

Rules of Golf

Monday, April 24, 2023

Tom Roden
Manager, Championships



Overview

Rules of Golf

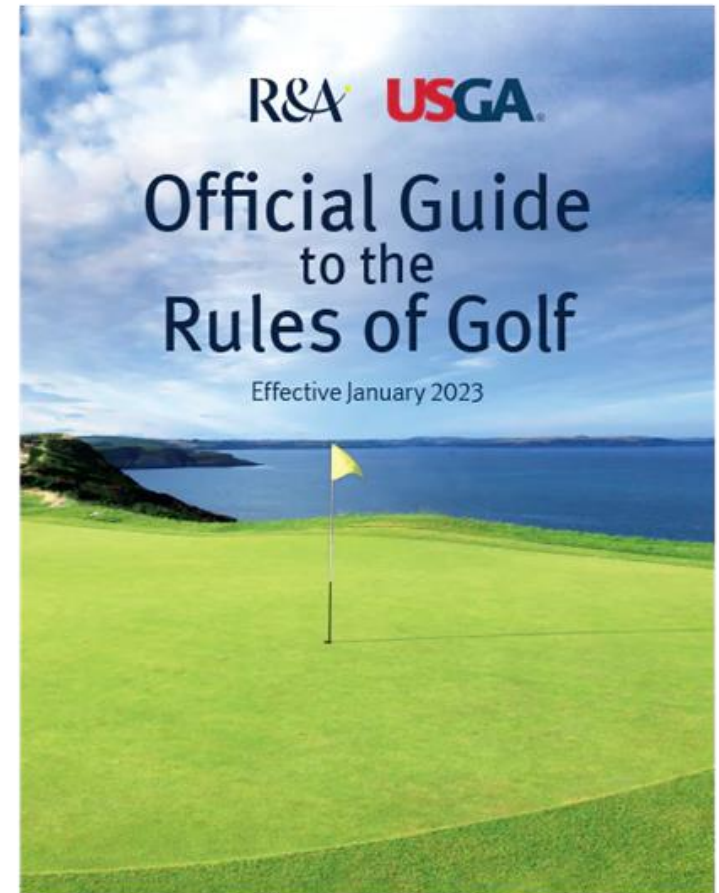
- 2023 Update
- Mobile App

Rules Topics

- Intervening Events (new for 2023)
- Damaged Club (new for 2023)
- Abnormal Course Conditions
- Ball at Rest moved by Natural Forces (new for 2023)
- Back-on-the-line relief (new for 2023)
- Embedded ball relief (new for 2023)
- Incorrectly Substituted Ball (new for 2023)
- Out of Bounds

2023 Rules of Golf

- Updated on January 1st 2023
- Two publications
 - Rules of Golf
 - Official Guide to the Rules of Golf
- Player's Edition (introduced with the 2019 Rules) has been discontinued.

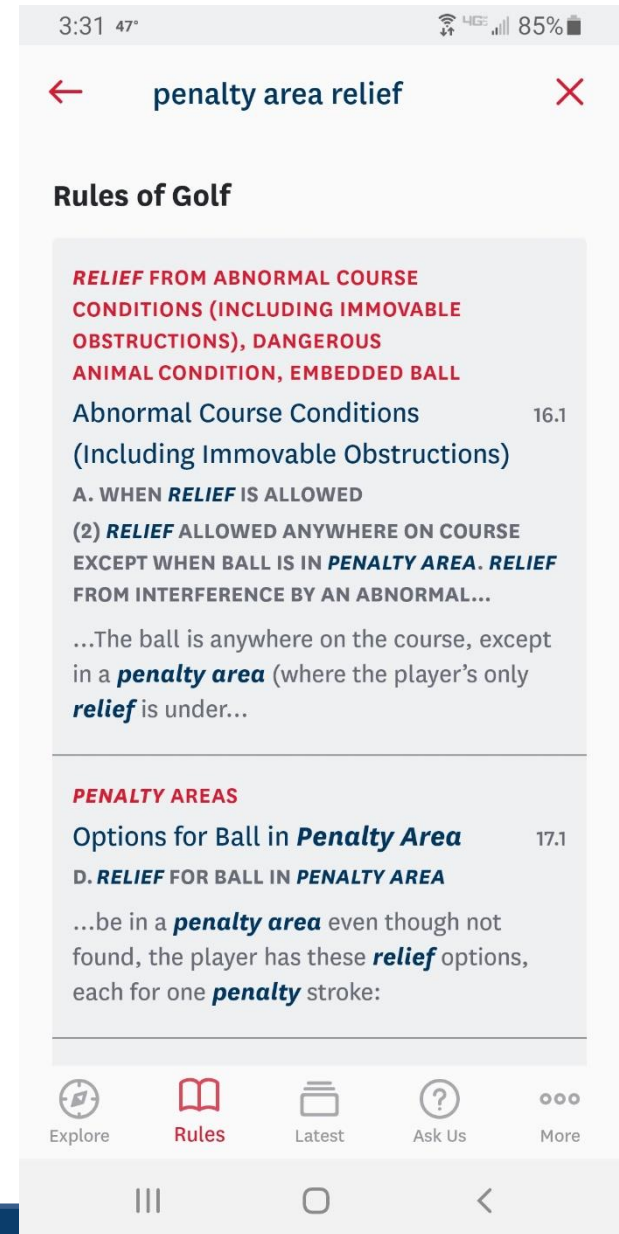


USGA Rules of Golf Mobile App

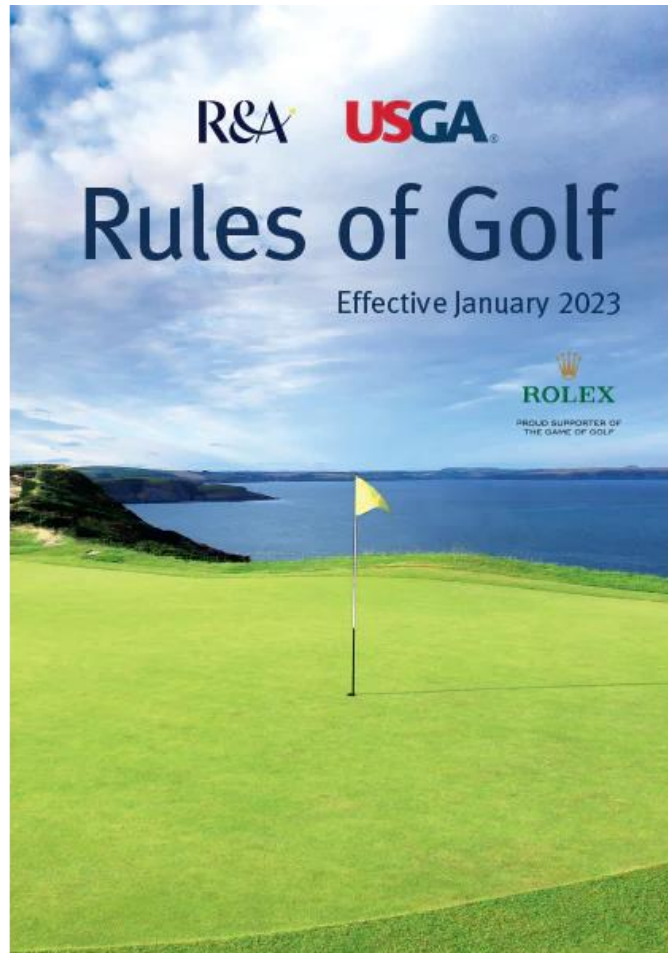
The USGA Rules of Golf Mobile App can be accessed anywhere, anytime, and it houses all major Rules Publications:

