



Draft Player's Edition of the New Rules of Golf for 2019

R&A Rules Limited and the United States Golf Association

March 1, 2017

PLAYER'S EDITION

Introduction to the “Player’s Edition of the Rules of Golf”

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

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

- It is a functioning Rule book. It looks like the full Rules of Golf, with the same organization, numbering, style of headings bullet points, etc. Although its text is condensed, it gives you the same answer that is in the full Rules.
- It focuses on the Rules that are most relevant to you as a player. This includes the Rules that describe the essential characteristics of golf – for example, playing by the Rules and in the spirit of the game, the different parts of the course and the equipment you may use – and the most commonly used Rules.
- Although it does not cover some of the less frequently occurring situations, it tells you where to find the text covering these situations in the full Rules of Golf, with the following reference icon: **see full Rules**. This icon means that the full Rule or explanation for that situation can be found under the same Rule number in the full Rules.
- It is written in a style that refers to “you” the golfer. This golfer-focused style is another key step in making the Rules more accessible.
- Diagrams and illustrations are included to help visually explain the Rules. (NOTE: These are not included in the preview draft; however, examples of the use of such visual explanations can be seen in the sample Player’s Edition).

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

I. Fundamentals of the Game (Rules 1-4)

Rule 1 – The Game, Your Conduct and the Rules

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

- **Play the course as you find it and play your ball as it lies.**
- **You are responsible for your own conduct and must play by the Rules and in the spirit of the game.**
- **If you breach a Rule, you will get a penalty to make sure that you gain no advantage over your opponent or the field.**

1.1 The Game of Golf

You play golf in a *round* of 18 (or fewer) holes on a course by striking your ball with your club.

Each hole starts with a *stroke* from the *teeing area* and ends when your ball goes in the *hole* on the *putting green*.

After each *stroke*, you normally:

- Play the *course* as you find it, and
- Play your ball as it lies.

1.2 Standards of Player Conduct

a. 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.
- 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, raking *bunkers*, repairing ball-marks, and not causing unnecessary damage to the *course*.

The *Committee* may **disqualify** you for serious misconduct that is contrary to the spirit of the game.

b. Code of Conduct

For an explanation of the *Committee's* authority to set its own standards of player conduct – [see full Rules](#).

I.3 Playing by the Rules

a. Your Responsibilities

You are responsible for applying the Rules. You may ask for help with the Rules from a referee, but if help is not reasonably available you must play on and raise the issue with the *Committee* later.

All players are expected to be honest in:

Applying Penalties.

- You apply your own penalties.
- If you breach a Rule and deliberately ignore the penalty, **you are disqualified**.
- If you and another player deliberately agree to ignore any Rule or any penalty, **you are both disqualified**.

Estimating or Measuring.

- Many Rules require you to estimate or measure a spot, point, line, area or distance.
- Your estimates or measurements need to be made promptly and with care but often cannot be precise.
- So long as you do all that can be reasonably expected of you under the circumstances to make an accurate estimation or measurement, your reasonable judgment will be accepted even if later shown to be wrong by other information (such as video technology).

b. Penalties

You may be penalized for your own actions or for the actions of people acting for you, such as your *caddie*.

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

- One-Stroke Penalty. Applies in both *match play* and *stroke play*.

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

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Rule 2 – The Course

Purpose of Rule 2: Rule 2 describes the basic things you should know about the **course**. It is important to know the area your ball lies in and the status of any interfering objects and conditions, because that often affects the requirements and options for playing your ball.

2.1 Course Boundaries and Out of Bounds

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

2.2 Defined Areas of the Course

There are five *areas of the course*.

a. The General Area

The *general area* covers the entire *course* **except** for the four specific *areas of the course* described in (b) below.

It is called the “general” area because:

- It covers most of the *course* and is where you will most often play your ball from until you reach the *putting green*.
- It includes every type of ground and growing or attached objects found in that area, such as fairway, rough, sand, trees, etc.

b. The Specific Areas

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

- The *teeing area* of the hole being played,
- All *bunkers*,
- All *penalty areas*, and
- The *putting green* of the hole being played.

2.3 Objects or Conditions that May Interfere with Play

Specific Rules may give you relief from interference by certain objects or conditions, such as:

- *Loose impediments,*
- *Movable obstructions, and*
- *Abnormal course conditions, which include immovable obstructions, ground under repair, temporary water and animal holes.*

But there is no relief from *integral parts of the course* that may interfere with your play.

2.4 No Play Zones

No play zones are designated parts of the course that you are not allowed to play from.

You must take relief when:

- Your ball lies in a *no play zone*, or
- The *no play zone* interferes with you playing your ball lying outside it.

Rule 3 – The Competition

Purpose of Rule 3: Rule 3 covers the three central elements of all golf competitions – namely, (1) playing either **match play** or **stroke play**, (2) playing either on an **individual** basis or with a **partner as part of a side** and (3) scoring by either **gross scores** or **net scores** (after applying your handicap).

3.1 Central Elements of Every Competition

a. Form of Play: Match Play or Stroke Play

These are very different forms of play:

- In *match play*, you and your *opponent* compete against each other based on holes won or lost.
- In the standard form of *stroke play*, all players compete with one another based on the total score – this is, adding up the total number of *strokes* taken (including *penalty strokes*) to *hole out* on each hole in all *rounds*.

b. Playing as an Individual or as a Partner

You either play as an individual player competing on your own or with a *partner* competing together as a *side*.

c. How to Score: Gross Scores or Net Scores

Gross-Score (or Scratch) Competitions. Your “gross score” for a hole or the *round* is your total number of *strokes* taken, including *penalty strokes*. Your handicap is not used.

Net-Score (or Handicap) Competitions.

- Your “net score” for a hole or the *round* is your gross score adjusted for your handicap strokes.
- This is done so that you can compete with players of differing abilities in a fair way.

3.2 Match Play

Purpose of Rule 3.2: Match play has specific Rules because you and your opponent compete solely against each other on every hole throughout the round. You can each see the other's play and protect your own interests.

a. Result of Hole and Match

Winning a Hole. You win a hole when:

- You *hole out* with a lower score than your *opponent*,
- Your *opponent* concedes the hole, or
- Your *opponent* gets a loss of hole penalty.

Tying (or Halving) a Hole. A hole is tied when:

- You and your *opponent* *hole out* with the same score, or
- After the hole has begun, you and your *opponent* agree to consider the hole tied.

Winning a Match. You win a match when:

- You lead your *opponent* by more holes than remain to be played,
- Your *opponent* concedes the match, or
- Your *opponent* is disqualified.

Extending Tied Match. If your match is tied after the final hole, the match is extended one hole at a time until there is a winner.

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

Concession of Stroke, Hole or Match. You may concede your *opponent's* stroke, a hole or a match:

- Conceding Stroke. Allowed any time your *opponent's* ball is at rest and before the stroke is made. Your *opponent* has then *holed out* with a score that includes that conceded stroke, and the ball may be removed by anyone.
- Conceding Hole. Allowed any time before the completion of the hole, including before the hole is started.
- Conceding Match. Allowed any time before the completion of the match, including before the match is started.

A concession is final and cannot be declined or withdrawn.

A concession is made only when clearly communicated, either verbally or by an action that clearly shows intent to concede the *stroke*, the hole or the match.

b. Applying Handicaps in Net-Score Match

Declaring Handicaps. You and your *opponent* should tell each other your handicaps before your match.

If you start a match having:

- Declared a Handicap That is Too High. You are **disqualified** if this affects the number of strokes you give or get. If it does not, **there is no penalty**.
- Declared a Handicap That is Too Low. **There is no penalty** and you must play with that lower handicap.

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* provides a different way).

You and your opponent are responsible for knowing the holes where each of you will give or get handicap strokes.

If you mistakenly apply handicap strokes on a hole, the agreed result of the hole stands.

c. Your Responsibilities

Telling Opponent about Number of Strokes Taken.

When your *opponent* asks you for the *number of strokes taken* on a hole or you give that information without being asked,

- You must give the right *number of strokes taken*.
- If you fail to respond to the *opponent's* request, you have given the wrong *number of strokes taken*.

You lose the hole if you give the *opponent* the wrong *number of strokes taken*, unless you correct that mistake as outlined below:

- While Playing Hole. You must give the right *number of strokes taken* before your *opponent* makes another *stroke* or takes a similar action such as conceding your *stroke* or the hole.

- ***After Hole Completed.*** You must give the right number of strokes taken before either of you makes a stroke from the next teeing area or, for the final hole of the match, before both of you leave the putting green.

Exception – There is No Penalty if No Effect on Result of Hole

Telling Opponent About Penalty. When you get a penalty, you must tell your opponent about that penalty as soon as reasonably possible.

If you fail to do so and do not correct that mistake before your opponent makes another stroke or takes a similar action such as conceding your stroke or the hole, **you lose the hole.**

Exception – No Penalty When Your Opponent Knew of the Penalty.

Knowing Score of Match. You and your opponent are expected to know the match score – that is, whether one of you leads by a certain number of holes (“holes up” in the match) or the match is tied (also known as “all square”).

If you mistakenly agree on a wrong match score:

- You may correct the match score before either of you makes a stroke from the next teeing area or, for the final hole, before both of you leave the putting green.
- If not corrected in that time, that wrong match score becomes the actual match score.

Exception – When Player Requests a Ruling: If you request a ruling in time, and it is found that your opponent either (1) gave the wrong number of strokes taken or (2) failed to tell you about a penalty, the wrong match score must be corrected.

Protecting Your Rights and Interests. In a match you should protect your own rights and interests under the Rules:

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

3.3 Stroke Play

Purpose of Rule 3.3: Rule 3.3 makes sure that all players in a stroke play competition are treated equally under the Rules because they are competing against all the other players. After the round, you and your **marker** (the person who keeps your score) must **certify** that your scores (for each hole) are right and you must return your **score card** to the Committee.

a. Winner in Stroke Play

The player who completes all rounds with the lowest total score is the winner.

In a net-score competition, this means the lowest total net score.

b. Scoring In Stroke Play

Marker's Responsibility: Entering Scores and Certifying Score Card.

- After each hole, your *marker* should confirm your score for that hole with you and enter it on the *score card*.
- When the *round* has ended, your *marker* must certify the *score card*.
- If you had more than one *marker*, each *marker* must certify the scores for the holes they marked.

Your Responsibility: Certifying and Returning Score Card. When the *round* has ended, you:

- Should carefully check the hole scores entered by your *marker* and raise any issues with the *Committee*,
- Should, in a net-score competition, make sure that your correct handicap is shown on the *score card*,
- Must make sure that your *marker* certifies your *score card*,
- May only change a hole score entered by your *marker* with your *marker's* consent or the *Committee's* approval, and
- Must certify the *score card* and promptly return it to the *Committee*, after which you must not change your *score card*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH IN RELATION TO CERTIFYING AND RETURNING SCORE CARD: You are **disqualified**.

Wrong Score for Hole. If you return a score card 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. You are **disqualified**.

Penalty Exception – For an Explanation of What Happens When You Fail to Include a Penalty You are Unaware of – see full Rules.

Scoring in a Net-Score Competition. If you return a score card with:

- Handicap on Score Card Too High or No Handicap Shown. You are **disqualified from the net-score competition**.
- Handicap on Score Card Too Low. There is **no penalty** and your net score stands using that lower handicap.

c. Failure to Hole Out

You must *hole out* at each hole in a *round*. If you fail to *hole out* at any hole:

- You must correct that mistake before making a *stroke* from the next *teeing area* or, for the final hole of the *round*, before leaving the *putting green*.
- If you don't correct the mistake in that time, you are **disqualified**.

Rule 4 – The Player's Equipment

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

4.1 Clubs

a. Clubs Allowed in Making a Stroke

Conforming Clubs. In making a stroke you must use a club that conforms to the Equipment Rules.

Use or Repair of Club Damaged During Round. If you damage your club during a round, you must not replace it with another club.

But you may:

- Continue to make strokes with the damaged club for the rest of the round, or
- Repair the club by restoring it as nearly as possible to its condition before this damage happened, while still using the original grip, shaft and clubhead. **But** in doing so you must not:
 - Unreasonably delay play, or
 - Repair any damage from before the round.

Deliberately Changing Club's Playing Characteristics During Round. For an explanation that you must not make a stroke with a club whose playing characteristics you have changed during the round – **see full Rules.**

PENALTY FOR MAKING STROKE WITH CLUB IN BREACH OF RULE 4.1a:
You are **disqualified.**

But there is **no penalty** under this Rule for merely carrying (but not making a stroke with) a non-conforming club or a club whose playing characteristics were deliberately changed during the round (but such a club would still count against the 14-club limit).

b. Limit of 14 Clubs; Choosing, Adding and Replacing Clubs

Limit of 14 Clubs. You must not:

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

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

No Sharing of Clubs. You are limited to those clubs you started with or added, and must not make a *stroke* with a club carried or chosen for play by anyone else playing on the *course*.

No Replacing Lost or Damaged Clubs. If you started with 14 clubs or added up to the limit of 14 clubs and then lose or damage a club during the *round*, you must not replace it with another club.

Exception – Replacing Damaged Club when You Did Not Cause Damage: If your club is damaged during the *round* and neither you nor anyone acting for you caused that damage, you may replace the damaged club with any club.

Restrictions When Adding or Replacing Clubs. When adding or replacing a club you must not:

- Unreasonably delay play, or
- Add or borrow any club chosen by another player who is playing on the *course* (whether or not in the same playing group or same competition), or
- Build a club from parts carried by anyone for you during the *round*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 4.1b:

- **When Breach Discovered:** You must immediately declare any excess club out of play and apply the penalty based on when you discovered the breach:
 - While Playing the Hole. The penalty applies to the hole you are playing. In *match play*, you must complete the hole, apply the result of that hole to the match score and then apply the penalty to adjust the match score.
 - Between the Play of Two Holes. The penalty applies to the hole you just completed, not to the next hole.

- **Penalty in Match Play – Match Score Revised by Deducting Hole, Maximum of Two Holes:**
 - This is a match adjustment penalty – it is **not** the same as a loss of hole penalty.
 - At the end of the hole you are playing or just completed, the match score is revised by **deducting one hole** for each hole where you were in breach, but with a **maximum deduction of two holes** in the *round*.
 - For example, if you started with 15 clubs and are playing the 3rd hole when you discover the breach and then win that hole to go three up in the match, the maximum adjustment of two holes applies and you would now be one up in the match.
- **Penalty in Stroke Play – Two Penalty Strokes, Maximum of Four Strokes:** You must add **two penalty strokes** to your score for each hole where you were in breach, but with a **maximum of four penalty strokes** in the *round* (adding two *penalty strokes* at each of the first two holes where you were in breach).

c. Declaring Excess Clubs Out of Play

During Round. When you discover during a *round* that you have more than 14 clubs or have made a *stroke* with another player's club, you must immediately:

- Decide which clubs you will not use for the rest of the *round*, and
- Declare those excess clubs out of play to your *opponent* in *match play* or your *marker* or another player in your group in *stroke play*, and
- Not make a *stroke* with them for the rest of the *round*.
- If the club belongs to another player, that other player may continue to use it.

