

# 2024 Pennsylvania Congressional Open Format & Rules



**2022 Participants:**

Mr. Parker Bennett\*\*

*Rep. John Joyce, M.D.*

Mr. Kevin Dawson\*\*

*Rep. Mike Kelly*

Mr. Chris Krepich\*\*

*Energy & Commerce Committee*

Mr. Kevin O'Keefe

*Ed & Workforce Committee*

Mr. Matt Powell

*Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber*

Mr. Joe Knowles

*Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick*

Mr. Joe Ramallo

*Sen. Bill Cassidy, M.D.*

Mr. Kevin Rodgers

*Rep. Nicole Malliotakis*

Mr. Drew Lingle

*CF Industries*

Mr. Ben Mullany

*Rep. John Joyce, M.D.*

Mr. Will Bensusan

*Sen. Roger Marshall, M.D.*

Mr. Alex Sells

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Mr. Tyler Mortier

*Rep. John Joyce, M.D.*

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*Pennsylvania State University*

Mr. Max West

*Rep. Warren Davidson*

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PA Chamber

Mr. Nick Rockwell

*House Agriculture Committee*

Mr. Hunter Thompson

*Senate Veterans Committee*

Mr. Parker Reynolds

*Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.*

\*\*Board Member

## **Format & Rules**

The PA Congressional Open is a two-day, net stroke play competition.

Players will play from the white tees and must putt out on each hole. **No gimmies!**

**Note:** Players are **not** permitted to score their own card or their cart partner's card.

### **Day One:**

All players will compete in individual *stroke play*. No player may record a score of more than four over par on the first day of competition.

#### **Prizes:**

*Golden Putter:* Players must record total number of putts for the round to qualify for the Golden Putter Trophy competition. Putts from the fringe or off the green are **not** counted.

*King of Beers:* Player who drinks the most beers will be named the King of Beers.

*Day 1 Low Score:* The player who shoots the lowest net score will win pro shop credit. Another "special" prize may be awarded.

### **Day Two:**

All players will compete in individual *stroke play*. No player may record a score of more than five over par on the second day of competition.

#### **Prizes:**

*Day 2 Low Score:* The player who shoots the lowest net score will win pro shop credit.

*Green Jacket:* The player who shoots the lowest overall net score will be named the 2022 PA Congressional Open Champion and take home the coveted Green Jacket.

## Stake Cheat Sheet:

**Red Stake:** Lateral hazard/lateral water hazard. Can play from the hazard with **no penalty**, take lateral relief within two club lengths with a **one stroke penalty**, take back-on-the-line relief with a **one stroke penalty**, or take stroke-and-distance penalty from the location of the previous shot.

**Yellow Stake:** Water Hazard. Can play from the water hazard with no stroke penalty, take a drop behind the point of entry on the back-on-the-line relief with **one penalty stroke**, or take stroke and distance penalty from the location of the previous shot.

**White Stake:** Out of Bounds. Local Rule: Can play the ball as it lies (are not permitted to move any objects, including stakes) with no penalty or can take stroke-and-distance penalty from the location of the previous shot.

## Local Rules:

\*A player who hit a ball that clearly comes to rest in bounds [typically in the rough] but is unable to locate the ball after a reasonable amount of time can be granted a free drop in the approximate location where the ball was thought to be with no stroke penalty if two members (not the player whose ball is in question) agree that the ball is not lost but unable to be located. Please use the proper discretion.

A player who hits the ball out of bounds can bring the ball back into the middle of the fairway no closer from point of entry for **two penalty** strokes. (I.e., losing a tee shot results in the player hitting **four** on his second shot.)

## 17.1 Options for Ball in Penalty Area

*Penalty areas* are defined as either red or yellow. This affects the player's relief options (see Rule 17.1d).

A player may stand in a *penalty area* to play a ball outside the *penalty area*, including after taking relief from the *penalty area*.

### a. When Ball Is in Penalty Area

A ball is in a *penalty area* when any part of the ball:

- Lies on or touches the ground or anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the edge of the *penalty area*, or
- Is above the edge or any other part of the *penalty area*.

If part of the ball is both in a *penalty area* and in another *area of the course*, see Rule 2.2c.

### b. Player May Play Ball as It Lies in Penalty Area or Take Penalty Relief

The player may either:

- Play the ball as it lies without penalty, under the same Rules that apply to a ball in the *general area* (which means there are no special Rules limiting how a ball may be played from a *penalty area*), or
- Play a ball from outside the *penalty area* by taking penalty relief under Rule 17.1d or 17.2.

**Exception – Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area (see Rule 17.1e).**

### c. Relief for Ball Not Found but in Penalty Area

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in a *penalty area*:

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in a *penalty area*:

- The player may take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d or 17.2.
- Once the player puts another ball *in play* to take relief in this way:
  - » The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
  - » This is true even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b).

**But** if it is not *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in a *penalty area* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

### d. Relief for Ball in Penalty Area

If a player's ball is in a *penalty area*, including when it is *known or virtually certain* to be in a *penalty area* even though not found, the player has these relief options, each for **one penalty stroke**:

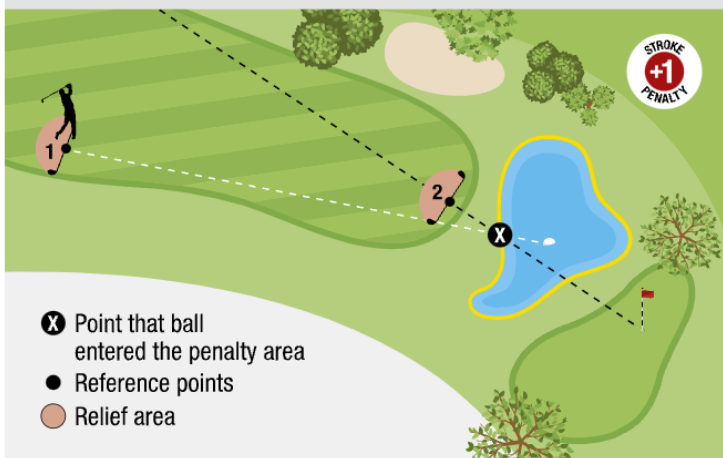
(1) **Stroke-and-Distance Relief.** The player may play the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

(2) **Back-On-the-Line Relief.** The player may *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3) in a *relief area* that is based on a reference line going straight back from the *hole* through the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area*. [Clarification Available](#)

- **Reference Point:** A point on the *course* chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the *hole* than the estimated point (with no limit on how far back on the line):
  - » In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a *tee*).
  - » If the player *drops* the ball without having chosen this point, the reference point is treated as being the point on the line that is the same distance from the *hole* as where the *dropped* ball first touched the ground.

- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course* except the same *penalty area*, but
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within one *club-length* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

#### DIAGRAM #1 17.1d: RELIEF FOR BALL IN YELLOW PENALTY AREA



- X Point that ball entered the penalty area
- Reference points
- Relief area

When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a yellow penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **two options**, each for one penalty stroke:

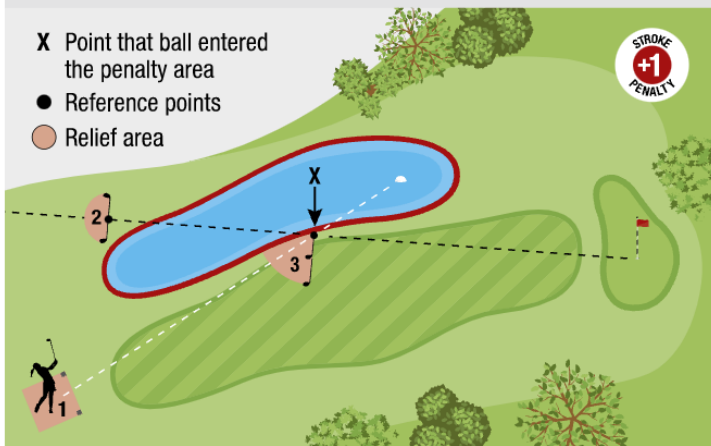
- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6).
- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X. The reference point is a point on the course chosen by the player that is on the reference line through point X (the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the yellow penalty area). There is no limit on how far back on the line the reference point may be. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course, except the same penalty area. In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

(3) **Lateral Relief (Only for Red Penalty Area).** When the ball last crossed the edge of a red *penalty area*, the player may drop the original ball or another ball in this lateral *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- **Reference Point:** The estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red *penalty area*.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** Two *club-lengths*, but with these limits:
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any area of the course except the same *penalty area*, but
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within two *club-lengths* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

## DIAGRAM #2 17.1d: RELIEF FOR BALL IN RED PENALTY AREA

- X Point that ball entered the penalty area
- Reference points
- Relief area



When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a red penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **three options**, each for one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief (see point (1) in Diagram #1 17.1d).
- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief (see point (2) in Diagram #1 17.1d).
- (3) The player may take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking lateral relief is point X, which is the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area. The relief area is two club-lengths from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course, except the same penalty area.

### e. Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Penalty Area

In each of these situations, the player must not play the ball as it lies:

- (1) **When Ball Is in No Play Zone in Penalty Area.** The player must take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d or 17.2.
- (2) **When No Play Zone on Course Interferes with Stance or Swing for Ball in Penalty Area.** If a player's ball is in a *penalty area*, and is outside a *no play zone* but a *no play zone* (whether in an *abnormal course condition* or in a *penalty area*) interferes with his or her area of intended *stance* or area of intended *swing*, the player must either:
  - Take penalty relief outside the *penalty area* under Rule 17.1d or 17.2, or
  - Take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (if it exists) in the *penalty area* (see Rule 14.3):
    - » **Reference Point:** The *nearest point of complete relief* from the *no play zone*.
    - » **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
    - » **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
      - » Must be in the same *penalty area* where the ball lies, and
      - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

But there is no free relief from interference by the *no play zone* under (2):

- When playing the ball as it lies would be clearly unreasonable because of something other than the *no play zone* (for example, when a player is unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush), or
- When interference exists only because the player chooses a club, type of *stance* or swing, or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

For what to do when there is interference by a *no play zone* for a ball anywhere except in a *penalty area*, see Rule 16.1f.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 17.1: *General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.***

## 17.2 Options After Playing Ball from Penalty Area

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

If a ball played from a *penalty area* comes to rest in the same *penalty area* or another *penalty area*, the player may play the ball as it lies (see Rule 17.1b).

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

(1) **Normal Relief Options.** The player may take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 17.1d(1), back-on-the-line relief under Rule 17.1d(2) or, for a red *penalty area*, lateral relief under Rule 17.1d(3).

Under Rule 17.1d(2) or (3), the estimated point used to determine the *relief area* is where the original ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area* where the ball now lies.

If the player takes *stroke-and-distance* relief by *dropping* a ball in the *penalty area* (see Rule 14.6) and then decides not to play the *dropped* ball from where it comes to rest:

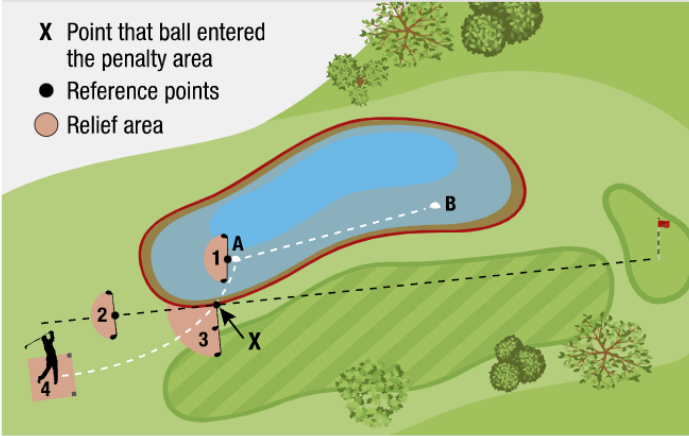
- The player may take further relief outside the *penalty area* under Rule 17.1d(2) or (3) (for a red *penalty area*) or under Rule 17.2a(2).
- If the player does so, he or she gets **one more penalty stroke**, for a total of **two penalty strokes**: one stroke for taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, and one stroke for taking relief outside the *penalty area*.

(2) **Extra Relief Option: Playing from Where Last Stroke Made Outside a Penalty Area.** Instead of using one of the normal relief options under (1), the player may choose to play the original ball or another ball from where he or she made the last *stroke* from outside a *penalty area* (see Rule 14.6).



**DIAGRAM #1 17.2a: BALL PLAYED FROM PENALTY AREA COMES TO REST IN SAME PENALTY AREA**

- X** Point that ball entered the penalty area
- Reference points
- Relief area

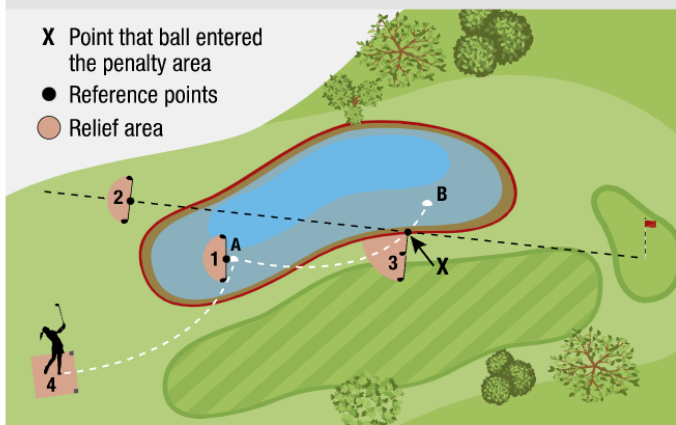


A player plays from the teeing area to point A in the penalty area. The player plays the ball from point A to point B. If the player chooses to take relief, for one penalty stroke there are **four options**. The player may:

- (1) Take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made at point A (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6) and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (2) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (3) Take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking relief is point X, and the original ball or another ball must be dropped in and played from the two club-length relief area, and the player is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (4) Play the original ball or another ball from the teeing area as that was where he or she made the last stroke from outside the penalty area, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

If the player selected option (1) and then decided not to play the dropped ball, the player may take back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in relation to point X, or play again from the teeing area, adding an additional penalty stroke for a total of two penalty strokes, and would be playing his or her 5th shot.

**DIAGRAM #2 17.2a: BALL PLAYED FROM PENALTY AREA COMES TO REST IN SAME PENALTY AREA HAVING EXITED AND RE-ENTERED**



A player plays from the teeing area to point A in the penalty area. The player plays the ball from point A to point B, with the ball exiting the penalty area but crossing back into the penalty area at point X. If the player chooses to take relief, for one penalty stroke there are **four options**. The player may:

- (1) Take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made at point A (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6) and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (2) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (3) Take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking relief is point X, and the original ball or another ball must be dropped in and played from the two club-length relief area, and the player is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (4) Play the original ball or another ball from the teeing area as that was where he or she made the last stroke from outside the penalty area, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

If the player selected option (1) and then decided not to play the dropped ball, the player may take back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in relation to point X, or play again from the teeing area, adding an additional penalty stroke for a total of two penalty strokes, and would be playing his or her 5th shot.

