete relief*.

It is the estimated point where your ball would lie that is:

- Nearest to your ball's original spot, **but** not nearer the *hole* than that spot,
- In the required *area of the course*, and
- Where that *abnormal course condition* least interferes with the *stroke* you would have made from the original spot if the condition was not there.

Estimating this reference point requires you to identify the choice of club, *stance*, swing and *line of play* you would have used for that *stroke*.

Provisional Ball: Another ball played in case the ball just played by you may be *out of bounds* or *lost* outside a *penalty area*.

Putting Green: The area on the hole you are playing that is specially prepared for putting, or the *Committee* has defined as the *putting green* (such as when a temporary green is used).

Referee: An official named by the *Committee* to decide questions of fact and apply the Rules.

Relief Area: The area where you must *drop* a ball when taking relief under a Rule. Each relief Rule requires you to use a specific *relief area* whose size and location are based on these three factors:

- **Reference Point:** The point from which the size of *relief area* is measured.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** The *relief area* is either one or two *club-lengths* from the reference point, **but** with certain limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:** The location of the *relief area* may be limited in one or more ways so that, for example:
 - » It is only in certain defined *areas of the course*, such as only in the *general area*, or not in a *bunker* or a *penalty area*,
 - » It is not nearer the *hole* than your reference point or must be outside a *penalty area* or a *bunker* from which you are taking relief, or

- » It is where there is no interference (as defined in the particular Rule) from the condition from which you are taking relief.

Replace: To place a ball by setting it down and letting it go, with the intent for it to be *in play*.

Round: 18 or fewer holes played in the order set by the *Committee*.

Scorecard: The document where your score for each hole is entered in *stroke play*.

Serious Breach: In *stroke play*, when playing from a *wrong place* could give you a significant advantage compared to your *stroke* to be made from the right place.

Side: Two or more *partners* competing as a single unit in a *round* in *match play* or *stroke play*.

Stance: The position of your feet and body in preparing for and making your *stroke*.

Stroke: The forward movement of your club made to strike the ball.

Stroke and Distance: The procedure and penalty when you take relief under Rules 17, 18 or 19 by playing a ball from where your previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

Stroke Play: A form of play where you or your *side* competes against all other players or *sides* in the competition.

Substitute: To change the ball you are using to play a hole by having another ball become your ball *in play*.

Tee: An object used to raise your ball above the ground to play it from the *teeing area*. It must be no longer than four inches (101.6 mm) and conform with the *Equipment Rules*.

Teeing Area: The area you must play from in starting the hole you are playing. The *teeing area* is a rectangle that is two *club-lengths* deep where:

- The front edge is defined by the line between the forward-most points of two tee-markers set by the *Committee*, and

- The side edges are defined by the lines back from the outside points of the tee-markers.

Temporary Water: Any temporary accumulation of water on the surface of the ground (such as puddles from rain or irrigation or an overflow from a body of water) that is not in a *penalty area*, and can be seen before or after you take a *stance* (without pressing down excessively with your feet).

It is not enough for the ground to be merely wet, muddy or soft or for the water to be momentarily visible as you step on the ground; an accumulation of water must remain present either before or after your *stance* is taken.

Special cases:

- Dew and frost are not *temporary water*.
- Snow and natural ice (other than frost) are either *loose impediments* or, when on the ground, *temporary water*, at your option.
- Manufactured ice is an *obstruction*.

Wrong Ball: Any ball other than your:

- Ball *in play* (whether your original ball or a *substituted* ball),
- *Provisional ball* (before you abandon it under Rule 18.3c), or
- Second ball in *stroke play* played under Rules 14.7b or 20.1c.

Examples of a *wrong ball* are another player's ball *in play*, a stray ball, and your own ball that is *out of bounds*, has become *lost* or has been lifted and not yet put back *in play*.

Wrong Green: Any green on the *course* other than the *putting green* for the hole you are playing. *Wrong greens* are part of the *general area*.

Wrong Place: Any place on the *course* other than where you are required or allowed to play your ball under the Rules.

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Rules of Amateur Status

The Rules of Amateur Status differentiate between those who play the game only for its challenges and enjoyment, and those who also pursue the game as a profession or for financial gain. Through appropriate limits and restrictions, such as those on the value of prizes that can be won, the Rules of Amateur Status are intended to encourage amateur golfers to enjoy the spirit of competition, rather than focus on financial reward. If you are an amateur golfer and breach these Rules, you may forfeit your amateur status and lose your ability to play as an amateur in competitions. Consequently, it is important to understand the Rules of Amateur Status, which you can find at RandA.org

Equipment Rules

The Equipment Rules contain the comprehensive Rules, specifications and guidelines to assist equipment manufacturers and designers, tournament officials and players in understanding and applying the Rules relating to the design and manufacture of golf clubs, balls and other equipment. It is the player's responsibility to ensure that the equipment he or she uses conforms to the Rules. An interactive version of the Equipment Rules is accessible from RandA.org, which includes links to official test protocols and/or video demonstrations relevant to the specific Rule, specification or measurement technique being covered.

Modified Rules of Golf for Players with Disabilities

The Modified Rules adapt the Rules of Golf for four identified categories of disability. They are intended to allow a player with a disability to play fairly with other players who have no disabilities, the same disability or a different type of disability. The Modified Rules do not automatically apply and it is up to each Committee to decide whether to adopt any of these Modified Rules for its own competitions. The Modified Rules are published in the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf and can also be found at RandA.org



Golf is a global game and
The R&A and the USGA
have issued a single set of
Rules to apply worldwide
to all golfers



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