Before Round. For an explanation of what to do if you discover shortly before starting a *round* that you accidentally have more than 14 clubs – **see full Rules**.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 4.1c: You are **disqualified**.

4.2 Balls

a. Balls Allowed During Round

Conforming Ball. In making each *stroke*, you must use a ball that conforms to the Equipment Rules.

You are allowed to receive or borrow a ball from anyone else.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 4.2a: You are **disqualified**.

b. Damage to Ball While Playing Hole

Ball Breaks into Pieces. For an explanation of what to do if your ball breaks into pieces – [see full Rules](#).

Cut or Cracked Ball. If you reasonably believe that your ball has been cut or cracked while playing a hole:

- You may lift the ball to see if it is cut or cracked, but must *mark* its spot first.
- You must not clean the lifted ball, **except** when it is on the *putting green*.
- You 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 you are playing – **but** not if it is only scratched or scraped or its paint is only damaged or discolored.
- If the original ball is cut or cracked and you choose to *substitute* another ball, you must *replace* the *substituted ball* on the *marked spot*; if not, you must *replace* the original ball on that spot.

Nothing in this Rule prohibits you from *substituting* another ball between the play of two holes.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 4.2b:

You must add **one penalty stroke** if you (1) do not *mark* the ball before lifting it, (2) clean the lifted ball when not allowed, or (3) lift the ball without a reasonable belief that it became cut or cracked on the hole you are playing (**except** on the *putting green*).

4.3 Use of Equipment

a. Scope of Rule 4.3

This Rule applies to all types of *equipment* that you might use during a *round*, **except** that clubs and balls are not covered by this Rule.

This Rule only concerns the use of *equipment*. It does not limit the *equipment* that you may carry during a *round*.

b. Allowed and Prohibited Uses of Equipment

You must not create a potential advantage by using *equipment* in either of these ways:

- To artificially replicate or reduce a required skill or judgment, or
- 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.

For an explanation of the main categories of allowed and prohibited uses of *equipment* during a *round* – [see full Rules](#).

c. Medical Exception

You are not in breach of Rule 4.3 if you use *equipment* to help with a medical condition, so long as:

- You have a medical reason to use the *equipment*, and
- The *Committee* finds that its use does not give you any unfair advantage over other players.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 4.3:

- First breach during *round*: **General Penalty**.
- Subsequent breach during *round*: You are **disqualified**.

II. Playing the Round and a Hole (Rules 5-6)

Rule 5 – Playing the Round

Purpose of Rule 5: Rule 5 covers how to play a **round**. 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 your turn to play, it is recommended that you make the stroke in no more than 40 seconds, and usually more quickly than that.

5.1 Meaning of Round

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

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

5.2 Practicing on Course Before Between Rounds

a. Match Play

You may practice on the *course* before a *round* or between *rounds* of a competition.

b. Stroke Play

On the day of a competition, you must not practice on the *course* before a *round*, but may practice on the *course* after completing play for that day.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.2: You are **disqualified**.

5.3 Starting and Ending a Round

a. When to Start Round

You must:

- Be ready to play at the starting time and starting point set by the *Committee*, and
- Start at (and not before) that time.

If the starting time is delayed for any reason, there is no breach of this Rule if you are present and ready to play when your group is able to start.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.3a: You are **disqualified**, **except** in these three situations:

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

b. When Round Ends

For an explanation of when a *round* ends – [see full Rules](#).

5.4 Playing in Groups

a. Match Play

During a *round*, you and your *opponent* must play each hole in the same group so you are able to see each other's play.

b. Stroke Play

During a *round*, you 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: You are **disqualified**.

5.5 Practice During Round

a. No Practice Strokes While Playing Hole

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

b. Restriction on Practice Strokes Between Play of Two Holes

Between the play of two holes, you must not make a practice *stroke*, **except** that you may practice putting or chipping on or near:

- The *putting green* of the hole you just completed,
- Any practice *putting green*, or
- The *teeing area* of your next hole.

But you must not make such practice *strokes* from a *bunker* or unreasonably delay play.

c. Practice When Play is Suspended

For an explanation of how you may practice when play is suspended – [see full Rules](#).

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.5: General Penalty.

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

5.6 Unreasonable Delay; Prompt Pace of Play

a. Unreasonable Delay of Play

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

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

- When you are seeking help from a *referee* or the *Committee*,
- When you suddenly becoming ill, or
- When there are other good reasons.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.6a:

- First breach: **One penalty stroke.**
- Second breach: **General Penalty.**
- Third breach: **Disqualification.**

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

b. Prompt Pace of Play

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

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

You are encouraged to allow faster groups to play through.

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

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

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

When it is your turn to play:

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

You may play out of turn to save time in *match play* and *stroke play*.

Committee Pace of Play Policy. To encourage and enforce prompt play, the *Committee* may introduce a Local Rule setting a Pace of Play Policy.

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

5.7 Stopping Play; Resuming Play

a. When You May or Must Stop Play

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

- Suspension by Committee.
- Stopping Play by Agreement in Match Play. You and your *opponent* may agree to stop play for any reason, **except** if doing so delays the competition.
- Stopping Play Because of Lightning. You may stop play if you believe there is danger from lightning.

If you stop play for any reason not allowed under this Rule, **you are disqualified.**

b. What You Must Do When Committee Suspends Play

Immediate Suspension (Such as When There is Imminent Danger). If the *Committee* declares an immediate suspension of play, you must stop play at once and must not play again until the *Committee* resumes play.

Normal Suspension (Such as For Darkness or Unplayable Course). If the *Committee* suspends play for normal reasons, what happens next depends on whether your group is between holes or is playing a hole:

- Between Play of Two Holes: If all players in your group are between the play of two holes, you must stop play and must not play from the next *teeing area* until the *Committee* resumes play.
- While Playing a Hole: If any player in a group has started a hole, the group may choose either to stop play at once or to play out the hole. If your group does not agree on what to do:
 - Match play: If your *opponent* stops play, you must stop play as well and you must not play again until the *Committee* resumes play.
 - Stroke play: You may continue play of the hole even if others in your group stop play, so long as your *marker* stays to keep your score.

Once you stop play, you must not play again until the *Committee* resumes play.

If you continue play of the hole:

- You may then stop play before completing the hole.
- If you complete the hole, you must not play from the next *teeing area* until the *Committee* resumes play.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.7b: You are disqualified.

c. What You Must Do When Play Resumes

Where to Resume Play. You must resume play from where you stopped play on a hole or, if between the play of two holes, at the next *teeing area*, even if play is resumed on a later day.

When to Resume Play. You must:

- Be present and ready to play at the location where you stopped at the time set by the *Committee* for play to resume, and
- Resume play at (and not before) that time.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.7c: You are disqualified

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

When stopping play of a hole under this Rule, you may *mark* and lift the ball **without penalty**.

When replacing a ball to resume play, you may use the original ball or a *substituted ball*.

Even if you did not lift the ball when stopping play, when you return, you may mark and lift the ball **without penalty**.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 5.7d: General Penalty.

Rule 6 – Playing a Hole

Purpose of Rule 6: Rule 6 covers how to play a **hole**. You are required to use the same ball for an entire hole except when **substitution** is allowed.

6.1 Starting Play of a Hole

a. Playing Ball from Inside Teeing Area

You must start each hole by playing a ball from inside *the teeing area*.

b. What to Do If You Play a Ball from Outside Teeing Area (including from a wrong set of tee markers)

Match Play – Your Opponent May Cancel Your Stroke.

- **There is no penalty** but your opponent may cancel the stroke. This must be done promptly, and before either of you makes another stroke.
- If your opponent cancels the stroke, you must play another ball from inside *the teeing area*.
- If your opponent does not cancel the stroke, the stroke counts and the ball is *in play* and must be played as it lies.

Stroke Play – You Must Correct Mistake.

- You **must add two penalty strokes** and 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 you make on the hole before correcting the mistake do not count.

PENALTY FOR FAILING TO CORRECT MISTAKE IN STROKE PLAY IN BREACH OF RULE 6.1b: You are **disqualified** if you:

- Make a stroke from the next *teeing area* without first correcting the mistake, or,
- If playing the final hole of the round, leave the *putting green* without first announcing that you will correct the mistake.

6.2 Specific Rules for Playing Ball from Teeing Area

a. When Teeing Area Rules Apply

For an explanation on when *the teeing area* Rules apply and do not apply – [see full Rules](#).

b. Teeing Area Rules

These Rules apply when you are starting a hole or playing again from *the teeing area*:

Where to Play Ball From.

- You must play a ball from anywhere inside *the teeing area*, which means that a part of the ball must touch or overhang *the teeing area*.
- You may stand outside of *the teeing area* in making the stroke.

Ball May be Teed. The ball must be played from either:

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

You 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:

- First breach: **General Penalty**
- Second breach: **Disqualification.**

Certain Conditions in Teeing Area May be Improved. Before making a stroke, **without penalty** you are allowed to:

- Alter the ground surface in *the teeing area*,
- Move, bend or break natural objects that are attached or growing in *the teeing area*, or
- Remove dew, frost or water in *the teeing area*.

Tee-Markers in Teeing Area Must Not be Moved. Before making a stroke, you must not move a tee-marker in *the teeing area* to improve the conditions affecting your stroke. If you do so, **you get the general penalty.**

Ball is Not in Play Until Stroke is Made. Whether the ball is teed or placed on the ground:

- It is not *in play* until you make a stroke at it, and
- You may lift or move the ball **without penalty** before you make a stroke.

When Ball Falls Off Tee. If a ball falls off the tee or you knock it off the tee before you have made a stroke at it, it is not *in play* and you may re-tee it **without penalty**.

6.3 Ball Used in Play of Hole

Purpose of Rule 6.3: A hole is played as a progression of strokes made from the teeing area to the putting green and into the hole. After teeing off, you are normally expected to play the same ball until you complete hole.

a. Holing Out with Same Ball Played from Teeing Area

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

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

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

You should put a mark on your ball to help identify it. This includes any ball you play provisionally.

b. Substitution of Another Ball While Playing Hole

Substituted Ball Becomes Ball in Play. If you *substitute* another ball while playing a hole, the *substituted ball* becomes your *ball in play*. This is true even when the *substitution* is not allowed by the Rules.

Making Stroke at Incorrectly Substituted Ball. You must not make a stroke at an incorrectly *substituted ball*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE: General Penalty, and, in stroke play, you must play out the hole with the *incorrectly substituted ball*.

c. Wrong Ball

Making Stroke at Wrong Ball. You must not make a stroke at a *wrong ball*.

Exception – Ball Moving in Water

PENALTY FOR PLAYING WRONG BALL: General Penalty.

In match play,

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

In stroke play,

- The strokes you make at a *wrong ball* do not count.
- You must correct the mistake under the Rules.
- If you make a stroke from the next *teeing area* without first correcting the mistake or, if playing the final hole of the round, leave the *putting green* without first announcing that you will correct the mistake, you are **disqualified**.

What to Do When Your Ball is Played by Someone Else as a Wrong Ball. You must replace your original ball or a *substituted ball* on the original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it) where it was before it was played as a *wrong ball*.

d. When You are Allowed to Play More than One Ball at a Time

For an explanation of when you are allowed to play more than one ball at a time – [see full Rules](#).

6.4 Order of Play When Playing Hole

Purpose of Rule 6.4: Rule 6.4 covers the **order of play** throughout play of a hole.

- Because the order of play is central in match play, if you play out of turn, your opponent may **cancel your stroke** and make you play again.
- But in stroke play, there is no penalty for playing out of turn, and you are both allowed and encouraged to play “ready golf” – that is, to **play out of turn in a safe and responsible way for convenience or to save time**.

a. Match Play

Order of Play. You and your *opponent* must play in this order:

- Starting First Hole. At the first hole, the *honor* (who plays first from the *teeing area*) is decided by the order of the draw or, if there is no draw, by lot or agreement.

- Starting All Other Holes. The player who wins a hole has the *honor* at the next *teeing area*. If the hole was tied, the player with the *honor* at the previous *teeing area* keeps it.
- After Both Players Start a Hole. The ball farther from the hole is 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 lot or agreement.

Opponent May Cancel Your Stroke Made Out of Turn. If you play when it was your *opponent's* turn to play, **there is no penalty but:**

- Your *opponent* may cancel your *stroke*. This must be done promptly, and before either of you makes another *stroke*.
- If your *opponent* cancels your *stroke*, you must, when it is your turn to play, play the original ball or a *substituted ball* from where the canceled *stroke* was made.
- If your *opponent* does not cancel your *stroke*, the *stroke* counts and you must play the ball as it lies.

Exception – Your Opponent May Invite You to Play Out of Turn to Save Time: If does so, your *opponent* gives up the right to cancel your *stroke* played out of turn.

b. Stroke Play

Normal Order of Play.

- Starting First Hole. The *honor* at the first *teeing area* is decided by the order of the draw or, if there is no draw, by lot or agreement.
- Starting All Other Holes.
 - The player in the group with the lowest gross score at a hole has the *honor* at the next *teeing area*; the player with the second lowest 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 *honor* is based on gross scores, even in a net-score competition.
- After All Players Have Started a Hole.
 - The ball 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 lot or agreement.

But there is no penalty if you play out of turn in *stroke play*, **except** that if you or another player agree to play out of turn to give one of you an advantage, **both of you must add two penalty strokes.**

Playing Out of Turn for Convenience or to Save Time. You are both allowed and encouraged to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way, such as when:

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

c. When You Will Play Provisional Ball or Another Ball from Teeing Area

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

d. When Taking Relief or When Playing Provisional Ball From Anywhere Other Than Teeing Area

For an explanation of the order of play for a *provisional ball*, and the different procedure based on whether or not your only option is to play under penalty of *stroke and distance* – [see full Rules](#).

6.5 Completing Play of a Hole

Match Play. The hole is completed when:

- You *hole out*, or
- Your next *stroke* is conceded, or
- The result of the hole is decided (such as when your *opponent's* score for the hole is less than you possibly could take or you or your *opponent* gets a loss of hole *penalty*).

Stroke Play. The hole is completed when you have *holed out* under Rule 3.3c.

III. Playing the Ball (Rules 7-11)

Rule 7 – Searching for and Identifying Ball

Purpose of Rule 7: Rule 7 allows you to take reasonable actions in **fairly searching** for and **identifying** your ball after each stroke.

- But you must be careful, as you will get a penalty will apply if you take excessive actions and they improve the conditions affecting your stroke.
- You get no penalty if your ball is accidentally moved during search, but you must then replace the ball on its original spot before the next stroke.

7.1 How to Fairly Search for Ball

a. You May Take Reasonable Actions to Find Ball

You are responsible for finding your ball in play after each stroke.

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

- Moving sand and water,
- Moving or bending grass, bushes, tree branches and other growing or attached natural objects, and
- Breaking such objects (**but** not if you deliberately break such objects).