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

After playing a ball from a *penalty area*, a player may sometimes be required or choose to take *stroke-and-distance* relief because the original ball is either:

- *Out of bounds* or *lost* outside the *penalty area* (see Rule 18.2), or
- Unplayable outside the *penalty area* (see Rule 19.2a).

If the player takes *stroke-and-distance* relief by *dropping* a ball in the *penalty area* (see Rule 14.6) and then decides not to play the *dropped* ball from where it comes to rest:

- The player may take further relief outside the *penalty area* under Rule 17.1d(2) or (3) (for a red *penalty area*) or under Rule 17.2a(2).
- If the player does so, he or she gets **one more penalty stroke**, for a **total of two penalty strokes**: one stroke for taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, and one stroke for taking relief outside the *penalty area*.

The player may directly take such relief outside the *penalty area* without first *dropping* a ball in the *penalty area*, but still gets a **total of two penalty strokes**.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 17.2: General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.**

### 17.3 No Relief Under Other Rules for Ball in Penalty Area

When a player's ball is in a *penalty area*, there is no relief for:

- Interference by an *abnormal course condition* (Rule 16.1),
- An *embedded* ball (Rule 16.3), or
- An unplayable ball (Rule 19).

The player's only relief option is to take penalty relief under Rule 17.

But when a dangerous *animal* condition interferes with the play of a ball in a *penalty area*, the player may take either free relief in the *penalty area* or penalty relief outside the *penalty area* (see Rule 16.2b(2)).

### 18.1 Relief Under Penalty of Stroke and Distance Allowed at Any Time

At any time, a player may take *stroke-and-distance* relief by adding **one penalty stroke** and playing the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

The player always has this *stroke-and-distance* relief option:

- No matter where the player's ball is on the *course*, and
- Even when a Rule requires the player to take relief in a certain way or to play a ball from a certain place.

Once the player puts another ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 14.4):

- The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
- This is true even if the original ball is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b).

But this does not apply to a ball to be played from where the previous *stroke* was made when the player:

- Announces that he or she is playing a *provisional ball* (see Rule 18.3b), or
- Is playing a second ball in *stroke play* under Rule 14.7b or 20.1c(3).

## 18.2 Ball Lost or Out of Bounds: Stroke-and-Distance Relief Must Be Taken

### a. When Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds

(1) **When Ball Is Lost.** A ball is *lost* if not found in three minutes after the player or his or her *caddie* begins to search for it.

If a ball is found in that time but it is uncertain whether it is the player's ball:

- The player must promptly attempt to identify the ball (see Rule 7.2) and is allowed a reasonable time to do so, even if that happens after the three-minute search time has ended.
- This includes a reasonable time to get to the ball if the player is not where the ball is found.

If the player does not identify his or her ball in that reasonable time, the ball is *lost*.

(2) **When Ball Is Out of Bounds.** A ball at rest is *out of bounds* only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the *course*.

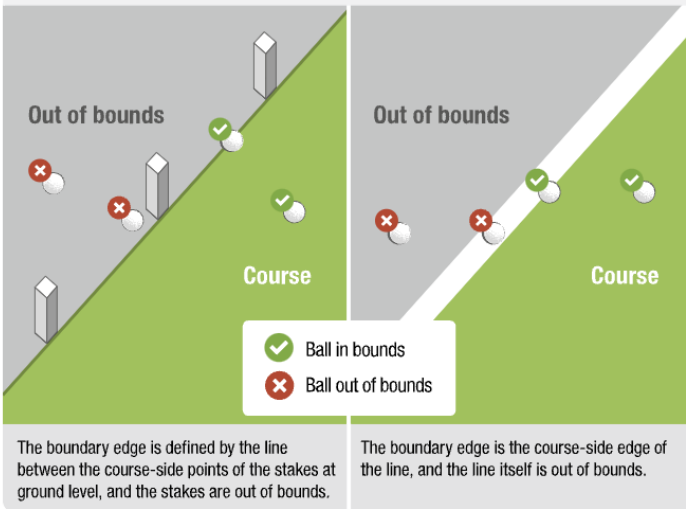
A ball is in bounds when any part of the ball:

- Lies on or touches the ground or anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the boundary edge, or
- Is above the boundary edge or any other part of the *course*.

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

#### DIAGRAM 18.2a: WHEN BALL IS OUT OF BOUNDS

A ball is out of bounds only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the course. The diagrams provide examples of when a ball is in bounds and out of bounds.



## b. What to Do When Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds

If a ball is *lost* or *out of bounds*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief by adding **one penalty stroke** and playing the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

**Exception – Player May Substitute Another Ball Under Other Rule When It Is Known or Virtually Certain What Happened to Ball:** Instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief, the player may *substitute* another ball as allowed under a Rule that applies when his or her ball has not been found and it is *known* or *virtually certain* that the ball:

- Came to rest on the *course* and was *moved* by an *outside influence* (see Rule 9.6) or played as a *wrong ball* by another player (see Rule 6.3c(2)),
- Came to rest on the *course* in or on a *movable obstruction* (see Rule 15.2b) or an *abnormal course condition* (see Rule 16.1e),
- Is in a *penalty area* (see Rule 17.1c), or
- Was deliberately deflected or stopped by any person (see Rule 11.2c).

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 18.2: *General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.***

## 18.3 Provisional Ball

### a. When Provisional Ball Is Allowed

If a ball might be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or be *out of bounds*, to save time the player may play another ball provisionally under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 14.6).

For a ball that might be *lost*, this applies:

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

**But** if the player is aware that the only possible place the original ball could be *lost* is in a *penalty area*, a *provisional ball* is not allowed and a ball played from where the previous *stroke* was made becomes the player's ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 18.1).

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

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

### b. Announcing Play of Provisional Ball

Before the *stroke* is made, the player must announce that he or she is going to play a *provisional ball*:

- It is not enough for the player only to say that he or she is playing another ball or is playing again.
- The player must use the word "provisional" or otherwise clearly indicate that he or she is playing the ball provisionally under Rule 18.3.

If the player does not announce this (even if he or she intended to play a *provisional ball*) and plays a ball from where the previous *stroke* was made, that ball is the player's ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* (see Rule 18.1).

### c. Playing Provisional Ball Until It Becomes the Ball in Play or Is Abandoned

(1) **Playing Provisional Ball More Than Once.** The player may continue to play the *provisional ball* without it losing its status as a *provisional ball* so long as it is played from a spot that is the same distance or farther from the *hole* than where the original ball is estimated to be.

This is true even if the *provisional ball* is played several times.

But it stops being a *provisional ball* when it becomes the ball *in play* under (2) or is abandoned under (3) and therefore becomes a *wrong ball*.

