

# The Rules of Golf



in association with

**USGA**<sup>®</sup>



# In This Presentation



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- Free Relief Procedures
  - Abnormal Course Conditions & Embedded Ball (Rule 16)
  - Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions (Rule 15)
- Penalty Relief Procedures
  - Penalty Areas (Rule 17)
  - Unplayable Ball (Rule 19)
  - Stroke & Distance, Ball Lost/Out of Bounds, Provisional (Rule 18)



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# Free Relief by Moving the Ball Away From Interference

## (Rule 16)



# Recognizing Abnormal Course Conditions

Abnormal course conditions are **any** of these things:

- Animal holes,
- Ground under repair,
- Immovable obstruction, or
- Temporary water



# 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 there is **no interference** (under the Rule being used) from the condition from which relief is being taken

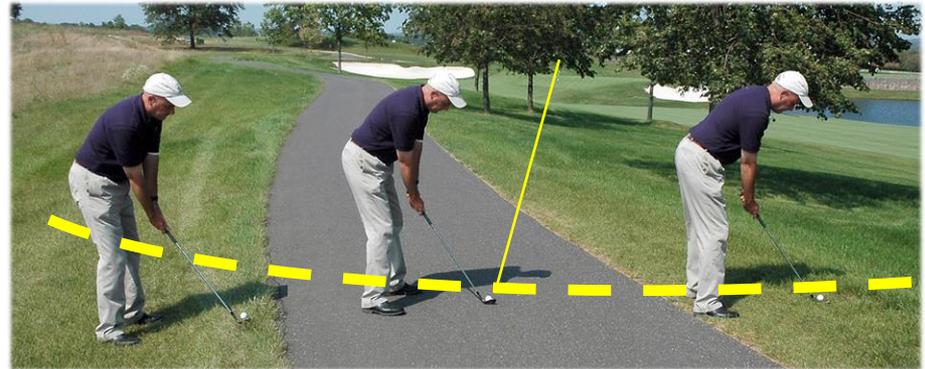


# Nearest Point of Complete Relief

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 the *stroke* if the condition were not there.





# Nearest Point of Complete Relief

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 from something else.





# Abnormal Course Condition Relief

Relief is allowed when interference exists:

- The ball **touches** or is **in** or **on**,
- Physical interference with **intended *stance*** or **intended swing**,
- On ***line of play*** for *putting green* only.



Ball lies **on** an immovable obstruction



Player's **stance** has interference from an immovable obstruction



Temporary water on the putting green may intervene on **line of play**



# Abnormal Course Condition Relief

Three exceptions when relief would not be allowed:

- Ball is in a *penalty area*,
- *Abnormal course condition* is *out of bounds*,
- Clearly unreasonable to play the ball:
  - Because of something other than an *abnormal course condition*
  - Because you choose a club, type of *stance*, swing, or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable.



Ball in penalty area is not entitled to relief



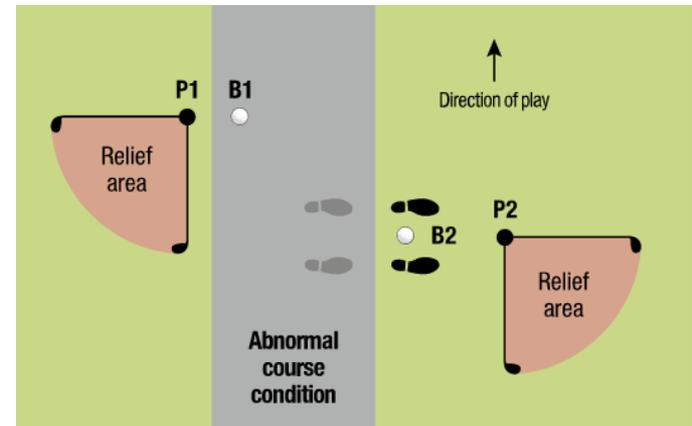
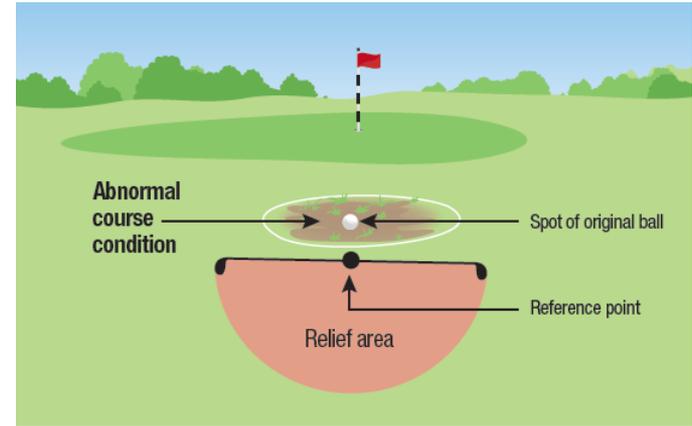
Unreasonable stroke not entitled to relief



# Abnormal Course Condition Relief

When taking relief from an abnormal course condition in the general area, you must follow these steps:

1. Identify a reference point
  - Nearest point of complete relief
2. Measure **one club-length** from the reference point (which must be in the general area)
3. Drop in relief area



# Questions



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# Definition: 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).