1. Rules of Golf
2. Clarifications (Available in Guide)
3. Committee Procedures (Available in Guide)

The app also includes a search function. Unsure of where to find penalty area relief? Just search it!



2023 Rules Changes



Rule 1.3c(4)

| Topic | 2019 Outcome | 2023 Outcome |
|---|--|--|
| A player breaches different Rules or the same Rule multiple times | While there are exceptions, a player gets multiple penalties if the breaches are unrelated. If the breaches are related, the player gets multiple penalties only when there has been an intervening event. | Committees no longer have to determine whether acts are related or unrelated. Intervening events are used to determine whether a player gets multiple penalties. There are only two intervening events: completion of a stroke and awareness of a breach.. |

Rule 1.3c(4)

There are two intervening events:

- The completion of a stroke
- Being aware or becoming aware of a breach of a Rule
 - When a player knows they breached a Rule
 - When the player is told of a breach
 - When the player is uncertain whether or not they have breached a Rule

Rule 1.3c(4)

Single Penalty Applied for Multiple Breaches Between Intervening

Events: If a player breaches multiple Rules or the same Rule multiple times between intervening events, the player gets only one penalty.

If the Rules breached have different penalties, the player gets only the higher-level penalty.

Multiple Penalties Apply for Breaches Before and After Intervening

Event: If a player breaches a Rule and then breaches the same Rule or another Rule after an intervening event, the player gets multiple penalties.

But any penalty strokes a player gets for taking penalty relief (such as a one-stroke penalty under Rules 17.1, 18.1 and 19.2) are always applied in addition to any other penalties.

Anna Davis - ANWA



Rule 1.3c(4)

Single Penalty Applied for Multiple Breaches Between Intervening Events: If a player breaches multiple Rules or the same Rule multiple times between intervening events, the player gets only one penalty.

If the Rules breached have different penalties, the player gets only the higher-level penalty.

Anna lifted her ball in play when she wasn't allowed to (1 penalty stroke), she then cleaned her ball (1 penalty stroke) and then placed it in a nearby spot but not the same spot. Once that ball is played, she played from a wrong place (2 penalty strokes)

There are two intervening events:

- The completion of a stroke
- Being aware or becoming aware of a breach of a Rule
 - When a player knows they breached a Rule
 - When the player is told of a breach
 - When the player is uncertain whether or not they have breached a Rule

Multiple Penalties Apply for Breaches Before and After Intervening Event: If a player breaches a Rule and then breaches the same Rule or another Rule after an intervening event, the player gets multiple penalties.

Rule 4.1a(2)

| Topic | 2019 Outcome | 2023 Outcome |
|---|--|--|
| Conforming club damaged during a round or while play is stopped (under Rule 5.7a) | A player normally must not replace a club damaged during a round (or while play is stopped) except in limited cases. | Except in cases of abuse, the player may repair or replace any damaged club with another club. |

MLR G-9 – can be used to limit when a damaged club may be replaced. Club must be “broken or significantly damaged”.

Rule 4.1a(2)



Rule 4.1a(2)


“Damaged during a round” means when any part, feature, or property of a club is changed because of any act during the round (including while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a), whether:

- By the player (such as making a stroke or practice swing with the club, putting it in or taking it out of a golf bag, dropping or leaning on it, or throwing or abusing it), or
- By any other person, outside influence or natural forces.

But a club is not “damaged during a round” if its playing characteristics are deliberately changed by the player during the round.

Rule 4.1a(2) – Thomas Pieters



 GOLF

MGA
—1897—

Rule 4.1a(2) - Phil Mickelson



Rule 4.1a(2) - Phil Mickelson



Abnormal Course Conditions

Abnormal course conditions are **any** of these things:

- animal holes,
- ground under repair,
- immovable obstruction, or
- temporary water



