Interpretations to the New Rules of Golf for 2019

R&A Rules Limited and the United States Golf Association

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RULES
Rule 1.2a Interpretations:

1.2a/1 – Meaning of Serious Misconduct

The phrase “serious misconduct” in Rule 1.2a is intended to cover player misconduct that is so far removed from the expected norm in golf that the most severe sanction of removing a player from the competition is justified. This includes dishonesty, deliberately interfering with another player’s rights, or endangering the safety of others.

The Committee must determine if the misconduct is serious considering all the circumstances. Even if the Committee determines that the misconduct is serious, it may take the view that it is more appropriate to warn the player that a repeat of the misconduct or similar misconduct will result in disqualification, instead of disqualifying him or her in the first instance.

Examples of actions by a player that are likely to be considered serious misconduct include:

- Deliberately causing serious damage to a putting green.
- Disagreeing with the course setup and taking it on himself or herself to move tee-markers or boundary stakes.
- Throwing a club towards another player or spectator.
- Deliberately distracting other players while they are making strokes.
- Removing loose impediments or movable obstructions to disadvantage another player after that other player has asked him or her to leave them in place.
- Repeatedly refusing to lift a ball at rest when it interferes with another player in stroke play.
- Deliberately playing away from the hole and then towards the hole to assist the player’s partner (such as helping the player’s partner learn the break on the putting green).
- Deliberately not playing in accordance with the Rules and potentially gaining a significant advantage by doing so, despite incurring a penalty for a breach of the relevant Rule.
- Repeatedly using vulgar or offensive language.
- Using a handicap that has been established for the purpose of providing an unfair advantage or using the round being played to establish such a handicap.

Examples of actions by a player that, although involving misconduct, are unlikely to be considered serious misconduct include:

- Slamming a club to the ground, damaging the club and causing minor damage to the turf.
- Throwing a club towards a golf bag that unintentionally hits another person.
- Carelessly distracting another player making a stroke.

Rule 1.3b(1) Interpretations:
1.3b(1)/1 – Disqualifying Players Who Know a Rule but Deliberately Agree to Ignore It

If two or more players deliberately agree to ignore any Rule or penalty they know applies, they will be disqualified unless the agreement is made before the round and is cancelled before any player involved in the agreement begins his or her round.

For example, in stroke play, two players agree to consider putts within a club-length of the hole holed, when they know that they must hole out on each hole.

While on the first putting green, another player in the group learns of this agreement. That player insists the two players who made the agreement hole out, and they do so.

Even though neither player who made the agreement acted on it by failing to hole out, they are still disqualified because they deliberately agreed to ignore Rule 3.3c (Failure to Hole Out).

1.3b(1)/2 – In Order to Agree to Ignore a Rule or Penalty, Players Must Be Aware the Rule Exists

Rule 1.3b(1) does not apply and there is no penalty if players agree to waive a Rule that they are not aware of or fail to apply a penalty that they do not know exists.

Examples where two players are unaware of a Rule, or where they have failed to apply a penalty, and therefore are not disqualified under Rule 1.3b(1), include:

• In a match, two players agree in advance to concede all putts within a specific length but are unaware that the Rules prohibit them from agreeing to concede putts in this way.

• Before a 36-hole match, two players agree that they will play only 18 holes and whoever is behind at that point will concede the match, not knowing that this agreement does not comply with the Terms of the Competition.

The match goes forward on that basis and the player behind after 18 holes concedes the match. Since the players do not know such an agreement is not allowed, the concession stands.

• In a stroke-play competition, a player and his or her marker, who is also a player, are unsure if the relief area for ground under repair is one club-length or two. Unaware of the Rule, they agree that it is two club-lengths and the player takes relief by dropping a ball almost two club-lengths from the nearest point of complete relief. Later in the round the Committee becomes aware of this.

Although neither player is disqualified under Rule 1.3b(1) because they were unaware of the Rule, the player has played from a wrong place and gets the penalty under Rule 14.7 (Playing from Wrong Place). There is no penalty for accidentally giving incorrect information on the Rules of Golf.

Interpretations Related to Rule 1.3b(2):

• 6.1/1 – What to Do When One or More Tee-Markers Are Missing
• 9.6/2 – Where to Replace Ball When It Was Moved from Unknown Location
• 17.1a/2 – Ball Lost in Either Penalty Area or Abnormal Course Condition Adjacent to Penalty Area
• 17.1d(3)/2 – Player Drops Ball Based on Estimate of Where the Ball Last Crossed Edge of Penalty Area That Turns Out to Be the Wrong Point

**Rule 1.3c(1) Interpretations:**

1.3c(1)/1 – Action of Another Person Breaches a Rule For Player

A player is responsible when another person’s action breaches a Rule with respect to the player if it is done at the player’s request or if the player sees the action and allows it.

Examples of when a player gets the penalty because he or she requested or allowed the action include:

• A player asks a spectator to move a loose impediment near his or her ball. If the ball moves the player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4b (Penalty for Lifting or Deliberately Touching Ball or Causing It to Move) and the ball must be replaced.

• A player’s ball is being searched for in tall grass. A spectator finds the ball and presses the grass down around the ball, improving the conditions affecting the stroke. If the player, seeing that this is about to happen, does not take reasonable steps to try to stop the spectator, he or she gets the general penalty for a breach of Rule 8.1a (Player’s Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke).

**Rule 1.3c(4) Interpretations:**

1.3c(4)/1 – Intervening Event Between Breaches Results in Multiple Penalties

When a player breaches multiple Rules or the same Rule multiple times, any relationship between the breaches is broken by an intervening event and the player will get multiple penalties.

The three types of intervening events where the player will get multiple penalties are:

• Making a stroke. Example: In stroke play, a player’s ball is near a bush. The player breaks branches and this improves the area of intended swing (a breach of Rule 8.1a). The player makes a stroke, misses the ball, and then breaks more branches (a breach of Rule 8.1a). In this case, the stroke that missed the ball is an intervening event between the two breaches. Therefore, the player gets two separate two-stroke penalties under Rule 8.1a, for four penalty strokes in total.

• Putting a ball in play. Examples:

  » In stroke play, a player’s ball is under a tree. The player breaks tree branches, improving the conditions affecting the stroke, but then decides the ball is unplayable. The player drops a ball within two club-lengths under Rule 19.2c (Unplayable Ball Relief) and then breaks more tree branches. In addition to the one penalty stroke under Rule 19.2, the player gets two separate two-
stroke penalties under Rule 8.1a for improving conditions affecting the stroke, for five penalty strokes in total.

» A player’s ball lies in the fairway and he or she accidentally moves the ball at rest. As required by Rule 9.4 (Ball Lifted or Moved by Player), the player replaces the ball and adds one penalty stroke. Before making a stroke, the player accidentally moves the ball again. The player gets an additional penalty stroke and must again replace the ball, for two penalty strokes in total.

• Becoming aware of the breach. Example: In stroke play, a player’s ball lies in a bunker where the player takes several practice swings each time touching the sand. Another player advises the player that this is a breach of the Rules. The player disagrees and takes several more practice swings, again touching the sand before making a stroke. Correctly informing the player of the breach of the Rules is an intervening event and, therefore, the player gets two separate two-stroke penalties under Rule 12.2b (Restrictions on Touching Sand in Bunker), for four penalty strokes in total.

1.3c(4)/2 – Multiple Breaches From a Single Act Result in a Single Penalty

A single act may breach two different Rules. In this situation, one penalty is applied. In the case of two Rules with different penalties, the higher-level penalty will apply.

For example, a player presses down the grass behind his or her ball in play and improves the lie in the rough, accidentally moving the ball as well. This single act (that is, pressing down the grass) breached two Rules, Rule 8.1a (Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke) and Rule 9.4b (Lifting or Deliberately Touching Ball or Causing It to Move) and only one penalty applies.

In this case, the penalty under Rule 8.1a is the general penalty and the penalty under Rule 9.4b is one penalty stroke. Therefore, the higher-level penalty applies and the player loses the hole in match play or must add a total penalty of two strokes in stroke play under Rule 8.1a and the ball must be replaced.

1.3c(4)/3 – Meaning of Unrelated Acts

Unrelated acts in the context of Rule 1.3c(4) are acts of a player that are of a different type or associated with a different process.

Examples of unrelated acts where multiple penalties apply include:

• Making a practice swing that touches sand in a bunker and bending an overhanging tree branch that interferes with the player’s swing.

• Moving an immovable obstruction that improves the area of the player’s swing and pressing down grass behind the ball.

Examples of related acts where only one penalty applies include:

• Making several practice swings that touch sand in a bunker.

• Asking for two different pieces of advice, such as what club the player used and what the wind direction is, both related to the process of selecting what club to
use for the next stroke.

1.3c(4)/4 – Not Replacing the Ball May Be Considered a Separate and Unrelated Act

In the example given in 1.3c(4)/2, a single act of pressing down grass and moving the ball breached two Rules (Rule 8.1a and Rule 9.4b) and resulted in a single penalty being applied under Rule 8.1a (Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke).

However, Rule 9.4b (Lifting or Deliberately Touching Ball or Causing It to Move) requires that the moved ball be replaced and, if it is not replaced before the stroke, the player will get an additional penalty of two strokes under Rule 9.4b. The failure to replace the ball is considered a separate and unrelated act.

Rule 1.3c General Interpretations:

1.3c/1 – Player Is Not Disqualified from a Competition When That Round Does Not Count

In competitions where not all rounds count, a player is not disqualified from the competition for being disqualified from a single round.

Examples of when a player is not disqualified from the competition:

• In a handicap competition where the two best of four rounds count, a player mistakenly returns his or her scorecard with a higher handicap that affects how many strokes are received in the first round.

Since the higher handicap affected the number of handicap strokes received, the player is disqualified from the first round of the competition and now has three rounds in which to determine his or her two best net scores.

• In a team competition with four-player teams, where the three best scores for each round are added up to make the team’s score for each round, a player is disqualified from the second round for not correcting the play of a wrong ball. That player’s score does not count for the team score in the second round but the player’s score would count for any other round of the competition.

1.3c/2 – Applying Disqualification Penalties, Concessions and Wrong Number of Strokes in a Stroke-Play Play-Off

During a play-off in a stroke-play competition the Rules are applied as follows:

• If a player is disqualified (such as for making a stroke with a non-conforming club), the player is disqualified from the play-off only and the player is entitled to any prize that may have been won in the competition itself.

• If two players are in the play-off, one player is allowed to concede the play-off to the other player.

• If Player A mistakenly gives the wrong number of strokes to Player B and that mistake results in Player B lifting his or her ball (such as when Player B thinks he or she has lost the play-off to Player A), Player B is allowed to replace the
ball without penalty and complete the hole. There is no penalty to Player A.
Rule 3.2b(1) Interpretations:

3.2b(1)/1 – Players Must Not Concede Holes to Deliberately Shorten a Match

Although a player is allowed to concede a hole to his or her opponent at any time before that hole is completed, a player and opponent are not allowed to agree to concede holes to each other to deliberately shorten the match. For example, before starting a match, a player and his or her opponent agree to alternate the concession of holes 6, 7, 8 and 9 to one another. If they know that the Rules do not allow them to make concessions in this way and start the match without cancelling the agreement, both players are disqualified under Rule 1.3b(1) (Player Responsibility for Applying the Rules). If the players are unaware that this is not allowed, the match stands as played.

Rule 3.2b(2) Interpretations:

3.2b(2)/1 – Concession Is Not Valid When Caddie Attempts to Make Concession

One of the actions a caddie is not allowed to take is to concede the next stroke, a hole or the match to the opponent. If a caddie attempts to concede, that concession is not valid. There is no penalty to the player for this action of the caddie since Rule 10.3b(3) (Actions Not Allowed By Caddie) does not specify a penalty.

If the opponent takes an action based on the caddie’s attempt to concede, such as lifting a ball in play or a ball-marker, this would be a reasonable misunderstanding under Rule 3.2b(2). There is no penalty and the ball or ball-marker must be replaced unless the player then makes a concession. However, if the caddie who made the invalid concession lifted the opponent’s ball or ball-marker or the ball or ball-marker of his or her player, that caddie’s player would get a penalty if that act was a breach of Rule 9.4 or Rule 9.5.

Rule 3.2c(1) Interpretations:

3.2c(1)/1 – Declaring Higher Handicap Is a Breach Even If Affected Hole Has Not Been Played

If a player declares a higher handicap to his or her opponent before playing the hole that would be affected, the player is still disqualified since this could have affected the opponent’s strategy.

For example, while waiting on the first tee to start the match, Player A declares that his or her handicap is 12, when it is really 11. Player B declares that his or her handicap is 10, and Player B makes a stroke to start play of the 1st hole. Player A is disqualified under Rule 3.2c(1) because Player B made a stroke in the match with the understanding that Player A gets two handicap strokes.

Rule 3.2c(2) Interpretations:
3.2c(2)/1 – Handicap Stroke Not Applied During a Match Is Discovered Later in Match

Handicap strokes that a player fails to apply are treated in the same way as those that are mistakenly applied.

**Rule 3.2d(1) Interpretations:**

3.2d(1)/1 – Number of Strokes Taken During Play of a Hole Does Not Need to Be Given by Player If It Is the Player’s Turn to Play

If the opponent asks the player for the number of strokes taken when it is the player’s turn to play, the player is not required to give this information right away.

The player is required to provide the number of strokes taken only before the opponent makes his or her next stroke or takes a similar action. The player may play his or her shot before giving such information.

3.2d(1)/2 – Meaning of the “No Penalty If No Effect on Result of Hole” Exception

During play of a hole, a player must give the right number of strokes taken so his or her opponent can decide how to play the hole. However, after a hole is completed, if a player gives the wrong number of strokes taken, there is no penalty under the Exception to Rule 3.2d(1) if doing so did not affect the opponent’s understanding of whether the hole was won, lost or tied.

For example, after completing a hole at which the opponent scored a 7, the player mistakenly states that he or she scored a 5, when the player actually scored a 6. After starting the next hole, the player realizes that he or she scored a 6. Since the wrong number of strokes taken did not change the fact that the player had won the hole, there is no penalty.

3.2d(1)/3 – Wrong Number of Strokes Given by Player After Hole Completed and the Mistake Is Discovered Several Holes Later

If a player gives the wrong number of strokes taken after a hole is completed, the player gets the general penalty if the mistake affects the result of the hole and is not corrected in time. In such a case, the match score must be corrected.

For example, after completing the 1st hole the player tells the opponent that he or she scored a 4 but actually scored a 5. The opponent scored a 5 on the hole. After playing several more holes, the player realizes that he or she gave the opponent the wrong number of strokes taken on the 1st hole.

Even though the hole would have been a tie if the right number of strokes taken had been given, the player gets a loss-of-hole penalty on the first hole because the mistake affected the understanding of the result of the hole.

The match score must be corrected.

3.2d(1)/4 – Wrong Number of Strokes Given by Player After Hole Completed and the Mistake Is Discovered After Result of the Match Is Final
If a player unknowingly gives the wrong number of strokes taken after a hole is completed but the mistake is not realized until after the result of the match is final (Rule 3.2a(5) – When Result Is Final), the result of the match stands as played.

For example, after completing the 17th hole, the player tells the opponent that he or she scored a 3, but actually scored a 4. The opponent scored a 4 on the hole. The players play the 18th hole, and the result of the player winning the match 1 up is made final. The player then realizes that he or she gave the opponent the wrong number of strokes taken on the 17th hole.

Because the player unknowingly gave the wrong number of strokes and the result of the match is final, there is no penalty and the match result stands, with the player as the winner (Rule 20.1b(3) – Ruling Request Made After Result of Match Is Final).

3.2d(1)/5 – Changing Mind About Taking Penalty Relief Is Not Giving Wrong Number of Strokes Taken

The right number of strokes taken means only the strokes a player has already made and any penalty strokes already received.

For example, the player’s ball lies in a penalty area and the opponent asks how the player intends to proceed. Although not required to answer the question, the player advises that he or she will take penalty relief. After the opponent plays, the player decides to play the ball as it lies in the penalty area.

The player was entitled to change his or her mind and there was no penalty for doing so since stating future intentions is not the same as giving the number of strokes taken.

**Rule 3.2d(2) Interpretations:**

3.2d(2)/1 – “As Soon as Reasonably Possible” Is Not Always Before the Opponent’s Next Stroke

The broad phrase of “as soon as reasonably possible” allows for consideration of all relevant circumstances, especially how near the player is to the opponent.

For example, if the player takes unplayable ball relief when the opponent is on the opposite side of the fairway and the opponent plays before the player can walk over to tell the opponent about the penalty, “as soon as reasonably possible” may be while they are walking up to the hole to make their next strokes.

There is no set procedure for determining what is “as soon as reasonably possible”, but it does not always mean before the opponent makes the next stroke.

**Rule 3.2d(3) Interpretations:**

3.2d(3)/1 – Deliberately Giving Incorrect Match Score or Failing to Correct Opponent’s Misunderstanding of Match Score May Result in Disqualification
Rule 3.2d(3) expects players to know the match score, but does not require a player to give the match score to the opponent.

If a player deliberately gives an incorrect match score or deliberately fails to correct the opponent’s misunderstanding of the match score, he or she has not given the wrong number of strokes taken. But the Committee should disqualify the player under Rule 1.2a (Serious Misconduct).

3.2d(3)/2 – Agreement to Wrong Match Score at a Prior Hole Discovered Later in Match

If a player and his or her opponent agree to a wrong match score, the match score stands. This is not the same as giving an incorrect number of strokes taken.

For example, after the 10th hole, a player mistakenly says to his or her opponent that the match score is tied and his or her opponent agrees to this score. Before starting the 12th hole, the opponent realizes that he or she was actually 1 up after the 10th hole and requests a ruling on the basis that the player gave the wrong match score.

Players are expected to know the match score and, because the players agreed to the wrong match score and this was not corrected before starting the 11th hole, the wrong match score stands. There is no penalty to the player who mistakenly gave the wrong match score.

**Rule 3.3b(1) Interpretations:**

3.3b(1)/1 – Marker Should Be Disqualified if He or She Knowingly Certifies a Wrong Score For Another Player

If a marker, who is a player, knowingly certifies a wrong score for a hole (including a hole score that does not include a penalty that the marker knew the player received on that hole), the marker should be disqualified under Rule 1.2a (Serious Misconduct).

For example, a player returns a scorecard with a hole score that is lower than actually taken because he or she was unaware of a penalty that should have been included. However, the player’s marker was aware of the penalty before the scorecard was returned, but knowingly failed to notify the player and certified the scorecard anyway.

Although Rule 3.3b(1) does not apply a penalty for knowingly certifying a wrong score for another player, it is not in the spirit of the game. Therefore, the Committee should disqualify the marker under Rule 1.2a (Serious Misconduct).

The player’s score is then revised as provided in Rule 3.3b(3) (Wrong Score for a Hole).

3.3b(1)/2 – Marker May Refuse to Certify Player’s Score Based on a Disagreement

A marker is not required to certify a hole score that he or she believes is wrong.

For example, if there is a dispute between a player and his or her marker about
whether there was a breach of the Rules or the player’s score for a hole and the marker reports the facts of the disagreement to the Committee, the marker is not required to certify the hole score for the hole that he or she believes is incorrect.

The Committee will need to consider the available facts and make a decision as to the player’s score on the hole in question. If the marker refuses to certify that hole score, the Committee should accept certification from someone else who saw the player’s actions on the hole in question (such as another player) or the Committee itself can certify the player’s score on that hole.

**Rule 3.3b(2) Interpretations:**

**3.3b(2)/1 – Players Are Required to Enter Only Scores on a Scorecard**

There is a difference between requiring players to enter a score for a round into a computer (such as for handicapping purposes) and being required to enter hole scores using an electronic form of scorecard approved by the Committee (such as a mobile scoring application).

The Committee may require players to use a scorecard other than a paper scorecard (such as an electronic form of scorecard), but the Committee has no authority to impose a penalty under Rule 3.3b(2) for failing to enter scores elsewhere.

However, to help in administrative matters (such as the efficient production and communication of competition results), a Committee may apply a penalty under a Code of Conduct (Rule 1.2b) or provide disciplinary sanctions (such as revoking entry into the next competition) for failing to enter scores elsewhere.

**3.3b(2)/2 – No Extra Certification Is Required When Changes on Scorecard Are Made**

When the marker or the Committee approves a change in a hole score on the scorecard, neither the player nor the marker is required to initial or make any extra certification of the changed score.

The player’s certification applies to all hole scores, including those that were changed.

**3.3b(2)/3 – Application of the Exception for Marker Failing to Carry Out His or Her Responsibilities**

Under the Exception to Rule 3.3b(2), a player gets no penalty if there is a breach of the scorecard requirements because of a failure of the marker that is beyond the player’s control.

Examples of how the Exception operates include:

- If a marker leaves the course with a player’s scorecard after a round, the Committee should try to contact the marker. However, if unable to do so, the Committee should accept certification of the player’s scores by someone who saw the round. If no one else is available, the Committee itself can certify the player’s scores.
• If a player needs to correct a hole score after the scorecard has been certified by the marker, but the marker is not available or has already left, the Committee should try to contact the marker. If unable to do so, the Committee should accept certification of the alteration by someone else who saw the player play that hole or, if no such person is available, the Committee itself can certify that score.

**Rule 3.3b(3) Interpretations:**

3.3b(3)/1 – Scores on Scorecard Must Be Identifiable to Correct Hole

Under Rule 3.3b, each hole score on the scorecard must be identifiable to the correct hole.

For example, if a marker enters the player’s front nine scores in the back nine boxes and the back nine scores in the front nine boxes, the scorecard will still be acceptable if the mistake is corrected by altering the hole numbers so that they go with the right score for each hole.

However, if this mistake is not corrected and, as a result, a hole score is lower than actually taken on that hole, the player is disqualified under Rule 3.3b(3).

**Rule 3.3b(4) Interpretations:**

3.3b(4)/1 – Meaning of “Handicap” Player Must Show on Scorecard

In net-score stroke-play competitions, it is the player’s responsibility to ensure that his or her handicap is shown on the scorecard. “Handicap” means the handicap for the course and tees being played, excluding any handicap allowances as set out within the Terms of the Competition. The Committee is responsible for applying any handicap allowances and adjustments.

3.3b(4)/2 – Player Not Exempt From Penalty When Committee Provides a Scorecard With an Incorrect Handicap

If the Committee provides players with scorecards containing their handicaps, each player must make sure that the right handicap is shown on his or her scorecard before returning it.

For example, as a courtesy, the Committee chooses to issue pre-printed scorecards containing the date and each player’s name and handicap.

If such a scorecard mistakenly has a player’s handicap being higher than it actually is, and this affects the number of strokes he or she gets, the player is disqualified under Rule 3.3b(4) if he or she does not correct this mistake before returning the scorecard.

3.3b(4)/3 – No Penalty When a Higher Handicap Has No Effect

If a player returns his or her scorecard with a higher handicap than he or she is entitled to, but that higher handicap does not affect how many handicap strokes he or she gets, there is no penalty since it does not affect the competition.