# Embedded Ball Relief

- The ball must be *embedded* 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.

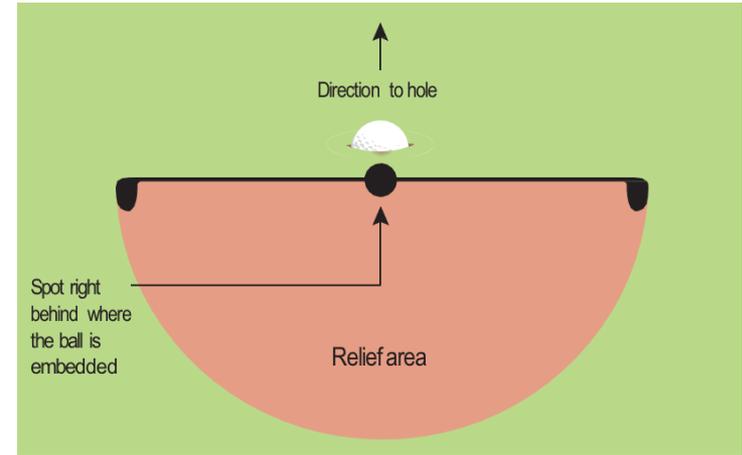




# Embedded Ball Relief

When a player's ball is *embedded* in the *general area* and relief is allowed, the player may take free relief by:

- *dropping* the original ball or another ball
  - in this *relief area*:
- **Reference Point**: The spot in the *general area* 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.



# Questions



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# Free Relief by Moving the Interfering Object

## (Rule 15)



# Definition: Loose Impediments

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 (including the mounds and webs they build, such as worm casts and ant hills),
- Clumps of compacted soil (including aeration plugs)





# Definition: Loose Impediments

## 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.
- **Live Insect on Ball** is a *loose impediment*.





# Removing Loose Impediments

**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,
  - using a club or other *equipment*,
  - getting help from others, or
  - breaking off part of a *loose impediment*





# Removing Loose Impediments

If a player's removal of a *loose impediment* **causes** their **ball to move**:

- The ball must be *replaced*
  - on its original spot
  - (which if not known must be estimated)
- If the *moved* ball has been at rest anywhere, except
  - on the putting green, or
  - in the teeing area,



The player gets **one penalty stroke** under Rule 9.4 (player causing ball to move).

# Questions



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# Definition: Movable Obstruction

Any **artificial** object that can be moved:

1. With reasonable effort, and
2. Without damaging the *obstruction* or the *course*.



**Except** if the object is an:

- *integral object*,
- *boundry object*, or
- *immovable obstruction*





# Removing Movable Obstructions

Without penalty, a player may:

- remove a *movable obstruction*
- anywhere on or off the *course*, and
- may do so in any way.



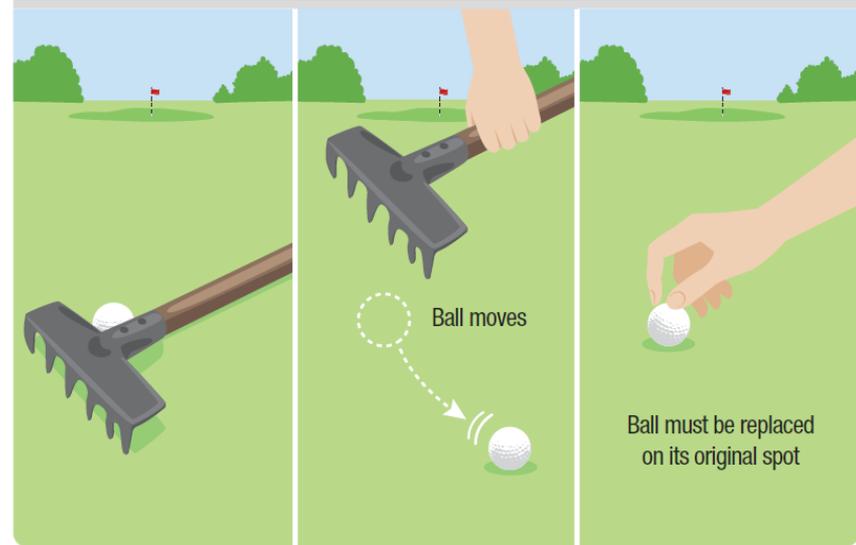


# Relief from Movable Obstructions

## Removal of Movable Obstruction:

If a player's ball **moves** while they are 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).