A ball rests on an
immovable obstruction



Temporary water
accumulates on a hole



Ground under repair

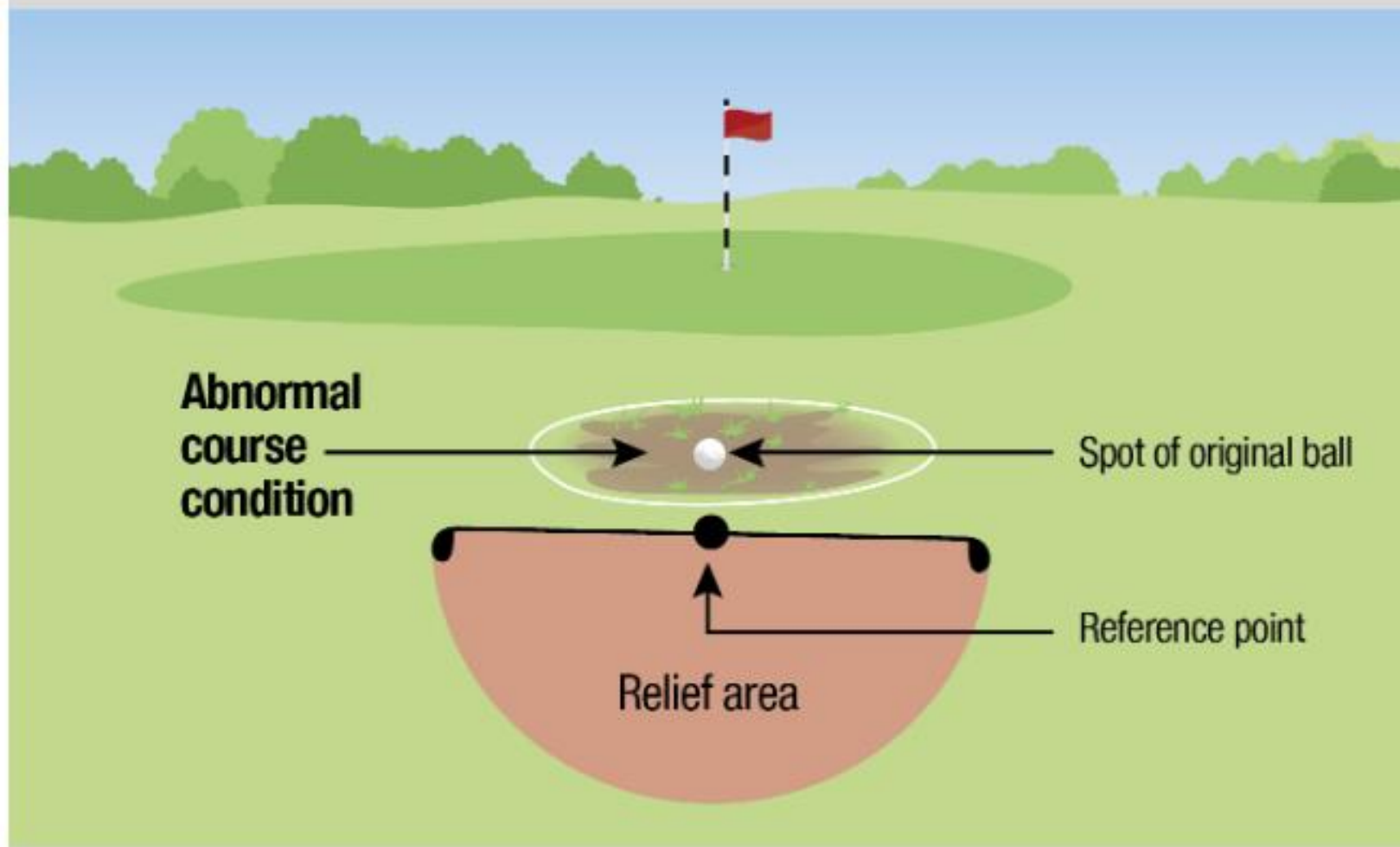
Rule 16.1

Relief from interference by an abnormal course condition (Ground Under Repair, Temporary Water, Immovable obstruction) is allowed under Rule 16.1 only when both:

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

Rule 16.1

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



Rule 16.1

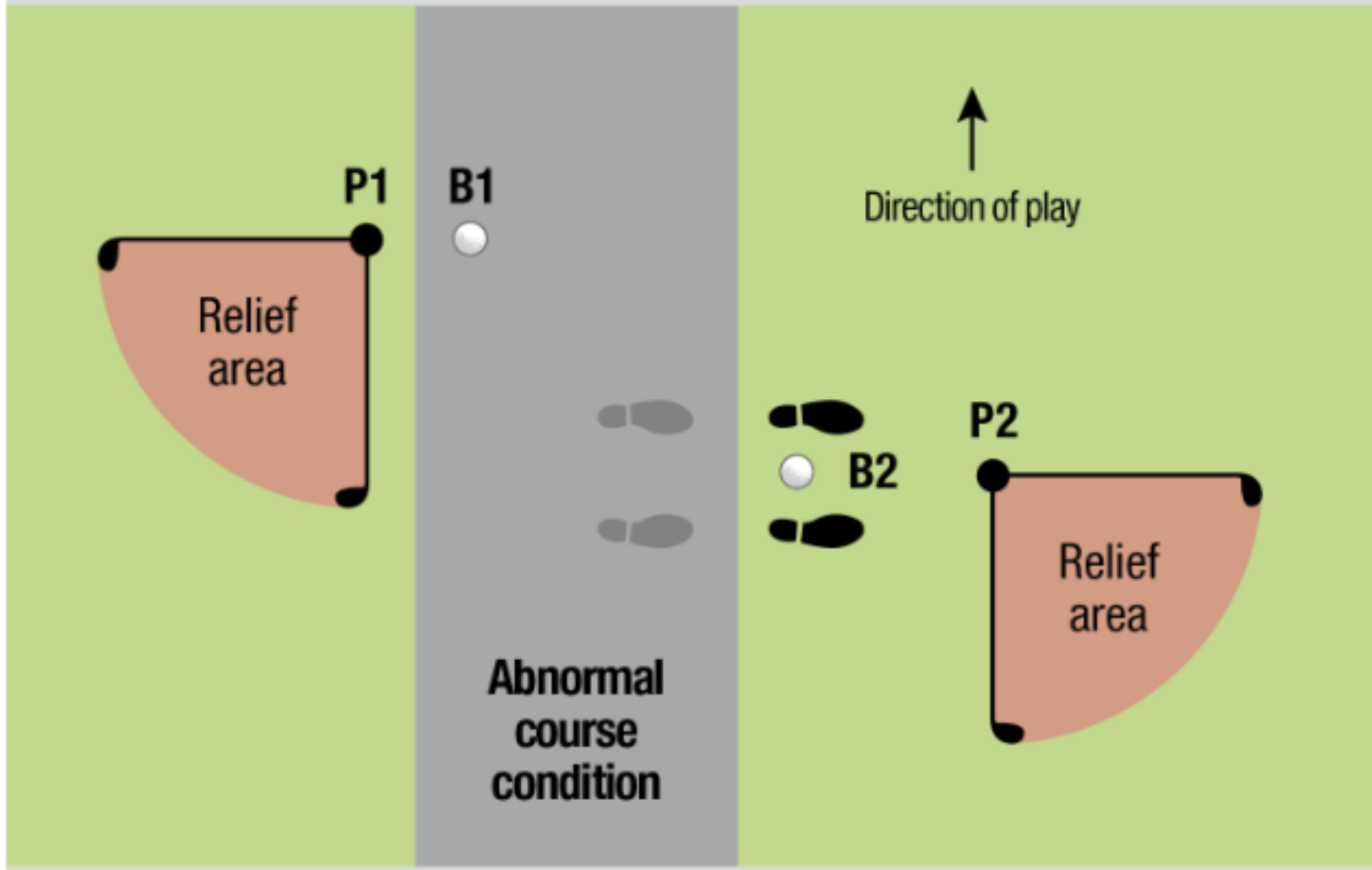
Interference exists when any one of these is true:

- 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.
- 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.

Rule 16.1

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



Rule 16.1 – Jordan Speith



C. 16.1a(3)/1

In some situations, a player may have to adopt an abnormal swing, stance or direction of play in playing their ball to accommodate a given situation. If the abnormal stroke is not clearly unreasonable given the circumstances, the player is permitted to take free relief under Rule 16.1.

For example, in the general area, a right-handed player's ball is so close to a boundary object on the left side of a hole that they must make a left-handed swing to play towards the hole. In making the left-handed swing, the player's stance is interfered with by an immovable obstruction.

The player is allowed relief from the immovable obstruction since use of a left-handed swing is not clearly unreasonable in the circumstances.

