

2019 RULES OF GOLF

Ball at Rest

Ball Moved During Search 2019 Rule: **Under Rule 7.4**, if a player accidentally moves his or her ball while searching for it:

- The player will get no penalty for causing it to move, and
- The ball will always be replaced; if the exact spot is not known, the player will replace the ball on the estimated original spot (including on, under or against any attached natural or man-made objects which the ball had been at rest under or against).

No Penalty for Moving Ball on the Putting Green

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 13.1d**, there will no longer be a penalty if a player (or opponent) accidentally causes the player's ball to move on the putting green.

The substance of this Rule change has already been implemented as of 1 January 2017 by authorizing Committees to adopt a Local Rule that eliminates the penalty for accidentally moving a ball on the putting green.

Standard for Deciding Why a Ball Moved

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 9.2**, the "known or virtually certain" standard (meaning at least 95% likely) will apply to all questions of fact about why a ball at rest moved:

- A player, opponent or outside influence will be found to have caused the ball to move if the player, opponent or outside influence was known or virtually certain to have caused it to move; otherwise it will be assumed that natural forces caused it to move.

Replacing Ball When Original Spot is Not Known

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 14.2c**, in that same situation:

- The ball will always be placed on a spot rather than being dropped.
- If the exact original spot is not known, the player will be required to replace the ball on its estimated spot (including on, under or against any attached natural objects that the ball had been at rest on, under or against).

Ball in Motion

Ball in Motion Accidentally Deflected

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 11.1**, for all accidental deflections, including when the ball hits the player or opponent or their equipment or caddies:

- There will be no penalty and the ball will be played as it lies (with limited exceptions).
- To address any concern that a player might deliberately position equipment to act as a backstop and potentially deflect his or her ball, there will be a penalty if the ball hits equipment that was positioned for that purpose (Rule 11.2a).

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Playing a Ball

Ball Accidentally Struck More Than Once During a Stroke

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 10.1a**, if the player's club accidentally hits the ball more than once during a single stroke:

a) There will be no penalty and the ball will be played as it lies.

Maximum Score Form of Stroke Play

2019 Rule: "Maximum Score" will be a new, additional form of stroke play:

a) A player's score for each hole is capped at a maximum set by the Committee, which may be fixed (such as 6, 8, 10, etc.), related to par (such as two times par or triple bogey), or related to the player's handicap (such as net double bogey).

b) A player who does not complete a hole (often referred to informally as "picking up") will not be disqualified, but simply gets the maximum score for the hole.

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Taking Relief

Measuring the Size of the Relief Area Where a Ball Must Be Dropped and Played

2019 Rule: Players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways as detailed in **Rule 14.3:**

- The focus of the dropping procedure will be on a specific “relief area” set by the Rule under which relief is being taken and will be either one or two club-lengths from a reference point (and may have certain other limitations).
- The relief area is a fixed size for each player and is pre-determined based on the clubs the player has selected for play.

New Procedure for Dropping a Ball

2019 Rule: Players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways as detailed in **Rule 14.3:**

- How a ball may be dropped is simplified; the only requirement will be that the ball be let go from knee height so that it falls through the air and does not touch any part of the player’s body or equipment before it hits the ground.

Where a Dropped Ball Must Come to Rest

2019 Rule: Players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways as detailed in **Rule 14.3:**

- The ball will need only to be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area; and there will be no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground but before coming to rest in the relief area.
- If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it will be dropped a second time; if it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it will be placed where it first touched the ground.
- If the placed ball will not come to rest on that spot after two attempts, the player will then place the ball on the nearest spot (not nearer the hole) where it will come to rest.

Fixed Distances to be Used for Measuring

2019 Rule: A club-length will be defined as the length of the longest club in the player’s bag, except that this cannot be his or her putter.

- The relief area for dropping a ball will be a fixed size of either one or two club-lengths depending on which relief Rule is being used.
- The relief area is a fixed size for each player and is pre-determined based on the clubs the player has selected for play.

Time For Search Before Ball is Lost

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 18.2,** the time for a ball search (before the ball becomes lost) will be reduced from 5 minutes to 3 minutes.

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Taking Relief

Substitution of Ball Always Allowed When Taking Relief

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 14.3**, when taking relief, the player will always be allowed the choice to substitute a ball or to use the original ball, including: When taking penalty relief as well as when taking free relief (Rules 15-19).

Relief For an Embedded Ball

2019 Rule: The current default position in the Rules will be reversed:

Rule 16.3 will allow relief for a ball embedded anywhere in the “general area” (that is, the area currently known as “through the green”), except when embedded in sand.

But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule restricting relief to a ball embedded in those parts of the general area cut to fairway height or less.

In taking relief, the player will drop the original ball or a substituted ball within one club-length of (but not nearer the hole than) the spot right behind where the ball was embedded.

Procedure for Taking Lateral Relief

2019 Rule: Players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways as detailed in **Rule 14.3**:

- The focus of the dropping procedure will be on a specific “relief area” set by the Rule under which relief is being taken and will be either one or two club-lengths from a reference point (and may have certain other limitations).
- The ball will need only to be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area; and there will be no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground but before coming to rest in the relief area.
- If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it will be dropped a second time; if it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it will be placed where it first touched the ground.
- If the placed ball will not come to rest on that spot after two attempts, the player will then place the ball on the nearest spot (not nearer the hole) where it will come to rest.

