Rules of Golf

Effective January 2019

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The R&A and the USGA reserve the right to amend both the Rules and their interpretations at any time.

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Foreword – To the 2019 Edition of the Rules of Golf

This book contains the Rules of Golf that will be effective worldwide from January 2019. This edition brings the Rules of Golf up to date to fit the needs of the game today. It is the result of the Rules Modernization Initiative conducted by past and present representatives of the Rules of Golf Committees of The R&A and the USGA, along with representatives from all levels of the game, and reflects 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.

These Rules look very different from past editions. You will note that they are written in a modern and plain style and language. The layout is designed to be easier to follow and enable you to find what you need. There is increased use of diagrams. Each Rule now has a Purpose Statement to help the reader better understand the principles behind each Rule.

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. To assist all golfers we have also created the Player's Edition, the booklet we expect will be the most used publication both on and off the course. It contains the Rules most relevant to play while on the course and is an abridged version of the full Rules. To assist referees and Committees and others wanting greater detail, we are publishing a new Official Guide containing Interpretations on the Rules of Golf as well as Committee Procedures with recommendations on how to organize general play and competitions. All these publications are available in hard copy or digital versions.

We believe golfers will find the modernized Rules fairer, less complicated, more welcoming, and more aligned with issues facing the game such as improved 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.

David Bonsall
Chairman
Rules of Golf Committee
R&A Rules Limited

Mark Reinemann
Chairman
Rules of Golf Committee
United States Golf Association

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.

ROLEX

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.

ROLEX

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.

ROLEX

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 Rules of Golf

The Rules of Golf are intended to be comprehensive and provide answers to the many issues that arise in a game that is played worldwide on many different types of courses by players of all abilities.

This Rules of Golf book is intended for those who administer the game, and who need to answer the variety of questions that can arise in relation to golf competitions.

To assist all golfers, we have also created the Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf, which contains the Rules situations that occur most commonly on the course and is an abridged version of the full Rules. But, as a member of the Committee or a referee, it is the full Rules of Golf that you should consult when asked to assist with a ruling.

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 the situation.

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

- If a player has accidentally moved his or her 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 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.

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 (is it match play or stroke play, single, foursome, four-ball, etc.).
- Who is involved (is it the player, partner or caddie, the opponent or his or her caddie, or an outside influence).
- What area of the course did the incident occur (was it on the teeing area, in a bunker, in a penalty area, on the putting green, etc.).
- What actually happened.
- What were the player's intentions (what was the player doing and what did he or she want to do).
- The timing of the incident (is the player still on the course, has the player now returned his or her scorecard, has the competition closed, etc.).

Refer to the Book

As stated above, reference to the Rule book should provide the answer to the majority of questions that can arise on the course. But, to assist referees, Committees and others wanting greater detail, we are publishing a new Official Guide, which contains Interpretations on the Rules of Golf and Committee Procedures with recommendations on how to organize general play and competitions.

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 for the player:

- **Play the course as you find it and play the 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 in a *round* of 18 (or fewer) holes on a *course* by striking a ball with a club.

Each hole starts with a *stroke* from the *teeing area* and ends when the ball is *holed* on the *putting green* (or when the Rules otherwise say the hole is completed).

For each *stroke*, the player:

- Plays the *course* as he or she finds it, and
- Plays the ball as it lies.

But there are exceptions where the Rules allow the player to alter conditions on the *course* and require or allow the player to play the ball from a different place than where it lies.

1.2 Standards of Player Conduct

1.2a Conduct Expected of All Players

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*.

There is no penalty under the Rules for failing to act in this way, **except** that the *Committee* may disqualify a player for acting contrary to the spirit of the game if it finds that the player has committed serious misconduct.

Penalties other than disqualification may be imposed for player misconduct only if those penalties are adopted as part of a Code of Conduct under Rule 1.2b.

1.2b Code of Conduct

The *Committee* may set its own standards of player conduct in a Code of Conduct adopted as a Local Rule.

- The Code may include penalties for breach of its standards, such as a one-stroke penalty or the *general penalty*.
- The *Committee* may also disqualify a player for serious misconduct in failing to meet the Code's standards.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5H (explaining the standards of player conduct that may be adopted).

1.3 Playing by the Rules

1.3a Meaning of "Rules"; Terms of the Competition

The "Rules" means:

- Rules 1-24 and the Definitions in these Rules of Golf, and
- Any "Local Rules" the *Committee* adopts for the competition or the *course*.

Players are also responsible for complying with all "Terms of the Competition" adopted by the *Committee* (such as entry requirements, the form and dates of play, the number of *rounds* and the number and order of holes in a *round*).

See Committee Procedures, Section 5C and Section 8 (Local Rules and full set of authorized Model Local Rules); **Section 5A** (Terms of the Competition).

1.3b Applying the Rules

(1) **Player Responsibility for Applying the Rules**. Players are responsible for applying the Rules to themselves:

- Players are expected to recognize when they have breached a Rule and to be honest in applying their own penalties.
  - » If a player knows that he or she has breached a Rule that involves a penalty and deliberately fails to apply the penalty, the player is **disqualified**.
  - » If two or more players deliberately agree to ignore any Rule or penalty they know applies and any of those players have started the *round*, they are **disqualified** (even if they have not yet acted on the agreement).
- When it is necessary to decide questions of fact, a player is responsible for considering not only his or her own knowledge of the facts but also all other information that is reasonably available.
- A player may ask for help with the Rules from a *referee* or the *Committee*, **but** if help is not available in a reasonable time the player must play on and raise the issue with a *referee* or the *Committee* when they become available (see Rule 20.1).

(2) **Accepting Player's "Reasonable Judgment" in Determining a Location When Applying the Rules**.

- Many Rules require a player to determine a spot, point, line, area or other location under the Rules, such as:
  - » Estimating where a ball last crossed the edge of a *penalty area*,
  - » Estimating or measuring when *dropping* or placing a ball in taking relief, or
  - » *Replacing* a ball on its original spot (whether the spot is known or estimated).
- Such determinations about location need to be made promptly and with care but often cannot be precise.
- So long as the player does what can be reasonably expected under the circumstances to make an accurate determination, the player's reasonable judgment will be accepted even if, after the *stroke* is made, the determination is shown to be wrong by video evidence or other information.
- If a player becomes aware of a wrong determination before the *stroke* is made, it must be corrected (see Rule 14.5).

1.3c Penalties

(1) **Actions Giving Rise to Penalties**. A penalty applies when a breach of a Rule results from a player's own actions or the actions of his or her *caddie* (see Rule 10.3c).

A penalty also applies when:

- Another person takes an action that would breach the Rules if taken by the player or *caddie* and that person does so at the player's request or while acting with the player's authority, or
- The player sees another person about to take an action concerning the player's ball or *equipment* that he or she knows would breach the Rules if taken by the player or *caddie* and does not take reasonable steps to object or stop it from happening.

(2) **Levels of Penalties**. Penalties are meant to cancel out any potential advantage to the player. There are three main penalty levels:

- One-Stroke Penalty. This penalty applies in both *match play* and *stroke play* under certain Rules where either (a) the potential advantage from a breach is minor or (b) a player takes penalty relief by playing a ball from a different place than where the original ball lies.
- General Penalty (Loss of Hole in Match Play, Two-Stroke Penalty in Stroke Play). This penalty applies for a breach of most Rules, where the potential advantage is more significant than where only one penalty stroke applies.
- Disqualification. In both *match play* and *stroke play*, a player may be disqualified from the competition for certain actions or Rule breaches involving serious misconduct (see Rule 1.2) or where the potential advantage is too significant for the player's score to be considered valid.

(3) **No Discretion to Vary Penalties**. Penalties need to be applied only as provided in the Rules:

- Neither a player nor the *Committee* has authority to apply penalties in a different way, and
- A wrong application of a penalty or a failure to apply a penalty may stand only if it is too late to correct it (see Rules 20.1b(2)-(4), 20.2d and 20.2e).

In *match play*, the player and *opponent* may agree how to decide a Rules issue so long as they do not deliberately agree to apply the Rules in the wrong way (see Rule 20.1b(1)).

(4) Applying Penalties to Multiple Breaches of the Rules. If a player breaches multiple Rules or the same Rule multiple times before an intervening event happens (such as making a *stroke* or becoming aware of the breach), the penalty that applies depends on what the player did:

- When Breaches Resulted from Unrelated Acts. The player gets a separate penalty for each breach.
- When Breaches Resulted from a Single Act or Related Acts. The player gets only one penalty; **but** if the act or acts breached multiple Rules involving different penalties, the higher-level penalty applies. For example:
  - » Multiple Procedural Breaches. If a player's single act or related acts breach more than one of the procedural requirements for *marking*, lifting, cleaning, *dropping*, *replacing* or placing a ball where the penalty is one stroke, such as both lifting a ball without *marking* its spot and cleaning the lifted ball when not allowed, the player gets **one penalty stroke in total**.
  - » Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball from a Wrong Place. In *stroke play*, if a player plays a *substituted* ball when not allowed in breach of Rule 6.3b and also plays that ball from a *wrong place* in breach of Rule 14.7a, the player gets **two penalty strokes in total**.
  - » Combined Procedural and Substitution/Wrong Place Breaches. In *stroke play*, if a player's single act or related acts breach one or more procedural requirements where the penalty is one stroke and also breach one or both of the Rules against playing an incorrectly *substituted* ball and playing from a *wrong place*, the player gets **two penalty strokes in total**.

But any penalty strokes a player gets for taking penalty relief (such as a one-stroke penalty under Rules 17.1, 18.1 and 19.2) are always applied in addition to any other penalties.

RULE 2 The Course

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 2 introduces the basic things every player 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 play.**

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

2.1 Course Boundaries and Out of Bounds

Golf is played on a *course* whose boundaries are set by the *Committee*. Areas not on the *course* are *out of bounds*.

2.2 Defined Areas of the Course

There are five *areas of the course*.

2.2a The General Area

The *general area* covers the entire *course* **except** for the four specific *areas of the course* described in Rule 2.2b.

It is called the "general area" because:

- It covers most of the *course* and is where a player's ball will most often be played until the ball reaches the *putting green*.
- It includes every type of ground and growing or attached objects found in that area, such as fairway, rough and trees.

DIAGRAM 2.2: DEFINED AREAS OF THE COURSE

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

1. The teeing area
2. Bunkers
3. Penalty areas
4. The putting green

2.2b The Four Specific Areas

Certain Rules apply specifically to the four *areas of the course* that are not in the *general area*:

- The *teeing area* the player must use in starting the hole he or she is playing (Rule 6.2),
- All *penalty areas* (Rule 17),
- All *bunkers* (Rule 12), and
- The *putting green* of the hole the player is playing (Rule 13).

2.2c Determining Area of Course Where Ball Lies

The *area of the course* where a player's ball lies affects the Rules that apply in playing the ball or taking relief.

A ball is always treated as lying in only one *area of the course*:

- If part of the ball is in both the *general area* and one of the four specific *areas of the course*, it is treated as lying in that specific *area of the course*.
- If part of the ball is in two specific *areas of the course*, it is treated as lying in the specific area that comes first in this order: *penalty area*, *bunker*, *putting green*.

2.3 Objects or Conditions That Can Interfere with Play

Certain Rules may give free relief (relief with no penalty) from interference by certain defined objects or conditions, such as:

- *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 there is no free relief from *boundary objects* or *integral objects* that interfere with play.

2.4 No Play Zones

A *no play zone* is a defined part of an *abnormal course condition* (see Rule 16.1f) or a *penalty area* (see Rule 17.1e) where play is not allowed.

A player must take relief when:

- His or her ball is in a *no play zone*, or
- A *no play zone* interferes with his or her area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing in playing a ball outside the *no play zone* (see Rules 16.1f and 17.1e).

See Committee Procedures, Section 5H(1) (a Code of Conduct may tell players to stay out of a *no play zone* entirely).

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

3.1a Form of Play: Match Play or Stroke Play

(1) Match Play or Regular Stroke Play. These are very different forms of play:

- In *match play* (see Rule 3.2), a player and an *opponent* compete against each other based on holes won, lost or tied.
- In the regular form of *stroke play* (see Rule 3.3), all players compete with one another based on the total score – that is, adding up each player's total number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) on each hole in all *rounds*.

Most of the Rules apply in both forms of play, but certain Rules apply in only one or the other.

See Committee Procedures, Section 6C (considerations for the *Committee* if it runs a competition that combines the two forms of play in a single *round*).

(2) Other Forms of Stroke Play. Rule 21 covers other forms of *stroke play* (*Stableford*, *Maximum Score* and *Par/Bogey*) that use a different scoring method. Rules 1-20 apply in these forms of play, as modified by Rule 21.

3.1b How Players Compete: Playing as an Individual or as Partners

Golf is played either by individual players competing on their own or by *partners* competing together as a *side*.

Although Rules 1-20 focus on individual play, they also apply:

- In competitions involving *partners* (*Foursomes* and *Four-Ball*), as modified by Rules 22 and 23, and
- In team competitions, as modified by Rule 24.

3.1c How Players Score: Gross Scores or Net Scores

(1) Scratch Competitions. In a scratch competition:

- The player's "gross score" for a hole or the *round* is his or her total number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes).
- The player's handicap is not applied.

(2) Handicap Competitions. In a handicap competition:

- The player's "net score" for a hole or the *round* is the gross score adjusted for the player's handicap strokes.
- This is done so that players of differing abilities can compete in a fair way.

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 the player and opponent:

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

3.2a Result of Hole and Match

(1) Winning a Hole. A player wins a hole when:

- The player completes the hole in fewer strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) than the *opponent*,
- The *opponent* concedes the hole, or
- The *opponent* gets the *general penalty* (loss of hole).

If the *opponent's* ball in motion needs to be *holed* to tie the hole and the ball is deliberately deflected or stopped by any person at a time when there is no reasonable chance it can be *holed* (such as when the ball has rolled past the *hole* and will not roll back there), the result of the hole has been decided and the player wins the hole (see Rule 11.2a, Exception).

(2) Tying a Hole. A hole is tied (also known as "halved") when:

- The player and *opponent* complete the hole in the same number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes), or
- The player and *opponent* agree to treat the hole as tied (**but** this is allowed only after at least one of the players has made a *stroke* to begin the hole).

(3) **Winning a Match**. A player wins a match when:

- The player leads the *opponent* by more holes than remain to be played,
- The *opponent* concedes the match, or
- The *opponent* is disqualified.

(4) **Extending a Tied Match**. If a match is tied after the final hole:

- The match is extended one hole at a time until there is a winner. See Rule 5.1 (an extended match is a continuation of the same *round*, not a new *round*).
- The holes are played in the same order as in the *round*, unless the *Committee* sets a different order.

But the Terms of the Competition may say that the match will end in a tie rather than be extended.

(5) **When Result is Final**. The result of a match becomes final in the way stated by the *Committee* (which should be set out in the Terms of the Competition), such as:

- When the result is recorded on an official scoreboard or other identified place, or
- When the result is reported to a person identified by the *Committee*.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5A(7) (recommendations on how the result of a match becomes final).

3.2b Concessions

(1) **Player May Concede Stroke, Hole or Match**. A player may concede the *opponent's* next *stroke*, a hole or the match:

- Conceding Next Stroke. This is allowed any time before the *opponent's* next *stroke* is made.
  - » The *opponent* has then completed the hole with a score that includes that conceded *stroke*, and the ball may be removed by anyone.
  - » A concession made while the *opponent's* ball is still in motion after the previous *stroke* applies to the *opponent's* next *stroke*, unless the ball is *holed* (in which case the concession does not matter).
  - » The player may concede the *opponent's* next *stroke* by deflecting or stopping the *opponent's* ball in motion only if that is done specifically to concede the next *stroke* and only when there is no reasonable chance the ball can be *holed*.

- Conceding a Hole. This is allowed any time before the hole is completed (see Rule 6.5), including before the players start the hole.
- Conceding the Match. This is allowed any time before the result of the match is decided (see Rules 3.2a(3) and (4)), including before the players start the match.

(2) **How Concessions Are Made**. A concession is made only when clearly communicated:

- This can be done either verbally or by an action that clearly shows the player's intent to concede the *stroke*, the hole or the match (such as making a gesture).
- If the *opponent* lifts his or her ball in breach of a Rule because of a reasonable misunderstanding that the player's statement or action was a concession of the next *stroke*, a hole or the match, there is no penalty and the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

A concession is final and cannot be declined or withdrawn.

3.2c Applying Handicaps in Handicap Match

(1) **Declaring Handicaps**. The player and *opponent* should tell each other their handicaps before the match.

If a player declares a wrong handicap either before or during the match and does not correct the mistake before the *opponent* makes his or her next *stroke*:

- Declared Handicap Too High. The player is **disqualified** if this affects the number of strokes the player gives or gets. If it does not, there is no penalty.
- Declared Handicap Too Low. There is no penalty and the player must play off the declared lower handicap.

(2) **Holes Where Handicap Strokes Applied**.

- 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* (unless the *Committee* sets a different way of doing so).

Each player is responsible for knowing the holes where he or she gives or gets handicap strokes, based on the stroke index allocation set by the *Committee* (which is usually found on the *scorecard*).

If the players mistakenly apply handicap strokes on a hole, the agreed result of the hole stands, unless the players correct that mistake in time (see Rule 3.2d(3)).

3.2d Responsibilities of Player and Opponent

(1) Telling Opponent About Number of Strokes Taken. At any time during play of a hole or after the hole is completed, the *opponent* may ask the player for the number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) the player has taken on the hole.

This is to allow the *opponent* to decide how to play the next *stroke* and the rest of the hole, or to confirm the result of the hole just completed.

When asked for the number of strokes taken, or when giving that information without being asked:

- The player must give the right number of strokes taken.
- A player who fails to respond to the *opponent's* request is treated as giving the wrong number of strokes taken.

The player gets the ***general penalty* (loss of hole)** if he or she gives the *opponent* the wrong number of strokes taken, unless the player corrects that mistake in time:

- Wrong Number of Strokes Given While Playing Hole. The player must give the right number of strokes taken before the *opponent* makes another *stroke* or takes a similar action (such as conceding the player's next *stroke* or the hole).
- Wrong Number of Strokes Given After Hole Completed. The player must give the right number of strokes taken:
  - » Before either player makes a *stroke* to begin another hole or takes a similar action (such as conceding the next hole or the match) or,
  - » For the final hole of the match, before the result of the match is final (see Rule 3.2a(5)).

Exception – No Penalty If No Effect on Result of Hole: If the player gives the wrong number of strokes taken after a hole is completed but this does not affect the *opponent's* understanding of whether the hole was won, lost or tied, there is no penalty.

(2) Telling Opponent About Penalty. When a player gets a penalty:

- The player must tell the *opponent* about that penalty as soon as reasonably possible, taking into account how near the player is to the *opponent* and other practical factors.
- This requirement applies even if the player does not know about the penalty (because players are expected to recognize when they have breached a Rule).

If the player fails to do so and does not correct that mistake before the *opponent* makes another *stroke* or takes a similar action (such as conceding the player's next *stroke* or the hole), the player gets the ***general penalty* (loss of hole)**.

Exception – No Penalty When Opponent Knew of Player's Penalty: If the *opponent* knew that the player had a penalty, such as when seeing the player obviously take penalty relief, the player gets no penalty for failing to tell the *opponent* about it.

(3) Knowing Match Score. The players are expected to know the match score — that is, whether one of them leads by a certain number of holes ("holes up" in the match) or the match is tied (also known as "all square").

If the players mistakenly agree on a wrong match score:

- They may correct the match score before either player makes a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole, before the result of the match is final (see Rule 3.2a(5)).
- If not corrected in that time, that wrong match score becomes the actual match score.

Exception – When Player Requests Ruling in Time: If the player makes a timely request for a ruling (see Rule 20.1b), and it is found that the *opponent* either (1) gave the wrong number of strokes taken or (2) failed to tell the player about a penalty, the wrong match score must be corrected.

(4) Protecting Own Rights and Interests. The players in a match should protect their own rights and interests under the Rules:

- If the player knows or believes that the *opponent* has breached a Rule that has a penalty, the player may act on the breach or choose to ignore it.
- **But** if the player and *opponent* deliberately agree to ignore a breach or penalty they know applies, both players are **disqualified** under Rule 1.3b.
- If the player and *opponent* disagree whether one of them has breached a Rule, either player may protect his or her rights by asking for a ruling under Rule 20.1b.

3.3 Stroke Play

Purpose of Rule:

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

- **Each player competes against all the other players in the competition, and**
- **All players need to be treated equally under the Rules.**

After the round, the player and the marker (who keeps the player's score) must certify that the player's score for each hole is right and the player must return the scorecard to the Committee.

3.3a Winner in Stroke Play

The player who completes all *rounds* in the fewest total strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) is the winner.

In a handicap competition, this means the fewest total net strokes.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5A(6) (the Terms of the Competition should say how ties will be decided).

3.3b Scoring in Stroke Play

The player's score is kept on his or her *scorecard* by the *marker*, who is either identified by the *Committee* or chosen by the player in a way approved by the *Committee*.

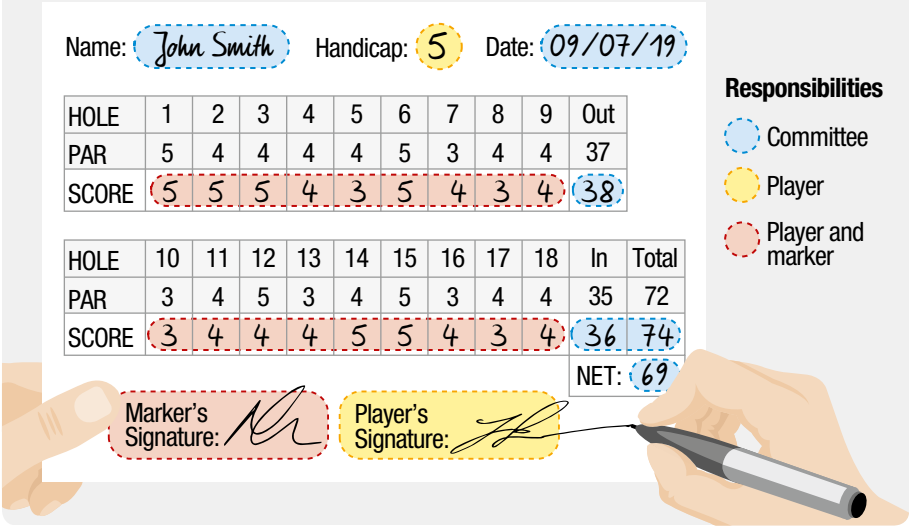
The player must use the same *marker* for the entire *round*, unless the *Committee* approves a change either before or after it happens.

(1) **Marker's Responsibility: Entering and Certifying Hole Scores on Scorecard**. After each hole during the *round*, the *marker* should confirm with the player the number of strokes on that hole (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) and enter that gross score on the *scorecard*.

When the *round* has ended:

- The *marker* must certify the hole scores on the *scorecard*.
- If the player had more than one *marker*, each *marker* must certify the scores for those holes where he or she was the *marker*.

DIAGRAM 3.3b: SCORECARD RESPONSIBILITIES IN HANDICAP STROKE PLAY



(2) <u>**Player's Responsibility: Certifying Hole Scores and Returning Scorecard**</u>. During the *round*, the player should keep track of his or her scores for each hole.

When the *round* has ended, the player:

- Should carefully check the hole scores entered by the *marker* and raise any issues with the *Committee*,
- Must make sure that the *marker* certifies the hole scores on the *scorecard*,
- Must not change a hole score entered by the *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 the player must not change the *scorecard*.

If the player breaches any of these requirements in Rule 3.3b, the player is **disqualified**.

Exception – No Penalty When Breach Due to Marker Failing to Carry Out Responsibilities: There is no penalty if the *Committee* finds that the player's breach of Rule 3.3b(2) was caused by the *marker's* failure to carry out his or her responsibilities (such as the *marker* leaving with the player's *scorecard* or without certifying the *scorecard*), so long as this was beyond the player's control.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5A(5) (recommendations on how to define when a *scorecard* has been returned).

(3) **Wrong Score for a Hole**. If the player returns a *scorecard* with a wrong score for any hole:

- Returned Score Higher Than Actual Score. The higher returned score for the hole stands.
- Returned Score Lower Than Actual Score or No Score Returned. The player is **disqualified**.

Exception – Failure to Include Unknown Penalty: If one or more of the player's hole scores are lower than the actual scores because he or she excluded one or more penalty strokes that the player did not know about before returning the *scorecard*:

- The player is not disqualified.
- Instead, if the mistake is found before the close of the competition, the *Committee* will revise the player's score for that hole or holes by adding **the penalty stroke(s) that should have been included** in the score for that hole or holes under the Rules.

This exception does not apply:

- When the excluded penalty is disqualification, or
- When the player was told that a penalty might apply or was uncertain whether a penalty applied and did not raise this with the *Committee* before returning the *scorecard*.

(4) **Scoring in Handicap Competition**. The player is responsible for making sure that his or her handicap is shown on the *scorecard*. If the player returns a *scorecard* without the right handicap:

- Handicap on Scorecard Too High or No Handicap Shown. If this affects the number of strokes the player gets, the player is **disqualified** from the handicap competition. If it does not, there is no penalty.
- Handicap on Scorecard Too Low. There is no penalty and the player's net score stands using the lower handicap as shown.

(5) **Player Not Responsible for Adding Up Scores or Applying Handicap**. The *Committee* is responsible for adding up the player's hole scores and, in a handicap competition, applying the player's handicap strokes.

If the player returns a *scorecard* on which he or she has made a mistake in adding up the scores or applying handicap strokes, there is no penalty for doing so.

3.3c Failure to Hole Out

A player must *hole out* at each hole in a *round*. If the player fails to *hole out* at any hole:

- The player must correct that mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the *round*, before returning the *scorecard*.
- If the mistake is not corrected in that time, the player is **disqualified**.

See Rules 21.1, 21.2 and 21.3 (Rules for other forms of *stroke play* (*Stableford*, *Maximum Score* and *Par/Bogey*) where scoring is different and a player is not disqualified if he or she does not *hole out*).

RULE 4 The Player's Equipment

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 4 covers the equipment that players may use during a round. Based on the principle that golf is a challenging game in which success should depend on the player's judgment, skills and abilities, the player:

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

For detailed requirements for clubs, balls and other *equipment* and the process for consultation and submission of *equipment* for conformity review, see the *Equipment Rules*.

4.1 Clubs

4.1a Clubs Allowed in Making a Stroke

(1) Conforming Clubs. In making a *stroke*, a player must use a club that conforms to the requirements in the *Equipment Rules*:

- A club used to make a *stroke* must conform not only when the club is new, but also when it has been deliberately or accidentally changed in any way.
- **But** if the performance characteristics of a conforming club change because of wear through normal use, it is still a conforming club.

"Performance characteristics" means any part of the club that affects how it performs in making a *stroke*, such as its grip, shaft, clubhead or lie or loft (including lie or loft of an adjustable club).

(2) Use or Repair of Club Damaged During Round. If a conforming club is damaged during a *round* or while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, the player normally must not replace it with another club. (For a limited **exception** when the player did not cause the damage, see Rule 4.1b(3)).

But no matter what the nature or cause of the damage, the damaged club is treated as conforming for the rest of the *round* (**but** not during a play-off in *stroke play*, which is a new *round*).

For the rest of the *round*, the player may:

- Continue to make *strokes* with the damaged club, or
- Have the club repaired by restoring it as nearly as possible to its condition before the damage happened during the *round* or while play was stopped, while still using the original grip, shaft and clubhead. **But** in doing so:
  - » The player must not unreasonably delay play (see Rule 5.6a), and
  - » Any damage that existed before the *round* must not be repaired.

"Damaged during a *round*" means when the club's performance characteristics are changed because of any act during the *round* (including while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a), whether:

- By the player (such as making a *stroke* or practice swing with the club, putting it in or taking it out of a golf bag, dropping or leaning on it, or throwing or abusing it), or
- By any other person, *outside influence* or *natural forces*.

But a club is not "damaged during a *round*" if its performance characteristics are deliberately changed by the player during the *round*, as covered by Rule 4.1a(3).

(3) Deliberately Changing Club's Performance Characteristics During Round.
A player must not make a *stroke* with a club whose performance characteristics he or she deliberately changed during the *round* (including while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a):

- By using an adjustable feature or physically changing the club (**except** when allowed to repair damage under Rule 4.1a(2)), or
- By applying any substance to the clubhead (other than in cleaning it) to affect how it performs in making a *stroke*.

Exception – Adjustable Club Restored to Original Position: If a club's performance characteristics were changed by using an adjustable feature and, before the club is used to make a *stroke*, the club is restored as nearly as possible to its original position by adjusting the feature back to where it was, there is no penalty and the club may be used to make a *stroke*.

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

- There is no penalty under this Rule for merely having (but not making a *stroke* with) a non-conforming club or a club whose performance characteristics were deliberately changed during the *round*.
- **But** such a club still counts towards the 14-club limit in Rule 4.1b(1).

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

(1) Limit of 14 Clubs. A player must not:

- Start a *round* with more than 14 clubs, or
- Have more than 14 clubs during the *round*.

If the player starts a *round* with fewer than 14 clubs, he or she may add clubs during the *round* up to the 14-club limit (see Rule 4.1b(4) for restrictions in doing this).

When the player becomes aware that he or she is in breach of this Rule by having more than 14 clubs, the player must immediately take the excess club or clubs out of play, using the procedure in Rule 4.1c(1):

- If the player started with more than 14 clubs, he or she may choose which club or clubs will be taken out of play.
- If the player added excess clubs during the *round*, those added clubs are the ones that must be taken out of play.

After a player's *round* has started, if the player picks up another player's club that was left behind, or a club is mistakenly put in the player's bag without his or her knowledge, the club is not treated as one of the player's clubs for purposes of the 14-club limit (**but** it must not be used).

(2) No Sharing of Clubs. A player is limited to those clubs he or she started with or added as allowed in (1):

- The player must not make a *stroke* with a club being used by anyone else who is playing on the *course* (even if the other player is playing in a different group or competition).
- When the player becomes aware that he or she has breached this Rule by making a *stroke* with another player's club, the player must immediately take that club out of play, using the procedure in Rule 4.1c(1).

See Rules 22.5 and 23.7 (limited exception in *partner* forms of play allowing *partners* to share clubs if they have no more than 14 clubs between them).

(3) No Replacing Lost or Damaged Clubs. If a player started with 14 clubs or added clubs up to the limit of 14 and then loses or damages a club during the *round* or while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, the player must not replace it with another club.

Exception - Replacing Damaged Club When Player Did Not Cause Damage: If a player's club is damaged during the *round* (including while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a) (see Rule 4.1a(2)) by an *outside influence* or *natural forces* or by any person other than the player or his or her *caddie*:

- The player may replace the damaged club with any club under Rule 4.1b(4).
- **But** when the player does so, the player must immediately take the damaged club out of play, using the procedure in Rule 4.1c(1).

(4) Restrictions When Adding or Replacing Clubs. When adding or replacing a club under (1) or (3), a player must not:

- Unreasonably delay play (see Rule 5.6a),
- Add or borrow any club from anyone else who is playing on the *course* (even if the other player is playing in a different group or competition), or
- Build a club from parts carried by anyone for the player during the *round*.

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

- Player Becomes Aware of Breach While Playing the Hole. The penalty is applied at the end of the hole being played. In *match play*, the player must complete the hole, apply the result of that hole to the match score and then apply the penalty to adjust the match score.
- Player Becomes Aware of Breach 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 being played 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 a player who started with 15 clubs becomes aware of the breach while playing the 3rd hole and then wins that hole to go three up in the match, the maximum adjustment of two holes applies and the player would now be one up in the match.

Penalty in Stroke Play — Two Penalty Strokes, Maximum of Four Strokes: The player gets 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

(1) During Round. When a player becomes aware during a *round* that he or she is in breach of Rule 4.1b(1), (2) or (3) for having more than 14 clubs or for making a *stroke* with another player's club, the player must immediately take an action that clearly indicates each club that is being taken out of play.

This may be done either by:

- Declaring this to the *opponent* in *match play* or the *marker* or another player in the group in *stroke play*, or
- Taking some other clear action (such as turning the club upside down in the bag, placing it on the floor of the golf cart or giving the club to another person).

The player must not make a *stroke* for the rest of the *round* with any club taken out of play.

If a club taken out of play is another player's club, that other player may continue to use the club.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 4.1c(1): Disqualification.

(2) Before Round. If a player becomes aware shortly before starting a *round* that he or she accidentally has more than 14 clubs, the player should try to leave the excess club or clubs behind.

But as an option without penalty:

- The player may take any such excess clubs out of play before the start of the *round*, using the procedure in (1), and
- The excess clubs may be kept by the player (**but** must not be used) during the *round*, and they do not count towards the 14-club limit.

If a player deliberately brings more than 14 clubs to his or her first *teeing area* and starts the *round* without leaving the excess clubs behind, this option is not allowed and Rule 4.1b(1) applies.

4.2 Balls

4.2a Balls Allowed in Play of Round

(1) Conforming Ball Must Be Played. In making each *stroke*, a player must use a ball that conforms to the requirements in the *Equipment Rules*.

A player may get a conforming ball to play from anyone else, including another player on the *course*.

(2) Deliberately Altered Ball Must Not Be Played. A player must not make a *stroke* at a ball whose performance characteristics have been deliberately altered, such as by scuffing or heating the ball or by applying any substance (other than in cleaning it).

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

4.2b Ball Breaks into Pieces While Playing Hole

If a player's ball breaks into pieces after a *stroke*, there is no penalty and the *stroke* does not count.

The player must play another ball from where that *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 4.2b: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

4.2c Ball Becomes Cut or Cracked While Playing Hole

(1) Lifting Ball to See If Cut or Cracked. If a player reasonably believes that his or her ball has been cut or cracked while playing a hole:

- The player may lift the ball to look at it, **but**:
- The spot of the ball must first be *marked*, and the ball must not be cleaned (**except** on the *putting green*) (see Rule 14.1).

If the player lifts the ball without having this reasonable belief (**except** on the *putting green* where the player may lift under Rule 13.1b), fails to *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleans it when not allowed, the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

If multiple Rule breaches with a one-stroke penalty result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

(2) **When Another Ball May Be Substituted**. The player may only *substitute* another ball if it can be clearly seen that the original ball is cut or cracked and this damage happened during the hole being played – **but** not if it is only scratched or scraped or its paint is only damaged or discoloured.

- If the original ball is cut or cracked, the player must *replace* either another ball or the original ball on the original spot (see Rule 14.2).
- If the original ball is not cut or cracked, the player must *replace* it on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

Nothing in this Rule prohibits a player from *substituting* another ball under any other Rule or changing balls between two holes.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 4.2c: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

4.3 Use of Equipment

Rule 4.3 applies to all types of *equipment* that a player might use during a *round*, **except** that the requirement to play with conforming clubs and balls is covered by Rules 4.1 and 4.2, not by this Rule.

This Rule only concerns how *equipment* is used. It does not limit the *equipment* that a player may have with him or her during a *round*.

4.3a Allowed and Prohibited Uses of Equipment

A player may use *equipment* to help his or her play during a *round*, **except** that a player 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 a *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.

This Rule does not affect the application of any other Rule that limits actions a player is allowed to take with a club, ball or other *equipment* (such as setting down a club or other object to help the player in lining up, see Rule 10.2b(3)).

Common examples of uses of *equipment* that are allowed and not allowed during a player's *round* under this Rule are:

(1) **Distance and Directional Information**.

- Allowed. Getting information on distance or direction (such as from a distance-measuring device or compass).
- Not Allowed.
  - » Measuring elevation changes, or
  - » Interpreting distance or directional information (such as using a device to get a recommended *line of play* or club selection based on the location of the player's ball).

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule G-5 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting the use of distance-measuring devices).

(2) **Information on Wind and Other Weather Conditions**.

- Allowed.
  - » Getting any type of weather information (including wind speed) that is available from weather forecasts, or
  - » Measuring temperature and humidity at the *course*.
- Not Allowed.
  - » Measuring wind speed at the *course*, or
  - » Using an artificial object to get other wind-related information (such as using powder to assess wind direction).

(3) **Information Gathered Before or During Round**.

- Allowed.
  - » Using information that was gathered before the *round* (such as playing information from previous *rounds*, swing tips or club recommendations), or
  - » Recording (for use after the *round*) playing or physiological information from the *round* (such as club distance, playing statistics or heart rate).

- Not Allowed.
  - » Processing or interpreting playing information from the *round* (such as club recommendations based on current *round* distances), or
  - » Using any physiological information recorded during the *round*.

(4) **Audio and Video**.

- Allowed.
  - » Listening to audio or watching video on matters unrelated to the competition being played (such as a news report or background music).
  - » **But** in doing so, consideration should be shown to others (see Rule 1.2).
- Not Allowed.
  - » Listening to music or other audio to eliminate distractions or to help with swing tempo, or
  - » Viewing video showing play of the player or other players during the competition that helps the player in choosing a club, making a *stroke*, or deciding how to play during the *round*.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule G-8 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting or restricting the use of audio and video devices during a *round*).

(5) **Gloves and Gripping Agents**.

- Allowed.
  - » Using a plain glove that meets the requirements in the *Equipment Rules*,
  - » Using resin, powders and other moisturizing or drying agents, or
  - » Wrapping a towel or handkerchief around the grip.
- Not Allowed.
  - » Using a glove that does not meet the requirements in the *Equipment Rules*, or
  - » Using other *equipment* that gives an unfair advantage with hand position or grip pressure.

(6) Stretching Devices and Training or Swing Aids.

- Allowed.
  - » Using any *equipment* for general stretching (other than in making a practice swing), whether the *equipment* is designed for stretching, for use in golf (such as an alignment rod placed across the shoulders) or for any purpose unrelated to golf (such as rubber tubing or a section of pipe).
- Not Allowed.
  - » Using any type of golf training or swing aid (such as an alignment rod or a weighted headcover or "donut") or a non-conforming club to make a practice swing or in any other way that creates a potential advantage by helping the player in preparing for or making a *stroke* (such as help with swing plane, grip, alignment, ball position or posture).

Further guidance on the use of *equipment* described above and other types of *equipment* (such as clothing and shoes) is found in the *Equipment Rules*.

A player who is uncertain whether he or she may use a piece of *equipment* in a particular way should ask the *Committee* for a ruling (see Rule 20.2b).

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule G-6 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting the use of motorized transportation during a *round*).

4.3b Equipment Used for Medical Reasons

(1) Medical Exception. A player is not in breach of Rule 4.3 if he or she uses *equipment* to help with a medical condition, so long as:

- The player has a medical reason to use the *equipment*, and
- The *Committee* decides that its use does not give the player any unfair advantage over other players.

(2) Tape or Similar Coverings. A player may use adhesive tape or a similar covering for any medical reason (such as to prevent an injury or help with an existing injury), **but** the tape or covering must not:

- Be applied excessively, or
- Help the player more than is necessary for the medical reason (for example, it must not immobilize a joint to help the player swing the club).

A player who is uncertain about where or how tape or similar coverings may be applied should ask the *Committee* for a ruling.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 4.3:

- **Penalty for first breach from single act or related acts:** ***General Penalty***.
- **Penalty for second breach unrelated to first breach: Disqualification**. This penalty applies even if the nature of the breach was entirely different than the breach resulting in the first penalty.

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 a player may practise on the course before or during a round, when a round starts and ends and what happens when play has to stop or resume. Players are expected to:

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

When it is a player's turn to play, it is recommended that he or she 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*.

When a *round* ends in a tie and play will go on until there is a winner:

- Tied Match Extended One Hole at a Time. This is the continuation of the same *round*, not a new *round*.
- Play-off in Stroke Play. This is a new *round*.

A player is playing his or her *round* from when it starts until it ends (see Rule 5.3), **except** while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a.

When a Rule refers to actions taken "during a *round*", that does not include while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a unless the Rule says otherwise.

5.2 Practising on Course Before or Between Rounds

For purposes of this Rule:

- "Practising on the *course*" means playing a ball, or testing the surface of the *putting green* of any hole by rolling a ball or rubbing the surface, and
- The limitations on practice on the *course* before or between *rounds* apply only to the player, not to the player's *caddie*.

5.2a Match Play

A player 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:

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

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule I-1 (in either form of play, the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting, restricting or allowing practice on the *course* before or between *rounds*).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.2:

- **Penalty for first breach: *General Penalty*** (applied to the player's first hole).
- **Penalty for second breach: Disqualification**.

5.3 Starting and Ending Round

5.3a When to Start Round

A player's *round* starts when the player makes a *stroke* to start his or her first hole (see Rule 6.1a).

The player must start at (and not before) his or her starting time:

- This means that the player must be ready to play at the starting time and starting point set by the *Committee*.
- A starting time set by the *Committee* is treated as an exact time (for example, 9 am means 9:00:00 am, not any time until 9:01 am).

If the starting time is delayed for any reason (such as weather, slow play of other groups or the need for a ruling by a *referee*), there is no breach of this Rule if the player is present and ready to play when the player's group is able to start.

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

- **Exception 1 – Player Arrives at Starting Point, Ready to Play, No More Than Five Minutes Late:** The player gets the ***general penalty*** applied to his or her first hole.
- **Exception 2 – Player Starts No More Than Five Minutes Early:** The player gets the ***general penalty*** applied to his or her first hole.
- **Exception 3 – Committee Decides that Exceptional Circumstances Prevented Player from Starting on Time:** There is no breach of this Rule and no penalty.

5.3b When Round Ends

A player's *round* ends:

- In *match play*, when the result of the match is decided under Rule 3.2a(3) or (4).
- In *stroke play*, when the player *holes out* at the final hole (including correction of a mistake, such as under Rule 6.1 or 14.7b).

See Rules 21.1e, 21.2e, 21.3e and 23.3b (when a *round* starts and ends in other forms of *stroke play* and in *Four-Ball*).

5.4 Playing in Groups

5.4a Match Play

During a *round*, the player and *opponent* must play each hole in the same group.

5.4b Stroke Play

During a *round*, the player must remain in the group set by the *Committee*, unless the *Committee* approves a change either before or after it happens.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.4: Disqualification.

5.5 Practising During Round or While Play Is Stopped

5.5a No Practice Strokes While Playing Hole

While playing a hole, a player must not make a practice *stroke* at any ball on or off the *course*.

These are not practice *strokes*:

- A practice swing made with no intent to strike a ball.
- Hitting a ball back to a practice area or to another player, when done solely as a courtesy.
- *Strokes* made by a player in playing out a hole whose result has been decided.

5.5b Restriction on Practice Strokes Between Two Holes

Between two holes, a player must not make a practice *stroke*.

Exception – Where Player Allowed to Practise Putting or Chipping: The player may practise putting or chipping on or near:

- The putting green of the hole just completed and any practice green (see Rule 13.1e), and
- The *teeing area* of the next hole.

But such practice *strokes* must not be made from a *bunker* and must not unreasonably delay play (see Rule 5.6a).

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule I-2 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting practise putting or chipping on or near the *putting green* of the hole just completed).

5.5c Practice While Play Is Suspended or Otherwise Stopped

While play is suspended or otherwise stopped under Rule 5.7a, a player must not make a practice *stroke* **except**:

- As allowed in Rule 5.5b,
- Anywhere outside the *course*, and
- Anywhere on the *course* the *Committee* allows.

If a match is stopped by agreement of the players and will not be resumed on the same day, the players may practise on the *course* without restriction before the match is resumed.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.5: *General Penalty*.

If the breach happens between two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.

5.6 Unreasonable Delay; Prompt Pace of Play

5.6a Unreasonable Delay of Play

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

A player may be allowed a short delay for certain reasons, such as:

- When the player seeks help from a *referee* or the *Committee*,
- When the player becomes injured or ill, or
- When there is another good reason.

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 the player unreasonably delays 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.

Each player should recognize that his or her pace of play is likely to affect how long it will take other players to play their *rounds*, including both those in the player's own group and those in following groups.

Players are encouraged to allow faster groups to play through.

(1) **Pace of Play Recommendations**. The player 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.

A player should prepare in advance for the next *stroke* and be ready to play when it is his or her turn.

When it is the player's turn to play:

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

(2) Playing Out of Turn to Help Pace of Play. Depending on the form of play, there are times when players may play out of turn to help the pace of play:

- In *match play*, the players may agree that one of them will play out of turn to save time (see Rule 6.4a).
- In *stroke play*, players may play "ready golf" in a safe and responsible way (see Rule 6.4b Exception).

(3) **Committee Pace of Play Policy**. To encourage and enforce prompt play, the *Committee* should adopt a Local Rule setting a Pace of Play Policy.

This Policy may set a maximum time to complete a *round*, a hole or series of holes and a *stroke*, and it may set penalties for not following the Policy.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5G (recommendations on contents of Pace of Play Policy).

5.7 Stopping Play; Resuming Play

5.7a When Players May or Must Stop Play

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

- Suspension by Committee. All players must stop play if the *Committee* suspends play (see Rule 5.7b).
- Stopping Play by Agreement in Match Play. Players in a match may agree to stop play for any reason, **except** if doing so delays the competition. If they agree to stop play and then one player wants to resume play, the agreement has ended and the other player must resume play.
- Individual Player Stopping Play Because of Lightning. A player may stop play if he or she reasonably believes there is danger from lightning, **but** must report to the *Committee* as soon as possible.

Leaving the *course* is not, by itself, stopping play. A player's delay of play is covered by Rule 5.6a, not by this Rule.

If a player stops play for any reason not allowed under this Rule or fails to report to the *Committee* when required to do so, the player is **disqualified**.

5.7b What Players Must Do When Committee Suspends Play

There are two types of *Committee* suspensions of play, each with different requirements for when players must stop play.

(1) **Immediate Suspension (Such as When There Is Imminent Danger)**. If the *Committee* declares an immediate suspension of play, all players must stop play at once and must not make another *stroke* until the *Committee* resumes play.

The *Committee* should use a distinct method of telling players about an immediate suspension.

(2) **Normal Suspension (Such as for Darkness or Unplayable Course)**. If the *Committee* suspends play for normal reasons, what happens next depends on where each playing group is:

- Between Two Holes. If all players in the group are between two holes, they must stop play and must not make a *stroke* to begin another hole until the *Committee* resumes play.
- While Playing Hole. If any player in the group has started a hole, the players may choose either to stop play or to play out the hole.
  - » The players are allowed a brief amount of time (which normally should be no more than two minutes) to decide whether to stop play or play out the hole.
  - » If the players continue play of the hole, they may go on to complete the hole or may stop before completing the hole.
  - » Once the players complete the hole or stop before completing the hole, they must not make another *stroke* until the *Committee* resumes play under Rule 5.7c.

  If the players do not agree on what to do:

  - » Match Play. If the *opponent* stops play, the player must also stop play and both players must not play again until the *Committee* resumes play. If the player does not stop play, the player gets the ***general penalty* (loss of hole)**.
  - » Stroke Play. Any player in the group may choose to stop play or go on to continue the hole, no matter what the others in the group decide to do, **except** that the player may continue play only if the player's *marker* stays to keep the player's score.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.7b: Disqualification.

Exception – No Penalty If Committee Decides That Failure to Stop Was Justified: There is no breach of this Rule and no penalty if the *Committee* decides that circumstances justified the player's failure to stop play when required to do so.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule J-1 (recommended ways for *Committee* to indicate immediate and normal suspensions to players).

5.7c What Players Must Do When Play Resumes

(1) **Where to Resume Play**. A player must resume play from where he or she stopped play on a hole or, if between two holes, at the next *teeing area*, even if play is resumed on a later day.

(2) **When to Resume Play**. The player must be present at the location identified in (1) and ready to play:

- At the time set by the *Committee* for play to resume, and
- The player must resume play at (and not before) that time.

If the ability to resume play is delayed for any reason (such as when players in the group ahead need to play first and move out of the way), there is no breach of this Rule if the player is present and ready to play when the player's group is able to resume play.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 5.7c: Disqualification.

Exceptions to Disqualification for Failure to Resume on Time: Exceptions 1, 2 and 3 in Rule 5.3a and the Exception to Rule 5.7b apply here as well.

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

(1) **Lifting Ball When Play Stops or Before Play Resumes**. When stopping play of a hole under this Rule, the player may *mark* the spot of his or her ball and lift the ball (see Rule 14.1).

Either before or when play is resumed:

- When Player's Ball Was Lifted When Play Stopped. The player must *replace* the original ball or another ball on the original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).
- When Player's Ball Was Not Lifted When Play Stopped. The player may play the ball as it lies, or may *mark* the spot of the ball, lift the ball (see Rule 14.1) and *replace* that ball or another ball on the original spot (see Rule 14.2).

In either case:

- If the *lie* of the ball is altered as a result of lifting the ball, the player must *replace* that ball or another ball as required under Rule 14.2d.
- If the *lie* of the ball is altered after the ball was lifted and before a ball is *replaced*, Rule 14.2d does not apply:
  - » The original ball or another ball must be *replaced* on the original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).
  - » If the *lie* or other *conditions affecting the stroke* were worsened during this time, Rule 8.1d applies.

(2) **What to Do If Ball or Ball-Marker Is Moved While Play Stopped**. If the player's ball or *ball-marker* is moved in any way before play resumes (including by *natural forces*), the player must either:

- *Replace* the original ball or another ball on the original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), or
- Place a *ball-marker* to *mark* that original spot, and then *replace* the original ball or another ball on that spot (see Rules 14.1 and 14.2).

If the player's *conditions affecting the stroke* were worsened while play was stopped, see Rule 8.1d.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 5.7d: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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

A player has started a hole when he or she makes a *stroke* to begin the hole.

The hole has started even if the *stroke* was made from outside the *teeing area* (see Rule 6.1b) or the *stroke* was cancelled under a Rule.

6.1b Ball Must Be Played from Inside Teeing Area

A player must start each hole by playing a ball from anywhere inside the *teeing area* under Rule 6.2b.

If a player who is starting a hole plays a ball from outside the *teeing area* (including from a wrong set of tee markers for a different teeing location on the same hole or a different hole):

(1) Match Play. There is no penalty, **but** the *opponent* may cancel the *stroke*:

- This must be done promptly and before either player makes another *stroke*. When the *opponent* cancels the *stroke*, he or she cannot withdraw the cancellation.
- If the *opponent* cancels the *stroke*, the player must play a ball from inside the *teeing area* and it is still his or her turn to play.
- If the *opponent* does not cancel the *stroke*, the *stroke* counts and the ball is *in play* and must be played as it lies.

(2) Stroke Play. The player gets the ***general penalty*** **(two penalty strokes)** and must correct the mistake by playing a ball from inside the *teeing area*:

- The ball played from outside the *teeing area* is not *in play*.
- That *stroke* and any more strokes before the mistake is corrected (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count.
- If the player does not correct the mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the *round*, before returning his or her *scorecard*, the player is **disqualified**.

6.2 Playing Ball from Teeing Area

6.2a When Teeing Area Rules Apply

The *teeing area* Rules in Rule 6.2b apply whenever a player is required or allowed to play a ball from the *teeing area*. This includes when:

- The player is starting play of the hole (see Rule 6.1),
- The player will play again from the *teeing area* under a Rule (see Rule 14.6), or
- The player's ball is *in play* in the *teeing area* after a *stroke* or after the player has taken relief.

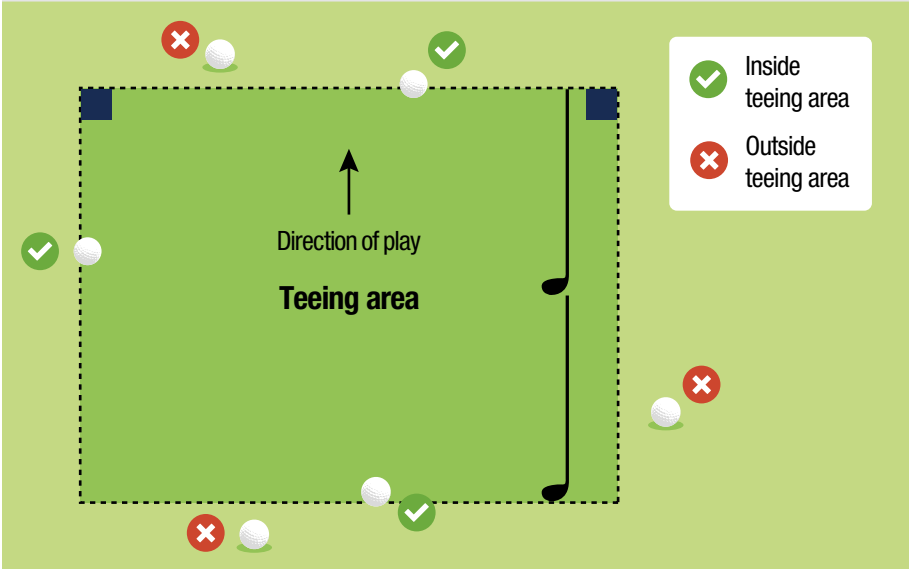
This Rule applies only to the *teeing area* the player must play from in starting the hole he or she is playing, not to any other teeing locations on the *course* (whether on the same hole or a different hole).

6.2b Teeing Area Rules

(1) When Ball Is in Teeing Area.

- A ball is in the *teeing area* when any part of the ball touches or is above any part of the *teeing area*.
- The player may stand outside the *teeing area* in making the *stroke* at a ball in the *teeing area*.

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.

(2) Ball May Be Teed or Played from Ground. The ball must be played from either:

- A *tee* placed in or on the ground, or
- The ground itself.

For purposes of this Rule, the "ground" includes sand or other natural materials put in place to set the *tee* or ball on.

The player must not make a *stroke* at a ball on a non-conforming *tee* or a ball teed in a way not allowed by this Rule.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 6.2b(2):

- **Penalty for first breach from single act or related acts: *General Penalty*.**
- **Penalty for second breach unrelated to first breach: Disqualification.**

(3) Certain Conditions in Teeing Area May Be Improved. Before making a *stroke*, the player may take these actions in the *teeing area* to *improve* the *conditions affecting the stroke* (see Rule 8.1b(8)):

- Alter the surface of the ground in the *teeing area* (such as by making an indentation with a club or foot),

- Move, bend or break grass, weeds and other natural objects that are attached or growing in the ground in the *teeing area*,
- Remove or press down sand and soil in the *teeing area*, and
- Remove dew, frost and water in the *teeing area*.

But the player gets the ***general penalty*** if he or she takes any other action to *improve* the *conditions affecting the stroke* in breach of Rule 8.1a.

(4) Restriction on Moving Tee-Markers When Playing from Teeing Area.

- The location of the tee-markers is set by the *Committee* to define each *teeing area* and should remain in that same location for all players who will play from that *teeing area*.
- If the player *improves* the *conditions affecting the stroke* by moving any such tee-marker before playing from the *teeing area*, he or she gets the ***general penalty*** for breach of Rule 8.1a(1).

In all other situations, the tee-markers are treated as regular *movable obstructions* that may be removed as allowed in Rule 15.2.

(5) Ball Is Not in Play Until Stroke Is Made. Whether the ball is teed or on the ground, when starting a hole or playing again from the *teeing area* under a Rule:

- The ball is not *in play* until the player makes a *stroke* at it, and
- The ball may be lifted or *moved* without penalty before the *stroke* is made.

If a teed ball falls off the *tee* or is knocked off the *tee* by the player before the player has made a *stroke* at it, it may be re-teed anywhere in the *teeing area* without penalty.

But if the player makes a *stroke* at that ball while it is falling or after it has fallen off, there is no penalty, the *stroke* counts and the ball is *in play*.

(6) When Ball in Play Lies in Teeing Area. If the player's ball *in play* is in the *teeing area* after a *stroke* (such as a teed ball after a *stroke* that missed the ball) or after taking relief, the player may:

- Lift or *move* the ball without penalty (see Rule 9.4b, Exception 1), and
- Play that ball or another ball from anywhere in the *teeing area* from a *tee* or the ground under (2), including playing the ball as it lies.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 6.2b(6): *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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, the player is normally required to play the same ball until the hole is completed. The player gets 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

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

The player 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
- The player *substitutes* another ball (whether or not allowed to do so).

The player should put an identifying mark on the ball to be played (see Rule 7.2).

6.3b Substitution of Another Ball While Playing Hole

(1) **When Player Is Allowed and Not Allowed to Substitute Another Ball**. Certain Rules allow a player to change the ball he or she is using to play a hole by *substituting* another ball as the ball *in play*, and others do not:

- When taking relief under a Rule, including when either *dropping* a ball or placing a ball (such as when a ball will not stay in the *relief area* or when taking relief on the *putting green*), the player may use either the original ball or another ball (Rule 14.3a),
- When playing again from where a previous *stroke* was made, the player may use either the original ball or another ball (Rule 14.6), and
- When *replacing* a ball on a spot, the player is not allowed to *substitute* a ball and must use the original ball, with certain exceptions (Rule 14.2a).

(2) **Substituted Ball Becomes Ball in Play**. When a player *substitutes* another ball as the ball *in play* (see Rule 14.4):

- The original ball is no longer *in play*, even if it is at rest on the *course*.
- This is true even if the player:
  - » *Substituted* another ball for the original ball when not allowed by the Rules (whether or not the player realized that he or she was *substituting* another ball), or

» *Replaced*, *dropped* or placed the *substituted* ball (1) in a *wrong place*, (2) in a wrong way or (3) by using a procedure that does not apply.

- For how to correct any error before playing the *substituted* ball, see Rule 14.5.

If the player's original ball has not been found and the player put another ball *in play* to take *stroke-and-distance* relief (see Rules 17.1d, 18.1, 18.2b and 19.2a) or as allowed under a Rule that applies when it is *known or virtually certain* what happened to the ball (see Rules 6.3c, 9.6, 11.2c, 15.2b, 16.1e and 17.1c):

- The player must continue playing with the *substituted* ball, and
- The player must not play the original ball even if it is found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 18.2a(1)).

(3) **Making Stroke at Incorrectly Substituted Ball**. If a player makes a *stroke* at an incorrectly *substituted* ball:

- The player gets the ***general penalty***.
- In *stroke play*, the player must then play out the hole with the incorrectly *substituted* ball.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

6.3c Wrong Ball

(1) **Making Stroke at Wrong Ball**. A player must not make a *stroke* at a *wrong ball*.

Exception – Ball Moving in Water: There is no penalty if a player makes a *stroke* at a *wrong ball* that is moving in water in a *penalty area* or in *temporary water*:

- The *stroke* does not count, and
- The player must correct the mistake under the Rules by playing the right ball from its original spot or by taking relief under the Rules.

Penalty for Playing *Wrong Ball* in Breach of Rule 6.3c(1): *General Penalty*.

In *match play*:

- If the player and *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*, the player 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 (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count.

- If the player does not correct the mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the *round*, before returning his or her *scorecard*, the player is **disqualified**.

(2) **What to Do When Player's Ball Was Played by Another Player as Wrong Ball**. If it is *known or virtually certain* that the player's ball was played by another player as a *wrong ball*, the player must *replace* the original ball or another ball on the original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

This applies whether or not the original ball has been found.

6.3d When Player May Play More Than One Ball at a Time

A player may play more than one ball at a time on a hole only when:

- Playing a *provisional ball* (which will either become the ball *in play* or be abandoned, as provided in Rule 18.3c), or
- Playing two balls in *stroke play* to correct a possible *serious breach* in playing from a *wrong place* (see Rule 14.7b) or when uncertain about the right procedure to use (see Rule 20.1c(3)).

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 a player plays out of turn, the opponent may cancel that stroke and make the player play again.**
- **In stroke play, there is no penalty for playing out of turn, and players 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

(1) Order of Play. The player and *opponent* must play in this order:

- Starting First Hole. At the first hole, the *honour* is decided by the order of the draw set by the *Committee* 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.
  - » If a player makes a timely ruling request (see Rule 20.1b) that has not yet been decided by the *Committee* and could affect who has the *honour* on the next hole, the *honour* is decided by agreement or by using a random method.
- After Both Players Start a Hole.
  - » The ball that is farther from the *hole* is to be played first.
  - » If the balls are the same distance from the *hole* or their relative distances are not known, the ball to be played first is decided by agreement or by using a random method.

(2) **Opponent May Cancel Player's Stroke Made Out of Turn**. If the player plays when it was the *opponent's* turn to play, there is no penalty **but** the *opponent* may cancel the *stroke*:

- This must be done promptly and before either player makes another *stroke*. When the *opponent* cancels the *stroke*, he or she cannot withdraw the cancellation.
- If the *opponent* cancels the *stroke*, the player must, when it is his or her turn to play, play a ball from where that *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).
- If the *opponent* does not cancel the *stroke*, the *stroke* counts and the ball is *in play* and must be played as it lies.

Exception – Playing Out of Turn by Agreement to Save Time: To save time:

- The player may invite the *opponent* to play out of turn or may agree to the *opponent's* request to play out of turn.
- If the *opponent* then makes the *stroke* out of turn, the player has given up the right to cancel the *stroke*.

See Rule 23.6 (order of play in *Four-Ball*).

6.4b Stroke Play

(1) **Normal Order of Play**.

- Starting First Hole. The *honour* at the first *teeing area* is decided by the order of the draw set by the *Committee* 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 Have Started a Hole.
  - » The ball that is farthest from the *hole* should be played first.
  - » If two or more balls are the same distance from the *hole* or their relative distances are not known, the ball to be played first should be decided by agreement or by using a random method.

There is no penalty if a player plays out of turn, **except** that if two or more players agree to play out of turn to give one of them an advantage, each of them gets the ***general penalty* (two penalty strokes)**.

(2) **Playing Out of Turn in a Safe and Responsible Way ("Ready Golf")**. Players are both allowed and encouraged to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way, such as when:

- Two or more players agree to do so for convenience or to save time,
- A player's ball comes to rest a very short distance from the *hole* and the player wishes to *hole out*, or
- An individual player is ready and able to play before another player whose turn it is to play under the normal order of play in (1), so long as in playing out of turn the player does not endanger, distract or interfere with any other player.

But if the player whose turn it is to play under (1) 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.

A player should not play out of turn to gain an advantage over other players.

6.4c When Player Will Play Provisional Ball or Another Ball from Teeing Area

The order of play in this case is for all other players in the group to make their first *stroke* on the hole before the player plays the *provisional ball* or another ball from the *teeing area*.

If more than one player will play a *provisional ball* or another ball from the *teeing area*, the order of play is the same order as before.

For a *provisional ball* or another ball played out of turn, see Rules 6.4a(2) and 6.4b.