After the relief procedure for the left-handed swing is complete, the player may then use a normal right-handed swing for the next stroke. If the obstruction interferes with the right-handed swing, the player may take relief for the right-handed swing under Rule 16.1b or play the ball as it lies.

Rule 16.1a(3)

There is no relief under Rule 16.1:

- When playing the ball as it lies 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), or
- 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.

Rule 16.1a(2)



Rule 9.3

| Topic | 2019 Outcome | 2023 Outcome |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Ball at rest moved by natural forces | If a ball at rest is moved by natural forces (except after being replaced on the putting green), the ball is to be played from where it comes to rest. | If a ball at rest is moved by natural forces after being dropped, placed or replaced and comes to rest in a different area of the course or out of bounds, the ball must be replaced and played from its original spot. A ball on the putting green must still be replaced if moved after being replaced. |

Rule 9.3

If natural forces (such as wind or water) cause a player's ball at rest to move:

There is **no penalty**, and

The ball **must** be played from its new spot.

But, there are two exceptions

Rule 9.3

Exception 1 – Ball on Putting Green Must Be Replaced If It Moves After Having Already Been Lifted and Replaced:

If the player's ball on the putting green moves after the player had already lifted and replaced the ball on the spot from which it moved:

- The ball must be replaced on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated)
- This is true no matter what caused it to move (including natural forces).

Rule 9.3 – Padraig Harrington



Rule 9.3

Exception 2 – Ball at Rest Must Be Replaced If It Moves to Another Area of the Course or Out of Bounds After Being Dropped, Placed or Replaced:

If the player puts the original ball or another ball into play by dropping, placing or replacing it, and natural forces cause the ball at rest to move and come to rest in another area of the course or out of bounds, the ball must be replaced on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).

But for a ball on the putting green that was replaced, see Exception 1.

Rule 9.3



Rule 9.3 – Rickie Fowler

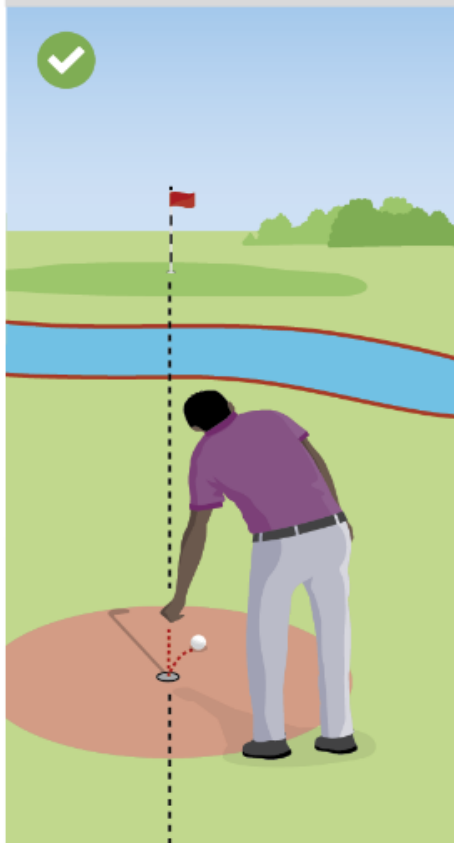


Back-on-the-line Relief

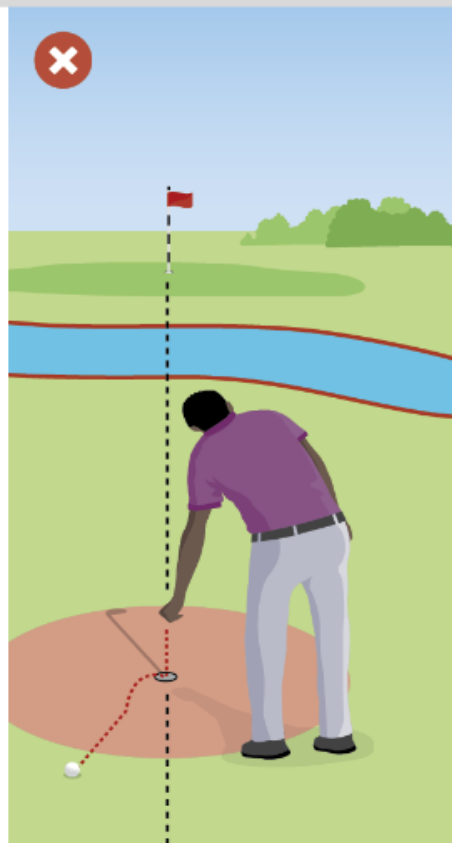
Rule 14.3b, 16.1c(2), 17.1d(2), 19.2b

| Topic | 2019 Outcome | 2023 Outcome |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Back-on-the-line relief | While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player may drop the ball one club-length away from the line and if the ball rolls forward of the reference point the ball must be dropped a second time. Model Local Rule E-12 allowed the ball to be played from forward of the reference point. | While remaining within the limits of the specific Rule, the player must drop the ball on the line and the ball must come to rest within one club-length in any direction of where it first touched the line. |

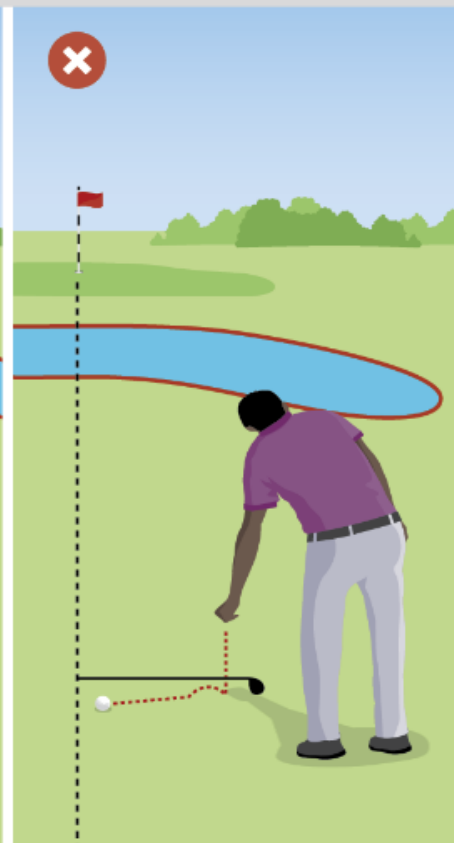
DIAGRAM #2 14.3c DROPPING WHEN TAKING BACK-ON-THE-LINE RELIEF



The spot on the line where the ball first touches the ground when dropped creates a relief area that is one club-length in any direction from that point. The ball is dropped in the right way under Rule 14.3b and the ball comes to rest in the relief area, so the relief procedure is complete.



The ball is dropped in the right way under Rule 14.3b, but comes to rest outside the relief area, and so the ball must be dropped the right way a second time.