If doing these things *improves* the conditions affecting your stroke,

- **You get no penalty** if the *improvement* results from a fair search.
- **But** if the *improvement* results because you took actions that exceeded what was reasonably necessary for a fair search, you **get the general penalty**.

b. What to Do if Sand Affecting Lie of Your Ball is Moved While You Are Trying to Find or Identify It

- You must re-create the original *lie* in the sand, but may leave a small part of the ball visible if the ball had been covered by sand.
- If you play the ball without having re-created the original *lie*, **you get the general penalty**.

7.2 How to Identify Ball

For an explanation of how your ball may be identified – [see full Rules](#).

7.3 Lifting Ball to Identify It

If a ball might be yours but you cannot identify it as it lies:

- You may lift the ball to identify it, but you must *mark* its spot first and must not clean it more than needed to identify it.
- If the lifted ball is yours, it must be *replaced* on the *marked* spot.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 7.3: If the lifted ball is your ball, you must add **one penalty stroke** if you: (1) did not *mark* the ball before lifting it, (2) cleaned the lifted ball more than necessary, or (3) lifted the ball when not necessary to identify it.

7.4 Ball Moved During Search or Identification

There is **no penalty** if your ball is accidentally *moved*:

- By you, your *opponent* or anyone else while searching for it, or
- By you while identifying it.

In either situation, your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it). In doing so:

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

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 7.4: General Penalty.

Rule 8 – Course Played as It is Found

Purpose of Rule 8: Rule 8 sets out a **fundamental principle of golf**: “**play the course as you find it**”. When your ball comes to rest, you normally have to accept the **conditions affecting the next stroke and not improve them**. You also must not **deliberately alter other physical conditions** on the course to affect either your own play or someone else’s play.

8.1 Player Actions that Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke

To support the principle of “play the course as you find it”, this Rule restricts what you may do to *improve* any of these protected “*conditions affecting your stroke*”:

- The *lie* of your ball at rest,
- The area of your intended *stance*,
- The area of your intended *swing*,
- Your *line of play*, and
- The *relief area* where you will *drop* or place a ball.

a. Actions that are **Not Allowed**

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

(1) Move, bend or break any:

- Growing or attached natural object, or
- Fixed artificial object (including *immovable obstructions* and *integral parts of the course*).

(2) Alter the surface of the ground (such as by creating or eliminating holes, indentations or uneven surfaces).

(3) Remove or press down:

- Sand or loose soil, or
- Divots that have already been replaced or other cut turf already in place.

(4) Build a *stance*, either by altering the ground or positioning something in place.

(5) Remove dew, frost or water.

b. Actions that are Allowed

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

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

(2) Ground your club lightly right in front of or right behind your ball. **But**:

- This does not include pressing your club on the ground, and
- When your ball lies in a *bunker*, touching the sand right in front of or behind your ball with your club is prohibited.

(3) Firmly place your feet in taking a *stance*, including a reasonable amount of digging in with your feet in sand.

(4) Fairly take your *stance* by doing what is reasonably necessary to get to your ball and take your *stance*. **But** you:

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

(5) Make a *stroke*, including the backswing for your *stroke* which you then make. (**But** when your ball lies in a *bunker*, touching the sand in the *bunker* in your backswing is prohibited.)

(6) Alter the ground surface in the *teeing area* or remove dew, frost or water from the *teeing area*.

(7) Remove sand and loose soil on the *putting green* and repair damage on the *putting green*.

(8) Move a natural object to see if it is loose. **But** if you find the object to be attached, it must stay attached and be returned as nearly as possible to its original position.

c. Restoring Conditions Altered After Ball Came to Rest

When Restoration of Conditions Not Allowed. If the conditions were altered by you (or anyone acting for you) or by *natural forces* such as wind or water, you must accept those altered conditions and must not restore them if doing so would *improve* them.

When Restoration of Conditions Allowed. If the conditions were altered by an *animal* or by any person other than you (or anyone acting for you), **without penalty** you may:

- Restore the original conditions as nearly as possible, and *replace* the ball on its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it) if it *moves* while doing so.
- *Mark*, lift, clean and *replace* your ball on the *marked* spot if reasonably necessary to restore the original conditions or if material ended up on your ball when the conditions were altered.

8.2 Your Deliberate Actions to Improve Other Physical Conditions to Affect Your Own Play

For an explanation of such actions that you must not take – [see full Rules](#).

8.3 Deliberate Actions to Improve or Damage Physical Conditions to Affect Another Player's Play

For an explanation of such actions that you must not take – [see full Rules](#).

Rule 9 – Ball Played as It Lies; Ball at Rest Lifted or Moved

Purpose of Rule 9: Rule 9 sets out a *fundamental principle of the game*: “*play the ball as it lies*”.

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

9.1 Playing Your Ball as It Lies

a. Playing Your Ball from Where it Came to Rest

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

- To play a ball from another place on the *course*, or
- To lift a ball and then *replace* it on the spot where it has been at rest.

b. What to Do When Your Ball Moves During Your Backswing or While You're Making a Stroke – [see full Rules](#).

9.2 Deciding Whether and Why Your Ball Moved

a. Deciding Whether Your Ball Moved

Meaning of Moved. Your ball has “*moved*” under the Rules:

- Only if it leaves its spot and comes to rest on any other spot, and this could be seen by the naked eye (whether or not you or anyone actually sees it do so).
- This includes when your ball *moves* vertically down.
- If your ball only moves back and forth (sometimes referred to as “oscillating”) and stays on or returns to the same spot, it has not *moved*.

Standard for Deciding Whether Your Ball Moved.

- Your ball at rest will be found to have *moved* only if it is “*known or virtually certain*” that it did.
- If your ball might have *moved* but this is not *known or virtually certain*, you must play it as it lies.

b. Deciding What Caused Your Ball to Move

When your ball at rest has *moved*:

- It must be decided what caused it to *move*.
- This tells you whether to *replace* the ball or play it from its new spot and whether there is a penalty.

Four Possible Causes. The Rules recognize only four possible causes when your ball at rest that *moves* before you make a *stroke*:

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

Standard for Deciding What Caused Ball to Move.

- You, your *opponent* or an *outside influence* will be found to have caused your ball to *move* only if it is *known or virtually certain* that you or they did so.
- If it is not *known or virtually certain* that at least one of these was the cause, the Rules will assume that *natural forces* caused your ball to *move*.

In applying this standard, you must consider all reasonably available information, which means all information you know or should know, or can get with reasonable efforts and without unreasonable delay.

9.3 Ball Moved by Natural Forces

“*Natural forces*” means wind or water or when something happens for no apparent reason, such as the effects of gravity.

If *natural forces* cause your ball at rest to *move*:

- **There is no penalty**, and
- You must play your ball from its new spot rather than *replacing* it on its original spot.

Exception – Your Ball on the Putting Green Must Always be Replaced if it Moves After Having Already Been Lifted and Replaced On Its Original Spot, No Matter What Caused it to Move

9.4 Ball Lifted or Moved By You

This Rule applies only when it is *known or virtually certain* that you (including your *caddie*) lifted your ball at rest or caused it to *move*.

a. When Lifted or Moved Ball Must Be Replaced

If you lift or *move* your ball at rest, your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it), **except**:

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

b. Penalty for Lifting, Moving or Deliberately Touching Ball

If you lift, *move* or deliberately touch your ball at rest, **you must add one penalty stroke**.

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

Exception 1: When a Rule Were Allows You to Lift or Move the Ball

Exception 2: When You Move Your Ball Accidentally While Searching for it

Exception 3: When You Move Your Ball Accidentally on the Putting Green

Exception 4: When You Move Your Ball Accidentally While Applying a Rule

9.5 Your Ball Lifted or Moved By Your Opponent

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

a. When Your Lifted or Moved Ball Must Be Replaced

If your *opponent* lifts or *moves* your ball at rest, your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it), **except**:

- When your *opponent* is conceding your *stroke*, a hole or the match, or
- When your *opponent* lifts or *moves* your ball at your request because you intend to take relief under a Rule or *replace* the ball on a different spot.

b. Penalty for Lifting, Moving or Deliberately Touching Your Ball

If your *opponent* lifts, *moves* or deliberately touches your ball at rest, **your opponent must add one penalty stroke**.

But there are several **exceptions** where **your opponent gets no penalty** for doing so:

Exception 1: When a Rule Allows Your Opponent to Lift Your Ball

Exception 2: When Your Opponent Takes Any of the Actions Covered By Exceptions 2, 3 or 4 in Rule 9.4b (that is, Your Opponent Gets Same Exceptions as for You).

9.6 Your Ball Moved by Outside Influence

This Rule applies only when it is *known or virtually certain* that an *outside influence* lifted or *moved* your ball at rest.

a. No Penalty and Replace Your Ball

If it is *known or virtually certain* that an *outside influence* (including another player in *stroke play*) caused your ball to *move*:

- **There is no penalty**, and
- Your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which must be estimated if you don't know it).

b. Your Ball Moved by Outside Influence but Not Found

If your ball has not been found but it is *known or virtually certain* that an *outside influence* moved it:

- You must *replace* a *substituted ball* on the estimated original spot (which must be estimated if you don't know it).
- **But** if this is not *known or virtually certain*, you must play a *substituted ball* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

9.7 Your Ball-Marker Moved or Lifted

This Rule covers what to do if your *ball-marker* is moved or lifted before your ball is *replaced*.

a. When Ball-Marker Must Be Replaced

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

- Your *ball-marker* must be replaced to *mark* the ball's original spot (which must be estimated if you don't know it), or
- Your ball must be *replaced* on that spot.

b. Penalty for Lifting or Moving Your Ball-Marker

If you or your *opponent* lifts your *ball-marker* or causes it to move, **you or your opponent must add one penalty stroke.**

Exception – Rule 9.4b and 9.5b Exceptions Apply When Your Ball-Marker is Lifted or Moved

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 9:

If you play your ball from a *wrong place* after (1) failing to *replace* your *moved* or *lifted* ball or *ball-marker* in breach of this Rule or (2) *replacing* your *moved* ball that should have been played from where it was at rest, you get the **general penalty**.

Rule 10 – Preparing for and Making a Stroke; Advice and Help; Caddies

Purpose of Rule 10: Rule 10 covers how to prepare for and make a **stroke**, including the **assistance** and **advice** you may get from others. You make a stroke by fairly striking your ball with your club. Your fundamental challenge is to direct and control the movement of your entire club by making a free swing.

10.1 Making a Stroke

If you make a *stroke* in breach of the Rule, the *stroke* counts and there is also a penalty.

a. Fairly Striking Your Ball

In making a *stroke*, you must fairly strike at the ball with the head of the club and must not push, scrape or scoop the ball.

b. Striking Your Ball More Than Once

If your club strikes the ball more than once in making a *stroke*, you **must add one penalty stroke**.

c. Anchoring Your Club

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

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

“Forearm” means the part of your arm below your elbow joint and includes your wrist.

d. Making Stroke while Standing Across or on Line of Play

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

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

Exception – If Your Stance Is Taken Accidentally or to Avoid Another Player's Line of Play

e. Playing a Moving Ball

You must not make a *stroke* at your ball while it is moving, **except** in these three situations when:

- **Your Ball Begins to Move Only after You Begin Your Backswing.**
- **Your Ball Is Falling Off the Tee.**
- **Your Ball Is Moving in Water**

f. Ball Moving in Water

For what you may do to play a ball that is moving in water – [see full Rules](#).

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 10.1: General Penalty.

10.2 Advice and Other Help

Purpose of Rule 10.2: *You must act alone in making your stroke. Golf is a game of skill and personal challenge. One of your fundamental challenges is deciding your strategy and tactics for play. So there are limits to the **advice** and **help** you may get during a round. You may ask for advice only from your **caddie** and must not give advice to other players.*

a. Advice

During a *round*, you must not:

- Give *advice* to anyone in the competition playing on the course, or
- Ask anyone for *advice*, other than your *caddie*.

b. Other Help

Pointing Out Your Target Line When Your Ball Will be Played From Anywhere Other than Putting Green.

- Any person may point out your target line for the *stroke*, such as a building or tree in the distance.
- You may have anyone stand on or close to your target line to show where it is, **but** that person must move away before your *stroke* is made.
- You may have an object (such as a bag or towel) put on the *course* to show the target line, **but** the object must be removed before you make your *stroke*.

Pointing Out Your Target Line When Your Ball Will be Played from Putting Green. Your caddie:

- May point out your target line before the stroke is made, **but:**
- Must not deliberately stand on or close to your target line to help you while you make the stroke.

Exception – Your Caddie May Attend the Flagstick While You Make Your Stroke

In pointing out your target line:

- Your *caddie* may touch the *putting green* with hands, feet or anything he or she is holding, but must not *improve conditions affecting your stroke* in breach of Rule 8.1.
- **But** you or your *caddie* must not put an object anywhere on or off the *putting green* to show the target. This is **not** allowed even if that object is removed before you make the stroke.

Help with Your Stance, Alignment or Positioning of Your Body. When you begin taking a *stance* for your stroke and until you make the stroke:

- Your *caddie* must not deliberately stand on or close to an extension of your *line of play* behind your ball, and
- You must not position your feet or body for your *stance* by reference to any object (such as a club) that was placed by or for you on the *course* to help your *stance*, alignment or the positioning of your body or club for your stroke, **except** that you may touch the *course* with the club while holding it.

“Taking a *stance* for your stroke” under this Rule means:

- When you intend to remain in position to make the stroke.
- If you position your feet or body next to your ball but intend to back away without making the stroke, and then you do back away, this Rule does not yet apply.

Exception – When Your Caddie Accidentally Stands on or Close to Your Line of Play or Extension of Your Line of Play Behind Your Ball

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

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

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 10.2: General Penalty.

10.3 Caddie

Purpose of Rule 10.3: You may have a **caddie** to carry your clubs, give you advice and help you during the round. Rule 10.3 lists various actions your caddie is allowed or not allowed to take for you.

a. Your Caddie May Help You During Round

Meaning of Caddie. Your “caddie” is someone who helps you during a round in these ways:

- Carrying or Handling Clubs – A person who carries or handles your clubs during play is your caddie even if not named as a caddie by you, **except** when only taking a casual act to help (such as getting a club you left behind or moving your bag or cart out of the way).
- Advice – Your caddie is the only person that you may ask for advice.

You Are Allowed Only One Caddie at a Time.

- You must not have more than one caddie at any one time.
- You may change caddies during a round, but must not do so temporarily to get advice from your new caddie.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 10.3a:

- You get the **general penalty** for each hole during which you are helped by more than one caddie.
- If the breach happens or continues between the play of two holes, you get the **general penalty** for your next hole.

b. What a Caddie May Do and Not Do – [see full Rules.](#)

c. You Are Responsible for Your Caddie's Breach of Rules

You are responsible for your *caddie's* actions during a *round*.

If your *caddie's* action would breach a Rule if done by you, or if your *caddie* takes an action that only you may take under a Rule, **you get the penalty under that Rule.**

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Rule 11 – Ball in Motion After Stroke Hits Person, Animal or Object

Purpose of Rule 11: Rule 11 covers what to do if your **ball in motion after a stroke** accidentally hits a person, animal, equipment or anything else on the course. You must normally accept such outcomes, whether favorable or not, and play your ball from where it comes to rest. Also, a ball in motion should be left to come to rest without deliberate interference. Any deliberately deflected ball must be played from where it is estimated it would have come to rest.