# Relief from Movable Obstructions

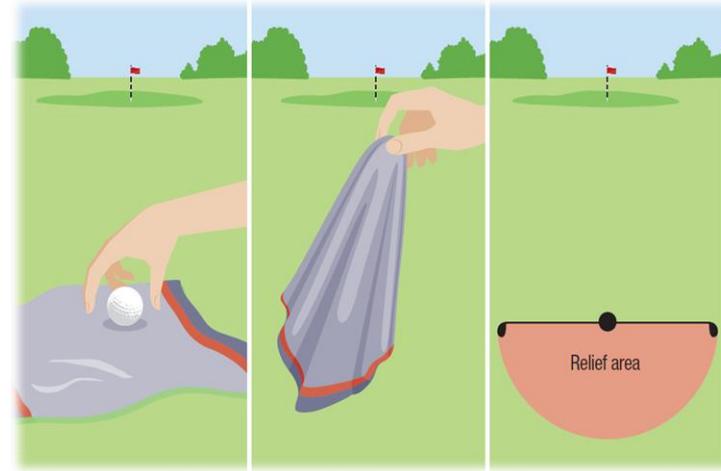
## Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction

### 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...



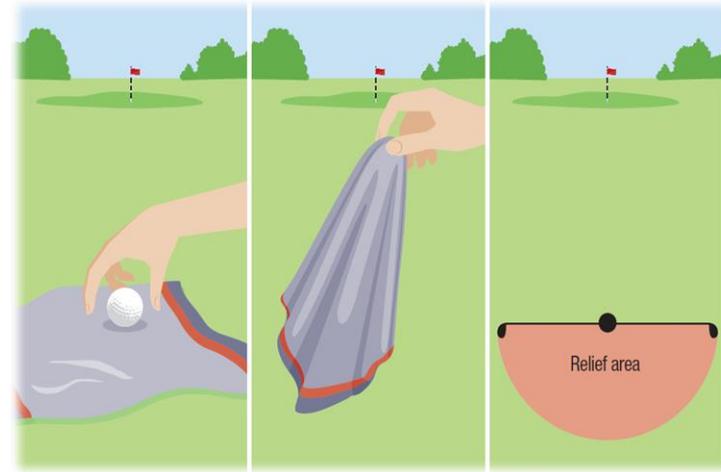


# Relief from Movable Obstructions

## Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction Anywhere on Course Except on Putting Green:

in this relief area...

- **Reference Point:** The estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the *movable obstruction*.
- **Size of Relief Area:** 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.





# Relief from Movable Obstructions

## Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction on **Putting Green**:

The player may take free relief by

- lifting the ball,
- 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*.



# Questions



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# Penalty Areas

## (Rule 17)



# What is a Penalty Area?

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*.





# Penalty Areas

Player May **Play Ball as It Lies** in Penalty Area or **Take Penalty Relief**

The player may:

- Play the ball as it lies
  - without penalty,
  - under the same Rules that apply to a ball in the *general area*...

i.e., there are no special Rules limiting how a ball may be played in a *penalty area*



# Penalty Areas



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- Play from Penalty Areas
  - Okay to move loose impediments
  - Okay to make practice swings
  - Okay to ground your club
  - Okay to touch water



# Penalty Areas

There are two different types of *penalty areas*, distinguished by the color 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*.





