

Fairways and Rough (General Area)

Most of the time you will play from the fairway or rough, which are part of the general area. Normally, you will play the ball as it lies. You have 3 minutes to find your ball. If it is not found, the ball is lost and you must play under and distance.

In the general area, you get free relief from abnormal course conditions or an embedded ball. You don't get free relief from object that define out of bounds and can't move objects that define out of bounds. If you can't play the ball as it lies, you can take unplayable relief. Under that Rule you have 3 relief options: stroke and distance, back-on-the-line or lateral relief.

If another player's ball interferes with your play, you can have it lifted before you play. The other player needs to mark the ball before it is lifted.

Starting the Hole (Teeing Area)

The teeing area is one of the five defined areas on course. It is the place for starting the hole you are playing. You can play up to two club-lengths from behind the tee-markers and can stand outside the teeing area. You are not allowed to move the tee-markers. You can tee a new ball anywhere in the teeing area, but could play the ball from the ground. You are allowed to use a broken tee or borrow one from another player. If your ball falls off the tee, you can re-tee it anywhere in the teeing area.

If you play from outside the teeing area in match play, your opponent has the option to cancel your stroke. If the stroke is canceled, you need to play from in the teeing area. Otherwise, you continue play with the ball played from outside the teeing area.

In stroke play, you are required to correct the mistake by playing from the teeing area. You get a two-stroke penalty and the stroke(s) made before the correction do not count in your score.

Bunkers

A bunker is one of the five defined areas on the course. Your ball lies in a bunker when any part of it touches the sand. In a bunker, the challenge is to play from the sand. To preserve the challenge, you are not permitted to test the condition of the sand or touch the sand right around your ball. You can remove natural and artificial objects from the bunker since those are part of the challenge. In preparing to play from a bunker, you can set your clubs in the bunker. You can also rake the bunker before playing, as long as you aren't testing the bunker or improving the conditions for the next stroke.

Penalty Areas

A penalty area is one of the five defined areas on the course. When your ball lies in a penalty area, you can play the ball as it lies or take relief outside the penalty area for one-penalty stroke. For red or yellow penalty areas, you can play from where you last stroke was made or take back-on-the-relief. In a red penalty area, you also have the option to take lateral relief.

If you play the ball from a penalty area, you can do everything you can in the general area. You can remove natural or artificial object. You can touch the ground in the penalty area at any time.

However, there are a few restrictions. You can't deem your ball unplayable or take relief from abnormal course conditions (e.g., a sprinkler box). You also are not allowed to play a provisional ball when you think your ball might be in a penalty area. Sometimes penalty areas are defined

as no play zones. If your ball is in a no play zone, you cannot play the ball as it lies. You are required to take penalty relief.

Putting Green

The putting green is one of the five defined areas on the course. It is area specifically prepared for putting and contains the hole. The Committee decides the hole location and while there is guidance, there is no such thing as an illegal hole location.

On the putting green, you have special permission. You can mark, lift and clean your ball. To mark your ball, you must use a ball-marker, which is an artificial object like a coin or tee. You are permitted to any damage (except natural wear) on the putting green and remove sand and loose soil – even if your ball is off the putting green.

If you accidentally cause your ball on the putting green to move, there is no penalty and you need to replace the ball. If the wind causes your ball to move and you have lifted and replace it, you need to replace it, with no penalty. Otherwise, you play it from the new spot without penalty.

On the putting green, the flagstick indicates where the hole is located. You are allowed to putt with the flagstick in the hole and there is no penalty for striking the ball in that case. If the flagstick is attended or removed while you make your stroke, it can be moved while your ball is in motion. Otherwise, it must be left in position while your ball is in motion.

Match Play

Match play is one of the two forms of golf where you solely compete against an opponent on every hole. You (or your opponent) may concede next strokes, holes or even the match to each other. If your next stroke has been conceded, you are permitted to putt out.

If you are unsure how to proceed, you and your opponent can decide the matter, but are not allowed to waive a Rule. If you and your opponent don't agree, you should proceed how you think is correct. Your opponent can make a timely ruling request and the Committee can then make a ruling.

In match play, you are not required to keep a scorecard. Scorecards are only required in stroke play.

Stroke Play

Stroke play is one of the two forms of golf where you compete against all other players in field by comparing your total score for one or more rounds. In regular stroke play, you need to hole out on every hole. Each hole score for 18 holes is added up and that is your final score.