11.1 Your Ball in Motion After Stroke Accidentally Hits Someone or Something

If your ball in motion after a stroke accidentally hits any person (including you or your caddie) or outside influence:

- There is **No Penalty** to Any Player.

Exception in Stroke Play: If your ball in motion hits another ball at rest on the putting green and both balls were at rest on the putting green before your stroke, you must add **two penalty strokes**.

- Your Ball Must be Played as It Lies. You must accept the outcome and play your ball from where it comes to rest, **except** in two situations:

Exception 1 – When Your Ball Played from Anywhere Other than Putting Green Comes to Rest on Any Person, Animal or Moving Outside Influence: You must not play your ball as it lies and must take relief in the required way – [see full Rules](#).

Exception 2 – When Your Ball Played from Putting Green Accidentally Hits Any Person, Animal or Movable Obstruction on Putting Green: Your stroke is normally canceled and replayed. For an explanation of the two situations where the stroke is not canceled and replayed – [see full Rules](#).

11.2 Ball in Motion After Stroke Deliberately Deflected or Stopped

For an explanation of what to do when a ball is deliberately deflected or stopped – [see full Rules](#).

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

For an explanation of when these actions are prohibited – [see full Rules](#).

IV. Special Rules for Bunkers and the Putting Green (Rules 12-13)

Rule 12 – Bunkers

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

12.1 When Your Ball Lies in Bunker

Your ball lies in a *bunker* when any part of the ball is inside the edge of the *bunker* and it:

- Touches sand in the *bunker*, or
- Rests on a *loose impediment, movable obstruction, abnormal course condition or integral part of the course* in the *bunker*.

12.2 Playing Your Ball in Bunker

a. Touching or Removing Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions

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

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

b. Restrictions on Touching Sand in Bunker

When Your Touching Sand Results in Penalty. Before playing your ball in a *bunker*, you must not:

- Deliberately touch the sand with a hand, club, rake or other object to test the condition of the sand to learn information about your next *stroke*, or
- Touch sand in the *bunker* with your club:
 - In the area right in front of or behind your ball, or
 - In making a practice swing, or
 - In making your backswing for a *stroke*.

Other than as covered above, this Rule does not prohibit you from touching the sand in any other way, except that you get a penalty under Rule 8.1a if your action in touching the sand improves the *conditions affecting your stroke* in breach of that Rule.

No Restrictions Once Your Ball Is Played Out of Bunker. Once you have played your ball and it is no longer in the *bunker*:

- You may touch or smooth the sand without restriction while your ball is outside the *bunker*.
- This is true even if your ball later rolls back into the *bunker* or if you may *drop* a ball in and play it from the *bunker*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 12.2: General Penalty.

12.3 Special Rules for Relief for Your Ball in Bunker – [see full Rules](#).

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Rule 13 – Putting Greens

Purpose of Rule 13: Rule 13 is a **specific rule for putting greens**. Because they are specially prepared for playing the ball along the ground, greens have certain different Rules than for other parts of the course.

13.1 Specific Rules for Putting Greens

a. Marking, Lifting and Cleaning Your Ball

Your ball that lies on or touches any part of the *putting green* may be marked, lifted and cleaned. Your ball must be *replaced* on the *marked spot*.

Exception – You are Restricted in Lifting Your Ball or Ball-Marker while Another Ball in Motion After a Stroke.

b. Improvements Allowed on Putting Green

You may do these two things on the *putting green*, no matter where your ball lies:

Repair Damage. You may repair damage on the *putting green* **without penalty**, but only:

- By using your hand or foot, or a normal ball-mark repair tool, tee, club or similar item of normal equipment, and
- Without unreasonably delaying play.

“Damage on the *putting green*” includes all types of damage **except** aeration holes, natural defects of the ground surface or natural wear of the *hole*.

Remove Sand and Loose Soil. You may remove sand and loose soil on the *putting green* (but not elsewhere on the *course*) **without penalty**.

c. Specific Rules When Your Ball or Ball-Marker Moves on Putting Green

No Penalty for Accidentally Causing Your Ball to Move. If you, your *opponent* or another player in stroke play accidentally moves your ball or ball-marker on the *putting green*, the ball or ball-marker must be *replaced* on the original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it).

This is the case **except** when your ball moved only after you began your backswing for a stroke and then made the stroke.

When to Replace Your Ball Moved by Natural Forces. If *natural forces* cause your ball on the *putting green* to move, where you must play from next depends on whether your ball had already been lifted from and replaced on its original spot on the *putting green*:

- When Your Ball Had Already Been Lifted and Replaced – You must *replace* the ball on its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it).
- When Your Ball Had Not Already Been Lifted and Replaced – You must play the ball as it lies.

d. Testing Putting Green

During a *round*, you must not deliberately take either of these actions to test any *putting green*:

- Roughen the surface, or
- Roll a ball, **except** that, between the play of two holes, you may roll a ball on the *putting green* of the hole you just completed and any practice *putting green*

e. You Must Take Relief from a Wrong Putting Green

Interference by a Wrong Putting Green. Interference under this Rule exists when:

- Your ball lies on or touches any part of a *wrong putting green*, or
- A *wrong putting green* interferes with your area of intended stance or swing.

You Must Take Relief. When there is interference by a *wrong putting green*, you must not play your ball as it lies.

Instead, without penalty you must *drop* your original ball or a *substituted ball* and play it from this *relief area*:

- Reference Point: The nearest point of complete relief in the *general area*.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **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
 - You must have complete relief from all interference by the *wrong putting green*.

No Relief Where Clearly Unreasonable. You get no relief under Rule 13.1e when interference exists only because you choose a club, type of stance or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 13.1: General Penalty.

13.2 The Flagstick

Purpose of Rule 13.2: This Rule explains your choices for dealing with the flagstick and what happens when your ball hits the flagstick. You may leave the flagstick in the hole or have it **attended** or removed, but must decide before making your stroke.

a. Meaning of Flagstick

Before playing your ball, you may leave the flagstick in the hole, remove it or have it attended (as defined in (c) below).

b. Unattended Flagstick Left in Hole

No Need to Have Flagstick Attended or Removed. You may leave the unattended flagstick in the hole when you make any stroke, even from the putting green.

If the unattended flagstick is in the hole when you make your stroke, the flagstick must not be deliberately removed while your ball is in motion to affect where the ball might come to rest.

Position of Flagstick in Hole. Before making a stroke with the unattended flagstick in the hole:

- You may leave the flagstick as you find it, or center the flagstick in the hole.
- **But** you must not make a stroke having deliberately tried to gain an advantage by moving the flagstick to a position other than centered.

No Penalty if Your Ball Hits Unattended Flagstick in Hole. There is **no penalty** if your ball in motion hits an unattended flagstick in the hole.

If your ball is not holed, your ball must be played as it lies.

c. Attended or Removed Flagstick

Meaning of Attended. A *flagstick* is “attended” if, when you make a *stroke*, any person is:

- Touching the *flagstick* in the *hole* or standing close enough to touch it, or
- Holding the *flagstick* above the *hole* to show where the *hole* is.

That person is *attending* the *flagstick* for you until the ball comes to rest.

Attendance or Removal Authorized by You. The *flagstick* may be *attended* or removed by anyone you authorize to do so.

You have authorized *attendance* if, before you make your *stroke*, any of these things happen:

- You ask or direct someone to *attend* or remove the *flagstick*,
- Your *caddie* *attends* or removes the *flagstick*, even if you are not aware of it, or
- You know that the *flagstick* has been removed or is being *attended*, and do not object.

Unauthorized Attendance or Removal By Another Player – [see full Rules](#).

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 13.2b, c: General Penalty.

d. Your Ball Hits Attended or Removed Flagstick or Person Attending It

Your Ball Accidentally Hits Attendant or Flagstick. If your ball in motion after a *stroke* accidentally hits an attended or removed *flagstick* or the person *attending* it:

- There is **no penalty**, and
- The ball must be played as it lies.

Your Ball Is Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Attendant. For an explanation of when a penalty applies and where you play your ball from – [see full Rules](#).

13.3 Your Ball Overhanging Hole or Resting against Flagstick

a. Your Ball Overhanging Hole

If any part of your ball overhangs the lip of the *hole* after a *stroke*:

- You are allowed a reasonable time to reach the *hole* and ten extra seconds to see whether the ball will fall into the *hole*.
- If the ball falls into the *hole* in this time, you have *holed out* with your previous *stroke*.
- If the ball does not fall into the *hole* in this time, it is at rest.
- If the ball then falls into the *hole* before you play it, you have *holed out* with your previous *stroke*, but **must add one penalty stroke** to your score for the hole.

b. Your Ball Resting against Flagstick in Hole

If your ball after a *stroke* comes to rest against the unattended *flagstick* in the *hole* but is not below the level of the lip of the *hole*:

- The ball is not *holed*, but you or anyone you authorize may move the *flagstick*.
- If the ball then falls into the *hole*, you have *holed out* with your previous *stroke*.
- If the ball *moves* but does not fall into the *hole*, you must *replace* it **without penalty** by placing it on the lip of the *hole*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 13.3b: General Penalty.

V. Lifting and Returning Your Ball to Play (Rule 14)

Rule 14 – Procedures for Your Ball: Marking, Lifting and Cleaning, Replacing on Spot, Dropping in Relief Area, Playing from Wrong Place

Purpose of Rule 14: Rule 14 covers the essential topics of when and how you may **lift, mark** and **clean** your ball and how to put a ball back into play by **replacing** or **dropping** it.

- These situations need to be handled in a consistent way so that your ball is played from the right place.
- When your ball is to be replaced, you must place it on and play it from a particular **spot**, whereas in taking relief with or without penalty you must drop your ball in and play it from a particular **relief area**.
- If you make a mistake in using these procedures you may correct it without penalty before you play your ball, but you get a penalty if you **play the ball from the wrong place**.

14.1 Marking, Lifting and Cleaning Your Ball

a. How to Mark Your Ball's Spot Before Lifting and Replacing It

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

If the spot is *marked* with a *ball-marker*, you must remove the *ball-marker* before making your *stroke*.

You must add **one penalty stroke** if you:

- Lift the ball without first *marking* its spot,
- *Mark* its spot in a wrong way, or
- Make a *stroke* with a *ball-marker* left in place.

b. Who May Lift Your Ball

You or anyone you authorize may always lift your ball.

Also, when your ball lies on the *putting green*, your *caddie* may lift the ball without your authorization.

If your *caddie* lifts your ball without authorization when it lies anywhere other than the *putting green*, you must add **one penalty stroke**.

c. Cleaning Your Lifted Ball

When you lift your ball from *the putting green* you may always clean it.

When you lift your ball from anywhere else, you may always clean it **except** when you lift it:

- To See if It is Cut or Cracked. Cleaning is not allowed
- To Identify It. Cleaning is allowed only as much as you needed to identify it.
- Because It Interferes with Play. Cleaning is not allowed.
- To see if It Lies In Condition Where Relief is Allowed. Cleaning is not allowed, unless you take relief under a Rule.

If you clean your lifted ball when not allowed, **you must add one penalty stroke**.

14.2 Replacing Your Lifted or Moved Ball on Spot

a. You Must Replace Your Original Ball

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

Exception: For an Explanation When You May Replace a Substituted Ball – see [full Rules](#).

b. Who May Replace Your Ball

Your ball may be *replaced* under the Rules only by these people:

- You may always *replace* your ball.
- If someone other than you lifted or *moved* your ball, the ball may also be *replaced* by that other person.

If you play your ball after it was *replaced* by someone not allowed to do so, **you must add one penalty stroke**.

c. Spot on Which Your Ball Is Replaced

When your ball is lifted or *moved* and a Rule requires it to be *replaced*:

- Your ball must be *replaced* on its original spot.
- If that spot is not *marked* or known, it must be estimated.

If your ball was at rest above the ground on, under or against any growing, attached or fixed objects:

- The “spot” of your ball includes its vertical location relative to the ground.
- This means that your ball must be *replaced* on, under or against those objects on the same spot where it was at rest.

d. Where to Replace Ball When Original Lie Altered

If the *lie* of your ball has been altered, you must *replace* the ball in this way:

Ball in Sand. When your ball was at rest in sand, whether in a *bunker* or anywhere else on the *course*:

- In *replacing* the ball on its spot, you must re-create the original *lie* as much as possible.
- In re-creating the *lie*, you may leave a small part of the ball visible if the ball had been covered by sand.

Ball Anywhere Other Than in Sand. When your ball was at rest anywhere other than sand, you must *replace* your ball by placing it on the nearest spot (not nearer the *hole*) with a *lie* most similar to the original *lie* that is:

- Within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it), and
- In the same *area of the course* as that spot.

e. What to Do If Your Ball Does Not Stay on Spot

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

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

- 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*.

f. Your Ball or Ball-Marker Moves While Replacing the Ball

There is **no penalty** and your ball or *ball-marker* must be *replaced*.

14.3 Dropping Ball in Relief Area

a. How You Must Drop Ball

When *dropping* your ball in a *relief area* under a Rule, you must:

- Hold the ball above the ground without it touching any growing thing or other natural or artificial object, and,
- Let go of the ball so that it falls through the air before coming to rest.

To avoid any doubt, it is recommended that you drop the ball from a height of at least one inch above the ground, including any growing thing or natural or artificial object.

PENALTY: Making a Stroke at a Ball That Was Dropped Incorrectly – One penalty stroke.

b. You Must Drop Your Ball

You must *drop* your ball. No one else (including your *caddie*) may do so.

PENALTY: Making a Stroke at Your Ball Dropped by a Wrong Person – One penalty stroke.

c. Ball Must Be Dropped in and Played from Relief Area

When you *drop* a ball in taking relief:

- Your ball must be *dropped* in, come to rest in and be played from the *relief area*.
- If your ball is *dropped* outside the *relief area* or comes to rest outside the *relief area*, you must lift it and *drop* it again.

You may stand either inside or outside the *relief area* when *dropping* a ball.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 14.3c:

- **Making Stroke at Your Ball Which was Dropped Outside Relief Area but Which Came to Rest in Relief Area: One *penalty stroke*.** (You have not played from a *wrong place*.)
- **Making Stroke at Your Ball Which Came to Rest Outside Relief Area: *General Penalty* for playing from a *wrong place* under Rule 14.7.**

d. Actions Affecting Where Your Dropped Ball Comes to Rest

For an explanation of what to do when your ball is accidentally or deliberately deflected or stopped after you *dropped* it – [see full Rules](#).

e. What to Do When Your Dropped Ball Comes to Rest Outside Relief Area

Dropping Your Ball Again. If you *drop* your ball and it comes to rest outside the *relief area*:

- You must *drop* your ball again.
- If it again comes to rest outside the *relief area*, you must *drop* it again. There is no set limit on the number of times you *drop* a ball again.
- If you *drop* your ball more than once in one place and it does not come to rest in the *relief area*, you must try other places in the *relief area*, even if your ball may come to rest in a less favorable *lie* or place.
- You should make all reasonable efforts to *drop* the ball so that it will come to rest in the *relief area*, such as by *dropping* from the lowest possible height and *dropping* in different places if necessary (such as trying the middle or the opposite sides of the *relief area*) .

