

# WWGA RULES TOPIC – APRIL 2025

## Interference from a Fence

### (Unplayable Ball & Immovable Obstruction)

This WWGA Rules Topic was designed to help reduce the confusion in the proper way to take relief from a fence, particularly when near the green.



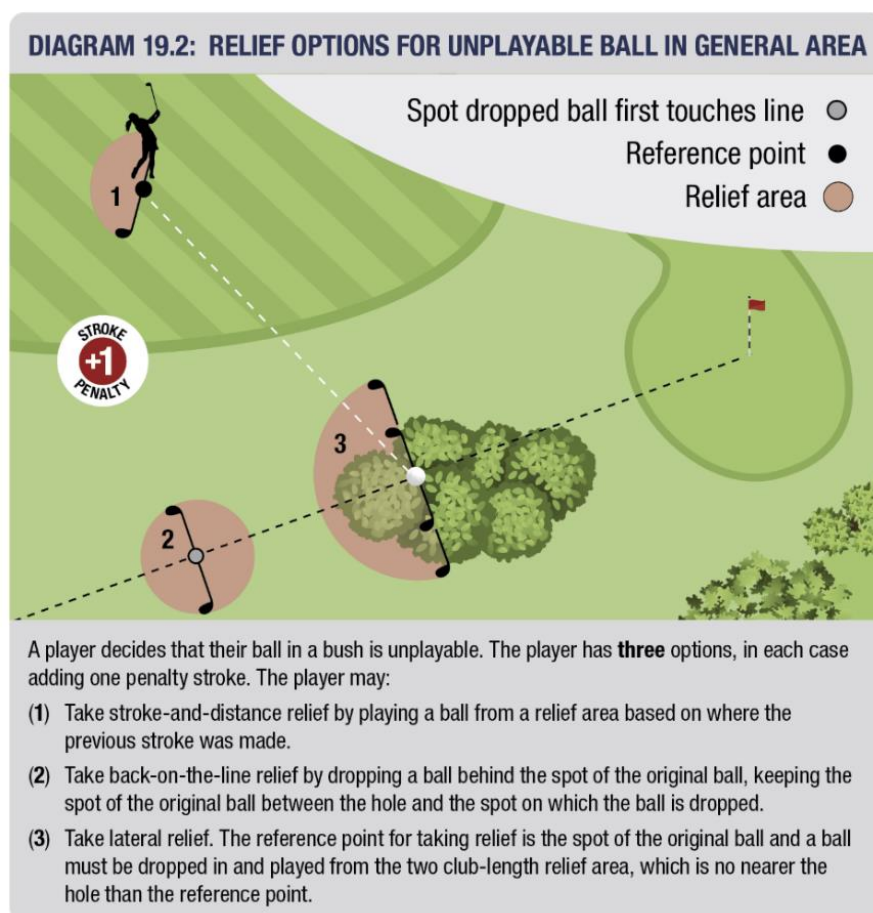
### Free Relief or Penalty Stroke?

Whether relief is free or will cost you a penalty stroke depends on the type of fence.

- **Boundary Fence** – No free relief. May take relief for **Unplayable Ball**
- **Protective Fence** – Free relief from **Abnormal Course Condition**
  - A protective fence is an Immovable Obstruction - a type of Abnormal Course Condition
  - An Immovable Obstruction is any obstruction that cannot be moved without unreasonable effort or without damaging the obstruction or the course.
- **Small moveable fence** – Okay to move it out of the way - just put it back after your stroke!

## Unplayable Ball Relief Options

The diagram below shows the three relief options available for an Unplayable Ball.



**Unplayable Ball Relief might not give full relief**

What if the bush in this picture was twice as big!