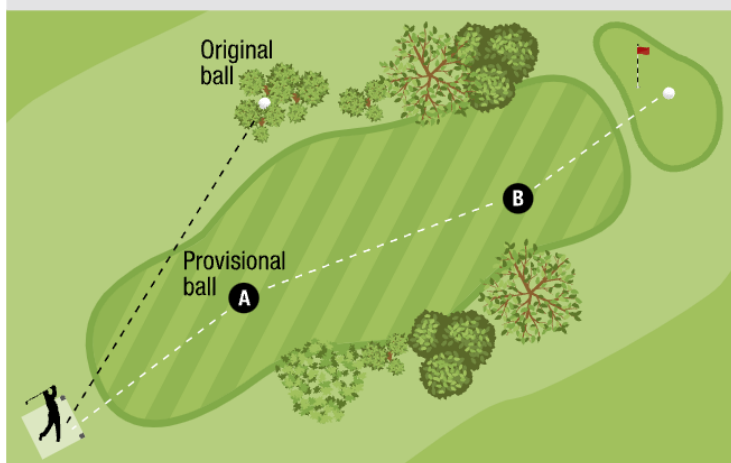
(2) **When Provisional Ball Becomes Ball in Play.** The *provisional ball* becomes the player's ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* in either of these two cases:

- **When Original Ball Is Lost Anywhere on Course Except in Penalty Area or Is Out of Bounds.** The original ball is no longer *in play* (even if it is then found on the *course* after the end of the three-minute search time) and is now a *wrong ball* that must not be played (see Rule 6.3c).
- **When Provisional Ball Is Played from Spot Nearer Hole Than Where Original Ball Is Estimated to Be.** The original ball is no longer *in play* (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 had been estimated) and is now a *wrong ball* that must not be played (see Rule 6.3c).

If the player plays a *provisional ball* into the same general location as the original ball and is unable to identify which ball is which:

- If only one of the balls is found on the *course*, that ball is treated as the *provisional ball* which is now *in play*.
- If both balls are found on the *course*, the player must choose one of the balls to be treated as the *provisional ball* which is now *in play*, and the other ball is treated as *lost* and must not be played.

### DIAGRAM 18.3c: PROVISIONAL BALL PLAYED FROM SPOT NEARER HOLE THAN WHERE ORIGINAL BALL IS ESTIMATED TO BE



A player's original ball played from the teeing area may be lost in a bush, so the player announces and plays a provisional ball, and it comes to rest at point A. As point A is farther from the hole than where the original ball is estimated to be, the player may play the provisional ball from point A without it losing its status as a provisional ball. The player plays the provisional ball from point A to point B. As point B is nearer the hole than where the original ball is estimated to be, if the player plays the provisional ball from point B, the provisional ball becomes the ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

## 19.1 Player May Decide to Take Unplayable Ball Relief Anywhere Except Penalty Area

A player is the only person who may decide to treat his or her ball as unplayable by taking penalty relief under Rule 19.2 or 19.3.

- Unplayable ball relief is allowed anywhere on the *course*, **except** in a *penalty area*.
- If a ball is unplayable in a *penalty area*, the player's only relief option is to take penalty relief under Rule 17.

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

A player may take unplayable ball relief using one of the three options in Rule 19.2a, b or c, in each case adding **one penalty stroke**.

- The player may take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 19.2a even if the original ball has not been found and identified.
- **But** to take back-on-the-line relief under Rule 19.2b or lateral relief under Rule 19.2c, the player must know the spot of the original ball.

### a. Stroke-and-Distance Relief

The player may play the original ball or another ball from where the previous *stroke* was made (see Rule 14.6).

### b. Back-On-the-Line Relief

The player may *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3) in a *relief area* that is based on a reference line going straight back from the *hole* through the spot of the original ball:

- **Reference Point:** A point on the *course* chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the *hole* than the spot of the original ball (with no limit on how far back on the line):
  - » In choosing this point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a *tee*).
  - » If the player *drops* the ball without having chosen this point, the reference point is treated as being the point on the line that is the same distance from the *hole* as where the *dropped* ball first touched the ground.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within one *club-length* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

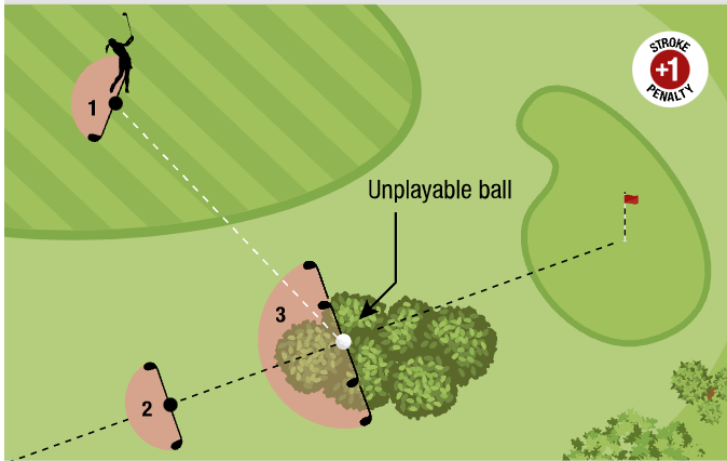
### c. Lateral Relief

The player may *drop* the original ball or another ball in this lateral *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- **Reference Point:** The spot of the original ball.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** Two *club-lengths*, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course*, **but**
  - » If more than one *area of the course* is located within two *club-lengths* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 19.2: General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.**

## DIAGRAM 19.2: RELIEF OPTIONS FOR BALL UNPLAYABLE IN GENERAL AREA



A player decides that his or her ball in a bush is unplayable. The player has **three options**, in each case adding one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6).
- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through the spot of the original ball. The reference point is a point on the course chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the hole than the spot of the original ball. There is no limit on how far back on the line the reference point may be. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course. In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).
- (3) The player may take lateral relief. The reference point is the spot of the original ball. The relief area is two club-lengths from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point and may be in any area of the course.

### 19.3 Relief Options for Unplayable Ball in Bunker

#### a. Normal Relief Options (One Penalty Stroke)

When a player's ball is in a *bunker*:

- The player may take unplayable ball relief for **one penalty stroke** under any of the options in Rule 19.2, **except** that:
- The ball must be *dropped* in and come to rest in a *relief area* in the *bunker* if the player takes either back-on-the-line relief (see Rule 19.2b) or lateral relief (see Rule 19.2c).

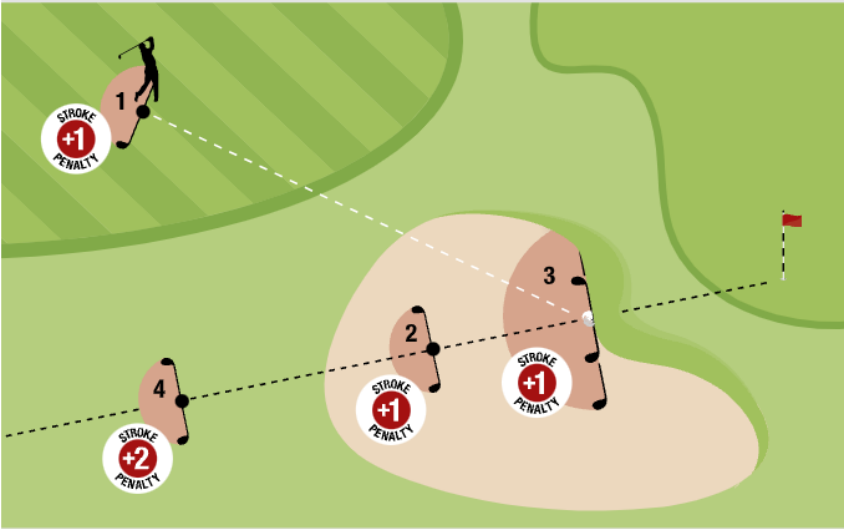
#### b. Extra Relief Option (Two Penalty Strokes)

As an extra relief option when a player's ball is in a *bunker*, for a **total of two penalty strokes**, the player may take back-on-the-line relief outside the *bunker* under Rule 19.2b.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 19.3: *General Penalty* Under Rule 14.7a.**



### DIAGRAM 19.3: RELIEF OPTIONS FOR BALL UNPLAYABLE IN BUNKER



A player decides that his or her ball in a bunker is unplayable. The player has **four options**:

- (1) For one penalty stroke, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief.
- (2) For one penalty stroke, the player may take back-on-the-line relief in the bunker.
- (3) For one penalty stroke, the player may take lateral relief in the bunker.
- (4) For a total of two penalty strokes, the player may take back-on-the-line relief outside the bunker based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through the spot of the original ball.