For example, a Term of the Competition is to use 90% of each player’s handicap.
A player is a 5 handicap, but the player returns his or her scorecard showing a handicap of 6. Since 90% of 5 or 6 equals 5 when rounded to the nearest whole number, using the handicap of 6 does not affect how many handicap strokes the player gets, so there is no penalty.

**Rule 3.3b General Interpretations:**

**3.3b/1 – Players Must Be Accompanied by a Marker for the Entire Round**

The purpose of a marker is to certify that a player’s score for each hole is correctly shown on the player’s scorecard. If a marker is not with the player for the entire round, the scorecard cannot be properly certified.

For example, if a player plays several holes without his or her marker and the marker enters the player’s scores for the holes the player played alone, the scorecard cannot be properly certified under Rule 3.3b.

The player should have insisted that the marker accompany the player for all of the holes. If the marker was unable to do so, the player should have asked another person to serve as his or her marker. If that was not possible, the player was required to stop play and report to the Committee so that another marker could be assigned.

**3.3b/2 – Information Put in Wrong Location on Scorecard May Still Be Acceptable**

Although all requirements of Rule 3.3b must be met before a scorecard is returned, there is no penalty if the correct information is mistakenly entered on the scorecard in a place other than where it was expected to be, except that each hole score on the scorecard must be identifiable to the correct hole (see 3.3b(3)/1).

For example:

- If the player and marker certify the hole scores in the location where the other was meant to certify, the player’s scores have been certified as required under Rule 3.3b. The same would be true if initials were used to certify, rather than the full name.
- If the player’s scores are recorded on the marker’s scorecard and the marker’s on the player’s, but the scores are correct and both scorecards are acceptable, then both scorecards are acceptable as long as the players tell the Committee which scorecard belongs to which player. As the nature of this mistake is administrative, there is no time limit on making such a correction (see 20.2d/1).

**3.3b/3 – Another Scorecard May Be Used if Official Scorecard Is Misplaced**

Although a player should return the scorecard that he or she was given by the Committee, Rule 3.3b does not require the same scorecard to be returned if it was damaged or misplaced.

For example, if the marker misplaces a paper scorecard that had been handed out by the Committee, it would be acceptable to use another scorecard (such as
a club *scorecard*) so long as that *scorecard* has the player’s name and hole scores, and is certified by the player and *marker*.

When an electronic scoring system is used and the player or *marker* loses internet connectivity or there is a technical issue, the players should raise the matter with the *Committee* as soon as possible and no later than immediately after the round is completed.
Rule 4.1a(1) Interpretations:

4.1a(1)/1 – Wear Through Normal Use Does Not Change Conformity

Normal use includes strokes, practice strokes and practice swings, as well as acts such as removing a club from and replacing a club into the golf bag. If wear through normal use occurs, the player’s club is treated as conforming, and he or she may continue to use it.

Examples of wear through normal use include when:

- Material inside a clubhead has broken loose and may rattle during the stroke or when the head is shaken.
- A wear mark has formed on the club’s grip where the thumbs are placed.
- A depression is formed on the club face through repeated use.
- The grooves on the club’s face are worn.

4.1a(1)/2 – No Penalty for Stroke with Non-Conforming Club When Stroke Disregarded

If a player makes a stroke with a non-conforming club, the player is not disqualified if the stroke does not count in the player’s score.

Examples of when the player gets no penalty for making a stroke with a non-conforming club include when:

- The player used the club to make a stroke at a provisional ball, but it never became the ball in play.
- The player used the club to make a stroke, but the stroke was cancelled.
- The player used the club to make a stroke at a second ball under Rule 20.1c(3), but that ball was not the ball that counted for his or her score.

Rule 4.1a(2) Interpretations:

4.1a(2)/1 – Meaning of “Repair”

Examples of repair include:

- Replacing lead tape that fell off during a stroke. Given the nature of lead tape, if the lead tape will not remain on the club in the same location, new tape may be used.
- Tightening clubs with adjustable mechanisms that come loose during the round, but not adjusting the club to a different setting.

Rule 4.1b(1) Interpretations:

4.1b(1)/1 – Separate Clubhead and Shaft Are Not a Club

With respect to Rule 4.1b(1), separated parts of a club are not a club and do not count towards a player’s 14-club limit.

For example, if a player starts his or her round with 14 clubs and is also carrying
separated club components, the player is considered to be carrying only 14 clubs and there is no breach of Rule 4.1b(1).

4.1b(1)/2 – Club Broken into Pieces Does Not Count Towards the 14-Club Limit

A club that has broken into pieces does not count towards the player’s 14-club limit even when the player begins a round with that broken club.

For example, while warming up on the practice range, a player’s club breaks just below the grip and the player starts the round with that broken club in his or her bag. That club does not count as one of the 14 clubs the player is allowed to carry.

4.1b(1)/3 – Clubs Carried for Player Count Towards the 14-Club Limit

The 14-club limit applies to any clubs being carried by the player, his or her caddie, or any other person he or she asks to carry clubs.

For example, if a player begins the round with 10 clubs and asks another person to walk along with the group and carry 8 additional clubs from which the player intends to add to his or her bag during the round, the player is considered to have started the round with more than 14 clubs.

4.1b(1)/4 – Club Is Considered Added When Next Stroke Made

A club is considered added when the player makes his or her next stroke with any club while the added club is in the player’s possession. This applies whether or not the player is allowed to add or replace a club.

For example, if a player who starts the round with 14 clubs decides to replace his or her putter with another putter between the play of two holes and does so without unreasonably delaying play, the player is not penalized if he or she realizes the mistake and corrects it prior to making the next stroke with any club.

Rule 4.1b(2) Interpretations:

4.1b(2)/1 – Multiple Players May Carry Clubs in One Bag

The Rules do not restrict multiple players (such as partners) from carrying their clubs in one bag. However, to reduce the risk of penalty under Rule 4.1b, they should make sure the clubs are clearly identifiable to each player.

4.1b(2)/2 – Sharing Clubs Is Not Allowed for Strokes That Count in a Player’s Score

The prohibition against sharing clubs applies only to strokes that count in a player’s score. It does not apply to practice swings, practice strokes or strokes made after the result of a hole is decided.

For example, there is no penalty under Rule 4.1b if, between the play of two holes, a player borrows another player’s putter and makes several practice putts on the putting green of the hole just completed.
**Rule 4.1b(4) Interpretations:**

4.1b(4)/1 – Club Components May Be Assembled When Not Carried By or For Player

Rule 4.1b(4) restricts a player from building a club from parts that he or she is carrying or parts that any other person is carrying for him or her. It does not restrict the player from retrieving parts to build a club or having parts brought to him or her.

For example, if a player is permitted to add a club (see Rule 4.1b(1)) or replace a damaged club (see Rule 4.1b(3)), club components brought from the clubhouse (such as the player’s locker), the golf shop, or a manufacturer’s truck, or other similar locations, are not considered to be “carried by anyone for the player during the round” and are allowed to be assembled by the player or anyone else.

**Rule 4.1b Interpretations:**

4.1b/1 – How to Apply Adjustment Penalty Once Any Player Starts Hole During Match

If any player in a match has started play of a hole when a breach of Rule 4.1b is discovered, the match adjustment penalty is applied at the end of that hole. If the player in breach has not started that hole, he or she is between holes and is not in breach on the next hole.

For example, after completing the first hole, the player tees off on the second hole. Before the opponent tees off, the opponent becomes aware that he or she is carrying 15 clubs in breach of Rule 4.1b(1). Since the opponent has not started the second hole, the match score is only adjusted by one hole in the player’s favour, but the match score is not revised until the second hole is completed since the second hole started when the player teed off.

**Rule 4.2a(1) Interpretations:**

4.2a(1)/1 – Status of Ball Not on List of Conforming Golf Balls

In a competition in which the Committee has not adopted the Local Rule requiring players to use a brand and model of ball on the current List of Conforming Golf Balls, a player may use the following golf balls:

- Brands and models that have never been tested – these are presumed to conform and the onus of proof is on the person alleging that the ball does not conform.
- Brands and models that appeared on a previous List but have not been re-submitted for inclusion on the current List – these are presumed to continue to conform.

However, brands and models that have been tested and found not to conform to the Equipment Rules must not be played, whether or not the Local Rule has been adopted.
4.2a(1)/2 – Status of “X-Out”, “Refurbished” and “Practice” Balls

If a player chooses to play a ball that is marked as “X-Out” or “Practice” by the manufacturer, or a ball that has been refurbished, these balls are treated as follows under the Equipment Rules:

• “X-Out” is the common name used for a golf ball that a manufacturer considers to be imperfect (often for aesthetic reasons only, such as paint or printing errors) and, therefore, has crossed out the brand name. “Refurbished” refers to a second-hand golf ball that has been cleaned and stamped as “refurbished” or a similar stamping.

In the absence of strong evidence to suggest that an “X-Out” or “refurbished” ball does not conform to the Equipment Rules, a player is allowed to use it. However, if the Committee has adopted the List of Conforming Golf Balls as a Local Rule, such a ball must not be used even if the identification markings on the ball in question appear on the List.

• “Practice” balls are typically listed, conforming golf balls that have been stamped “Practice” or with a similar stamping. “Practice” balls are treated in the same way as golf balls that feature a golf club or course, company, school or other logo.

Such balls may be used even where the Committee has adopted the List of Conforming Golf Balls as a Local Rule.

4.2a(1)/3 – No Penalty for Playing Non-Conforming Ball When Stroke Is Disregarded

If a player makes a stroke at a non-conforming ball or a ball not on the List of Conforming Golf Balls when the Local Rule is in effect, the player is not disqualified if the stroke does not count in the player’s score.

Examples of when a player gets no penalty include when the player plays a ball that is not allowed:

• As a provisional ball, but the provisional ball never becomes the ball in play.
• When the stroke with that ball is cancelled.
• As a second ball under Rule 20.1c(3), but that ball is not the ball that counts for his or her score.

Rule 4.3a(1) Interpretations:

4.3a(1)/1 – Restrictions on Using Equipment to Gauge Slope

Although a player may use his or her club as a plumb line to assist in judging or gauging slope and contours, there is other equipment that a player may not use in judging a slope or contour.

For example, a player is not allowed to gauge slope by:

• Placing a bottled drink to act as a level.
• Holding or placing a bubble level.
• Using a weight suspended on a string as a plumb line.

**Rule 4.3a(2) Interpretations:**

4.3a(2)/1 – Using Artificial Objects to Get Wind-Related Information Is Not Allowed

Rule 4.3a(2) gives a single example of an artificial object not allowed to get wind-related information (powder to assess wind direction). However, other artificial objects must not be used for the sole purpose of getting wind-related information.

For example, if a player takes a handkerchief out for the sole purpose of holding it in the air to see which direction the wind is blowing, the player’s action is a breach of Rule 4.3.

**Rule 4.3a(4) Interpretations:**

4.3a(4)/1 – Viewing Video That Is Being Shown at the Course

There is no breach of Rule 4.3a(4) if a player views video that is being shown for the benefit of spectators at a golf competition.

For example, if a player is standing on a tee waiting to play, and he or she is able to see a public screen showing live coverage of the competition, statistical information, wind speed or other similar things, there is no breach of the Rule 4.3 if the player watches the coverage or views the information, even if it could help the player in choosing a club, making a stroke, or deciding how to play.

**Rule 4.3 General Interpretation:**

**Rule 4.3/1 – Player Breaches Rule 4.3 Between Holes; How to Apply the Penalty**

For the first breach of Rule 4.3, the player gets the general penalty on the hole where the breach occurs. However, if the player breaches Rule 4.3 between the play of two holes, the penalty is applied to the next hole to be played.

For example, a player uses an alignment rod to check his or her swing plane between the play of two holes.

In *match play*, the player loses the next hole or, in *stroke play*, he or she gets two penalty strokes and will start the next hole making his or her third stroke.
Rule 5.2b Interpretations:

5.2b/1 – Meaning of “Completing Play of His or Her Final Round for That Day” in Stroke Play

In stroke play, a player has completed his or her final round for that day when he or she will not play any more holes that day on the course as part of the competition.

For example, having completed play in the first round on the first day of a two-day 36-hole stroke-play competition, a player is permitted by Rule 5.2b to practise on the competition course later that day as long as his or her next round will not start until the next day.

However, if the player finishes one round but will play another round or part of a round on the course on that same day, practising on the course would breach Rule 5.2b.

For example, having completed play in a stroke-play qualifying round for a match-play competition, a player practises on the course. After the conclusion of play, the player is tied for the last qualifying place for the match-play competition. The tie is to be decided by a hole-by-hole stroke-play play-off that is scheduled to be played immediately after play the same day on that course.

If the player’s practice on the course was his or her first breach of Rule 5.2b, the player gets the general penalty applied to the first hole of the play-off.

Otherwise, the player is disqualified from the play-off under Rule 5.2b for practising on the course before the play-off.

5.2b/2 – Practice Stroke After Hole but Between Rounds Allowed

The permissions for practising in Rule 5.5b (Restriction on Practice Strokes Between Two Holes) override the prohibitions in Rule 5.2b in that a player is allowed to practise on or near the putting green of the hole just completed even if he or she will play that hole again on the same day.

Examples of when practising putting or chipping on or near the putting green of the hole just completed is allowed even though play for the day is not over include when:

• A player is playing an 18-hole stroke-play competition on a 9-hole course in one day and practises putting on the 3rd green after completing the 3rd hole during the first round.

• A player is playing a 36-hole stroke-play competition on the same course in one day and practises chipping near the 18th green after completing the 18th hole during the first round.

5.2b/3 – Practising May Be Allowed on Course Before a Round in a Competition that Covers Consecutive Days

When a competition is scheduled on a course over consecutive days and the Committee schedules some players to play on the first day and others to play on a later day, a player is allowed to practise on the course on any day that he or she is
not scheduled to play his or her *round*.

For example, if a competition is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday and a player is only scheduled to play on Sunday, that player is allowed to practice on the *course* on Saturday.

**Rule 5.3a Interpretations:**

*5.3a/1 – Exceptional Circumstances That Warrant Waiving Starting Time Penalty*

The term “exceptional circumstances” in Exception 3 under Rule 5.3a does not mean unfortunate or unexpected events outside a player’s control. It is a player’s responsibility to allow enough time to reach the *course* and he or she must make allowances for possible delays.

There is no specific guidance in the Rules for deciding what is exceptional, as it depends on the circumstances in each case and must be left to the determination of the *Committee*.

One important factor not included in the examples below is that consideration should be given to a situation where multiple players are involved to the extent that the *Committee* should consider the situation to be exceptional.

Examples of circumstances that should be considered as exceptional include:

- The player was present at the scene of an accident and provided medical assistance or was required to give a statement as a witness and otherwise would have started on time.
- There is a fire alarm at the player’s hotel and he or she must evacuate. By the time the player can return to the room to dress or retrieve his or her *equipment*, the player is unable to make his or her starting time.

Examples of circumstances that would not generally be considered exceptional include:

- The player gets lost or his or her car breaks down on the way to the *course*.
- Heavy traffic or an accident results in the journey to the *course* taking longer than expected.

*5.3a/2 – Meaning of “Starting Point”*

In Rule 5.3a, the “starting point” is the *teeing area* of the hole where the player will start his or her *round* as set by the *Committee*.

For example, the *Committee* may start some groups on the 1st tee and some groups on the 10th tee. In a “shotgun start”, the *Committee* may assign each group a different hole to start on.

The *Committee* may set a standard for what it means for the player to be at the starting point. For example, the *Committee* may state that, to be at the starting point, the player must be within the gallery ropes of the *teeing area* of the hole to be played.

*5.3a/3 – Meaning of “Ready to Play”*
The term “ready to play” means that the player has at least one club and ball ready for immediate use.

For example, if a player arrives at his or her starting point by the starting time with a ball and a club (even if just the player’s putter), the player is considered ready to play. Should the player decide to wait for a different club when it is his or her turn to play, he or she may get a penalty for unreasonably delaying play (Rule 5.6a).

5.3a/4 – Player at Starting Point but Then Leaves Starting Point

When a player is ready to play at the starting point, but then leaves the starting point for some reason, the Rule that applies depends if he or she is ready to play at the starting point at the starting time.

For example, a player’s starting time is 9:00 am and he or she is ready to play at the starting point at 8:57 am. The player realizes that he or she left something in a locker and leaves the starting point to get it. If the player does not arrive back at the starting point at 9:00:00 am, the player is late to his or her starting time, and Rule 5.3a applies.

However, if the player was ready to play at the starting point at 9:00 am and then went to his or her locker, the player may get the penalty under Rule 5.6a (Unreasonable Delay) since he or she satisfied the requirement of Rule 5.3a by being ready to play at the starting point by the starting time.

5.3a/5 – Match Starts on Second Hole When Both Players Late

When both players in a match arrive at the starting point ready to play no more than five minutes after their starting time and neither has experienced exceptional circumstances (Exception 3), they both get a loss of hole penalty and the result of the first hole is a tie.

For example, if the starting time is 9:00 am and the player arrives at the starting point ready to play at 9:02 am and the opponent arrives ready to play at 9:04 am, they both get a loss of hole penalty even though the player arrived before the opponent (Exception 1). Therefore, the first hole is tied and the match starts on the second hole all square. There is no penalty if they play the first hole to get to the teeing area of the second hole.

**Rule 5.5a Interpretations:**

5.5a/1 – Practice Stroke with Ball of Similar Size to Conforming Ball is Breach

A “practice stroke” under Rule 5.5a covers not only hitting a conforming ball with a club but hitting any other type of ball that is similar in size to a golf ball, such as a plastic practice ball.

Striking a tee or natural object with a club (such as a stone or a pine cone) is not a practice stroke.

**Rule 5.5b Interpretations:**
Interpretations to the New Rule of Golf – Draft of August 6, 2018

5.5b/1 – When Practising Between Holes Is Allowed

A player is allowed to practise putting and chipping when he or she is between the play of two holes. This is when the player has completed play of the previous hole, or in a form of play involving a partner, when the side has completed play of the previous hole.

Examples of when a player is between the play of two holes:

**Match Play:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>When the player has <em>holed out</em>, his or her next <em>stroke</em> has been conceded, or the outcome of the hole has been determined.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foursome</td>
<td>When the <em>side</em> has <em>holed out</em>, its next <em>stroke</em> has been conceded, or the outcome of the hole has been determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-Ball</td>
<td>When both <em>partners</em> have <em>holed out</em>, their next <em>strokes</em> have been conceded, or the outcome of the hole has been determined.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stroke Play:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>When the player has <em>holed out</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foursome</td>
<td>When the <em>side</em> has <em>holed out</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-Ball</td>
<td>When both <em>partners</em> have <em>holed out</em>, or one partner has holed out and the other cannot better the <em>side’s score</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stableford, Par/Bogey, and Maximum Score</td>
<td>When the player has holed out, or has picked up after scoring zero points, losing the hole or reaching the maximum score.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rule 5.5c Interpretations:**

5.5c/1 – Extra Practice Permissions No Longer Apply When Stroke-Play Round Resumed

In *stroke play*, when play is resumed by the Committee after it had been suspended, all players who had started their *rounds* prior to the suspension have resumed the play of their *round*. Consequently, those players are no longer allowed to practise other than as allowed by Rule 5.5b (Restriction on Practice Strokes Between Two Holes).

For example, if the Committee suspends play for the day and play will resume at 8:00 am on the following day, a player whose group will be the third group to play from a particular *teeing area* is not allowed to continue practising on the designated practice area after play has resumed at 8:00 am.

The player’s *round* has resumed, even though players in his or her group will not be able to make their next *strokes* right away. The only practice that is allowed is putting or chipping on or near the *putting green* of the hole last competed, any practice *putting green*, or the *teeing area* of the next hole.

**Rule 5.6a Interpretations:**
5.6a/1 – Examples of Delays That Are Considered Reasonable or Unreasonable

Unreasonable delays in the context of Rule 5.6a are delays caused by a player’s actions that are within the player’s control and affect other players or delay the competition. Brief delays that are a result of normal events that happen during a round or are outside the player’s control are generally treated as “reasonable”.

Determining which actions are reasonable or unreasonable depends on all the circumstances, including whether the player is waiting for other players in the group or the group ahead.

Examples of actions that are likely to be treated as reasonable are:

• Briefly stopping by the clubhouse or half-way house to get food or drink.
• Taking time to consult with others in the playing group to decide whether to play out the hole when there is a normal suspension by the Committee (Rule 5.7b(2)).

Examples of actions that, if causing more than a brief delay in play, are likely to be treated as unreasonable delay are:

• Returning to the teeing area from the putting green to retrieve a lost club.
• Continuing to search for a lost ball for several minutes after the allowed three-minute search time has expired.
• Stopping by the clubhouse or half-way house to get food or drink for more than a few minutes if the Committee has not allowed for it.

5.6a/2 – Player Who Gets Sudden Illness or Injury Is Normally Allowed 15 Minutes to Recover

If a player gets a sudden illness or injury (such as from heat exhaustion, a bee sting or being struck by a golf ball), the Committee should normally allow that player up to 15 minutes to recover before the player’s failure to continue play would be unreasonably delaying play.

The Committee should also normally apply this same time limit to the total time a player uses when he or she receives repeated treatments during a round to alleviate an injury.

Rule 5.7a Interpretations:

5.7a/1 – When a Player Has Stopped Play

Stopping play in the context of Rule 5.7a can either be an intentional act by the player or it can be a delay long enough to constitute stopping. Temporary delays, whether reasonable or unreasonable, are covered by Rule 5.6a (Unreasonable Delay).

Examples where the Committee is likely to disqualify a player under Rule 5.7a for stopping play include when:

• The player walks off the course in frustration with no intent to return.
• The player stops in the clubhouse after nine holes for an extended time to...
watch television or to have lunch when the Committee has not allowed for this.

• The player takes shelter from rain for a significant amount of time.

Rule 5.7b(1) Interpretations:

5.7b(1)/1 – Circumstances That Justify a Player’s Failure to Stop Play

Under Rule 5.7b(1), if the Committee declares an immediate suspension of play, all players must stop play at once. The intent of this suspension is to enable the course to be cleared as quickly as possible when a potentially dangerous situation, such as lightning, exists.

However, there can be confusion or uncertainty when a suspension is declared and there can be circumstances that explain or justify why the player didn’t stop at once. In these cases, the Exception to Rule 5.7b allows the Committee to decide that there is no breach of the Rule.

If a player makes a stroke after play has been suspended, the Committee must consider all relevant facts in determining if the player should be disqualified.

Examples where the Committee is likely to determine that continuing play after suspension is justified include when a player:

• Is in a remote part of the course and does not hear the signal for suspension of play, or confuses the signal for something else, such as a vehicle horn.

• Has already taken a stance with a club behind the ball or has begun the backswing for a stroke and completes the stroke without hesitation.

An example where the Committee is likely to determine that continuing play after suspension is not justified is when a player hears the signal to suspend play but wants to make a stroke quickly prior to stopping, such as to complete a hole with a short putt or to take advantage of a favourable wind.