What to Do When Your Dropped Ball Will Not Stay in Relief Area. In unusual situations, your *dropped* ball may not stay in the *relief area* despite your repeated attempts.

If this happens and it is reasonable to conclude that your *dropped* ball will not come to rest in the *relief area* no matter where and how you *drop* the ball:

- You must place the ball on and play it from a spot of your choosing that is anywhere in the *relief area*.
- If the placed ball does not stay at rest on the spot you choose, you must apply Rule 14.2e.
- Only you may place your ball under this Rule. No one else (including your *caddie*) may do it for you.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULES 14.1, 14.2, 14.3:

If you play your ball from a *wrong place* after replacing or dropping it in breach of these Rules, you get the **general penalty** for breach of Rule 14.7.

14.4 When Your Replaced, Dropped or Placed Ball Is in Play

When your *ball in play* has been lifted, it is *again in play* when you *replace, drop* or place it with the intent for it to be *in play*.

Your *replaced* ball is *in play* even if your *ball-marker* has not been removed.

14.5 Correcting Your Mistake Made in Taking Relief

a. You May Lift Your Ball to Correct Mistake, If You Have Not Yet Played the Ball

When your *ball in play* has been *substituted, replaced, dropped* or placed by a wrong person, in a *wrong place* or by using a procedure not allowed under the Rules:

- You may lift the ball **without penalty** and correct the mistake.
- But this is allowed only before you have played the ball.

b. Relief Rule and Relief Option to Use When Correcting Mistake

For an explanation of whether or not you may change relief options when correcting your mistake – **see full Rules**.

c. No Penalties for Ball Lifted to Correct Mistake

For an explanation when you get a penalty for your actions before your corrected the mistake – [see full Rules](#).

14.6 Making Your Next Stroke from Where Your Previous Stroke Made

This Rule applies whenever you must or may make your next *stroke* from where you made your previous *stroke* – such as when you are playing under penalty of *stroke and distance* or playing again after a canceled *stroke*.

- How you must put a ball *in play* depends on the *area of the course* where you made your previous *stroke*.
- In all situations, you may use the original ball or may *substitute* another *ball*.

a. Your Previous Stroke Made from Teeing Area

You must play your original ball or a *substituted ball* from anywhere inside the *teeing area* (and may tee it).

b. Your Previous Stroke Made from General Area, Penalty Area or Bunker

You must *drop* your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and play it from this *relief area*:

- Reference Point: Spot where you made your previous *stroke*.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
 - Must be in the same *area of the course* as the reference point, and
 - Not nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

c. Your Previous Stroke Made from Putting Green

You must place your original ball or a *substituted ball* on the spot where you made your previous *stroke*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 14.6: General Penalty.

14.7 Playing from Wrong Place

a. Place from Where You Must Play Ball

You must not play your *ball in play* from a *wrong place*.

PENALTY FOR PLAYING FROM WRONG PLACE: *General Penalty*.

b. How to Complete Hole After You Play from Wrong Place in Stroke Play

If you have played from a *wrong place* but it's not a *serious breach* you take your penalty and play on. For an explanation of what to do if it is a *serious breach*, or if you aren't sure if it is – [see full Rules](#).

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VI. Relief Without Penalty (Rules 15-16)

Rule 15 – Relief from Objects That Can Be Moved: Loose Impediments, Movable Obstructions, Balls Helping or Interfering with Play

Purpose of Rule 15: Rule 15 covers when and how you may take free relief from **loose (natural) impediments and movable (artificial) obstructions**, which are normally not considered part of your challenge in playing the course:

- In most cases, you may remove loose impediments and movable obstructions that interfere with your play, but there is a penalty if you move loose impediments causing your ball at rest to move (except on the putting green).
- A ball that helps or interferes with the play of another ball may usually be lifted (but not cleaned) and then will be replaced.

15.1 Loose Impediments

a. Your Removal of Loose Impediments

You may remove a loose impediment anywhere on or off the course **without penalty**, except in these two situations:

Exception 1 – Removing Loose Impediments Where Your Ball Must Be Replaced. For an explanation of the prohibition on deliberately moving certain loose impediments before your ball is replaced – **see full Rules**.

Exception 2 –Deliberately Removing Loose Impediments to Affect Ball in Motion After Stroke. See Rule 11.3

b. When Your Ball Moves When Removing Loose Impediment

If your removal of a loose impediment causes your ball to move:

- You must *replace* your ball on its original spot (which you must estimate if you don't know it).
- If your *moved* ball had been at rest anywhere other than on the *putting green*, **you must add one penalty stroke** under Rule 9.4b.

15.2 Movable Obstructions

a. Relief from Movable Obstructions

Your Removal of Movable Obstructions. You may remove a movable obstruction anywhere on or off the course **without penalty**.

Exception – You Are Restricted in Deliberately Removing Movable Obstructions to Affect a Ball in Motion After a Stroke. See Rule 11.3

Relief When Your Ball Is In or On Movable Obstruction Anywhere Other than Putting Green.

Without penalty you may lift your ball, remove the obstruction and drop your original ball or a substituted ball in and play it from this relief area:

- Reference Point: Estimated point right under where your ball was at rest in or on the obstruction.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **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.

How To Take Relief When Ball is In or On Movable Obstruction on Putting Green – **see full Rules.**

b. Your Ball in Movable Obstruction But Not Found

For an explanation of how to take relief when you have not found your ball but it is *known or virtually certain* that it came to rest in a movable obstruction – **see full Rules.**

15.3 Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

a. Ball on Putting Green Helping Play

This Rule applies only to a ball at rest on the *putting green*, not anywhere else on the course.

If you reasonably believe that a ball at rest on the *putting green* might help anyone's play (such as by serving as a possible backstop near the hole), you may:

- *Mark* and lift the ball if it is your own, or if the ball belongs to another player, require the other player to *mark* and lift the ball.

- The lifted ball must be *replaced* on the *marked* spot.
- In *stroke play* only, a player required to *mark* and lift a ball may play first instead.

In *stroke play*:

- You and another player (including your *partner*) must not agree to leave a ball in place to help any player.
- If you do and that player then makes a *stroke* with the helping ball left in place, **each player who made the agreement must add two penalty strokes.**

b. Ball Anywhere on Course Interfering With Your Play

If you reasonably believe that another player's ball at rest anywhere on the *course* might interfere with your own play:

- You may require the other player to *mark* and lift the ball, which must not be cleaned (**except** when lifted from the *putting green*).
- The lifted ball must be *replaced* on the *marked* spot.
- In *stroke play* only, a player required to *mark* and lift his or her ball under this Rule may play first instead.

Interference exists when another player's ball at rest:

- Might interfere with your area of intended *stance* or swing, or
- Is on or close to your *line of play* such that, given your intended *stroke*, there is a reasonable chance your ball in motion could hit that ball, or
- Is close enough to distract you in making a *stroke*.

If you believe that your own ball might interfere with another player's play, you must not lift the ball under this Rule without being required to do so by the other player (**except** when lifting the ball on the *putting green*).

PENALTY FOR LIFTING OR CLEANING YOUR BALL WHEN NOT ALLOWED UNDER THIS RULE: One penalty stroke.

c. Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

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

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

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 15.3: *General Penalty.*

DRAFT

Rule 16 – Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions), Dangerous Animal Situations, Embedded Ball

Purpose of Rule 16: Rule 16 covers when and how you may take free relief from interference by **abnormal course conditions** and **dangerous animal situations**.

- Because such conditions and situations are not considered part of your challenge in playing the game, you are normally allowed relief without penalty when they interfere with your ball that lies anywhere on the course except in a **penalty area**.
- You normally take relief by **dropping** your ball in and playing it from a **relief area** based on the **nearest point of complete relief**, so that you are completely free of the interference.

The Rule also allows you to take free relief when your ball is **embedded** in its own pitch mark in the general area.

16.1 Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions)

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

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

a. When You May Take Relief

Meaning of Interference by Abnormal Course Condition. Interference exists when:

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

When your ball is off the *putting green*, intervention on your *line of play* is not interference under this Rule.

You May Take Relief Anywhere on Course Except Penalty Area. You are allowed to take relief from interference by an *abnormal course condition* under this Rule only when both:

- The *abnormal course condition* is on the course, and
- Your ball lies anywhere on the course, **except** in a *penalty area*.

No Relief Where Clearly Unreasonable to Play Your Ball. There is no relief under this Rule:

- When playing your ball as it lies would be clearly unreasonable for a reason other than the interference (which could be the case, for example, when your ball is at rest in a bush and you are unable to make a stroke because of the bush), or
- When interference exists only because you choose a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

b. Relief for Your Ball in General Area

If your ball is in the *general area* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the course, **without penalty** you may drop your original ball or a substituted ball in and play it from this relief area:

- Reference Point: The nearest point of complete relief in the *general area*.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **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
 - You must have complete relief from all interference by the *abnormal course condition*.

c. Relief for Your Ball in Bunker

If your ball is in a *bunker* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the course, you may take relief **without penalty** or **with penalty**:

Relief Without Penalty: Playing from Bunker. You may take relief **without penalty** under Rule 16.1b, **except** that the nearest point of complete relief and the relief area must be in the *bunker*.

If you have no such *nearest point of complete relief* in the bunker, you may still take this relief **by** using the *point of maximum available relief* in the bunker as the reference point for the relief area.

Relief With Penalty: Playing from Behind Bunker Using Back-On-A-Line Relief Procedure. **For one penalty stroke**, you may drop your original ball or a substituted ball in and play it from this relief area behind the bunker:

- Reference Line for Relief Area: Line from the hole through the spot where your original ball came to rest.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Line: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) on either side of the reference line, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
 - May be in any area of the course,
 - Must be behind the bunker where the ball came to rest, and
 - No limit to how far back you may drop the ball.

d. Relief for Your Ball on Putting Green

If your ball is on the *putting green* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the course, you may take relief **without penalty** by placing your original ball or a substituted 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 you have no such *nearest point of complete relief*, you may still take this relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* that is either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.

e. Relief for Your Ball in Abnormal Course Condition But not Found

If your ball has not been found but is *known or virtually certain* to have come to rest in an *abnormal course condition*:

- You may take relief using the estimated point where your ball last crossed the edge of the *abnormal course condition* as the spot of the ball for purposes of finding the *nearest point of complete relief*.
- **But** if it is not *known or virtually certain* that your ball came to rest in an *abnormal course condition*, you must play under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

f. You Must Take Relief from Interference by No Play Zone in Abnormal Course Condition

When Your Ball Lies in No Play Zone in Abnormal Course Condition. You must not play your ball as it lies. You must take relief as provided above.

No Play Zone Interferes with Your Stance or Swing. If your ball lies outside a *no play zone*, but a *no play zone* in an *abnormal course condition* or anything growing in it interferes with your area of intended stance or swing, you must not play your ball as it lies.

Instead, you must take relief in one of two ways:

- As provided above in this Rule, or
- You may take unplayable ball relief.

PENALTY FOR MAKING STROKE IN BREACH OF RULE 16.1f: You have played from a *wrong place* and get the **general penalty** for breach of Rule 14.7.

16.2 Dangerous Animal Situation

For an explanation on when a “dangerous animal situation” exists and how to take relief – [see full Rules](#).

16.3 Embedded Ball

a. When You May Take Relief

Meaning of Embedded.

- Your ball is “*embedded*” when it is in its own pitch-mark made after your *stroke* and part of the ball is below the level of the ground.
- Your ball does not necessarily have to touch the soil to be *embedded* (for example, grass and *loose impediments* may be between the ball and the soil).

Your Ball Must Be Embedded in General Area. You are allowed relief only when your ball is *embedded* in the *general area*.

- If your ball is *embedded* anywhere other than the *general area*, you are not entitled to relief under this Rule.
- **But** if your ball is *embedded* on the *putting green*, you may *mark*, lift and clean the ball, repair the damage caused by its impact, and *replace* the ball on the *marked spot* (see Rule 13.1b).

b. How You Take Relief for Embedded Ball

If your ball is *embedded* in the *general area*, you may take relief **without penalty** by dropping your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and playing it from this *relief area*:

- Reference Point: Spot right behind where your ball is *embedded*.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
 - Must be in the *general area*, and
 - Not nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

Exceptions – Relief Not Allowed for Your Ball Embedded in General Area in Two Situations:

- Your ball is *embedded* in *sand* in a part of the *general area* that is not cut to fairway height or less, or
- Interference by anything other than the ball being *embedded* makes your *stroke* clearly unreasonable (which could be the case, for example, when your ball is *embedded* below a bush and you would be unable to make a *stroke* because of the bush).

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 16.1a-e, 16.2, 16.3: General Penalty.

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

For an explanation on what to do when you reasonably believe your ball lies in a condition where you are entitled to relief under Rules 15 or 16 but cannot decide without lifting it – **see full Rules.**

VII. Relief With Penalty (Rules 17-19)

Rule 17 – Your Ball in Penalty Area

Purpose of Rule 17: Rule 17 is a specific Rule for **penalty areas**. A penalty area is an area of the course that is a body of water or that has been defined by the Committee. You are given special relief options (each with a one-stroke penalty) because it is likely that your ball coming to rest in a penalty area will be lost or, if found, will be unplayable.

17.1 Options for Your Ball in Penalty Area

Penalty areas are defined as either red or yellow. This affects your relief options.

a. You May Play Ball as It Lies or Take Relief

Your ball is in a *penalty area* if it lies in, touches any part of or overhangs the edge of the *penalty area*.

You may either:

- Play your ball as it lies without penalty (there are no special Rules limiting how you may play your ball from a *penalty area*); or
- Play a ball from outside the *penalty area* by taking relief with penalty under Rules 17.1c or 17.2.

Exception – You Must Take Relief for Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area.

b. Your Ball in Penalty Area but Not Found

If your ball has not been found but is *known or virtually certain* to have come to rest in a *penalty area*:

- You may take relief **with penalty** under Rules 17.1c or 17.2.
- **But** if it is not *known or virtually certain* that your ball came to rest in a *penalty area*, you must play under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

c. Relief for Your Ball in Penalty Area

If your ball is in a *penalty area*, including when it is *known or virtually certain* to be in a *penalty area* even though not found, you have these three relief options, each **for one penalty stroke**:

Stroke-And-Distance Relief. You may play your original ball or a *substituted ball* from where your previous *stroke* was made.

Back-On-A-Line Relief. You may *drop* your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and play it from this *relief area* behind the *penalty area*:

- *Reference Line for Relief Area*: Line from the *hole* through the estimated point where your original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area*.
- *Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Line*: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) on either side of the reference line, **but** with these limits:
- *Limits on Location of Relief Area*:
 - May be in any *area of the course*,
 - Must be behind the *penalty area* where your ball came to rest, and
 - No limit to how far back you may *drop* the ball.