6.4d When Player Takes Relief or Will Play Provisional Ball from Anywhere Except Teeing Area

The order of play under Rules 6.4a(1) and 6.4b(1) in these two cases is:

(1) Taking Relief to Play Ball from a Different Place Than Where It Lies.

- When Player Becomes Aware That He or She Is Required to Take Stroke-and-Distance Relief. The player's order of play is based on the spot where his or her previous *stroke* was made.
- When Player Has Choice to Play Ball as It Lies or Take Relief.
  - » The player's order of play is based on the spot where the original ball lies (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).
  - » This applies even when the player has already decided to take *stroke-and-distance* relief or to take relief to play from a different place than where the original ball lies (such as when the original ball is in a *penalty area* or will be treated as unplayable).

(2) Playing Provisional Ball. The order of play is for the player to play the *provisional ball* right after making the previous *stroke* and before anyone else plays a ball, **except**:

- When starting a hole from the *teeing area* (see Rule 6.4c), or
- When the player waits before deciding to play a *provisional ball* (in which case the player's order of play, once he or she has decided to play a *provisional ball*, is based on the spot where the previous *stroke* was made).

6.5 Completing Play of a Hole

A player has completed a hole:

- In *match play*, when:
  - » The player *holes out* or the player's next *stroke* is conceded, or
  - » The result of the hole is decided (such as when the *opponent* concedes the hole, the *opponent's* score for the hole is lower than the player possibly could make or the player or *opponent* gets the *general penalty* (loss of hole)).
- In *stroke play*, when the player *holes out* under Rule 3.3c.

See Rules 21.1b(1), 21.2b(1), 21.3b(1) and 23.3c (when a player has completed a hole in other forms of *stroke play* or in *Four-Ball*).

III

Playing the Ball

RULES 7-11

RULE 7 Ball Search: Finding and Identifying Ball

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 7 allows the player to take reasonable actions to fairly search for his or her ball in play after each stroke.

- **But the player still must be careful, as a penalty will apply if the player acts excessively and causes improvement to the conditions affecting his or her next stroke.**
- **The player gets no penalty if the ball is accidentally moved in trying to find or identify it, but must then replace the ball on its original spot.**

7.1 How to Fairly Search for Ball

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

A player is responsible for finding his or her ball *in play* after each *stroke*.

The player 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 under Rule 8.1a if the *improvement* results from a fair search.
- **But** if the *improvement* results from actions that exceeded what was reasonable for a fair search, the player gets the ***general penalty*** for breach of Rule 8.1a.

In trying to find and identify the ball, the player may remove *loose impediments* as allowed in Rule 15.1 and may remove *movable obstructions* as allowed in Rule 15.2.

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

- The player 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 the player plays the ball without having re-created the original *lie*, the player gets the ***general penalty***.

7.2 How to Identify Ball

A player's ball at rest may be identified in any one of these ways:

- By the player or anyone else seeing a ball come to rest in circumstances where it is known to be the player's ball.
- By seeing the player's identifying mark on the ball (see Rule 6.3a).
- By finding a ball with the same brand, model, number and condition as the player's ball in an area where the player's ball is expected to be (**but** this does not apply if an identical ball is in the same area and there is no way to know which one is the player's ball).

If a player's *provisional ball* cannot be distinguished from his or her original ball, see Rule 18.3c(2).

7.3 Lifting Ball to Identify It

If a ball might be a player's ball but cannot be identified as it lies:

- The player may lift the ball to identify it (including by rotating 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*) (see Rule 14.1).

If the lifted ball is the player's ball or another player's ball, it must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

If the player lifts his or her ball under this Rule when not reasonably necessary to identify it (**except** on the *putting green* where the player may lift under Rule 13.1b), fails to *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleans it when not allowed, the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 7.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

7.4 Ball Accidentally Moved in Trying to Find or Identify It

There is no penalty if the player's ball is accidentally *moved* by the player, *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) (see Rule 14.2). 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 (see Rule 14.2c).
- If the ball was covered by sand, the original *lie* must be re-created and the ball must be *replaced* in that *lie* (see Rule 14.2d(1)). **But** the player may leave a small part of the ball visible when doing so.

See also Rule 15.1a (restriction on deliberately removing certain *loose impediments* before *replacing* ball).

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 the player's ball comes to rest, he or she normally has to accept the conditions affecting the stroke and not improve them before playing the ball. However, a player 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 Player's Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke

To support the principle of "play the *course* as you find it", this Rule restricts what a player may do to *improve* any of these protected "*conditions affecting the stroke*" (anywhere on or off the *course*) for the next *stroke* the player will make:

- The *lie* of the player's ball at rest,
- The area of the player's intended *stance*,
- The area of the player's intended swing,
- The player's *line of play*, and
- The *relief area* where the player will *drop* or place a ball.

This Rule applies to actions taken both during a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a.

It does not apply to:

- The removal of *loose impediments* or *movable obstructions*, which is allowed to the extent provided in Rule 15, or
- An action taken while a player's ball is in motion, which is covered by Rule 11.

8.1a Actions That Are Not Allowed

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

(1) Move, bend or break any:

- Growing or attached natural object,
- *Immovable obstruction*, *integral object* or *boundary object*, or

- Tee-marker for the *teeing area* when playing a ball from that *teeing area*.

(2) Move a *loose impediment* or *movable obstruction* into position (such as to build a *stance* or to *improve* the *line of play*).

(3) Alter the surface of the ground, including by:

- Replacing divots in a divot hole,
- Removing or pressing down divots that have already been replaced or other cut turf that is already in place, or
- Creating or eliminating holes, indentations or uneven surfaces.

(4) Remove or press down sand or loose soil.

(5) 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*, a player may take any of these actions and there is no penalty even if doing so *improves* the *conditions affecting the stroke*:

(1) Fairly search for his or her ball by taking reasonable actions to find and identify it (see Rule 7.1a).

(2) Take reasonable actions to remove *loose impediments* (see Rule 15.1) and *movable obstructions* (see Rule 15.2).

(3) Take reasonable actions to *mark* the spot of a ball and to lift and *replace* the ball under Rules 14.1 and 14.2.

(4) Ground the club lightly right in front of or right behind the ball.

But this does not allow:

- Pressing the club on the ground, or
- When a ball is in a *bunker*, touching the sand right in front of or right behind the ball (see Rule 12.2b(1)).

(5) Firmly place the feet in taking a *stance*, including a reasonable amount of digging in with the feet in sand or loose soil.

(6) Fairly take a *stance* by taking reasonable actions to get to the ball and take a *stance*.

But when doing so the player:

- Is not entitled to a normal *stance* or swing, and
- Must use the least intrusive course of action to deal with the particular situation.

(7) Make a *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* which is then made.

But when the ball is in a *bunker*, touching the sand in the *bunker* in taking the backswing is not allowed under Rule 12.2b(1).

(8) In the *teeing area*:

- Place a *tee* in or on the ground (see Rule 6.2b(2)),
- Move, bend or break any growing or attached natural object (see Rule 6.2b(3)), and
- Alter the surface of the ground, remove or press down sand and soil, or remove dew, frost or water (see Rule 6.2b(3)).

(9) In a *bunker*, smooth sand to care for the *course* after a ball played from the *bunker* is outside the *bunker* (see Rule 12.2b(3)).

(10) On the *putting green*, remove sand and loose soil and repair damage (see Rule 13.1c).

(11) 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.

8.1c Avoiding Penalty by Restoring Conditions Improved in Breach of Rule 8.1a(1) or 8.1a(2)

If a player has *improved* the *conditions affecting the stroke* by moving, bending or breaking an object in breach of Rule 8.1a(1) or moving an object into position in breach of Rule 8.1a(2):

- There is no penalty if, before making the next *stroke*, the player eliminates that *improvement* by restoring the original *conditions* in the ways allowed in (1) and (2) below.
- **But** if the player *improves* the *conditions affecting the stroke* by taking any of the other actions covered by Rules 8.1a(3)-(5), he or she cannot avoid penalty by restoring the original conditions.

(1) How to Restore Conditions Improved by Moving, Bending or Breaking Object. Before making the *stroke*, the player may avoid penalty for breach of Rule 8.1a(1) by restoring the original object as nearly as possible to its original position so that the *improvement* created by the breach is eliminated, such as by:

- Replacing a *boundary object* (such as a boundary stake) that had been removed or moving the *boundary object* back into its original position after it had been pushed to a different angle, or
- Returning a tree branch or grass, or an *immovable obstruction* to its original position after it had been moved.

But the player cannot avoid penalty:

- If the *improvement* is not eliminated (such as when a *boundary object* or branch has been bent or broken in a significant way so that it cannot be returned to the original position), or
- By using anything other than the original object itself in trying to restore *conditions*, such as:
  - » Using a different or additional object (for example, placing a different stake in a hole from which a boundary stake had been removed or tying a moved branch into place), or
  - » Using other materials to repair the original object (for example, using tape to repair a broken *boundary object* or branch).

(2) **How to Restore Conditions Improved by Moving an Object into Position**. Before making the *stroke*, the player may avoid penalty for breach of Rule 8.1a(2) by removing the object that was moved into position.

8.1d Restoring Conditions Worsened After Ball Came to Rest

If the *conditions affecting the stroke* are worsened after a player's ball came to rest:

(1) **When Restoration of Worsened Conditions Is Allowed**. If the *conditions affecting the stroke* are worsened by any person other than the player or by an *animal* or artificial object, without penalty under Rule 8.1a the player may:

- Restore the original *conditions* as nearly as possible.
- *Mark* the spot of the ball and lift, clean and *replace* the ball on its original spot (see Rules 14.1 and 14.2), if it is reasonable to do so to restore the original *conditions* or if material ended up on the ball when the *conditions* were worsened.
- If the worsened *conditions* cannot be easily restored, lift and *replace* the ball by placing it on the nearest spot (not nearer the *hole*) that (1) has the most similar *conditions affecting the stroke*, (2) is within one *club-length* of its original spot, and (3) is in the same *area of the course* as that spot.

Exception – Lie of Ball Worsened When or After a Ball Is Lifted or Moved and Before It Is Replaced: This is covered by Rule 14.2d, unless the *lie* was worsened when play was stopped and the ball was lifted in which case this Rule applies.

(2) **When Restoration of Worsened Conditions Is Not Allowed**. If the *conditions affecting the stroke* are worsened by the player, by a natural object or by *natural forces* such as wind or water, the player must not *improve* those worsened *conditions* in breach of Rule 8.1a (**except** as allowed in Rules 8.1c(1), 8.1c(2) and Rule 13.1c).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 8.1d: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

See Rules 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action of the *partner* is treated as action by the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

8.2 Player's Deliberate Actions to Alter Other Physical Conditions to Affect the Player's Own Ball at Rest or Stroke to Be Made

8.2a When Rule 8.2 Applies

This Rule only covers a player's deliberate actions to alter other physical conditions to affect his or her ball at rest or *stroke* to be made.

This Rule does not apply to a player's actions to:

- Deliberately deflect or stop his or her own ball or to deliberately alter any physical conditions to affect where the ball might come to rest (which is covered by Rules 11.2 and 11.3), or
- Alter the player's *conditions affecting the stroke* (which is covered by Rule 8.1a).

8.2b Prohibited Actions to Alter Other Physical Conditions

A player must not deliberately take any actions listed in Rule 8.1a (**except** as allowed in Rule 8.1b, c or d) to alter any such other physical conditions to affect:

- Where the player's ball might go or come to rest after his or her next *stroke* or a later *stroke*, or
- Where the player's ball at rest might go or come to rest if it *moves* before the *stroke* is made (for example, when the ball is on a steep slope and the player is concerned that it might roll into a bush).

Exception – Actions to Care for the Course: There is no penalty under this Rule if the player alters any such other physical conditions to care for the *course* (such as smoothing footprints in a *bunker* or replacing a divot in a divot hole).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 8.2: *General Penalty.*

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

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

8.3a When Rule 8.3 Applies

This Rule only covers a player's deliberate actions to alter physical conditions to affect another player's ball at rest or *stroke* to be made by that other player.

It does not apply to a player's actions to deliberately deflect or stop another player's ball in motion or to deliberately alter any physical conditions to affect where the ball might come to rest (which is covered by Rules 11.2 and 11.3).

8.3b Prohibited Actions to Alter Other Physical Conditions

A player must not deliberately take any of the actions listed in Rule 8.1a (**except** as allowed in Rule 8.1b, c or d) to:

- *Improve* or worsen the *conditions affecting the stroke* of another player, or
- Alter any other physical conditions to affect:
  - » Where another player's ball might go or come to rest after that player's next *stroke* or a later *stroke*, or
  - » Where another player's ball at rest might go or come to rest if it *moves* before the *stroke* is made.

Exception – Actions to Care for the Course: There is no penalty under this Rule if the player alters any such other physical conditions to care for the *course* (such as smoothing footprints in a *bunker* or replacing a divot in a divot hole).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 8.3: *General Penalty.*

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

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

Rule 9 applies to a ball *in play* at rest on the *course*, and applies both during a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a.

9.1 Ball Played as It Lies

9.1a Playing Ball from Where It Came to Rest

A player's ball at rest on the *course* must be played as it lies, **except** when the Rules require or allow the player:

- 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 Ball Moves During Backswing or Stroke

If a player's ball at rest begins moving after the player has begun the *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* and the player goes on to make the *stroke*:

- The ball must not be *replaced*, no matter what caused it to *move*.
- Instead, the player must play the ball from where it comes to rest after the *stroke*.
- If the player 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* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

9.2 Deciding Whether Ball Moved and What Caused It to Move

9.2a Deciding Whether Ball Moved

A player's ball at rest is treated as having *moved* only if it is *known or virtually certain* that it did.

If the ball might have *moved* but this is not *known or virtually certain*, it is treated as not having *moved* and must be played as it lies.

9.2b Deciding What Caused Ball to Move

When a player's ball at rest has *moved*:

- It must be decided what caused it to *move*.
- This determines whether the player must *replace* the ball or play it as it lies and whether there is a penalty.

(1) Four Possible Causes. The Rules recognize only four possible causes for a ball at rest that *moves* before the player makes a *stroke*:

- *Natural forces*, such as wind or water (see Rule 9.3),
- The player, including the player's *caddie* (see Rule 9.4),
- The *opponent* in *match play*, including the *opponent's caddie* (see Rule 9.5), or
- An *outside influence*, including any other player in *stroke play* (see Rule 9.6).

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

(2) "Known or Virtually Certain" Standard for Deciding What Caused Ball to Move.

- The player, the *opponent* or an *outside influence* is treated as having caused the ball to *move* only if it is *known or virtually certain* to be the cause.
- If it is not *known or virtually certain* that at least one of these was the cause, the ball is treated as having been *moved* by *natural forces*.

In applying this standard, all reasonably available information must be considered, which means all information the player knows or can get with reasonable effort and without unreasonably delaying play.

9.3 Ball Moved by Natural Forces

If *natural forces* (such as wind or water) cause a player's ball at rest to *move*:

- There is no penalty, and

- The ball must be played from its new spot.

Exception – Ball on Putting Green Must Be Replaced If It Moves After Having Already Been Lifted and Replaced (see Rule 13.1d): If the player's ball on the *putting green moves* after the player had already lifted and *replaced* the ball on the spot from which it *moved*:

- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).
- This is true no matter what caused it to *move* (including *natural forces*).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

9.4 Ball Lifted or Moved by Player

This Rule applies only when it is *known or virtually certain* that a player (including the player's *caddie*) lifted his or her ball at rest or caused it to *move*.

9.4a When Lifted or Moved Ball Must Be Replaced

If the player lifts his or her ball at rest or causes it to *move*, the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), **except**:

- When the player lifts the ball under a Rule to take relief or to *replace* the ball on a different spot (see Rules 14.2d and 14.2e), or
- When the ball *moves* only after the player has begun the *stroke* or the backswing for a *stroke* and then goes on to make the *stroke* (see Rule 9.1b).

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

If the player lifts or deliberately touches his or her ball at rest or causes it to *move*, the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

But there are four **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Player Allowed to Lift or Move Ball: There is no penalty when the player lifts the ball or causes it to *move* under a Rule that:

- Allows the ball to be lifted and then *replaced* on its original spot,
- Requires a *moved* ball to be *replaced* on its original spot, or
- Requires or allows the player to *drop* or place a ball again or to play a ball from a different place.

Exception 2 – Accidental Movement Before Ball Is Found: There is no penalty when the player accidentally causes the ball to *move* while trying to find or identify it (see Rule 7.4).

Exception 3 – Accidental Movement on Putting Green: There is no penalty when the player accidentally causes the ball to *move* on the *putting green* (see Rule 13.1d), no matter how that happens.

Exception 4 – Accidental Movement Anywhere Except on Putting Green While Applying Rule: There is no penalty when the player accidentally causes the ball to *move* anywhere except on the *putting green* while taking reasonable actions to:

- *Mark* the spot of the ball or lift or *replace* the ball, when allowed to do so (see Rules 14.1 and 14.2),
- Remove a *movable obstruction* (see Rule 15.2),
- Restore worsened conditions, when allowed to do so (see Rule 8.1d),
- Take relief under a Rule, including in determining whether relief is available under a Rule (such as swinging a club to see if there is interference from a condition), or where to take relief (such as determining the *nearest point of complete relief*), or
- Measure under a Rule (such as to decide the order of play under Rule 6.4).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.4: *General Penalty* under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

9.5 Ball Lifted or Moved by Opponent in Match Play

This Rule applies only when it is *known or virtually certain* that the *opponent* (including the *opponent's caddie*) lifted a player's ball at rest or caused it to *move*.

If the *opponent* plays the player's ball as a *wrong ball*, that is covered by Rule 6.3c(1), not by this Rule.

9.5a When Lifted or Moved Ball Must Be Replaced

If the *opponent* lifts or *moves* the player's ball at rest, the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), **except**:

- When the *opponent* is conceding the next *stroke*, a hole or the match (see Rule 3.2b), or
- When the *opponent* lifts or *moves* the ball at the player's request because the player intends to apply a Rule to take relief or to *replace* the ball on a different spot.

9.5b Penalty for Lifting or Deliberately Touching Ball or Causing It to Move

If the *opponent* lifts or deliberately touches the player's ball at rest or causes it to *move*, the *opponent* gets **one penalty stroke**.

But there are several **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Opponent Allowed to Lift Player's Ball: There is no penalty when the *opponent* lifts the ball:

- When conceding the next *stroke*, a hole or the match to the player, or
- At the player's request.

Exception 2 – Marking and Lifting Player's Ball on Putting Green by Mistake: There is no penalty when the *opponent marks* the spot of the player's ball and lifts it on the *putting green* in the mistaken belief that it is the *opponent's* own ball.

Exception 3 – Same Exceptions as for the Player: There is no penalty when the *opponent* accidentally causes the ball to *move* while taking any of the actions covered by Exceptions 2, 3 or 4 in Rule 9.4b.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.5: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

9.6 Ball Lifted or Moved by Outside Influence

If it is *known or virtually certain* that an *outside influence* (including another player in *stroke play* or another ball) lifted or *moved* a player's ball:

- There is no penalty, and
- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

This applies whether or not the player's ball has been found.

But if it is not *known or virtually certain* that the ball was lifted or *moved* by an *outside influence* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

If the player's ball is played as a *wrong ball* by another player, that is covered by Rule 6.3c(2), not by this Rule.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.6: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

9.7 Ball-Marker Lifted or Moved

This Rule covers what to do if a *ball-marker* that is *marking* the spot of a lifted ball is lifted or moved before the ball is *replaced*.

9.7a Ball or Ball-Marker Must Be Replaced

If a player's *ball-marker* is lifted or moved in any way (including by *natural forces*) before the ball is *replaced*, the player must either:

- *Replace* the ball on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), or
- Place a *ball-marker* to *mark* that original spot.

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

If the player, or his or her *opponent* in *match play*, lifts the player's *ball-marker* or causes it to move (when the ball is lifted and not yet *replaced*), the player or *opponent* gets **one penalty stroke**.

Exception – Rule 9.4b and 9.5b Exceptions Apply to Lifting or Moving Ball-Marker or Causing It to Move: In all cases where the player or *opponent* gets no penalty for lifting the player's ball or accidentally causing it to *move*, there is also no penalty for lifting or accidentally moving the player's *ball-marker*.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 9.7: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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 the player may get from others (including caddies). 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 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*:

- The player 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 must not push, scrape or scoop the ball.
- If the player's club accidentally hits the ball more than once, there has been only one *stroke* and there is no penalty.

10.1b Anchoring the Club

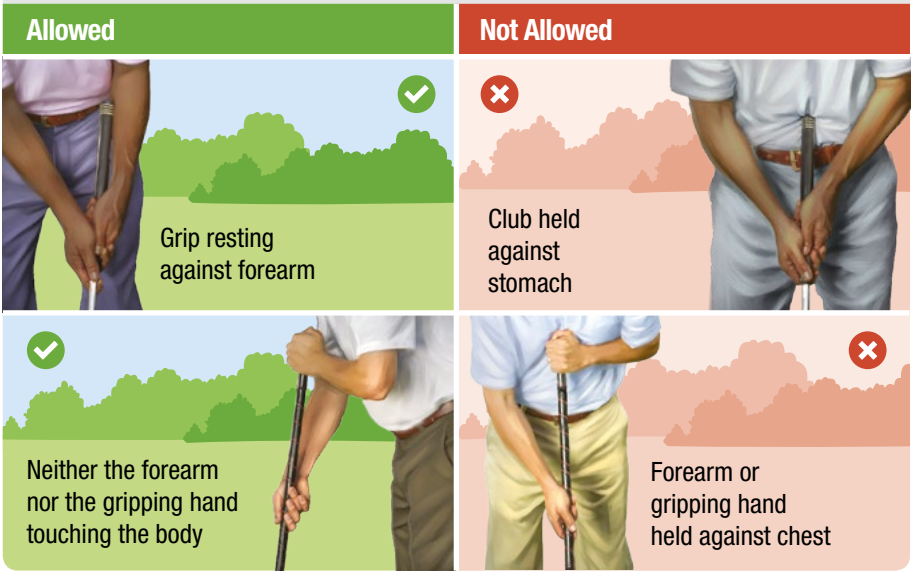
In making a *stroke*, the player must not anchor the club, either:

- Directly, by holding the club or a gripping hand against any part of the body (**except** that the player may hold the club or a gripping hand against a hand or forearm), or
- Indirectly, through use of an "anchor point", by holding a forearm against any part of the body to use a gripping hand as a stable point around which the other hand may swing the club.

If the player's club, gripping hand or forearm merely touches his or her body or clothing during the *stroke*, without being held against the body, there is no breach of this Rule.

For the purposes of this Rule, "forearm" means the part of the arm below the elbow joint and includes the wrist.

DIAGRAM 10.1b: ANCHORING THE CLUB



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

The player must not make a *stroke* from a *stance* with a foot deliberately placed on each side of, or with either foot deliberately touching, the *line of play* or an extension of that line behind the ball.

For this Rule only, the *line of play* does not include a reasonable distance on either side.

Exception – There Is No Penalty If Stance Is Taken Accidentally or to Avoid Another Player's Line of Play.

10.1d Playing Moving Ball

A player must not make a *stroke* at a moving ball:

- A ball *in play* is "moving" when it is not at rest on a spot.
- If a ball that has come to rest is wobbling (sometimes referred to as oscillating) but stays on or returns to its original spot, it is treated as being at rest and is not a moving ball.

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

Exception 1 – Ball Begins to Move Only after Player Begins Backswing for Stroke: Making a *stroke* at a moving ball in this situation is covered by Rule 9.1b, not by this Rule.

Exception 2 – Ball Falling Off Tee: Making a *stroke* at a ball falling off a *tee* is covered by Rule 6.2b(5), not by this Rule.

Exception 3 – Ball Moving in Water: When a ball is moving in *temporary water* or in water in a *penalty area*:

- The player may make a *stroke* at the moving ball without penalty, or
- The player may take relief under Rule 16.1 or 17, and may lift the moving ball.

In either case, the player must not unreasonably delay play (see Rule 5.6a) to allow the wind or water current to move the ball to a better place.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 10.1: *General Penalty*.

In *stroke play*, a *stroke* made in breach of this Rule counts and the player gets **two penalty strokes**.

10.2 Advice and Other Help

Purpose of Rule:

A fundamental challenge for the player is deciding the strategy and tactics for his or her play. So there are limits to the advice and other help the player may get during a round.

10.2a Advice

During a *round*, a player must not:

- Give *advice* to anyone in the competition who is playing on the *course*,
- Ask anyone for *advice*, other than the player's *caddie*, or
- Touch another player's *equipment* to learn information that would be *advice* if given by or asked of the other player (such as touching the other player's clubs or bag to see what club is being used).

This does not apply before a *round*, while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a or between *rounds* in a competition.

See Rules 22, 23 and 24 (in forms of play involving *partners*, a player may give *advice* to his or her *partner* or the *partner's caddie* and may ask the *partner* or *partner's caddie* for *advice*).

10.2b Other Help

(1) Pointing Out Line of Play for Ball Anywhere Except on Putting Green. A player may have his or her *line of play* pointed out by:

- Having his or her *caddie* or any other person stand on or close to the player's *line of play* to show where it is, **but** that person must move away before the *stroke* is made.
- Having an object (such as a bag or towel) set down on the *course* to show the *line of play*, but the object must be removed before the *stroke* is made.

(2) Pointing Out Line of Play for Ball on Putting Green. Before the *stroke* is made, only the player and his or her *caddie* may point out the player's *line of play*, **but** with these limitations:

- The player or *caddie* may touch the *putting green* with a hand, foot or anything he or she is holding, **but** must not *improve* the *conditions affecting the stroke* in breach of Rule 8.1a, and
- The player or *caddie* must not set an object down anywhere on or off the *putting green* to show the *line of play*. This is not allowed even if that object is removed before the *stroke* is made.

While the *stroke* is being made, the *caddie* must not deliberately stand in a location on or close to the player's *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*.

(3) No Setting Down Object to Help in Taking Stance. A player must not take a *stance* for the *stroke* using any object that was set down by or for the player to help in lining up his or her feet or body, such as a club set down on the ground to show the *line of play*.

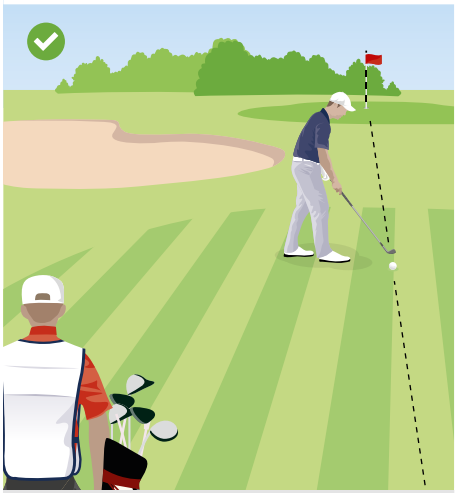
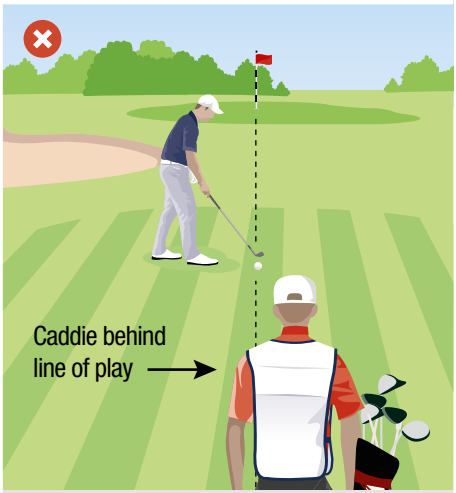
If the player takes a *stance* in breach of this Rule, he or she cannot avoid penalty by backing away from the *stance* and removing the object.

(4) Restriction on Caddie Standing Behind Player. When a player begins taking a *stance* for the *stroke* and until the *stroke* is made:

- The player's *caddie* must not deliberately stand in a location on or close to an extension of the *line of play* behind the ball for any reason.
- If the player takes a *stance* in breach of this Rule, he or she cannot avoid penalty by backing away.

Exception – Ball on Putting Green: When the player's ball is on the *putting green*, there is no penalty under this Rule if the player backs away from the *stance* and does not begin to take the *stance* again until after the *caddie* has moved out of that location.

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

Allowed	Not 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(4).	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(4).

See Rules 22, 23 and 24 (in forms of play involving *partners*, a player's *partner* and the *partner's caddie* may take the same actions (with the same limitations) as the player's *caddie* may take under Rules 10.2b(2) and (4)).

(5) **Physical Help and Protection from Elements**. A player must not make a *stroke*:

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

Before the *stroke* is made, such help or protection is allowed, **except** as prohibited in Rules 10.2b(3) and (4).

This Rule does not prohibit the player from taking his or her own actions to protect against the elements while making a *stroke*, such as by wearing protective clothing or holding an umbrella over his or her own head.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 10.2: *General Penalty.*

10.3 Caddies

Purpose of Rule:

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

10.3a Caddie May Help Player During Round

(1) Player Allowed Only One Caddie at a Time. A player may have a *caddie* to carry, transport and handle his or her clubs, give *advice* and help him or her in other ways allowed during a *round*, **but** with these limitations:

- The player must not have more than one *caddie* at any one time.
- The player may change *caddies* during a *round*, **but** must not do so temporarily for the sole purpose of getting *advice* from the new *caddie*.

Whether or not the player has a *caddie*, any other person who walks or rides along with the player or who carries other things for the player (such as a rainsuit, umbrella or food and drink) is not the player's *caddie* unless he or she is named as such by the player or also carries, transports or handles the player's clubs.

(2) Two or More Players May Share a Caddie. When there is a Rules issue involving a specific action of a shared *caddie* and it needs to be decided which player the action was taken for:

- If the *caddie's* action was taken at the specific direction of one of the players sharing the *caddie*, the action was taken for that player.
- If none of those players specifically directed that action, the action is treated as taken for the player sharing the *caddie* whose ball was involved.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule H-1 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting or requiring the use of *caddies* or restricting a player's choice of *caddie*).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 10.3a:

- The player gets the ***general penalty*** for each hole during which he or she is helped by more than one *caddie* at any one time.
- If the breach happens or continues between two holes, the player gets the ***general penalty*** for the next hole.

10.3b What a Caddie May Do

These are examples of what a *caddie* is allowed and not allowed to do:

(1) **Actions Always Allowed**. A *caddie* may always take these actions when allowed under the Rules:

- Carry, transport and handle the player's clubs and other *equipment* (including driving a cart or pulling a trolley).
- Search for the player's ball (Rule 7.1).
- Give information, *advice* and other help before the *stroke* is made (Rules 10.2a and 10.2b).
- Smooth *bunkers* or take other actions to care for the *course* (Rules 8.2 Exception, 8.3 Exception and 12.2b(2) and (3)).
- Remove sand and loose soil and repair damage on the *putting green* (Rule 13.1c).
- Remove or attend the *flagstick* (Rule 13.2b).
- *Mark* the spot of the player's ball and lift and *replace* the ball on the *putting green* (Rules 14.1b Exception and 14.2b).
- Clean the player's ball (Rule 14.1c).
- Remove *loose impediments* and *movable obstructions* (Rules 15.1 and 15.2).

(2) **Actions Allowed Only With Player's Authorization**. A *caddie* may take these actions only when the Rules allow the player to take them and only with the player's authorization (which must be given specifically each time rather than given generally for a *round*):

- Restore conditions that were worsened after the player's ball came to rest (Rule 8.1d).
- When the player's ball is anywhere except on the *putting green*, lift the player's ball under a Rule requiring it to be *replaced* or after the player has decided to take relief under a Rule (Rule 14.1b).