The ball is dropped in a wrong way as it has not been dropped on the line, and so the ball must be dropped again in the right way.

Back-on-the-line Relief



Rule 16.3b & C. 16.3b/1

| Topic | 2019 Outcome | 2023 Outcome |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Embedded ball relief | There is no requirement for the reference point to be in the general area. In some situations, relief is not available if no part of the relief area is in the general area. | The reference point must be in the general area. If the spot right behind the ball is not in the general area, the player must find the nearest spot (no closer to the hole) in the general area and use that as the reference point - see Clarification 16.3b/1. |

Rule 16.3 - Embedded Ball

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.

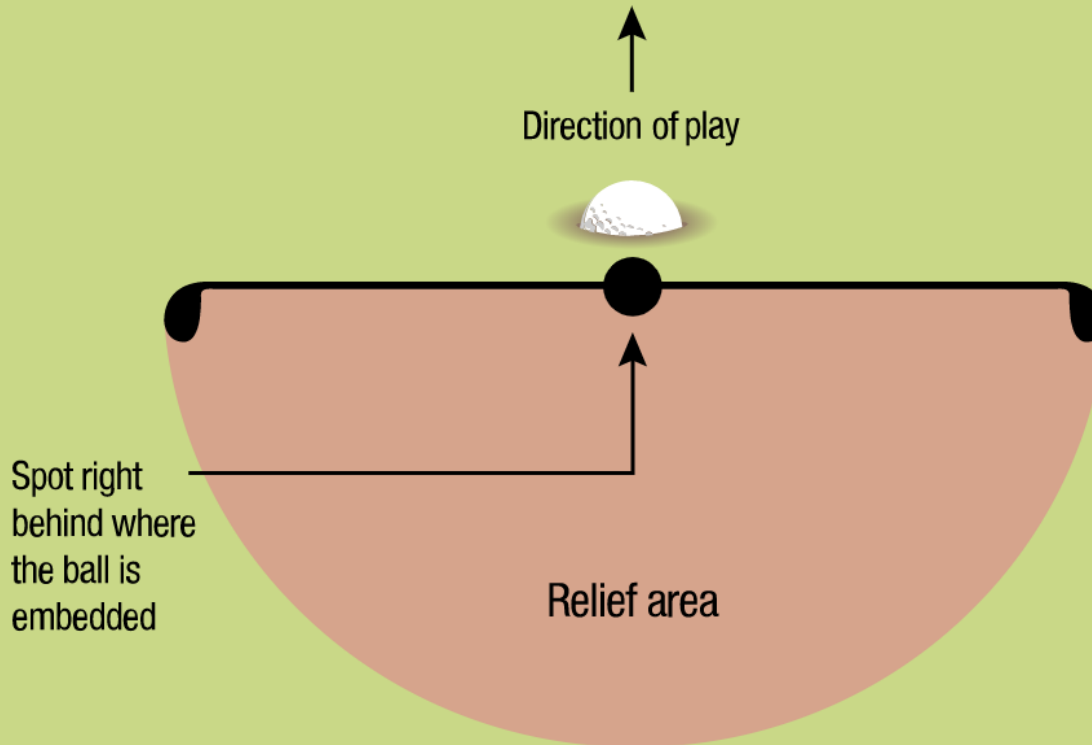


Ball is NOT embedded

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.

Rule 16.3 - Embedded Ball

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.

Rule 16.3b & C. 16.3b/1



16.3b/1 – Taking Embedded Ball Relief When Spot Immediately Behind Ball is Not In General Area

When a player is allowed to take relief from a ball *embedded* in the *general area*, there are situations where the spot immediately behind where the ball is *embedded* is not in the *general area*.

When this occurs, the relief procedure requires the player to find the nearest spot in the general area that is not nearer the hole to the spot immediately behind where the ball *embedded*, and this spot becomes the reference point for establishing a *relief area* under Rule 16.3b.

While this spot is normally very close to the spot behind where the ball *embedded*, it could be some distance away (such as when a ball embeds just outside a *penalty area* and, based on the shape of the *penalty area*, the player would need to go some distance to the right or left in order to find a spot in the *general area* that is not nearer the *hole*).

This procedure also applies when a ball is in bounds but embeds right next to *out of bounds* or when it embeds in the wall or face right above a *bunker*. (New)



Rule 6.3b

| Topic | 2019 Outcome | 2023 Outcome |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Player makes a stroke at an incorrectly substituted ball | Penalty - General Penalty | Penalty – One-stroke penalty |

Rule 6.3b

(1) When Player Is Allowed and Not Allowed to Substitute Another Ball.

- When taking relief under a Rule, including when either dropping a ball or placing a ball (such as when a ball will not stay in the relief area or when taking relief on the putting green), the player may use either the original ball or another ball.
- When playing again from where a previous stroke was made, the player may use either the original ball or another ball.
- **When replacing a ball on a spot, the player is not allowed to substitute a ball and must use the original ball, with certain exceptions (see Rule 14.2a).**

Rule 14.2a

The original ball must be used when replacing a ball.

Exception – Another Ball May Be Used When:

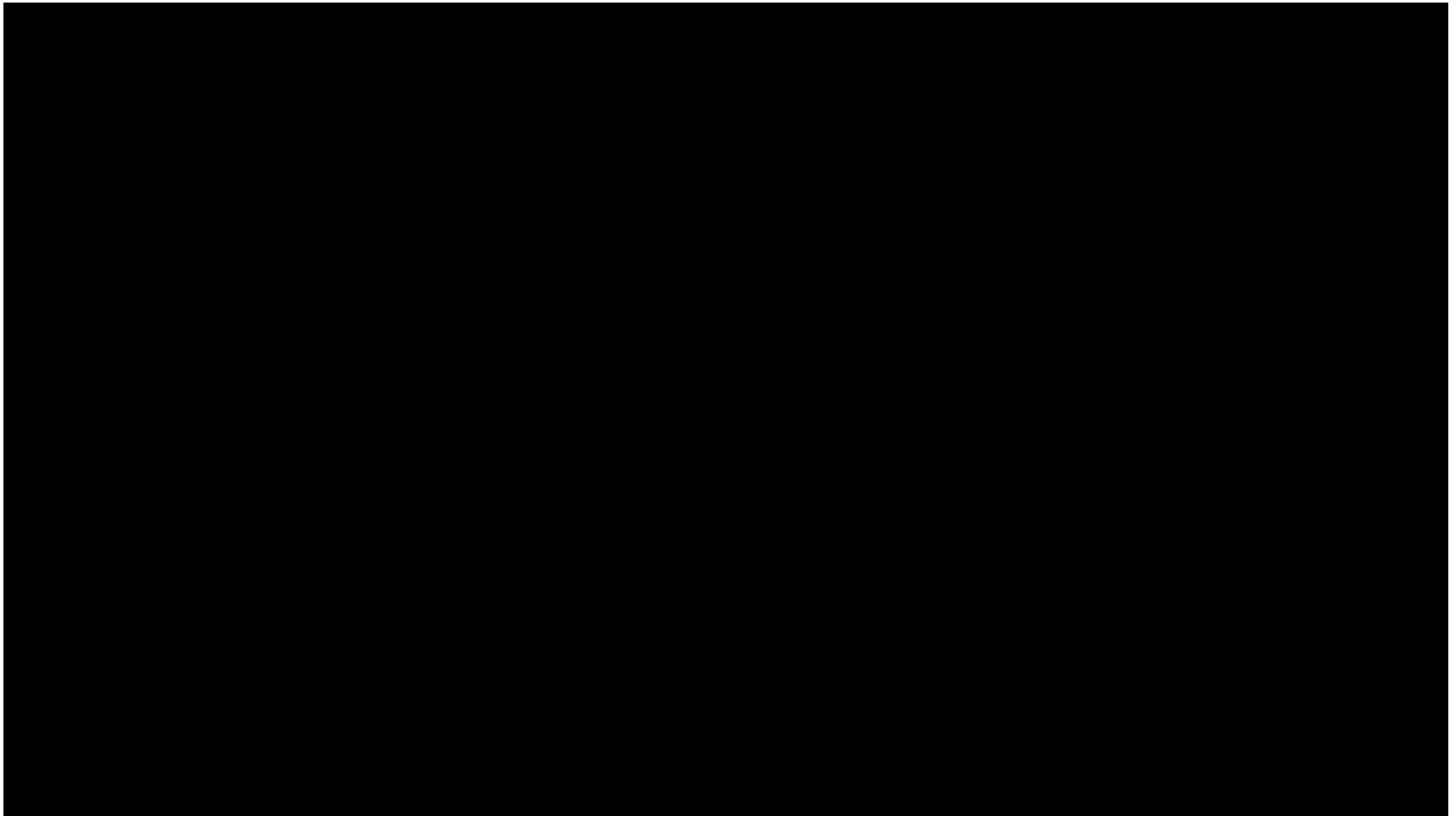
- The original ball cannot be recovered with reasonable effort and in a few seconds, so long as the player did not deliberately cause the ball to become unrecoverable.
- The original ball is cut or cracked.
- Play resumes after it had been stopped.
- The original ball was played by another player as a wrong ball.

Rule 6.3b

(3) Making Stroke at Incorrectly Substituted Ball.

If a player makes a stroke at an incorrectly substituted ball, the player gets **one penalty stroke** and must then play out the hole with the incorrectly substituted ball.

Rule 18.2 – Ball Lost or Out of Bounds



Rule 18.2 – Ball Lost or Out of Bounds

A ball is lost if not found in three minutes after the player or their 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 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 their ball in that reasonable time, the ball is lost.

Rule 18.2 – Ball Lost or Out of Bounds

A ball at rest is out of bounds only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the course.

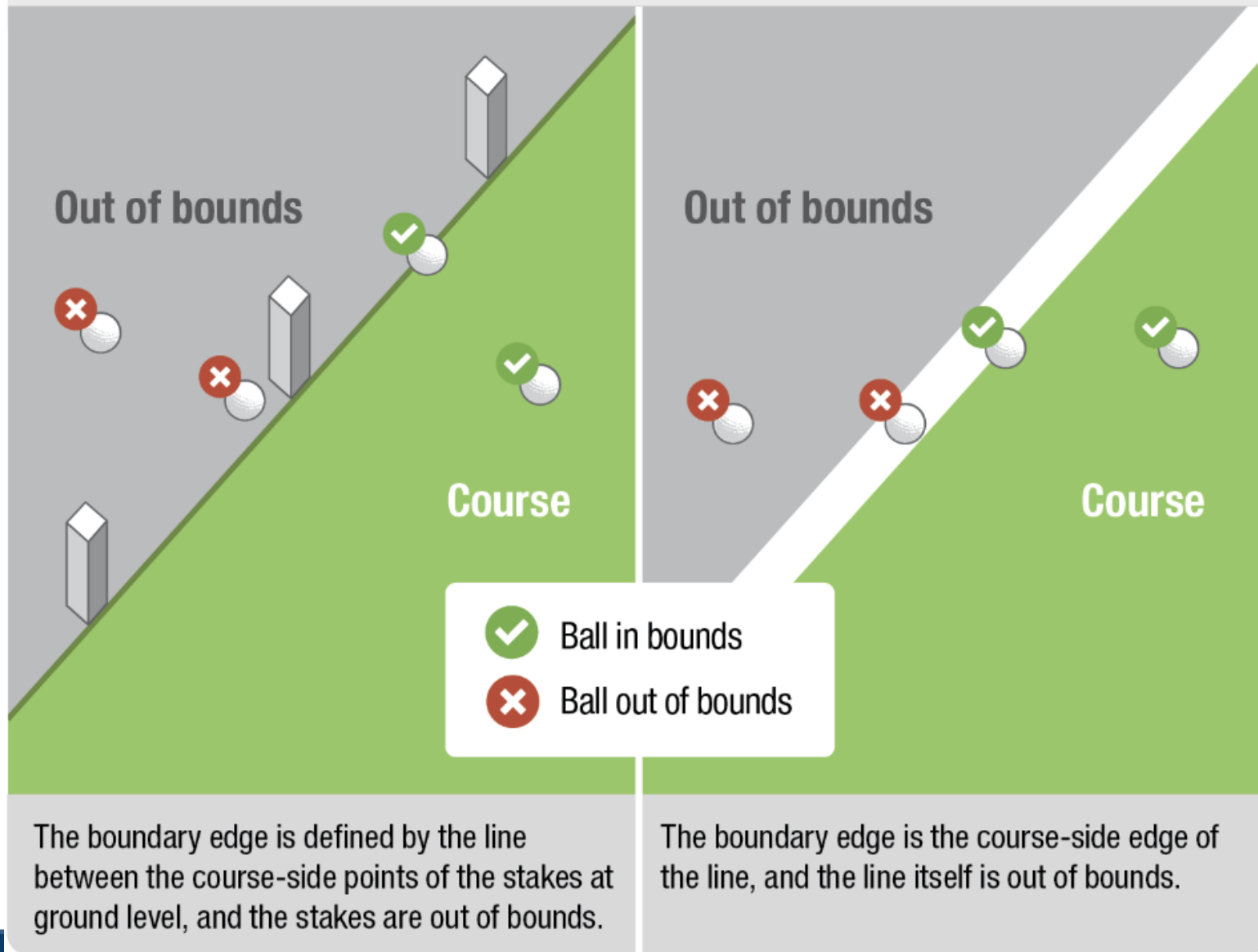
A ball is in bounds when any part of the ball:

- Lies on or touches the ground or anything else (such as any natural or artificial object) inside the boundary edge.
- 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.