## 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 Rule 2.2b.

It is called the “general area” because:

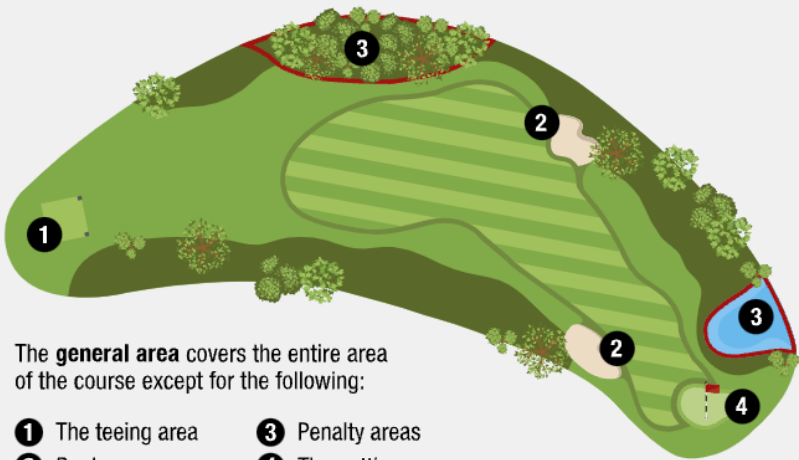
- It covers most of the *course* and is where a player’s ball will most often be played until the ball reaches the *putting green*.
- It includes every type of ground and growing or attached objects found in that area, such as fairway, rough and trees.

### b. The Four Specific Areas

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

- The *teeing area* the player must use in starting the hole he or she is playing (Rule 6.2),
- All *penalty areas* (Rule 17),
- All *bunkers* (Rule 12), and
- The *putting green* of the hole the player is playing (Rule 13).

## DIAGRAM 2.2: DEFINED AREAS OF THE COURSE



### c. Determining Area of Course Where Ball Lies

The *area of the course* where a player’s ball lies affects the Rules that apply in playing the ball or taking relief.

A ball is always treated as lying in only one *area of the course*:

- If part of the ball is in both the *general area* and one of the four specific *areas of the course*, it is treated as lying in that specific *area of the course*.
- If part of the ball is in two specific *areas of the course*, it is treated as lying in the specific area that comes first in this order: *penalty area, bunker, putting green*.

## 2.3 Objects or Conditions That Can Interfere with Play

Certain Rules may give free relief (relief with no penalty) from interference by certain defined objects or conditions, such as:

- *Loose impediments* (Rule 15.1),
- *Movable obstructions* (Rule 15.2), and
- *Abnormal course conditions*, which are *animal holes*, *ground under repair*, *immovable obstructions* and *temporary water* (Rule 16.1).

But there is no free relief from *boundary objects* or *integral objects* that interfere with play.

## 2.4 No Play Zones

A *no play zone* is a defined part of an *abnormal course condition* (see Rule 16.1f) or a *penalty area* (see Rule 17.1e) where play is not allowed.

A player must take relief when:

- His or her ball is in a *no play zone*, or
- A *no play zone* interferes with his or her area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing in playing a ball outside the *no play zone* (see Rules 16.1f and 17.1e).

## Rule 15 - Relief from Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions (including Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play)

**Purpose of Rule:** Rule 15 covers when and how the player may take free relief from loose impediments and movable obstructions.

- These movable natural and artificial objects are not treated as part of the challenge of playing the course, and a player is normally allowed to remove them when they interfere with play.
- But the player needs to be careful in moving loose impediments near his or her ball off the putting green, because there will be a penalty if moving them causes the ball to move.

## 15.1 Loose Impediments

### a. Removal of Loose Impediment

Without penalty, a player may remove a *loose impediment* anywhere on or off the *course*, and may do so in any way (such as by using a hand or foot or a club or other *equipment*).

But there are two exceptions:

**Exception 1 – Removing Loose Impediment Where Ball Must Be Replaced:** Before *replacing* a ball that was lifted or *moved* from anywhere except the *putting green*:

- A player must not deliberately remove a *loose impediment* that, if moved when the ball was at rest, would have been likely to have caused the ball to *move*.
- If the player does so, he or she gets **one penalty stroke**, but the removed *loose impediment* does not need to be replaced.

This exception applies both during a *round* and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a. It does not apply to a *loose impediment* that is removed as a result of *marking* the spot of a ball, or lifting, *moving* or *replacing* a ball or causing a ball to *move*.

**Exception 2 – Restrictions on Deliberately Removing Loose Impediments to Affect Ball in Motion** (see Rule 11.3).

## b. Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediment

If a player's removal of a *loose impediment* causes his or her ball to *move*:

- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).
- If the *moved* ball had been at rest anywhere except on the *putting green* (see Rule 13.1d) or in the *teeing area* (see Rule 6.2b(6)), the player gets **one penalty stroke** under Rule 9.4b, **except** when Rule 7.4 applies (no penalty for ball *moved* during search) or when another exception to Rule 9.4b applies.

**Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 15.1: General Penalty Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.**

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

## 15.2 Movable Obstructions

This Rule covers free relief that is allowed from artificial objects that meet the definition of *movable obstruction*.

It does not give relief from *immovable obstructions* (a different type of free relief is allowed under Rule 16.1) or *boundary objects* or *integral objects* (no free relief is allowed).

### a. Relief from Movable Obstruction

(1) **Removal of Movable Obstruction.** Without penalty, a player may remove a *movable obstruction* anywhere on or off the *course* and may do so in any way.

But there are two **exceptions**:

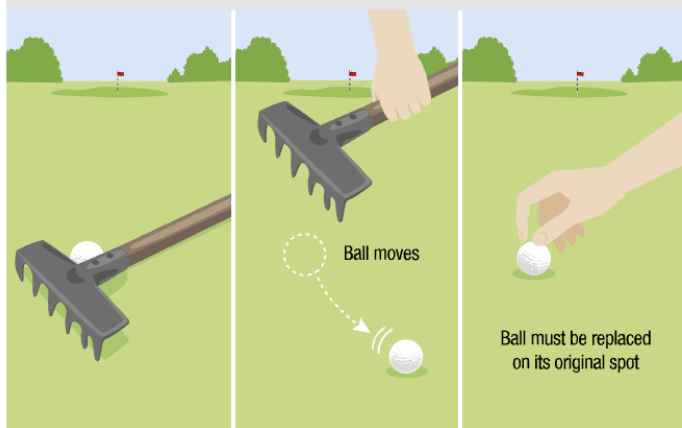
**Exception 1 – Tee Markers Must Not be Moved When Ball Will Be Played from Teeing Area** (see Rules 6.2b(4) and 8.1a(1)).

**Exception 2 – Restrictions on Deliberately Removing Movable Obstruction to Affect a Ball in Motion** (see Rule 11.3).

If a player's ball *moves* while he or she is removing a *movable obstruction*:

- There is no penalty, and
- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated) (see Rule 14.2).