(3) **Actions Not Allowed**. A *caddie* is not allowed to take these actions for the player:

- Concede the next *stroke*, a hole or the match to the *opponent* or agree with the *opponent* on the match score (Rule 3.2).
- Deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the *line of play* behind the player's ball when the player begins taking a *stance* for the *stroke* and

until the *stroke* is made (Rule 10.2b(4)) or take other actions prohibited by Rule 10.2b.

- *Replace* a ball, unless the *caddie* had lifted or *moved* the ball (Rule 14.2b).
- *Drop* or place a ball in a *relief area* (Rule 14.3).
- Decide to take relief under a Rule (such as treating a ball as unplayable under Rule 19 or taking relief from an *abnormal course condition* or *penalty area* under Rule 16.1 or 17); the *caddie* may advise the player to do so, but the player must decide.

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

A player is responsible for his or her *caddie's* actions both during a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, but not before or after a *round*.

If the *caddie's* action breaches a Rule or would breach a Rule if the action was taken by the player, the player gets the penalty under that Rule.

When application of a Rule depends on whether the player is aware of certain facts, the player's knowledge is treated as including whatever is known by his or her *caddie*.

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

This Rule applies any time a ball *in play* is in motion (whether after a *stroke* or otherwise), **except** when a 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 Ball in Motion Accidentally Hits Person or Outside Influence

11.1a No Penalty to Any Player

If a player's ball in motion accidentally hits any person or *outside influence*:

- There is no penalty to any player.
- This is true even if the ball hits the player, the *opponent* or any other player or any of their *caddies* or *equipment*.

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

11.1b Ball Must Be Played as It Lies

If a player's ball in motion accidentally hits any person or *outside influence*, the ball must be played as it lies, **except** in two situations:

Exception 1 – When Ball Played from Anywhere Except Putting Green Comes to Rest on Any Person, Animal or Moving Outside Influence: The player must not play the ball as it lies. Instead, the player must take relief:

- When Ball Is Anywhere Except on Putting Green. The player must *drop* the original ball or another ball in this relief area (see Rule 14.3):
  - » Reference Point: The estimated point right under where the ball first came to rest on the person, *animal* or moving *outside influence*.

» 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 the reference point, and

– Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

- When Ball Is on Putting Green. The player must place the original ball or another ball on the estimated spot right under where the ball first came to rest on the person, *animal* or moving *outside influence*, using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

Exception 2 – When Ball Played from Putting Green Accidentally Hits Any Person, Animal or Movable Obstruction (Including Another Ball in Motion) on Putting Green: The *stroke* does not count and the original ball or another ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), **except** in these two cases:

- Ball in Motion Hits Another Ball at Rest or Ball-Marker on Putting Green. The *stroke* counts and the ball must be played as it lies. (See Rule 11.1a for whether a penalty applies in *stroke play*).
- Ball in Motion Accidentally Hits Flagstick or Person Attending Flagstick. This is covered by Rule 13.2b(2), not by this Rule.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 11.1: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

11.2 Ball in Motion Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Person

11.2a When Rule 11.2 Applies

This Rule applies only when it is *known or virtually certain* that a player's ball in motion was deliberately deflected or stopped by a person, which is when:

- A person deliberately touches the ball in motion, or
- The ball in motion hits any *equipment* or other object (**except** a *ball-marker* or another ball at rest before the ball was played or otherwise went into motion) or any person (such as the player's *caddie*) that a player deliberately positioned or left in a particular location so that the *equipment*, object or person might deflect or stop the ball in motion.

Exception – Ball Deliberately Deflected or Stopped in Match Play When No Reasonable Chance It Can Be Holed: An *opponent's* ball in motion that is deliberately deflected or stopped at a time when there is no reasonable chance it can be *holed*,

and when done either as a concession or when the ball needed to be *holed* to tie the hole, is covered by Rule 3.2a(1) or 3.2b(1), not by this Rule.

For a player's right to have a ball or *ball-marker* lifted before a *stroke* is made if he or she reasonably believes the ball or *ball-marker* might help or interfere with play, see Rule 15.3.

11.2b When Penalty Applies to a Player

- A player gets the ***general penalty*** if he or she deliberately deflects or stops any ball in motion.
- This is true whether it is the player's own ball or a ball played by an *opponent* or by another player in *stroke play*.

Exception – Ball Moving in Water: There is no penalty if a player lifts his or her ball moving in water in *temporary water* or in a *penalty area* when taking relief under Rule 16.1 or 17 (see Rule 10.1d Exception 3).

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

11.2c Place from Where Deliberately Deflected or Stopped Ball Must Be Played

If it is *known or virtually certain* that a player's ball in motion was deliberately deflected or stopped by a person (whether or not the ball has been found), it must not be played as it lies. Instead, the player must take relief:

(1) Stroke Made from Anywhere Except Putting Green. The player must take relief based on the estimated spot where the ball would have come to rest if not deflected or stopped:

- When Ball Would Have Come to Rest Anywhere on Course Except on Putting Green. The player must *drop* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):
  - » Reference Point: The estimated spot where the ball would have come to rest.
  - » 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 the reference point, and
    - – Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

- When Ball Would Have Come to Rest on Putting Green. The player must place the original ball or another ball on the estimated spot where the ball would have come to rest, using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.
- When Ball Would Have Come to Rest Out of Bounds. The player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

(2) **Stroke Made from Putting Green**. The *stroke* does not count, and the original ball or another ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 11.2: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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

When a ball is in motion, a player must not deliberately take any of these actions to affect where that ball (whether the player's own ball or another player's ball) might come to rest:

- Alter physical conditions by taking any of the actions listed in Rule 8.1a (such as replacing a divot or pressing down a raised area of turf), or
- Lift or move:
  - A *loose impediment* (see Rule 15.1a, Exception 2), or
  - A *movable obstruction* (see Rule 15.2a, Exception 2).

Exception – Moving Flagstick, Ball at Rest on Putting Green and Other Player Equipment: This Rule does not prohibit a player from lifting or moving:

- A removed *flagstick*,
- A ball at rest on the *putting green*, or
- Any other player *equipment* (other than a ball at rest anywhere except the *putting green* or a *ball-marker* anywhere on the *course*).

Removing the *flagstick* from the *hole* (including by attending it) while a ball is in motion is covered by Rule 13.2, not by this Rule.

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

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

IV

Specific Rules for Bunkers and Putting Greens

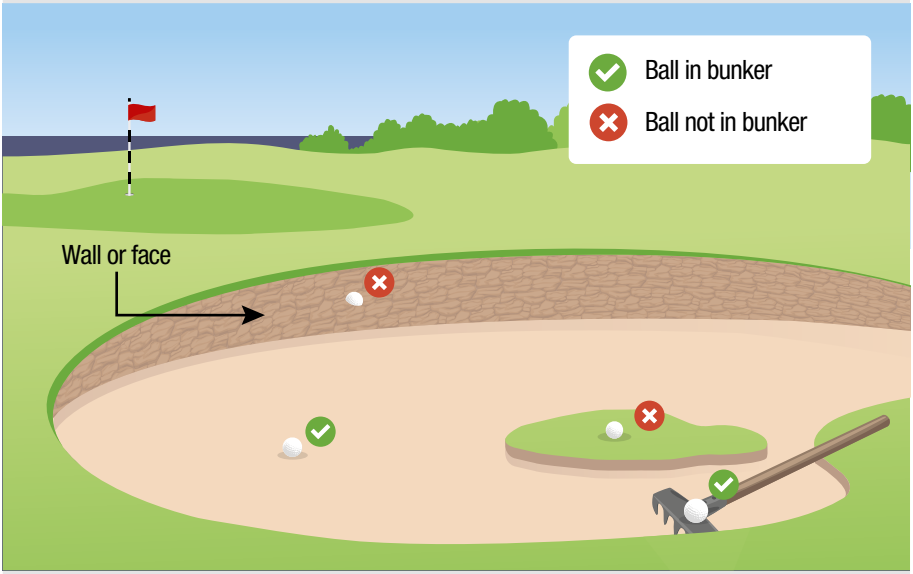
RULES 12-13

RULE 12 Bunkers

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 12 is a specific Rule for bunkers, which are specially prepared areas intended to test the player's ability to play a ball from the sand. To make sure the player confronts this challenge, there are some restrictions on touching the sand before the stroke is made and on where relief may be taken for a ball in a 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.

12.1 When Ball Is in Bunker

A ball is in a *bunker* when any part of the ball:

- Touches sand on the ground inside the edge of the *bunker*, or
- Is inside the edge of the *bunker* and rests:
  - » On ground where sand normally would be (such as where sand was blown or washed away by wind or water), or
  - » In or on a *loose impediment*, *movable obstruction*, *abnormal course condition* or *integral object* that touches sand in the *bunker* or is on ground where sand normally would be.

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

If part of the ball is both in a *bunker* and in another *area of the course*, see Rule 2.2c.

12.2 Playing Ball in Bunker

This Rule applies both during a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a.

12.2a Removing Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions

Before playing a ball in a *bunker*, a player may remove *loose impediments* under Rule 15.1 and *movable obstructions* under Rule 15.2.

This includes any reasonable touching or movement of the sand in the *bunker* that happens while doing so.

12.2b Restrictions on Touching Sand in Bunker

(1) **When Touching Sand Results in Penalty**. Before making a *stroke* at a ball in a *bunker*, a player must not:

- Deliberately touch sand in the *bunker* with a hand, club, rake or other object to test the condition of the sand to learn information for the next *stroke*, or
- Touch sand in the *bunker* with a club:
  - » In the area right in front of or right behind the ball (**except** as allowed under Rule 7.1a in fairly searching for a ball or under Rule 12.2a in removing a *loose impediment* or *movable obstruction*),
  - » In making a practice swing, or
  - » In making the backswing for a *stroke*.

(2) **When Touching Sand Does Not Result in Penalty**. **Except** as covered by (1), this Rule does not prohibit the player from touching sand in the *bunker* in any other way, including:

- Digging in with the feet to take a *stance* for a practice swing or the *stroke*,
- Smoothing the *bunker* to care for the *course*,
- Placing 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 the player gets the ***general penalty*** if his or her actions in touching the sand *improve* the *conditions affecting the stroke* in breach of Rule 8.1a. (See also Rules 8.2 and 8.3 for limitations on *improving* or worsening other physical conditions to affect play.)

(3) **No Restrictions After Ball Is Played Out of Bunker**. After a ball in a *bunker* is played and it is outside the *bunker*, the player may:

- Touch sand in the *bunker* without penalty under Rule 12.2b(1), and
- Smooth sand in the *bunker* to care for the *course* without penalty under Rule 8.1a.

This is true even if the ball comes to rest outside the *bunker* and:

- The player is required or allowed by the Rules to take *stroke-and-distance* relief by *dropping* a ball in the *bunker*, or
- The sand in the *bunker* is on the player's *line of play* for the next *stroke* from outside the *bunker*.

But if the ball played from the *bunker* comes back into the *bunker*, or the player takes relief by *dropping* a ball in the *bunker*, the restrictions in Rules 12.2b(1) and 8.1a again apply to that ball *in play* in the *bunker*.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 12.2: *General Penalty*.

12.3 Specific Rules for Relief for Ball in Bunker

When a ball is in a *bunker*, specific relief Rules may apply in these situations:

- Interference by an *abnormal course condition* (Rule 16.1c),
- Interference by a dangerous *animal* condition (Rule 16.2), and
- Unplayable ball (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 the 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 the player 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 a ball and to repair damage and remove sand and loose soil on the putting green. There is no penalty for accidentally causing a ball or ball-marker to move on the putting green.

13.1a When Ball Is on Putting Green

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

- 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*.

If part of the ball is both on the *putting green* and in another *area of the course*, see Rule 2.2c.

13.1b Marking, Lifting and Cleaning Ball on Putting Green

A ball on the *putting green* may be lifted and cleaned (see Rule 14.1).

The spot of the ball must be *marked* before it is lifted and the ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

13.1c Improvements Allowed on Putting Green

During a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, a player may take these two actions on the *putting green*, no matter whether the ball is on or off the *putting green*:

(1) **Removal of Sand and Loose Soil**. Sand and loose soil on the *putting green* (**but** not anywhere else on the *course*) may be removed without penalty.

(2) **Repair of Damage**. A player 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 his or her hand, foot or other part of the body or a normal ball-mark repair tool, *tee*, club or similar item of normal *equipment*, and
- Without unreasonably delaying play (see Rule 5.6a).

But if the player *improves* the *putting green* by taking actions that exceed what is reasonable to restore the *putting green* to its original condition (such as by creating a pathway to the *hole* or by using an object that is not allowed), the player gets the ***general penalty*** for breach of Rule 8.1a.

"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 or areas of bare, diseased or uneven growth), or
- Natural wear of the *hole*.

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

There are two specific Rules for a ball or *ball-marker* that *moves* on the *putting green*.

(1) No Penalty for Accidentally Causing Ball to Move. There is no penalty if the player, *opponent* or another player in *stroke play* accidentally *moves* the player's ball or *ball-marker* on the *putting green*.

The player must:

- *Replace* the ball on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), or
- Place a *ball-marker* to *mark* that original spot.

Exception – Ball Must Be Played as It Lies When Ball Begins to Move During Backswing or Stroke and Stroke Is Made (see Rule 9.1b).

If the player or *opponent* deliberately lifts the player's ball or *ball-marker* on the *putting green*, see Rule 9.4 or 9.5 to find out if there is a penalty.

(2) When to Replace Ball Moved by Natural Forces. If *natural forces* cause a player's ball on the *putting green to move*, where the player must play from next depends on whether the ball had already been lifted and *replaced* on its original spot:

- Ball Already Lifted and Replaced. The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), even though it was *moved* by *natural forces* and not by the player, the *opponent* or an *outside influence* (see Rule 9.3, Exception).
- Ball Not Already Lifted and Replaced. The ball must be played from its new spot (see Rule 9.3).

13.1e No Deliberate Testing of Greens

During a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, a player must not deliberately take either of these actions to test the *putting green* or a *wrong green*:

- Rub the surface, or
- Roll a ball.

Exception – Testing Greens When Between Two Holes: Between two holes, a player may rub the surface or roll a ball on the *putting green* of the hole just completed and on any practice green (see Rule 5.5b).

Penalty for Testing the *Putting Green* or a *Wrong Green* in Breach of Rule 13.1e: *General Penalty.*

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule I-2 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting a player from rolling a ball on the *putting green* of the hole just completed.)

13.1f Relief Must Be Taken from Wrong Green

(1) **Meaning of Interference by Wrong Green**. Interference under this Rule exists when:

- Any part of the player's ball touches a *wrong green* or lies on or in anything (such as a *loose impediment* or an *obstruction*) and is inside the edge of a *wrong green*, or
- A *wrong green* physically interferes with the player's area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing.

(2) **Relief Must Be Taken**. When there is interference by a *wrong green*, a player must not play the ball as it lies.

Instead, the player must take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The *nearest point of complete relief* in the same *area of the course* where the original ball came to rest.
- 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 the reference point,
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » There must be complete relief from all interference by the *wrong green*.

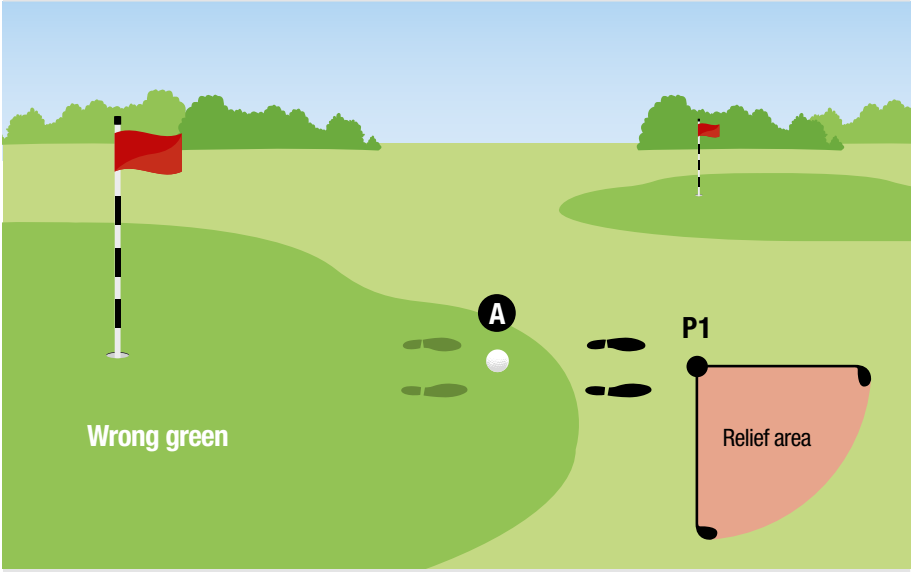
(3) **No Relief When Clearly Unreasonable**. There is no relief under Rule 13.1f if interference exists only because the player chooses a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule D-3 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule denying relief from a *wrong green* that only interferes with the area of intended *stance*).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 13.1: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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 on the same area of the course where the original ball came to rest (in this case, the general area). The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and must be in the same area of the course where the original ball came to rest. The player must take complete relief from the wrong green.

13.2 The Flagstick

Purpose of Rule:

This Rule covers the player's choices for dealing with the flagstick. The player may leave the flagstick in the hole or have it removed (which includes having someone attend the flagstick and remove it after the ball is played), but 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

(1) **Player May Leave Flagstick in Hole**. The player may make a *stroke* with the *flagstick* left in the *hole*, so that it is possible for the ball in motion to hit the *flagstick*.

The player must decide this before making the *stroke*, by either:

- Leaving the *flagstick* where it is in the *hole* or moving it so that it is centred in the *hole* and leaving it there, or
- Having a removed *flagstick* put back in the *hole*.

In either case:

- The player must not try to gain an advantage by deliberately moving the *flagstick* to a position other than centred in the *hole*.
- If the player does so and the ball in motion then hits the *flagstick*, he or she gets the ***general penalty***.

(2) **No Penalty If Ball Hits Flagstick Left in Hole**. If the player makes a *stroke* with the *flagstick* left in the *hole* and the ball in motion then hits the *flagstick*:

- There is no penalty (**except** as provided in (1)), and
- The ball must be played as it lies.

(3) **Limitation on Player Moving or Removing Flagstick in Hole While Ball Is in Motion**. After making a *stroke* with the *flagstick* left in the *hole*:

- The player and his or her *caddie* must not deliberately move or remove the *flagstick* to affect where the player's ball in motion might come to rest (such as to avoid having the ball hit the *flagstick*). If this is done, the player gets the ***general penalty***.
- **But** there is no penalty if the player has the *flagstick* in the *hole* moved or removed for any other reason, such as when he or she reasonably believes that the ball in motion will not hit the *flagstick* before coming to rest.

(4) **Limitation on Other Players Moving or Removing Flagstick When Player Has Decided to Leave It in Hole**. When the player has left the *flagstick* in the *hole* and has not authorized anyone to attend the *flagstick* (see Rule 13.2b(1)), another player must not deliberately move or remove the *flagstick* to affect where the player's ball in motion might come to rest.

- If another player or his or her *caddie* does so before or during the *stroke* and the player makes the *stroke* without being aware of this, or does so while the player's ball is in motion after the *stroke*, that other player gets the ***general penalty***.
- **But** there is no penalty if the other player or his or her *caddie* moves or removes the *flagstick* for any other reason, such as when he or she:
  - » Reasonably believes that the player's ball in motion will not hit the *flagstick* before coming to rest, or
  - » Is not aware that the player is about to play or that the player's ball is in motion.

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

13.2b Removing Flagstick from Hole

(1) Player May Have Flagstick Removed from Hole. The player may make a *stroke* with the *flagstick* removed from the *hole*, so that his or her ball in motion will not hit the *flagstick* in the *hole*.

The player must decide this before making the *stroke*, by either:

- Having the *flagstick* removed from the *hole* before playing the ball, or
- Authorizing someone to attend the *flagstick*, which means to remove it by:
  - » First holding the *flagstick* in, above or next to the *hole* before and during the *stroke* to show the player where the *hole* is, and
  - » Then removing the *flagstick* after the *stroke* is made.

The player is treated as having authorized the *flagstick* to be attended if:

- The player's *caddie* is holding the *flagstick* in, above or next to the *hole* or is standing right next to the *hole* when the *stroke* is made, even if the player is not aware the *caddie* is doing so,
- The player asks any other person to attend the *flagstick* and that person does so, or
- The player sees any other person holding the *flagstick* in, above or next to the *hole* or standing right next to the *hole*, and the player makes the *stroke* without asking that person to move away or to leave the *flagstick* in the hole.

(2) What to Do If Ball Hits Flagstick or Person Attending Flagstick. If the player's ball in motion hits a *flagstick* that the player had decided to have removed under (1), or hits the person who is attending the *flagstick* (or anything the person is holding), what happens depends on whether this was accidental or deliberate:

- Ball Accidentally Hits Flagstick or Person Who Removed or Is Attending It. If the player's ball in motion accidentally hits the *flagstick* or the person who removed or is attending it (or anything the person is holding), there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies.
- Ball Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Person Attending Flagstick. If the person who is attending the *flagstick* deliberately deflects or stops the player's ball in motion, Rule 11.2c applies:
  - » Where Ball Is Played from. The player must not play the ball as it lies and instead must take relief under Rule 11.2c.
  - » When Penalty Applies. If the person who deliberately deflected or stopped the ball was a player or his or her *caddie*, that player gets the ***general penalty*** for a breach of Rule 11.2.

For purposes of this Rule, "deliberately deflected or stopped" means the same thing as in Rule 11.2a, and includes when the player's ball in motion hits:

- A removed *flagstick* that was deliberately positioned or left in a particular place on the ground so that it might deflect or stop the ball,
- An attended *flagstick* that the person deliberately failed to remove from the *hole* or to move out of the way of the ball, or
- The person who attended or removed the *flagstick* (or anything the person was holding), when he or she deliberately failed to move out of the way of the ball.

Exception — Restrictions on Deliberately Moving Flagstick to Affect a Ball in Motion (see Rule 11.3).

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

13.2c Ball Resting Against Flagstick in Hole

If a player's ball comes to rest against the *flagstick* left in the *hole*:

- If any part of the ball is in the *hole* below the surface of the *putting green*, the ball is treated as *holed* even if the entire ball is not below the surface.
- If no part of the ball is in the *hole* below the surface of the *putting green*:
  - » The ball is not *holed* and must be played as it lies.
  - » If the *flagstick* is removed and the ball *moves* (whether it falls into the *hole* or moves away from the *hole*), there is no penalty and the ball must be *replaced* on the lip of the *hole* (see Rule 14.2).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 13.2c: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

In *stroke play*, the player is **disqualified** if he or she fails to *hole out* as required under Rule 3.3c.

13.3 Ball Overhanging Hole

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

If any part of a player's ball overhangs the lip of the *hole*:

- The player is allowed a reasonable time to reach the *hole* and ten more seconds to wait to see whether the ball will fall into the *hole*.
- If the ball falls into the *hole* in this waiting time, the player has *holed out* with the previous *stroke*.
- If the ball does not fall into the *hole* in this waiting time:
  - » The ball is treated as being at rest.
  - » If the ball then falls into the *hole* before it is played, the player has *holed out* with the previous *stroke*, **but** gets **one penalty stroke** added to the score for the hole.

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

If a ball overhanging the *hole* is lifted or *moved* before the waiting time under Rule 13.3a has ended, the ball is treated as having come to rest:

- The ball must be *replaced* on the lip of the *hole* (see Rule 14.2), and
- The waiting time under Rule 13.3a no longer applies to the ball. (See Rule 9.3 for what to do if the *replaced* ball is then *moved* by *natural forces*.)

If the *opponent* in *match play* or another player in *stroke play* deliberately lifts or *moves* the player's ball overhanging the *hole* before the waiting time has ended:

- In *match play*, the player's ball is treated as *holed* with the previous *stroke*, and there is no penalty to the *opponent* under Rule 11.2b.
- In *stroke play*, the player who lifted or *moved* the ball gets the ***general penalty* (two penalty strokes)**. The ball must be *replaced* on the lip of the *hole* (see Rule 14.2).

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 the player may mark the spot of a ball at rest and lift and clean the ball and how to put a ball back into play so that the ball is played from the right place.

- **When a lifted or moved ball is to be replaced, the same ball must be set down on its original spot.**
- **When taking free relief or penalty relief, a substituted ball or the original ball must be dropped in a particular relief area.**

A mistake in using these procedures may be corrected without penalty before the ball is played, but the player gets a penalty if he or she plays the ball from the wrong place.

14.1 Marking, Lifting and Cleaning Ball

This Rule applies to the deliberate "lifting" of a player's ball at rest, which includes picking up the ball by hand, rotating it or otherwise deliberately causing it to *move* from its spot.

14.1a Spot of Ball to Be Lifted and Replaced Must Be Marked

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

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

If the spot is *marked* with a *ball-marker*, after *replacing* the ball the player must remove the *ball-marker* before making a *stroke*.

If the player lifts the ball without *marking* its spot, *marks* its spot in a wrong way or makes a *stroke* with a *ball-marker* left in place, the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

When a ball is lifted to take relief under a Rule, the player is not required to *mark* the spot before lifting the ball.

14.1b Who May Lift Ball

The player's ball may be lifted under the Rules only by:

- The player, or
- Anyone the player authorizes, **but** such authorization must be given each time before the ball is lifted rather than given generally for the *round*.

Exception – Caddie May Lift Player's Ball on Putting Green Without Authorization: When the player's ball is on the *putting green*, his or her *caddie* may lift the ball without the player's authorization.

If the *caddie* lifts the ball without authorization when it is anywhere except on the *putting green*, the player gets **one penalty stroke** (see Rule 9.4).

14.1c Cleaning Lifted Ball

A ball lifted from the *putting green* may always be cleaned (see Rule 13.1b).

A ball lifted from anywhere else may always be cleaned **except** when it is lifted:

- To See If It Is Cut or Cracked. Cleaning is not allowed (see Rule 4.2c(1)).
- To Identify It. Cleaning is allowed only as needed to identify it (see Rule 7.3).
- Because It Interferes with Play. Cleaning is not allowed (see Rule 15.3b(2)).
- To See If It Lies in Condition Where Relief Is Allowed. Cleaning is not allowed, unless the player then takes relief under a Rule (see Rule 16.4).

If the player cleans a lifted ball when not allowed, he or she gets **one penalty stroke**.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

14.2 Replacing Ball on Spot

This Rule applies whenever a ball is lifted or *moved* and a Rule requires it to be *replaced* on a spot.

14.2a Original Ball Must Be Used

The original ball must be used when *replacing* a ball.

Exception – Another Ball May Be Used When:

- The original ball cannot be recovered with reasonable effort and in a few seconds, so long as the player did not deliberately cause the ball to become unrecoverable,
- The original ball is cut or cracked (see Rule 4.2c),
- Play resumes after it had been stopped (see Rule 5.7d), or
- The original ball was played by another player as a *wrong ball* (see Rule 6.3c(2)).

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

(1) Who May Replace Ball: The player's ball must be *replaced* under the Rules only by:

- The player, or
- Any person who lifted the ball or caused it to *move* (even if that person was not allowed to do so under the Rules).

If the player plays a ball that was *replaced* by someone not allowed to do so, the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

(2) How Ball Must Be Replaced. The ball must be replaced by setting it down on the required spot and letting it go so that it stays on that spot.

If the player plays a ball that was *replaced* in a wrong way but on the required spot, the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

14.2c Spot Where Ball Is Replaced

The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated), **except** when the ball must be *replaced* on a different spot under Rules 14.2d(2) and 14.2e.

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

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

If any *loose impediments* were removed as a result of the ball being lifted or *moved* or before the ball was *replaced*, they do not need to be replaced.

For restrictions on removing *loose impediments* before *replacing* a lifted or *moved* ball see Rule 15.1a, Exception 1.

14.2d Where to Replace Ball When Original Lie Altered

If the *lie* of a lifted or *moved* ball that must be *replaced* is altered, the player must *replace* the ball in this way:

(1) Ball in Sand. When the ball was in sand, whether in a *bunker* or anywhere else on the *course*:

- In *replacing* the ball on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2c), the player must re-create the original *lie* as much as possible.
- In re-creating the *lie*, the player may leave a small part of the ball visible if the ball had been covered by sand.

If the player fails to re-create the *lie* in breach of this Rule, the player has played from a *wrong place*.

(2) Ball Anywhere Except in Sand. When the ball was anywhere except in sand, the player 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) (see Rule 14.2c),
- Not nearer the *hole*, and
- In the same *area of the course* as that spot.

If the player knows that the original *lie* was altered but does not know what the *lie* was, the player must estimate the original *lie* and *replace* the ball under (1) or (2).

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 the player tries to *replace* a ball but it does not stay on its original spot, the player must try a second time.

If the ball again does not stay on that spot, the player must *replace* the ball by placing it on the nearest spot where the ball 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* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

14.3 Dropping Ball in Relief Area

This Rule applies whenever a player must *drop* a ball in taking relief under a Rule, including when the player must complete taking relief by placing a ball under Rule 14.3c(2).

If the player *improves* the *relief area* before or when *dropping* a ball, see Rule 8.1.

14.3a Original Ball or Another Ball May Be Used

The player may use the original ball or another ball.

This means that the player may use any ball each time he or she *drops* or places a ball under this Rule.

14.3b Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way

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

(1) **Player Must Drop Ball**. The ball must be *dropped* only by the player. Neither the player's *caddie* nor anyone else may do so.

(2) **Ball Must Be Dropped Straight Down from Knee Height Without Touching Player or Equipment**. The player must let go of the ball from a location at knee height so that the ball:

- Falls straight down, without the player 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 the player's body or *equipment* before it hits the ground.

"Knee height" means the height of the player's knee when in a standing position.

DIAGRAM 14.3b: DROPPING FROM KNEE HEIGHT

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.

(3) **Ball Must Be Dropped in Relief Area**. The ball must be *dropped* in the *relief area*. The player may stand either inside or outside the *relief area* when *dropping* the ball.

If a ball is *dropped* in a wrong way in breach of one or more of these three requirements:

- The player must *drop* a ball again in the right way, and there is no limit to the number of times the player must do so.
- A ball *dropped* in the wrong way does not count as one of the two *drops* required before a ball must be placed under Rule 14.3c(2).

If the player does not *drop* again and instead makes a *stroke* at the ball from where it came to rest after being *dropped* in a wrong way:

- If the ball was played from the *relief area*, the player gets ***one penalty stroke*** (but has not played from a *wrong place* under Rule 14.7a).
- **But** if the ball was played from outside the *relief area*, or after it was placed when required to be *dropped* (no matter where it was played from), the player gets the ***general penalty***.

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.

(1) **Player Has Completed Taking Relief When Ball Dropped in Right Way Comes to Rest in Relief Area**. The ball must come to rest in the *relief area*.

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

- If the ball comes to rest in the *relief area*, the player has completed taking relief and must play the ball as it lies.
- If the ball comes to rest outside the *relief area*, the player must use the procedures in Rule 14.3c(2).

In either case, there is no penalty to any player if a ball *dropped* in the right way accidentally hits any person, *equipment* or other *outside influence* before coming to rest.

