

UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION  
RULES OF GOLF EXPLAINED

# TRAINER'S GUIDE

PROVISIONAL BALL



USGA®



## Introduction to the Rules of Golf Explained Video Series

Rules of Golf Explained is a collection of 12 short videos offering simple, straight-forward explanations of how to play by the Rules and what your choices are when applying the Rules in situations that happen while playing. The explanations should be familiar but each will probably contain a thing (or things) not previously known or realized by many golfers who view them.

The following information is provided to help you conduct a presentation approximately 20 minutes in length to a small group of golfers using any of the 12 Rules of Golf Explained videos as the center piece. Each presentation is divided into four parts:

- 1) **TEASER QUESTION (1 to 2 minutes):** Each video begins by showing an incident and asking a Rules question about it. Ask participants to consider the question and write down or remember their answer before continuing to view the video. This question will be reviewed and participants will have the opportunity to find out the correct answer at the end of the video. This teaser question is designed to focus the attention of participants on the topic covered in the video.
- 2) **VIDEO (3 to 5 minutes depending on the video)**
- 3) **TEASER QUESTION REVIEW AND ANSWER (2 to 4 minutes):** Most participants, after watching the video, should be clear on the correct answer to this question (even if they were not entirely sure prior to viewing the video). As the presenter, you will have the option to click the button for either the correct or incorrect answer.
  - a. If the correct answer is selected, a message communicating the answer is correct will appear.
  - b. If the incorrect answer button is selected, a message stating that the answer is incorrect will appear.

Regardless of which answer is selected, three buttons will appear.

- a. **<Back to Question>** allows the opportunity to review the question.
- b. **<Review>** will replay the portion of video that provides the answer to the question.
- c. **<Continue>** will advance to the next question without reviewing the answer to the question.

Notes are provided in the next section of this Trainer's Guide for this and the other three questions to help you as the presentation leader clear up any confusion participants might have with incorrect answers.

- 4) **THREE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (5 to 8 minutes):** The three additional follow-up questions are meant to reinforce other important points made in the video. As the presenter, you will once again have the opportunity to click the buttons for the correct or incorrect answers. As outlined above with the first question, you will always have the option to:
  - a. Review the question.
  - b. Replay the relevant part of the video.
  - c. Continue to the next question or the end of the video.

A note of caution: These videos are not comprehensive explanations of the Rules covered, but broad overviews meant to cover fundamental and commonly encountered aspects of each Rule presented. If questions come up that are not answered by the video, we recommend they be handled individually after the formal presentation session. If you know the answer and are comfortable answering, please do. If you are not, the USGA can be contacted at (908) 326-1850 or by email at [Rules@usga.org](mailto:Rules@usga.org).

## **Rules of Golf Explained – Provisional Ball**

This segment focuses on how to correctly announce and play a provisional ball. Also, after you have played a provisional ball, it helps you figure out whether your original ball or your provisional ball is the right ball to continue playing for the remainder of the hole.

### **The primary messages of this segment are:**

- There are two times when the Rules of Golf allow you to play a provisional ball: 1) when your ball might be out of bounds and 2) when it might be lost.
- There are two things you must do before playing a provisional ball: 1) tell another person in your group that you want to play a provisional and 2) play it before you go forward to look for your original ball.
- After playing a provisional ball, which ball are you supposed to continue playing?
  - If your original ball is found in bounds within five minutes **(play the original)**
  - If the original ball is out of bounds **(play the provisional)**
  - If the original ball is lost **(play the provisional)**

### **The secondary messages of this segment are:**

- You are not allowed to play a provisional ball if the only place your original ball might be lost is in a water hazard.
- You are allowed to play a provisional ball if your ball might have gone into a water hazard as long as it might also be lost somewhere outside of that water hazard too.

## Teaser Question (Question 1)

**Q1.** Phil Mickelson hopes to find his ball. He wants to play a provisional ball in case he doesn't. What do the Rules require him to do before he plays it?

- Just tell someone in the group
- Just play the provisional ball before he goes forward to look
- He has to do both** (correct answer)

Click button "Continue to video to find the answer."

Question answered correctly: "That's correct!"

Question answered incorrectly: "Sorry, that's not correct. If you only do that, the ball you play will be considered your ball in play (not a provisional)."

Choose between the three options:

- **<Back to Question>** allows the opportunity to correctly answer the question, or
- **<Review>** to replay that portion of the video which answers this question, or
- **<Continue>** to go to Question 2.

## Three Follow-up Questions (Questions 2, 3 and 4)

**Q2.** If you played a provisional ball but find your original ball in bounds within 5 minutes after you started to look for it, which ball do you finish playing the hole with?