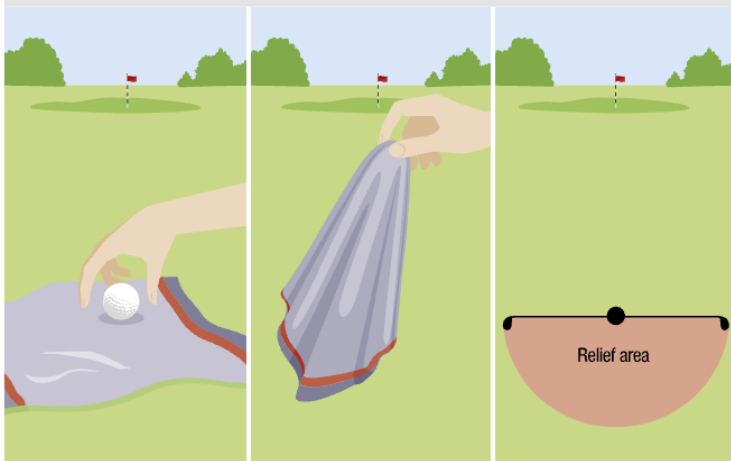
### DIAGRAM #1 15.2a: BALL MOVES WHEN MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION REMOVED (EXCEPT WHEN BALL IN OR ON OBSTRUCTION)



(2) **Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction Anywhere on Course Except on Putting Green.** The player may take free relief by lifting the ball, removing the *movable obstruction* and *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- **Reference Point:** The estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the *movable obstruction*.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - » Must be in the same *area of the course* as the reference point, and
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

### DIAGRAM #2 15.2a: BALL IN OR ON MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION



When a ball is in or on a movable obstruction (such as a towel) anywhere on the course, free relief may be taken by lifting the ball, removing the movable obstruction and, except on the putting green, dropping that ball or another ball. The reference point for taking relief is the estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the movable obstruction. 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 same area of the course as the reference point.

But if it is not *known* or *virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on a *movable obstruction* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

**Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 15.2: General Penalty Under Rule 6.3b or Rule 14.7a.**

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

### 15.3 Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

#### a. Ball on Putting Green Helping Play

Rule 15.3a applies only to a ball at rest on the *putting green*, not anywhere else on the *course*.

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

- *Mark* the spot of the ball and lift it under Rule 13.1b if it is his or her own ball, or if the ball belongs to another player, require the other player to *mark* the spot and lift the ball (see Rule 14.1).
- The lifted ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

In *stroke play* only:

- A player who is required to lift a ball may play first instead, and
- If two or more players agree to leave a ball in place to help any player, and that player then makes a *stroke* with the helping ball left in place, each player who made the agreement gets the **general penalty (two penalty strokes)**.

(3) **Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction on Putting Green.** The player may take free relief by:

- Lifting the ball and removing the *movable obstruction*, and
- Placing the original ball or another ball on the estimated spot right under where the ball was at rest in or on the *movable obstruction*, using the procedures for *replacing* a ball under Rule 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

#### b. Relief for Ball Not Found but in or on Movable Obstruction

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known* or *virtually certain* that it came to rest in or on a *movable obstruction* on the *course*, the player may use this relief option instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief:

- The player may take free relief under Rule 15.2a(2) or 15.2a(3), using the estimated point right under where the ball last crossed the edge of the *movable obstruction* on the *course* as the reference point.
- Once the player puts another ball *in play* to take relief in this way:
  - » The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
  - » This is true even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b)

#### b. Ball Anywhere on Course Interfering with Play

(1) **Meaning of Interference by Another Player's Ball.** Interference under this Rule exists when another player's ball at rest:

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

(2) **When Relief Is Allowed from Interfering Ball.** If a player reasonably believes that another player's ball anywhere on the *course* might interfere with the player's own play:

- The player may require the other player to *mark* the spot and lift the ball (see Rule 14.1), and the ball must not be cleaned (except when lifted from the *putting green* under Rule 13.1b) and must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).
- If the other player does not *mark* the spot before lifting the ball or cleans the lifted ball when not allowed, he or she gets **one penalty stroke**.
- In *stroke play* only, a player required to lift his or her ball under this Rule may play first instead.

A player is not allowed to lift his or her ball under this Rule based only on the player's own belief that the ball might interfere with another player's play.

If the player lifts his or her ball when not required to do so by the other player (except when lifting the ball on the *putting green* under Rule 13.1b), the player gets **one penalty stroke**.

### c. Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

If a *ball-marker* might help or interfere with play, a player may:

- Move the *ball-marker* out of the way if it is his or her 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 he or she 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 lifted ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2) or the *ball-marker* must be replaced to *mark* that spot.

**Penalty for Breach of Rule 15.3: General Penalty.**

This penalty also applies if the player:

- Makes a *stroke* without waiting for a helping ball or *ball-marker* to be lifted or moved after becoming aware that another player (1) intended to lift or move it under this Rule or (2) had required someone else to do so, or
- Refuses to lift his or her ball or move his or her *ball-marker* when required to do so and a *stroke* is then made by the other player whose play might have been helped or interfered with.

**Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 15.3: General Penalty Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.**

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

## 16.1 Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions)

This Rule covers free relief that is allowed from interference by *animal holes*, *ground under repair*, *immovable obstructions* or *temporary water*:

- These are collectively called *abnormal course conditions*, but each has a separate Definition.
- This Rule does not give relief from *movable obstructions* (a different type of free relief is allowed under Rule 15.2a) or *boundary objects* or *integral objects* (no free relief is allowed).

### a. When Relief Is Allowed

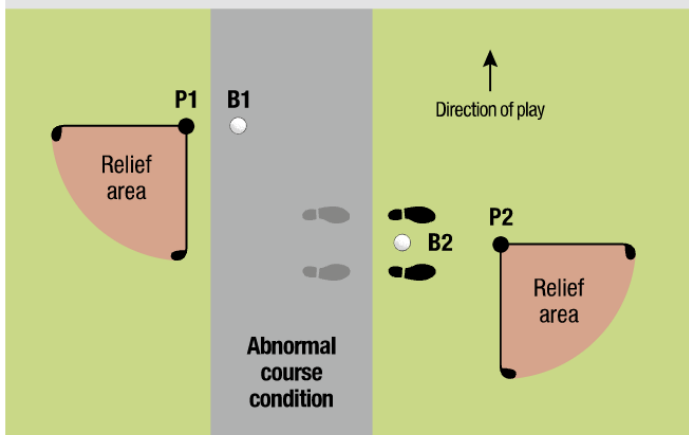
(1) **Meaning of Interference by Abnormal Course Condition.** Interference exists when any one of these is true:

- The player's ball touches or is in or on an *abnormal course condition*,
- An *abnormal course condition* physically interferes with the player's area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing, or
- Only when the ball is on the *putting green*, an *abnormal course condition* on or off the *putting green* intervenes on the *line of play*.

If the *abnormal course condition* is close enough to distract the player but does not meet any of these requirements, there is no interference under this Rule.

See [Committee Procedures, Section 8](#); [Model Local Rule F-6](#) (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule denying relief from an *abnormal course condition* that only interferes with the area of intended *stance*).

## DIAGRAM 16.1a: WHEN RELIEF IS ALLOWED FOR ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION



The diagram assumes the player is right-handed. Free relief is allowed for interference by an abnormal course condition (ACC), including an immovable obstruction, when the ball touches or lies in or on the condition (B1), or the condition interferes with the area of intended stance (B2) or swing. The nearest point of complete relief for B1 is P1, and is very close to the condition. For B2, the nearest point of complete relief is P2, and is farther from the condition as the stance has to be clear of the ACC.