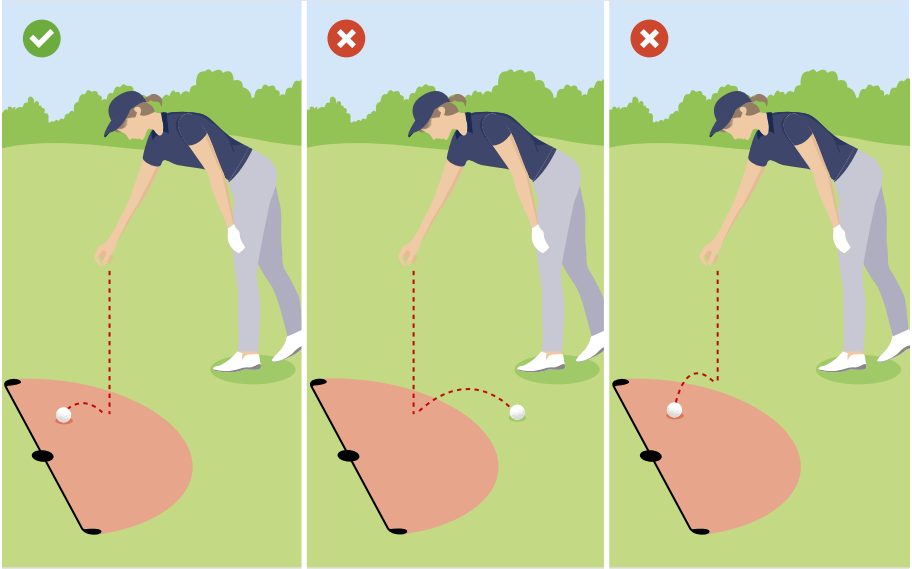
Exception – When Ball Dropped in Right Way is Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Any Person: For what to do when the *dropped* ball is deliberately deflected or stopped by any person before it comes to rest, see Rule 14.3d.

(2) **What to Do if Ball Dropped in Right Way Comes to Rest Outside Relief Area**. If the ball comes to rest outside the *relief area*, the player must *drop* a ball in the right way a second time.

If that ball also comes to rest outside the *relief area*, the player must then complete taking relief by placing a ball using the procedures for *replacing* a ball in Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e:

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

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.

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

For purposes of this Rule, a *dropped* ball is "deliberately deflected or stopped" when:

- A person deliberately touches the ball in motion after it hits the ground, or
- The ball in motion hits any *equipment* or other object or any person (such as the player's *caddie*) that a player deliberately positioned or left in a particular location so that the *equipment*, object or person might deflect or stop the ball in motion.

When a ball *dropped* in the right way is deliberately deflected or stopped by any person (whether in the *relief area* or outside the *relief area*) before it comes to rest:

- The player must *drop* a ball again, using the procedures in Rule 14.3b (which means that the ball that was deliberately deflected or stopped does not count as one of the two *drops* required before a ball must be placed under Rule 14.3c(2)).
- If the ball was deliberately deflected or stopped by any player or his or her *caddie*, that player gets the ***general penalty***.

Exception – When There Is No Reasonable Chance Ball Will Come to Rest in Relief Area: If a ball *dropped* in the right way is deliberately deflected or stopped (whether in the *relief area* or outside the *relief area*) when there is no reasonable chance it will come to rest in the *relief area*:

- There is no penalty to any player, and
- The *dropped* ball is treated as having come to rest outside the *relief area* and counts as one of the two *drops* required before a ball must be placed under Rule 14.3c(2).

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* Under Rule 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

See Rule 22.2 (in *Foursomes*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* is treated as action of the player); **23.5** (in *Four-Ball*, either *partner* may act for the *side* and action by the *partner* concerning the player's ball or *equipment* is treated as action of the player).

14.4 When Player's Ball is Back in Play after Original Ball Was Out of Play

When a player's ball *in play* is lifted from the *course* or is *lost* or *out of bounds*, the ball is no longer *in play*.

The player has a ball *in play* again only when he or she:

- Plays the original ball or another ball from the *teeing area*, or
- *Replaces*, *drops* or places the original ball or another ball on the *course* with the intent for that ball to be *in play*.

If the player returns a ball to the *course* in any way with the intent for it to be *in play*, the ball is *in play* even if it was:

- *Substituted* for the original ball when not allowed under the Rules, or
- *Replaced*, *dropped* or placed (1) in a *wrong place*, (2) in a wrong way or (3) by using a procedure that did not apply.

A *replaced* ball is *in play* even if the *ball-marker marking* its spot has not been removed.

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

14.5a Player May Lift Ball to Correct Mistake Before Ball Is Played

When a player has *substituted* another ball for the original ball when not allowed under the Rules or the player's ball *in play* was *replaced*, *dropped* or placed (1) in a *wrong place* or came to rest in a *wrong place*, (2) in a wrong way or (3) by using a procedure that did not apply:

- The player may lift the ball without penalty and correct the mistake.
- **But** this is allowed only before the ball is played.

14.5b When Player May Change to a Different Rule or Relief Option When Correcting Mistake in Taking Relief

When correcting a mistake in taking relief, whether the player must use the same Rule and relief option originally used or may change to a different Rule or relief option depends on the nature of the mistake:

(1) **When Ball Was Put in Play Under Rule That Did Not Apply**.

- In correcting this mistake, the player may use any Rule that applies to his or her situation.
- For example, if the player mistakenly took unplayable ball relief for his or her ball in a *penalty area* (which Rule 19.1 does not allow), the player must correct the mistake by either *replacing* the ball (if it had been lifted) under Rule 9.4, or taking penalty relief under Rule 17 and may use any relief option under that Rule that applies to his or her situation.

(2) **When Ball Was Put in Play Under Rule That Applied but Ball Was Dropped or Placed in Wrong Place**.

- In correcting this mistake, the player must go on to take relief under the same Rule but may use any relief option under that Rule that applies to his or her situation.
- For example, if when taking relief for an unplayable ball, the player used the lateral relief option Rule (19.2c) and mistakenly *dropped* the ball outside the required *relief area*, in correcting the mistake the player must go on to take relief under Rule 19.2 but may use any of the relief options in Rule 19.2a, b or c.

(3) **When Ball Was Put in Play Under Rule That Applied and Was Dropped or Placed in Right Place, but Rule Requires Ball to Be Dropped or Placed Again**.

- In correcting this mistake, the player must go on to take relief using the same Rule and the same relief option under that Rule.
- For example, if when taking relief for an unplayable ball, the player used the lateral relief option (Rule 19.2c) and the ball was (1) *dropped* in the right *relief area* but (2) was *dropped* in a wrong way (see Rule 14.3b) or came to rest outside the *relief area* (see Rule 14.3c), in correcting the mistake the player must go on to take relief under Rule 19.2 and must use the same relief option (lateral relief under Rule 19.2c).

14.5c No Penalties for Ball Lifted to Correct Mistake

When a ball is lifted under Rule 14.5a to correct a mistake:

- The player does not count any penalty for actions that were taken relating to that ball after the mistake and before it was lifted, such as for accidentally causing it to *move* (see Rule 9.4b).
- **But** if those same actions were also in breach of a Rule relating to the ball that was put *in play* to correct the mistake (such as when those actions *improved* the *conditions affecting the stroke* for both the ball now *in play* and the original ball before it was lifted), the penalty applies to the ball now *in play*.

14.6 Making Next Stroke from Where Previous Stroke Made

This Rule applies whenever a player is required or allowed under the Rules to make the 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).

- How the player must put a ball *in play* depends on the *area of the course* where that previous *stroke* was made.
- In all of these situations, the player may use either the original ball or another ball.

14.6a Previous Stroke Made from Teeing Area

The original ball or another ball must be played from anywhere inside the *teeing area* (and may be teed) under Rule 6.2b.

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

The original ball or another ball must be *dropped* in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The spot where the 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 the reference point, and
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

14.6c Previous Stroke Made from Putting Green

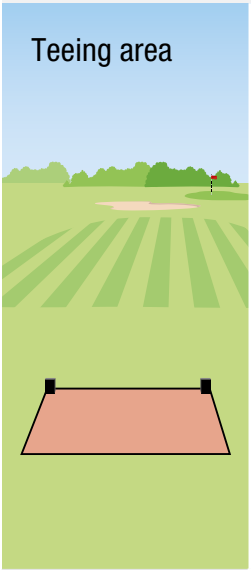
The original ball or another ball must be placed on the spot where the previous *stroke* was made (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2), using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 14.6: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

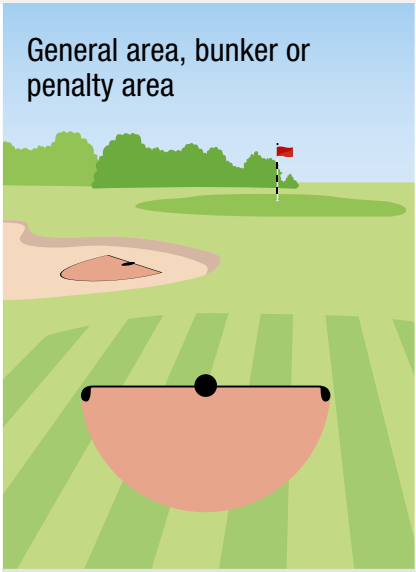
If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

DIAGRAM 14.6: MAKING NEXT STROKE FROM WHERE PREVIOUS STROKE MADE

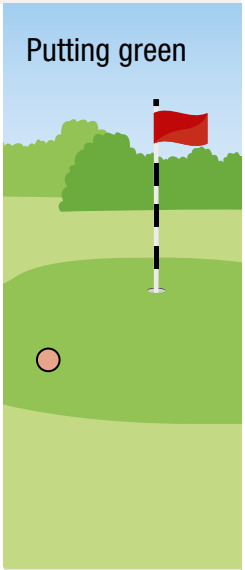
When a player is required or allowed to make the next stroke from where the previous stroke was made, how the player must put a ball into play depends on the area of the course where that previous stroke was made.



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



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

14.7 Playing from Wrong Place

14.7a Place from Where Ball Must Be Played

After starting a hole:

- A player must make each *stroke* from where his or her ball comes to rest, **except** when the Rules require or allow the player to play a ball from another place (see Rule 9.1).
- A player must not play his or her ball *in play* from a *wrong place*.

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

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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

(1) **Player Must Decide Whether to Play Out Hole with Ball Played from Wrong Place or to Correct the Mistake by Playing from Right Place**. What a player does next depends on whether it was a *serious breach* – that is, whether the player could have gained a significant advantage by playing from a *wrong place*:

- Not a Serious Breach. The player must play out the hole with the ball played from a *wrong place*, without correcting the mistake.
- Serious Breach.
  - » The player must correct the mistake by playing out the hole with a ball played from a right place under the Rules.
  - » If the player does not correct the mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the *round*, before returning his or her *scorecard*, the player is **disqualified**.
- What to Do If Uncertain Whether Breach Is Serious. The player should play out the hole with both the ball played from a *wrong place* and a second ball played from a right place under the Rules.

(2) **Player Who Tries to Correct Mistake Must Report to Committee**. If the player tries to correct the mistake under (1) by playing a ball from a right place:

- The player must report the facts to the *Committee* before returning the *scorecard*.
- This applies whether the player played out the hole with only that ball or with two balls (and even if the player scores the same with both balls).

If the player does not report the facts to the *Committee*, he or she is **disqualified**.

(3) **When Player Tried to Correct Mistake, Committee Will Decide Player's Score for Hole**. The player's score for the hole depends on whether the *Committee* decides that there was a *serious breach* in playing the original ball from a *wrong place*:

- No Serious Breach.
  - » The score with the ball played from a *wrong place* counts, and the player gets the ***general penalty* under Rule 14.7a** (which means that **two penalty strokes** are added to the score with that ball).
  - » If a second ball was played, all strokes with that ball (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count.
- Serious Breach.
  - » The score with the ball played to correct the mistake of playing from a *wrong place* counts, and the player gets the ***general penalty* under Rule 14.7a** (which means that **two penalty strokes** are added to the score with that ball).
  - » The *stroke* made in playing the original ball from a *wrong place* and any more strokes with that ball (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count.
  - » If the ball played to correct the mistake was also played from a *wrong place*:
    - – If the *Committee* decides that this was not a *serious breach*, the player gets the ***general penalty* (two more penalty strokes) under Rule 14.7a**, making a **total of four penalty strokes** that are added to the score with that ball (two for playing the original ball from a *wrong place* and two for playing the other ball from a *wrong place*).
    - – If the *Committee* decides that this was a *serious breach*, the player is **disqualified**.

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 the player 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 a player is normally allowed to remove them when they interfere with play.**
- **But the player needs to be careful in moving loose impediments near his or her ball off the putting green, because there will be a penalty if moving them causes the ball to move.**

15.1 Loose Impediments

15.1a Removal of Loose Impediment

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

But there are two **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Removing Loose Impediment Where Ball Must Be Replaced: Before *replacing* a ball that was lifted or *moved* from anywhere except the *putting green*:

- A player must not deliberately remove a *loose impediment* that, if moved when the ball was at rest, would have been likely to have caused the ball to *move*.
- If the player does so, he or she gets **one penalty stroke**, **but** the removed *loose impediment* does not need to be replaced.

This exception applies both during a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a. It does not apply to a *loose impediment* that is removed as a result of *marking* the spot of a ball or lifting, *moving* or *replacing* a ball or causing a ball to *move*.

Exception 2 – Restrictions on Deliberately Removing Loose Impediments to Affect Ball in Motion (see Rule 11.3).

15.1b Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediment

If a player's removal of a *loose impediment* causes his or her ball to *move*:

- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).
- If the *moved* ball had been at rest anywhere except on the *putting green* (see Rule 13.1d) or in the *teeing area* (see Rule 6.2b(6)), the player gets **one penalty stroke** under Rule 9.4b, **except** when Rule 7.4 applies (no penalty for ball *moved* during search) or when another exception to Rule 9.4b applies.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 15.1: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

15.2 Movable Obstructions

This Rule covers free relief that is allowed from artificial objects that meet the definition of *movable obstruction*.

It does not give relief from *immovable obstructions* (a different type of free relief is allowed under Rule 16.1) or *boundary objects* or *integral objects* (no free relief is allowed).

15.2a Relief from Movable Obstruction

(1) Removal of Movable Obstruction. Without penalty, a player may remove a *movable obstruction* anywhere on or off the *course* and may do so in any way.

But there are two **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Tee Markers Must Not be Moved When Ball Will Be Played from Teeing Area (see Rules 6.2b(4) and 8.1a(1)).

Exception 2 – Restrictions on Deliberately Removing Movable Obstruction to Affect a Ball in Motion (see Rule 11.3).

If a player's ball *moves* while he or she is removing a *movable obstruction*:

- There is no penalty, and
- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

(2) **Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction Anywhere on Course Except on Putting Green**. The player may take free relief by lifting the ball, removing the *movable obstruction* and *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the *movable obstruction*.
- 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 the reference point, and
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

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

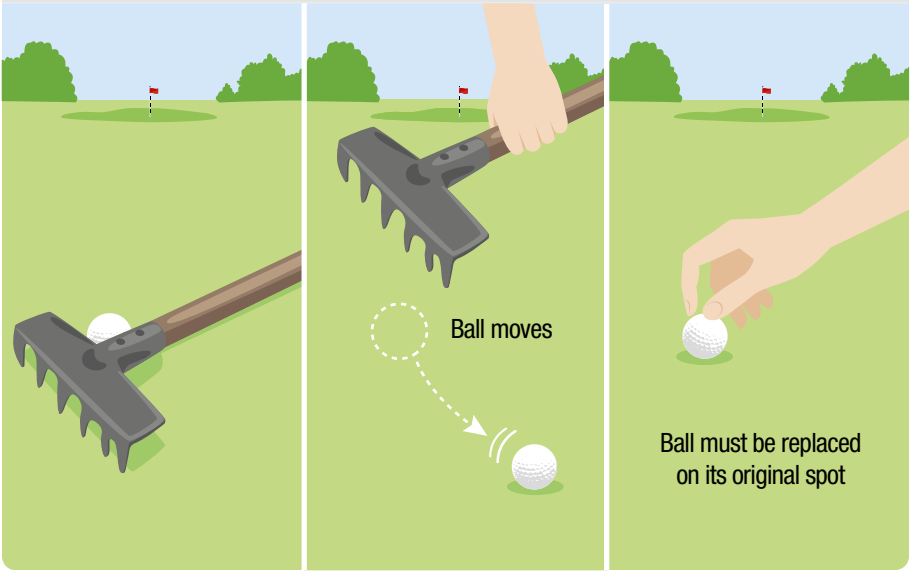
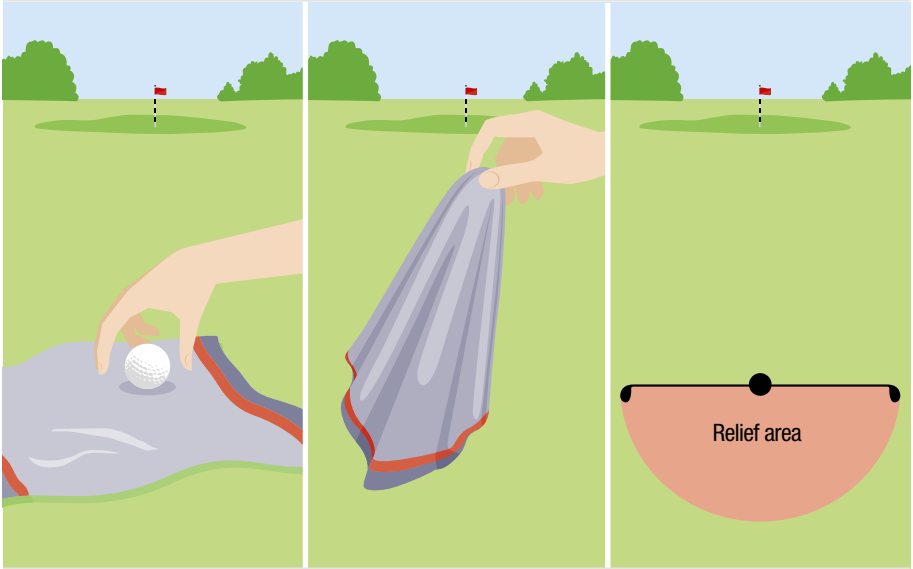


DIAGRAM #2 15.2a: BALL IN OR ON MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION



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. The reference point for taking relief is the estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the movable obstruction. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and must be in the same area of the course as the reference point.

(3) **Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction on Putting Green**. The player may take free relief by:

- Lifting the ball and removing the *movable obstruction*, and
- Placing the original ball or another ball on the estimated spot right under where the ball was at rest in or on the *movable obstruction*, using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rule 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

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

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that it came to rest in or on a *movable obstruction* on the *course*, the player may use this relief option instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief:

- The player may take free relief under Rule 15.2a(2) or 15.2a(3), using the estimated point right under where the ball last crossed the edge of the *movable obstruction* on the *course* as the reference point.
- Once the player puts another ball *in play* to take relief in this way:
  - » The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
  - » This is true even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b).

But if it is not *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on a *movable obstruction* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 15.2: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

15.3 Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

15.3a Ball on Putting Green Helping Play

Rule 15.3a applies only to a ball at rest on the *putting green*, not anywhere else on the *course*.

If a player reasonably believes that a ball on the *putting green* might help anyone's play (such as by serving as a possible backstop near the *hole*), the player may:

- *Mark* the spot of the ball and lift it under Rule 13.1b if it is his or her own ball, or if the ball belongs to another player, require the other player to *mark* the spot and lift the ball (see Rule 14.1).
- The lifted ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

In *stroke play* only:

- A player who is required to lift a ball may play first instead, and
- If two or more players agree to leave a ball in place to help any player, 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

(1) **Meaning of Interference by Another Player's Ball**. Interference under this Rule exists when another player's ball at rest:

- Might interfere with the player's area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing,
- Is on or close to the player's *line of play* such that, given the intended *stroke*, there is a reasonable chance the player's ball in motion could hit that ball, or
- Is close enough to distract the player in making the *stroke*.

(2) **When Relief Is Allowed from Interfering Ball**. If a player reasonably believes that another player's ball anywhere on the *course* might interfere with the player's own play:

- The player may require the other player to *mark* the spot and lift the ball (see Rule 14.1), and the ball must not be cleaned (**except** when lifted from the *putting green* under Rule 13.1b) and must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).
- If the other player does not *mark* the spot before lifting the ball or cleans the lifted ball when not allowed, he or she gets **one penalty stroke**.
- In *stroke play* only, a player required to lift his or her ball under this Rule may play first instead.

A player is not allowed to lift his or her ball under this Rule based only on the player's own belief that the ball might interfere with another player's play.

If the player lifts his or her ball when not required to do so by the other player (**except** when lifting the ball on the *putting green* under Rule 13.1b), the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

15.3c Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

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

- Move the *ball-marker* out of the way if it is his or her 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 he or she may require a ball to be lifted under Rules 15.3a and 15.3b.

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.

Either the lifted ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2) or the *ball-marker* must be replaced to *mark* that spot.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 15.3: *General Penalty.*

This penalty also applies if the player:

- Makes a *stroke* without waiting for a helping ball or *ball-marker* to be lifted or moved after becoming aware that another player (1) intended to lift or move it under this Rule or (2) had required someone else to do so, or
- Refuses to lift his or her ball or move his or her *ball-marker* when required to do so and a *stroke* is then made by the other player whose play might have been helped or interfered with.

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 15.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 16 covers when and how the player may take free relief by playing a ball from a different place, such as when there is interference by an abnormal course condition or a dangerous animal condition.

- **These conditions are not treated as part of the challenge of playing the course, and free relief is generally allowed except in a penalty area.**
- **The player normally takes relief by dropping a ball in a relief area based on the nearest point of complete relief.**

This Rule also covers free relief when a player's 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.
- This Rule does not give relief from *movable obstructions* (a different type of free relief is allowed under Rule 15.2a) or *boundary objects* or *integral objects* (no free relief is allowed).

16.1a When Relief Is Allowed

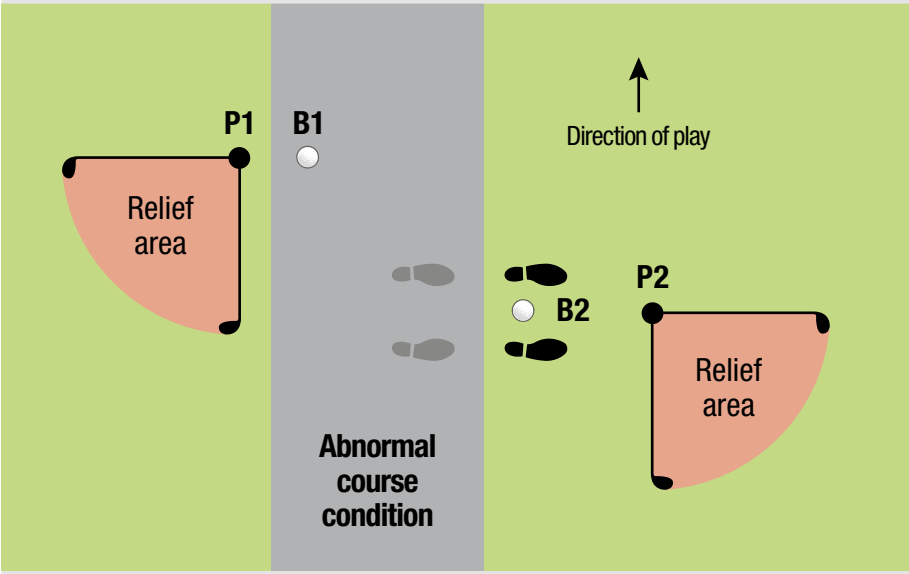
(1) Meaning of Interference by Abnormal Course Condition. Interference exists when any one of these is true:

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

If the *abnormal course condition* is close enough to distract the player but does not meet any of these requirements, there is no interference under this Rule.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule F-6 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule denying relief from an *abnormal course condition* that only interferes with the area of intended *stance*).

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.

(2) **Relief Allowed Anywhere on Course Except When Ball Is in Penalty Area**. Relief from interference by an *abnormal course condition* is allowed under Rule 16.1 only when both:

- The *abnormal course condition* is on the *course* (not *out of bounds*), and
- The ball is anywhere on the *course*, **except** in a *penalty area* (where the player's only relief is under Rule 17).

(3) **No Relief When Clearly Unreasonable to Play Ball**. There is no relief under Rule 16.1:

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

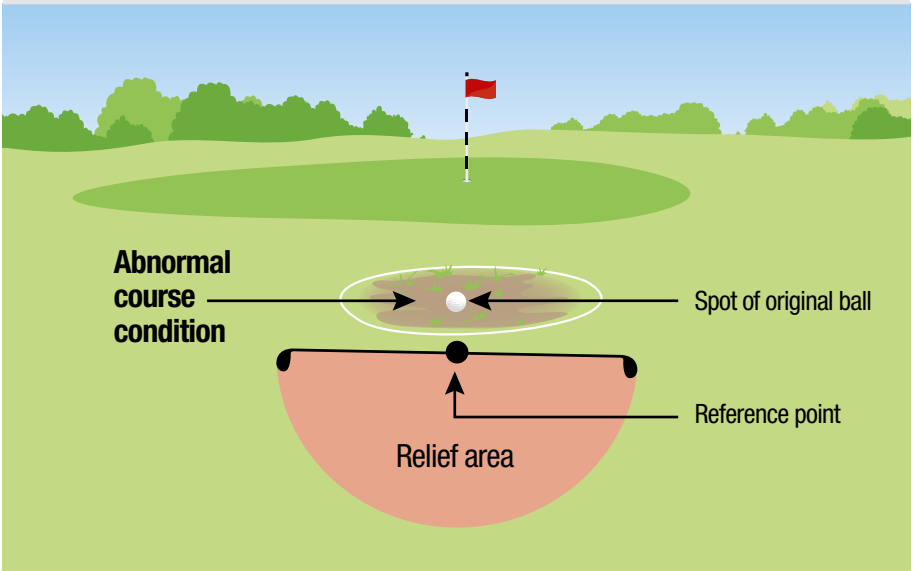
See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule F-23 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing free relief from interference by temporary immovable obstructions on or off the *course*).

16.1b Relief for Ball in General Area

If a player's ball is in the *general area* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The *nearest point of complete relief* in the *general area*.
- 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 *general area*,
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » There must be complete relief from all interference by the *abnormal course condition*.

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. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and must be in the general area. When taking relief, the player must take complete relief from all interference by the abnormal course condition.

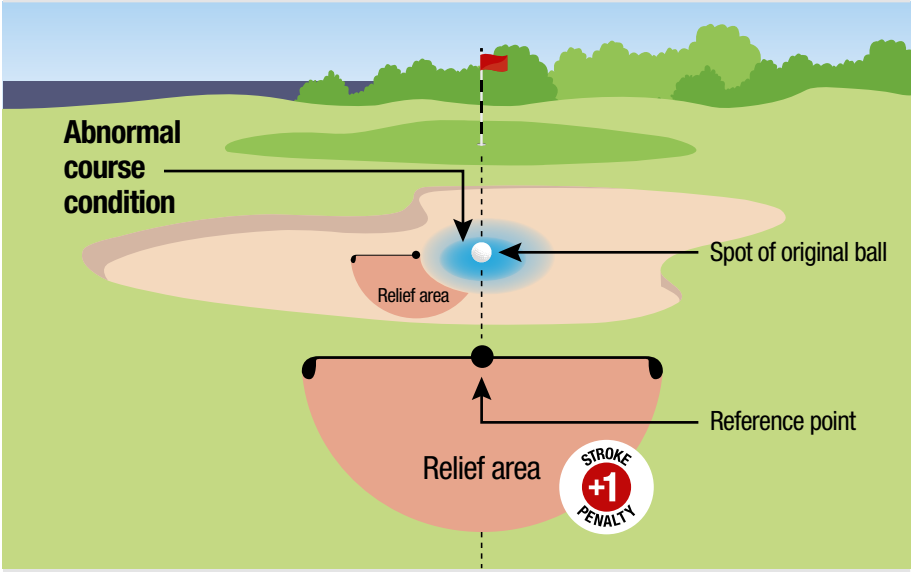
16.1c Relief for Ball in Bunker

If a player's ball is in a *bunker* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take either free relief under (1) or penalty relief under (2):

(1) **Free Relief: Playing from Bunker**. The player may take 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*, the player may still take this relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* in the *bunker* as the reference point.

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 or 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. The reference point is 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). The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point, but may be in any area of the course. In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

(2) **Penalty Relief: Playing from Outside Bunker (Back-On-the-Line Relief)**. For **one penalty stroke**, the player may *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3) in a *relief area* that is based on a reference line going straight back from the *hole* through the spot of the original ball:

- Reference Point: A point on the *course* chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the *hole* than that original spot (with no limit on how far back on the line):
  - » In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a *tee*).

  - » If the player *drops* the ball without having chosen this point, the reference point is treated as being the point on the line that is the same distance from the *hole* as where the *dropped* ball first touched the ground.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: One *club-length*, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within one *club-length* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

16.1d Relief for Ball on Putting Green

If a player's ball is on the *putting green* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take free relief by placing the original ball or another ball on the spot of the *nearest point of complete relief*, using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

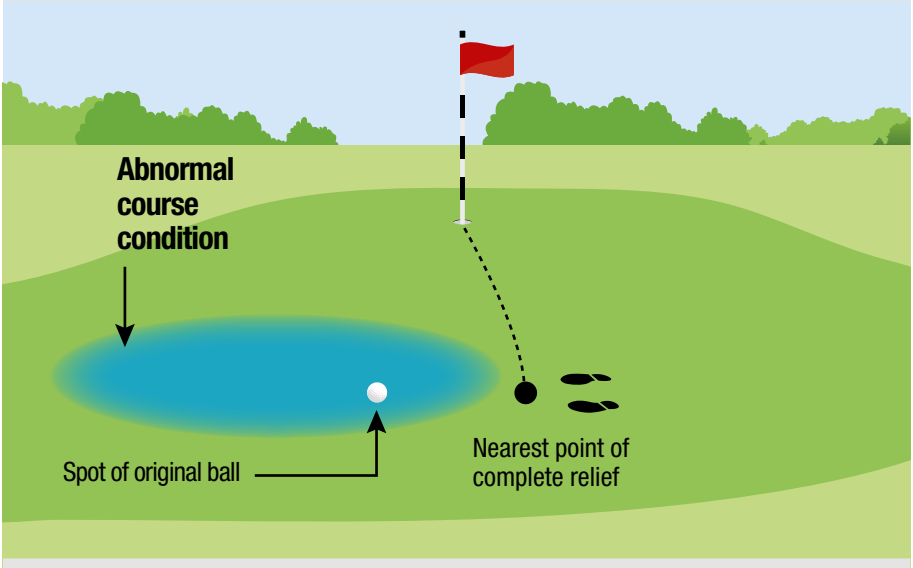
- The *nearest point of complete relief* must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.
- If there is no such *nearest point of complete relief*, the player may still take this free relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* as the reference point, which must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.

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

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may use this relief option instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief:

- The player may take relief under Rule 16.1b, c or d, using the estimated point where the ball last crossed the edge of the *abnormal course condition* on the *course* as the spot of the ball for purposes of finding the *nearest point of complete relief*.
- Once the player puts another ball *in play* to take relief in this way:
  - » The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
  - » This is true even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b).

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. The nearest point of complete relief must be either on the putting green or in the general area. If there is no such nearest point of complete relief, the player 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.