Lateral Relief (Only for Red Penalty Area). When your ball last crossed the edge of a red *penalty area*, you may *drop* your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and play it from this *lateral relief area*:

- *Reference Point*: Estimated point where your original ball last crossed the edge of the red *penalty area*.
- *Size of Area Measured from Reference Point*: The entire area within 80 inches (203.2 centimeters) from the reference point, **but** with these limits:
- *Limits on Location of Relief Area*:
 - May be in any area on the *course* **except** the same *penalty area*, and
 - Must not be nearer the *hole*.

d. You Must Take Relief for Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area

In each of these situations, you must not play the ball as it lies.

When Your Ball Lies in No Play Zone in Penalty Area. You must take relief **with penalty** under Rule 17.1.

No Play Zone Interferes with Your Stance or Swing for Your Ball in Penalty Area. For an explanation on what to do if your ball lies in a *penalty area* but you have interference by a *no play zone* that is within the same *penalty area* – **see full Rules.**

No Play Zone Interferes with Your Stance or Swing for Your Ball Outside Penalty Area. For an explanation on what to do if your ball lies outside of a *penalty area* but you have interference by a *no play zone* or anything growing within the *no play zone* – **see full Rules.**

17.2 Relief Options after You Have Played Your Ball From Penalty Area

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

If your ball played from a *penalty area* comes to rest in the same *penalty area* or another *penalty area*, you may play your ball as it lies **without penalty.**

Or, **for one penalty stroke**, you may take relief under any of these options:

Normal Relief Options. You may take *stroke-and-distance* relief or back-on-a-line relief or, for a red *penalty area*, lateral relief.

The reference point or reference line is found by using the estimated point where your original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area* where the ball now lies.

If you take *stroke-and-distance* relief by dropping a ball in the *penalty area* and then decide not to play your *dropped* ball from where it lies:

- You may take further relief by playing your original ball or a *substituted ball* from outside the *penalty area* under back-on-a-line relief or, if it applies, lateral relief.
- If you do so, **you must add one extra penalty stroke, for a total of two penalty strokes: one stroke for taking stroke-and-distance relief, and one extra stroke for taking relief outside the penalty area.**

Extra Relief Option: Playing from Where You Made Your Last Stroke Made Outside a Penalty Area. Instead of using one of the normal *penalty area* relief options, you may choose to play your original ball or a *substituted ball* from where you made your last stroke from outside a *penalty area*.

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

For an explanation on what to do if your ball played from a *penalty area* is *lost* or unplayable outside of the *penalty area* – [see full Rules](#).

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

When your ball is in a *penalty area*, there is no relief for:

- Interference by an *abnormal course condition*,
- An *embedded* ball, or
- An unplayable ball.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 17: General Penalty.

DRAFT

Rule 18 – Stroke and Distance Relief for Your Ball Lost or Out of Bounds; Provisional Ball

Purpose of Rule 18: Rule 18 requires you to take relief under **penalty of stroke and distance when your ball is lost (outside a penalty area) or out of bounds**. The progression of playing from the teeing area until your ball is holed is broken when your ball cannot be found or came to rest off the course. You must resume that progression by playing again from where you made your previous stroke.

To save time when you are uncertain whether your ball stayed in bounds or will be found outside a penalty area, you may play a **provisional ball** but you must announce this before making the stroke. The Rule covers how your provisional ball becomes your ball in play or when you must abandon it.

18.1 You May Take Relief under Penalty of Stroke and Distance at any Time

At any time, you may take stroke-and-distance relief by **adding one penalty stroke** and playing your original ball or a substituted ball from where you made your previous stroke.

Once you put a ball into play under penalty of stroke and distance, your original ball is no longer in play and you must not play it even if it is then found on the course before the end of the three-minute search time.

Exception – Playing Your Ball from Where You Made Your Previous Stroke Is Not Playing Under Penalty of Stroke and Distance When You:

- Announce that you are playing a *provisional ball*,
- Are playing a second ball in *stroke play*, or
- Are playing again after a canceled stroke under any Rule.

18.2 Your Ball Lost or Out of Bounds: You Must Take Stroke and Distance Relief

a. When Your Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds

When Your Ball Is Lost. Your ball is lost if not found in three minutes after you or your caddie begin to search for it.

If your ball is found in that time but it is uncertain if it is your ball:

- You must promptly attempt to identify the ball.

- If you are not where the ball is found, you are allowed a reasonable time to get to the ball to try to identify it, even if that happens after the three-minute search time has ended.
- If you do not identify your ball in that time, your ball is *lost*.

When Your Ball Is Out of Bounds. Your ball is *out of bounds* only when all of it lies *out of bounds*. It is in bounds if any part of your ball touches or overhangs the course.

You may stand *out of bounds* to play a ball on the course.

b. What to Do when Your Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds

If your ball is *lost* or *out of bounds*, you must take *stroke-and-distance* relief by adding **one penalty stroke** and playing your original ball or a *substituted ball* from where your previous stroke was made.

Exception – Taking Relief under Another Rule Where It Is Known or Virtually Certain What Happened to Your Ball That Has Not Been Found For an explanation of the limited times when you cannot find your ball but are not required to play under *stroke and distance* – [see full Rules](#).

18.3 Provisional Ball

a. When You May Play Provisional Ball

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

- When your original ball has not been found or identified and is not yet *lost*, and
- When your ball might be *lost* in a *penalty area* but also might be *lost* somewhere else on the course.

But you are not allowed to play a *provisional ball* if the only possible place your original ball could be *lost* is in a *penalty area*.

If your *provisional ball* itself might be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or be *out of bounds*:

- You may play another *provisional ball*.
- That *provisional ball* then has the same relationship to your first *provisional ball* as the first one has to your original ball.

b. Announcing Your Play of Provisional Ball

Before making the stroke:

- You must tell your *opponent* in *match play* or your *marker* or another player in the group in *stroke play* that you are playing a *provisional ball*.
- It is not enough for you only to say that you are playing another ball or are playing again.

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

c. When Your Provisional Ball Becomes Your Ball in Play

When Original Ball Is Lost Outside a Penalty Area or Is Out of Bounds. Your *provisional ball* becomes your *ball in play* **under penalty of stroke and distance**.

Exception – Taking Relief Under Another Rule Where It Is Known or Virtually Certain What Happened to Your Original Ball – [see full Rules](#).

When You Play Your Provisional Ball from Nearer the Hole than Where Your Original Ball Is Estimated to Be.

- Your *provisional ball* becomes your *ball in play* **under penalty of stroke and distance**.
- Your original ball is no longer *in play* and you must not play it, 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 it was estimated to be from the *hole*.

Until your original ball is found or lost:

- Your *provisional ball* is still a *provisional ball* if you play it again from a spot farther from the *hole* than where your original ball is estimated to be.
- This is true even if you play your *provisional ball* multiple times.

d. When Your Provisional Ball Must Be Abandoned

When Your Original Ball Is Found On Course Before Becoming Lost. You must abandon your *provisional ball* and continue playing your original ball.

When Your Original Ball Is Found in Penalty Area or Is Known or Virtually Certain to be in Penalty Area. You must abandon your *provisional ball* and either play your original ball as it lies or take *penalty area relief*.

e. Effect of Abandoning Your Provisional Ball

If you abandon your *provisional ball*:

- You must not make any more *strokes* at your *provisional ball*, and
- All *strokes* made in playing that ball before you abandoned it and all penalties you got solely by playing it are disregarded.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 18: *General Penalty*.

DRAFT

Rule 19 – Ball Unplayable

Purpose of Rule 19: Rule 19 sets out your relief options for an **unplayable ball** anywhere on the course (except in a penalty area). This allows you to choose which option to use – with one penalty stroke to get out of a difficult situation where it may be inadvisable or impossible for you to play your ball. The relief options for your ball in a bunker are different, as they normally require you to play your ball from inside the bunker if taking relief under the back-on-a-line or lateral relief options.

19.1 You May Take Unplayable Ball Relief Anywhere Except Penalty Area

You are the only person who may decide to treat your ball as unplayable.

You may take unplayable ball relief anywhere on the course, **except** in a penalty area. If your ball is unplayable in a penalty area, your only option is to take penalty area relief.

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

You may take unplayable ball relief under one of these three options and **add one penalty stroke**:

a. Stroke-And-Distance Relief

You may play your original ball or a substituted ball from where you made your previous stroke.

b. Back-On-A-Line Relief

You may drop your original ball or a substituted ball in and play it from this relief area behind the spot of your ball:

- Reference Line for Relief Area: Line from the hole through the spot where your original ball came to rest.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Line: The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) on either side of the reference line, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
 - May be in any area of the course,
 - Must be behind than the spot where your original ball was at rest, and
 - No limit to how far back you may drop the ball.

c. Lateral Relief

You may *drop* your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and play it from this lateral relief area:

- Reference Point: Spot where your original ball came to rest.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point: The entire area within 80 inches (203.2 centimeters) from the reference point, **but** with these limits:
- Limits on Location of Relief Area:
 - Must not be nearer the *hole*, and
 - May be in any *area of the course*.

19.3 Relief Options for Unplayable Ball in Bunker

a. Your Normal Relief Options

When your ball is in a *bunker*:

- You may take unplayable ball relief **for one penalty stroke under any of the** options in Rule 19.2, **except** that:
- Your ball must be *dropped* in and played from a *relief area* in the *bunker* if you take either back-on-a-line relief or lateral relief.

b. Your Extra Relief Option

As an extra relief option when your ball is in a *bunker*, **for a total of two penalty strokes**:

- You may play your original ball or a *substituted ball* from outside the *bunker* using the back-on-a-line relief procedure.
- You may play such a ball from any *area of the course*.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 19: General Penalty.

VIII. Procedures for Players and Committee in Applying the Rules (Rule 20)

Rule 20 – Resolving Rules Issues During Round; Rulings by Referee and Committee

Purpose of Rule 20: Rule 20 tells you what to do when you have questions about applying the Rules during your round.

- When no referee is available, **you must decide what to do and play on.**
- The Rule also sets out procedures (which differ in match play and stroke play) allowing you to protect your right to get a ruling at a later time.

The Committee may appoint referees to decide questions of fact and apply the Rules, and rulings from a referee or the Committee are binding on you.

20.1 Resolving Rules Issues During Round

a. You Must Avoid Unreasonable Delay Play

You must not unreasonably delay play when seeking help with the Rules during a round:

- If a referee or Committee member is not reasonably available to help you with a Rules issue, you must decide what to do and play on.
- You may protect your rights by asking for a ruling in *match play* or playing two balls in *stroke play*.

b. Rules Issues in Match Play

Deciding Issues by Agreement. During a round:

- You and your *opponent* may agree how to decide a Rules issue.
- That agreement is conclusive even if it turns out to have been wrong under the Rules, so long as you and your *opponent* did not deliberately agree to waive the Rules.

Exception – When Referee Is with Match – see full Rules.

Requesting Ruling. You may get a ruling from a referee or the Committee only if you:

- Tell your *opponent* about the ruling request, and
- Make the request in time.

If you fail to do so, a ruling will not be given. The result of the hole or holes in question will stand even if the Rules were applied in the wrong way.

When You Request Ruling during Match. The Committee will give you a ruling only if the request is made in time. For an explanation of when a request for a ruling is made in time – [see full Rules](#).

When You Request Ruling After Match Has Ended but before Result of Match Is Announced. For an explanation of when a referee or Committee will give you a ruling after the match has ended but before the result has been announced – [see full Rules](#).

When You Request Ruling after Result of Match Is Announced. For an explanation of when a referee or Committee will give you a ruling after the result of the match has been announced – [see full Rules](#).

No Right to Play Two Balls. If you are uncertain about the right procedure in a match, you are not allowed to play out the hole with two balls.

c. Rules Issues in Stroke Play

No Right to Decide Rules Issues by Agreement. Two or more players have no right to decide a Rules issue by agreement. You should raise any Rules issues with the Committee before returning your *score card*.

You Should Protect the Field. To protect the interests of all players in the field:

- If you know or believe it possible that another player has breached the Rules, and the other player does not recognize it or is ignoring it, you should tell the other player, the player's *marker*, a referee or the Committee.
- You should do this promptly, and in all cases before the other player returns his or her *score card* unless it is not possible to do so.

Playing Two Balls When You Are Uncertain What to Do. If you are uncertain about the right procedure while playing a hole you may complete the hole with two balls **without penalty**:

- You must decide to play two balls after the uncertain situation arises and before you make a *stroke*.

- If you wish to choose which ball should count if the Rules allow the procedure used for that ball, you should announce that choice to your *marker* or to another player before making a *stroke*.
- If you do not choose in time, the ball you played first is treated as the ball you chose by default.
- You must report the facts of the situation to the *Committee* before returning your *score card*, even if you score the same with both balls. **You are disqualified if you fail to do so.**

20.2 Rulings on Issues under the Rules

For an explanation of who may make rulings, when rulings may be corrected and the *Committee's* rights to disqualify a player after a match or competition – [see full Rules](#).

20.3 Situations Not Covered by the Rules

Any situation not covered by the Rules should be decided by:

- 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 21: Rule 21 covers four other forms of individual play.

- Three are forms of stroke play where you are **not required** to hole out and different scoring methods apply: **Stableford** (scoring by points awarded on each hole); **Maximum Score** (your score for any hole is capped at a maximum); and **Par/Bogey** (match play scoring used on a hole by hole basis).
- The fourth is **Three-Ball Match Play** (in which you play a separate match against two other players at the same time).

21.1 Stableford

a. Overview of Stableford

Stableford is a form of stroke play where:

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

b. Scoring in Stableford

How Points Are Awarded. You are awarded points for each hole by comparing your number of strokes (including *penalty strokes*) on the hole to a fixed score for the hole (such as *par*):

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

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

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

Score Entered for Each Hole. To meet the requirements for entering hole scores on your score card:

- If Hole Is Correctly Completed.
 - When Actual Number of Strokes (including Penalty Strokes) Is Lower than Two over Fixed Score. Your score card must show the actual number of strokes.
 - When Actual Number of Strokes (including Penalty Strokes) Is Two or More over Fixed Score. Your score card may show either no score or any number of strokes that results in zero points being awarded.
- If Hole Is Not Correctly Completed. If you do not *hole out* correctly under the Rules, your score card may show either no score or any number of strokes that results in zero points being awarded.

The Committee is responsible for deciding how many points you get on each hole.

c. Penalties in Stableford

Penalties Other Than Disqualification. All penalty strokes are added to your score for the hole where the breach happened, **but** there are four **exceptions**:

Exception 1 – Excess Clubs. For an explanation of deducting points for a breach of Rule 4.1b – [see full Rules](#).

Exception 2 – Time of Starting. For an explanation of deducting points for a breach of Rule 5.3a – [see full Rules](#).

Exception 3 – Unreasonable Delay or Breach of Pace of Play Policy. For an explanation of deducting points for a breach of Rule 5.6a – [see full Rules](#).