(2) **Relief Allowed Anywhere on Course Except When Ball Is in Penalty Area.** Relief from interference by an *abnormal course condition* is allowed under Rule 16.1 only when both:

- The *abnormal course condition* is on the *course* (not *out of bounds*), and
- The ball is anywhere on the *course*, **except** in a *penalty area* (where the player's only relief is under Rule 17).

(3) **No Relief When Clearly Unreasonable to Play Ball.** There is no relief under Rule 16.1:

- When playing the ball as it lies would be clearly unreasonable because of something other than an *abnormal course condition* (such as when a player is standing in *temporary water* or on an *immovable obstruction* but would be unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush), or [Clarification Available](#)
- 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.

See [Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule F-23](#) (the *Committee* may adopt a Local Rule allowing free relief from interference by temporary immovable obstructions on or off the *course*).

### b. Relief for Ball in General Area

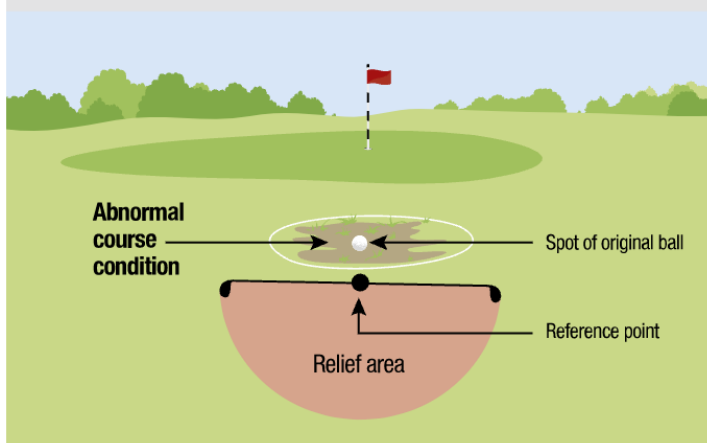
If a player's ball is in the *general area* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- **Reference Point:** The *nearest point of complete relief* in the *general area*.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - » Must be in the *general area*,
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and



» There must be complete relief from all interference by the *abnormal course condition*.

### 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.

#### c. Relief for Ball in Bunker

If a player's ball is in a *bunker* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take either free relief under (1) or penalty relief under (2):

(1) **Free Relief: Playing from Bunker.** The player may take free relief under Rule 16.1b, **except** that:

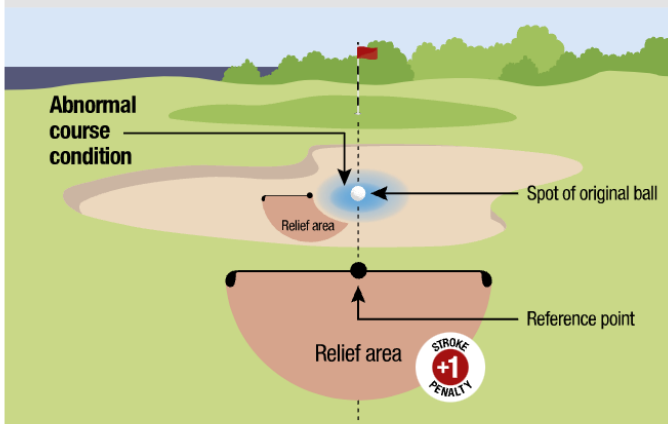
- The *nearest point of complete relief* and the *relief area* must be in the *bunker*.
- If there is no such *nearest point of complete relief* in the *bunker*, the player may still take this relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* in the *bunker* as the reference point.

(2) **Penalty Relief: Playing from Outside Bunker (Back-On-the-Line Relief).** For **one penalty stroke**, the player may *drop* the original ball or another ball (see Rule 14.3) in a *relief area* based on a reference line going straight back from the *hole* through the spot of the original ball:

- **Reference Point:** A point on the *course* chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the *hole* than that original spot (with no limit on how far back on the line):
  - » In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a *tee*).
  - » If the player *drops* the ball without having chosen this point, the reference point is treated as being the point on the line that is the same distance from the *hole* as where the *dropped* ball first touched the ground.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - » May be in any *area of the course*, but

» If more than one *area of the course* is located within one *club-length* of the reference point, the ball must come to rest in the *relief area* in the same *area of the course* that the ball first touched when *dropped* in the *relief area*.

#### DIAGRAM 16.1c: RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN BUNKER



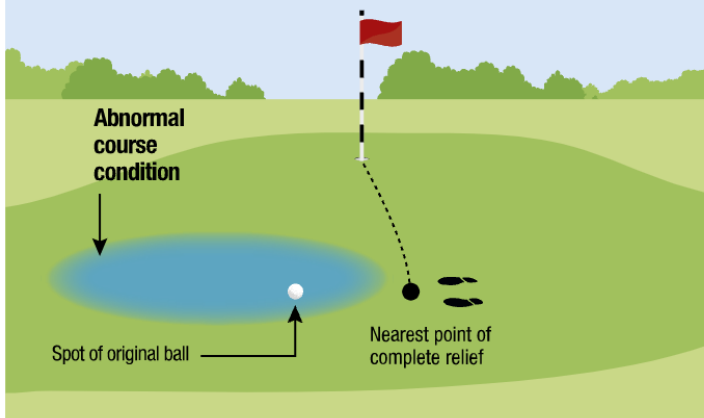
The diagram assumes a right-handed player. When there is interference from an abnormal course condition in a bunker, free relief may be taken in the bunker under Rule 16.1b or relief may be taken outside the bunker for one penalty stroke. Relief outside the bunker is based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through the spot of the original ball in the bunker. The reference point is a point on the course outside the bunker chosen by the player that is on the reference line and is farther from the hole than the original spot (with no limit on how far back on the line). The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole than the reference point, but may be in any area of the course. In choosing this reference point, the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

#### d. Relief for Ball on Putting Green

If a player's ball is on the *putting green* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may take free relief by placing the original ball or another ball on the spot of the *nearest point of complete relief*, using the procedures for *replacing a ball* under Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

- The *nearest point of complete relief* must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.
- If there is no such *nearest point of complete relief*, the player may still take this free relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* as the reference point, which must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.

### DIAGRAM 16.1d: FREE RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION ON PUTTING GREEN



The diagram assumes the player is left-handed. When a ball is on the putting green and there is interference by an abnormal course condition, free relief may be taken by placing a 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 there is no such nearest point of complete relief, the player may still take this free relief by using the point of maximum available relief as the reference point, which must be either on the putting green or in the general area.

#### e. Relief for Ball Not Found but in or on Abnormal Course Condition

If a player's ball has not been found and it is *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, the player may use this relief option instead of taking *stroke-and-distance* relief:

- The player may take relief under Rule 16.1b, c or d, using the estimated point where the ball last crossed the edge of the *abnormal course condition* on the *course* as the spot of the ball for purposes of finding the *nearest point of complete relief*.
- Once the player puts another ball *in play* to take relief in this way:
  - » The original ball is no longer *in play* and must not be played.
  - » This is true even if it is then found on the *course* before the end of the three-minute search time (see Rule 6.3b)

But if it is not *known or virtually certain* that the ball came to rest in or on an *abnormal course condition* and the ball is *lost*, the player must take *stroke-and-distance* relief under Rule 18.2.