But if it is not *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on an *abnormal course condition* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

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

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

(1) When Ball Is in No Play Zone. If the player's ball is in a *no play zone* in or on an *abnormal course condition* in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*:

- No Play Zone in General Area. The player must take free relief under Rule 16.1b.

- No Play Zone in Bunker. The player must take free relief or penalty relief under Rule 16.1c(1) or (2).
- No Play Zone on Putting Green. The player must take free relief under Rule 16.1d.

(2) **When No Play Zone Interferes with Stance or Swing for Ball Anywhere on Course Except Penalty Area**. If a player's ball is outside a *no play zone* and is in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*, and a *no play zone* (whether in an *abnormal course condition* or in a *penalty area*) interferes with the player's area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing, the player must either:

- Take relief if allowed under Rule 16.1b, c or d, depending on whether the ball is in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*, or
- Take unplayable ball relief under Rule 19.

For what to do when there is interference by a *no play zone* for a ball in a *penalty area*, see Rule 17.1e.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.1: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

16.2 Dangerous Animal Condition

16.2a When Relief Is Allowed

A "dangerous *animal* condition" exists when a dangerous *animal* (such as poisonous snakes, stinging bees, alligators, fire ants or bears) near a ball could cause serious physical injury to the player if he or she had to play the ball as it lies.

A player may take relief under Rule 16.2b from interference by a dangerous *animal* condition no matter where his or her ball is on the *course*, **except** that relief is not allowed:

- When playing the ball as it lies is clearly unreasonable because of something other than the dangerous *animal* condition (for example, when a player is unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush), or
- When interference exists only because the player chooses a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

16.2b Relief For Dangerous Animal Condition

When there is interference by a dangerous *animal* condition:

(1) **When Ball Is Anywhere Except Penalty Area**. The player may take relief under Rule 16.1b, c or d, depending on whether the ball is in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*.

(2) **When Ball Is in Penalty Area**. The player may take free relief or penalty relief:

- Free Relief: Playing from Inside Penalty Area. The player may take free relief under Rule 16.1b, **except** that the *nearest point of complete relief* and the *relief area* must be in the *penalty area*.
- Penalty Relief: Playing from Outside Penalty Area.
  - » The player may take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d.
  - » If there is interference by a dangerous *animal* condition where the ball would be played after taking this penalty relief outside the *penalty area*, the player may take further relief under (1) without additional penalty.

For purposes of this Rule, the *nearest point of complete relief* means the nearest point (not nearer the *hole*) where the dangerous *animal* condition does not exist.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.2: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

16.3 Embedded Ball

16.3a When Relief Is Allowed

(1) **Ball Must Be Embedded in General Area**. Relief is allowed under Rule 16.3b only when a player's ball is *embedded* in the *general area*.

- There is no relief under this Rule if the ball is *embedded* anywhere except in the *general area*.
- **But** if the ball is *embedded* on the *putting green*, the player may *mark* the spot of the ball and lift and clean the ball, repair the damage caused by the ball's impact, and *replace* the ball on its original spot (see Rule 13.1c(2)).

Exceptions – When Relief Not Allowed for Ball Embedded in General Area: Relief under Rule 16.3b is not allowed:

- When the 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 the ball being *embedded* makes the *stroke* clearly unreasonable (for example, when a player is unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush).

(2) **Determining Whether Ball Is Embedded**. A player's ball is *embedded* only if:

- It is in its own pitch-mark made as a result of the player's previous *stroke*, and
- Part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

If the player cannot tell for sure whether the ball is in its own pitch-mark or a pitch-mark made by another ball, the player may treat the ball as *embedded* if it is reasonable to conclude from the available information that the ball is in its own pitch-mark.

A ball is not *embedded* if it is below the level of the ground as a result of anything other than the player's previous *stroke*, such as when:

- The ball is pushed into the ground by someone stepping on it,
- The ball is driven straight into the ground without becoming airborne, or
- The ball was *dropped* in taking relief under a Rule.

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.

16.3b Relief for Embedded Ball

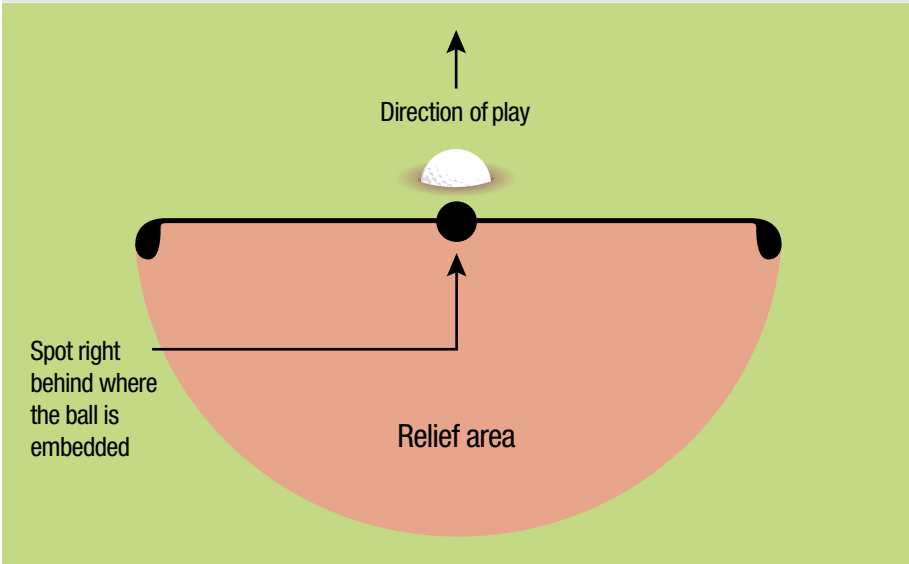
When a player's ball is *embedded* in the *general area* and relief is allowed under Rule 16.3a, the player may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The spot right behind where the ball is *embedded*.
- 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 *general area*, and
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule F-2 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing relief only for a ball *embedded* in an area cut to fairway height or less).

Penalty for Playing a Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

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. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and must be in the general area.

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

If a player reasonably believes that his or her ball lies in a condition where free relief is allowed under Rule 15.2, 16.1 or 16.3, but cannot decide that without lifting the ball:

- The player may lift the ball to see if relief is allowed, **but**
- The spot of the ball must first be *marked*, and the lifted ball must not be cleaned (**except** on the *putting green*) (see Rule 14.1).

If the player lifts the ball without having this reasonable belief (**except** on the *putting green* where the player may lift under Rule 13.1b), he or she gets **one penalty stroke**.

If relief is allowed and the player takes relief, there is no penalty even if the player did not *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleaned the lifted ball.

If relief is not allowed, or if the player chooses not to take relief that is allowed:

- The player gets **one penalty stroke** if he or she did not *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleaned the lifted ball when not allowed, and
- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.4: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

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, players may use specific relief options to play a ball from outside the penalty area.

17.1 Options for Ball in Penalty Area

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

A player 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 Ball Is in Penalty Area

A ball is in a *penalty area* when any part of the ball:

- Lies on or touches the ground or anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the edge of the *penalty area*, or
- Is above the edge or any other part of the *penalty area*.

If part of the ball is both in a *penalty area* and in another *area of the course*, see Rule 2.2c.

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

The player may either:

- Play the ball as it lies without penalty, under the same Rules that apply to a ball in the *general area* (which means there are no special Rules limiting how a ball may be played from a *penalty area*), or
- Play a ball from outside the *penalty area* by taking penalty relief under Rule 17.1d or 17.2.

Exception – Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area (see Rule 17.1e).

17.1c Relief for Ball Not Found but in Penalty Area

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in a *penalty area*:

- The player may take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d or 17.2.
- Once the player puts another ball *in play* to take relief in this way:
  - » The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
  - » This is true even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b).

But if it is not *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in a *penalty area* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance relief* under Rule 18.2.

17.1d Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

If a player's ball is in a *penalty area*, including when it is *known or virtually certain* to be in a *penalty area* even though not found, the player has these relief options, each for **one penalty stroke**:

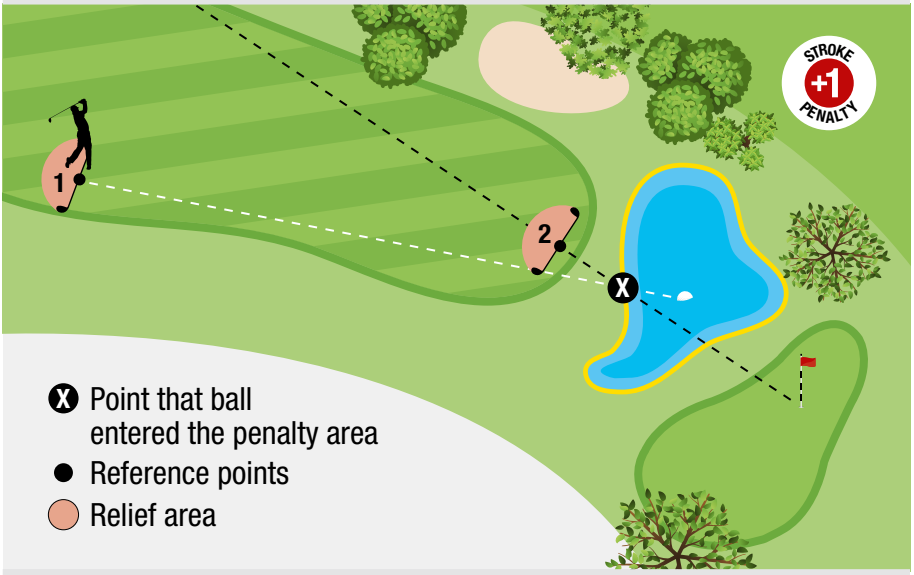
(1) Stroke-and-Distance Relief. The player may play the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

(2) Back-On-the-Line Relief. The player may *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3) in a *relief area* that is based on a reference line going straight back from the *hole* through the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area*:

- Reference Point: A point on the *course* chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the *hole* than the estimated point (with no limit on how far back on the line):
  - » In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a *tee*).
  - » If the player *drops* the ball without having chosen this point, the reference point is treated as being the point on the line that is the same distance from the *hole* as where the *dropped* ball first touched the ground.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: One *club-length*, **but** with these limits:

- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course* except the same *penalty area*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within one *club-length* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

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

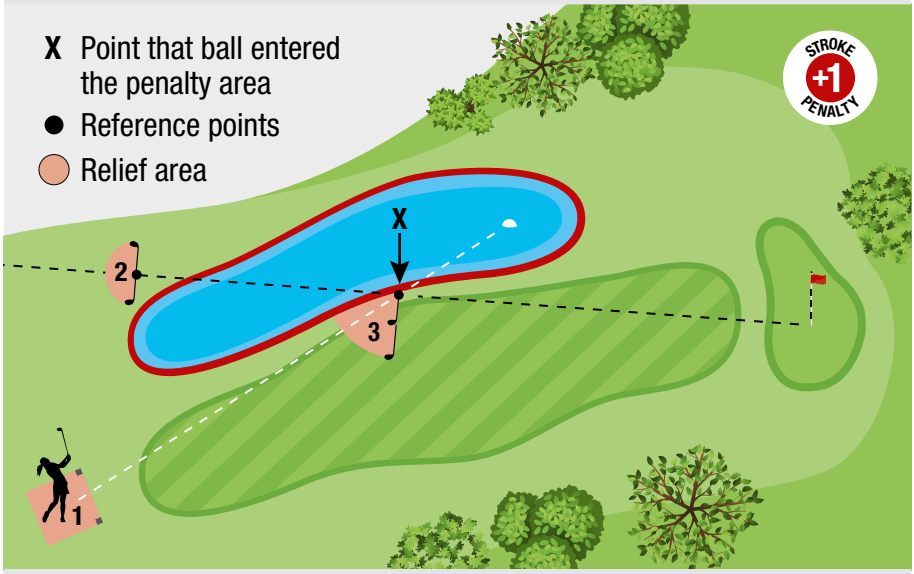


When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a yellow penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **two options**, each for one penalty stroke:

(**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).

(**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. The reference point is 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. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course, except the same penalty area. In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

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



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, which is the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area. The relief area is two club-lengths from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course, except the same penalty area.

(3) Lateral Relief (Only for Red Penalty Area). When the ball last crossed the edge of a red *penalty area*, the player may *drop* the original ball or another ball in this lateral *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red *penalty area*.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: Two *club-lengths*, **but** with these limits:

- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course* except the same *penalty area*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within two *club-lengths* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule B-2 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing lateral relief on the opposite side of a red *penalty area* at an equal distance from the *hole*).

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

In each of these situations, the player must not play the ball as it lies:

(1) **When Ball Is in No Play Zone in Penalty Area**. The player must take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d or 17.2.

(2) **When No Play Zone on Course Interferes with Stance or Swing for Ball in Penalty Area**. If a player's ball is in a *penalty area*, and is outside a *no play zone* but a *no play zone* (whether in an *abnormal course condition* or in a *penalty area*) interferes with his or her area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing, the player must either:

- Take penalty relief outside the *penalty area* under Rule 17.1d or 17.2, or
- Take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (if it exists) in the *penalty area* (see Rule 14.3):
  - » **Reference Point**: The *nearest point of complete relief* from the *no play zone*.
  - » **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 *penalty area* where the ball lies, and
    - – Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

But there is no free relief from interference by the *no play zone* under (2):

- When playing the ball as it lies is clearly unreasonable because of something other than the *no play zone* (for example, when a player is unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush), or

- When interference exists only because the player chooses a club, type of *stance* or swing, or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

For what to do when there is interference by a *no play zone* for a ball anywhere except in a *penalty area*, see Rule 16.1f.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 17.1: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

17.2 Options After Playing Ball from Penalty Area

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

If a ball played from a *penalty area* comes to rest in the same *penalty area* or another *penalty area*, the player may play the ball as it lies (see Rule 17.1b).

Or, for **one penalty stroke**, the player may take relief under any of these options:

(1) **Normal Relief Options**. The player may take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 17.1d(1), back-on-the-line relief under Rule 17.1d(2) or, for a red *penalty area*, lateral relief under Rule 17.1d(3).

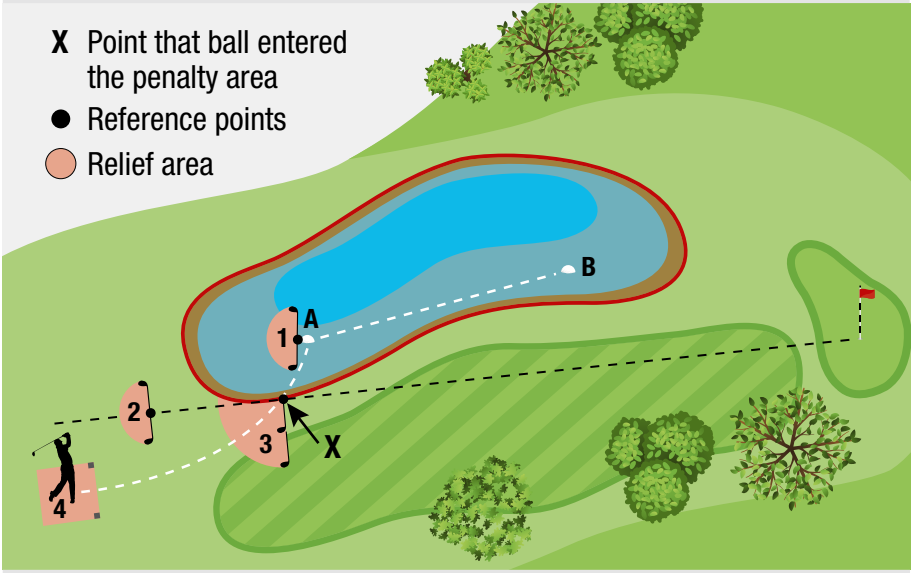
Under Rule 17.1d(2) or (3), the estimated point used to determine the *relief area* is where the original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area* where the ball now lies.

If the player takes *stroke-and-distance* relief by *dropping* a ball in the *penalty area* (see Rule 14.6) and then decides not to play the *dropped* ball from where it comes to rest:

- The player may take further relief outside the *penalty area* under Rule 17.1d(2) or (3) (for a red *penalty area*) or under Rule 17.2a(2).
- If the player does so, he or she gets **one more penalty stroke**, for a total of **two penalty strokes**: one stroke for taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, and one stroke for taking relief outside the *penalty area*.

(2) **Extra Relief Option: Playing from Where Last Stroke Made Outside a Penalty Area**. Instead of using one of the normal relief options under (1), the player may choose to play the original ball or another ball from where he or she made the last *stroke* from outside a *penalty area* (see Rule 14.6).

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.

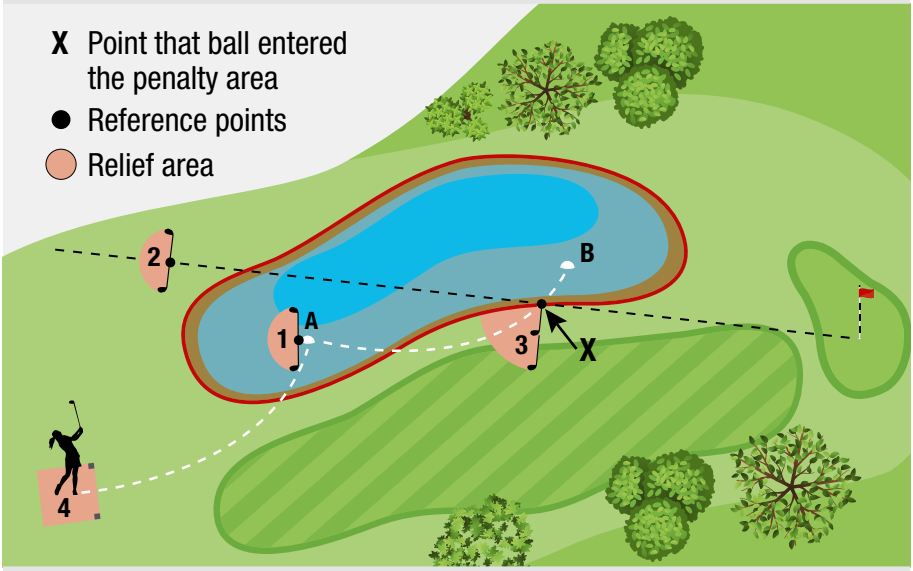
(**2**) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

(**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 Ball Played from Penalty Area Is Lost, Out of Bounds or Unplayable Outside Penalty Area

After playing a ball from a *penalty area*, a player may sometimes be required or choose to take *stroke-and-distance* relief because the original ball is either:

- *Out of bounds* or *lost* outside the *penalty area* (see Rule 18.2), or
- Unplayable outside the *penalty area* (see Rule 19.2a).

If the player takes *stroke-and-distance* relief by *dropping* a ball in the *penalty area* (see Rule 14.6) and then decides not to play the *dropped* ball from where it comes to rest:

- The player may take further relief outside the *penalty area* under Rule 17.1d(2) or (3) (for a red *penalty area*) or under Rule 17.2a(2).
- If the player does so, he or she gets **one more penalty stroke**, for a **total of two penalty strokes**: one stroke for taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, and one stroke for taking relief outside the *penalty area*.

The player may directly take such relief outside the *penalty area* without first *dropping* a ball in the *penalty area*, **but** still gets a **total of two penalty strokes**.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 17.2: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

17.3 No Relief Under Other Rules for Ball in Penalty Area

When a player's 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).

The player's only relief option is to take penalty relief under Rule 17.

But when a dangerous *animal* condition interferes with the play of a ball in a *penalty area*, the player may take either free relief in the *penalty area* or penalty relief outside the *penalty area* (see Rule 16.2b(2)).

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 a 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; the player 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 the 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, a player may take *stroke-and-distance* relief by adding **one penalty stroke** and playing the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

The player always has this *stroke-and-distance* relief option:

- No matter where the player's ball is on the *course*, and
- Even when a Rule requires the player to take relief in a certain way or to play a ball from a certain place.

Once the player puts another ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 14.4):

- The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
- This is true even if the original ball is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b).

But this does not apply to a ball to be played from where the previous *stroke* was made when the player:

- Announces that he or she is playing a *provisional ball* (see Rule 18.3b), or
- Is playing a second ball in *stroke play* under Rule 14.7b or 20.1c(3).

18.2 Ball Lost or Out of Bounds: Stroke-and-Distance Relief Must Be Taken

18.2a When Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds

(1) **When Ball Is Lost**. A ball is *lost* if not found in three minutes after the player or his or her *caddie* begins to search for it.

If a ball is found in that time but it is uncertain whether it is the player's ball:

- The player must promptly attempt to identify the ball (see Rule 7.2) and is 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 the player is not where the ball is found.

If the player does not identify his or her ball in that reasonable time, the ball is *lost*.

(2) **When Ball Is Out of Bounds**. A ball at rest is *out of bounds* only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the *course*.

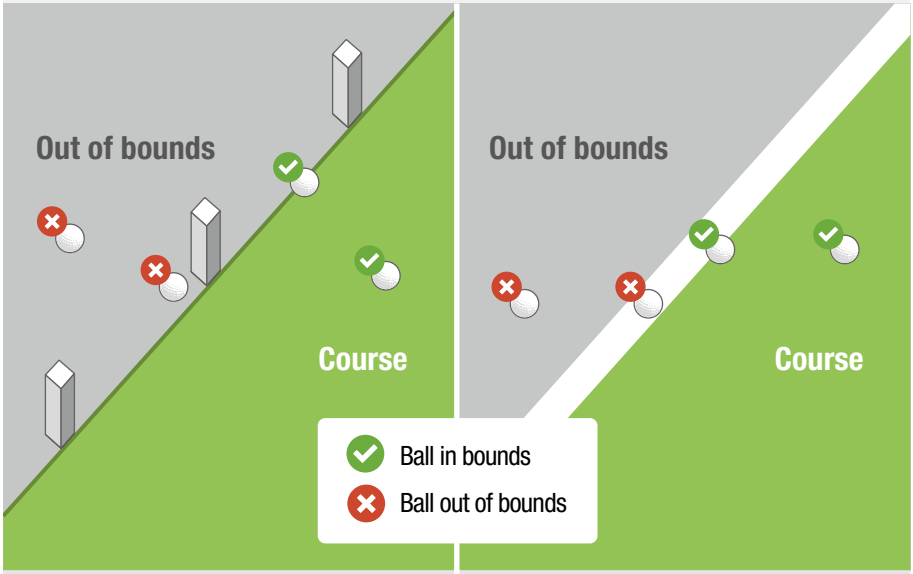
A ball is in bounds when any part of the ball:

- Lies on or touches the ground or anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the boundary edge, or
- Is above the boundary edge or any other part of the *course*.

A player may stand *out of bounds* to play a ball on 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.



The boundary edge is defined by the line between the course-side points of the stakes at ground level, and the stakes are out of bounds.

The boundary edge is the course-side edge of the line, and the line itself is out of bounds.

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

If a ball is *lost* or *out of bounds*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief by adding **one penalty stroke** and playing the original ball or another 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: Instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, the player may *substitute* another ball as allowed under a Rule that applies when his or her ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball:

- Came to rest on the *course* and was *moved* by an *outside influence* (see Rule 9.6) or played as a *wrong ball* by another player (see Rule 6.3c(2)),
- Came to rest on the *course* in or on a *movable obstruction* (see Rule 15.2b) or an *abnormal course condition* (see Rule 16.1e),

- Is in a *penalty area* (see Rule 17.1c), or
- Was deliberately deflected or stopped by any person (see Rule 11.2c).

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 18.2: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

18.3 Provisional Ball

18.3a When Provisional Ball Is Allowed

If a ball might be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or be *out of bounds*, to save time the player may play another ball provisionally under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 14.6).

For a ball that might be *lost*, this applies:

- When the original ball has not been found and identified and is not yet *lost*, and
- When a ball might be *lost* in a *penalty area* but also might be *lost* somewhere else on the *course*.

But if the player is aware that the only possible place the 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 the player's ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 18.1).

If a *provisional ball* itself might be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or be *out of bounds*:

- The player may play another *provisional ball*.
- That *provisional ball* then has the same relationship to the first *provisional ball* as the first one has to the original ball.

18.3b Announcing Play of Provisional Ball

Before the *stroke* is made, the player must announce that he or she is going to play a *provisional ball*:

- It is not enough for the player only to say that he or she is playing another ball or is playing again.
- The player must use the word "provisional" or otherwise clearly indicate that he or she is playing the ball provisionally under Rule 18.3.

If the player does not announce this (even if he or she intended to play a *provisional ball*) and plays a ball from where the previous *stroke* was made, that ball is the player's ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 18.1).

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

(1) Playing Provisional Ball More Than Once. The player 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 the original ball is estimated to be.

This is true even if the *provisional ball* is played several times.

But it stops being a *provisional ball* when it becomes the ball *in play* under (2) or is abandoned under (3) and therefore becomes a *wrong ball*.

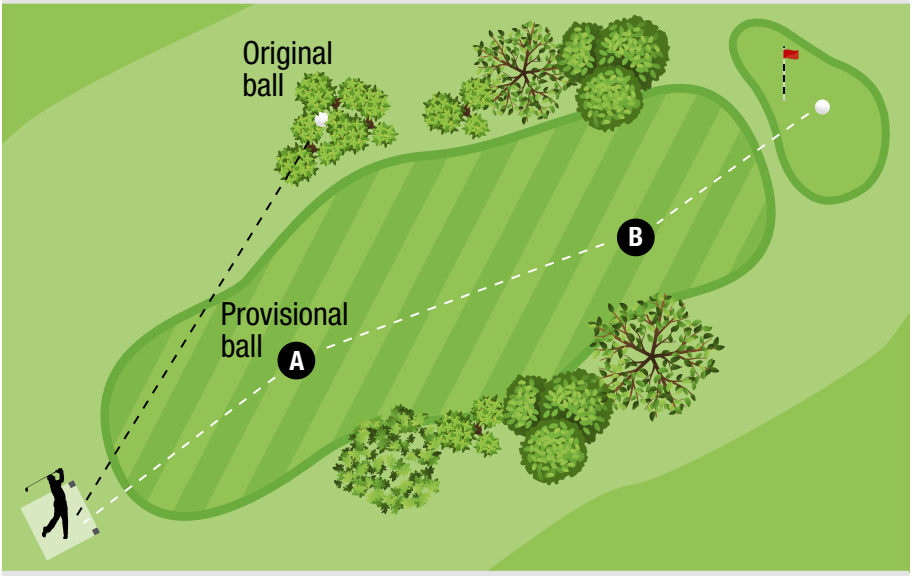
(2) When Provisional Ball Becomes Ball in Play. The *provisional ball* becomes the player's ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* in either of these two cases:

- When Original Ball Is Lost Anywhere on Course Except in Penalty Area or Is Out of Bounds. The original ball is no longer *in play* (even if it is then found on the *course* after the end of the three-minute search time) and is now a *wrong ball* that must not be played (see Rule 6.3c).
- When Provisional Ball Is Played from Spot Nearer Hole Than Where Original Ball Is Estimated to Be. The original ball is no longer *in play* (even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time or is found nearer the *hole* than had been estimated) and is now a *wrong ball* that must not be played (see Rule 6.3c).

If the player plays a *provisional ball* into the same general location as the original ball and is unable to identify which ball is which:

- If only one of the balls is found on the *course*, that ball is treated as the *provisional ball*, which is now *in play*.
- If both balls are found on the *course*, the player must choose one of the balls to be treated as the *provisional ball*, which is now *in play*, and the other ball is treated as *lost* and must not be played.

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: The player has an extra option when his or her ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball:

- Came to rest on the *course* and was *moved* by an *outside influence* (see Rule 9.6),
- Came to rest on the *course* in or on a *movable obstruction* (see Rule 15.2b) or an *abnormal course condition* (see Rule 16.1e), or
- Was deliberately deflected or stopped by any person (see Rule 11.2c).

When one of those Rules applies, the player may either:

- *Substitute* another ball as allowed under that Rule, or
- Treat the *provisional ball* as the ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

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

- When Original Ball Is Found on Course Outside Penalty Area Before the End of the Three-Minute Search Time. The player must play the original ball as it lies.
- When Original Ball Is Found in Penalty Area or Is Known or Virtually Certain to Be in Penalty Area. The player must either play the original ball as it lies or take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d.

In either case:

- The player must not make any more *strokes* with the *provisional ball* which is now a *wrong ball* (see Rule 6.3c), and
- All strokes with that *provisional ball* before it was abandoned (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 18.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

RULE 19 Unplayable Ball

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 19 covers the player's several relief options for an unplayable ball. This allows the player 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 Player May Decide to Take Unplayable Ball Relief Anywhere Except Penalty Area

A player is the only person who may decide to treat his or her ball as unplayable by taking penalty relief under Rule 19.2 or 19.3.

Unplayable ball relief is allowed anywhere on the *course*, **except** in a *penalty area*.

If a ball is unplayable in a *penalty area*, the player's only relief option is to take penalty relief under Rule 17.

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

A player may take unplayable ball relief using one of the three options in Rule 19.2a, b or c, in each case adding **one penalty stroke**.

- The player may take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 19.2a even if the original ball has not been found and identified.
- **But** to take back-on-the-line relief under Rule 19.2b or lateral relief under Rule 19.2c, the player must know the spot of the original ball.

19.2a Stroke-and-Distance Relief

The player may play the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

19.2b Back-On-the-Line Relief

The player may *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3) in a *relief area* that is based on a reference line going straight back from the *hole* through the spot of the original ball:

- Reference Point: 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):
  - » In choosing this point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a *tee*).
  - » If the player *drops* the ball without having chosen this point, the reference point is treated as being the point on the line that is the same distance from the *hole* as where the *dropped* ball first touched the ground.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: One *club-length*, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within one *club-length* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

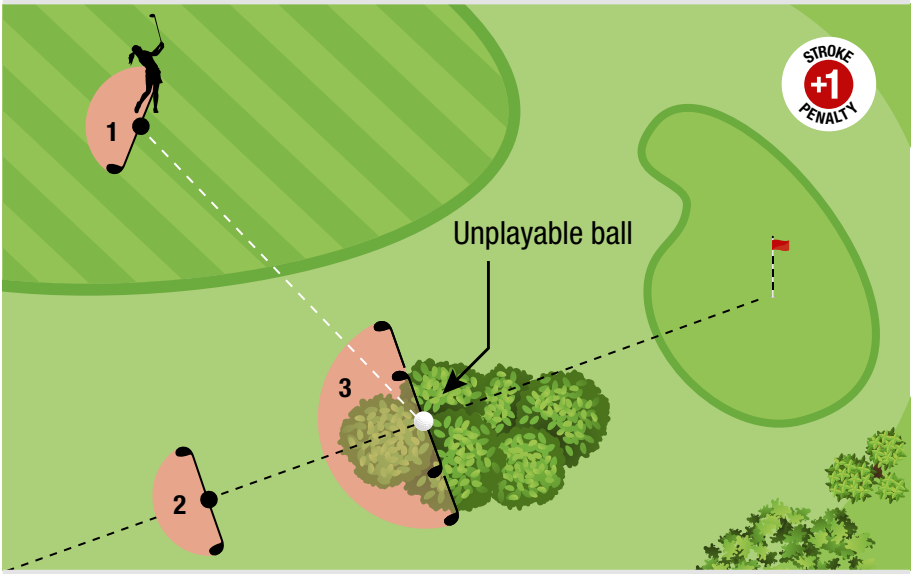
19.2c Lateral Relief

The player may *drop* the original ball or another ball in this lateral *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- Reference Point: The spot of the original ball.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: Two *club-lengths*, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within two *club-lengths* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 19.2: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

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).

