

Rules of Golf Presentation
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Rule 1 – The Game, Player Conduct, and the Rules

UNIQUE SPORT

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

Acting with integrity

By following the Rules

Applying all penalties

Being honest in all aspects of play.

Show consideration to others

Prompt pace of play

Look out for safety of others

Not distract others

Take good care of the course

Replace divots, smooth bunkers, repair ball-marks

Rule 2 – The Course

Important to know the area of the course where your ball lies to determine your options.

5 Areas of the Course are:

General Area

Teeing Area

Penalty Areas

Bunkers

Putting Green

Rule 15 – Loose Impediments

Loose Impediment:

Any unattached natural object such as:

Stones, loose grass, leaves, branches, sticks

Dead animals and animal waste

Worms, insects, and similar animals that can be easily removed, and the mounds/webs they build

Clumps of compacted soil (including aeration plugs)

Such natural objects are NOT loose if they are:

Attached or growing

Solidly embedded in the ground (can't be picked out easily)

Sticking to the ball

Special cases:

Sand and loose soil – NOT loose impediments

Dew, frost, and water – NOT loose impediments

Snow and natural ice – either loose impediments or (when on ground) temporary water – player's choice
Spider webs – are loose impediments even though they are attached to another object

Rights – Loose Impediments

A player may remove loose impediments that interfere with play.

EXCEPTIONS:

Loose Impediments:

Removing loose impediments where a ball must be replaced (doesn't apply when taking a drop)

Deliberately removing loose impediments to affect a ball in motion

Restrictions – Loose Impediments

Loose Impediments:

If a player's removal of loose impediments causes her ball to move:

Ball must be replaced on original spot

If moved ball was anywhere except putting green or teeing area, player gets a 1 STROKE PENALTY.

EXCEPTION:

If player causes ball to move during a reasonable search, no penalty.

Rule 15 –

Movable Obstructions

Obstruction:

Any artificial object EXCEPT for integral objects and boundary objects.

Examples:

Artificially surfaced roads/paths

Buildings and rain shelters

Sprinkler heads, drains, irrigation/control boxes

Stakes, walls, railings, fences (but not when they are boundary objects)

Golf carts, mowers, cars, other vehicles

Waste containers, signposts, benches

Player's equipment, flagsticks, rakes

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 (i.e. – gate or door or part of 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 (i.e. – loose stone that is part of a stone wall).

Rights – Movable Obstructions

A player may remove movable obstructions that interfere with play.

EXCEPTIONS for Movable Obstructions:

Moving tee markers from your teeing area
Deliberately removing movable obstructions to affect a ball in motion
Removing stakes that determine out of bounds.

Restrictions – Movable Obstructions

Movable Obstructions:

If a player's removal of a movable obstruction causes her ball to move:
Ball must be replaced on original spot
NO penalty

Rule 14 – Ball Procedures

DROPPING PROCEDURES:

Use these for anytime you have to take relief (either free or penalty).
How you proceed is determined by the area of the course.
NOT used when the rules say to replace a ball on a spot.

Simplified Dropping Procedure

Must drop in the “right way”

Knee height
Straight down (no throw, spin, roll)
Must NOT hit the player or player's equipment before hitting the relief area
Ball must hit in the relief area and stay in the relief area

Club-Lengths

Relief areas are always measured by the player's longest club other than the putter.

Important Terms for Dropping Procedures

REFERENCE POINT

The starting point for measuring a relief area
Will be different depending on relief being taken

RELIEF AREA

Where the ball must be dropped AND come to rest
2 club-lengths for lateral relief
1 club-length for everything else
Never closer to hole than reference point (except when using back on the line relief)

Simplified Dropping Procedures

When to Drop Again

Drop, drop, place, place

Simplified Dropping Procedures

When to Drop Again

Drop, drop, place, place

“wrong way” drops don't count – you MUST redrop

Not knee height

Hits player or player's equipment (before hitting the ground)

Doesn't hit in relief area when dropped

Simplified Dropping Procedures

All drops allow original ball or another ball to be used

Free relief AND Penalty relief

Rule 16 - Abnormal Course Conditions

Immovable Obstructions

Ground Under Repair

Temporary Water

Animal Holes

Rule 16 - Abnormal Course Conditions

RELIEF GIVEN ANYWHERE ON GOLF COURSE EXCEPT PENALTY AREAS.

Free Relief

Player may drop original ball or another ball

Reference Point:

Nearest point of complete relief (*not nicest point of relief*)

Must be in general area

Relief Area Size:

One club-length measured from reference point

Limits on Location of Relief Area:

Not nearer the hole than reference point

Complete relief for lie, stance, swing

If in bunker, must remain in bunker for free relief.

Must be in general area

Rule 16 – Abnormal Course Conditions

PUTTING GREEN RELIEF

Free relief – for lie, stance, and LINE of putt.

Ball must be on the putting green.

Player may PLACE original ball or another ball

On the nearest point of complete relief (putting green or general area)

Dangerous Animal Condition

Exists when a dangerous animal (i.e. – snake, stinging bees, alligators, fire ants, etc.) are near a ball and would cause serious physical injury to the player if she had to play it as it lies.

Free relief everywhere.

If in bunker, must remain in bunker for free relief (can come outside bunker – closest point of complete relief – for one penalty stroke)

If in penalty area, must remain in penalty area for free relief. Can use penalty area relief to come out of PA for one penalty shot.

Embedded Ball Relief (Rule 16.3)

Embedded ball (general area ONLY):

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).

Embedded Ball Relief (Rule 16.3)

On the putting green

Mark and lift, then repair the pitch-mark, then replace on spot.

No relief for embedded ball in bunkers or penalty areas

Free relief available ANYWHERE in GENERAL AREA

Reference Point:

spot right behind where ball is embedded

Relief Area Size:

One club-length measured from reference point

Not nearer the hole than reference point

Must be in general area

Rule 17 – Penalty Areas

Penalty Areas:

Player always has option to play the ball out of the penalty area.

Area from which relief with a 1-stroke penalty is allowed if player's ball comes to rest there.

Includes:

Any body of water on the course (i.e. – sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, etc.)

Any other part of the course marked as penalty area

Two different types:

Yellow – 2 relief options

Red – 3 relief options

Should be defined by stakes or lines or physical features (i.e. – wall). If stakes and lines present, lines define the area.

Rule 17 – Penalty Areas

Play from inside Penalty Areas allowed:

May move loose impediments

Make practice swings that touch the ground

Ground your club behind the ball

Touch water

Rule 17 – Penalty Areas

Relief from Penalty Areas

Available when:

Player's ball is found in the penalty areas

Or is known or virtually certain to be in penalty area (even if not found)

Known or Virtually Certain:

Rules of Golf standard for determining what happened to a player's ball.

Either conclusive evidence (i.e. – someone saw what happened)

Or 95% likely that the event in question happened

Rule 17 – Penalty Areas

Relief Options from Penalty Areas (1 penalty stroke):

Stroke and Distance Relief – Red or Yellow penalty areas

Go back to where you last hit the ball and follow procedures to put another ball in play.

Back on the Line Relief – Red or Yellow penalty areas

Reference Point – picked by player on invisible line keeping point where the ball last crossed penalty area and pin in line (mark point with tee)

Relief Area – one club-length measured from reference point, **IN ANY DIRECTION**, may be any area of the course except same penalty area

Lateral Relief – Red penalty area **ONLY**

Reference Point – where original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area

Relief Area – 2 club-lengths measured from reference point, not nearer the hole than reference point, in any area of the course (except same penalty area)

Rule 19 – Unplayable Ball

3 options for unplayable ball relief – each adding 1 penalty stroke.

- Stroke and Distance relief – an option even if original ball not found and identified
- Back on the Line relief – drop in a 1 club-length relief area on a line using reference point (where original ball came to rest) and pin going back as far as the player chooses.
- Lateral relief – use spot original ball came to rest as reference point and relief area is two club-lengths from there.

Rule 19 – Unplayable Ball

Special Rules for taking an unplayable ball in a bunker:

Same three one-penalty stroke options apply, but for back on the line and lateral relief, the ball **MUST** remain in the bunker.

Extra Option:

Back on the Line relief **OUTSIDE** bunker – 2 penalty strokes applied.

Rule 18 – Stroke and Distance, Lost Ball/Out of Bounds, Provisional Ball

A player **ALWAYS** has the option to take stroke and distance relief with 1 penalty stroke and go back to where she played her last shot.

Option with penalty areas, unplayable ball, lost ball, ball out of bounds, etc.

Once a player puts another ball in play under stroke and distance penalty, that is it. The original ball can no longer be played.

Doesn't apply to provisional balls or when playing a 2nd ball in stroke play
Out of Bounds
No relief given for boundary objects -
fences, stakes, walls

Rule 18 – Lost or Out of Bounds

Ball is lost if, at the end of the 3-minute search, it is not found.
Only option for player is to use stroke and distance (with 1 penalty stroke) to put another ball in play.

Rule 18 – Provisional Ball

If a player believes her ball may be lost (outside of a penalty area) or out of bounds, she may hit a provisional.
Before a stroke is made at the provisional ball, the player must announce that she is playing a provisional.
She can play the provisional up to the point where she believes the original ball came to rest. If she finds the original ball within the 3-minute search time, the provisional ball is abandoned.

Rule 7 - Reasonably Searching for Your Ball

3-minute search window starts when you or your caddie start looking for your ball.

You can take reasonable actions to find your ball:

- Moving sand/water

- Moving/bending grass, bushes, tree branches, other growing or attached natural objects

If reasonable actions as part of a fair search improve conditions affecting the stroke, no penalty. If excessive, then there is a penalty.

If ball accidentally moved during search, no penalty. Must be replaced on its original spot (and original lie).

If you can't identify the ball as yours:

- Mark the spot of the ball first.

- Lift to identify (DO NOT CLEAN). Then replace on its spot.

Rule 12 - Bunkers

Loose impediments can be moved (leaves, sticks, rocks)

Relaxed restrictions:

- Digging in with feet to take stance

- Smooth bunker to care for course

- Place clubs, other equipment in bunker

- Lean on club to rest/balance/prevent fall

- Strike sand in frustration/anger

Rule 12 - Bunkers

Remaining restrictions:

- Cannot test the surface of the sand (with hand, club, rake, other)

Cannot touch sand with club right behind or in front of your ball
Cannot make practice swings where club hits sand
Cannot touch the sand as you make a backswing
Special rules apply when taking relief in bunker

Rule 13 – Putting Green

Lots of rights on putting green (ball has to be touching the green to be considered on it).

Rights:

May mark, lift, and clean ball

May remove sand or loose soil from green

May repair damage – but cannot delay play....

Ball marks/shoe marks/scuffs/indentation from equipment or flag

Old hole plugs, turf plugs, seams of cut turf, scrapes/indents from maintenance equipment

Animal tracks, hoof prints

Embedded objects (i.e. – acorn, stone)

Not considered “damage”

Normal maintenance (i.e. aeration holes)

Irrigation/rain/other natural forces

Natural imperfections (weeds, wear, disease)

Natural wear around the hole

Rule 13 – Putting Green

No penalty for accidentally causing ball (or ball-marker to move) on putting green. Just replace on original spot.

Rule 13 – Putting Greens

After marking and lifting your ball, if your ball moves for ANY reason, you may replace it on its original spot with no penalty.

If you haven't marked and lifted it, you may not replace it if it is moved by natural forces (wind, water). Must play it as it lies.

Rule 13 – Putting Greens

Flagstick

No penalty if a putt strikes an unattended flagstick in the hole.

Must play it as it lies if not holed.

If ball ends up resting against flagstick and edge of cup, considered holed if part of the ball is below the surface of the green.