There is another form of stroke played called maximum score. The maximum score for each hole is set by the Committee. You can pick up before or after you reach that score and the maximum score becomes hole score.

If you are unsure how to process, you can get help from a referee or play two balls if a referee is not readily available. If you play two balls, you must tell the Committee before you return your scorecard.

Clubs

Your clubs are an important piece of equipment. You are allowed to pick up to 14 clubs for play (but you could pick fewer). They could be both left-handed and right-handed clubs if you like. If you start with 14 clubs, you are generally limited to those clubs. If a club is broken during a stroke or in anger, you are not allowed to replace it. You can continue using it or have it repaired. You also cannot replace a lost club.

If you start with fewer than 14 clubs, you can add clubs until you reach 14. You cannot add a club another player selected or delay play.

When you have a partner, you can share clubs, provided the total between the two of you is fewer than 14. For example, if you 5 and your partner has 7, the total is 12 and you could share.

You cannot purposely adjust or alter clubs during your round, that includes adjustable clubs. But if an adjustable club becomes loose during the round, you can repair it by moving it back to the original setting.

Golf Ball

Generally, you will hole out with the ball you play from the teeing area. You can always use a new ball when starting a hole. You can use a new ball when you are taking relief, both free and penalty relief. Unless the one-ball Local Rule is in effect, the new ball could be any brand. When you lift your ball from the putting green, you must replace that ball and cannot replace a new ball. When your ball is in your hand, you can almost always clean it.

If you happen to run out of balls, you can borrow from another player in your group.

In general practice or X-Out balls are conforming and you can use them during your round.

If you play a wrong ball, you lose the hole in match play or get a two-stroke penalty in stroke play. In stroke play, you must correct your mistake, by playing the right ball or playing under the Rules.

Dropping

When taking relief, whether with penalty or no penalty, you must drop a ball. The ball must be dropped in the right way, which means the ball is dropped straight down from knee height by you and first strikes a spot in your relief area. Your caddie is not allowed to drop the ball for you. The ball must come to rest in the relief area. If the ball doesn't, drop again in the right way. If it again doesn't come to rest in relief area, you must place a ball on the spot where it struck the ground when dropped in the right way for the second time.

When taking relief, your relief area is one or two club-lengths from a reference point. A club-length is the length of the longest club selected for play excluding your putter. For most players, that's their driver. You may leave the headcover on when measuring, but the extra length doesn't count.

Your reference point when taking relief for an abnormal course condition, dangerous animal situation or wrong green is called the nearest point of complete relief. It's the spot on the course nearest to where your ball lies where you could play the intended stroke with no interference from the condition.

Abnormal Course Conditions (Including IOs)/Embedded Ball

Certain conditions are not treated as part of the challenging of playing the course, and free relief is given for abnormal course conditions and embedded balls in the general area and also in a bunker.

Abnormal course conditions are temporary water, ground under repair, immovable obstructions and animal holes. Objects that define out of bounds (e.g., white stakes, fences) are not abnormal course conditions, so there's no free relief from those objects. When an abnormal course condition is only on your line of play, that is not considered interference so free relief is not given.

If your ball is stuck in the ground (embedded), you get free relief. However, you must find your ball to take this relief.

Making a Stroke

The game of golf is meant to be at a prompt pace of play. You should make a stroke in no more than 40 seconds and normally should be able to play more quickly.

In making a stroke, it must be free flowing and not anchored. You may use a distance-measuring device to measure distance only, but it must not measure slope or other conditions may assist you. You are also allowed to listen to music but should be considerate to other players on the course.

Ball Moved or Deflected

One of the central principles of golf is to play the ball as it lies. Therefore, if your ball at rest is moved, you must replace the ball. If the ball is moved by another player in stroke play or during search, you get no penalty. However, you are expected to care when near your ball and will get a one-stroke penalty if you cause it move.

When your ball in motion is accidentally deflect or stopped, there is no penalty and normally, you must accept the result, whether favorable or not, and play the ball from where it comes to rest.

Order of Play/Ready Golf

While playing a hole, the ball farthest from the hole is typically played first.

In order to assist with playing at a prompt pace of play, you are allowed to play out of turn to save time. However, it should be done in a safe and responsible manner.

In four-ball play, you and your partner can play in whatever order you think is best when it is your side's turn to play (i.e., one of your ball is farthest from the hole).