(**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. The reference point is 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. There is no limit on how far back on the line the reference point may be. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course. In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

(**3**) The player may take lateral relief. The reference point is the spot of the original ball. The relief area is two club-lengths from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course.

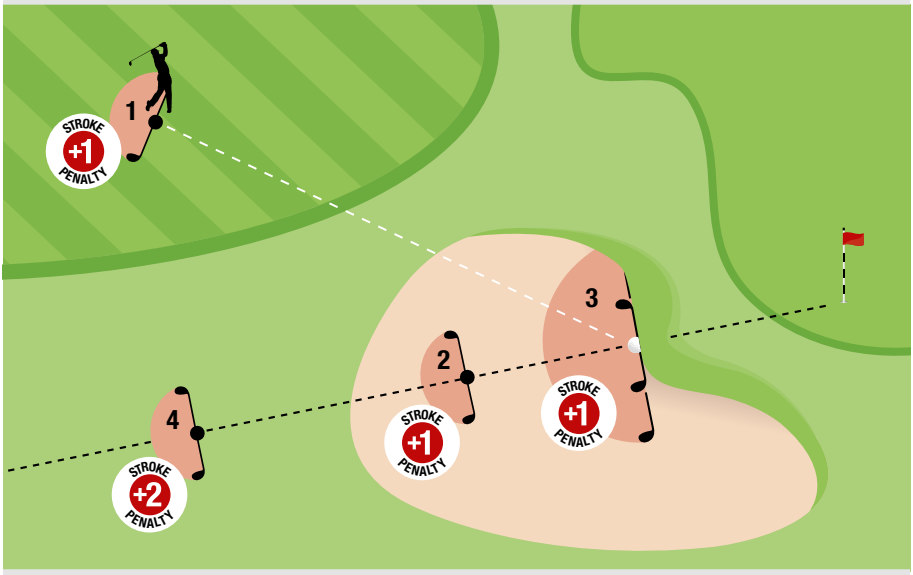
19.3 Relief Options for Unplayable Ball in Bunker

19.3a Normal Relief Options (One Penalty Stroke)

When a player's ball is in a *bunker*:

- The player may take unplayable ball relief for **one penalty stroke** under any of the options in Rule 19.2, **except** that:
- The ball must be *dropped* in and come to rest in a *relief area* in the *bunker* if the player takes either back-on-the-line relief (see Rule 19.2b) or lateral relief (see Rule 19.2c).

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.

19.3b Extra Relief Option (Two Penalty Strokes)

As an extra relief option when a player's ball is in a *bunker*, for a **total of two penalty strokes**, the player may take back-on-the-line relief outside the *bunker* under Rule 19.2b.

Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 19.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.

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 players should do when they have questions about the Rules during a round, including the procedures (which differ in match play and stroke play) allowing a player to protect the 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 Players Must Avoid Unreasonable Delay

Players 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, the player must decide what to do and play on.
- The player may protect his or her rights by asking for a ruling in *match play* (see Rule 20.1b(2)) or by playing two balls in *stroke play* (see Rule 20.1c(3)).

20.1b Rules Issues in Match Play

(1) **Deciding Issues by Agreement**. During a *round*, the players in a match may agree how to decide a Rules issue:

- The agreed outcome is conclusive even if it turns out to have been wrong under the Rules, so long as the players did not deliberately agree to ignore any Rule or penalty they knew applied (see Rule 1.3b(1)).
- **But** if a *referee* is assigned to the match, the *referee* must rule on any issue that comes to his or her attention in time and the players must follow that ruling.

In the absence of a *referee*, if the players do not agree or have doubt about how the Rules apply, either player may request a ruling under Rule 20.1b(2).

(2) **Ruling Request Made Before Result of Match Is Final**. When a player wants a *referee* or the *Committee* to decide how to apply the Rules to his or her own play or the *opponent's* play, the player may make a request for a ruling.

If a *referee* or the *Committee* is not available in a reasonable time, the player may make the request for a ruling by notifying the *opponent* that a later ruling will be sought when a *referee* or the *Committee* becomes available.

If a player makes a request for a ruling before the result of the match is final:

- A ruling will be given only if the request is made in time, which depends on when the player becomes aware of the facts creating the Rules issue:
  - » When Player Becomes Aware of the Facts Before Either Player Starts the Final Hole of the Match. When the player becomes aware of the facts, the ruling request must be made before either player makes a *stroke* to begin another hole.
  - » When Player Becomes Aware of the Facts During or After Completion of the Final Hole of the Match. The ruling request must be made before the result of the match is final (see Rule 3.2a(5)).
- If the player does not make the request in this time, a ruling will not be given by a *referee* or the *Committee* and the result of the hole(s) in question will stand even if the Rules were applied in the wrong way.

If the player requests a ruling about an earlier hole, a ruling will be given only if all three of these apply:

- The *opponent* breached Rule 3.2d(1) (giving wrong number of strokes taken) or Rule 3.2d(2) (failing to tell the player about a penalty),
- The request is based on facts the player was not aware of before either player made a *stroke* to begin the hole being played or, if between holes, the hole just completed, and
- After becoming aware of these facts, the player makes a request for a ruling in time (as set out above).

(3) Ruling Request Made After Result of Match Is Final. When a player makes a request for a ruling after the result of the match is final:

- The *Committee* will give the player a ruling only if both of these apply:
  - » The request is based on facts the player was not aware of before the result of the match was final, and
  - » The *opponent* breached Rule 3.2d(1) (giving wrong number of strokes taken) or Rule 3.2d(2) (failing to tell the player about a penalty) and knew of the breach before the result of the match was final.
- There is no time limit on giving such a ruling.

(4) No Right to Play Two Balls. A player who is uncertain about the right procedure in a match is not allowed to play out the hole with two balls. That procedure applies only in *stroke play* (see Rule 20.1c).

20.1c Rules Issues in Stroke Play

(1) 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:

- The players are encouraged to help each other in applying the Rules, **but** they have no right to decide a Rules issue by agreement and any such agreement they may reach is not binding on any player, a *referee* or the *Committee*.
- A player should raise any Rules issues with the *Committee* before returning his or her *scorecard*.

(2) Players Should Protect Other Players in the Competition. To protect the interests of all other players:

- If a player knows or believes that another player has breached or might have breached the Rules and that the other player does not recognize or is ignoring this, the player should tell the other player, the player's *marker*, a *referee* or the *Committee*.
- This should be done promptly after the player becomes aware of the issue, and no later than before the other player returns his or her *scorecard* unless it is not possible to do so.

If the player fails to do so, the *Committee* may disqualify the player under Rule 1.2a if it decides that this was serious misconduct contrary to the spirit of the game.

(3) Playing Two Balls When Uncertain What to Do. A player who is uncertain about the right procedure while playing a hole may complete the hole with two balls without penalty:

- The player must decide to play two balls after the uncertain situation arises and before making a *stroke*.
- The player should choose which ball will count if the Rules allow the procedure used for that ball, by announcing that choice to his or her *marker* or to another player before making a *stroke*.
- If the player does not choose in time, the ball played first is treated as the ball chosen by default.
- The player must report the facts of the situation to the *Committee* before returning the *scorecard*, even if the player scores the same with both balls. The player is **disqualified** if he or she fails to do so.
- If the player made a *stroke* before deciding to play a second ball:
  - » This Rule does not apply at all and the score that counts is the score with the ball played before the player decided to play the second ball.
  - » **But** the player gets no penalty for playing the second ball.

A second ball played under this Rule is not the same as a *provisional ball* under Rule 18.3.

(4) **Committee Decision on Score for Hole**. When a player plays two balls under (3), the *Committee* will decide the player's score for the hole in this way:

- The score with the ball chosen (whether by the player or by default) counts if the Rules allow the procedure used for that ball.
- If the Rules do not allow the procedure used for that ball, the score with the other ball played counts if the Rules allow the procedure used for that other ball.
- If the Rules do not allow the procedures used for each of the two balls, the score with the ball chosen (whether by the player or by default) counts unless there was a *serious breach* in playing that ball from a *wrong place*, in which case the score with the other ball counts.
- If there was a *serious breach* in playing each ball from a *wrong place*, the player is **disqualified**.
- All strokes with the ball that does not count (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count in the player's score for the hole.

"Rules allow the procedure used" means that either: (a) the original ball was played as it lies and play was allowed from there, or (b) the ball that was played was put *in play* under the right procedure, in the right way and in the right place under the Rules.

20.2 Rulings on Issues Under the Rules

20.2a Rulings by Referee

A *referee* is an official named by the *Committee* to decide questions of fact and apply the Rules.

A *referee's* ruling on the facts or how the Rules apply must be followed by the player.

- A player has no right to appeal a *referee's* ruling to the *Committee*.
- The *referee* may seek the *Committee's* help before making a ruling or refer a ruling to the *Committee* for review, **but** is not required to do so.

See Committee Procedures, Section 6C (explaining the scope of a *referee's* authority).

20.2b Rulings by Committee

When there is no *referee* to give a ruling or when a *referee* refers a ruling to the *Committee*:

- The ruling will be given by the *Committee*, and
- The *Committee's* ruling is final.

If the *Committee* cannot reach a decision, it may refer the issue to the Rules of Golf Committee of The R&A, whose decision is final.

20.2c Applying "Naked Eye" Standard When Using Video Evidence

When the *Committee* is deciding questions of fact in making a ruling, the use of video evidence is limited by the "naked eye" standard:

- If the facts shown on the video could not reasonably have been seen with the naked eye, that video evidence will be disregarded even if it indicates a breach of the Rules.
- **But** even where video evidence is disregarded under the "naked eye" standard, a breach of the Rules will still be found if the player was otherwise aware of facts establishing a breach (such as where the player felt the club touch sand in a *bunker* even though that could not be seen by the naked eye).

20.2d When Wrong Rulings Will Be Corrected

If a ruling by a *referee* or the *Committee* is later found to be wrong:

- The ruling will be corrected if possible under the Rules.
- If it is too late to do so, the wrong ruling stands.

If a player takes an action in breach of a Rule based on a reasonable misunderstanding of a *referee's* or *Committee's* instruction during a *round* or while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a (such as lifting a ball *in play* when not allowed under the Rules), there is no penalty and the instruction is treated like a wrong ruling.

See Committee Procedures, Section 6C (what the *Committee* should do when there has been a wrong ruling).

20.2e Disqualifying Players After Result of Match or Competition Is Final

(1) Match Play. There is no time limit on disqualifying a player under Rule 1.2 (serious misconduct) or Rule 1.3b(1) (deliberately ignoring a known breach or penalty, or agreeing with another player to ignore any Rule or penalty they know applies).

This may be done even after the result of the match is final (see Rule 3.2a(5)).

For when the *Committee* will give a ruling when a request is made after the result of the match is final, see Rule 20.1b(3).

(2) Stroke Play. Normally, a penalty must not be added or corrected after a *stroke-play* competition has closed, which is:

- When the result becomes final in the way set by the *Committee* or,
- In *stroke-play* qualifying followed by *match play*, when the player has teed off to start his or her first match.

But a player must be **disqualified** even after the competition is closed if he or she:

- Returned a score for any hole lower than actually taken for any reason other than failing to include one or more penalty strokes that, before the competition closed, the player did not know about (see Rule 3.3b(3)),
- Knew before the competition had closed that the returned *scorecard* showed a handicap that was higher than the actual handicap, and this affected the number of handicap strokes used to adjust the player's score (see Rule 3.3b(4)),
- Knew before the competition had closed that he or she was in breach of any other Rule with a penalty of disqualification, or
- Deliberately agreed with another player to ignore any Rule or penalty they knew applied (see Rule 1.3b(1)).

The *Committee* may also disqualify a player under Rule 1.2 (serious misconduct) after the competition has closed.

20.3 Situations Not Covered by the Rules

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

- Considering all the circumstances, and
- Treating the situation in a way that is reasonable, fair and consistent with how similar situations are treated under the Rules.

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 (the 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

Stableford is a form of *stroke play* where:

- A player's or *side's* score for a hole is based on points awarded by comparing the player's or *side's* number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) on the hole to a fixed target 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.

The normal Rules for *stroke play* in Rules 1-20 apply, as modified by these specific Rules. Rule 21.1 is written for:

- Scratch competitions, but can be adapted for handicap competitions, and
- Individual play, but can be adapted for competitions involving *partners*, as modified by Rules 22 (*Foursomes*) and 23 (*Four-Ball*), and for team competitions, as modified by Rule 24.

21.1b Scoring in Stableford

(1) **How Points Are Awarded**. Points are awarded to a player for each hole by comparing the player's score to the fixed target score for the hole, which is par unless the *Committee* sets a different 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

A player who does not *hole out* under the Rules for any reason gets zero points for the hole.

To help pace of play, players are encouraged to stop playing a hole when their score will result in zero points.

The hole is completed when the player *holes out*, chooses not to do so or when his or her score will result in zero points.

(2) **Score Entered for Each Hole**. To meet the requirements in Rule 3.3b for entering hole scores on the *scorecard*:

- If Hole Is Completed by Holing Out:
  - » When Score Would Result in Points Being Awarded. The *scorecard* must show the score.
  - » When Score Would Result in Zero Points. The *scorecard* must show either no score or any score that results in zero points being awarded.
- If Hole Is Completed Without Holing Out. If the player does not *hole out* under the Rules, the *scorecard* must show either no score or any score that results in zero points being awarded.

The *Committee* is responsible for calculating how many points the player gets on each hole and, in a handicap competition, for applying handicap strokes to the score entered for each hole before calculating the number of points.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5A(5) (the Terms of the Competition may encourage but not require players to enter the points awarded for each hole on the *scorecard*).

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

Marker's Signature:

Player's Signature:

Responsibilities

- Committee
- Player
- Player and marker

21.1c Penalties in Stableford

(1) **Penalties Other Than Disqualification.** All penalty strokes are added to the player's score for the hole where the breach happened, **but** there are three **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Excess, Shared, Added or Replaced Clubs: If a player breaches Rule 4.1b (Limit of 14 Clubs; Sharing, Adding or Replacing Clubs During Round), the *Committee* will deduct **two points** (if the breach applies to only one hole) or **four points** (if the breach applies to two or more holes) under Rule 4.1b from the player's total points for the *round*.

Exception 2 – Time of Starting: If a player breaches Rule 5.3a by (1) arriving late but within five minutes after the starting time or (2) starting early but within five minutes of the starting time (see Rule 5.3 Penalty Statement, Exceptions 1 and 2), the *Committee* will deduct **two points** from the player's total points for the *round*.

Exception 3 – Unreasonable Delay: If a player breaches Rule 5.6a, the *Committee* will deduct **one point** for the first breach and an additional **two points** for the second breach from the player's total points for the *round*. (For a third breach of Rule 5.6a, see Rule 21.1c(2).)

For each exception, the player must report the facts about the breach to the *Committee* before returning the *scorecard* so that the *Committee* may apply the penalty. If the player fails to do so, the player is **disqualified**.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule K-3 (how to adopt Pace of Play Policy in *Stableford* with deduction of points used in the penalties for breach).

(2) Disqualification Penalties. A player who breaches any of these four Rules is not disqualified **but** gets **zero points** for the hole where the breach happened:

- Failure to *hole out* under Rule 3.3c,
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from outside the *teeing area* in starting a hole (see Rule 6.1b(2)),
- Failure to correct mistake of playing a *wrong ball* (see Rule 6.3c), or
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from a *wrong place* when there is a *serious breach* (see Rule 14.7b).

If the player breaches any other Rule with a penalty of disqualification, the player is **disqualified**.

21.1d Exception to Rule 11.2 in Stableford

Rule 11.2 does not apply in this situation:

If a player's ball in motion needs to be *holed* to get one point on the hole and any person deliberately deflects or stops the ball at a time when there is no reasonable chance it can be *holed*, there is no penalty to that person and the player gets zero points on the hole.

21.1e When Round Ends in Stableford

A player's *round* ends when the player:

- *Holes out* on his or her final hole (including correction of a mistake, such as under Rule 6.1 or 14.7b), or
- Chooses not to *hole out* on the final hole or already cannot get more than zero points on the hole.

21.2 Maximum Score

21.2a Overview of Maximum Score

Maximum Score is a form of *stroke play* where a player's or *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.

The normal Rules for *stroke play* in Rules 1-20 apply, as modified by these specific Rules. Rule 21.2 is written for:

- Scratch competitions, but can be adapted for handicap competitions as well, and
- Individual play, but can be adapted for competitions involving *partners*, as modified by Rules 22 (*Foursomes*) and 23 (*Four-Ball*), and for team competitions, as modified by Rule 24.

21.2b Scoring in Maximum Score

(1) Player's Score on Hole. A player's score for a hole is based on the player's number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes), **except** that the player will get only the maximum score even if the actual score exceeds the maximum.

A player who does not *hole out* under the Rules for any reason gets the maximum score for the hole.

To help pace of play, players are encouraged to stop playing a hole when their score has reached the maximum.

The hole is completed when the player *holes out*, chooses not to do so or when his or her score has reached the maximum.

(2) Score Entered for Each Hole. To meet the requirements in Rule 3.3b for entering hole scores on the *scorecard*:

- If Hole Is Completed by Holing Out:
  - » When Score Is Lower Than Maximum. The *scorecard* must show the actual score.
  - » When Score Is Same as or Higher Than Maximum. The *scorecard* must show either no score or any score at or above the maximum.
- If Hole Is Completed Without Holing Out. If the player does not *hole out* under the Rules, the *scorecard* must show either no score or any score at or above the maximum.

The *Committee* is responsible for adjusting the player's score to the maximum

for any hole where the *scorecard* shows either no score or any score above the maximum and, in a handicap competition, for applying handicap strokes to the score entered for each hole.

21.2c Penalties in Maximum Score

All penalties that apply in *stroke play* apply in *Maximum Score*, **except** that a player who breaches any of these four Rules is not disqualified **but** gets the **maximum score** for the hole where the breach happened:

- Failure to *hole out* under Rule 3.3c,
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from outside the *teeing area* in starting a hole (see Rule 6.1b(2)),
- Failure to correct mistake of playing a *wrong ball* (see Rule 6.3c), or
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from a *wrong place* when there is a *serious breach* (see Rule 14.7b).

If the player breaches any other Rule with a penalty of disqualification, the player is **disqualified**.

After applying any penalty strokes, the player's score for a hole cannot exceed the maximum score set by the *Committee*.

21.2d Exception to Rule 11.2 in Maximum Score

Rule 11.2 does not apply in this situation:

If a player's ball in motion needs to be *holed* to score one lower than the maximum score on the hole and any person deliberately deflects or stops the ball at a time when there is no reasonable chance it can be *holed*, there is no penalty to that person and the player gets the maximum score on the hole.

21.2e When Round Ends in Maximum Score

A player's *round* ends when the player:

- *Holes out* on his or her final hole (including correction of a mistake, such as under Rule 6.1 or 14.7b), or
- Chooses not to *hole out* on the final hole or already will get the maximum score on the hole.

21.3 Par/Bogey

21.3a Overview of Par/Bogey

Par/Bogey is a form of *stroke play* that uses scoring as in *match play* where:

- A player or *side* wins or loses a hole by completing the hole in fewer strokes or more 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 deducting the holes lost).

The normal Rules for *stroke play* in Rules 1-20 apply, as modified by these specific Rules. Rule 21.3 is written for:

- Scratch competitions, but can be adapted for handicap competitions as well, and
- Individual play, but can be adapted for competitions involving *partners*, as modified by Rules 22 (*Foursomes*) and 23 (*Four-Ball*), and for team competitions, as modified by Rule 24.

21.3b Scoring in Par/Bogey

(1) How Holes Are Won or Lost. Scoring is done as in *match play*, with holes being won or lost by comparing the player's number of strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes) to the fixed target score (typically par or bogey) set by the *Committee*:

- If the player's score is lower than the fixed score, the player wins the hole.
- If the player's score is the same as the fixed score, the hole is tied (also known as halved).
- If the player's score is higher than the fixed score, or no score is returned, the player loses the hole.

A player who does not *hole out* under the Rules for any reason loses the hole.

To help pace of play, players are encouraged to stop playing a hole when their score exceeds the fixed score (as they have lost the hole).

The hole is completed when the player *holes out,* chooses not to do so or when his or her score exceeds the fixed score.

(2) Score Entered for Each Hole. To meet the requirements in Rule 3.3b for entering hole scores on the *scorecard*:

- If Hole Is Completed by Holing Out:
  - » When Score Results in Hole Being Won or Tied. The *scorecard* must show the actual score.
  - » When Score Results in Hole Being Lost. The *scorecard* must show either no score or any score that results in the hole being lost.
- If Hole Is Completed Without Holing Out. If the player does not *hole out* under the Rules, the *scorecard* must show either no score or any score that results in the hole being lost.

The *Committee* is responsible for deciding whether the player won, lost or tied each hole and, in a handicap competition, for applying handicap strokes to the score entered for each hole before deciding the result of the hole.

Exception – No Penalty If No Effect on Result of Hole: If the player returns a *scorecard* with a hole score lower than the actual score but this does not affect whether the hole was won, lost or tied, there is no penalty under Rule 3.3b.

See Committee Procedures, Section 5A(5) (the Terms of the Competition may encourage but not require players to enter the result of the hole on the *scorecard*).

21.3c Penalties in Par/Bogey

(1) Penalties Other Than Disqualification. All penalty strokes are added to the player's score for the hole where the breach happened, **but** there are three **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Excess, Shared, Added or Replaced Clubs: If a player breaches Rule 4.1b (Limit of 14 Clubs; Sharing, Adding and Replacing Clubs), the *Committee* will deduct **one hole** (if the breach applies to only one hole) or **two holes** (if the breach applies to two or more holes) under Rule 4.1b from the player's total of holes won versus holes lost.

Exception 2 – Time of Starting: If a player breaches Rule 5.3a by (1) arriving late but within five minutes after the starting time or (2) starting early but within five minutes of the starting time (see Rule 5.3 Penalty Statement, Exceptions 1 and 2), the *Committee* will deduct **one hole** from the player's total of holes won versus holes lost.

Exception 3 – Unreasonable Delay: If a player breaches Rule 5.6a:

- Penalty for first breach: The player gets **one penalty stroke** on the hole where the breach occurred.
- Penalty for second breach: The *Committee* will deduct **one hole** from the player's total of holes won versus holes lost.
- For a third breach of Rule 5.6a, see Rule 21.3c(2).

For each exception, the player must report the facts about the breach to the *Committee* before returning the *scorecard* so that the *Committee* may apply the penalty. If the player fails to do so, the player is **disqualified**.

(2) Disqualification Penalties. A player who breaches any of these four Rules is not disqualified **but loses the hole** where the breach happened:

- Failure to *hole out* under Rule 3.3c,
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from outside the *teeing area* in starting a hole (see Rule 6.1b(2)),
- Failure to correct mistake of playing a *wrong ball* (see Rule 6.3c), or
- Failure to correct mistake of playing from a *wrong place* when there is a *serious breach* (see Rule 14.7b).

If the player breaches any other Rule with a penalty of disqualification, the player is **disqualified**.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule K-4 (how to adopt Pace of Play Policy in *Par/Bogey* with deduction of holes used in the penalties for breach).

21.3d Exception to Rule 11.2 in Par/Bogey

Rule 11.2 does not apply in this situation:

If a player's ball in motion needs to be *holed* to tie the hole and any person deliberately deflects or stops the ball at a time when there is no reasonable chance it can be *holed*, there is no penalty to that person and the player loses the hole.

21.3e When Round Ends in Par/Bogey

A player's *round* ends when the player:

- *Holes out* on his or her final hole (including correction of a mistake, such as under Rule 6.1 or 14.7b), or
- Chooses not to *hole out* on the final hole or has already lost the hole.

21.4 Three-Ball Match Play

21.4a Overview of Three-Ball Match Play

Three-Ball Match Play is 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.

The normal Rules for *match play* in Rules 1-20 apply to all three individual matches, **except** that these specific Rules apply in two situations where applying the normal Rules in one match might conflict with applying them in another match.

21.4b Playing Out of Turn

If a player plays out of turn in any match, the *opponent* who should have played first may cancel the *stroke* under Rule 6.4a(2):

If the player played out of turn in both matches, each *opponent* may choose whether to cancel the *stroke* in his or her match with the player.

If a player's *stroke* is cancelled only in one match:

- The player must continue play with the original ball in the other match.
- This means the player must complete the hole by playing a separate ball in each match.

21.4c Ball or Ball-Marker Lifted or Moved by One Opponent

If an *opponent* gets **one penalty stroke** for lifting a player's ball or *ball-marker* or causing the ball or *ball-marker* to *move* under Rule 9.5b or 9.7b, that penalty applies only in the match with that player.

The *opponent* gets no penalty in his or her match with the other player.

21.5 Other Forms of Playing Golf

Although only certain forms of play are specifically covered by Rules 3, 21, 22 and 23, golf is also played in many other forms, such as scrambles and greensomes.

The Rules can be adapted to govern play in these and other forms of play.

See Committee Procedures, Section 9 (recommended ways to adapt the Rules for other common 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.

22.1 Overview of Foursomes

Foursomes (also known as Alternate Shot) is a form of play involving *partners* (in either *match play* or *stroke play*) where two *partners* compete as a *side* by playing one ball in alternating order on each hole.

Rules 1-20 apply to this form of play (with the *side* playing one ball being treated in the same way as the individual player is treated), as modified by these specific Rules.

A variation of this is a form of *match play* known as Threesomes, where an individual player competes against a *side* of two *partners* who play alternating shots under these specific Rules.

22.2 Either Partner May Act for Side

As both *partners* compete as one *side* playing only one ball:

- Either *partner* may take any allowed action for the *side* before the *stroke* is made, such as to *mark* the spot of the ball and lift, *replace*, *drop* and place the ball, no matter which *partner's* turn it is to play next for the *side*.
- A *partner* and his or her *caddie* may help the other *partner* in any way that the other *partner's caddie* is allowed to help (such as to give and be asked for *advice* and take the other actions allowed under Rule 10), **but** must not give any help that the other *partner's caddie* is not allowed to give under the Rules.
- Any action taken or breach of the Rules by either *partner* or either *caddie* applies to the *side*.

In *stroke play*, only one of the *partners* needs to certify the *side's* hole scores on the *scorecard* (see Rule 3.3b).

22.3 Side Must Alternate in Making Strokes

On each hole, the *partners* must make each *stroke* for the *side* in alternating order:

- One *partner* must play first for the *side* from the *teeing area* of all odd numbered holes, while the other *partner* must play first for the *side* from the *teeing area* of all even numbered holes.
- After the *side's* first *stroke* from the *teeing area* of a hole, the *partners* must alternate *strokes* for the rest of the hole.
- If a *stroke* is cancelled or otherwise does not count under any Rule (except when a *stroke* is made in the wrong order in breach of this Rule), the same *partner* who made the *stroke* must make the next *stroke* for the *side*.
- If the *side* decides to play a *provisional ball*, it must be played by the *partner* whose turn it is to play the *side's* next *stroke*.

Any penalty strokes for the *side* do not affect the *partners*' alternating order of play.

Penalty for Making a *Stroke* in the Wrong Order in Breach of Rule 22.3: *General Penalty*.

In *stroke play*, the *side* must correct the mistake:

- The right *partner* must make a *stroke* from where the *side* made the first *stroke* in the wrong order.
- The *stroke* made in the wrong order and any more strokes before the mistake is corrected (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes solely from playing that ball) do not count.
- If the *side* does not correct the mistake before making a *stroke* to begin another hole or, for the last hole of the *round*, before returning its *scorecard*, the *side* is **disqualified**.

22.4 Starting the Round

22.4a Partner to Play First

The *side* may choose which *partner* will play from the first *teeing area* in starting the *round*, unless the Terms of the Competition say which *partner* must play first.

The *side's round* starts when that *partner* makes a *stroke* to start the *side's* first hole.

22.4b Starting Time and Starting Point

Rule 5.3a applies differently to each *partner* based on who will play first for the *side*:

- The *partner* who will play first must be ready to play at the starting time and starting point, and must start at (and not before) that time.
- The *partner* who will play second must be present at the starting time either at the starting point or on the hole near where the ball played from the *teeing area* is expected to come to rest.

If either *partner* is not present in this way, the *side* is in breach of Rule 5.3a.

22.5 Partners May Share Clubs

Rule 4.1b(2) is modified to allow *partners* to share clubs, so long as the total number of clubs they have together is not more than 14.

RULE 23 Four-Ball

Purpose of Rule:

Rule 23 covers Four-Ball (played either in match play or stroke play), where partners compete as a side with each playing a separate ball. The side's score for a hole is the lower score of the partners 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:

- Two *partners* compete together as a *side*, with each player playing his or her own ball, and
- A *side's* score for a hole is the lower score of the two *partners* on that hole.

Rules 1-20 apply to this form of play, as modified by these specific Rules.

A variation of this is a form of *match play* known as Best-Ball, where an individual player competes against a *side* of two or three *partners* and each *partner* plays his or her own ball under the Rules, as modified by these specific Rules. (For Best-Ball with three *partners* on a *side*, each reference to the other *partner* means the other two *partners*).

23.2 Scoring in Four-Ball

23.2a 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 the *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 the *side's* score for the hole. The other *partner* does not need to *hole out*.
- When Neither Partner Holes Out or Otherwise Completes the Hole Under the Rules. The *side* does not have a score for that hole, which means:
  - » In *match play*, the *side* **loses the hole**, unless the opposing *side* already had conceded or otherwise lost the hole.
  - » In *stroke play*, the *side* is **disqualified** unless the mistake is corrected in time under Rule 3.3c.

23.2b Side's Scorecard in Stroke Play

(1) **Side's Responsibility**. The *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 the *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, the *side* is **disqualified**.
- It is not enough to identify a score as the score of the *side* in general.

Only one *partner* needs to certify the hole scores on the *side's scorecard* under Rule 3.3b(2).

(2) **Committee's Responsibility**. The *Committee* is responsible for deciding which score counts for the *side* on each hole, including applying any handicaps in a handicap competition:

- If only one score is entered for a hole, that score counts for the *side*.
- If the scores of both *partners* are entered for a hole:
  - » If those scores are different, the lowest (gross or net) score for that hole counts for the *side*.
  - » If both scores are the same, the *Committee* may count either score. If the score used is found to be wrong for any reason, the *Committee* will count the other score.

If the score that counts for the *side* is not clearly identified as the score of the individual *partner* who made it or if that *partner* is disqualified relating to the play of the hole, the *side* is **disqualified**.

23.2c Exception to Rule 11.2 in Four-Ball

Rule 11.2 does not apply in this situation:

When a player's *partner* has already completed the hole and the player's ball in motion needs to be *holed* to lower the side's score for the hole by one stroke, if any person deliberately deflects or stops the ball at a time when there is no reasonable chance it can be *holed*, there is no penalty to that person and the player's ball does not count for the *side*.

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

Marker's Signature:

Player's Signature:

Responsibilities

- Committee
- Player
- Player and marker

23.3 When Round Starts and Ends; When Hole Is Completed

23.3a When Round Starts

A *side's round* starts when one of the *partners* makes a *stroke* to start his or her first hole.