Rule 5.7b General Interpretations:

5.7b/1 – Dropping a Ball After Play Has Been Suspended Is Not Failing to Stop Play

Stopping play in the context of Rule 5.7b means making no further strokes. Therefore, if, after a suspension of play, a player proceeds under a Rule, such as by dropping a ball, determining the nearest point of complete relief or continuing a search, there is no penalty.

However, if the Committee has signalled an immediate suspension, in view of the purpose of Rule 5.7b(1), it is recommended that all players take shelter immediately without taking further actions.

Rule 5.7c General Interpretations:

5.7c/1 – Players Must Resume When Committee Concludes There Is No Danger from Lightning

The safety of players is paramount and Committees should not risk exposing players to danger. Rule 5.7a (When Players May or Must Stop Play) allows...
a player to stop play if he or she reasonably believes that there is danger from lightning. In this situation, if the player’s belief is reasonable, the player is the final judge.

However, if the Committee has ordered a resumption of play after using all reasonable means to conclude that danger from lightning no longer exists, all players must resume play. If a player refuses because he or she believes there is still danger, the Committee may conclude that the player’s belief is unreasonable and he or she may be disqualified under Rule 5.7c.

**Rule 5.7d(1) Interpretations:**

**5.7d(1)/1 – Whether Player Must Accept Improved or Worsened Lie in Bunker During a Suspension**

When replacing a ball in resuming play, Rule 14.2d (Where to Replace Ball When Original Lie Altered) does not apply and the player is not required to re-create the original lie.

For example, a player’s ball is embedded in a bunker when play is suspended. During the suspension of play the bunker is prepared by the maintenance staff and the surface of the sand is now smooth. The player must resume play by placing a ball on the estimated spot from which the ball was lifted, even though this will be on the surface of the sand and not embedded.

However, if the bunker has not been prepared by the maintenance staff, the player is not necessarily entitled to the conditions affecting the stroke he or she had before play was stopped. If the conditions affecting the stroke are worsened by natural forces (such as wind or water), the player must not improve those worsened conditions (Rule 8.1d).

**5.7d(1)/2 – Removal of Loose Impediments Before Replacing Ball When Play Is Resumed**

The player must not remove a loose impediment before replacing a ball that, if removed when the ball was at rest, would have been likely to cause the ball to move (Exception 1 to Rule 15.1a). However, when resuming play, if a loose impediment is now present that was not there when the ball was lifted, that loose impediment may be removed before the ball is replaced.
**Rule 6.1b(1) Interpretations:**

6.1b(1)/1 – Ball Played from Outside Teeing Area in Match Play and Stroke Not Cancelled by Opponent

If, in starting the play of the hole in match play, a stroke made from outside the teeing area is not cancelled, Rule 6.1b(1) provides that the player plays the ball as it lies. However, the player may not always be permitted to play the ball as it lies.

For example, when starting play of a hole, a player hits a ball out of bounds from outside the teeing area (such as from a wrong set of tee-markers) and the opponent does not cancel the stroke.

Since, the player’s stroke is not cancelled, and the ball is out of bounds, he or she must take stroke-and-distance relief by playing a ball from where the previous stroke was made. However, as the stroke was not made from inside the teeing area, the ball must be dropped, not teed (see Rule 14.6b – Previous Stroke from General Area, Penalty Area or Bunker).

**Rule 6.1 General Interpretations:**

6.1/1 – What to Do When One or Both Tee-Markers Are Missing

If a player finds one or both tee-markers missing, the player should seek help from the Committee.

However, if that help is not available in a reasonable time, the player should use his or her reasonable judgment (Rule 1.3b(2)) to estimate the location of the teeing area.

Recognizing that such an estimation must be made promptly and cannot be precise, the player’s reasonable judgment of the location of the teeing area will be accepted even if later shown to be wrong (Rule 1.3b(2)).

**Rule 6.2b(4) Interpretations:**

6.2b(4)/1 – Tee-Marker Moved by Player Should Be Replaced

Before making a stroke when playing from a teeing area, a player must not move a tee-marker in the teeing area to improve the conditions affecting the stroke (Rule 6.2b(4)).

However, there would be no penalty if a player moves a tee-marker by:

- Tripping over it,
- Hitting it in anger (though a Committee could consider this serious misconduct), or
- Lifting it for no apparent reason.

Because moving tee-markers can have a significant effect on the competition, they should not be moved and, if they are moved, they should be replaced.

However, if a player moves a tee-marker because he or she thinks it should be in a different position, or deliberately destroys the tee-marker, the Committee may choose to disqualify the player for serious misconduct contrary to the spirit of the.
game (Rule 1.2a).

**Rule 6.2b(6) Interpretations:**

6.2b(6)/1 – Ball That Comes to Rest in Teeing Area Does Not Have to Be Played as It Lies

Any time a player’s ball is inside the teeing area, the player may move the ball to another spot within the teeing area, and may play it from a tee without penalty.

For example, a player makes his or her first stroke from the teeing area, barely making contact with the ball, and the ball either comes to rest on the ground within the teeing area or remains on the tee.

Since the ball is in the teeing area, the player may play the ball as it lies or, even though the ball is in play, may move the ball to any other spot within the teeing area and play from there without penalty. The player may also place the ball on a tee or adjust the height of the tee the ball is resting on.

**Rule 6.3a Interpretations:**

6.3a/1 – What to Do When Balls Exchanged at Unknown Place

If, after holing out, two players discover that they finished a hole with the other player’s ball but cannot establish whether the balls were exchanged during play of the hole, there is no penalty.

For example, after play of a hole, it was discovered that Player A holed out with Player B’s ball and Player B holed out with Player A’s ball. Both players are certain they holed out with the ball they played from the teeing area.

In this situation, and because a player is allowed to start each hole with any conforming ball (Rule 6.3a), it should be determined that the balls were exchanged before play on that hole began, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

**Rule 6.3c(1) Interpretations:**

6.3c(1)/1 – Meaning of “Penalty Strokes Solely From Playing That Ball”

When the strokes made at a particular ball do not count in the player’s score, any penalty strokes that the player gets while playing that ball do not count unless the player gets a penalty that could also apply to his or her ball in play.

Examples of penalties that are disregarded because they could not also apply to the ball in play include:

- Deliberately touching or causing the ball to move (Rule 9.4).
- The player’s caddie standing behind the player while taking a stance (Rule 10.2b(4)).
- Touching sand in the backswing for the stroke (Rule 12.2b(2)).

Examples of penalties that are not disregarded because they also apply to the ball in play include:
• Making a practice stroke during a hole (Rule 5.5a).
• Playing a wrong ball (Rule 6.3c(1)).
• Asking for or giving advice (Rule 10.2a).

**Rule 6.4c Interpretations:**

**6.4c/1 – Stroke Cannot Be Cancelled When Provisional Ball Played Out of Turn from Teeing Area**

If a player who has the honour decides to play a provisional ball after his or her opponent has played a provisional ball, the player may not cancel the opponent’s stroke with the provisional ball under Rule 6.4a(2).

For example, Player A has the honour and plays first from the teeing area. Player B (the opponent) plays next and since his or her ball may be out of bounds, decides to play a provisional ball and does so. After Player B plays the provisional ball, Player A decides that he or she will also play a provisional ball.

Since Player A only made his or her intentions to play a provisional ball known after Player B had played, Player A has abandoned the right to cancel Player B’s stroke with the provisional ball. However, Player A may still play a provisional ball.

**Rule 6.5 Interpretations:**

**6.5/1 – Another Ball Played After Hole Was Unknowingly Completed**

When a player has holed out, the play of that hole is completed and the player gets no penalty for playing another ball.

For example:

• Being unable to find his or her ball, the player puts another ball in play or concedes the hole (the concession is not valid as the hole is completed).

• After searching for his or her ball for three minutes, the player cannot find it and continues play with a provisional ball.

• Believing it is the original ball, the player plays a wrong ball.

If the player did not know the hole was completed and attempts to complete play of the hole with another ball, the player’s further play is not considered practice (Rule 5.5a).
Rule 7.1a Interpretations:

7.1a/1 – Examples of Actions Unlikely to Be Part of a Fair Search

Examples of actions that are unlikely to be considered reasonable as part of a fair search, and will result in the general penalty if there is an improvement to conditions affecting the stroke, include:

• Taking an action to flatten areas of grass beyond what is reasonably necessary to walk through or search for the ball in the area where the ball is thought to lie;
• Purposely removing any growing thing from the ground; or
• Breaking a tree branch to allow easier access to the ball when it could have been reached without doing so.

Rule 7.2 Interpretations:

7.2/1 – Identifying Ball That Cannot Be Retrieved

If a player sees a ball in a tree or some other location where he or she is unable to retrieve the ball, the player may not assume that it is his or hers but rather must identify it in one of the ways provided in Rule 7.2.

This may be done even though the player is unable to retrieve the ball, such as by:

• Using binoculars or a distance-measuring device to see a mark that definitely identifies it as the player’s ball, or
• Determining that another player or spectator saw the ball come to rest in that specific location after the player’s stroke.

Rule 7.4 Interpretations:

7.4/1 – Estimating Original Spot on Which to Replace Ball Moved During Search

When a player’s ball is accidentally moved during a search and its original spot where it must be replaced must be estimated, the player should consider all reasonably available evidence about where the ball was located before it was moved.

For example, when estimating a ball’s original spot, the player should consider:

• How the ball was found (for example, whether it was stepped on, kicked or moved with a probing club or hand),
• If it was visible or not, and
• Its location relative to the ground and any growing objects, such as whether it was lying against or under the grass and how deep in the grass it was located.

In replacing the ball, the player is not required to replace loose impediments (such as leaves) that may have been moved since loose impediments are not part of the lie and, in many cases, it would be nearly impossible to reconstruct the original situation if loose impediments were required to be replaced.

For example, while searching for a ball that is covered by leaves in a penalty area,
the player kicks the ball and moves the leaves that were close to the ball. Although the ball must be replaced on its original or estimated spot, the leaves do not need to be put back in their original position even when the ball would certainly have been lying under the leaves.

7.4/2 – Player Attempts to Dislodge Ball in Tree or Step on Ball in Tall Grass During Search

If a ball is accidentally moved when a player is trying to find or identify it, Rule 7.4 applies, and the ball must be replaced on the estimated spot without penalty.

This Rule also applies in situations when the player is attempting to find the ball and takes reasonable actions that are likely to reveal the ball’s location by moving it.

Example of these reasonable actions include when the player:

• Believes his or her ball has come to rest in a tree and shakes the tree hoping to dislodge and find the ball, or

• Is walking through long grass while sweeping his or feet back and forth hoping to step on or move the ball to find it.
Rule 8.1a Interpretations:

8.1a/1 – Examples of Actions That Are Likely to Create Potential Advantage

Examples of actions that are likely to improve conditions affecting the stroke (that is, likely to give a player a potential advantage) include when:

- A player repairs a pitch-mark in the general area or replaces a divot in a divot hole a few yards in front of his or her ball on the line of play before making a stroke that might be affected by the pitch-mark or divot hole (for example, a putt or a low-running chip).
- A player’s ball lies in a greenside bunker, and the player smooths footprints in front of the ball on his or her line of play before playing a short shot intended to be played over the smoothed area (see Rule 12.2b(2) – When Touching Sand Does Not Result in Penalty).

8.1a/2 – Examples of Actions Unlikely to Create Potential Advantage

Examples of actions that are unlikely to improve conditions affecting the stroke (that is, unlikely to give a player a potential advantage) include when:

- Before making a 150-yard approach shot from the general area, a player repairs a small pitch-mark, smooths a footprint in a bunker or replaces a divot in a divot hole on his or her line of play several yards in front of the ball.
- A player’s ball lies in the middle of a long, shallow-faced fairway bunker, and the player smooths footprints several yards in front of the ball and on his or her line of play before playing a long shot over the smoothed area (see Rule 12.2b(2) – When Touching Sand Does Not Result in Penalty).

8.1a/3 – Player Who Improves Conditions for Intended Stroke in Breach Even if Different Stroke Is Made

If a player intends to play a ball in a certain way and improves conditions affecting the stroke for that particular stroke, and the penalty cannot be avoided by restoration, the player is in breach of Rule 8.1a whether he or she goes on to play the ball in that way or plays it in a different way that is unaffected by that improvement.

For example, if a player breaks a branch that interferes with his or her area of stance or swing for an intended stroke when a stance could have been taken without breaking the branch, a penalty cannot be avoided by playing the ball in a different direction or by taking relief to a different location where that branch would have had no effect on the stroke. This also applies if a player broke the branch when starting a hole and moved to a different location within the teeing area.

See Rule 8.1c for whether a penalty may be avoided by restoring improved conditions.

8.1a/4 – Example of Moving, Bending or Breaking an Immovable Obstruction

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Part of a fence that is situated out of bounds (and so is not a boundary object) leans onto the course and the player pushes it back into an upright position. This action breaches Rule 8.1a, which prohibits a player from improving conditions affecting the stroke by moving immovable obstructions. The player gets the general penalty unless the player restores the conditions by returning the fence to its original position before his or her next stroke as permitted by Rule 8.1c (Avoiding Penalty by Restoring Improved Conditions).

In such a situation, although Rule 8.1a prohibits moving, bending or breaking the immovable obstruction, the player has the option to take free relief from interference by the part of the immovable obstruction that is leaning onto the course under Rule 16.1b (Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions).

### 8.1a/5 – Building Stance by Positioning Object Such as Towel Is Not Permitted

The definition of “stance” includes not only where a player places his or her feet to stand, but also where the player’s entire body is positioned in preparing for or making a stroke.

For example, a player is in breach of Rule 8.1a for improving the area of intended stance if he or she places a towel or other object on a bush to protect his or her body while making a stroke.

If a player needs to play from his or her knees because the ball is under a tree, and the player places a towel on the ground to avoid getting wet or dirty, the player is building his or her stance. But a player is allowed to wrap a towel around his or her waist or put on rain gear before kneeling to play the shot (see Rule 10.2b(5) – Physical Help and Protection From Elements).

If a player has positioned an object in a way that is not allowed but realizes the mistake before playing the ball, the penalty may be avoided by removing the object before making the stroke, so long as there has been no other improvement to conditions affecting the stroke.

### 8.1a/6 – Altering Surface of Ground to Build Stance Is Not Permitted

A player is allowed to place his or her feet firmly in taking a stance, but is in breach of Rule 8.1a if he or she alters the ground where the stance will be taken if altering the ground improves the area of intended stance.

Examples of altering the ground that are likely to improve conditions affecting the stroke include:

- Knocking down sand on the side of a bunker with a foot to create a level area to stand on.
- Excessively digging feet into soft ground to gain a firmer foundation for the stance.

A player is in breach of Rule 8.1a as soon as he or she has improved conditions by altering ground conditions to build a stance and cannot avoid a penalty by attempting to restore the ground conditions to their original state.

The restriction on altering the ground (Rule 8.1a(3)) does not include removing...
loose impediments or movable obstructions from the area of intended stance, such as removing large amounts of pine needles or leaves from where a player will stand to play the ball.

8.1a/7 – Player May Probe Near Ball to Determine if Tree Roots, Rocks or Obstructions Are Below Surface of Ground, but Only if This Does Not Improve Conditions

Rule 8.1a does not prohibit a player from touching the ground within an area covered by conditions affecting the stroke, so long as those conditions are not improved.

For example, without improving any of the conditions affecting the stroke, when the ball lies anywhere on the course, a player may probe the area around the ball with a tee or other object to see whether his or her club might strike a root, rock or obstruction below the surface of the ground when the stroke is made.

However, see 12.2b/2 if the player probes sand in a bunker to test the condition of the sand.

8.1a/8 – Altering Surface of Ground in Relief Area Is Not Allowed

Before dropping a ball to take relief, a player must not replace a divot in a divot hole in the relief area or take other actions to alter the ground surface in a way that improves conditions affecting the stroke.

However, this prohibition applies only after the player becomes aware that he or she is required or allowed to drop a ball in that relief area.

For example, if a player plays a ball, replaces the divot and only then realizes that he or she must or may play again from there under penalty of stroke and distance because the ball is out of bounds, is in a penalty area, is unplayable or that a provisional ball should be played, the player is not in breach of Rule 8.1a if that replaced divot is in the relief area.

8.1a/9 – When Divot Is Replaced and Must Not Be Removed or Pressed Down

Rule 8.1a(3) prohibits improving conditions affecting the stroke by pressing down, removing or repositioning a divot in a divot hole, which is treated as part of the ground (and not as a loose impediment), even if it is not yet attached or growing.

A divot has been replaced when most of it, with the roots down, is in a divot hole (whether or not the divot is in the same divot hole that it came from).

Rule 8.1b Interpretations:

8.1b/1 – Meaning of “Ground the Club Lightly”

Rule 8.1b allows a player to ground the club lightly directly in front of or behind the ball, even if that improves his or her lie or area of intended swing.

“Ground the club lightly” means allowing the weight of the club to be supported by the grass, soil, sand or other material on or above the ground surface.
But the player gets the penalty under Rule 8.1a if he or she improves the lie or area of intended swing by pressing the club down more than lightly.

See Rule 12.2b(1) (When Touching Sand Results in Penalty) for when a player gets a penalty for touching sand in a bunker.

8.1b/2 – Player Allowed to Dig in Firmly with Feet More Than Once in Taking Stance

Rule 8.1b allows a player to place his or her feet firmly in taking a stance, and this may be done more than once in preparing to make a stroke.

For example, a player may enter a bunker without a club, dig in with his or her feet in taking a stance to simulate playing the ball, leave to get a club, and then dig in again with his or her feet and make the stroke.

8.1b/3 – Examples of “Fairly Taking a Stance”

Although a player is allowed to play in any direction, he or she is not entitled to a normal stance or swing and must adapt to the situation and use the least intrusive course of action.

Examples of actions that are considered fairly taking a stance and are allowed under Rule 8.1b even if the action results in an improvement include:

• Backing into a branch or a boundary object when that is the only way to take a stance for the selected stroke, even if this moves the branch or boundary object out of the way or causes it to bend or break.

• Bending a branch with his or her hands to get under a tree to play a ball when that is the only way to get under the tree to take a stance.

See 8.1b/4 for when a player gets a penalty for doing more than is necessary to take a stance.

8.1b/4 – Examples of Not “Fairly Taking a Stance”

Examples of actions that are not considered fairly taking a stance and will result in a penalty under Rule 8.1a if they improve conditions affecting the stroke include:

• Deliberately moving, bending or breaking branches with a hand, a leg or the body to get them out of the way of the backswing or stroke.

• Standing on tall grass or weeds in a way that pushes them down and to the side so that they are out of the way of the area of intended stance or swing, when a stance could have been taken without doing so.

• Hooking one branch on another or braiding two weeds to keep them away from the stance or swing.

• Using a hand to bend a branch that obscures the view of the ball after taking the stance.

• Bending an interfering branch in taking a stance when a stance could have been taken without doing so.
8.1b/5 – Improving Conditions in Teeing Area Is Limited to Ground

Rule 8.1b(8) allows a player to take actions to improve conditions affecting the stroke in the teeing area. This limited exception to Rule 8.1a is intended to allow a player to only alter physical conditions on the surface of the ground inside the teeing area itself (including removing any natural objects that are growing from there) whether the ball is teed or played from the ground.

This exception does not allow a player to improve conditions affecting the stroke for his or her tee shot by taking actions outside the teeing area, such as breaking tree branches located either outside the teeing area or when they are rooted outside the teeing area but are hanging over the teeing area and may interfere with the area of intended swing.

8.1b/6 – Player Smooths Bunker to “Care for the Course” After Playing Out of Bunker

After a ball in a bunker is played and is outside the bunker, Rules 8.1b(9) and 12.2b(3) use care for the course to allow the player to restore the bunker to the condition that it should be in, even if the restoring improves the player’s conditions affecting the stroke. This is true even if the player’s action is deliberately taken both to care for the course and to improve conditions affecting the stroke.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest in a large bunker near a putting green. Not being able to play towards the hole, he or she plays out backwards towards the teeing area with the ball coming to rest outside the bunker.

In this case, the player may smooth the areas that he or she had altered as a result of playing the ball (including footprints getting to the ball) and may also smooth any other areas in the bunker, whether created by the player or those that were already present when the player arrived to play from the bunker.

8.1b/7 – When Damage That Is Partially On and Partially Off Putting Green May Be Repaired

If an individual area of damage is both on and off a putting green, the entire area of damage may be repaired.

For example, if a ball mark is partially on and partially off the edge of the putting green, it is unreasonable to allow a player to repair only the portion of damage on the putting green. Therefore, the entire ball mark (both on and off the putting green) may be repaired.

The same applies to other individual areas of damage, such as animal tracks or hoof marks, or club indentations.

However, if a portion of damage extends off the green and is not identifiable as part of the damage on the green, it may not be repaired if the repair improves the conditions affecting the stroke.

For example, an entire shoe print that starts on the putting green and extends off it may be repaired. However, if one shoe print is on the putting green and another
shoe print is off the putting green, only the shoe print on the putting green may be repaired as they are two separate areas of damage.

**Rule 8.1d(1) Interpretations:**

**8.1d(1)/1 – Examples Where Player Is Allowed to Restore Conditions Altered by the Actions of Another Person or Outside Influence**

Examples of when restoration is allowed include when:

- A player’s *line of play* is worsened by a pitch-mark in the *general area* that was made by a ball played by someone else after the player’s ball came to rest.
- A player’s *lie* or area of intended *stance* or intended swing is worsened when another player’s *stroke* creates a divot or deposits sand, soil, grass or other material on or around his or her ball.
- A player’s ball in a *bunker* lies close to another player’s ball in the *bunker*, and that other player’s *stance* or swing in making the *stroke* worsens one or more of the player’s *conditions affecting the stroke*.

In all such situations, the player is allowed to restore *conditions* without penalty, but is not required to do so.

**8.1d(1)/2 – Player Is Entitled to Have Loose Impediments or Movable Obstructions Left Where They Were When Ball Came to Rest**

Generally speaking, a player is entitled to the *conditions affecting the stroke* that he or she had when the ball came to rest. Any player may move *loose impediments* or *movable obstructions* (Rules 15.1 and 15.2), but if this worsened *conditions affecting the stroke* of another player, that player may restore the *conditions* by replacing the objects under Rule 8.1d.

For example, a player has a downhill putt and picks up *loose impediments* between his or her ball and the *hole* but deliberately leaves some behind the *hole*. Another player removes the *loose impediments* behind the *hole* that might have served as a backstop for the player’s ball.

Since the player’s *conditions affecting the stroke* have been worsened, he or she is allowed to replace the *loose impediments*.

**Rule 8.1d(2) Interpretations:**

**8.1d(2)/1 – Examples of Conditions Altered by a Natural Object or Natural Forces Where Player Is Not Allowed to Restore Worsened Conditions**

Rule 8.1d does not allow a player to restore *conditions affecting* the *stroke* that were altered by a natural object or by *natural forces* (such as wind or water).