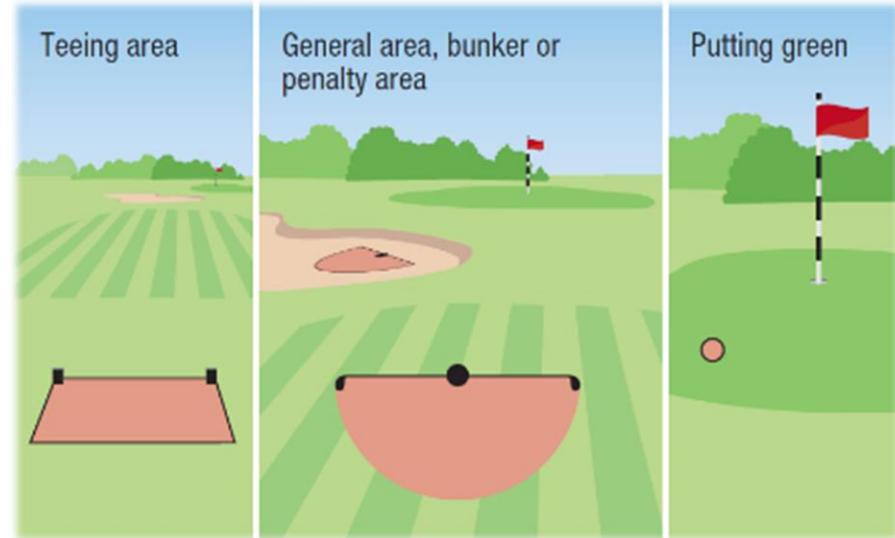
# Penalty Areas

## Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

### (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).



Anywhere inside the  
teeing area

Within one club-length of the spot  
where the previous stroke was made

On the spot where  
the previous stroke  
was made



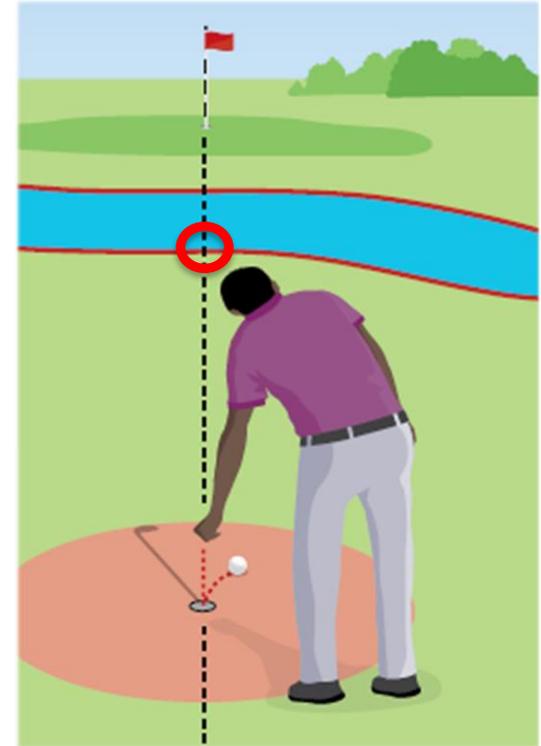
# Penalty Areas

## Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

(2) Back-On-the-Line Relief. The player may

- *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3)
- outside the *penalty area*,
- keeping the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area,
- between the *hole* and the spot where the ball is *dropped*

(with no limit as to how far back the ball may be *dropped*).





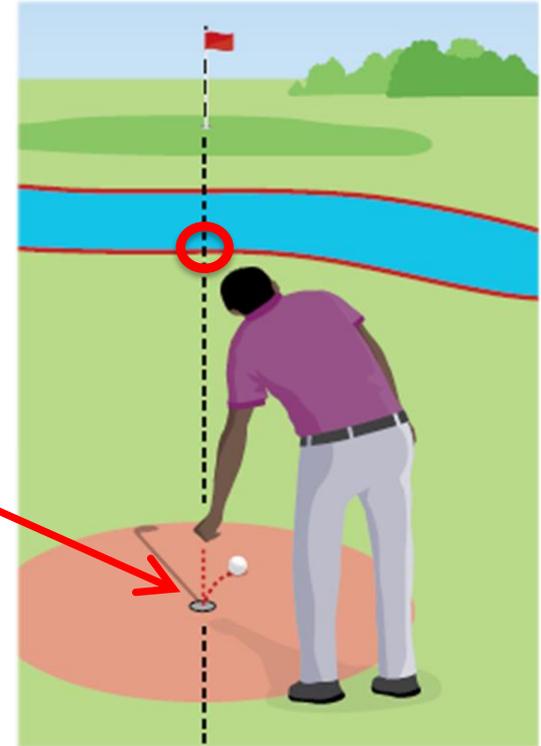
# Penalty Areas

## Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

### (2) Back-On-the-Line Relief

The spot on the line where the ball first touches the ground when *dropped*

- creates a **relief area**
- that is **one club-length** in any direction from that point (with limits).





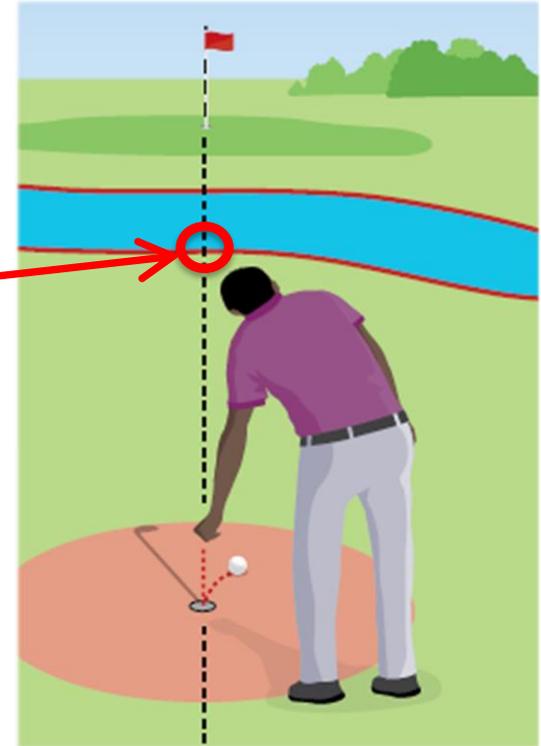
# Penalty Areas

## Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

### (2) Back-On-the-Line Relief

But with these limits:

- Must not be nearer the *hole* than the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area*, and
- May be in any *area of the course* except the same *penalty area*, but
- Must be in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped*.





