

# Rule Tip of the Gifts

## Rules

That very special time of the year is here when we are surprising our loved ones with gifts. Did you know that the Rules of Golf are also in the gift-giving mode? Many players do not realize this because their perception of the Rules has been tainted by various penalties they have incurred. For them, the Rules are more Scrooge-like than Santa-like, having received too many “lumps of coal” in the form of penalty strokes. The key to discovering the “gifts” within the Rules is having a good working knowledge of the Rules, or else these “gifts” will go unnoticed. Here are just a few examples of the many “gifts” that are available within the new Rules for 2019:



- You find your ball in a deep footprint in a bunker. However, in taking your stance, you notice that one of your feet is positioned on a tunnel created by a mole. In this case, the Rule 16.1 [Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions)] “gift” is that you are permitted to drop a ball away from that footprint. Per Rule 16.1c [Relief for Ball in Bunker], you will be able to drop a ball in the bunker within one club-length of, and not nearer the hole than, the nearest point of complete relief from the mole tunnel!
- Your ball is completely buried in sand somewhere in a bunker. The first Rules “gift” in this situation is courtesy of Rule 7.1 [How to Fairly Search for Ball] which permits you to take reasonable actions to find and identify your ball, such as moving the sand with a club. After dislodging your ball, the second Rules “gift” is found in Rule 7.2 [What to Do If Sand Affecting Lie of Player’s Ball Is Moved While Trying to Find or Identify It]. This Rule allows you to leave a small part of the ball visible when replacing the moved ball, instead of having to re-create the buried lie.
- Your ball comes to rest in a narrow water-filled ditch marked as a red penalty area. In the immediate vicinity of where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area, there are a number of bushes that would interfere with your next stroke if you took lateral relief on that side of the ditch by dropping within two club-lengths of where your original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area. Here, the Rules “gift” is found in Interpretation 17.1d(3)/1 [Player May Measure Across Penalty Area In Taking Lateral Relief] which advises, *“In taking lateral relief where the ball last crossed the edge of a narrow red penalty area, it may be possible for the player to measure the two club-lengths from the reference point across the penalty area in determining the size of the relief area. However, any part of the penalty area within the two club-lengths as measured from the reference point is not part of the relief area.”* Depending on the width of the ditch, you may be able to drop on the other side of the ditch and end up with an unobstructed approach shot to the green!
- Your approach shot to the green is wide right and there are several trees close together blocking the direct line to the hole. Thus, it is reasonable for you to play sideways to avoid the trees. In taking your stance for that shot, you notice that your right foot is positioned on the cart path. The Rules “gift” here is from Rule 16.1 [Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions)] that allows you to take relief from the cart path by finding the nearest point of complete relief and then dropping your ball within one club-length of that reference point no closer to the hole and where there is no longer any interference from the cart path. This may very well result in an improved, if not a direct, line of play to the hole for your next shot!
- You find your ball in thick rough, a foot or two from the edge of the fairway. As you take your stance, you discover that you are standing on a sprinkler head. In taking relief from this immovable obstruction per Rule 16.1, you are permitted to drop within one club-length of the nearest point of complete relief no closer to the hole. The “gift” of possibly being able to drop in the fairway, instead of remaining in the rough, is confirmed in Interpretation 16.1/1 [Relief from Abnormal Course Condition May Result in Better or Worse Conditions]. The Rules “gift” here comes from knowing that the Rules make no distinction between fairway and rough as both are part of the general area.
- You have about a 40-foot putt, but no one is readily available to attend the flagstick for you. In this case, your “gift” is found in Rule 13.2a [Leaving Flagstick in Hole]. This Rule provides that you may leave the flagstick unattended in the hole, even though your ball is on the putting green, and there is no penalty if your ball in motion then strikes the flagstick left in the hole.