Examples of when restoration is not allowed include when:

- A branch falls from a tree and alters the *lie* of the player’s ball or the area of his or her *stance* or swing, without causing the ball to *move*.
- A signpost or other *obstruction* falls over or is blown into a position that alters...
one or more conditions affecting the stroke. See Rule 15.2 (Movable Obstructions) and Rule 16.1 (Abnormal Course Conditions) for what relief might be available from the obstruction.

8.1d(2)/2 – Player Is Not Allowed to Restore Conditions Affecting the Stroke When Worsened by Caddie or Another Person at Player’s Request

A player is not allowed to restore conditions affecting the stroke if the conditions are worsened by the player himself or herself.

This also includes when the conditions are worsened by the player’s caddie or partner or another person taking an action that is authorized by the player.

Examples of situations where the conditions could not be restored include:

• The player’s caddie or partner walks across a bunker to get a rake and leaves footprints in the sand that worsen the player’s line of play, or

• The player asks another person to remove a gallery control rope and, in removing the rope, a branch that had been held back by the rope is freed and worsens the area of the player’s intended swing.

8.1d(2)/3 – If Player Enters a Bunker on the Line of Play He or She Must Not Restore Worsened Conditions

Players should be careful when taking actions that might affect the conditions affecting the stroke because worsening these areas means that the player must accept the worsened condition.

For example, a player is taking relief from an abnormal course condition behind a bunker and the dropped ball rolls into the bunker. If the player creates footprints while walking into the bunker to retrieve the ball to drop it again, he or she is not allowed to restore the bunker to its previous condition under Rule 8 because the player was responsible for worsening its condition.

In such a case, the player could use another ball for the second drop (Rule 14.3a) or take additional care when retrieving the original ball to avoid worsening the conditions affecting the stroke.

Rule 8.2b Interpretations:

8.2b/1 – Examples of Player’s Deliberate Actions to Improve Other Physical Conditions Affecting His or Her Own Play

Rule 8.2 applies only to altering physical conditions other than conditions affecting the stroke when the player’s ball is at rest on the course or when he or she does not have a ball in play.

Examples of a player’s actions listed in Rule 8.1a (Actions Not Allowed to Improve Conditions) that would be a breach of Rule 8.2 if taken to deliberately improve other physical conditions to affect his or her own play (except as expressly allowed in Rules 8.1b or c) include when:

• A player’s ball is just short of the putting green and, although his or her line of
play is straight at the hole, the player is concerned his or her ball might come to rest in a nearby bunker. Before making the stroke, the player smooths sand in the bunker to make sure of a good lie if the shot to be played goes into the bunker.

• A player’s ball lies at the top of a steep hill and, because the player is concerned that the wind might blow the ball down the hill away from the hole before he or she is able to play it, the player deliberately presses down the grass at the bottom of the hill in case the ball might come to rest there.

• Replacing or placing a ball when returning it to play by firmly pressing it into the surface of the ground to help prevent it from being moved by wind or gravity and plays the ball. Since the spot of a ball includes vertical distance, the ball is in a wrong place. As these related acts breach multiple Rules, the player only gets the general penalty. See Rule 1.3c(4) (Applying Penalties to Multiple Breaches).

Rule 8.3 Interpretations:

8.3/1 – Both Players Are Penalized if Physical Conditions Are Improved with Other Player’s Knowledge

If a player asks, authorizes or allows another player to deliberately alter physical conditions to improve his or her play:

• The player acting on the request will get the general penalty under Rule 8.3, and

• The player who requests, authorizes or allows the improvement will also get the general penalty under either Rule 8.1 (Player’s Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke) or 8.2 (Player’s Deliberate Actions to Alter Other Physical Conditions to Affect the Player’s Own Ball at Rest or Stroke to Be Made), whichever applies.

For example, in stroke play, unaware of the Rules, Player A asks Player B to break a branch from a tree that is on Player A’s line of play and Player B complies; both players are penalized. Player A gets two penalty strokes for a breach of Rule 8.1 because Player B broke the branch at the request of Player A. Player B gets two penalty strokes for a breach of Rule 8.3.
Rule 9.2a Interpretations:

9.2a/1 – When a Ball Is Treated as Having Moved

As stated in the definitions, to “move”, a ball at rest must leave its original spot and come to rest on any other spot and the movement must be enough that it can be seen by the naked eye. In order to treat the ball as moved, there must be knowledge or virtual certainty that the ball has moved.

An example of when it is known or virtually certain that a ball has moved is:

• A player marks, lifts and replaces his or her ball on the putting green. As the player walks away, the ball rolls a short distance and comes to rest. The player does not see this, but another player observes the ball moving and informs the player. Since it is known that the ball moved, the player must replace the ball on its original spot under Rule 13.1d(2) (Ball Moved by Natural Forces).

An example of when it is not known or virtually certain that a ball has moved is:

• Player A and Player B play their approach shots to the putting green, but because of the contours of the putting green they could not see where the two balls came to rest. Unknown to the players, Player B’s ball struck Player A’s ball at rest and it rolled some distance farther from the hole. As long as this information does not come to the attention of the players before Player A makes the next stroke, Player A does not get a penalty for playing from where his or her ball came to rest after being struck by Player B’s ball.

9.2a/2 – Player Responsible for Actions That Cause Ball to Move Even When Not Aware Ball Moved

In the second bullet point in 9.2a/1, the player did not make a stroke from a wrong place because it was not known or virtually certain that the ball had moved at the time the ball was played.

However, if it was the player’s actions (or the actions of the player’s caddie or partner) that caused the ball to move, the player is always responsible for the movement, even when the player is not aware that his or her actions caused the ball to move.

Examples of this include:

• A player’s ball lies in the general area and he or she removes a loose impediment near the ball that causes the ball to move. Because the player is not looking at the ball, he or she was not aware that the ball moved. The player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 15.1b (Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediment) and he or she must replace the ball.

• A player’s caddie or his or her partner removed roping and staking, and this causes the player’s ball to move while the player was watching another player make a stroke. There is no penalty for moving the ball under Rule 15.2a(1) (Removal of Movable Obstruction) but the player must replace the ball.

In both of these situations, even though the player was not aware that the ball moved, if the player makes a stroke without first replacing the ball, the player gets the general penalty for playing from a wrong place under Rule 14.7a (Place from Where Ball Must Be Played).
Rule 9.4a Interpretations:

9.4a/1 – Procedure When Player’s Ball Is Dislodged From Tree

Rule 9.4 applies wherever a ball in play is on the course. This includes when a ball is in a tree. However, when the player does not intend to play the ball as it lies but is trying only to identify it, or intends to retrieve it to use another Rule, the Exceptions to Rule 9.4b apply and there is no penalty. For example:

- In searching for his or her ball, a player sees a ball lying in a tree but cannot identify it. The player climbs the tree in an attempt to identify the ball and in doing so accidentally dislodges the ball from the tree. The ball is identified as the player’s ball.

In this case, since the ball was accidentally moved in taking reasonable actions to identify it, there is no penalty for moving the ball (Rule 7.4).

The player must replace the ball or may directly use a relief Rule (such as Rule 19 – Unplayable Ball).

In two situations, the player’s only option is to take relief under a relief Rule:

- The player is unable to replace the ball because he or she cannot reach the spot where the ball was moved from when the player was identifying it, or

- The player can reach that spot but the ball will not come to rest on that spot and the player cannot reach the spot where it will come to rest under Rule 14.2e (Replaced Ball Does Not Stay on Spot).

- A player’s ball has not yet been found but is believed to be lodged in a tree in the general area. The player makes it clear that if the ball is found he or she will take unplayable ball relief under Rule 19. The player shakes the tree; the ball falls down and is identified by the player within three minutes of starting search.

The player may now take relief under Rule 19 (Unplayable Ball) adding only the one penalty stroke prescribed by that Rule with no additional penalty for causing the ball to move. If not known, the player must estimate the spot where the ball lay in the tree when applying Rule 19.

However, if the player moves the ball when he or she is not intending to identify it or without intending to take relief under another Rule, the player does get a penalty for a breach of Rule 9.4. For example:

- A player’s ball is in a tree and he or she intends to play it. In preparing for the stroke, the player accidentally dislodges the ball.

The player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4 for causing the ball to move. The player must replace the ball or may take relief directly under a relief Rule. If the player takes relief under Rule 19, he or she gets a total of two penalty strokes, one under Rule 9.4 and one under Rule 19.

Rule 9.4b Interpretations:
9.4b/1 – Ball Deliberately Touched but Not Moved Results in Penalty to Player

When the ball in play is deliberately touched by the player, even if it does not move, the player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4b.

For example, a player gets one penalty stroke if he or she:

• Without first marking the ball’s spot, rotates the ball on the putting green to line up the trademark with the hole, even if the ball remains on the same spot. If the player had marked the ball before touching or rotating it, there would have been no penalty.

• Without first marking the ball’s spot, rotates the ball anywhere on the course to identify it and the ball is the player’s ball.

• Deliberately touches the ball with a club in preparing to make a stroke.

• Holds the ball steady with his or her hand or positions a pine cone or stick against the ball to prevent the ball from moving while he or she removes some loose impediments or brushes something off the ball.

9.4b/2 – Meaning of “Trying to Find”

In Rule 7.4 (Ball Accidentally Moved in Trying to Find or Identify It) and Exception 2 of Rule 9.4, there is no penalty if a ball is accidentally moved while “trying to find” it. “Trying to find” includes actions that can reasonably be considered part of searching for the ball, including the actions allowed by Rule 7.1 (How to Fairly Search for Ball). It does not include actions before a search begins such as walking to the area where the ball is expected to be.

For example, a player’s ball is hit towards a wooded area. The player is not aware the ball has struck a tree and deflected back towards the teeing area. When the player is still some distance from the area where he or she believes the ball is likely to be and before starting to search, the player accidentally kicks his or her ball. Because this was not while trying to find the ball, the player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4b for accidentally moving his or her ball and must replace the ball.

9.4b/3 – Ball Moved When Search Temporarily Stopped

In 9.4b/2 a player gets a penalty if the ball is moved when he or she is not trying to find it.

However, if a player accidentally moves his or her ball when search is temporarily stopped due to circumstances outside the player’s control, the player gets no penalty for moving the ball.

For example:

• The player stops searching for his or her ball to get out of the way of another group who is going to play through. While getting out of the way, the player accidentally moves his or her ball.

• The Committee suspends play and the player begins to leave the area and accidentally steps on and moves his or her ball.
9.4b/4 – Meaning of “While” in Rule 9.4b Exception 4

Exception 4 uses “while” to govern the time period when the Exception will apply to a player who moves his or her ball in play as a result of “reasonable actions”. For the meaning of “reasonable actions”, see 9.4b/2.

The use of the word “while” indicates that every reasonable action in applying a Rule has a beginning and an end and, if the ball’s movement occurs during the time that such action is taking place, the Exception applies.

Examples of situations covered by Exception 4, therefore resulting in no penalty for causing the ball to move, include when:

- The player finds a ball that he or she believes to be his or her ball in play. In the process of identification, the player approaches the ball to mark and lift it and accidentally slips and moves the ball.

  Even though the player was not marking or lifting the ball when it was moved, it was still moved while the player was identifying the ball.

- The player has dropped a ball when taking relief and then reaches down to lift the tee that was marking the relief area. When standing up, he or she accidentally drops a club that he or she was holding and the club hits and moves the ball in play.

  Even though the player has already dropped the ball to take relief, the ball was moved while he or she was taking relief.

9.4b/5 – Meaning of “Reasonable Actions” in Rule 9.4b Exception 4

In many situations, the Rules require a player to perform actions near or next to the ball (such as lifting, marking, measuring, etc.). If the ball is accidentally moved while taking these “reasonable actions”, Exception 4 to Rule 9.4 applies.

However, there are other situations when the player is taking actions farther from the ball where, even though the ball might be moved as a result of those actions, Exception 4 also applies because those actions are “reasonable”.

These include when:

- The player approaches his or her ball for the purpose of taking relief and accidentally kicks a rock or accidentally drops his or her club that strikes and moves the ball.

- The player removes stakes and rope (movable obstructions) used for gallery control purposes some distance ahead of the ball and in removing one of the stakes, he or she causes the others to become loose and fall to the ground, moving his or her ball in play.

- The player restores the line of play by brushing sand away from the fringe with his or her hat under Rule 8.1d (Restoring Conditions Worsened After Ball Came to Rest), and the sand splashes onto the ball and causes it to move.

In other situations, Exception 4 to Rule 9.4 does not apply because the player’s
actions are not “reasonable”.

These include when:

- The player approaches his or her ball to take relief and kicks a rock in frustration that accidentally strikes and moves the ball.
- The player throws a club down into the relief area in preparing to measure, and the club accidentally strikes and moves the ball.
- The player lifts a bunker rake or his or her club and throws it out of a bunker. The rake or club falls back into the bunker, striking and moving the ball.

9.4b/6 – Player Lifts Ball Under Rule 16.1b That Allows Free Relief but Then Decides Not to Take Free Relief

In the general area, if a player lifts his or her ball with the intention to take free relief under Rule 16.1b (Abnormal Course Conditions), but then decides not to proceed under that Rule despite relief being available, the player’s right to lift the ball under Rule 16.1b is no longer valid.

After lifting the ball but before doing anything else, the player has the following options:

- Replace the ball in its original position with a penalty of one stroke (Rule 9.4b);
- Replace the ball in its original position with a penalty of one stroke (Rule 9.4b) and then take relief under Rule 19.2 (Unplayable Ball Relief), getting an additional penalty of one stroke for a total of two penalty strokes;
- Directly take relief under Rule 19.2b or c, without replacing the ball and using the spot where the original ball lay to determine the reference point for the relief procedure, getting a penalty of one stroke under Rule 19.2 and an additional penalty of one stroke under Rule 9.4b for a total of two penalty strokes;
- Drop the ball under Rule 16.1b and then either play the ball as it lies without penalty or, using its new position to determine the reference point, take relief under any of the options of Rule 19.2, getting a penalty of only one stroke; or
- Directly take stroke-and-distance relief, without dropping the ball under Rule 16.1b, getting a penalty of one stroke under Rule 19.2a and no penalty under Rule 9.4b, as the player does not need to establish a new reference point before taking relief under Rule 19.2a.

Rule 9.5b Interpretations:

9.5b/1 – Player Declares Found Ball as His or Hers and This Causes Opponent to Lift Another Ball That Turns Out to Be the Player’s Ball

Under Rule 9.5b, an opponent gets one penalty stroke for lifting the player’s ball unless one of the Exceptions applies.

For example, during a search Player A finds a ball and states that it is his or hers. Player B (the opponent) finds another ball and lifts it. Player A then realizes the found ball was not in fact his or her ball and the ball Player B lifted was Player A’s
ball.
Since the ball was not in fact found when Player B lifted Player A’s ball, it is considered to have been accidentally moved during search and Exception 3 to Rule 9.5b applies. The player or opponent must replace the ball without penalty to anyone.

**Rule 9.6 Interpretations:**

**9.6/1 – Outside Influence Moved by Wind Causes Ball to Move**

Wind is not itself an outside influence, but if wind causes an outside influence to move a player’s ball, Rule 9.6 applies.

For example, if a player’s ball comes to rest in a plastic bag (movable obstruction) that is lying on the ground, and a gust of wind blows the bag and moves the ball, the bag (outside influence) is considered to have moved the ball. The player may either:

- Directly take relief under Rule 15.2a by estimating the point right under where the ball was at rest in the plastic bag before the ball was moved, or
- Replace the ball moved by the bag by applying Rule 9.6 (by replacing the ball and the bag) and then decide to play the ball as it lies or take relief under Rule 15.2a (Relief From Movable Obstruction).

**9.6/2 – Where to Replace Ball When It Was Moved from Unknown Location**

If a ball has been moved by an outside influence and the original spot where the ball lay is not known, the player must use his or her reasonable judgment (Rule 1.3b(2)) to determine where the ball had come to rest before it was moved.

For example, on a particular hole, part of the putting green and adjoining area cannot be seen by the players playing towards it. Near the putting green there is a bunker and a penalty area. A player plays towards the putting green and cannot tell where the ball came to rest. The players see a person (outside influence) with a ball. The person drops the ball and runs away. The player identifies it as his or her ball. The player does not know whether the ball was on the putting green, in the general area, in the bunker, or in the penalty area.

As it is impossible to know where the ball should be replaced, the player must use reasonable judgment. If it is equally likely the ball came to rest on the putting green, in the general area, in the bunker, or in the penalty area, a reasonable judgment would be to estimate the ball came to rest in the general area.

**9.6/3 – Player Learns That Ball Moved After Stroke Made**

If it is not known or virtually certain that the player’s ball has been moved by an outside influence, the player must play the ball as it lies. If information that the ball was in fact moved by an outside influence only becomes known to the player after the ball has been played, the player did not play from a wrong place because this knowledge did not exist when the player made the stroke.

**9.6/4 – Ball at Rest Played and then Discovered to Have Been Moved by Outside**

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Influence; Ball Turns Out to be Wrong Ball

If a player discovers, after playing his or her ball, that it had been moved onto the course by an outside influence after the ball had come to rest out of bounds, the player has played a wrong ball (see Definition). Because it was not known or virtually certain at the time the ball was played, the player does not get a penalty for playing a wrong ball under Rule 6.3c(1) but might need to correct the mistake by proceeding under Rule 18.2b (What to Do When Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds) depending when that discovery is made:

- In *match play*, the player must correct the mistake if the discovery that the ball was moved onto the course by the outside influence is made before the opponent makes his or her next stroke or takes a similar action (such as conceding the hole).

  If that discovery occurs after the opponent makes his or her next stroke or takes a similar action, the player must continue to play out the hole with the wrong ball.

- In *stroke play*, the player must correct the mistake if the discovery that the ball was moved onto the course by an outside influence is made before making a stroke to begin another hole or, for the final hole of the round, before returning his or her scorecard.

  If that discovery occurs after the player has made a stroke on the next hole or, for the final hole of the round, after returning his or her scorecard, the player’s score with the wrong ball counts.
Rule 10.1a Interpretations:

10.1a/1 – Examples of Pushing, Scraping or Scooping

These terms have overlapping meanings but can be defined through these three examples of using the club in a manner not allowed by the Rule:

- A player holes a short putt by striking the ball with the bottom of the clubhead, using a motion similar to that used in making a shot in billiards or shuffleboard. Moving the ball like this is a push.

- A player moves the club along the surface of the ground pulling it towards him or her. Moving the ball like this is a scrape.

- A player slides a club beneath and very close to the ball. The player then lifts and moves the ball by use of a forward and upward motion. Moving the ball like this is a scoop.

10.1a/2 – Player May Use Any Part of Clubhead to Fairly Strike Ball

In fairly striking a ball, any part of the clubhead may be used, including the toe, heel and back of the clubhead.

10.1a/3 – Other Material May Intervene Between Ball and Clubhead During Stroke

In fairly striking a ball, it is not necessary for the clubhead to make contact with the ball. Sometimes other material may intervene.

An example of fairly striking a ball includes when a ball is lying against the base of a fence defining out of bounds and the player makes a stroke at the out-of-bounds side of the fence to make the ball move.

Rule 10.1b Interpretations:

10.1b/1 – Player Must Not Anchor the Club with Forearm Against Body

Holding a forearm against the body during a stroke is an indirect means of anchoring the club.

For an “anchor point” to exist, two things must happen: (1) the player must hold a forearm against the body; and (2) the player must grip the club so that the hands are separated and work independently from each other.

For example, in making a stroke with a long putter, the player’s forearm is held against his or her body to establish a stable point, while the bottom hand is held down the shaft to swing the lower portion of the club.

However, a player is allowed to hold one or both forearms against his or her body in making a stroke, so long as doing so does not create an anchor point.

10.1b/2 – Deliberate Contact with Clothing During Stroke Is a Breach
Clothing held against the body by a club or gripping hand is treated as if it is part of the player’s body for the purpose of applying Rule 10.1b.

The concept of a free-flowing swing may not be circumvented by having something intervene between the player’s body and club or hand.

For example, if a player is wearing a rain jacket and is using a mid-length putter, and presses the club into his or her body, the player is in breach of Rule 10.1b.

Additionally, if the player deliberately uses a gripping hand to hold an article of clothing worn on any part of the body (such as holding the sleeve of a shirt with a hand) while making a stroke, there is a breach of Rule 4.3 (Prohibited Use of Equipment) since that is not its intended use and doing so might assist the player in making that stroke.

**10.1b/3 – Inadvertent Contact with Clothing During Stroke Is Not a Breach**

Touching an article of clothing with the club or gripping hand and making a stroke is allowed.

This might occur in various situations where a player:

- Wears loose fitting clothes or rain gear,
- Has a physical size or build that causes the arms naturally to rest close to the body,
- Holds the club extremely close to the body, or
- For some other reason touches his or her clothing in making a stroke.

**Rule 10.2a Interpretations:**

**10.2a/1 – Player May Get Information from Shared Caddie**

If a caddie is being shared by more than one player, any of the players sharing that caddie may seek information from him or her.

For example, two players are sharing a caddie and both hit tee shots into a similar area. One of the players gets a club to make the stroke, while the other is undecided. The undecided player is allowed to ask the shared caddie what club the other player chose.

**10.2a/2 – Player Must Try to Stop Ongoing Advice That Is Given Voluntarily**

If a player gets advice from someone other than his or her caddie (such as a spectator) without asking for it, he or she gets no penalty. However, if the player continues to get advice from that same person, the player must try to stop that person from giving advice. If the player does not do so, he or she is treated as asking for that advice and gets the penalty under Rule 10.2a.

In a team competition (Rule 24), this also applies to a player who gets advice from a team captain who has not been named an advice giver.

**Rule 10.2b(3) Interpretations:**
10.2b(3)/1 – Setting Clubhead on Ground Behind Ball to Help the Player Take a Stance is Allowed

Rule 10.2b(3) does not allow a player to set down an object (such as an alignment rod or a golf club) to help the player take a stance.

However, this prohibition does not prevent a player from setting his or her clubhead behind the ball, such as when a player stands behind the ball and places the clubhead perpendicular to the line of play and then walks around from behind the ball to take his or her stance.

Rule 10.2b(4) Interpretations:

10.2b(4)/1 – Examples of When Player Begins Taking His or Her Stance

Rule 10.2b(4) does not allow a player to have his or her caddie deliberately stand behind him or her when the player begins taking a stance because aiming at the intended target is one of the challenges the player must overcome alone.

There is no set procedure for determining when a player has begun to take a stance since each player has his or her own set-up routine. However, if a player has his or her feet or body close to a position where useful guidance on aiming at the intended target could be given, it should be decided that the player has begun to take his or her stance.

Examples of when a player has begun to take a stance include when:

- The player is standing beside the ball but facing the hole with his or her club behind the ball, and then starts to turn his or her body to face the ball.
- After standing behind the ball to determine the target line, the player takes a step forward and then starts to turn his or her body and puts a foot in place for the stroke.

Rule 10.2b(5) Interpretations:

10.2b(5)/1 – Player May Ask Another Person Who Was Not Deliberately Positioned to Move or Remain in Place

Although a player may not place an object or position a person for the purpose of blocking the sunlight from the ball, the player may ask a person (such as a spectator) not to move when that spectator is already in position, so that a shadow remains over the ball, or may ask that spectator to move, so that his or her shadow is no longer over the ball.

10.2b(5)/2 – Player May Wear Protective Clothing

Although a player must not improve conditions affecting the stroke to protect against the elements, he or she may wear protective clothing to protect against the elements.

For example, if a player’s ball comes to rest right next to a cactus, it would breach Rule 8.1a (Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke) if he or she placed a towel on the cactus to improve his or her area of intended stance.
However, a towel may be wrapped around the player’s body to protect him or her from the cactus.

**Rule 10.3a Interpretations:**

10.3a/1 – Player Transports Clubs on Motorized Golf Cart and Hires Individual to Perform All Other Functions of a Caddie

A player whose clubs are transported on a motorized golf cart that he or she is driving is allowed to hire an individual to perform all the other duties of a *caddie*, and this individual is considered to be a *caddie*.

This arrangement is allowed provided the player has not also hired someone else to drive the cart. In such a case, the cart driver is also a *caddie* since he is transporting the player’s clubs, and the player gets a penalty under Rule 10.3a(1) for having more than one *caddie*.

10.3a/2 – Player May Caddie for Another Player When Not Playing a Round

A player in a competition may *caddie* for another player in the same competition, except when the player is playing his or her *round* or when a Local Rule restricts the player from being a *caddie*.

For example:

- If two players are playing in the same competition but at different times on the same day, they are allowed to *caddie* for each other.
- In *stroke play*, if one player in a group withdraws during a *round*, he or she may caddie for another player in the group.

**Rule 11.1b Interpretations:**

11.1b/1 – Playing from Where Ball Came to Rest When Stroke Does Not Count Is
Playing from Wrong Place

When a stroke is cancelled by an opponent (such as under Rule 6.4a(2) – Playing Out of Turn) or does not count under a Rule (such as under Exception 2 to Rule 11.1b – When Ball Played from Putting Green Accidentally Hits Any Person, Animal or Movable Obstruction (Including Another Ball in Motion) on Putting Green), it is disregarded from the player’s score as if it never took place. If the player does not replace the ball, but instead plays from where the ball came to rest, he or she has played from a wrong place and Rule 14.7 (Playing from Wrong Place) applies since the player was required to replay the stroke.

For example, a player makes a stroke from the putting green that accidentally hits a hole-liner that came out of the hole when the flagstick was removed (Exception 2 to Rule 11.1b). Instead of replacing a ball and replaying the stroke, the player plays the ball from where it came to rest. The stroke with the ball that accidentally hit the hole-liner does not count in the player’s score. However, by not replacing a ball as required, the player has played from a wrong place and Rule 14.7 applies.

This also applies if a player plays out of turn and the stroke is cancelled by an opponent under Rule 6.4a(2).

11.1b/2 – What to Do When Ball Moves After Being Accidentally Deflected or Stopped

If a ball comes to rest against a person or an outside influence after being accidentally deflected or stopped and the person or outside influence moves or is moved, Rule 9 applies, and the player must follow the Rule appropriately. However, there is no penalty under Rule 9 if the ball moves after coming to rest against a person or equipment.

Examples of where there is no penalty include when:

• The player’s ball comes to rest against the opponent’s foot after being accidentally stopped by him or her and the ball moves as a result of the opponent moving. The player must replace the ball as required by Rule 9.5 but neither the player nor the opponent gets a penalty.

• The player’s ball in motion is accidentally stopped by his or her club after rolling back down a hill and the ball moves as a result of removing the club. The player must replace the ball as required by Rule 9.4 but gets no penalty.

For other situations when a ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by an outside influence (such as an animal), and that outside influence moves and causes the ball to move, see Rule 9.6 for what to do.

Rule 11.2a Interpretations:

11.2a/1 – Equipment Left in Position After Player Realizes It Could Be Helpful if the Ball Were to Hit It

Rule 11.2 applies to a situation where a player did not initially position the equipment, other object or person for the purpose of deflecting the ball in motion, but once positioned by the player, he or she realizes it may deflect or stop the ball and deliberately leaves it there.
An example where the player gets a penalty is when:

- After raking a bunker, a player places the rake between the putting green and the bunker, without any thought of it influencing a ball. The player, who now has a downhill putt towards the bunker, realizes the rake might stop his or her ball and plays without first moving the rake. The player putts and the ball is stopped by that rake.

An example where the player does not get a penalty is when:

- A rake has been left by a preceding group between the putting green and a bunker. A player, who has a downhill putt towards the bunker, sees the rake and leaves it there because it might stop the ball if his or her putt is too strong. The player putts and the ball is stopped by that rake.

**Rule 11.2c(1) Interpretations:**

**11.2c(1)/1 – Options When Ball Would Have Come to Rest in Penalty Area**

When a ball in motion is deliberately deflected or stopped and it is estimated that it would have come to rest in a penalty area, the player has the choice to drop a ball in the penalty area (Rule 11.2c(1)) or take relief from the penalty area (Rule 17.1d).

If the player decides to take relief from the penalty area because he or she does not wish to drop a ball in the relief area in the penalty area, the player must estimate the point that the ball would have last crossed the edge of

**Rule 11.3 Interpretations:**

**11.3/1 – Outcome of Deliberate Actions to Affect Ball in Motion Is Irrelevant**

Rule 11.3 applies when a player or caddie takes a deliberate action for the purpose of affecting a ball in motion, and the player is in breach of this Rule even if the deliberate action does not affect where the ball comes to rest.

Examples where the player gets the general penalty under Rule 11.3, and in stroke play must play the ball where it comes to rest, include when:

- The player’s ball lies in the general area at the bottom of a slope. The player makes a stroke and, while the ball is rolling back down the slope, the player presses down a raised piece of turf for the purpose of preventing the ball from coming to rest in a bad lie.

- The player believes a rake lying on the ground may stop or deflect another player’s ball in motion, so the player lifts the rake.

Examples where there is no penalty, and in stroke play the ball must be played where it comes to rest, include when:

- A player’s ball lies in the general area at the bottom of a slope. The player makes a stroke and the ball begins to roll back down the slope. Unaware that the ball was returning to the area from where it had been played, the player presses down a raised piece of turf without any intent to affect where the ball might come to rest. There is no penalty even if the ball comes to rest in the pressed down area.
• After making a stroke and while the ball is in motion, a player lifts a nearby rake to give it to another player for an upcoming bunker shot. The player’s ball rolls through the area that the rake was lifted from.
Rule 12.2a Interpretations:

12.2a/1 – Improvement Resulting from Removing Loose Impediment or Movable Obstruction from a Bunker

When removing a loose impediment or a movable obstruction from a bunker, sand is often moved as a result of removing the object, and there is no penalty if this improves conditions affecting the stroke if the actions taken to remove the loose impediment or movable obstruction were reasonable (Rule 8.1b(2)).

For example, a player removes a pine cone near his or her ball and improves the conditions affecting the stroke by dragging the pine cone away in a way that also removes a mound of sand from the area of his or her intended swing.

The player could have used a less intrusive way to remove the pine cone (such as lifting the pine cone straight up without dragging it behind the ball). Because his or her actions are not reasonable in this situation, the player gets a penalty for a breach of Rule 8.1a (Improving the Conditions Affecting the Stroke).

Rule 12.2b(3) Interpretations:

12.2b(3)/1 – Player is Allowed to Smooth Sand in a Bunker to Care for the Course After Taking Relief Outside the Bunker

Under Rule 12.2b(3), a player may smooth sand in a bunker to care for the course without penalty under Rule 8.1a (Actions That Are Not Allowed) after a ball is played out of that bunker. The term “played out of the bunker” in Rule 12.2b(3) also includes taking relief outside the bunker.

For example, a player decides to take unplayable ball relief outside a bunker for a penalty of two strokes under Rule 19.3b (Back-On-the-Line Relief). Before dropping a ball using the back-on-the-line relief procedure outside the bunker or, after dropping a ball but before making his or her next stroke, the player smooths footprints in the bunker on the line of play. Rule 12.2b(3) applies and there is no penalty.

Provided that the player intended to take relief outside the bunker, there would be no penalty even if the player smoothed the bunker before dropping the ball outside the bunker.

Rule 12.2b Interpretations:

12.2b/1 – Rule 12.2b Applies to a Mound of Sand from an Animal Hole in a Bunker

If a player’s ball lies in a bunker on or near a mound of sand that is part of an animal hole, the restrictions in Rule 12.2b(1) apply to touching that mound of sand.

However, the player may take relief from the animal hole (which is an abnormal course condition) under Rule 16.1c.
12.2b/2 – Whether Player May Probe in Bunker

8.1a/7 confirms that a player may probe anywhere on the course (including in a bunker) without penalty to determine if tree roots, rocks or obstructions might interfere with his or her stroke, as long as the player does not improve the conditions affecting the stroke.

For example, when a player’s ball comes to rest near a drain in a bunker, the player may use a tee to probe the sand to determine the extent of the drain and whether it will interfere with his or her stroke.

However, if the purpose of the probing is to test the condition of the sand, the player is in breach of Rule 12.2b(1).

12.2b/3 – Rule 12.2 Continues to Apply When Player Has Lifted His or Her Ball from Bunker to Take Relief but Has Not Yet Decided Whether to Take Relief In or Out of Bunker

If a player has lifted the ball from a bunker to take relief under a Rule, but has not yet decided which relief option to use, the restrictions in Rule 12.2b(1) continue to apply.

For example, if a player’s tee shot is unplayable in a bunker and he or she is deciding whether to go back to the teeing area to play again under penalty of stroke and distance, take relief in the bunker or take back-on-the-line relief outside the bunker, the player is in breach of Rule 12.2b if he or she deliberately tests the condition of the sand in the bunker or hits the sand with a practice swing.

However, just as Rule 12.2b(1) no longer applies after the player has played a ball and it is outside the bunker, Rule 12.2b(1) does not apply after the player decides to take relief outside the bunker so long as relief is actually taken outside the bunker.
Rule 13.1c(2) Interpretations:
See 8.1b/7 for when damage partially on and partially off putting green may be repaired.

13.1c(2)/1 – Line of Play on Putting Green Accidentally Damaged May Be Repaired

A player is entitled to the conditions affecting the stroke that he or she had when his or her ball came to rest unless natural forces or the player caused the damage (Rule 8.1d). However, damage caused by the player to his or her own line of play on the putting green may be repaired under Rule 13.1c(2).

For example, if a player creates spike marks in assessing the line of play, he or she may take reasonable actions to repair the damage.

13.1c(2)/2 – Damaged Hole Is Part of Damage on the Putting Green

Damage to the hole is covered by Rule 13.1c as part of damage on a putting green. The player may repair a damaged hole unless the damage is natural wear that Rule 13.1c does not allow to be repaired.

For example, if the hole is damaged in removing the flagstick, it may be repaired by the player under Rule 13.1c, even if the damage has changed the dimensions of the hole.

However, if a hole has been damaged and the player cannot repair the damage (such as the hole cannot be made round again) or where natural wear that the player may not repair results in the hole not being round, the player should request that the Committee repair it.

13.1c(2)/3 – Player May Request Help from Committee When Unable to Repair Damage On Putting Green

If a player is unable to repair damage on the putting green, such as an indentation from a club or an old hole plug that has sunk below the surface, the player may request that the Committee repair the damage.

If the Committee is unable to repair the damage and the player’s ball lies on the putting green, the Committee could consider providing relief to the player under Rule 16.1 by defining the damaged area as ground under repair.

Rule 13.1d(1) Interpretations:

13.1d(1)/1 – No Penalty for Accidental Movement of Ball or Ball-Marker on Putting Green

Under Rule 13.1d(1) examples of actions that are accidental include when:

• The player takes normal actions near the ball before attempting a stroke, such as practice swings near the ball or addressing the ball by placing the putter on the ground near the ball.
• The player drops a coin or a club, hitting the ball and causing it to move.
• The partner or opponent of the player, or one of their caddies, unintentionally moves the ball or ball-marker, such as by kicking the ball, dropping something on the ball, or by pressing down the ball-marker.
• The player inadvertently steps on the ball-marker and it sticks to the bottom of his or her shoe.

In these examples of accidental movement, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced and there is no penalty to anyone. If the exact spot from where the ball or ball-marker was moved is not known, it must be estimated (Rule 14.2c).

**Rule 13.1d(2) Interpretations:**

**13.1d(2)/1 – Ball Must Be Replaced if It Moves After Placing a Ball to Take Relief**

A player’s ball is on the putting green and he or she has interference from an abnormal course condition. The player decides to take free relief under Rule 16.1d. Once the ball is placed, it is treated as if it has been lifted and replaced under Rule 13.1d(2).

For example, a player’s ball is in temporary water on the putting green. He or she decides to take relief and places a ball on the spot of the nearest point of complete relief. While the player is preparing to make the stroke, natural forces cause the ball to move. The player must replace the ball on the spot of the nearest point of complete relief.

**Rule 13.1e Interpretations:**

**13.1e/1 – Deliberately Testing Any Putting Green Is Not Allowed**

Rule 13.1e prohibits a player from taking two specific actions on the putting green or a wrong green for the purpose of finding out information about how a ball might roll on it. It does not prohibit a player from taking other actions even when done for the purpose of testing or from inadvertently taking the prohibited actions.

An example of an action that is a breach of Rule 13.1e is when:

• A player roughens or scrapes the grass on the putting green to determine which way the grain is growing.

Examples of actions that are not a breach of Rule 13.1e are when:

• A player concedes his or her opponent’s next putt and hits the ball away on the same line of play as the player may subsequently use but does not do so deliberately to learn information about the putting green.

• A player places the palm of his or her hand on the surface of the putting green on his or her line of play to determine the wetness of the putting green. While the player is doing so to test the putting green, this action is not prohibited under Rule 13.1e.

• A player rubs a ball on the putting green to clean off mud.
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Rule 13.2a(1) Interpretations:

13.2a(1)/1 – Player Has the Right to Leave Flagstick in Position Preceding Group Left It

A player is entitled to play the course as he or she finds it, which includes the position in which the preceding group left the flagstick.

For example, if the preceding group replaced the flagstick in a position that is leaning away from the player, the player has the right to play with the flagstick in that position should he or she find this advantageous.

If another player or caddie centres the flagstick in the hole, the player may keep it in that position or have the flagstick restored to its previous position.

Rule 13.2a(4) Interpretations:

13.2a(4)/1 – Unattended Flagstick Removed Without Player’s Authority May Be Replaced

If a player chooses to play with the flagstick in the hole and another player takes the flagstick out of the hole without the player’s authority, it may be put back in the hole while the player’s ball is in motion.

However, if the other player’s action was a breach of Rule 13.2a(4), he or she does not avoid a penalty by replacing the flagstick.

Rule 13.2b(1) Interpretations:

13.2b(1)/1 – Flagstick Attendee May Stand Anywhere

A person attending the flagstick may stand anywhere when holding the flagstick in, above or next to the hole.

For example, the attendee may stand directly behind or to either side of the hole to avoid standing on another player’s line of play.

13.2b(1)/2 – Player May Make Stroke While Holding Flagstick

Rule 13.2b(1) allows a player to make a one-handed stroke while holding the flagstick with the other hand. However, the player may not use the flagstick to steady himself or herself while making a stroke (Rule 4.3a).

For example, a player may:

• Remove the flagstick from the hole with one hand before putting and continue to hold it while making a one-handed stroke with the other hand.

• Attend his or her own flagstick in the hole with one hand before and while putting with the other hand. While or after making the one-handed stroke, he or she may remove the flagstick from the hole, but must not deliberately allow the ball in motion to hit the flagstick.

Rule 13.3a Interpretations:
13.3a/1 – Meaning of Reasonable Time for Player to Reach Hole

Determining the limits of a reasonable time to reach the hole depends on the circumstances of the stroke and includes time for a player’s natural or spontaneous reaction to the ball not going into the hole.

For example, a player may have played the shot from well off the putting green and it may take him or her several minutes to reach the hole while other players play their shots and all walk to the putting green. Or, the player may need to take an indirect route to the hole by walking around the line of play of another player on the putting green.

Rule 13.3b Interpretations:

13.3b/1 – What to Do When Player’s Ball Overhanging Hole Moves When Player Removes Flagstick

After the flagstick is removed by the player, if the player’s ball overhanging the hole moves, he or she must proceed as follows:

• If it is known or virtually certain that the player’s removal of the flagstick caused the ball to move, the ball is replaced on the lip of the hole and Rule 13.3b applies. The ball is treated as coming to rest and the waiting time under Rule 13.3a no longer applies. There is no penalty to the player since the flagstick is a movable obstruction (Rule 15.2a(1)).

• If the player’s removal of the flagstick did not cause the ball to move, and the ball falls into the hole, Rule 13.3a applies.

• If the player’s ball moved due to natural forces to a new spot not overhanging the hole and not because the flagstick was removed, there is no penalty and the ball must be played from its new spot (Rule 9.3).
Rule 14.1a Interpretations:

14.1a/1 – Ball May Be Lifted in Any Manner

There are no restrictions on how a ball may be lifted so long as the ball is not lifted in a way that deliberately tests the putting green (Rule 13.1e).

For example, after the spot of the ball is marked on the putting green, the player may lift the ball with the back of the putter or may move it to the side with a club.

14.1a/2 – Marking Ball Correctly

Rule 14.1a uses “right behind” and “right next to” to ensure the spot of a lifted ball is marked with sufficient accuracy for the player to replace it in the right spot.

A ball may be marked in any position around the ball so long as it is marked right next to it, and this includes placing a ball-marker in front of or to the side of the ball.

Rule 14.1c Interpretations:

14.1c/1 – Player Must Be Careful When Lifted Ball May Not Be Cleaned

When a player is applying any of the four Rules mentioned in Rule 14.1c where cleaning is not allowed, there are acts that the player should avoid because, despite there being no intention to clean the ball, the act itself may result in the ball being cleaned.

For example, if a player lifts his or her ball that has grass or other debris sticking to it and throws it to his or her caddie who catches it with a towel, it is likely that some of the grass or other debris will be removed, meaning the ball has been cleaned. Similarly, if the player places that ball in his or her pocket or drops it onto the ground, these acts could result in some of the grass or other debris being removed from that ball, meaning that it has been cleaned.

However, if the player takes these actions after lifting a ball that was known to be clean before it was lifted, the player does not get a penalty because the ball was not cleaned.

Rule 14.2b(2) Interpretation:

14.2b(2)/1 Player Drops Ball When Ball Is to Be Replaced

When a player drops a ball when the Rules require him or her to replace the ball, the ball has been replaced in a wrong way. If the player replaces the ball in a wrong way, but on the required spot (this includes if the player drops the ball and it comes to rest on the required spot), he or she gets one penalty stroke if the ball is played without correcting the mistake under Rule 14.5 (Correcting Mistake Made in Substituting, Replacing, Dropping or Placing Ball).

But if the player has dropped a ball and that ball comes to rest somewhere other than on the required spot, he or she gets the general penalty for playing from a wrong place if the ball is played without correcting the mistake.
For example:

- In stroke play, a player moves his or her ball during search and is required to replace the ball without penalty. Instead of replacing the ball on the original or the estimated spot, the player drops the ball on that spot, the ball bounces and comes to rest on another spot, and he or she plays the ball from there. The player has replaced the ball in a wrong way and has also played from a wrong place.

Because the player’s breaches of the Rules were a combination of a procedural breach (replacing the ball in a wrong way under Rule 14.2b(2)) and playing from a wrong place in breach of Rule 14.7a, the player gets a total of two penalty strokes under Rule 14.7a (see Rule 1.3c(4) – Applying Penalties to Multiple Breaches of the Rules).

**Rule 14.2c Interpretations:**

**14.2c/1 – Ball May Be Replaced in Almost Any Orientation**

When replacing a lifted ball on a spot, the Rules are concerned about only the location. The ball may be aligned in any way when being replaced (such as by lining up a trademark) so long as the ball’s vertical distance to the ground remains the same.

For example, when using a Rule that does not allow cleaning, the player lifts his or her ball and there is a piece of mud sticking to it. The ball may be aligned in any way when replacing it on the original spot (such as by rotating the interfering mud towards the hole).

However, the player is not allowed to replace the ball in an alignment so the ball rests on the mud unless that was its position before it was lifted. The “spot” of the ball includes its vertical location relative to the ground.

**14.2c/2 – Removal of Loose Impediment from Spot Where Ball to Be Replaced**

Exception 1 to Rule 15.1a makes clear that, before replacing a ball, the player must not remove a loose impediment that, if moved when the ball was at rest, would have been likely to cause the ball to move. But there are situations where a loose impediment may move either when the ball is being lifted or before it is replaced, and the player is not required to put the loose impediment back before or after replacing the ball.

For example:

- A player marks and lifts his or her ball in the general area after being requested to do so as it interferes with another player’s play. As a result of lifting the ball, a loose twig lying against the ball is moved. The player is not required to put the twig back when the ball is replaced.

- A player marks and lifts his or her ball in a bunker to see if it is cut. While the ball is lifted, a leaf that had been just behind the ball-marker is moved away by the wind. The player is not required to put the leaf back when the ball is replaced.

**Rule 14.2d(2) Interpretations:**
14.2d(2)/1 – Altered Lie Might Be “Nearest Spot with Lie Most Similar”

If a player’s lie is altered when his or her ball is lifted or moved and must be replaced, the altered lie might be the nearest spot with a lie most similar to the player’s original lie, and the player may be required to play the ball from the altered lie.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest in a divot hole in the fairway. Thinking it is his or her ball, another player plays the ball, making the divot hole a little deeper. If there is no other similar divot hole within one club-length, the nearest spot with the lie most similar to the original lie would be a spot in the deepened divot hole.

Rule 14.2e Interpretations:

14.2e/1 – Player Must Take Penalty Relief When Spot Where Ball Will Remain at Rest Is Nearer Hole

When following Rule 14.2e, there is a possibility that the only spot in the same area of the course where the ball will stay at rest when placed is nearer the hole. In such circumstances, the player must take penalty relief under an allowed Rule. The player is not allowed to push the ball into the ground to ensure it stays on a spot (see 8.2b/1).

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest on the downslope of a bunker against a rake and, in removing the rake, the ball moves. The player attempts to replace the ball as required, but it does not stay. He or she then follows the procedure of Rule 14.2e with no success and finds that there are no other spots to try in that bunker that are not nearer the hole.

In this case, the player must take unplayable ball relief either by using stroke and distance for one penalty stroke (Rule 19.2a) or back-on-the-line relief outside

Rule 14.2 General Interpretations:

14.2/1 – Ball Does Not Need to Be Replaced on Original Spot When Player Will Play From Another Place

When a player’s ball must be replaced on its original spot, the player does not need to replace the ball if he or she wishes to take relief under a Rule or play the ball from another place.