Procedure for Taking Back-on-the-Line Relief

2019 Rule: Players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways as detailed in Rule 14.3:

- a) The focus of the dropping procedure will be on a specific “relief area” set by the Rule under which relief is being taken and will be either one or two club-lengths from a reference point (and may have certain other limitations).
- b) The ball will need only to be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area; and there will be no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground but before coming to rest in the relief area.
- c) If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it will be dropped a second time; if it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it will be placed where it first touched the ground.
- d) If the placed ball will not come to rest on that spot after two attempts, the player will then place the ball on the nearest spot (not nearer the hole) where it will come to rest.

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Areas of the Course

When to Replace a Ball That Moves on the Putting Green

2019 Rule: Rule 13.1d, will revise the procedure for when a ball on the putting green is moved by wind, water or other natural forces, so that it must sometimes be replaced and sometimes be played from its new spot:

- a) If the ball had been lifted and replaced on its original spot before it moved, the ball must always be replaced on its original spot, regardless of what caused it to move.
- b) The ball must be played from its new spot only if the ball had not been lifted and replaced before it moved.

Repairing Damage on the Putting Green

2019 Rule: Rule 13.1c(2) allows repair of almost any damage on the green:

- a) "Damage on the putting green" will be defined to include all types of damage (such as ball-marks, shoe damage, indentations from a club or flagstick, animal damage, etc.), **except** aeration holes, natural surface imperfections or natural wear of the hole.

Touching Line of Play on a Putting Green

2019 Rule: The prohibition of touching the line of play on the putting green will be eliminated:

- a) There will no longer be a penalty for merely touching the line of play on the putting green (the term "line of play" will apply everywhere on the course including the putting green, and the term "line of putt" will no longer be used).
- b) But the player will still be subject to the prohibition on improving his or her line of play on the putting green (**see Rule 8.1a, as limited by 8.1b**).

Ball Played From Green Hits Unattended Flagstick in Hole

2019 Rule: Under Rule 13.2a(2):

- a) There will no longer be a penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits a flagstick left in the hole.
- b) Players will not be required to putt with the flagstick in the hole; rather, they will continue to have the choice to have it removed (which includes having someone attend the flagstick and remove it after the ball is played).

Areas the Committee May Mark as Penalty Areas

2019 Rule: Under the new Rules, "Water hazards" will be superseded by the expanded concept of "penalty areas", and **Rule 17** will provide the same basic options for relief that exist under the current Rules:

- a) A penalty area will include both (1) all areas currently defined in the Rules as a water hazard or lateral water hazard and (2) any other areas the Committee chooses to define as penalty areas (with recommended guidelines to be provided in the guidebook).
- b) Penalty areas may therefore include areas such as deserts, jungles, lava rock fields, etc.
- c) The term "hazard" will no longer be used in the Rules.

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Areas of the Course

Touching Loose Impediments or Ground in a Penalty Area

2019 Rule: **Under Rule 17:**

- a) There will no longer be any special restrictions when a ball is in a “penalty area” (the expanded designation for the area that includes what are now called water hazards).
- b) A player will be allowed to touch or move loose impediments and touch the ground with hand or club (such as grounding the club right behind the ball) for any reason, subject only to the prohibition on improving conditions for the stroke (**see new Rule 8.1a**).

Expanded Use of Red-Marked Penalty Areas

2019 Rule: Under the new Rules, “Water hazards” will be superseded by the expanded concept of “penalty areas”, **and Rule 17** will provide the same basic options for relief that exist under the current Rules:

- a) A penalty area will include both (1) all areas currently defined in the Rules as a water hazard or lateral water hazard and (2) any other areas the Committee chooses to define as penalty areas (with recommended guidelines to be provided in the guidebook).
- b) Penalty areas may therefore include areas such as deserts, jungles, lava rock fields, etc.
- c) The term “hazard” will no longer be used in the Rules.

Elimination of Opposite Side Relief for Red Penalty Areas

2019 Rule: Rule 17.1d will remove the option to take relief on the opposite side of a red penalty area (the new term that will include what is today called a lateral water hazard):

- a) This means that, when a ball is in a red penalty area, the player will have three options for relief (all for a one-stroke penalty) rather than four options as today.
- b) But a Committee could still adopt a Local Rule allowing opposite side relief on those holes where it believes the other relief options are not viable.

Moving or Touching Loose Impediments or Touching Sand in a Bunker

2019 Rule: Under Rules 12.2a and 12.2b, the player will be allowed to touch or move loose impediments in a bunker and will be generally allowed to touch the sand with a hand or club; but a limited prohibition continues so that the player must not:

- a) Deliberately touch the sand in a bunker with a hand, club, rake or other object to test the condition of the sand to learn information for the stroke, or
- b) Touch the sand in a bunker with a club in making a practice swing, in grounding the club right in front of or behind the ball, or in making the backswing for a stroke.

Unplayable Ball in Bunker

2019 Rule: The player will have an extra option allowing relief outside the bunker using the back-on-the-line procedure, but for a total of two penalty strokes (**Rule 19.3b**).