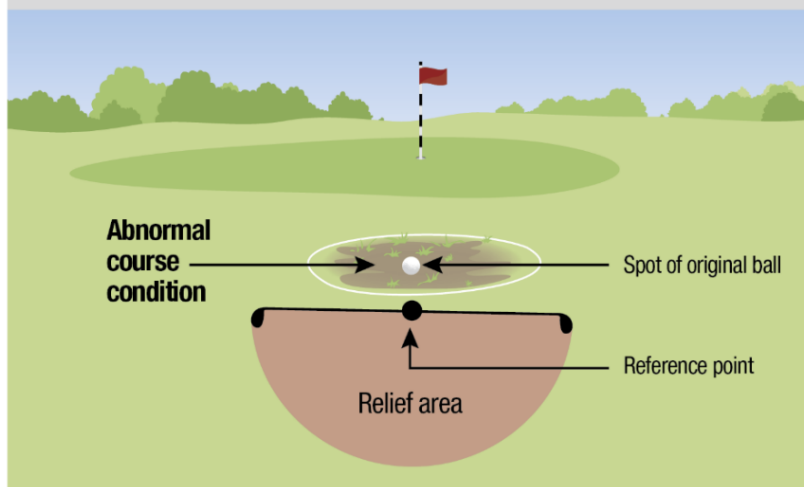
**No Guarantee Ball Will Be Playable After Taking Unplayable Relief**

When taking unplayable ball relief, **a player must accept the outcome even if it is unfavourable**, such as when a dropped ball comes to rest in its original location or in a bad lie in another location in the relief area.

## Free Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions

For relief from a Protective Fence (like those on holes 12 & 13), first you find the Reference Point, which is the nearest point of complete relief, not closer to the hole. Then drop a ball into the relief area, which is one club length from the Reference Point, but no closer to the hole than the reference point.

**DIAGRAM 16.1b: FREE RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN GENERAL AREA**



- Free relief is allowed when the ball is in the general area and there is interference by an abnormal course condition.
- The nearest point of complete relief should be identified and a ball must be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area.
- The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and must be in the general area.
- When taking relief, the player must take complete relief from all interference by the abnormal course condition.

## Complete Relief

Complete Relief means complete relief for lie, area of stance and intended swing.



**Unless the ball is on the green, you are not allowed relief for line-of-play.**



**The nearest point of complete relief is not necessarily the nicest point of complete relief.**

The nearest point of complete relief could be in a bush, in the middle of a tree, or on some rocks.

## No Relief When Clearly Unreasonable to Play Ball

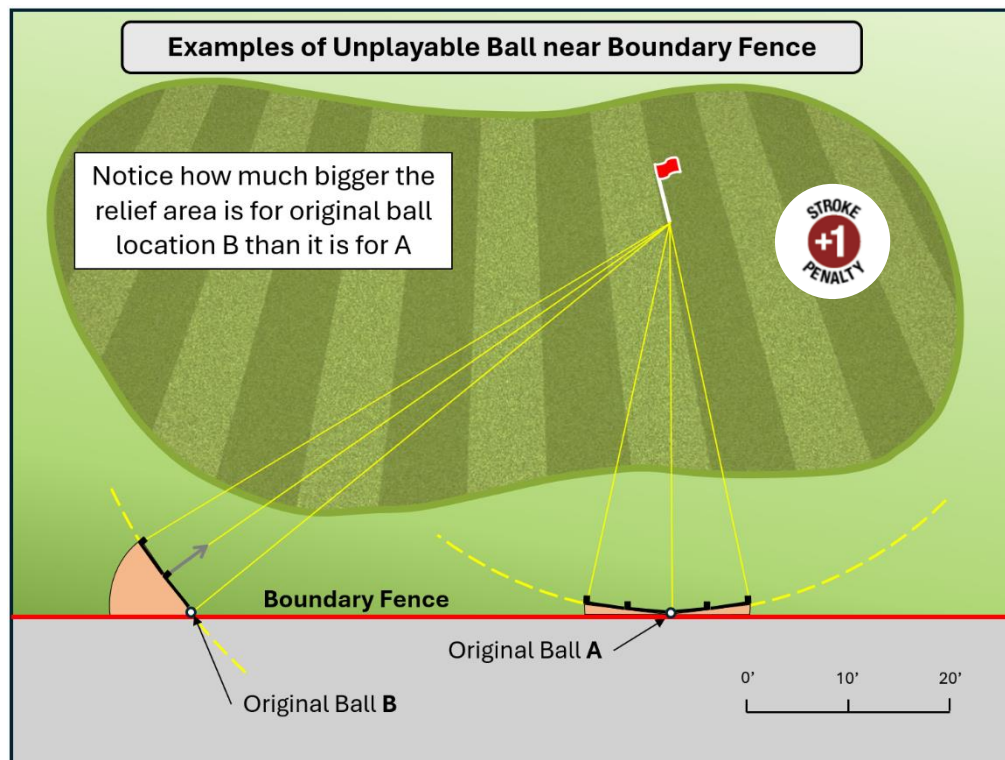
One example would be when playing the ball as it lies it would be clearly unreasonable because of something from which the player is not allowed to take free relief, such as when a player is unable to make a stroke because of where the ball lies in a bush. Another example would be when interference exists only because a player chooses a club, type of stance or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