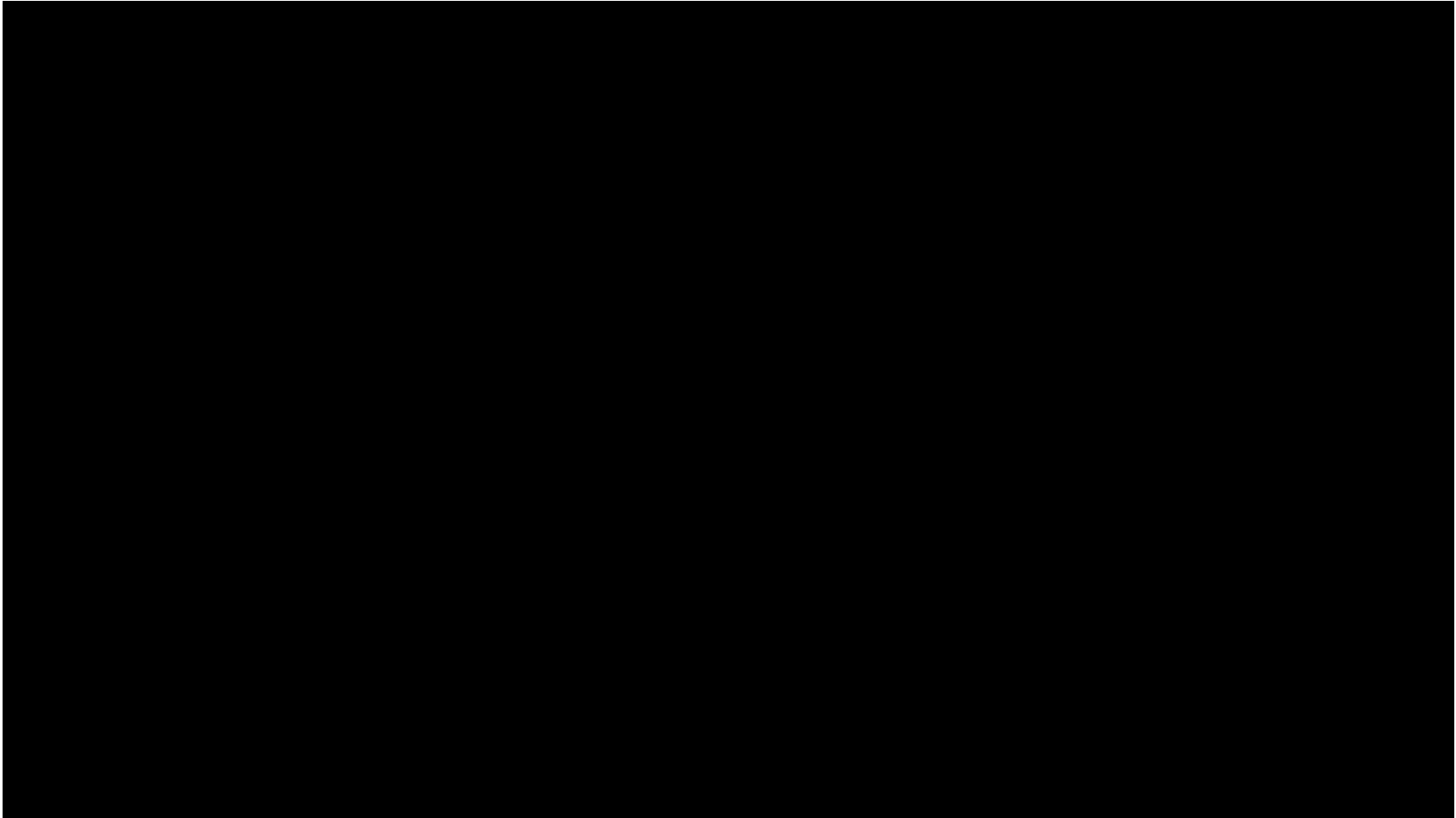
Rule 18.2 – Ball Lost or Out of Bounds

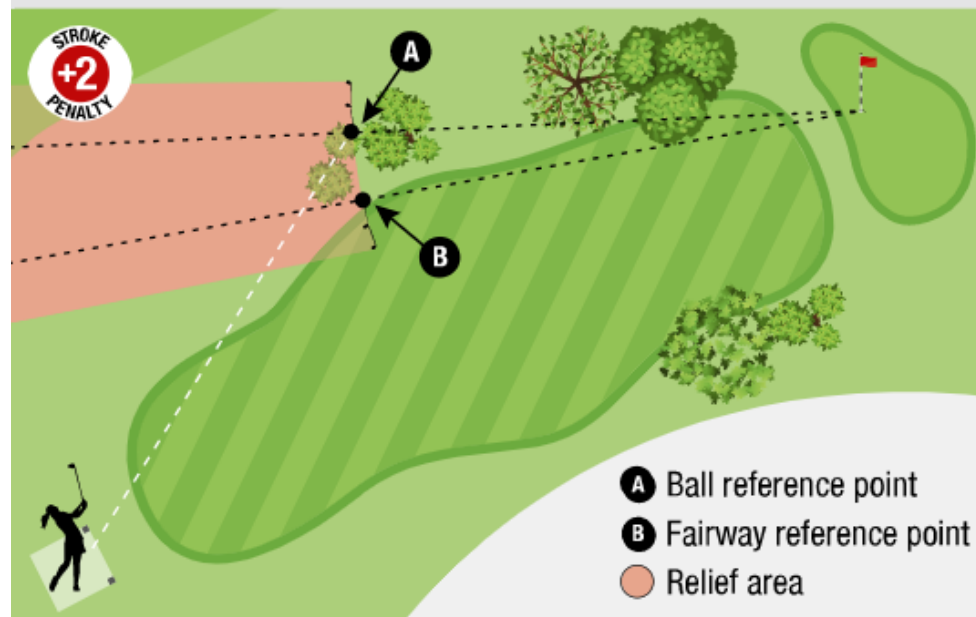
If a ball is lost or out of bounds, the player must take stroke-and-distance relief by adding one penalty stroke and playing the original ball or another ball from where the previous stroke was made.