For example, if a player’s ball at rest in a penalty area is moved by an outside influence (Rule 9.6), the player does not need to replace the ball before taking relief from the penalty area.

He or she may replace the ball and then take relief from the penalty area or may directly take relief from the penalty area.

Rule 14.3b(2) Interpretations:
14.3b(2)/1 – Ball May Fall Only a Short Distance When Dropped from Knee Height

Rule 14.3b(2) and the Definition of “drop” require a player to drop a ball from a location at the player’s knee height when in a standing position. But, while the ball must fall through the air in order to be dropped (rather than placed), the ball will not always fall the distance of the player’s knee to the ground.

For example, the player has interference from an abnormal course condition, and the player’s relief area is on a steep slope. If the player is positioned with his or her feet near the bottom of the slope and is facing up the slope to drop the ball, it may be that the ball will only fall a short distance when dropped, despite being dropped from knee height.

Rule 14.3c(1) Interpretations:

14.3c(1)/1 – What to Do When Dropped Ball Moves After Coming to Rest Against a Player’s Foot or Equipment

A player drops a ball in the right way, but the ball is accidentally stopped by the player’s foot or equipment (such as a tee that is marking the relief area) and comes to rest in the relief area. There is no penalty, the player has completed taking relief and must play the ball as it lies.

If the ball then moves when the player moves his foot or the equipment, the player must replace the ball as required by Rule 9.4 but gets no penalty as the ball’s movement was a result of reasonable actions taken in taking relief under a Rule (see Exception 4 to Rule 9.4 – Accidental Movement Anywhere Except on Putting Green While Applying Rule).

Rule 14.3c(2) Interpretations:

14.3c(2)/1 – Ball Dropped in Right Way Twice That Comes to Rest Outside Relief Area Might Be Placed Outside Relief Area

If a player must complete the dropping procedure by placing a ball using Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e, this might result in the player placing the ball outside the relief area.

For example, if the player drops the ball for a second time in the right way near the edge of the relief area and it comes to rest outside the relief area, he or she must place a ball on the spot it first touched the ground after the second drop. But, if the placed ball does not stay on that spot after two attempts, the nearest spot not nearer the hole where the ball will stay at rest might be inside or outside the relief area.

14.3c(2)/2 – Where to Place Ball Dropped in Right Way Twice in Relief Area with a Bush in It

If a player must complete the dropping procedure by placing a ball using Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e, this might result in the player attempting to place a ball other than on the ground.
For example, if the player is *dropping* into a bush in the relief area, and with both
*drops* the ball comes to rest outside the *relief area*, Rule 14.3c(2) provides that
he or she must place a ball on the spot it first touched the ground after the second
drop. If the ball first struck the bush when *dropped* for the second time, the
“ground” includes the bush, and the player must attempt to place the ball where
it first struck the bush. But, if the placed ball does not stay on that spot after two
attempts, the player must place the ball on the nearest spot not nearer the *hole*
where the ball will stay at rest, subject to the limits in Rule 14.2e.

**Rule 14.3c General Interpretations:**

**14.3c/1 – Relief Area Includes Everything in Relief Area**

A player’s *relief area* includes tall grass, bushes or other growing things in it. If a
player’s *dropped* ball comes to rest in a bad lie in the *relief area*, it has still come to
rest in the *relief area*.

For example, a player *drops* his or her ball in the right way and it stays in a bush in
the *relief area*. The bush is part of the *relief area* and, therefore, the ball is *in play*
and the player is not allowed to *drop* again under Rule 14.3c.

**14.3c/2 – Ball May Be Dropped in No Play Zone**

In *dropping* a ball under a relief Rule, the player may *drop* a ball in a *no play zone*
so long as that *no play zone* is part of the *relief area*. However, the player must
then take relief under the Rule that applies.

For example, a player may take relief from a *penalty area* and *drop* a ball in a *no
play zone* in an *abnormal course condition*. But, after the *dropped* ball comes to
rest in the *relief area* required by Rule 17 (Penalty Area Relief), the player must
take relief under Rule 16.1f.

**Rule 14.4 Interpretations:**

**14.4/1 – Placed Ball Is Not in Play Unless There Was Intent to Put It in Play**

When a ball is placed or *replaced* on the ground, it needs to be determined
whether it was put down with the intent of putting it *in play*.

For example, the player *marks* the ball on the *putting green* by placing a coin right
behind the ball, lifts the ball and gives it to his or her *caddie* to have
it cleaned. The *caddie* then places the ball right behind or right next to the coin
(not on the ball’s original spot) to help the player read the *line of play* from the
other side of the hole. The ball is not *in play* as the *caddie* did not place the ball
with the intention of putting it *in play*.

In this case, the ball is not *in play* until it is repositioned with the intention of
*replacing* the ball as required by Rule 14.2. If the player makes a *stroke* at the ball
while it is out of play, the player would be playing a *wrong ball*.

**14.4/2 – Test Drops Are Not Allowed**

The *dropping* procedure in Rule 14.3 means that there is an element of uncertainty
when taking relief under a Rule. It is not in the spirit of the game to test how a dropped ball will react.

For example, in taking relief from a cart part (immovable obstruction), a player determines his or her relief area and realizes that the ball may roll and come to rest in a bush in the relief area. Knowing that the dropped ball would not be in play without intent, the player test drops a ball in one side of the relief area to see if it rolls into the bush.

Since this act is contrary to the spirit of the game, the Committee is justified in disqualifying the player under Rule 1.2a (Serious Misconduct).

**Rule 14.5b(3) Interpretations:**

**14.5b(3)/1 – Player May Change Relief Areas When Dropping Again for Back-On-the-Line Relief**

When a player is required to drop a ball a second time after using back-on-the-line relief under Rule 16.1c(2) (Abnormal Course Condition Relief), Rule 17.1d(2) (Penalty Area Relief), or Rule 19.2b or Rule 19.3b (Unplayable Ball Relief), he or she is required to drop again under the back-on-the-line relief option in the relevant Rule. But, when dropping for the second time, the player is allowed to change reference points so that the relief area is nearer to or farther from the hole.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest in a penalty area and he or she chooses to take back-on-the-line relief. The player picks a reference point and drops the ball in the right way, but it rolls out of the relief area. When the player drops again under back-on-the-line relief, he or she may choose a different reference point that is nearer or farther from the hole.

**14.5b(3)/2 – Player May Change Areas of the Course in the Relief Area When Dropping Again**

When a player’s relief area is located in more than one area of the course and he or she is required to drop again under that relief option, the player may drop in a different area of the course within the same relief area.

For example, a player chooses to take unplayable ball relief under Rule 19.2c (Lateral Relief) and his or her relief area is partially in the general area and partially in a bunker. The player’s drop first touches the bunker in the relief area and comes to rest in the general area or outside the entire relief area, so the player must drop again. When doing so, he or she may drop the ball in the general area portion of the relief area.

**Rule 14.7b Interpretations:**

**14.7b/1 – Player Gets Penalty for Each Stroke Made from Area Where Play Is Not Allowed**

When a player’s ball comes to rest in an area where play is not allowed, the player must take relief under the appropriate Rule. In stroke play, if the player plays the ball from that area (such as a no play zone or wrong green) the player gets two...
penalty strokes for each stroke made from that area.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest in a no play zone within a penalty area. The player enters the no play zone and makes a stroke at the ball, which moves only a few yards and remains in the no play zone. The player then makes another stroke at the ball and it comes to rest outside the no play zone.

Each stroke counts, and the player gets the general penalty under Rule 14.7 for playing from a wrong place for each stroke made from the no play zone for a total of four penalty strokes. The player is required to play out the hole with the ball played from the no play zone, unless it was a serious breach. For a serious breach, the player must correct the mistake (see Rule 14.7b).

14.7b/2 – Ball in Wrong Place If Club Strikes Condition Relief Was Taken From

When a player is taking relief from interference by an abnormal course condition, he or she is required to take relief from all interference from that condition. If the ball is dropped at a spot or comes to rest in a spot where the player has any type of interference from that condition, the ball is in a wrong place.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest on a cart path and the player decides to take relief. He or she estimates the nearest point of complete relief using the club that would have been used to play the ball from the cart path. Having measured the relief area from that point, the player drops a ball that comes to rest in the relief area and makes a stroke, hitting the cart path during the stroke. Because the cart path was in the player’s area of intended swing, the player still had interference. Therefore, he or she did not properly determine the relief area and gets the general penalty for playing from a wrong place.

However, if the player had interference from the condition because, for example he or she decided to play in a different direction or his or her feet slipped when making the stroke and altered the intended swing, the player would not be considered to have played from a wrong place.

Rule 15.1a Interpretations:

15.1a/1 – Removing a Loose Impediment, Including Assistance from Others
Loose impediments come in many shapes and sizes (such as acorns and large rocks), and the means and methods by which they may be removed are not limited, except that removal must not unreasonably delay play (see Rule 5.6a).

For example, a player may use a towel, hand or hat, or may lift or push a loose impediment for removal. A player is also allowed to seek help in removing loose impediments, such as by asking spectators for assistance in removing a large tree branch.

15.1a/2 – Player Allowed to Break Off Part of Loose Impediment

While Rule 15.1a allows a player to remove a loose impediment, he or she may also break off part of a loose impediment.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest behind a large branch that has broken off a tree. Rather than seek help from other players to remove the entire tree branch, the player may break off the part that is in his or her way.

15.1a/3 – Removal of Loose Impediment from Relief Area or Spot Where Ball to Be Dropped, Placed or Replaced

Exception 1 to Rule 15.1a makes clear that, before replacing a ball, the player must not remove a loose impediment that, if moved when the ball was at rest, would have been likely to cause the ball to move. This is because when the ball is in its initial location, the player risks the ball moving when removing the loose impediment.

However, when a ball is to be dropped or placed, the ball is not being put back in a specific spot and therefore removing loose impediments before dropping or placing a ball is allowed.

For example, if a player is applying Rule 14.3b when dropping a ball in a relief area or Rule 14.3c(2) when a dropped ball will not stay in a relief area and the player now must place a ball, the player is allowed to remove loose impediments from the relief area into which a ball will be dropped or from on or around the spot on which the player must place a ball.

Rule 15.3a Interpretations:

15.3a/1 – Breach of Rule for Leaving Helping Ball in Place Does Not Require Knowledge

In stroke play, under Rule 15.3a, if two or more players agree to leave a ball in place on the putting green to help any player, and the stroke is made with the helping ball left in place, each player who made the agreement gets two penalty strokes. A breach of Rule 15.3a does not depend on whether the players know that such an agreement is not allowed.

For example, in stroke play, before playing from just off the putting green, a player asks another player to leave his or her ball that is near the hole, in order to use it as a backstop. Without knowing this is not allowed, the other player agrees to leave his or her ball by the hole to help the other player. Once the stroke is made with the ball in place, both players get the penalty under Rule 15.3a.
The same outcome would apply if the player whose ball was near the hole offered to leave the ball *in play* to help the other player, and the other player accepted the offer and then played.

If the players know that they are not allowed to make such an agreement, but still do it, they are both disqualified under Rule 1.3b(1) for deliberately ignoring Rule 15.3a.

**15.3a/2 – Players Allowed to Leave Helping Ball in Match Play**

In a match, a player may agree to leave his or her ball in place to help the *opponent* since the outcome of any benefit that may come from the agreement affects only their match.
Rule 16.1a(3) Interpretations:

16.1a(3)/1 – Obstruction Interfering with Abnormal Stroke May Not Preclude Player From Taking Relief

In some situations a player may have to adopt an abnormal swing, stance or direction of play in playing his or her 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 he or she 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.

16.1a(3)/2 – Player May Not Use Clearly Unreasonable Stroke to Get Relief from Condition

A player may not use a clearly unreasonably stroke to get relief from an abnormal ground condition. If the player’s stroke is clearly unreasonable given the circumstances, relief under Rule 16.1 is not allowed, and he or she must either play the ball as it lies or take unplayable ball relief.

For example, in the general area, a right-handed player’s ball is in a bad lie. A nearby immovable obstruction would not interfere with the player’s normal right-handed stroke, but would interfere with a left-handed stroke. The player states that he or she is going to make the next stroke left-handed and believes that, since the obstruction would interfere with such a stroke, Rule 16.1b allows relief.

However, since the only reason for the player to use a left-handed stroke is to escape a bad lie by taking relief, use of the left-handed stroke is clearly unreasonable and the player is not allowed to take relief under Rule 16.1b (Rule 16.1a(3)).

The same principles would apply to the use of a clearly unreasonable stance, direction of play or the choice of a club.

16.1a(3)/3 – Application of Rule 16.1a(3) When Ball Lies Underground in Animal Hole

In deciding whether relief should be denied under Rule 16.1a(3) for a ball lying underground in an animal hole, the decision is made based on the lie the ball would have at the entrance to the hole as opposed to the ball’s position underground in the hole.

For example, in the general area, a player’s ball comes to rest underground in a hole made by an animal. A large bush is immediately next to and overhanging the
entrance to the animal hole.

The nature of the area at the entrance of the animal hole is such that, if the animal hole was not there, it would be clearly unreasonable for the player to make a stroke at the ball (because of the overhanging bush). In such a situation, the player is not allowed to take relief under Rule 16.1b. The player must play the ball as it lies or proceed under Rule 19 (Ball Unplayable).

If the ball lies in an animal hole but is not underground, the spot of the ball is used to determine whether it is clearly unreasonable to play the ball and if Rule 16.1a(3) applies. If Rule 16.1a(3) does not apply, the player is allowed relief without penalty under Rule 16.1b. The same principles would apply to a ball that is underground in an immovable obstruction.

**Rule 16.1b Interpretations:**

16.1b/1 – Relief Procedure When Ball Lies in Underground Abnormal Course Condition

When a ball enters an abnormal course condition and comes to rest underground (and Rule 16.1a(3) does not apply), the relief procedure that applies depends on whether the ball lies in the general area (Rule 16.1b), in a bunker (Rule 16.1c), in a penalty area (Rule 17.1c) or out of bounds (Rule 18.2b).

Examples of whether relief is available and how to take relief are as follows:

- A ball enters an animal hole through an entrance that is in a greenside bunker and is found at rest underneath the putting green. As the ball is not in the bunker or on the putting green, relief is taken under Rule 16.1b for a ball in the general area. The spot where the ball lies in the animal hole is used to determine the nearest point of complete relief and the relief area must be in the general area.

- A ball enters an animal hole through an entrance that is in a spot that is out of bounds. Part of the hole is in bounds and in the general area. The ball is found at rest in bounds, underground and in the general area. Relief is taken under Rule 16.1b for a ball in the general area. The spot where the ball lies in the animal hole is used to determine the nearest point of complete relief and the relief area must be in the general area.

- A ball enters an animal hole through an entrance that is in the general area but only about a foot from a boundary fence. The animal hole slopes steeply down below the fence, so that the ball is found at rest beyond the boundary line. Since the ball lies out of bounds, the player must take stroke-and-distance relief by adding one penalty stroke and play a ball from where the previous stroke was made (Rule 18.2b).

- A ball might have entered an animal hole through an entrance that is in the general area but it is not known or virtually certain that the ball that has not been found is in the abnormal course condition. In this situation, the ball is lost and the player must take stroke-and-distance relief by adding one penalty stroke and play a ball from where the previous stroke was made (Rule 18.2b).

**Rule 16.1c Interpretations:**
16.1c/1 – Player Takes Maximum Available Relief; Then Decides to Take Back-On-the-Line Relief

If the player takes maximum available relief, he or she will still have interference from the abnormal course condition and may take further relief by using the back-on-the-line procedure for one penalty stroke. If the player decides to do this, the reference point for back-on-the-line relief is where the ball came to rest after taking maximum available relief.

16.1c/2 – After Lifting Ball Player May Change Relief Options Before Putting a Ball in Play

If a player lifts his or her ball to take relief under Rule 16.1c, he or she is not committed to the intended relief option under Rule 16.1c until the original ball is put in play or another ball is substituted under that option.

For example, a player elects to take relief from temporary water in a bunker and lifts the ball with the intention of taking free relief in the bunker (Rule 16.1c(1)). The player then realizes that where the Rule requires the ball to be dropped in the bunker will result in a very difficult shot.

After lifting the ball, but prior to putting a ball in play, the player may choose either of the two options of the Rule despite the original intention to take relief under Rule 16.1c(1).

Rule 16.1 General Interpretations:

16.1/1 – Relief from Abnormal Course Condition May Result in Better or Worse Conditions

If a player receives a better lie, area of intended swing or line of play in taking relief under Rule 16.1, this is the player’s good fortune. There is nothing in Rule 16.1 that requires him or her to maintain identical conditions after relief is taken.

For example, in taking relief from a sprinkler head (immovable obstruction) in the rough, the player’s nearest point of complete relief or relief area may be located in the fairway. If this results in the player being able to drop a ball in the fairway, this is allowed.

In some situations, the conditions may be less advantageous to the player after relief is taken as compared with the conditions before relief is taken, such as when the nearest point of complete relief or relief area is in an area of rocks.

16.1/2 – If Interference by Second Abnormal Course Condition Exists after Complete Relief Taken from First Condition, Further Relief May Be Taken

If a player has interference by a second abnormal course condition after taking complete relief from an abnormal course condition, the second situation is a new situation and the player may again take relief under Rule 16.1.

For example, in the general area, there are two areas of temporary water that are close together and the player has interference by one area but not the other. The player takes relief under Rule 16.1 and the ball comes to rest within the relief area.
at a spot where there is no longer interference by the first area of temporary water, but there is interference by the second area.

The player may play the ball as it lies or take relief from the second area under Rule 16.1.

The same outcome applies if there is interference by any other abnormal course condition.

16.1/3 – Player May Choose to Take Relief from Either Condition When Interference by Two Conditions Exists

There are situations where a player may have interference by two conditions at the same time and, in those situations, the player may choose to take relief from either condition. If, after taking relief from one condition, interference by the second condition exists, the player may then take relief from the second condition.

Some examples of this include when:

• In the general area, an immovable obstruction interferes with the area of the player’s intended swing and the ball lies within an area defined as ground under repair.

  The player may first take relief from the obstruction under Rule 16.1, drop the ball in the ground under repair if this is part of the relief area, and then have the option of playing the ball as it lies in the ground under repair or taking relief under Rule 16.1b.

  Conversely, the player may take relief from the ground under repair and, if there is still interference by the obstruction, take relief from the obstruction.

• A player’s ball is embedded in the general area in ground under repair.

  The player has the option of taking relief under Rule 16.1 for interference by the ground under repair or under Rule 16.3 for the embedded ball.

However, in such situations, the player may not, in a single procedure, concurrently take relief from two conditions by dropping a ball in a single relief area determined by a combined nearest point of complete relief from both conditions, except in the situation where the player has successively taken relief for interference from each condition and is essentially back where the player started.

16.1/4 – How to Take Relief When Ball Lies on Elevated Part of Immovable Obstruction

When a ball lies on an elevated part of an immovable obstruction, the nearest point of complete relief is on the ground under the obstruction. This is to make it easier to establish the nearest point of complete relief and to avoid it from being located on the branch of a nearby tree.

For example, a ball comes to rest in the general area on the elevated part of an immovable obstruction, such as a walkway or bridge over a deep hollow.

If the player elects to take relief in this situation, vertical distance is disregarded, and the nearest point of complete relief is the point (Point X) on the ground.
If a ball lies directly beneath where the ball lies on the obstruction, provided that the player does not have interference, as defined in Rule 16.1a, at this point. The player may take relief under Rule 16.1b by dropping a ball within the relief area determined using Point X as the reference point.

If there is interference from some part of the obstruction (such as a supporting column) for a ball located at Point X, the player may then take relief under Rule 16.1b by using Point X as the spot of the ball for purposes of finding the nearest point of complete relief.

See Interpretation 16.1/5 for when a ball lies underground and has interference from an immovable obstruction.

16.1/5 — How to Measure Nearest Point of Complete Relief When Ball Underground in Abnormal Course Condition

The procedure when a ball lies underground in an abnormal course condition (such as a tunnel) is different from when it is elevated. In such a case, determining the nearest point of complete relief must account for vertical and horizontal distance. In some cases, the nearest point of complete relief could be at the entrance to the tunnel, and in other cases it could be on the ground directly above where the ball lies in the tunnel.

See Interpretation 16.1/4 for when a ball lies on elevated part of an immovable obstruction.

16.1/6 — Player May Wait to Determine Nearest Point of Complete Relief When Ball Is Moving in Water

When a ball is moving in temporary water, whether a player chooses to lift the moving ball or substitute another ball in taking relief under Rule 16.1, the player is allowed to let the ball move to a better spot before determining the nearest point of complete relief so long as he or she does not unreasonably delay play (Exception 3 to Rule 10.1d and Rule 5.6a).

For example, a player’s ball is moving in temporary water across the fairway. The player arrives at the ball when it is at Point A and realizes that when it gets to Point B, which is five yards away, his or her nearest point of complete relief will be in a much better spot than would be the case if relief is taken from Point A.

So long as the player does not unreasonably delay play (Rule 5.6a), he or she is allowed to delay starting the relief procedure until the ball reaches Point B.

Rule 16.2a Interpretations:

16.2a/1 — No Free Relief from Dangerous Course Condition

If a player’s ball comes to rest in a spot where the player has interference from a plant or bush that could cause physical harm, such as poison ivy or a cactus, while the player may be faced with challenging circumstances or may be allergic to a given
Rule 16.3a(2) Interpretations:

16.3a(2)/1 – Concluding Whether Ball Is Embedded in Its Own Pitch-mark

It must be reasonable to conclude that the ball is in its own pitch-mark for the player to take relief under Rule 16.3b.

An example of when it is reasonable to conclude that the ball came to rest in its own pitch-mark is when a player’s approach shot lands on soft ground just short of the putting green in the general area. The player sees the ball bounce forward and then spin back. When the player arrives at the ball, he or she sees that it is embedded in the only pitch-mark in the area. Since it is reasonable to conclude that the ball spun back into its own pitch-mark, the player may take relief under Rule 16.3b.

However, if a player’s tee shot lands in the fairway and the ball bounces over a hill to a position where it could not be seen from the tee but is found in a pitch-mark, it is not reasonable to conclude that the ball is embedded in its own pitch-mark and the player is not allowed to take relief under Rule 16.3b.
**Rule 17.1a Interpretations:**

17.1a/1 – Ball Is in Penalty Area Even if Penalty Area Is Improperly Marked

If stakes defining a body of water as a penalty area are improperly located, a player is not allowed to take advantage of such an error by the Committee.

For example, a ball is found in an expanse of water that, because of the configuration of the ground, is clearly part of the penalty area but is outside the stakes and, thus, technically outside the penalty area. The player may not claim that the ball at rest in the water is in temporary water since a penalty area includes any body of water on the course, whether or not marked by the Committee (see definition of “penalty area”).