- Original Ball** (correct answer)
- Provisional Ball

Question answered correctly: "That's correct!"

Question answered incorrectly: "Sorry, that's not correct."

Choose between the three options:

- **<Back to Question>** allows the opportunity to correctly answer the question, or
- **<Review>** to replay that portion of the video which answers this question, or
- **<Continue>** to go to Question 3

**Q3.** When is playing a provisional ball allowed if your ball might be in a water hazard?

- If your ball might be lost somewhere other than in the water hazard** (correct answer)
- You can't play a provisional ball if your ball might be in a water hazard

Question answered correctly: "That's correct! As long as your ball might be lost outside a water hazard or might be out of bounds you can play a provisional ball."

Question answered incorrectly: "Sorry, that's not correct. As long as your ball might be lost outside a water hazard or might be out of bounds you can play a provisional ball."

Choose between the three options:

- **<Back to Question>** allows the opportunity to correctly answer the question, or
- **<Review>** to replay that portion of the video which answers this question, or
- **<Continue>** to go to Question 4.

**Q4.** If you play a second ball before you've announced it's a provisional:

- The second ball is considered a provisional ball as long as everyone in your group agrees it is.
- The second ball is your ball in play as soon as you play it and your original ball is considered lost.** (correct answer)

Question answered correctly: "That's correct!"

Question answered incorrectly: "Sorry, that's not correct."

Choose between the three options:

- **<Back to Question>** allows the opportunity to correctly answer the question, or
- **<Review>** to replay that portion of the video which answers this question, or
- **<Continue>** to go to the end of the video.

## Resources:

### Video Script:

► – VIDEO CLIP WITH INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

#### PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

There are two circumstances when the Rules of Golf require you to play under penalty of stroke and distance:

1. when your ball is LOST and
2. when it is OUT OF BOUNDS.

Often, until you have gone forward to look around, you don't really know if your ball is out of bounds or if it won't be found.

**(Golfer says) "I'm going to hit a Provisional."**

To avoid the delay of going forward then back, the Rules permit you to play a second ball "conditionally" under stroke and distance, BEFORE you go forward to find out what has happened to your original ball. This is called playing a PROVISIONAL BALL.

#### PART 2 – HOW TO PLAY

There are two things you have to do for a second ball to be treated as a PROVISIONAL BALL

**(Golfer says) "I am going to hit a Provisional Ball."**

- 1) BEFORE you play it, you have to tell another person in your group that you are going to play a provisional ball and
- 2) you have to play it BEFORE you go forward to search.

If you don't ... the Rules assume the second ball is your ball in play under stroke and distance ... and your original ball is considered lost.

#### PART 3 – WHICH BALL COUNTS

After playing your original and a provisional ball, which ball do you continue playing?

If you find your original ball in bounds within the five-minute allowable search period, then finish playing the hole with your original ball.

You continue with your PROVISIONAL BALL in two cases:

- when your original ball is OUT OF BOUNDS
- Or... if it is LOST.

#### **PART 4 – PROVISIONALS & WATER**

Many players are confused about whether they are allowed to play a provisional ball if their original ball might be lost in a water hazard. The answer has two parts:

You may NOT play a provisional ball if you have hit your original ball toward a water hazard and aren't sure whether you will find it solely because it might be lost in the hazard.

However, when a hole has a water hazard and an adjoining area that is not part of the water hazard and you hit your original ball toward those areas, if you think there is a chance your original ball might be lost in the adjoining area, then the Rules permit you to play a PROVISIONAL BALL.

#### **(Golfer says) “Provisional”...**

In such a case:

- if you find your original ball within five minutes somewhere outside of the water hazard, continue playing the original and abandon the PROVISIONAL;
- if you determine your original is LOST in the adjoining area that is not in the water hazard, then play the PROVISIONAL BALL;
- if you can't determine where your original ball is, maybe in the adjoining area – maybe in the water hazard, then play the PROVISIONAL BALL;
- but, if you determine your original ball is in the water hazard (whether or not you find it) abandon the PROVISIONAL BALL and either play the original ball as it lies or take relief from the water hazard (using any of the options reviewed in the WATER HAZARD video in this series.)

#### **PART 5 – QUESTIONS**

For more information on playing a provisional ball, refer to the definition of PROVISIONAL BALL on page 32 of the Rules of Golf and to RULE 27-2 (Provisional Ball) on page 101.

(pause)

The USGA and the R&A jointly govern the game worldwide, administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, Equipment Standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings.