15 RULES EVERY GOLFER SHOULD KNOW

**BALL MOVED**
1 Ball Moved During Search
   - If you move any player’s ball (even your own) while searching for it, there is no penalty; just replace the ball.

2 Ball Moved on Putting Green
   - If you accidentally move any player’s ball (even your own) on the putting green, there is no penalty; just replace the ball.
   - Once you have lifted and replaced your ball, you are taking relief under).

**PUTTING GREEN**
3 Repairing Damage
   - You can repair almost any damage on the putting green, including:
     - Spike marks
     - Animal damage
     - Any damage from a person or a ball

4 Touching Line of Play
   - You are allowed to touch your line of play for any reason (including on the putting green).

5 Flagstick
   - If your ball hits an unattended flagstick in the hole, there is no penalty.

**BUNKERS AND PENALTY AREAS**
6 Relaxed Restrictions in Bunkers
   - You can touch or move loose impediments in a bunker, but be careful: you don’t move your ball when doing so or you’ll get one penalty stroke.
   - You cannot touch the sand with your club next to your ball, or during the backswing for your stroke.
   - You also cannot touch the sand anywhere to test its condition or when making a practice swing.

7 Actions Allowed in Penalty Areas
   - You are allowed to:
     - Ground your club
     - Take practice swings
     - Touch water
     - Remove loose impediments
     - Take penalty area relief

**TAKING RELIEF**
8 Dropping and Measuring Relief Area
   - Drop your ball from knee height so that it lands in and comes to rest in the relief area, except when taking back-on-the-line relief where the ball must be dropped on the line.
   - Your relief area is either one or two club-lengths, measured from the reference point (based on the Rule you are taking relief under).

9 Penalty Area Relief
   - For one penalty stroke, you have two relief options from a yellow penalty area and three relief options from a red penalty area.
   1. Stroke-and-Distance (red or yellow): Play from the relief area based on where your previous stroke was made.
   2. Back-On-the-Line (red or yellow): Drop a ball on a line that goes from where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area and it must come to rest within one club-length of where it first hits the line.
   3. Lateral Relief (red only): Drop a ball within a two club-length relief area measured from where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area, and no closer to the hole than that point.

**PLAYING A BALL**
10 Changing Balls Allowed When Taking Relief
   - You can use your original ball or another ball when taking either free relief or penalty relief.

11 Accidental Deflections
   - There is no penalty if your ball in motion is accidentally deflected, including by:
     - You
     - Your equipment
     - Your partner
     - Your caddie
     - A double hit
   - Generally, your ball will be played from where it comes to rest.

12 Search Time
   - Once you start searching for your ball, you have three minutes to find it before it is lost.

**EQUIPMENT**
13 Help with Alignment
   - Your caddie or partner is not allowed to stand on or close to a line behind your ball (the restricted area) while you are taking your stance and until your stroke is made.

14 Club Damage
   - If your club is damaged during a round (except in cases of abuse) you may replace it. Repair it or continue to use it.
   - Check to see if Model Local Rule G-9 is in effect, which limits replacement to cases where the club is broken or significantly damaged.

15 Yardage Books
   - There are limits on the size and scale of green-reading materials that you are allowed to use.
   - This applies to all materials, including yardage books, but only when you use them to read the green when you’re playing from it.
   - Check to see if Model Local Rule G-11 or G-12 are in effect, both of which further restrict the use of green-reading materials.

For more information on the Rules of Golf, please visit usga.org/rules.

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