For Exceptions 1-3, you must report the facts about your breach to the Committee before returning your score card so that the Committee may apply the penalty. If you fail to do this, **you are disqualified.**

Exception 4 – Wrong Score by Failing to Include Penalty You Did Not Know About For an explanation of deducting points when you fail to include a penalty on your score card – [see full Rules](#).

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

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

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

d. Order of Play in Net-Score Stableford Competition

In net-score *Stableford* competitions, Rule 6.4b(1) is modified so that the player with the lowest net score at a hole has the *honor* at the next *teeing area*.

21.2 Maximum Score

a. Overview of Maximum Score

Maximum Score is a form of *stroke play* where your score or your *side's* score for a hole is capped at a maximum number of strokes set by the *Committee*, such as two times par, a fixed number (6, 8, 10, etc.) or net double bogey.

b. Scoring in Maximum Score

Your Score on Hole. Your score for a hole is based on the number of strokes you actually take (including *penalty strokes*), **except** that you will get only the maximum score even if your actual number of strokes exceeds the maximum.

If you do not *hole out* correctly under the Rules for any reason, you get the maximum score for the hole.

To help pace of play, you are encouraged to stop playing a hole when your score has reached the maximum.

Score Entered for Each Hole. To meet the requirements for entering hole scores on your score card:

- If Hole Is Correctly Completed.
 - When Actual Number of Strokes (including Penalty Strokes) Is Lower than Maximum. Your score card must show the actual number of strokes.
 - When Actual Number of Strokes (including Penalty Strokes) Is Same as or Higher than Maximum. Your score card may show either no score or any number of strokes at or above the maximum.
- If Hole Is Not Completed Correctly. If you do not *hole out* correctly under the Rules, your score card may show either no score or any number of strokes at or above the maximum.

c. Penalties in Maximum Score

All penalties that apply in *stroke play* apply in *Maximum Score*, **except** that if you breach any of these four Rules you are **not disqualified from the competition but get the maximum score** for the hole where the breach happened:

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

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

21.3 Par/Bogey

For an overview of the *Par/Bogey* format, including how to score and apply penalties – [see full Rules](#).

21.4 Three-Ball Match Play

For an overview of *Three-Ball Match Play* – [see full Rules](#).

21.5 Other Forms of Playing Golf

Although only certain forms of play are specifically addressed in the Rules, golf can be and often is played in many other forms, such as scrambles, greensomes, Chapman and shamble.

The Rules can be adapted to govern play in these and other forms of play.

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Rule 22 – Foursomes and Threesomes

Purpose of Rule 22: Rule 22 covers **Foursomes** and **Threesomes** – which are also known as **Alternate Shot** – where you and a partner compete together as a **side** by making alternating strokes at a single ball.

- One partner tees off on all odd holes in the round while the other partner tees off on all even holes.
- After each tee shot, you and your partner play out the hole in alternating order.
- Since your side plays one ball, the Rules for Alternate Shot are otherwise largely the same as in individual play.

22.1 Overview of Foursomes and Threesomes

This Rule discusses *Foursomes* and *Threesomes*, which are also known as *Alternate Shot* forms of play:

- **Foursomes** – A form of *match play* or *stroke play* where you and a partner compete as a *side* by playing one ball in alternating order on each hole. *Foursomes* may be played as a *match play* competition between one side of two partners and another side of two partners or as a *stroke play* competition involving multiple sides.
- **Threesomes** – A form of *match play* between one side of two partners and one individual player. The *side* competes by playing one ball in alternating order on each hole.

22.2 Either Partner Acts for Your Side

As you and your partner compete as one *side* playing only one ball:

- Either of you may take any allowed action for the *side*, such as to *mark*, *lift*, *replace* or *drop* a ball, and
- Any breach of the Rules by you or your partner applies to your *side*.

In *stroke play*, only one of you needs to certify your *score card*.

22.3 Your Side Must Alternate in Making Strokes

On each hole, you and your *partner* must make each make *strokes* for your *side* in alternating order:

- One of you must play from the *teeing area* of all odd numbered holes, while the other *partner* must play from the *teeing area* of all even numbered holes.
- After your *side's* first *stroke* from the *teeing area* of a hole, you and your *partner* must alternate *strokes* for the rest of the hole.

Any *penalty strokes* that your *side* gets do not change your alternating order of play.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 22.3:

- **Match Play:** If you or your *partner* makes a *stroke* in the wrong order, your *side* loses the hole.
- **Stroke Play –** If you or your *partner* make a *stroke* or *strokes* in the wrong order, you must add **two *penalty strokes*** and correct the mistake:
 - The right *partner* must make a *stroke* from where your *side* made the first *stroke* in the wrong order.
 - The first *stroke* made in the wrong order and all later *strokes* until the mistake is corrected are canceled, along with any *penalty strokes* in making those *strokes*.
 - If you or your *partner* make a *stroke* from the next *teeing area* without first correcting the mistake or, for the last hole of the *round*, both of you leave the *putting green* without first announcing your *side* will correct the mistake, your *side* is **disqualified**.

22.4 Starting the Round

a. Partner to Play First

Your *side* may choose whether you or your *partner* plays from the first *teeing area* in starting the *round*.

Your *side's* *round* begins when you or your *partner* makes a *stroke* in that *round*.

b. Starting Time and Starting Point

For an explanation of the requirements for you and your *partner* when starting in *Foursomes* and *Threesomes* – [see full Rules](#).

Rule 23 – Four-Ball and Best-Ball

Purpose of Rule 23: Rule 23 covers **Four-Ball** and **Best-Ball**, which are forms of **partner** play that may be played either in match play or stroke play.

- You and your partner compete as a **side**, each playing a separate ball.
- Your side's score for a hole is the lower of your score and your partner's score on that hole.
- The Rule also covers what happens when one partner takes actions regarding the other partner's ball and when penalties apply only to one partner or to your side.

23.1 Overview of Four-Ball and Best-Ball

Four-Ball and *Best-Ball* are forms of play (in either *match play* or *stroke play*) involving partners:

Four-Ball – A form of play where you and your partner compete together as a side, with each of you playing your own ball. Your side's score for a hole is the lower score of either your score or your partner's score on that hole.

Best-Ball – A form of *match play* where you compete against a side of two or three partners, with each partner playing his or her own ball. Your side's score for a hole is the low score of the two or three partners on that hole.

23.2 Scoring in Four-Ball and Best-Ball

a. Your Side's Score for Hole in Match Play and Stroke Play

- Both Partners Hole Out Correctly Under the Rules. The lower score is your side's score for the hole.
- Only One Partner Holes Out Correctly Under the Rules. The score for the partner that holed out is your side's score for the hole. The other partner does not need to hole out.
- No Partner Holes Out Correctly Under the Rules. Your side does not have a score for that hole, which means:
 - In *match play*, your side **loses the hole**, unless the opposing side already had failed to hole out correctly under the Rules on that hole.
 - In *stroke play*, your side is **disqualified from the competition** unless the mistake is corrected in time.

b. Your Side's Score Card in Stroke Play

Your Side's Responsibility. Your *side's* gross scores for each hole must be entered on a single score card. Only one *partner* needs to certify your score card for your *side*.

For each hole:

- The gross score of at least one *partner* must be entered on your *side's* score card.
- **There is no penalty** for entering more than one *partner's* score on the score card.
- Each score on the score card must be clearly attributable to the individual *partner* who made that score; if this is not done, **the side is disqualified**.
- It is not enough to attribute a score to the *side* in general.

Committee's Responsibility

For an explanation of the *Committee's* responsibility for deciding which score is to count for the *side* on each hole, including applying any handicaps – [see full Rules](#).

23.3 Your Actions Affecting Play of Your Partner's Ball

a. You Are Allowed to Take Any Actions Regarding Your Partner's Ball that Your Partner May Take

Although you and your *partner* each play a separate ball:

- You may take any action regarding your *partner's* ball that he or she is allowed to take before making a *stroke*, such as to *mark*, *lift*, *replace* or *drop* a ball.
- You may also ask your *partner* for *advice* and give *advice* to your *partner*.

b. Any Actions You Take Regarding Your Partner's Ball are Treated as Having Been Taken by Your Partner

If your actions regarding your *partner's* ball would breach a Rule if taken by your *partner*:

- Your *partner* is in breach of the Rule and gets the resulting penalty.

For the situation where your actions affect the play of both your own ball and your *partner's* ball – [see full Rules](#).

23.4 One Or Both Partners May Represent Your Side

Your *side's round* starts when either you or your *partner* makes your first *stroke*, and ends when the result of the match is decided in *match play* or when your *side* completes the final hole in *stroke play*.

Your *side* may be represented by one *partner* during all or any part of a *round*. You and your *partner* need not both be present.

An absent *partner* may join in playing for the *side* only between the play of two holes, which means:

Match Play – Absent Partner May Join Only Before Any Player in Match Starts Hole.

Stroke Play – Absent Partner May Join Only Before Other Partner Starts Hole.

A player may give advice to a *partner* on a hole even if not allowed to join the *side* in playing that hole.

23.5 Your Side's Order of Play

You and your *partner* may play in the order you consider best for your *side*.

This means that when it is your *side's* turn to play, either you or your *partner* may play next.

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

- You must not continue play of a hole after your next *stroke* has been conceded if this would help your *partner*.
- If you do so, your score for the hole stands, but your *partner's score for the hole cannot count for the side*.

23.6 When Penalty Applies to You Only or Applies to Side

When you get a penalty for a breach of a Rule, the penalty may apply either to you alone or to your *side* (that is, to both you and your *partner*). This depends on the penalty and the form of play:

a. Penalties Other than Disqualification

Penalty Normally Applies Only to Player, not Partner. When you get a penalty other than disqualification, that penalty normally applies only to you and not your *partner*, **except** in the situations below.

Three Situations Where Your Penalty Also Applies to Your Partner

For an explanation of the situations where your penalty will also apply to your *partner* – [see full Rules](#).

Exception – Regardless of the Circumstances, if You Make a Stroke at a Wrong Ball, Only You (and Not Also Your Partner) Gets the Penalty

b. Disqualification Penalties

When Breach by Either You or Your Partner Means Side Is Disqualified.

For an explanation of when a breach by you or your *partner* results in the side being disqualified – [see full Rules](#).

When Breach by Both You and Your Partner Means Side Is Disqualified

For an explanation of when the side is disqualified because you and your *partner* both breached a Rule – [see full Rules](#).

When Breach by You Means Only that You Have No Valid Score for Hole

For an explanation of all other situations where the penalty is disqualification, but the result is only that your score cannot count for the side on a particular hole – [see full Rules](#).

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Rule 24 – Team Competitions

For an explanation of team competitions, including recommendations for Conditions of Competition, the selection of team captains and how to apply the *advice* Rule – [see full Rules](#).

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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 deliberate action (such as showing what club you just used to make a stroke) that is intended to influence you or another player in:

- Choosing a club,
- Making a *stroke*, or
- Deciding how to play during a hole or *round*.

But *advice* does not include information on the Rules, distance or other public matters, such as the location of the *hole*, the *putting green*, the *fairway*, *penalty areas*, *bunkers* or another player's ball.

***Animal* (see [full Rules](#))**

Animal Hole

Any hole dug by an *animal* (**except** when the hole has been dug by *animals* that are *loose impediments*, such as worms and insects), and the material removed or damage caused in digging the hole.

Areas of the Course

The five areas that make up the *course*:

- The *general area*,
- The *teeing area* of the hole you are playing,
- All *bunkers*,
- All *penalty areas*, or
- The *putting green* of the hole you are playing.

Attend

You have the *flagstick attended* if, when you make a *stroke*, any person is:

- Touching the *flagstick* in the *hole* or standing close enough to touch it, or
- Holding the *flagstick* above the *hole* to show where the *hole* is.

That person is attending the *flagstick* for you until your ball comes to rest.

Ball in Play

The ball you are playing on a hole:

- Your ball is first *in play* on a hole:
 - When you make a *stroke* at it from inside the *teeing area*, or
 - In *match play*, your ball is also in play when you make a *stroke* at it from outside the *teeing area* unless your *opponent* cancels your *stroke* under Rule 6.1b.
- That ball remains *in play* until it is *holed*, **except** that it is no longer *in play*:
 - When you lift it from the *course*,
 - When it is *lost* or *out of bounds*, or
 - When you *substitute* another ball for it, even if not allowed by a Rule.

When you use a *ball-marker* to *mark* the spot of your *ball in play*:

- Your ball that is *marked* but not lifted is still *in play*.
- Your ball that has been *marked*, lifted and *replaced* is *in play* even if the *ball-marker* has not been removed.

Ball-Marker (see full Rules)

Best-Ball

A form of *match play* in which an individual player competes against a *side* of two or three *partners*, with each *partner* playing his or her own ball. The *side's* score for a hole is the low score of the two or three *partners* on that hole.

Bunker

Bunkers are one of the five defined *areas of the course*. A *bunker* is all sand inside the edge of a specially prepared area, which is often a hollow from which turf or soil was removed and replaced with sand.

These are not part of a *bunker*:

- Sand that has spilled over or is outside the edge of the prepared area.
- A lip, wall or face at the edge of the prepared area and consisting of earth, grass or turf.
- Any growing thing inside the prepared area such as grass, bushes or trees.

The word “sand” as used in this Definition and Rule 12 includes any material similar to sand.

Caddie

Someone who helps you during a *round* in these ways:

- *Carrying or Handling Clubs*: A person who carries or handles your clubs during play is your *caddie* even if not named as your *caddie* by you, **except** when only taking a casual act to help out (such as getting a club you left behind or moving your bag or cart out of the way).
- *Advice*: Your *caddie* is the only person (other than your *partner* or your *partner's caddie*) you may ask for *advice*.

When you have a *caddie*:

- Other people may carry other items (such as a rain-suit, umbrella or food and drink) for you and take casual acts to help you.
- Such a person is not your *caddie* unless you name them as such or unless he or she carries or handles your clubs.

Committee

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

Conditions Affecting Your Stroke

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

These terms mean:

- *Lie* of a ball, *line of play* and *relief area* are defined terms.
- The “area of intended *stance*” includes not only where you will place your feet, but the entire area that might reasonably affect how and where your body is positioned in preparing for and making your intended *stroke*.
- Your “area of intended swing” includes the entire area that might reasonably affect any part of your backswing, your downswing or the completion of your swing for your intended *stroke*.

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 on or 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

When you:

- Hold your ball above the ground without it touching any growing thing or other natural or artificial object, and
- Let go of the ball so that it falls through the air before coming to rest.

To avoid any doubt, it is recommended that you drop your ball from a height of at least one inch above the ground, including any growing thing or natural object.

The purpose of a *drop* is for there to be a degree of randomness in where your ball will come to rest.

If you let go of your ball without intending it to be *in play*, the ball has not been *dropped* and is not *in play*.

Embedded

A ball that is at rest in its own pitch-mark made after a *stroke* and where part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

A ball does not necessarily have to touch the 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 you or your *caddie*. Objects used for the care of the *course*, such as rakes, are *equipment* only while they are being held or carried by you or your *caddie*.