# Penalty Areas

## Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

### (3) Lateral Relief (Only for Red Penalty Area).

- Reference Point: The estimated point where the original ball last crossed the **edge** of the **red penalty area**.



# Penalty Areas

## Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

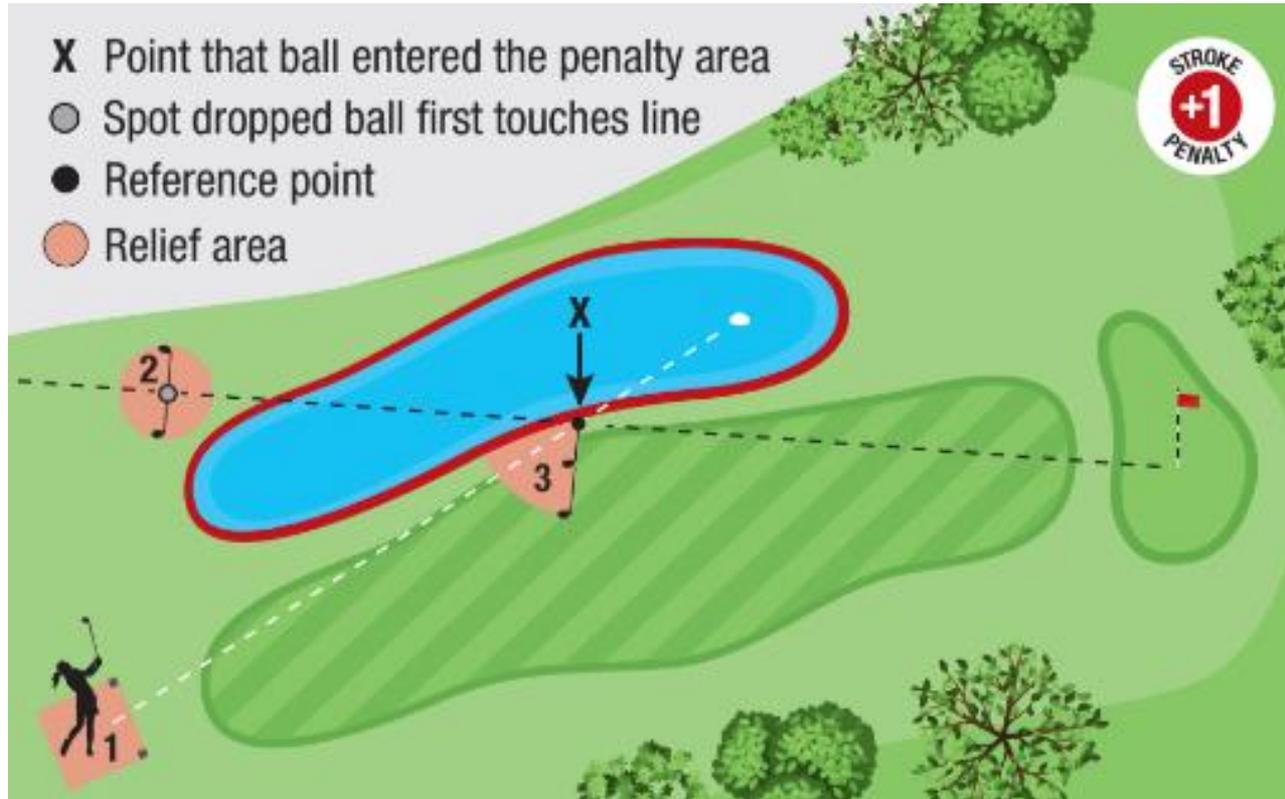
### (3) Lateral Relief (Only for **Red** Penalty Area).

- 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**





# Penalty Areas



# Questions



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# Unplayable Ball (Rule 19)



# Unplayable Ball

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

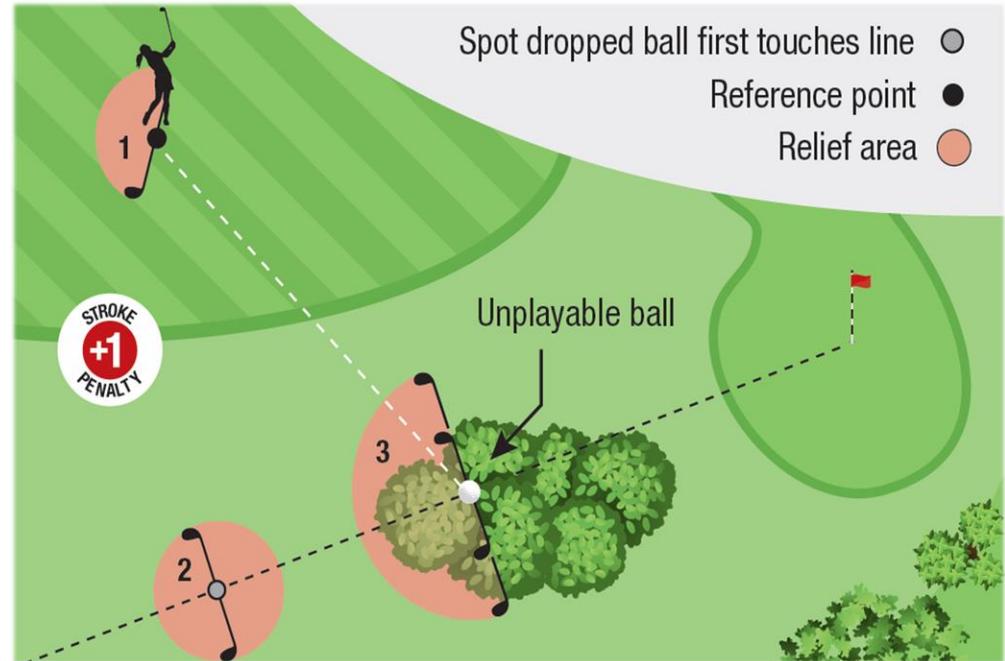




# Unplayable Ball

## Relief for Ball Unplayable in General Area

- (1) Stroke-and-Distance Relief
- (2) Back-On-the-Line Relief
- (3) Lateral Relief





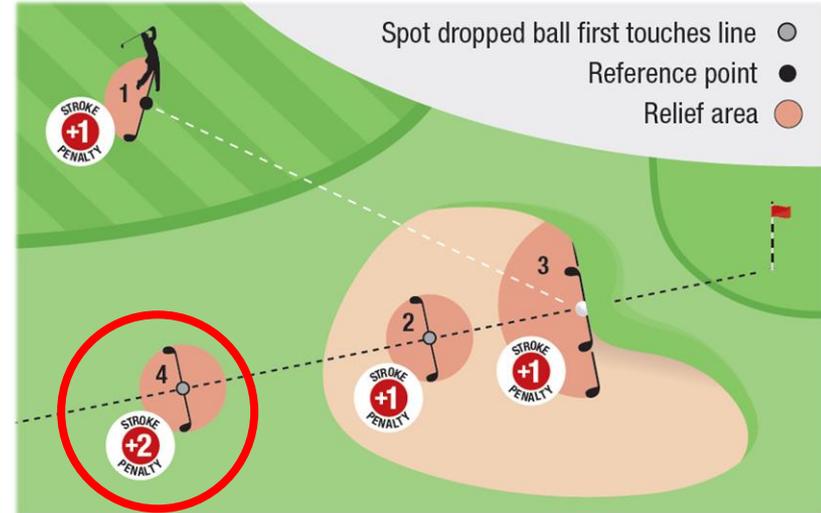
# Unplayable Ball – Additional Option

## Relief for Ball Unplayable in Bunker

### Extra Relief Option (Two Penalty Stroke)

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*.



A player decides that their 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.

# Questions



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# Stroke-and-Distance Relief; Ball Lost or Out of Bounds; Provisional Ball

## (Rule 18)



# When is a Ball Lost

A ball is lost

- if **not found in three minutes**
- after the player or their *caddie* begins to search for it.

The search time begins when:

- the player,
- the player's caddie,
- the player's partner,
- or partner's caddie

begin to look for the ball.





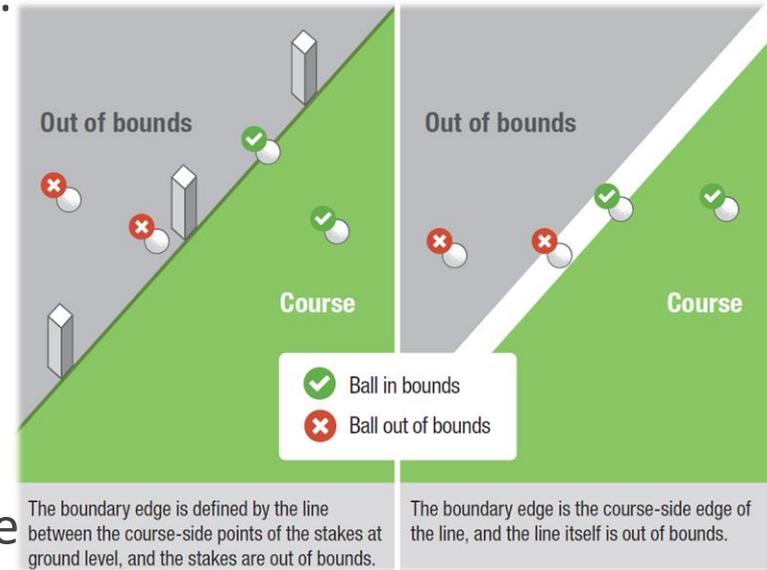
# When is a Ball is Out of Bounds

A ball is out of bounds

- only when **all of it**
- is **outside** the boundary edge of the *course*.

A ball is **in bounds** when:

- lies on or touches  
the ground or anything else inside the boundary edge
- is above  
the boundary edge or any other part of the *course*.



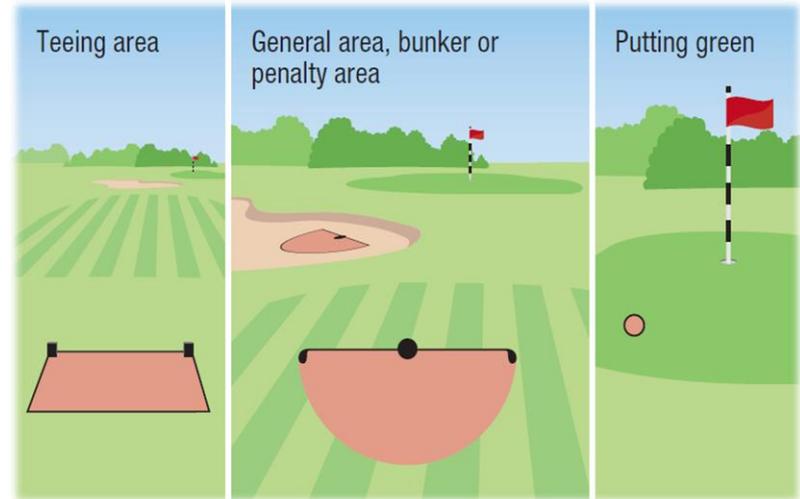
# What to Do When Ball is Lost or Out of Bounds



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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.

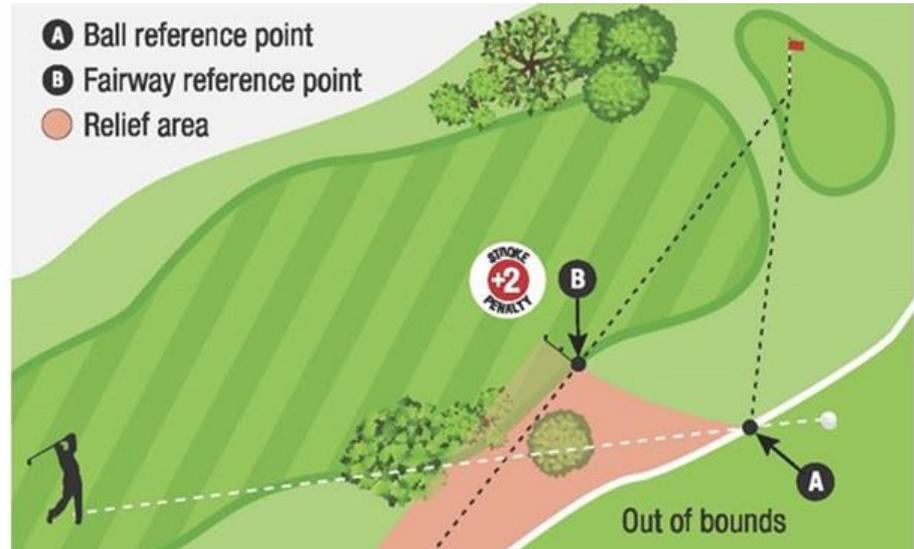
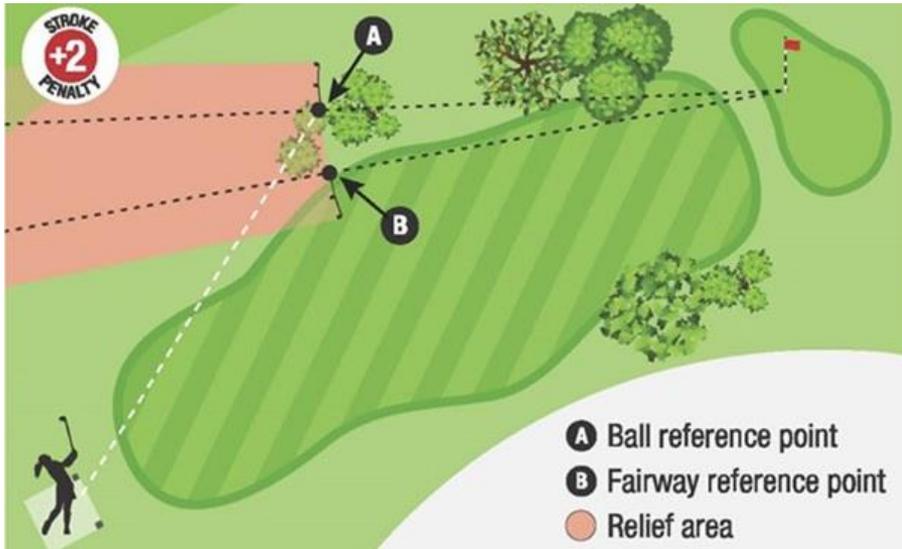




# Alternative to Stroke-and-Distance

## By Model Local Rule Only: MLR E-5

- Provides quicker option to help pace of play, rather than returning to previous spot where stroke made.
- **Two penalty strokes** to use this option.



