



GOLF RULES IN BRIEF

2004-2007

as approved by R&A Rules Limited



A re-drop is also necessary if the dropped ball comes to rest more than two club-lengths from where it was dropped or nearer the hole than its original position, the nearest point of relief or where the ball last crossed the margin of a water hazard. If the ball when re-dropped rolls into any of these positions, place it where it first struck the course when re-dropped.

BALL ASSISTING OR INTERFERING WITH PLAY

You may lift your ball or have any other ball lifted if you think it might assist any other player.

You may have any ball lifted if it might interfere with your play.

LOOSE IMPEDIMENTS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

You may move a loose impediment unless it and your ball are in a hazard. However, if you have removed a loose impediment and this causes your ball to move, the ball must be replaced and (unless your ball was on the putting green) you incur a penalty stroke.

Movable obstructions (e.g. rakes, tin cans, etc.) positioned anywhere may be moved without penalty. If the ball moves it must be replaced without penalty.

Check the Local Rules on the score card for guidance on immovable obstructions (e.g. surfaced roads and paths, etc.).

Free Relief (except in a water hazard) – if an immovable obstruction (e.g. a sprinkler head) physically interferes with the lie of the ball, your stance or swing, you may drop the ball within one club-length of the nearest point of relief not nearer the hole. If the ball is on the putting green, it is placed at the nearest point of relief. There is no relief for intervention on your line of play unless your ball and the obstruction are on the putting green.

Also, when the ball is in a bunker, the player may take relief from the obstruction behind the bunker under penalty of one stroke.

ABNORMAL GROUND CONDITIONS

Free Relief (except in a water hazard) – if your ball is in a position where you have interference from an abnormal ground condition (i.e. casual water, ground under repair or a hole or cast made by a

burrowing animal, etc.), you may drop within one club-length of the nearest point of relief not nearer the hole. If the ball is on the putting green, it is placed at the nearest point of relief. There is no relief for intervention on your line of play unless your ball and the abnormal ground condition are on the putting green.

If your ball is in a bunker and you cannot take complete relief, you may drop the ball at the nearest position in the bunker not nearer the hole that gives maximum available relief. Also, when the ball is in a bunker, the player may take relief behind the bunker under penalty of one stroke.

WATER HAZARDS

Check the Local Rules on the score card to establish whether the sea, lake, river, ditch, etc. is a ‘water hazard’ or a ‘lateral water hazard’.

Ball in water hazard (yellow stakes and/or lines) – play the ball as it lies or, under penalty of one stroke,

- play again from where you hit the ball into the hazard, or
- drop any distance behind the water hazard keeping a straight line between the hole, the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard and the spot on which the ball is dropped.

Ball in lateral water hazard (red stakes and/or lines) – in addition to the options for a ball in a water hazard (see above), under penalty of one stroke, you may drop within two club-lengths of, and not nearer the hole than,

- the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard, or
- a point on the opposite side of the hazard equidistant from the hole.

BALL LOST OR OUT OF BOUNDS

Check the Local Rules on the score card to identify the boundaries of the course.

If your ball is lost outside a water hazard or out of bounds you must play another ball from the spot where the last shot was played under penalty of one stroke, i.e. stroke and distance. You are allowed 5 minutes to search for a ball, after which if it is not found or identified it is lost.

If, after playing a shot, you think your ball may be lost outside a water hazard or out of bounds you should play a ‘provisional ball’. You must state that it is a provisional ball and play it before you go forward to search for the original ball. If it transpires that the original ball is lost or out of bounds, you must continue with the provisional ball, under penalty of one stroke. If the original ball is not lost or out of bounds, you must continue play of the hole with it and the provisional ball must be abandoned.

BALL UNPLAYABLE

If you believe your ball is unplayable and it lies outside a hazard, you may under penalty of one stroke,

- drop a ball at the spot from where the last shot was played, or
- drop a ball any distance behind the point where the ball lay keeping a straight line between the hole, the point where the ball lay and the spot on which the ball is dropped, or
- drop a ball within two club-lengths of where the ball lies not nearer the hole.

If your ball is in a bunker you may proceed as above, except that if you are dropping within two club-lengths or back on a line, you must drop in the bunker.

If your ball is in a water hazard, you must proceed under the water hazard Rule if taking relief.

As golf is, essentially, a self-regulating game, all golfers should have a good understanding of the fundamental Rules, as contained in this booklet. The Rules of Golf should be consulted where any doubt arises and the inside back cover of the Rule book lists other Rules publications which may be of interest and assistance.

Further copies of this publication or the Rules of Golf can be obtained from your club secretary, by contacting the Rules of Golf telephone order line: +44 (0) 1924 245416 or by visiting the R&A's website – www.randa.org.

The following is a summary of the Rules of Golf, simplified where possible. For more information, please refer to the Rules of Golf.

ETIQUETTE

Players should at all times show consideration to all others using the course. Although the following points are not Rules as such they are an important part of the game.

- Don't play until the group in front is out of the way.
- Shout a warning if your ball might hit someone.
- Don't move, talk or stand close to a player making a stroke.
- Don't step on another player's line of putt.
- Always play without delay and keep up with the group in front.
- Invite faster groups to play through.
- Repair divot holes and pitch-marks.
- Smooth footprints in bunkers.
- Don't drop clubs on the putting green or lean on your putter.
- Replace the flagstick carefully.
- In the case of a serious breach of etiquette, the Committee has the authority to disqualify a player.