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 their 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 or played as a wrong ball by another player
- Came to rest on the course in or on a movable obstruction or an abnormal course condition
- Is in a penalty area
- Was deliberately deflected or stopped by any person

Model Local Rule E-5

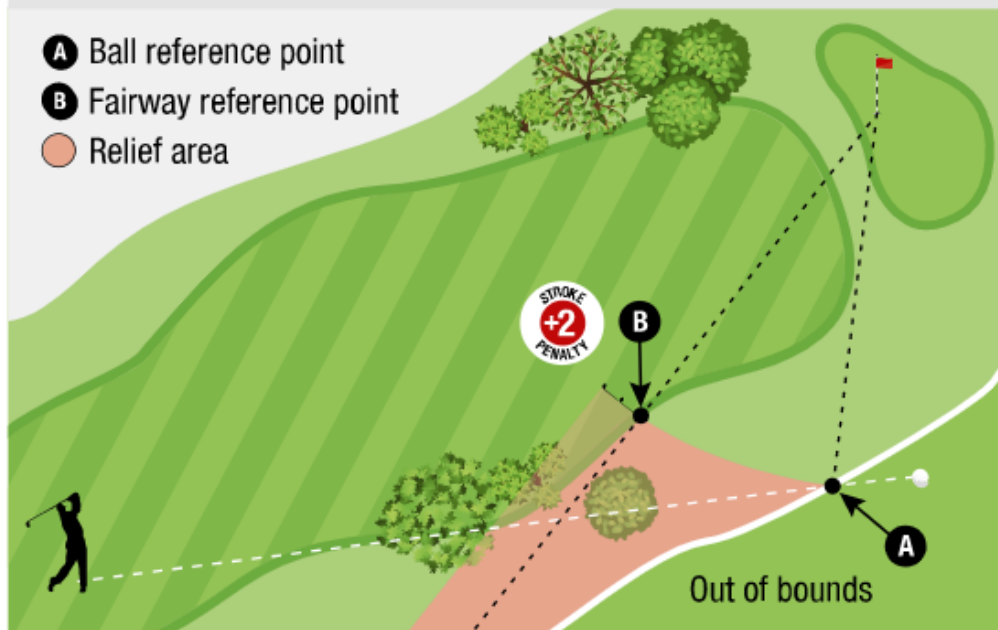




When a player's ball has not been found, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief, or when Model Local Rule E-5 is introduced, the player has the additional option to drop a ball in and play from the relief area described below for two penalty strokes:

| Reference Points | Size of Relief Area | Limits on Relief Area |
|--|--|---|
| <p>A. Ball Reference Point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest on the course (point A)</p> <p>B. Fairway Reference Point: The point of fairway of the hole being played (point B) that is nearest to the ball reference point, but is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point</p> | <p>Anywhere between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A line from the hole through the ball reference point (point A) (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line), and A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (point B) (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line) | <p>The relief area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point, and Must be in the general area |

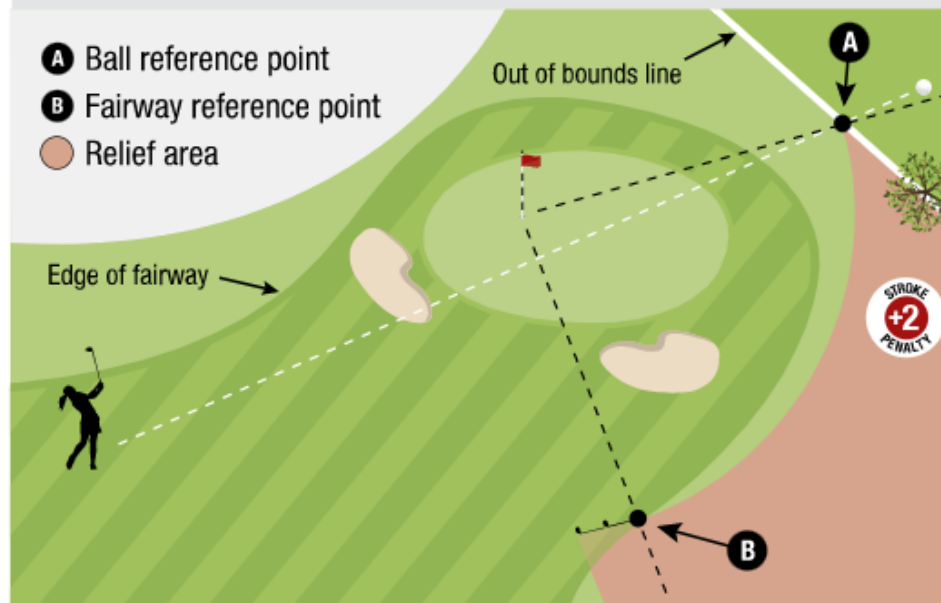
MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 2: BALL OUT OF BOUNDS



When a player's ball is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief, or when Model Local Rule E-5 is introduced, the player has the additional option to drop a ball in and play from the relief area described below for two penalty strokes:

| Reference Point | Size of Relief Area | Limits on Relief Area |
|---|---|--|
| A. Ball Reference Point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have last crossed the edge of the course boundary to go out of bounds (point A) | Anywhere between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A line from the hole through the ball reference point (point A) (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line but still on the course), and • A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (point B) (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line) | The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point, and • Must be in the general area |
| B. Fairway Reference Point: The point of fairway of the hole being played (point B) that is nearest to the ball reference point, but is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point | | |

MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 3: BALL NOT FOUND OR OUT OF BOUNDS CLOSE TO GREEN



When a player's ball has not been found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief, or when Model Local Rule E-5 is introduced, the player has the additional option to drop a ball in and play from the relief area described below for two penalty strokes:

| Reference Points | Size of Relief Area | Limits on Relief Area |
|--|--|---|
| <p>A. Ball Reference Point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest on the course or last crossed the edge of the course boundary to go out of bounds (point A)</p> <p>B. Fairway Reference Point: The point of fairway of the hole being played (point B) that is nearest to the ball reference point, but is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point</p> | <p>Anywhere between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A line from the hole through the ball reference point (point A) (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line), and • A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (point B) (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line) | <p>The relief area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point, and • Must be in the general area |

Model Local Rule E-5

Once the player puts a ball in play under this Local Rule:

- The original ball is no longer in play and must not be played.
- This is true even if the ball is found on the course before the end of the three-minute search time.

But the player may not use this option to take relief for the original ball when:

- That ball is known or virtually certain to have come to rest in a penalty area, or
- The player has played another ball provisionally under penalty of stroke and distance.

A player may use this option to take relief for a provisional ball that has not been found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds.

Questions?

Thank You!

Any Questions Contact:

Tom Roden: troden@mgagolf.org

Chris Gaffney: cgaaffney@mgagolf.org

Sean Corrison: scorrison@mgagolf.org

Justin Wexler: justin.wexler@mgagolf.org

Marissa Colvin: marissa.colvin@mgagolf.org

Troy Odymsky: troy.odymsky@mgagolf.org

Charles Pacilio: charles.pacilio@mgagolf.org