#### f. Relief Must Be Taken from Interference by No Play Zone in Abnormal Course Condition

In each of these situations, the ball must not be played as it lies:

(1) **When Ball Is in No Play Zone.** If the player's ball is in a *no play zone* in or on an *abnormal course condition* in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*:

- **No Play Zone in General Area.** The player must take free relief under Rule 16.1b.
- **No Play Zone in Bunker.** The player must take free relief or penalty relief under Rule 16.1c(1) or (2).
- **No Play Zone on Putting Green.** The player must take free relief under Rule 16.1d.

(2) **When No Play Zone Interferes with Stance or Swing for Ball Anywhere on Course Except Penalty Area.** If a player's ball is outside a *no play zone* and is in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*, and a *no play zone* (whether in an *abnormal course condition* or in a *penalty area*) interferes with the player's area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing, the player must either:

- Take relief if allowed under Rule 16.1b, c or d, depending on whether the ball is in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*, or
- Take unplayable ball relief under Rule 19.

For what to do when there is interference by a *no play zone* for a ball in a *penalty area*, see Rule 17.1e.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 16.1: General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.**

## 16.2 Dangerous Animal Condition

### a. When Relief Is Allowed

A "dangerous *animal* condition" exists when a dangerous *animal* (such as poisonous snakes, stinging bees, alligators, fire ants or bears) near a ball could cause serious physical injury to the player if he or she had to play the ball as it lies.

A player may take relief under Rule 16.2b from interference by a dangerous *animal* condition no matter where his or her ball is on the *course*, **except** that relief is not allowed:

- When playing the ball as it lies is clearly unreasonable because of something other than the dangerous *animal* condition (for example, when a player is unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush), or
- When interference exists only because the player chooses a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

### b. Relief for Dangerous Animal Condition

When there is interference by a dangerous *animal* condition:

(1) **When Ball Is Anywhere Except Penalty Area.** The player may take relief under Rule 16.1b, c or d, depending on whether the ball is in the *general area*, in a *bunker* or on the *putting green*.

(2) **When Ball Is in Penalty Area.** The player may take free relief or penalty relief:

- **Free Relief: Playing from Inside Penalty Area.** The player may take free relief under Rule 16.1b, **except** that the *nearest point of complete relief* and the *relief area* must be in the *penalty area*.
- **Penalty Relief: Playing from Outside Penalty Area.**
  - » The player may take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d.
  - » If there is interference by a dangerous *animal* condition where the ball would be played after taking this penalty relief outside the *penalty area*, the player may take further relief under (1) without additional penalty.

For purposes of this Rule, the *nearest point of complete relief* means the nearest point (not nearer the *hole*) where the dangerous *animal* condition does not exist.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 16.2: General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a.**

## 16.3 Embedded Ball

### a. When Relief Is Allowed

(1) **Ball Must Be Embedded in General Area.** Relief is allowed under Rule 16.3b only when a player's ball is *embedded* in the *general area*.

- There is no relief under this Rule if the ball is *embedded* anywhere except in the *general area*.

- There is no relief under this Rule if the ball is *embedded* anywhere except in the *general area*.
- But if the ball is *embedded* on the *putting green*, the player may *mark* the spot of the ball and lift and clean the ball, repair the damage caused by the ball's impact, and *replace* the ball on its original spot (see Rule 13.1c(2)).

**Exceptions – When Relief Not Allowed for Ball Embedded in General Area:** Relief under Rule 16.3b is not allowed:

- When the ball is *embedded* in sand in a part of the *general area* that is not cut to fairway height or less, or
- When interference by anything other than the ball being *embedded* makes the *stroke* clearly unreasonable (for example, when a player is unable to make a *stroke* because of where the ball lies in a bush).

(2) **Determining Whether Ball Is Embedded.** A player's ball is *embedded* only if:

- It is in its own pitch-mark made as a result of the player's previous *stroke*, and
- Part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

If the player cannot tell for sure whether the ball is in its own pitch-mark or a pitch-mark made by another ball, the player may treat the ball as *embedded* if it is reasonable to conclude from the available information that the ball is in its own pitch-mark.

A ball is not *embedded* if it is below the level of the ground as a result of anything other than the player's previous *stroke*, such as when:

- The ball is pushed into the ground by someone stepping on it,
- The ball is driven straight into the ground without becoming airborne, or
- The ball was *dropped* in taking relief under a Rule.

#### DIAGRAM 16.3a: WHEN A BALL IS EMBEDDED



##### **Ball is embedded**

Part of the ball (embedded in its own pitch-mark) is below the level of the ground.

← **Level of Ground**



##### **Ball is embedded**

Despite the fact that the ball is not touching the soil, part of the ball (embedded in its own pitch-mark) is below the level of the ground.



##### **Ball is NOT embedded**

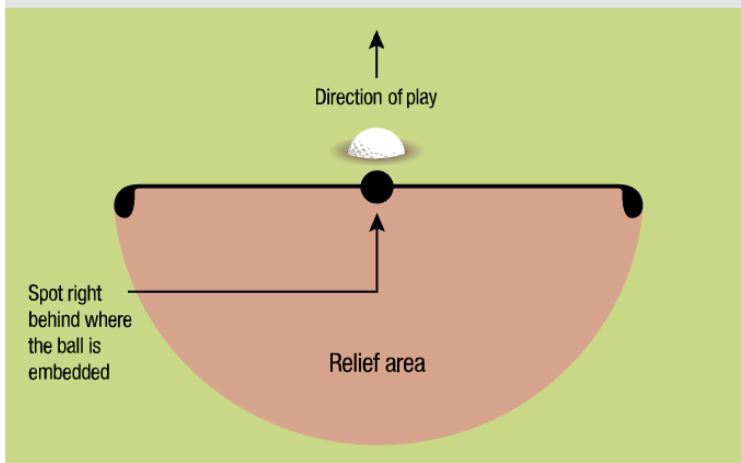
Even though the ball is sitting down in the grass, relief is not available because no part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

## b. Relief for Embedded Ball

When a player's ball is *embedded* in the *general area* and relief is allowed under Rule 16.3a, the player may take free relief by *dropping* the original ball or another ball in this *relief area* (see Rule 14.3):

- **Reference Point:** The spot right behind where the ball is *embedded*.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One *club-length*, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - » Must be in the *general area*, and
  - » Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

**DIAGRAM 16.3b: FREE RELIEF FOR EMBEDDED BALL**



When a ball is embedded in the general area, free relief may be taken. The reference point for taking relief is the spot right behind where the ball is embedded. 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.

#### 16.4 Lifting Ball to See if it Lies in Condition Where Relief Allowed

If a player reasonably believes that his or her ball lies in a condition where free relief is allowed under Rule 15.2, 16.1 or 16.3, but cannot decide that without lifting the ball:

- The player may lift the ball to see if relief is allowed, but:
- The spot of the ball must first be *marked*, and the lifted ball must not be cleaned (**except on the *putting green***) (see Rule 14.1).

If the player lifts the ball without having this reasonable belief (**except on the *putting green*** where the player may lift under Rule 13.1b), he or she gets **one penalty stroke**.

If relief is allowed and the player takes relief, there is no penalty even if the player did not *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleaned the lifted ball.

If relief is not allowed, or if the player chooses not to take relief that is allowed:

- The player gets **one penalty stroke** if he or she did not *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or cleaned the lifted ball when not allowed, and
- The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).

**Penalty for Playing Incorrectly *Substituted* Ball or Playing Ball from a *Wrong Place* in Breach of Rule 16.4: *General Penalty* Under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.**