17.1a/2 – Ball Lost in Either Penalty Area or Abnormal Course Condition Adjacent to Penalty Area

If a player’s ball is not found in an area where there is a penalty area and an adjacent abnormal course condition, the player must use reasonable judgment (Rule 1.3b(2)) when determining the location of the ball. If, after applying reasonable judgment, it is known or virtually certain that the ball has come to rest in one of those areas but both are equally likely, the player must take penalty relief under Rule 17.

**Rule 17.1d(2) Interpretations:**

17.1d(2)/1 – Recommendation That Player Physically Marks Reference Point on Reference Line

Rule 17.1d allows a player to choose a reference point on the reference line that determines the relief area for back-on-the-line relief. Although the player should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee), he or she may visually select a reference point.

If the player has visually selected a reference point, that point is used to determine the relief area and whether a ball must be dropped again.

The reason for recommending that the reference point is physically marked is that it assists with the relief procedure and determining whether the ball has been dropped in and has come to rest in the relief area (Rule 14.3).

**Rule 17.1d(3) Interpretations:**

17.1d(3)/1 – Player May Measure Across Penalty Area In Taking Lateral Relief

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.

17.1d(3)/2 – Player Drops Ball Based on Estimate of Where the Ball Last Crossed
Interpretations to the New Rule of Golf – Draft of August 6, 2018

**Edge of Penalty Area That Turns Out to Be the Wrong Point**

If the point where a ball last crossed the edge of a *penalty area* is not known, a player must use his or her reasonable judgment to determine the reference point.

Under Rule 1.3b(2), the player’s reasonable judgment will be accepted even if that reference point turns out to be wrong. However, there are situations when, before the player has made a *stroke*, it becomes known that the reference point is wrong and this mistake must be corrected.

For example, in stroke play, it is *virtually certain* that a player’s ball is in a red *penalty area*. The player, having consulted with the other players in the group, estimates where the ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area*. The player takes lateral relief and drops a ball in the *relief area* based on that reference point.

But before making a stroke at the *dropped* ball, one of the players in the group finds the player’s original ball in the *penalty area* in a position indicating that the ball last crossed the edge of the *penalty area* approximately 20 yards closer to the hole than the reference point the player had estimated.

Because this information became known before the player made a *stroke* at the *dropped* ball, he or she must correct the error under Rule 14.5 (Correcting Mistake Made in Substituting, Replacing, Dropping or Placing Ball). In doing so, the player must proceed under Rule 17.1 with respect to the correct reference point and may use any relief option under that Rule (see Rule 14.5b(2)).

**Rule 17.2b Interpretations:**

17.2b/1 – Examples of Options for Relief Allowed by Rule 17.2b

In the diagram, a player plays from the *teeing area* and the ball comes to rest in
the red penalty area at Point A. The player elects to play from the penalty area playing to Point B, which is out of bounds.

The player may take stroke-and-distance relief under Rule 18.2b by using Point A as the reference point for the relief area and will be playing 4.

If the player takes stroke-and-distance relief by dropping a ball back into the penalty area and then decides not to play the dropped ball from where it comes to rest:

• The player may take back-on-the-line relief anywhere on dotted line X-Y outside the penalty area under Rule 17.1d(2), take lateral relief using point X as the reference point under Rule 17.1d(3) or play another ball from where the last stroke was made outside the penalty area (in this case the teeing area) under Rule 17.2a(2).

• If the player takes any of these three options, he or she gets one more penalty stroke, for a total of two penalty strokes: one stroke for taking stroke-and-distance relief plus one stroke for taking any back-on-the-line relief, lateral relief or for playing another ball from where the last stroke was made outside the penalty area (in this case the teeing area). Thus, the player will be playing 5 under any of these options.

The player also has the option to take relief outside the penalty area without first dropping a ball in the penalty area, but will still get a total of
**Rule 18.1 Interpretations:**

18.1/1 – Teed Ball May Be Lifted When Original Ball Is Found Within Three-Minute Search Time

When playing again from the *teeing area*, a ball that is placed, dropped or teed in the *teeing area* is not *in play* until the player makes a *stroke* at it (definition of “in play” and Rule 6.2).

For example, a player plays from the *teeing area*, searches briefly for his or her ball and then goes back and tees another ball. Before the player plays the teed ball, and within the three-minute search time, the original ball is found. The player may abandon the teed ball and continue with the original ball without penalty, but is also allowed to proceed under *stroke and distance* by playing from the *teeing area*.

However, if the player had played from the *general area* and then dropped another ball to take *stroke-and-distance* relief, the outcome would be different in that the player must continue with the dropped ball under penalty of *stroke and distance*. If the player continued with the original ball in this case, he or she would be playing a *wrong ball*.

18.1/2 – Penalty Cannot Be Avoided by Playing Under Stroke and Distance

If a player lifts his or her ball when not allowed to do so, the player cannot avoid the one-stroke penalty under Rule 9.4b by then deciding to play under *stroke and distance*.

For example, a player’s tee shot comes to rest in a wooded area. The player picks up a ball, believing it is a stray ball, but discovers the ball was the ball *in play*. The player then decides to play under *stroke and distance*.

The player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4b in addition to the *stroke and distance* penalty under Rule 18.1, since at the time the ball was lifted the player was not allowed to lift the ball and had no intention to play.

**Rule 18.2a(1) Interpretations:**

18.2a(1)/1 – Time Permitted for Search When Search Temporarily Interrupted

A player is allowed three minutes to search for his or her ball before it becomes *lost*. However, there are situations when the “clock stops” and such time does not count towards the player’s three minutes.

The following examples illustrate how to account for the time when a search is temporarily interrupted:

- In *stroke play*, a player searches for his or her ball for one minute and finds a ball. The player assumes that ball is his or her ball, takes 30 seconds to decide how to make the *stroke*, choose a club, and plays that ball. The player then discovers that it is a *wrong ball*.

When the player returns to the area where the original ball was likely to be and resumes search, he or she has two more minutes to search. The time of search stopped when the player found the *wrong ball* and stopped searching.
• A player has been searching for his or her ball for two minutes when play is suspended by the Committee. The player continues searching. When three minutes has elapsed from when the player began searching, the ball is lost even if the three-minute search time ends while play is suspended.

• A player has been searching for his or her ball for one minute when play is suspended. The player continues to search for one more minute and then stops the search to seek shelter. When the player returns to the course to resume play, the player is allowed one more minute to search for the ball even if play has not been resumed.

• A player finds and identifies his or her ball in high rough after a two-minute search. The player leaves the area to get a club. When he or she returns, the ball cannot be found. The player has one minute to search before the ball becomes lost. The three-minute search time stopped when the ball was first found.

• A player is searching for his or her ball for two minutes, then steps aside to allow the following group to play through. The search time stops when the search is temporarily stopped, and the player is allowed one more minute to search.

18.2a(1)/2 – Caddie Is Not Required to Start Searching for Player’s Ball Before Player

A player may instruct his or her caddie not to begin searching for his or her ball.

For example, a player hits a long drive into heavy rough and another player hits a short drive into heavy rough. The player’s caddie starts walking ahead to the location where the player’s ball might be to start searching. Everyone else, including the player, walks towards the location where the other player’s ball might be to look for that player’s ball.

The player may direct his or her caddie to look for the other player’s ball and delay search for his or her ball until everyone else can assist.

18.2a(1)/3 – Ball May Become Lost if It is Not Promptly Identified

When a player has the opportunity to identify a ball as his or hers within the three-minute search time but fails to do so, the ball is lost when the search time expires.

For example, a player begins to search for his or her ball and after two minutes finds a ball that the player believes to be another player’s ball and resumes search for his or her ball.

The three-minute search time elapses and it is then discovered that the ball the player found and believed to be another player’s ball was in fact the player’s ball. In this case, the player’s ball is lost because he or she continued the search, failing to identify the found ball promptly.

Rule 18.2a(2) Interpretations:
18.2a(2)/1 – Ball Moved Out of Bounds by Flow of Water
If a flow of water (either temporary water or water in a penalty area) carries a ball out of bounds, the player must take stroke-and-distance relief (Rule 18.2b). Water is a natural force, not an outside influence, therefore Rule 9.6 does not apply.

Rule 18.3a Interpretations:

18.3a/1 – When Player May Play Provisional Ball
When a player is deciding whether he or she is allowed to play a provisional ball, only the information that is known by the player at that time is considered.

Examples where a provisional ball may be played include when when:

- The original ball might be in a penalty area, but it might also be lost outside a penalty area or be out of bounds.
- A player believes the original ball came to rest in the general area and it might be lost. If it is later found in a penalty area within the three-minute search time, the player must abandon the provisional ball.

18.3a/2 – Playing Provisional Ball After Search Has Started Is Allowed
A player may play a provisional ball for a ball that might be lost when the original ball has not been found and identified even if the three-minute search time has not yet ended.

For example, if a player is able to return to the spot of his or her previous stroke and play a provisional ball before the three-minute search time has ended, the player is allowed to do so.

If the player plays the provisional ball and the original ball is then found within the three-minute search time, the player must continue play with the original ball.

18.3a/3 – Each Ball Relates Only to the Previous Ball When It Is Played from That Same Spot
When a player plays multiple balls from the same spot, each ball relates only to the previous ball played.

For example, a player plays a provisional ball believing that his or her tee shot might be lost or out of bounds. The provisional ball is struck in the same direction as the original ball and, without any announcement, he or she plays another ball from the tee. This ball comes to rest in the fairway.

If the original ball is not lost or out of bounds, the player must continue play with the original ball without penalty.

However, if the original ball is lost or out of bounds, the player must continue play with the third ball played from the tee since it was played without any announcement. Therefore, the third ball was a ball substituted for the provisional ball under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 18.1), regardless of the provisional ball’s location. The player has now taken 5 strokes (including...
Rule 18.3b Interpretations:

18.3b/1 – What Is Considered Announcement of Provisional Ball

Although Rule 18.3b does not specify to whom the announcement of a provisional ball must be made, an announcement must be made so that people in the vicinity of the player can hear it.

For example, with other people nearby, if a player states that he or she will be playing a provisional ball but does so in a way that only he or she can hear it, this does not satisfy the requirement in Rule 18.3b that the player must “announce” that he or she is going to play a provisional ball. Any ball played in these circumstances becomes the player’s ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance.

If there are no other people nearby to hear the player’s announcement (such as when a player has returned to the teeing area after briefly searching for his or her ball), the player is considered to have correctly announced that he or she has the intent to play a provisional ball provided that he or she informs someone of that when it becomes possible to do so.

18.3b/2 – Statements That “Clearly Indicate” That a Provisional Ball Is Being Played

When playing a provisional ball, it is best if the player uses the word “provisional” in his or her announcement. However, other statements that make it clear that the player’s intent is to play a provisional ball are acceptable.

Examples of announcements that clearly indicate the player is playing a provisional ball include:

• “I’m playing a ball under Rule 18.3.”
• “I’m going to play another just in case.”

Examples of announcements that do not clearly indicate the player is playing a provisional ball and mean that the player would be putting a ball into play under stroke and distance include:

• “I’m going to re-load.”
• “I’m going to play another.”

Rule 18.3c(1) Interpretations:

18.3c(1)/1 – Actions Taken with Provisional Ball Are a Continuation of Provisional Ball

Taking actions other than a stroke with a provisional ball, such as dropping, placing or substituting another ball nearer to the hole than where the original ball is estimated to be are not “playing” the provisional ball and do not cause that ball to lose its status as a provisional ball.

For example, a player’s tee shot may be lost 175 yards from the hole, so he or she plays a provisional ball. After briefly searching for the original ball, the player goes
forward to play the *provisional ball* that is in a bush 150 yards from the *hole*. He or she decides the *provisional ball* is unplayable and *drops* it under Rule 19.2c. Before playing the *dropped* ball, the player’s original ball is found by a spectator within three minutes of when the player started the search.

In this case, the original ball remained the ball *in play* because it was found within three minutes of beginning the search and the player had not made a *stroke* at the *provisional ball* from a spot nearer the *hole* than where the original ball was estimated to be.

**Rule 18.3c(2) Interpretations:**

18.3c(2)/1 – *Estimated Spot of the Original Ball Is Used to Determine Which Ball Is in Play*

Rule 18.3c(2) uses the spot where the player “estimates” his or her original ball to be when determining whether the *provisional ball* has been played from nearer the hole than that spot, and whether the original or *provisional ball* is *in play*. The estimated spot is not where the original ball ends up being found. Rather, it is the spot the player reasonably thinks or assumes that ball to be.

Examples of determining which ball is *in play* include:

- A player, believing that his or her original ball might be *lost* or *out of bounds*, plays a *provisional ball* that does not come to rest nearer the *hole* than the estimated spot of the original ball. The player finds a ball and plays it, believing it was the original ball. The player then discovers that the ball that was played was the *provisional ball*.

  In this case, the *provisional ball* was not played from a spot nearer the *hole* than the estimated spot of the original ball. Therefore, the player may resume searching for the original ball. If the original ball is found within three minutes of starting the search, it remains the ball *in play* and the player must abandon the *provisional ball*. If the three-minute search time expires before the original ball is found, the *provisional ball* is the ball *in play*.

- A player, believing his or her tee shot might be *lost* or over a road defined as *out of bounds*, plays a *provisional ball*. The player searches for the original ball briefly but does not find it. The player goes forward and plays the *provisional ball* from a spot nearer the *hole* than where the original ball was estimated to be. Then the player goes forward and finds the original ball in bounds. The original ball must have bounced down the road and then come back in bounds, because it was found much farther forward than anticipated.

  In this case, the *provisional ball* became the ball *in play* when it was played from a spot nearer the *hole* than where the original ball was estimated to be. The original ball is no longer *in play* and must be abandoned.

18.3c(2)/2 – *Player May Ask Others Not to Search for His or Her Original Ball*

If a player does not plan to search for his or her original ball because he or she would prefer to continue play with a *provisional ball*, the player may ask others not to
search, but there is no obligation for them to comply.

If a ball is found, the player must make all reasonable efforts to identify the ball, provided he or she has not already played the provisional ball from nearer the hole than where the original ball was estimated to be, in which case it became the player’s ball in play. If the provisional ball has not yet become the ball in play when another ball is found, refusal to make a reasonable effort to identify the found ball may be considered serious misconduct contrary to the spirit of the game (Rule 1.2a).

After the other ball is found, if the provisional ball is played from nearer the hole than where the other ball was found, and it turns out that the other ball was the player’s original ball, the stroke at the provisional ball was actually a stroke at a wrong ball (Rule 6.3c). The player will get the general penalty and, in stroke play, must correct the error by continuing play with the original ball.

18.3c(2)/3 – Opponent or Another Player May Search for Player’s Ball Despite the Player’s Request

Even if a player prefers to continue play of the hole with a provisional ball without searching for the original ball, the opponent or another player in stroke play may search for the player’s original ball so long as it does not unreasonably delay play. If the player’s original ball is found while it is still in play, the player must abandon the provisional ball (Rule 18.3c(3)).

For example, at a par-3 hole, a player’s tee shot goes into dense woods, and he or she plays a provisional ball that comes to rest near the hole. Given this outcome, the player does not wish to find the original ball and walks directly towards the provisional ball to continue play with it. The player’s opponent or another player in stroke play believes it would be beneficial to him or her if the original ball was found, so he or she begins searching for it.

If he or she finds the original ball before the player makes another stroke with the provisional ball the player must abandon the provisional ball and continue with the original ball. However, if the player makes another stroke with the provisional ball before the original ball is found, it becomes the ball in play because it was nearer the hole than the estimated spot of the original ball (Rule 18.3c(2)).

In match play, if the player’s provisional ball is nearer the hole than the opponent’s ball, the opponent may cancel the stroke and have the player play in the proper order (Rule 6.4a). However, cancelling the stroke would not change the status of the original ball, which is no longer in play.

18.3c(2)/4 – When Score with Holed Provisional Ball Becomes the Score for Hole

So long as the original ball has not already been found in bounds, the score with a provisional ball that has been holed becomes the player’s score for the hole when the player lifts the ball from the hole since, in this case, lifting the ball from the hole is the same as making a stroke.

For example, at a short hole, Player A’s tee shot might be lost, so he or she plays a provisional ball that is holed. Player A does not wish to look for the original ball,
but Player B, Player A’s opponent or another player in stroke play, goes to look for the original ball.

If Player B finds Player A’s original ball before Player A lifts the provisional ball from the hole, Player A must abandon the provisional ball and continue with the original ball. If Player A lifts the ball from the hole before Player B finds Player A’s original ball, Player A’s score for the hole is three.

18.3c(2)/5 – Provisional Ball Lifted by Player Subsequently Becomes the Ball in Play

If a player lifts his or her provisional ball when not allowed to do so under the Rules, and the provisional ball subsequently becomes the ball in play, the player must add one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4b (Penalty for Lifting or Moving Ball) and must replace the ball.

For example, in stroke play, believing his or her tee shot might be lost, the player plays a provisional ball. The player finds a ball that he or she believes is the original ball, makes a stroke at it, picks up the provisional ball, and then discovers that the ball he or she played was not the original ball, but a wrong ball. The player resumes search for the original ball but cannot find it within the three-minute search time.

Since the provisional ball became the ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance, the player is required to replace that ball and gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4b. The player also gets two penalty strokes for playing a wrong ball (Rule 6.3c). The player’s next stroke is his or her seventh.

Rule 18.3c(3) Interpretations:

18.3c(3)/1 – Provisional Ball Cannot Serve as Ball in Play if Original Ball Is Unplayable or in Penalty Area

A player is only allowed to play a provisional ball if he or she believes the original ball might be lost outside a penalty area or might be out of bounds. The player may not decide that a second ball he or she is going to play is both a provisional ball in case the original ball is lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds and the ball is play in case the original ball is unplayable or in a penalty area.

If the original ball is found in bounds or is known or virtually certain to be in a penalty area, the provisional ball must be abandoned.
Rule 19.2a Interpretations:

19.2a/1 – Player May Take Stroke-and-Distance Relief Even When Spot of Previous Stroke Is Nearer Hole Than Where Unplayable Ball Lies

If a ball comes to rest farther from the hole than the spot from which it was played, stroke-and-distance relief may still be taken.

Examples where stroke-and-distance relief may be nearer the hole include when:

- A player’s stroke from the teeing area hits a tree, bounces backwards and comes to rest behind the teeing area. The player may play again from the teeing area under penalty of one stroke.
- A player has a downhill putt and he or she puts off the putting green and the ball rolls off the green into a bad lie or into a penalty area. The player may play again from the putting green under penalty of one stroke.

19.2a/2 – Stroke-and-Distance Relief Is Allowed Only at Spot of the Last Stroke

The option to take stroke-and-distance relief for an unplayable ball applies only to where the last stroke was made; a player is not allowed to go back to the spot of any earlier strokes made before that.

If the stroke-and-distance relief option or the back-on-the-line option are not favourable, the only option is to take lateral relief multiple times, taking a penalty each time, until the player can get a ball into a playable location.

Rule 19.2c Interpretations:

19.2c/1 – Reference Point for Lateral Relief When Ball Is Not on the Ground

When a player’s ball lies above the ground (such as in a bush or a tree), the player may take lateral relief by using the point on the ground directly below the spot of the ball as his or her reference point:

- The relief area is within two club-lengths of and no closer to the hole than that reference point on the ground (see Rule 19.2c).

In some cases, this might allow a ball to be dropped on a putting green.

But, if an unplayable ball lies on the ground, the spot of the original ball itself is always used as the reference point. For example:

- If a player’s ball lies at the base of a cliff or a steep slope, the spot of the original ball is the reference point.
- This means that the player may not ignore vertical distance and drop a ball at the top of the cliff or slope within two club-lengths of a point directly above where the ball lies on the ground at the base of the cliff or slope.

Rule 19.2 General Interpretations:

19.2/1 – No Guarantee Ball Will Be Playable After Taking Unplayable Ball Relief

When taking unplayable ball relief, a player must accept the outcome even if it is
unfavourable, such as when a dropped ball comes to rest in its original location or in a bad lie in another location in the relief area:

- Once the dropped ball comes to rest in the relief area, the player has a new situation.
- If the player decides that he or she cannot (or does not wish to) play the ball as it now lies, the player may again take unplayable ball relief, for an additional penalty, using any available relief option under Rule 19.

19.2/2 – Ball May be Dropped in Any Area of the Course When Taking Unplayable Ball Relief

A player may take relief by dropping a ball into a relief area in any area of the course under the unplayable ball relief options. This includes taking relief from the general area and dropping directly into a bunker or penalty area, onto a putting green, into a no play zone or onto a wrong green.

However, if the player chooses to drop into a no play zone or onto a wrong green, the player must then continue to take the relief required by the Rules from that no play zone or wrong green.

Similarly, if the player chooses to drop in a penalty area and he or she cannot (or does not wish to) play the ball from where it now lies, the only option is to take further relief under penalty of stroke and distance by playing from where the previous stroke was made because:

- Unplayable ball relief may not be taken again as such relief is not allowed when a ball lies in a penalty area.
- Relief from the penalty area using the back-on-the-line relief option or the lateral relief option may also not be taken, because the ball did not cross the edge of the penalty area before coming to rest and therefore there is no reference point and no way of estimating a reference point for taking such relief.

In taking stroke-and-distance relief, the player will get another one-stroke penalty (in addition to the first penalty stroke for taking unplayable ball relief).

19.2/3 – Stroke-and-Distance Reference Point Does Not Change Until Stroke Is Made

The reference point used for taking relief under stroke-and-distance does not change until the player makes another stroke at his or her ball in play, even if the player has dropped a ball under a Rule.

For example, a player takes relief for an unplayable ball and drops a ball under either the back-on-the-line relief option or lateral relief option. The dropped ball stays within the relief area but rolls into a place that the player again decides is unplayable.

For one additional penalty stroke the player may again use the back-on-the-line relief option or lateral relief option, or may choose the stroke-and-distance relief option using the point where the ball was last played before becoming unplayable the first time as the reference point. This stroke-and-distance reference point does not change because the player did not make a stroke at the dropped ball.
The outcome would be different if the player made a stroke at the dropped ball, because that spot would become the new stroke-and-distance reference point.

19.2/4 – Player May Take Relief Without Penalty if He or She Lifts Ball to Take Unplayable Ball Relief and Discovers Ball Was in Ground Under Repair Before Dropping

If a player lifts his or her ball to take unplayable ball relief and then discovers it was in ground under repair or another abnormal course condition, the player may still take free relief under Rule 16.1 so long as he or she has not yet put a ball in play under Rule 19 to take unplayable ball relief.

19.2/5 – Player Must Find Ball to Use Back-On-the-Line or Lateral Relief Options

The back-on-the-line and lateral relief options under Rule 19.2 and 19.3 may not be used without finding the original ball as both require that ball’s original spot as the reference point for relief. If either relief option is used to take unplayable ball relief with reference to a ball that is not the player’s ball, the player is treated as taking stroke-and-distance relief as that is the only Rule that can be used if the player has not found his or her original ball.