Flagstick (see full Rules)

Four-Ball

A form of play where *sides* of two *partners* compete, with each player playing his or her own ball. Your *side's* score for a hole is the lower score of you or your *partner* 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 involving multiple *sides* of *partners*.

Foursomes

A form of *match play* or *stroke play* in which you and your *partner* 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 involving multiple *sides* of *partners*.

General Area

The area of the course that covers all parts of the course **except** for the other four defined areas: (1) the *teeing area* of the hole you are playing, (2) all *bunkers* on the course, (3) all *penalty areas* on the course, and (4) the *putting green* of the hole you are playing.

The *general area* includes:

- All *teeing areas* other than the *teeing area* of the hole you are playing.
- All *wrong putting greens*, which means all *putting greens* other than the *putting green* of the hole you are playing.

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* marks or declares to be *ground under repair*, including all ground and any grass, bush, tree or other growing or attached natural object in the *ground under repair*.

Ground under repair also includes all of the following things, even if the *Committee* does not mark or declare them as such:

- Any hole made by the *Committee* or greenkeeping staff in setting up the course (such as a hole where a stake has been removed or a *hole* on a *putting green* being used for another *hole* such as in the case of a double green) or in maintaining the course (such as a hole made in removing turf or a tree stump, laying pipelines, etc., **but not** aeration holes)
- Material piled for later removal. **But** grass cuttings and other material left on the course and not intended to be removed are not *ground under repair* unless marked or declared as such.

- Any *animal* habitat (such as a bird's nest) that is near your ball such that your *stroke* would damage or destroy it.

The edge of *ground under repair* extends down below the ground but not up above the ground. It 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 farthest 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 define the edge of the *ground under repair*.

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 (see [full Rules](#))

Hole Out

When your ball is *holed* on the hole being played.

Holed

When your ball is at rest in the *hole* and the entire ball is below the surface of the *putting green*.

Honor

The right of a player to play first from the *teeing area*.

Immovable Obstruction

Any *obstruction* that is fixed rather than *movable*.

Improve

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

Integral Part of the Course

An artificial object that is treated as an integral part of your challenge in playing the *course* and not as an *obstruction* from which relief may be allowed.

Integral parts of the course are:

- Objects defining or showing *out of bounds*, such as walls, fences, stakes and railings; and
- Any other object the *Committee* defines as an *integral part of the course*.

Known or Virtually Certain

The standard for deciding what happened to your ball – for example, whether your ball *moved*, whether you or some other person or thing caused it to *move* or whether it came to rest in a *penalty area*.

Known or virtually certain means more than just possible or probable. It means that you know or are almost sure that the event in question happened to your ball because either:

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

“All reasonably available information” includes all information you know or should know, or can get with reasonable efforts and without *unreasonable delay*.

Lie

The “*lie*” of your ball is the surface on which it rests and any growing or attached natural objects or fixed artificial objects touching it or right next to it.

Loose impediments and *movable obstructions* are not part of the *lie* of your ball.

Line of Play

The line on which you intend your ball to go after a *stroke*, including an extension of that line up above the ground and a reasonable distance on either side of that line.

Loose Impediment

Any unattached natural object such as:

- Stones, loose grass, leaves, branches, sticks, etc.;
- Dead *animals* and *animal waste*; and
- Worms, insects and similar *animals* that can be removed with ease, and the material they remove from holes or otherwise leave on the ground (such as worm casts and ant hills).

Such natural objects are not loose if they are:

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

Special cases:

- Loose Sand and Loose Soil are not *loose impediments*. (Loose lumps of earth or plugs of compacted soil such as aeration plugs are not “loose soil” and are *loose impediments* wherever they are found.)
- Dew, Frost and Water are not *loose impediments*.
- Snow and Natural Ice, other than frost, are either *temporary water* or *loose impediments*, at your option.

Lost Ball

A ball that is not found in three minutes after you or your *caddie* or *partner* begins to search for it. Time you spend in playing a *wrong ball* does not count in this three-minute period.

Mark

To show the spot of a ball at rest by:

- Placing a *ball-marker* behind or to the side of the ball, or
- Holding a club on the ground behind or to the side of the ball.

Marker

In *stroke play*, the person with the responsibility to enter your *score* on your *score card* and to certify that *score card*. Your *marker* may be another player, but not your *partner*.

The *Committee* may choose your *marker* or tell you how you may choose your *marker*.

Match Play

A form of play in which you on your own or as part of a *side* play directly against an *opponent* or opposing *side* in a *head-to-head* match of one or more *rounds* in which:

- You or your *side* wins a hole in the match by completing the hole in the fewest *strokes*, and
- The match is won when you or your *side* leads your *opponent* or opposing *side* by more holes than remain to be played.

Match play can be played as a singles match, a *Three-Ball* match or a match involving *sides* of *partners* (*Four-Ball*, *Best-Ball*, *Foursomes* and *Threesomes*).

Maximum Score

A form of *stroke play* in which you or your *side's* score for a hole is capped at a maximum number of *strokes* set by the *Committee*, such as two times par, a fixed number (6, 8, 10, etc.) or net double bogey.

Movable Obstruction

An *obstruction* that can be moved readily and without damaging the *obstruction* or the *course*.

Even when an *obstruction* is movable, the *Committee* may define it to be an *immovable obstruction*.

Move

When a ball leaves its spot and comes to rest on any other spot, and this can be seen by the naked eye (whether or not anyone actually sees it).

Natural Forces

The effects of nature such as wind, water or earthquakes, or when something happens for no apparent reason because of the effects of gravity.

Nearest Point of Complete Relief

Your reference point for taking relief without penalty from interference by an *abnormal course condition*, a dangerous *animal* situation, or a *wrong putting green*.

It is the estimated point in the required area of the *course*:

- Nearest to where your ball came to rest, but not nearer the *hole*, and
- Where that condition or situation does not interfere with the *stroke* you would have made (including your choice of club, *stance*, swing and *line of play*) from your ball's original spot if the condition or situation did not exist.

Although the *nearest point of complete relief* is based on how you would have made your *stroke*:

- In taking relief you need not actually simulate your *stroke*.
- What matters is that you play the ball from the right place defined by reference to the *nearest point of complete relief* and to any other limits stated in the Rule being used to take relief.

No Play Zone

A part of the *course* where the *Committee* has prohibited play. A *no play zone* must be either part of an *abnormal course condition* or in 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 be a distinctive color.

Number of Strokes Taken

In *match play*, the number of strokes you have taken:

- At any point during your play of the current hole, or
- In completing that hole.

This includes any *penalty strokes* you get on the hole, even if you did not know about those *penalty strokes*.

Obstruction

Any artificial object **except** for *integral parts of the course*.

Examples of *obstructions*:

- Artificially surfaced roads and paths, including their artificial borders (such as curbs),
- Buildings, tents and rain shelters,
- Sprinkler heads, drains and irrigation or control boxes,
- Stakes, walls, railings and fences (**but** not when they define the boundary edge of the *course*, in which case they are *integral parts of the course*).
- Golf carts, mowers, cars and other vehicles,
- Waste containers, signposts and benches, and
- Player *equipment*, *flagsticks* and rakes.

An *obstruction* is either a *movable obstruction* or an *immovable obstruction*.

Opponent

A player you compete against in a match. The term *opponent* applies only in *match play*.

Outside Influence

Any of these people or things that can affect what happens to your ball at rest or in motion:

- Any person (including another player), **except** you or your *caddie* or your *partner* or *opponent* or any of their *caddies*,
- Any *animal*, and
- Any natural or artificial object or anything else (including another ball in motion after a *stroke*), **except** for *natural forces*.

Out of Bounds

All areas outside the boundary edge of the *course* as defined by the *Committee*. All areas on or inside that edge are in bounds.

The boundary edge of the *course* extends both up above the ground and down below the ground and should be defined by objects or lines:

- Objects: When defined by stakes or a fence, the boundary edge is defined by the nearest inside 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 a curb, the *Committee* should define the boundary edge.

- Lines: When defined by a painted line on the ground, the boundary edge is the inside 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*:

- You or your *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*.
- 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 you as a *side*, in either *match play* or *stroke play*.

Penalty Area

A *penalty area* is one of the five defined *areas of the course* and includes:

- 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 water course (even if not containing water), and
- Any other part of the *course* the *Committee* defines as a *penalty area*.

There are two different types of *penalty area*, distinguished by the color used to mark them:

- Yellow *penalty areas* (marked with yellow lines or yellow stakes) have two relief options (Rule 17.1a, b).
- Red *penalty areas* (marked with red lines or red stakes) have an extra lateral relief option (Rule 17.1c), in addition to the two available for yellow *penalty areas*.

If the color 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 and should be defined by stakes, lines or physical features:

- Stakes: When defined by stakes, the edge of the *penalty area* is defined by the farthest 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 define the edge of the *penalty area*.

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.

Penalty Stroke

A stroke added to your score or your *side's* score under a Rule.

Point of Maximum Available Relief

Your *reference point* for taking relief without penalty from an *abnormal course condition* in a bunker or on the *putting green* when there is no *nearest point of complete relief*.

It is the estimated point in the required area of the *course*:

- Nearest to where your ball came to rest, but not nearer the *hole*, and
- Where that *abnormal course condition* least interferes with the *stroke* you would have made from your ball's original spot if the condition did not exist.

The *point of maximum available relief* is found by comparing the amount of interference with the lie of your ball, your *area of intended stance or swing* and, on the *putting green*, your *line of play*. For example, when taking relief from *temporary water*:

- The *point of maximum available relief* may be where your ball will be in shallower water than where you will stand, or vice versa, or where your intended swing will be affected less than your *stance*, or vice versa.
- On the *putting green*, the *point of maximum available relief* may be based on the *line of play* where your ball will need to go through the shallowest or shortest stretch of *temporary water*.

Provisional Ball

Another ball you have played in case your *ball in play* may be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or is *out of bounds*. It is not your *ball in play*, unless it becomes your *ball in play* under Rule 18.3c.

Putting Green

An *area* that is specially prepared for putting or that the *Committee* has defined as a *putting green*.

Putting greens fall into two categories based on the hole you are playing:

- The **putting green** is the *putting green* of the hole being played, which is one of the five defined *areas of the course*. It contains the *hole* into which you intend to play a ball.
- A **wrong putting green** is any *putting green* on the *course* other than the *putting green* of the hole you are playing.

Wrong putting greens include practice greens for putting or pitching, unless the *Committee* excludes them by Local Rule (meaning that those practice greens would be part of the *general area*).

Referee

Someone the *Committee* has authorized to decide questions of fact and apply the Rules.

Relief Area

The area in which you must *drop* and play a ball when taking relief under a Rule. Each relief Rule requires you to use a specific *relief area* whose size and location are based on these three factors:

- Reference Point or Reference Line for Relief Area: Each *relief area* is based on either (1) a reference point, or (2) a reference line from the *hole* through a particular point.
- Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point or Reference Line: The *relief area* is the entire area either 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) or 80 inches (203.2 centimeters) from the reference point or 20 inches from the reference line, **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:
 - It is only in certain defined *areas of the course*, such as only in the *general area*, not in a *bunker* or a *penalty area*, or

- It is not nearer to the *hole* than the reference point or must be behind a *penalty area* or a *bunker* from which you are taking relief, or
- There is no interference from the condition or situation from which relief you are taking relief.

Replace

To place a ball by hand on the spot from which it was lifted or *moved* by setting the ball down and letting it go, with the intent for it to stay on that spot and to be *in play*.

Round

18 or fewer holes played in the order set by the *Committee*.

Score Card ([see full Rules](#))

Serious Breach ([see full Rules](#))

Side

You and at least one more *partner* 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 *Best-Ball*) or the *partners* play one ball (*Foursomes* or *Threesomes*).

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* in which:

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

Stance

The position of your feet and body in preparing for or making your *stroke*.

Stroke

The forward movement of your club made to strike your ball.

But you have not made a *stroke* if you decide during your downswing not to strike your ball and avoid doing so:

- By deliberately stopping your clubhead before it reaches your ball or,
- If unable to stop, by deliberately missing your ball.

Your score for a hole or a *round* is described as a number of “strokes,” adding up the number of *strokes* you made with your club at your ball and any *penalty strokes*.

Stroke and Distance

The procedure and penalty under Rules 17.1c(1), 18.1 or 19.2a when you make a *stroke* from where you made your previous *stroke*.

The term *stroke and distance* means that you both:

- Get one *penalty stroke*, and
- Lose the benefit of any gain of distance towards the *hole* from your last *stroke*.

Stroke Play

A form of play in which you or your *side* competes against all other players or *sides* in the competition:

- You or your *side*'s score for a *round* is the total number of strokes taken (including all *penalty strokes*) by you or your *side* on each hole.
- 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*.

Substituted Ball

A ball that you put *in play* instead of your original ball that was:

- *In play,*
- Lifted from the *course*, or
- *Lost or out of bounds.*

A *substituted ball* becomes your *ball in play* when you have *dropped it* or placed it, even if the *substitution* is not allowed under the Rules.

Tee

An object used to raise a ball above the ground to play from *the teeing area*. It must be no longer than four inches and conform with Equipment Rule ____.

Teeing Area

Your starting place for the hole to be played:

- *The teeing area* is a rectangular area 80 inches (203.2 centimeters) deep.
- Its front and sides are defined by the outside edges of two tee-markers, as set by the *Committee*.

The teeing area is one of the five defined *areas of the course*.

But when determining the location of a *relief area* under a Rule that requires a ball to be *dropped*, the *teeing area* is treated as part of the *general area*.

Temporary Water

Any temporary accumulation of water on the surface of the ground (such as puddles of water from rain or an overflow from a body of water) that is not in a *penalty area* and can be seen before or after you take a *stance*.

Special cases:

- Dew and Frost are not *temporary water*.
- Snow and Natural Ice, other than frost, are either *temporary water* or *loose impediments*, at the player's option.
- Manufactured Ice is an *obstruction*.

Three-Ball

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

Threesomes

A form of *match play* between one side of two *partners* and one individual player. The *side* competes by playing one ball in alternating order on each hole.

Wrong Ball

Any ball **other than** your:

- *Ball in play* (whether the original ball or a *substituted* ball),
- *Provisional ball*, or
- Second ball in *stroke play* played under Rule 14.7c or Rule 20.1c.

Examples of a *wrong ball* are:

- Another player's *ball in play*.
- A stray ball at rest on the ground.
- Your own ball that is *out of bounds* or has been lifted and not yet put back *in play*.

Wrong Place

Any place on the *course* other than where you are required or allowed to play your ball under the Rules.

Examples of playing from a *wrong place* are:

- Playing a lifted or *moved* ball without *replacing* it or after *replacing* it on the wrong spot, when a Rule required your lifted or *moved* ball to be *replaced* on its original spot.
- Playing a *dropped* ball from outside the required *relief area*.
- Taking relief under a wrong Rule, so that your ball is *dropped* in and played from a place not allowed under the Rules.
- Playing a ball from a *no play zone* or when there is interference by a *no play zone*.

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*, but rather is covered by Rule 6.1.

Wrong Putting Green

See Definition of **Putting Green**.