## When Interference by Second Abnormal Course Condition Exists after Complete Relief Taken from First Condition

Let's say you take free relief from the protective fence between holes 12 & 13, but when you drop the ball it lands on the cart path, but still within one club length of the reference point and no closer to the hole. You can now take free relief from the cart path. If after taking that relief you wind up with interference with the fence again, you may locate the nearest complete relief from both. However, you need to take relief from one then the other before taking relief from both.

## Comparison - Unplayable Ball and Relief from Abnormal Course Condition

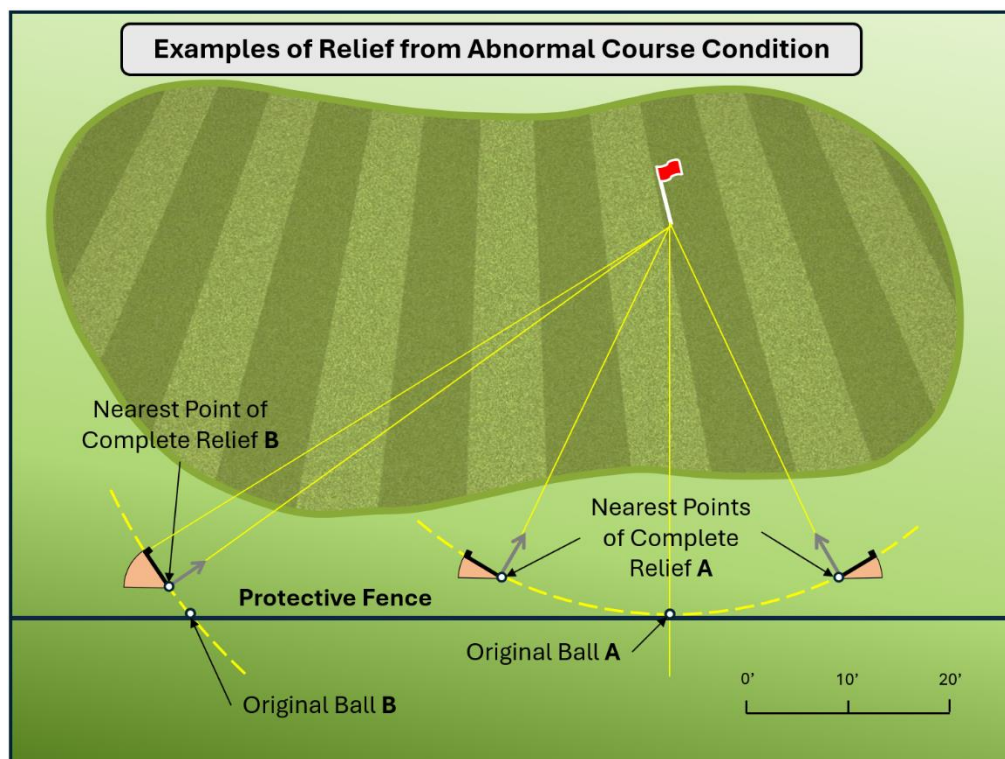
Unplayable Ball Relief and Relief from Abnormal Course Condition may seem similar but can be quite different. See the examples below.



### Unplayable Ball near Boundary Fence

Notice how small the relief area is for Original Ball A compared to the relief area for Original Ball B. May not be enough relief for intended stance and swing.

Stroke & Distance is another option to consider.



### Free relief from Protective Fence

Complete relief from the protective fence.

Notice how far away from the Original Ball A the relief areas are. Anywhere closer would not give complete relief.

Reference USGA [Rule 16 - Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions](#) and [Rule 19 - Unplayable Ball](#)