# Questions



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# What is a Provisional Ball?

Another ball played in case the ball just played by the player may be:

- *out of bounds,*
- lost outside a *penalty area*

You can play a provisional in any of these situations:

- When your original ball went toward a boundary and might be out of bounds.
- When your original ball went somewhere on the *course* outside a penalty area where you don't think you'll find it.
- When your original ball might have gone into a penalty area, but it also might be somewhere you cannot find it outside a *penalty area*.





# Announcing Play of Provisional Ball

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

It is **not enough** for the player only to say they:

- Are playing another ball, or
- Are playing again.
- The player must use the word **“provisional”** or
- otherwise clearly indicate that they are playing the ball provisionally under Rule 18.3.

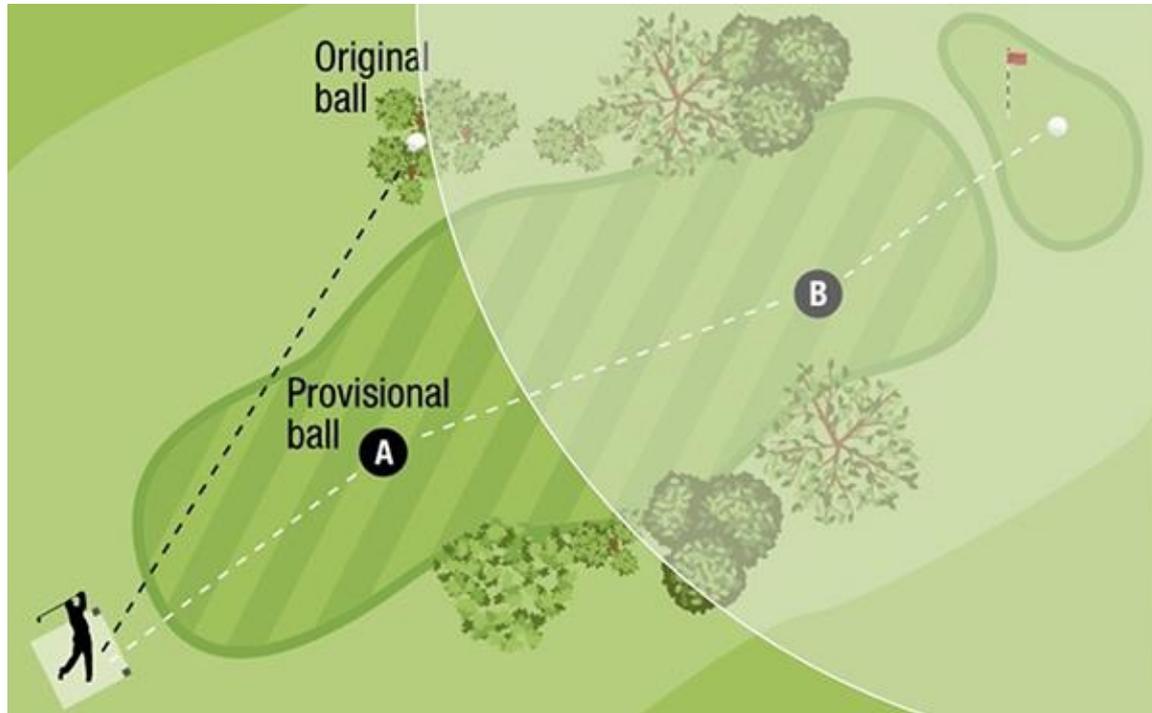


# Playing the Provisional Ball



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The player is allowed to play a provisional ball all the way up to the estimated spot the player's original ball is likely to be.



# When Provisional Ball Must be Abandoned



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Examples where *provisional ball* must be abandoned:

1. If the player finds the original ball on the *course* within the three-minute search time.
  - The player cannot play provisional ball
  - Player may play original ball or proceed under the Rules
2. The player finds their ball in, or it is known or virtually certain that the ball is in a *penalty area*.
  - The player cannot play provisional ball
  - Player may play original ball or proceed under Penalty Area Rule

# Questions



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# Coming Up Next Week

- Finding and Identifying Ball (Rule 7)
- Play the Course as You Find It (Rule 8)
- Playing the Ball as it Lies (Rule 9)
- Ball in Motion Deflected (Rule 11)