23.3b When Round Ends

A *side's round* ends:

- In *match play*, when either *side* has won the match (see Rules 3.2a(3) and (4)).
- In *stroke play*, when the *side* completes the final hole, either by both *partners holing out* (including correction of a mistake, such as under Rule 6.1 or 14.7b) or by one *partner holing out* on the final hole and the other *partner* choosing not to do so.

23.3c When Hole Is Completed

(1) Match Play. A *side* has completed a hole when both *partners* have *holed out* or had their next *strokes* conceded or either *side* has conceded the hole.

(2) Stroke Play. A *side* has completed a hole when one of the *partners* has *holed out* and the other *partner* has either *holed out* or chooses not to do so.

23.4 One or Both Partners May Represent the Side

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

If a *partner* is absent and then arrives to play, that *partner* may start play for the *side* only between the play of two holes, which means:

- Match Play – Before Any Player in Match Starts Hole. If the *partner* arrives only after any player on either *side* in the match has started play of a hole, that *partner* is not allowed to play for the *side* until the next hole.
- Stroke Play – Before Other Partner Starts Hole. If the *partner* arrives only after the other *partner* has started play of a hole, the arriving *partner* is not allowed to play for the *side* until the next hole.

An arriving *partner* who is not allowed to play on a hole may still give *advice* or help to the other *partner* and take other actions for the other *partner* on that hole (see Rules 23.5a and 23.5b).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 23.4: *General Penalty.*

23.5 Player's Actions Affecting Partner's Play

23.5a Player Allowed to Take Any Actions Concerning Partner's Ball That Partner May Take

Although each player on a *side* must play his or her own ball:

- A player may take any action concerning the *partner's* ball that the *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.
- A player and the player's *caddie* may help the *partner* in any way that the *partner's caddie* is allowed to help (such as to give and be asked for *advice* and take the other actions allowed under Rule 10), **but** must not give any help that the *partner's caddie* is not allowed to give under the Rules.

In *stroke play*, *partners* must not agree with each other to leave a ball in place on the *putting green* to help either of them or any other player (see Rule 15.3a).

23.5b Partner Is Responsible for Player's Actions

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

If the player's action would breach a Rule if taken by the *partner*:

- The *partner* is in breach of the Rule and gets the resulting penalty (see Rule 23.8a).
- Examples of this are when the player breaches the Rules by:
  - » *Improving* the *conditions affecting the stroke* to be made by the *partner*,
  - » Accidentally causing the *partner's* ball to *move*, or
  - » Failing to *mark* the spot of the *partner's* ball before lifting it.

This also applies to actions by the player's *caddie* concerning the *partner's* ball that would breach a Rule if taken by the *partner* or *partner's caddie*.

If the actions of the player or the player's *caddie* affect the play of both the player's own ball and the *partner's* ball, see Rule 23.8a(2) to find out when there is a penalty for both *partners*.

23.6 Side's Order of Play

Partners may play in the order the *side* considers best.

This means that when it is a player's turn to play under Rule 6.4a (*match play*) or 6.4b (*stroke play*), either the player or his or her *partner* may play next.

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

- A player must not continue play of a hole after the player's next *stroke* has been conceded if this would help his or her *partner*.
- If the player does so, his or her score for the hole stands without penalty, **but** the *partner's* score for the hole cannot count for the *side*.

23.7 Partners May Share Clubs

Rule 4.1b(2) is modified to allow *partners* to share clubs, so long as the total number of clubs they have together is not more than 14.

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

When a player gets a penalty for breach of a Rule, the penalty may apply either to that player alone or to both *partners* (that is, to the *side*). This depends on the penalty and the form of play:

23.8a Penalties Other Than Disqualification

(1) Penalty Normally Applies Only to Player, Not Partner. When a player gets a penalty other than disqualification, that penalty normally applies only to the player and not also to his or her *partner*, **except** in the situations covered by (2).

- Any penalty strokes are added only to the player's score, not to the *partner's* score.
- In *match play*, a player who gets the ***general penalty* (loss of hole)** has no score that can count for the *side* on that hole; **but** this penalty has no effect on the *partner*, who may continue to play for the *side* on that hole.

(2) Three Situations Where Player's Penalty Also Applies to Partner.

- When Player Breaches Rule 4.1b (Limit of 14 Clubs; Shared, Added or Replaced Clubs). In *match play*, the *side* gets the penalty (**adjustment of the match score**); in *stroke play*, the *partner* also gets the **same penalty** as the player.
- When Player's Breach Helps Partner's Play. In either *match play* or *stroke play*, the *partner* also gets the **same penalty** as the player.
- In Match Play, When Player's Breach Hurts Opponent's Play. The *partner* also gets the **same penalty** as the player.

Exception – Player Who Makes Stroke at Wrong Ball Is Not Treated as Having Helped Partner's Play or Hurt Opponent's Play:

- Only the player (not the *partner*) gets the ***general penalty*** for breach of Rule 6.3c.
- This is true whether the ball played as a *wrong ball* belongs to the *partner*, an *opponent* or anyone else.

23.8b Disqualification Penalties

(1) **When Breach by One Partner Means Side Is Disqualified**. A *side* is **disqualified** if either *partner* gets a penalty of disqualification under any of these Rules:

- Rule 1.2 Standards of Player Conduct
- Rule 1.3 Playing by the Rules
- Rule 4.1a Club Allowed in Making a Stroke
- Rule 4.1c Procedure for Taking Clubs Out of Play
- Rule 4.2a Balls Allowed In Play of Round
- Rule 4.3 Use of Equipment
- Rule 5.6a Unreasonable Delay
- Rule 5.7b-c When Committee Suspends Play and Play Resumes
- Rule 6.2b Teeing Area Rules

Match Play Only:

- Rule 3.2c Applying Handicaps in Handicap Match

Stroke Play Only:

- Rule 3.3b(2) Player's Responsibility: Certifying and Returning Scorecard
- Rule 3.3b(3) Wrong Score for Hole
- Rule 3.3b(4) Scoring in a Handicap Competition
- Rule 5.2b Practising On Course Before or Between Rounds
- Rule 23.2b Side's Scorecard in Stroke Play

(2) **When Breach by Both Partners Means Side Is Disqualified**. A *side* is **disqualified** if both *partners* get a penalty of disqualification under any of these Rules:

- Rule 5.3 Starting and Ending Round
- Rule 5.4 Playing in Groups
- Rule 5.7a When Players May or Must Stop Play

Stroke Play Only:

A *side* is **disqualified** if, at the same hole, both *partners* get penalties of disqualification under any combination of these Rules:

- Rule 3.3c Failure to Hole Out
- Rule 6.1b Playing from Outside Teeing Area in Starting Hole
- Rule 6.3c Wrong Ball
- Rule 14.7 Playing from Wrong Place

(3) **When Breach by One Player Means Only That the Player Has No Valid Score for Hole**. In all other situations where a player breaches a Rule with a penalty of disqualification, the player is not disqualified **but** his or her score on the hole where the breach happened cannot count for the *side*.

In *match play*, if both *partners* breach such a Rule on the same hole, the *side* **loses the hole**.

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.

24.1 Overview of Team Competitions

- A "team" is a group of players who play as individuals or as *sides* to compete against other teams.
- Their play in the team event may also be part of another competition (such as individual *stroke play*) that takes place at the same time.

Rules 1-23 apply in a team competition, as modified by these specific Rules.

24.2 Terms of Team Competition

The *Committee* decides the form of play, how a team's overall score is to be calculated and other Terms of the Competition, such as:

- In *match play*, the number of points awarded for winning or tying a match.
- In *stroke play*, the number of scores to count in each team's total score.
- Whether the competition may end in a tie and, if not, how the tie will be decided.

24.3 Team Captain

Each team may name a team captain to lead the team and make decisions for it, such as which players on the team will play in which *rounds* or matches, in what order they will play and who will play together as *partners*.

The team captain may be a player in the competition.

24.4 Advice Allowed in Team Competition

24.4a Person Allowed to Give Advice to Team (Advice Giver)

The *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing each team to name one person (an "advice giver") who may give *advice* and other help as allowed in Rule 10.2b(2) to players on the team during a *round* and who may be asked for *advice* by players on the team:

- The advice giver may be the team captain, a team coach or other person (including a team member playing in the competition).
- The advice giver must be identified to the *Committee* before giving *advice*.
- The *Committee* may allow a team's advice giver to change during a *round* or during the competition.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule H-2 (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing each team to name two advice givers).

24.4b Restriction on Advice Giver While Playing

If a team's advice giver is a player on the team, he or she is not allowed to act in that role while playing a *round* in the competition.

While playing a *round*, the advice giver is treated like any other playing team member for purposes of the restrictions on *advice* in Rule 10.2a.

24.4c No Advice Between Team Members Other Than Partners

Except when playing together as *partners* on a *side*:

- A player must not ask for *advice* from or give *advice* to a member of his or her team playing on the *course*.
- This applies whether the team member is playing in the same group as the player or in another group on the *course*.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule H-5 (in a *stroke play* team competition where a player's score for the *round* counts only as part of the team's score, the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing team members playing in the same group to give each other *advice* even if they are not *partners*).

Penalty for Breach of Rule 24.4: *General Penalty.*

X

Definitions

Abnormal Course Condition

Any of these four defined conditions:

- *Animal Hole*,
- *Ground Under Repair*,
- *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 a 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* such as the *hole*, the *putting green*, the fairway, *penalty areas*, *bunkers*, or another player's ball,
- The distance from one point to another, or
- The Rules.

Animal

Any living member of the animal kingdom (other than humans), including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates (such as worms, insects, spiders and crustaceans).

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*:

- The *general area*,
- The *teeing area* the player must play from in starting the hole he or she is playing,
- All *penalty areas*,
- All *bunkers*, and
- The *putting green* of the hole the player is playing.

Ball-Marker

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

When a Rule refers to a *ball-marker* being moved, this means a *ball-marker* in place on the *course* to *mark* the spot of a ball that has been lifted and not yet *replaced*.

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 was 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).

Bunkers are one of the five defined *areas of the course*.

A *Committee* may define a prepared area of sand as part of the *general area* (which means it is not a *bunker*) or may define a non-prepared area of sand as a *bunker*.

When a *bunker* is being repaired and the *Committee* defines the entire *bunker* as *ground under repair*, it is treated as part of the *general area* (which means it is not a *bunker*).

The word "sand" as used in this Definition and Rule 12 includes any material similar to sand that is used as *bunker* material (such as crushed shells), as well as any soil that is mixed in with the sand.

Caddie

Someone who helps a player during a *round*, including in these ways:

- Carrying, Transporting or Handling Clubs: A person who carries, transports (such as by cart or trolley) or handles a player's clubs during play is the player's *caddie* even if not named as a *caddie* by the player, **except** when done to move the player's clubs, bag or cart out of the way or as a courtesy (such as getting a club the player left behind).
- Giving Advice: A player's *caddie* is the only person (other than a *partner* or *partner's caddie*) a player may ask for *advice*.

A *caddie* may also help the player 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 the player has during the *round* (as allowed by Rule 4.1b(1)), other than a putter.

For example, if the longest club (other than a putter) a player has during a *round* is a 43-inch (109.22 cm) driver, a *club-length* is 43 inches for that player for that *round*.

Club-lengths are used in defining the player's *teeing area* on each hole and in determining the size of the player's *relief area* when taking relief under a Rule.

Committee

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

See Committee Procedures, Section 1 (explaining the role of the *Committee*).

Conditions Affecting the Stroke

The *lie* of the player's ball at rest, the area of intended *stance*, the area of intended swing, the *line of play* and the *relief area* where the player will *drop* or place a ball.

- The "area of intended *stance*" includes both where the player will place his or her feet and the entire area that might reasonably affect how and where the player's body is positioned in preparing for and making the intended *stroke*.
- The "area of intended swing" includes the entire area that might reasonably affect any part of the backswing, the downswing or the completion of the swing for the intended *stroke*.
- Each of the terms "*lie*", "*line of play*" and "*relief area*" has its own Definition.

Course

The entire area of play within the edge of any boundaries set by the *Committee*:

- All areas inside the boundary edge are in bounds and part of the *course*.
- All areas outside the boundary edge are *out of bounds* and not part of the *course*.
- The boundary edge extends both up above the ground and down below the ground.

The *course* is made up of the five defined *areas of the course*.

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*.

If the player lets go of a ball without intending it to be *in play*, the ball has not been *dropped* and is not *in play* (see Rule 14.4).

Each relief Rule identifies a specific *relief area* where the ball must be *dropped* and come to rest.

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

- Falls straight down, without the player 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 the player's body or *equipment* before it hits the ground (see Rule 14.3b).

Embedded

When a player's ball is in its own pitch-mark made as a result of the player's previous *stroke* and where part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

A ball does not necessarily have to touch soil to be *embedded* (for example, grass and *loose impediments* may be between the ball and the soil).

Equipment

Anything used, worn, held or carried by the player or the player's *caddie*.

Objects used for the care of the *course*, such as rakes, are *equipment* only while they are being held or carried by the player or *caddie*.

Equipment Rules

The specifications and other regulations for clubs, balls and other *equipment* that players 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 players where the *hole* is. The *flagstick* includes the flag and any other material or objects attached to the pole.

The requirements for a *flagstick* are stated in the *Equipment Rules*.

Four-Ball

A form of play where *sides* of two *partners* compete, with each player playing his or her own ball. A *side's* score for a hole is the lower score of the two *partners* on that hole.

Four-Ball may be played as a *match-play* competition between one *side* of two *partners* and another *side* of two *partners* or a *stroke-play* competition among multiple *sides* of two *partners*.

Foursomes (also known as "Alternate Shot")

A form of play where two *partners* compete as a *side* by playing one ball in alternating order on each hole.

Foursomes may be played as a *match-play* competition between one *side* of two *partners* and another *side* of two *partners* or a *stroke-play* competition among multiple *sides* of two *partners*.

General Area

The *area of the course* that covers all of the *course* **except** for the other four defined areas: (1) the *teeing area* the player must play from in starting the hole he or she is playing, (2) all *penalty areas*, (3) all *bunkers*, and (4) the *putting green* of the hole the player is 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). Any defined *ground under repair* includes both:

- All ground inside the edge of the defined area, and
- Any grass, bush, tree or other growing or attached natural object rooted in the defined area, including any part of those objects that extends up above the ground outside the edge of the defined area (**but** not when such object is attached to or below the ground outside the edge of the defined area, such as a tree root that is part of a tree rooted inside the edge).

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 a player's ball that the player's *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, lines or

physical features:

- 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*.
- Physical Features: When defined by physical features (such as a flower bed or a turf nursery), the *Committee* should say how the edge of the *ground under repair* is defined.

When the edge of *ground under repair* is defined by lines or physical features, stakes may be used to show where the *ground under repair* is, **but** they have no other meaning.

Hole

The finishing point on the *putting green* for the hole being played:

- The *hole* must be 4 ¼ inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least 4 inches (101.6 mm) deep.
- If a lining is used, its outer diameter must not exceed 4 ¼ inches (108 mm). The lining must be sunk at least 1 inch (25.4 mm) below the *putting green* surface, unless the nature of the soil requires that it be closer to the surface.

The word "hole" (when not used as a Definition in italics) is used throughout the Rules to mean the part of the *course* associated with a particular *teeing area*, *putting green* and *hole*. Play of a hole begins from the *teeing area* and ends when the ball is *holed* on the *putting green* (or when the Rules otherwise say the hole is completed).

Holed

When a ball is at rest in the *hole* after a *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 the player's ball is *holed*.

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

Honour

The right of a player 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*.

The *Committee* may define any *obstruction* to be an *immovable obstruction*, even if it meets the definition of *movable obstruction*.

Improve

To alter one or more of the *conditions affecting the stroke* or other physical conditions affecting play so that a player gains a potential advantage for a *stroke*.

In Play

The status of a player's ball when it lies on the *course* and is being used in the play of a hole:

- A ball first becomes *in play* on a hole:
  - » When the player makes a *stroke* at it from inside the *teeing area*, or
  - » In *match play*, when the player makes a *stroke* at it from outside the *teeing area* and the *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*.

The player cannot have more than one ball *in play* at any time. (See Rule 6.3d for the limited cases when a player may play more than one ball at the same time on a hole.)

When the Rules refer to a ball at rest or in motion, this means a ball that is *in play*.

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

- If the ball has not been lifted, it is still *in play*, and
- If the 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.

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*.

Artificial objects defined by the *Committee* as *integral objects* are not *obstructions* or *boundary objects*.

Known or Virtually Certain

The standard for deciding what happened to a player's ball – for example, whether the 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 the player's ball, such as when the player 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.

"All reasonably available information" includes all information the player knows and all other information he or she can get with reasonable effort and without unreasonable delay.

Lie

The spot on which a ball is at rest and any growing or attached natural object, *immovable obstruction*, *integral object*, or *boundary object* touching the 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 the player intends his or her ball to go after a *stroke*, including the area on that line that is a reasonable distance up above the ground and on either side of that 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 the player intends 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 the player's 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 the player or his or her *caddie* (or the player's *partner* or *partner's caddie*) begins to search for it.

If the search begins and is then temporarily interrupted for a good reason (such as when the player stops searching when play is suspended or needs to stand aside to wait for another player to play) or when the player has mistakenly identified a *wrong ball*:

- The time between the interruption and when the search resumes does not count, and
- The time allowed for search is three minutes in total, counting the search time both before the interruption and after the search resumes.

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.

This is done to show the spot where the ball must be *replaced* after it is lifted.

Marker

In *stroke play*, the person responsible for entering a player's score on the player's *scorecard* and for certifying that *scorecard*. The *marker* may be another player, **but** not a *partner*.

The *Committee* may identify who will be the player's *marker* or tell the players how they may choose a *marker*.

Match Play

A form of play where a player or *side* plays directly against an *opponent* or opposing *side* in a head-to-head match of one or more *rounds*:

- A player or *side* wins a hole in the match by completing the hole in fewer strokes (including *strokes* made and penalty strokes), and
- The match is won when a player or *side* leads the *opponent* or opposing *side* by more holes than remain to be played.

Match play can be played as a singles match (where one player plays directly against one *opponent*), a *Three-Ball* match or a *Foursomes* or *Four-Ball* match between *sides* of two *partners*.

Maximum Score

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

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).

Even when an *obstruction* is movable, the *Committee* may define it to be an *immovable obstruction*.

Moved

When a 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 the ball has gone up, down or horizontally in any direction away from its original spot.

If the ball at rest only wobbles (sometimes referred to as oscillating) and stays on or returns to its original spot, the 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

The 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 the ball would lie that is:

- Nearest to the 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* the player would have made from the original spot if the condition was not there.

Estimating this reference point requires the player to identify the choice of club, *stance*, swing and *line of play* he or she would have used for that *stroke*.

The player does not need to simulate that *stroke* by taking an actual *stance* and swinging with the chosen club (**but** it is recommended that the player normally do this to help in making an accurate estimate).

The *nearest point of complete relief* relates solely to the particular condition from which relief is being taken and may be in a location where there is interference by something else:

- If the player takes relief and then has interference by another condition from which relief is allowed, the player may take relief again by determining a new *nearest point of complete relief* from the new condition.

- Relief must be taken separately for each condition, **except** that the player may take relief from both conditions at the same time (based on determining the *nearest point of complete relief* from both) when, having already taken relief separately from each condition, it becomes reasonable to conclude that continuing to do so will result in continued interference by one or the other.

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*.

The *Committee* may use *no play zones* for any reason, such as:

- Protecting wildlife, *animal* habitats, and environmentally sensitive areas,
- Preventing damage to young trees, flower beds, turf nurseries, re-turfed areas or other planted areas,
- Protecting players from danger, and
- Preserving sites of historical or cultural interest.

The *Committee* should define the edge of a *no play zone* with a line or stakes, and the line or stakes (or the tops of those stakes) should identify the *no play zone* as different than a regular *abnormal course condition* or *penalty area* that does not contain a *no play zone*.

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 rain shelters.
- Sprinkler heads, drains and irrigation or control boxes.
- Stakes, walls, railings and fences (**but** not *when* they are *boundary objects* that define or show the boundary edge of the *course*).
- Golf carts, mowers, cars and other vehicles.
- Waste containers, signposts and benches.
- Player *equipment*, *flagsticks* and rakes.

An *obstruction* is either a *movable obstruction* or an *immovable obstruction*. If part of an *immovable obstruction* (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*.

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule F-23 (*Committee* may adopt a Local Rule defining certain *obstructions* as temporary immovable obstructions for which special relief procedures apply).

Opponent

The person a player competes 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 a player's ball or *equipment* or to the *course*:

- Any person (including another player), **except** the player or his or her *caddie* or the player's *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:

- This means that all ground and anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the boundary edge is in bounds, whether on, above or below the surface of the ground.
- If an object is both inside and outside the boundary edge (such as steps attached to a boundary fence, or a tree rooted outside the edge with branches extending inside the edge or vice versa), only the part of the object that is outside the edge is *out of bounds*.

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.

Par/Bogey

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

- A player or *side* wins or loses a hole by completing the hole in fewer strokes or more strokes (including *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).

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 the player's ball comes to rest there.

A *penalty area* is:

- Any body of water on the *course* (whether or not marked by the *Committee*), including a sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, surface drainage ditch or other open watercourse (even if not containing water), and
- Any other part of the *course* the *Committee* defines as a *penalty area*.

A *penalty area* is one of the five defined *areas of the course*.

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 the player two relief options (Rules 17.1d(1) and (2)).
- Red *penalty areas* (marked with red lines or red stakes) give the player 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:

- This means that all ground and anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the edge is part of the *penalty area*, whether on, above or below the surface of the ground.
- If an object is both inside and outside the edge (such as a bridge over the *penalty area*, or a tree rooted inside the edge with branches extending outside the edge or vice versa), only the part of the object that is inside the edge is part of the *penalty area*.

The edge of a *penalty area* should be defined by stakes, lines or physical features:

- 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*.
- Physical Features: When defined by physical features (such as a beach or desert area or a retaining wall), the *Committee* should say how the edge of the *penalty area* is defined.

When the edge of a *penalty area* is defined by lines or by physical features, stakes may be used to show where the *penalty area* is, **but** they have no other meaning.

When the edge of a body of water is not defined by the *Committee*, the edge of that *penalty area* is defined by its natural boundaries (that is, where the ground slopes down to form the depression that can hold the water).

If an open watercourse usually does not contain water (such as a drainage ditch or run-off area that is dry except during a rainy season), the *Committee* may define that area as part of the *general area* (which means it is not a *penalty area*).

Point of Maximum Available Relief

The 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 the ball would lie that is:

- Nearest to the 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* the player would have made from the original spot if the condition was not there.

Estimating this reference point requires the player to identify the choice of club, *stance*, swing and *line of play* the player would have used for that *stroke*.

The player does not need to simulate that *stroke* by taking an actual *stance* and swinging with the chosen club (**but** it is recommended that the player normally do this to help in making an accurate estimate).

The *point of maximum available relief* is found by comparing the relative amount of interference with the *lie* of the ball and the player's area of intended *stance* and swing and, on the *putting green* only, the *line of play*. For example, when taking relief from *temporary water*:

- The *point of maximum available relief* may be where the ball will be in shallower water than where the player will stand (affecting the *stance* more than the *lie* and swing), or where the ball is in deeper water than where the player will stand (affecting the *lie* and swing more than the *stance*).
- On the *putting green*, the *point of maximum available relief* may be based on the *line of play* where the ball will need to go through the shallowest or shortest stretch of *temporary water*.

Provisional Ball

Another ball played in case the ball just played by the player may be:

- *Out of bounds*, or
- *Lost* outside a *penalty area*.

A *provisional ball* is not the player's ball *in play*, unless it becomes the ball *in play* under Rule 18.3c.

Putting Green

The area on the hole the player is playing that:

- Is specially prepared for putting, or
- The *Committee* has defined as the *putting green* (such as when a temporary green is used).

The *putting green* for a hole contains the *hole* into which the player tries to play a ball.

The *putting green* is one of the five defined *areas of the course*. The putting greens for all other holes (which the player is not playing at the time) are *wrong greens* and part of the *general area*.

The edge of a *putting green* is defined by where it can be seen that the specially prepared area starts (such as where the grass has been distinctly cut to show the edge), unless the *Committee* defines the edge in a different way (such as by using a line or dots).

If a double green is used for two different holes:

- The entire prepared area containing both *holes* is treated as the *putting green* when playing each hole.
- **But** the *Committee* may define an edge that divides the double green into two different *putting greens*, so that when a player is playing one of the holes, the part of the double green on the side of the edge that is used for the other hole is a *wrong green*.

Referee

An official named by the *Committee* to decide questions of fact and apply the Rules.

See Committee Procedures, Section 6C (explaining the responsibilities and authority of a *referee*).

Relief Area

The area where a player must *drop* a ball when taking relief under a Rule. Each relief Rule requires the player 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 the reference point or must be outside a *penalty area* or a *bunker* from which relief is being taken, or
  - » It is where there is no interference (as defined in the particular Rule) from the condition from which relief is being taken.

In using *club-lengths* to determine the size of a *relief area*, the player may measure directly across a ditch, hole or similar thing, and directly across or through an object (such as a tree, fence, wall, tunnel, drain or sprinkler head), **but** is not allowed to measure through ground that naturally slopes up and down.

See Committee Procedures, Section 2I (*Committee* may choose to allow or require the player to use a dropping zone as a *relief area* when taking certain relief).

Replace

To place a ball by setting it down and letting it go, with the intent for it to be *in play*.

If the player sets a ball down without intending it to be *in play*, the ball has not been *replaced* and is not *in play* (see Rule 14.4).

Whenever a Rule requires a ball to be *replaced*, the Rule involved identifies a specific spot where the ball must be *replaced*.

Round

18 or fewer holes played in the order set by the *Committee*.

Scorecard

The document where a player's score for each hole is entered in *stroke play*.

The *scorecard* may be in any paper or electronic form approved by the *Committee* that allows:

- The player's score to be entered for each hole,
- The player's handicap to be entered, if it is a handicap competition, and
- The *marker* and the player to certify the scores, and the player to certify his or her handicap in a handicap competition, either by physical signature or by a method of electronic certification approved by the *Committee*.

A *scorecard* is not required in *match play* but may be used by the players to help keep the match score.

Serious Breach

In *stroke play*, when playing from a *wrong place* could give the player a significant advantage compared to the *stroke* to be made from the right place.

In making this comparison to decide if there was a *serious breach*, the factors to be taken into account include:

- The difficulty of the *stroke*,
- The distance of the ball from the *hole*,
- The effect of obstacles on the *line of play*, and
- The *conditions affecting the stroke*.

The concept of a *serious breach* does not apply in *match play*, because a player loses the hole if he or she plays from a *wrong place*.

Side

Two or more *partners* competing as a single unit in a *round* in *match play* or *stroke play*.

Each set of *partners* is a *side*, whether each *partner* plays his or her own ball (*Four-Ball*) or the *partners* play one ball (*Foursomes*).

A *side* is not the same as a team. In a team competition, each team consists of players competing as individuals or as *sides*.

Stableford

A form of *stroke play* where:

- A player's or *side's* score for a hole is based on points awarded by comparing the player's or *side's* number of strokes on the hole (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes) to a fixed target 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.

Stance

The position of a player's feet and body in preparing for and making a *stroke*.

Stroke

The forward movement of the club made to strike the ball.

But a *stroke* has not been made if the player:

- Decides during the downswing not to strike the ball and avoids doing so by deliberately stopping the clubhead before it reaches the ball or, if unable to stop, by deliberately missing the ball.
- Accidentally strikes the ball when making a practice swing or while preparing to make a *stroke*.

When the Rules refer to "playing a ball", it means the same as making a *stroke*.

The player's score for a hole or a *round* is described as a number of "strokes" or "strokes taken", which means both all *strokes* made and any penalty strokes (see Rule 3.1c).

Stroke and Distance

The procedure and penalty when a player takes relief under Rules 17, 18 or 19 by playing a ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

The term *stroke and distance* means that the player both:

- Gets one penalty stroke, and
- Loses the benefit of any gain of distance towards the *hole* from the spot where the previous *stroke* was made.

Stroke Play

A form of play where a player or *side* competes against all other players or *sides* in the competition.

In the regular form of *stroke play* (see Rule 3.3):

- A player's or *side's* score for a *round* is the total number of strokes (including *strokes* made and any penalty strokes) to *hole out* on each hole, and
- The winner is the player or *side* who completes all *rounds* in the fewest total strokes.

Other forms of *stroke play* with different scoring methods are *Stableford*, *Maximum Score* and *Par/Bogey* (see Rule 21).

All forms of *stroke play* can be played either in individual competitions (each player competing on his or her own) or in competitions involving *sides* of *partners* (*Foursomes* or *Four-Ball*).

Substitute

To change the ball the player is using to play a hole by having another ball become the ball *in play*.

The player has *substituted* another ball when he or she puts that ball *in play* in any way (see Rule 14.4) instead of the player's original ball, whether the original ball was:

- *In play*, or
- No longer *in play* because it had been lifted from the *course* or was *lost* or *out of bounds*.

A *substituted* ball is the player's ball *in play* even if:

- It was *replaced*, *dropped* or placed in a wrong way or *wrong place*, or
- The player was required under the Rules to put the original ball back *in play* rather than to *substitute* another ball.

Tee

An object used to raise a ball above the ground to play it from the *teeing area*. It must be no longer than 4 inches (101.6 mm) and conform with the *Equipment Rules*.

Teeing Area

The area the player must play from in starting the hole he or she is 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.

The *teeing area* is one of the five defined *areas of the course*.

All other teeing locations on the *course* (whether on the same hole or any other hole) are part of the *general area*.

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 the player takes a *stance* (without pressing down excessively with his or her feet).

It is not enough for the ground to be merely wet, muddy or soft or for the water to be momentarily visible as the player steps on the ground; an accumulation of water must remain present either before or after the *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 the player's option.
- **Manufactured Ice** is an *obstruction*.

Three-Ball

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.

Wrong Ball

Any ball other than the player's:

- Ball *in play* (whether the original ball or a *substituted* ball),
- *Provisional ball* (before it is abandoned under Rule 18.3c), or
- Second ball in *stroke play* played under Rule 14.7b or 20.1c.

Examples of a *wrong ball* are:

- Another player's ball *in play*.
- A stray ball.
- The player's 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 the player is playing. *Wrong greens* include:

- The putting greens for all other holes that the player is not playing at the time,
- The normal putting green for a hole where a temporary green is being used, and
- All practice greens for putting, chipping or pitching, unless the *Committee* excludes them by Local Rule.

Wrong greens are part of the *general area*.

Wrong Place

Any place on the *course* other than where the player is required or allowed to play his or her ball under the Rules.

Examples of playing from a *wrong place* are:

- Playing a ball after *replacing* it on the wrong spot or without *replacing* it when required by the Rules.
- Playing a *dropped* ball from outside the required *relief area*.
- Taking relief under a wrong Rule, so that the ball is *dropped* in and played from a place not allowed under the Rules.
- Playing a ball from a *no play zone* or when a *no play zone* interferes with the player's area of intended *stance* or swing.

Playing a ball from outside the *teeing area* in starting play of a hole or in trying to correct that mistake is not playing from a *wrong place* (see Rule 6.1b).

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Notes

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Notes

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. An amateur golfer who breaches these Rules may forfeit his or her amateur status and lose the ability to play as an amateur in competitions. Consequently, it is important that players and administrators understand the Rules of Amateur Status, which can be found 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