DEFINITIONS

A good knowledge of the defined terms will help in the correct application of the Rules. These include:

Teeing Ground – the starting place for the hole, defined by two tee-markers.

Through the Green – the whole area of the golf course except the teeing ground and putting green of the hole being played and all hazards.

Hazards – any bunker or water hazard.

Putting Green – an area specially prepared for putting.

Out of Bounds – beyond the boundaries of the course or any part of the course marked as out of bounds by the Committee. A ball is out of bounds when all of it lies out of bounds.

Loose Impediments – natural objects such as stones, leaves and twigs, provided they are not fixed or growing, are not solidly embedded and are not sticking to the ball (dew and frost are not loose impediments).

Obstructions – any man-made object, except:

- objects defining out of bounds;
- any part of an immovable man-made object that is out of bounds; and
- any construction declared by the Committee in the Local Rules to be an integral part of the course.

Casual Water – any temporary accumulation of water on the course that is visible before or after the player takes his stance (dew and frost are not casual water).

Ground Under Repair – any part of the course so marked by the Committee. Also includes material piled for removal and a hole made by a greenkeeper, even if not so marked.

Burrowing Animal – an animal that makes a hole in which to live or shelter (e.g. a rabbit, mole, etc.).

Nearest Point of Relief – the reference point for taking free relief from immovable obstructions, casual water, ground under repair, burrowing animal holes, etc. and a wrong putting green. It is the nearest point not nearer the hole where, if the ball were so positioned, there would be no interference from the condition for the stroke the player would have made from the ball's original position.

THE RULES OF PLAY

GENERAL POINTS

Before commencing your round:

- Read the Local Rules on the score card or the notice board.
- Put an identification mark on your ball. Many golfers play the same brand of ball and if you can't identify your ball, it is considered lost.
- Count your clubs. You are allowed a maximum of 14 clubs.

During the round, don't ask for "advice" from anyone except your partner or caddie. Don't give advice to anyone except your partner.

During the play of a hole you must not play any practice shots.

TEE SHOT

Play your tee shot from between, and not in front of, the tee-markers. You may play your tee shot from up to two club-lengths behind the front line of the tee-markers.

Teeing from outside this area – in match play there is no penalty but your opponent may require you to replay your stroke; in stroke play you incur a two-stroke penalty and must then play from within the proper area.

PLAYING THE BALL

Play the ball as it lies. Don't improve your lie, the area of your intended stance or swing or your line of play by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed or growing, except in fairly taking your stance or making your swing. Don't press anything down or build a stance.

If your ball is in a bunker or a water hazard, don't touch the ground in either type of hazard, or touch water in the water hazard, with your hand or club before your downswing.

The ball must be fairly struck at, not pushed or spooned.

Playing a wrong ball (except in a hazard) – in match play you lose the hole; in stroke play you incur a two-stroke penalty and you must then correct the mistake by playing the correct ball or by proceeding under the Rules.

ON THE PUTTING GREEN

You may repair ball marks and old hole plugs on the line of your putt but not any other damage, such as spike marks.

You may mark, lift and clean your ball on the putting green. Always replace it on the exact spot.

When making a stroke on the putting green you should ensure that the flagstick is removed or attended.

Ball played from putting green strikes the flagstick – in match play you lose the hole; in stroke play you incur a two-stroke penalty.

BALL AT REST MOVED

If you accidentally cause your ball to move, lift it when not permitted or it moves after you have addressed it, add a penalty stroke and replace your ball.

Failure to replace ball – in match play you lose the hole; in stroke play you incur a total penalty of two strokes.

If your ball at rest is moved by someone else or another ball, replace it without penalty to you.

BALL IN MOTION DEFLECTED OR STOPPED

Ball struck by you is deflected or stopped by you, your partner or your caddie – in match play you lose the hole; in stroke play you incur a two-stroke penalty and the ball is played as it lies.

Ball struck by you is deflected or stopped by someone else – play your ball as it lies without penalty, except (a) in match play, if an opponent or his caddie deflects the ball you have an option to replay the stroke or (b) in stroke play, if the ball is deflected after a stroke from on the putting green, you must replay the stroke.

Ball struck by you is deflected or stopped by another ball at rest – no penalty and the ball is played as it lies, except in stroke play you incur a two-stroke penalty if your ball and the other ball were on the putting green before you played.

LIFTING, DROPPING AND PLACING THE BALL

Before lifting a ball that has to be replaced (e.g. when the ball is lifted on the putting green to clean it), the position of the ball must be marked. When the ball is being lifted in order to drop or place it in another position (e.g. dropping within two club-lengths under the unplayable ball Rule, etc.), it is not mandatory to mark its position although it is recommended that you do.

When dropping, stand upright, hold the ball at shoulder height and arm's length and drop it. If a dropped ball strikes you or your partner, caddie or equipment, it must be re-dropped without penalty.

A dropped ball must be re-dropped if it rolls into a hazard, out of a hazard, on to a putting green, out of bounds or to a position where there is interference from a condition from which free relief has been taken (e.g. an immovable obstruction).