For example, a player finds a stray ball in a bad lie. Mistaking it for his or her ball, the player decides to take lateral relief (Rule 19.2c), substitutes a ball and plays it. While walking to play the next stroke, the player finds his or her ball. Since the player did not know the spot of the original ball at the time the other ball was substituted, he or she is treated as having taken stroke-and-distance relief and did so in a wrong place (Rule 14.7).

In match play, the player loses the hole for playing from a wrong place.

In stroke play, the player gets one penalty stroke for taking stroke-and-distance relief (Rule 18.1) and another two penalty strokes for doing so from a wrong place. If the wrong place was a serious breach, the mistake must be corrected before making a stroke to start another hole, or for the final hole of the round, before returning his or her scorecard.

Rule 19.3b Interpretations:

19.3b/1 – Taking Unplayable Ball Relief Outside Bunker After First Taking Unplayable Ball Relief in Bunker

If a player’s ball lies in a bunker and the player takes unplayable ball relief in the bunker for one penalty stroke under Rule 19.3a and then decides he or she cannot (or does not wish to) play the dropped ball as it now lies, the player is faced with a new situation:

• Unplayable ball relief may again be taken under Rule 19.3a, for one more penalty stroke, for a total of two penalty strokes, by either using stroke-and-distance relief and playing again from where the previous stroke was made or by using the ball’s new spot as the reference point for taking back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in the bunker.
• If the player instead decides to take relief by *dropping* a ball behind the *bunker* using the extra relief option under Rule 19.3b, he or she gets two more penalty strokes in addition to the one-stroke penalty for taking unplayable ball relief the first time, for a total of three penalty strokes.
Rule 20.1b(2) Interpretations:

20.1b(2)/1 – Request for Ruling Must Be Made in Time

A player is entitled to know the status of his or her match at all times or that a ruling request will be settled later in the match. A request for a ruling must be made in time to prevent a player from trying to apply penalties later in the match. Whether a ruling will be given depends on when the player becomes aware of the facts (not when he or she learned that something was a penalty) and when the request for a ruling was made.

For example, during the first hole of a match without a referee, Player A properly lifts his or her ball to check for damage under Rule 4.2c(1), determines that it is cut and substitutes a new ball under Rule 4.2c(2). Unknown to Player A, Player B sees the condition of the original ball and privately disagrees with Player A’s assessment. However, Player B decides to overlook the possible breach and says nothing to Player A. Both players hole out and play from the next teeing area.

At the conclusion of the final hole, Player A is the winner of the match, 1up. Walking off the putting green, when the Committee is readily available, Player B changes his or her mind and tells Player A that he or she disagrees with the substitution that Player A made on the first hole and is making a request to the Committee for a ruling.

The Committee should determine that the ruling request by Player B was not made in time as Player B was aware of the facts during play of the first hole and, subsequently, a stroke was made on the second hole (Rule 20.1b(2)). Therefore, the Committee should decide that no ruling will be given.

The match stands as played with Player A as the winner.

20.1b(2)/2 – Ruling Made After Completion of the Final Hole of the Match but Before the Result of the Match Is Final May Result in Players Resuming the Match

If a player becomes aware of a possible breach of the Rules by his or her opponent after completing what they thought was the final hole of the match, the player may make a request for a ruling. If the opponent was in breach of the Rules, the adjusted match score may require that the players return to the course to resume the match.

For example:

• In a match between Player A and Player B, Player B wins by a score of 5 and 4. On the way back to the clubhouse and before the result of the match is final, it is discovered that Player B had 15 clubs in his or her bag. Player A requests a ruling, and the Committee determines correctly that the ruling request by Player A was made in time. The players must return to the 15th hole and resume the match. The score in the match is adjusted by deducting two holes from Player B (Rule 4.1b(4)), and Player B is now 3 up with four holes to play.

• In a match between Player A and Player B, Player B wins by a score of 3 and 2. On the way back to the clubhouse, Player A discovers that Player B hit the sand with a practice swing in a bunker on the 14th hole. Player B had won the 14th hole. Player A requests a ruling, and the Committee determines correctly that the ruling request by Player A was made in time, and that Player B lost the 14th
hole for failing to tell Player A about the penalty (Rule 3.2d(2)). The players must return to the 17 th hole and resume the match. As the score in the match is adjusted by changing Player B’s win of the 14 th hole to a loss of hole, Player B is now 1 up with two holes to play.

**Rule 20.1b(4) Interpretations:**

20.1b(4)/1 – Playing Out Hole with Two Balls Is Not Allowed in Match Play

The playing of two balls is limited to stroke play because, when a match is being played, any incidents in that match concern only the players involved in it and the players in the match can protect their own interests.

However, if a player in a match is uncertain about the right procedure and plays out the hole with two balls, the score with the original ball always counts if the player and opponent refer the situation to the Committee and the opponent has not objected to the player playing the second ball.

However, if the opponent objects to the player playing a second ball and makes a ruling request in time (Rule 20.1b(2)), the player loses the hole for playing a wrong ball in breach of Rule 6.3c(1).

**Rule 20.1c(3) Interpretations:**

20.1c(3)/1 – No Penalty for Playing a Ball That Was Not in Play When Two Balls Are Being Played

When a player is uncertain of what to do and decides to play two balls, he or she gets no penalty if one of the balls played was his or her original ball that is no longer in play.

For example, a player’s ball is not found in a penalty area after a three-minute search, so the player properly takes relief from the penalty area under Rule 17.1c and plays a substituted ball. Then, the original ball is found in the penalty area. Not sure what to do, the player decides to play the original ball as a second ball before making any further strokes, and chooses to score with the original ball. The player holes out with both balls.

The ball played under Rule 17.1c became the ball in play and the score with that ball is the player’s score for the hole. The score with the original ball could not count because the original ball was no longer in play. However, the player gets no penalty for playing the original ball as a second ball.

20.1c(3)/2 – Player Must Decide to Play Two Balls Before Making Another Stroke

Rule 20.1c(3) requires a player to decide to play two balls before making a stroke so that his or her decision to play two balls or the choice of which ball to count is not influenced by the result of the ball just played. Dropping a ball is not equivalent to making a stroke.

Examples of the application of that requirement include:

- A player’s ball comes to rest on a paved cart path in the general area. In taking relief, the player lifts the ball, drops it outside the required relief area.
and plays it. The player’s marker questions the drop and advises the player that he or she may have played from a wrong place.

Uncertain what to do, the player would like to complete the hole with two balls. However, it is too late to use Rule 20.1c(3) since a stroke has already been made and the player must add the general penalty for playing from a wrong place (Rule 14.7). If the player believes this may be a serious breach of playing from a wrong place, the player should play a second ball under Rule 14.7 to avoid possible disqualification.

If the player’s marker questioned the drop before the player made a stroke at the ball and he or she was uncertain what to do, the player could have completed the hole with two balls under Rule 20.1c(3).

• A player’s ball lies in a penalty area defined by red stakes. One of the stakes interferes with the player’s intended swing and the player is uncertain if he or she is allowed to remove the stake. The player makes his or her next stroke without removing a stake.

At this point, the player decides to play a second ball with the stake removed and get a ruling from the Committee. The Committee should rule that the score with the original ball is the score that counts since the uncertain situation arose when the ball was in the penalty area with interference from the stake, and the player had to make the decision to play two balls before making a stroke at the original ball.

20.1c(3)/3 – Player May Lift Original Ball and Drop, Place or Replace It When Playing Two Balls

Rule 20.1c(3) does not require the original ball to be the ball that is played as it lies. Typically, the original ball is played as it lies, and the second ball is put in play under whatever Rule is being used. However, putting the original ball in play under the Rule is also allowed.

For example, if a player is uncertain whether his or her ball lies in an abnormal course condition in the general area, the player may decide to play two balls. The player may then take relief under Rule 16.1b (Relief from Abnormal Course Condition) by lifting, dropping and playing the original ball and then continuing by placing a second ball where the original ball lay in the questionable area and playing it from there.

In such a case, the player does not need to mark the spot of the original ball before lifting it, although it is recommended that this is done.

20.1c(3)/4 – Order of Playing the Original Ball and Second Ball Is Interchangeable

When a player is uncertain about the right procedure and wants to complete the hole with two balls, the Rules do not require that the original ball be played first, followed by the second ball. The balls may be played in any order the player decides.

For example, uncertain what to do, a player decides to complete the hole with two balls and chooses to score with the second ball. The player may choose to play the
second ball before the original ball and may alternate making *strokes* with the original and second ball in completing play of the hole.

### 20.1c(3)/5 – Player’s Obligation to Complete Hole with Second Ball After Announcing Intention to Do So and Choosing Which Ball Should Count

After a player has announced his or her intention to play two balls under Rule 20.1c(3) and has either put a ball *in play* or made a *stroke* at one of the balls, the player is committed to the procedure in Rule 20.1c(3). If the player does not play, or does not *hole out* with, one of the balls and that ball is the one the Committee rules would have counted, the player is disqualified for failing to *hole out* (Rule 3.3c – Failure to Hole Out). However, there is no penalty if the player does not *hole out* a ball that will not count.

For example, a player’s ball lies in a rut made by a vehicle. Believing that the area should have been marked as *ground under repair*, the player decides to play two balls and announces that he or she would like the second ball to count. The player then makes a *stroke* at the original ball from the rut. After seeing the results of this stroke, the player decides not to play a second ball. Upon completion of the round, the facts are reported to the Committee.

If the Committee decides that the rut is *ground under repair*, the player is disqualified for failing to *hole out* with the second ball (Rule 3.3c).

However, if the Committee decides that the rut is not *ground under repair*, the player’s score with the original ball counts and he or she gets no penalty for not playing a second ball.

The result would be the same for a player who made a *stroke or strokes* with a second ball but picked it up before completing play of the hole.

### 20.1c(3)/6 – Provisional Ball Must Be Used as Second Ball When Uncertain

Although Rule 20.1c(3) states that a second ball played under this Rule is not the same as a *provisional ball* under Rule 18.3 (Provisional Ball), the reverse is not true. In deciding to play two balls after playing a *provisional ball* and being uncertain whether the original ball is *out of bounds* or *lost* outside a *penalty area*, the player must treat the *provisional ball* as the second ball.

Examples of using a *provisional ball* as a second ball include when:

- The player is unsure whether his or her original ball is *out of bounds*, so he or she completes the hole with the original ball and the *provisional ball*.

- The player has *knowledge or virtual certainty* that his or her original ball that has not been found is in an *abnormal course condition* and is unsure what to do, so he or she completes the hole with the *provisional ball* and a second ball with relief under Rule 16.1e.

### 20.1c(3)/7 – Player Allowed to Play One Ball Under Two Different Rules

When a player is uncertain about the right procedure, it is recommended that he or she play two balls under Rule 20.1c(3). However, there is nothing that prevents
the player from playing one ball under two different Rules and requesting a ruling before returning his or her scorecard.

For example, a player’s ball comes to rest in an unplayable spot in an area that he or she believes should be ground under repair, but is not marked. Uncertain what to do and willing to accept the one-stroke penalty if it is not ground under repair, the player decides to use one ball and drop it in the relief area allowed for taking relief from ground under repair (Rule 16.1) and simultaneously in part of the relief area allowed for taking unplayable ball relief (Rule 19.2) for one penalty stroke.

If the Committee decides that the area is ground under repair, the player does not get a penalty for taking unplayable ball relief. If the Committee decides that the area is not ground under repair, the player gets one penalty stroke for taking unplayable ball relief.

If the player used the procedure outlined above and the ball came to rest at a spot where there is interference from the condition (required to drop again for Rule 16.1 but not for Rule 19.2), he or she should get help from the Committee or play two balls under Rule 20.1c(3).

Rule 20.2d Interpretations:

20.2d/1 – A Wrong Ruling Is Different from an Administrative Mistake

There are limits on when a wrong ruling may be corrected, but there is no time limit for correcting an administrative mistake.

A wrong ruling has occurred when a referee or the Committee has attempted to apply the Rules to a situation but has done so incorrectly, for example, by:

- Misinterpreting or misunderstanding a Rule,
- Failing to apply a Rule, or
- Applying a Rule that was not applicable or does not exist.

This can be distinguished from an administrative mistake when a referee or the Committee has made a procedural error in relation to the administration of the competition, for example, by:

- Miscalculating the result of a tie, or
- Applying a player’s full handicap strokes in a stroke-play competition when only a percentage should be applied.

20.2d/2 – Administrative Errors Should Always Be Corrected

The time frame in Rule 20.2d, which deals with penalties, does not apply to administrative mistakes by the Committee. There is no time limit for correcting administrative mistakes.

For example, there is no time limit in correcting:

- A handicap that was miscalculated by the Committee causing another player to win the competition.
- A prize that was given to the wrong player after the Committee failed to post...
Rule 20.2e Interpretations:

20.2e/1 – Player Found to Be Ineligible During Competition or After Result of Match or Competition Is Final

There is no time limit on correcting the results of a competition when a player who has competed in the competition is found to be ineligible.

For example, if it is discovered that a player has played in a competition with a maximum age and the player was over that age, or a player has played in a competition restricted to amateur golfers when the player was not an amateur, the player was ineligible.

In these circumstances, the player is treated as if he or she had not entered the competition, as opposed to being disqualified from the competition, and the scores or the results are amended accordingly.
Rule 21.4 General Interpretations:

21.4/1 – In Three-Ball Match Play Each Player Is Playing Two Distinct Matches

In *Three-Ball match play*, because each player is playing two distinct matches, situations may arise that affect one match but not the other.

For example, Player A concedes the next *stroke*, a hole or the match to Player B. That concession has no effect on the match between Player A and Player C or the match between Player B and Player C.

Rule 21 General Interpretations:

21/1 – Player May Compete in Multiple Stroke-Play Formats at Same Time

A player may compete simultaneously in multiple forms of *stroke-play* competitions, such as regular *stroke play*, *Stableford*, *Maximum Score*, and *Par/Bogey*. 
Rule 22.1 Interpretations:

22.1/1 – Individual Handicaps Must Be Recorded on Scorecard
Under Rule 3.3b(4) (Handicap Shown on Scorecard), it is the player’s responsibility to make sure that his or her handicap (see 3.3b(4)/1) is correctly shown on the scorecard. In a Foursomes competition, this would apply to both the player and his or her partner.

If the side returns a scorecard on which the handicaps are not individually recorded for both the player and the partner, such as being combined as a side handicap allowance or being omitted, the side is disqualified.

Rule 22.3 Interpretations:

22.3/1 – When Playing Again from Teeing Area in Mixed Foursomes Ball Must Be Played from Same Teeing Area
In playing mixed Foursomes where different teeing areas are used by women and men if, for example, a man tees off from the teeing area defined by green tee-markers and hits his shot out of bounds, the woman must play the next stroke from the green teeing area.

22.3/2 – Determining Which Ball Is in Play When Both Partners in Foursomes Tee Off from Same Tee
If both the player and his or her partner mistakenly tee off from the same teeing area, it must be determined whose turn it was to play.

For example, Player A and Player B are partners of the side A-B. Player A tees off first; then Player B tees off from the same teeing area:

• If it was Player A’s turn to tee off, Player B’s ball would be the side’s ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 18.1). The side has taken 3 strokes (including one penalty stroke) and it is Player A’s turn to play next.

• If it was Player B’s turn to tee off, the side loses the hole in match play or gets two penalty strokes in stroke play for playing in the wrong order when Player A played first. In stroke play, Player B’s ball is the side’s ball in play, the side has taken 3 strokes (including two penalty strokes) and it is Player A’s turn to play next.

22.3/3 – Player May Not PURPOSELY Miss Ball so His or Her Partner Can Play
A player may not change whose turn it is to play by intentionally missing the ball. A “stroke” is the forward movement of the club made to strike the ball. Therefore, if a player has intentionally missed the ball, he or she has not made a stroke and it is still his or her turn to play.

For example, Player A and Player B are partners of the side A-B. If Player A purposely misses the ball so that Player B can hit the shot, Player A has not made a stroke as there was no intention of striking the ball. If Player B subsequently plays the ball, side A-B gets the general penalty because Player B...
played in the wrong order as it was still Player A’s turn to play.

However, if Player A intends to strike the ball and accidentally misses it, he or she has made a stroke and it is Player B’s turn to play.

22.3/4 – How to Proceed When Provisional Ball Played by Wrong Partner

If a side decides to play a provisional ball, it must be played by the partner whose turn it is to make the side’s next stroke.

For example, Player A and Player B are partners of the side A-B. Player A plays his or her ball and there is doubt whether the ball is out of bounds or lost outside a penalty area. If the side decides to play a provisional ball, Player B must play the provisional ball. If, by mistake, Player A plays the provisional ball, there is no penalty if the original ball is found and the provisional ball does not become the ball in play.

However, if the original ball is lost and the provisional ball becomes the ball in play, since Player A played the provisional ball in this example, the side loses the hole in match play or gets a penalty of two strokes in stroke play for playing in the wrong order. In stroke play, the provisional ball must be abandoned and Player B must return to the spot of Player A’s last stroke at the original ball and put a ball in play (Rule 18.2b).

Rule 23.2a Interpretations:

23.2a/1 – Result of Hole When No Ball Is Correctly Holed Out

In Four-Ball match play, if no player completes a hole, the side whose player is last to pick up or be disqualified from the hole wins the hole.

For example, side A-B are playing against side C-D in a Four-Ball match. On a given hole, by mistake Player A plays Player C’s ball and then Player C plays Player A’s ball and each hole out with that ball. Player B and Player D both play into penalty areas and pick up. During play of the next hole, Player A and Player C determine that both of them played a wrong ball on the prior hole.

The ruling is that Player A and Player C are disqualified for the prior hole. Therefore, if Player B picked up before Player D, side C-D won the hole and if Player D picked up before Player B, side A-B won the hole. If it cannot be determined which player picked up first, the Committee should rule that the hole was tied.

Rule 23.2b Interpretations:

23.2b/1 – Score for Hole Must Be Identified to the Correct Partner

In Four-Ball stroke play, partners are required to return a scorecard with correct hole scores that are identified to the correct partner. The following are examples of scoring in Four-Ball based on how the scorecard is completed and returned by side A-B:

• In a handicap competition, Player A and Player B both holed out in 4 strokes on a hole where Player B received a handicap stroke and Player A did not. The marker recorded a gross score of 4 for Player A, no gross score for Player B, and
a net score for the side of 3. The scorecard was returned to the Committee.

The ruling is that Player A’s score of 4 is the side’s score for the hole. Only the Committee has the responsibility to apply any handicap strokes. The side’s score is 4 as it is identified to Player A. The marker’s recording of the net 3 is irrelevant.

- On a hole, Player A picks up and Player B holes out in 5 strokes. The marker records a score of 6 for Player A and a score of 5 for Player B. The scorecard is returned with these scores recorded.

There is no penalty because the partner’s score that counts for the side on that hole is correctly recorded.

- On a hole, Player A picked up and Player B holed out in 4 strokes. By mistake, the marker recorded a score of 4 for Player A and no score for Player B. The scorecard is returned in this way.

The ruling is that the side is disqualified because the score for the side on that hole is identified to Player A, and Player A did not complete play of the hole.

23.2b/2 – Application of Exception to Rule 3.3b(3) for Returning Incorrect Scorecard

The following situations illustrate how Rule 3.3b(3) (Wrong Score for Hole) and Rule 23.2b are to be applied. In all cases, side A-B returns a scorecard with an incorrect score on a hole and the mistake is discovered after the scorecard is returned but before the competition has closed.

- Player A returns a score of 4 and Player B returns a score of 5. Player A touches sand in a bunker with a club in making the backswing for a stroke and was aware of the penalty for a breach of Rule 12.2b(1) (Restrictions on Touching Sand in Bunker) before returning the scorecard but failed to include it in his or her score for the hole.

The Exception to 3.3b(3) does not apply as Player A was aware of the penalty and the side is disqualified under Rule 23.2b.

- Player A returns a score of 4 and Player B returns a score of 5. Player A was in breach of Rule 12.2b(1) for touching sand in making a practice swing in a bunker but neither partner was aware of the penalty before returning the scorecard. The Exception to Rule 3.3b(3) applies. As Player A’s score was the score to count on the hole, the Committee must apply the general penalty to Player A’s score on that hole for a breach of Rule 12.2b(1).

Therefore, the side’s score for the hole is 6. The Rules only allow the side to revert to Player B’s score if both partners’ scores were the same on the hole (Rule 23.2b(2)).

- Player A returns a score of 4 and Player B returns a score of 6. Player A moved his or her ball while removing a loose impediment in breach of Rule 15.1b. Player A replaced the ball but was unaware of the one-stroke penalty. Player B witnessed the entire incident and was aware of the penalty. The scorecard is returned with a score of 4 for Player A and 6 for Player B. Player A’s score should have been 5 with the one-stroke penalty included.
The Exception under Rule 3.3b(3) does not apply given Player B’s awareness of the incident and the resulting penalty that should have been applied to Player A. The side is disqualified under Rule 23.2b.

• Player A and Player B each return scores of 4. Player A lifted his or her ball for identification in the general area but the lifting was not reasonably necessary to identify the ball. Neither Player A nor Player B was aware of the penalty for a breach of Rule 7.3 before returning the scorecard.

Since both scores on the scorecard are the same, the Committee may count either score. If the Committee had counted Player A’s score that was later found to be wrong, the Committee will count Player B’s score, which is correct, and there is no penalty to the side.

**Rule 23.4 Interpretations:**

*23.4/1 – Determining Handicap Allowance in Match Play If One Player Unable to Compete*

If, in a Four-Ball match played under handicap, the player with the lowest handicap is unable to play, the absent player is not disregarded given that he or she may start play for the side between the play of two holes, which in match play means only before any player on either side has started play of a hole.

The handicap strokes are calculated as if all four players are present. If a wrong handicap is declared for the absent player, Rule 3.2c(1) (Declaring Handicaps) applies.

**Rule 23.5a Interpretations:**

*23.5a/1 – Actions of Shared Caddie May Result in Penalty for Both Partners*

When partners in Four-Ball share a caddie and the caddie’s breach of a Rule cannot be assigned to one particular partner, both partners are penalized.

For example, side A-B is playing side C-D in a Four-Ball match. Partners A and B share a caddie and that caddie accidentally moves Player C’s or Player D’s ball other than during search without specific direction from either Player A or Player B. The caddie has breached Rule 9.5b (Lifting or Deliberately Touching Ball or Causing It to Move), but there is no way to assign the penalty to one particular partner of the side. Therefore, both Player A and Player B get one penalty stroke.

**Rule 23.6 Interpretations:**

*23.6/1 – Abandoning Right to Play in Any Order Side Determines Best*

In a Four-Ball match, if a side states or implies that the player on that side whose ball is farthest from the hole will not complete the hole, that player has abandoned his or her right to complete the hole, and the side may not change that decision after an opponent has played.

For example, side A-B is playing side C-D in a Four-Ball match. All four balls are on the putting green with Player A, Player B and Player D lying two while Player C lies four. The balls of Player A and Player C are about 10 feet from the hole, Player B’s
ball is two feet away and Player D’s ball is three feet away. Player C picks up. Player A suggests that Player B and Player D should play.

After Player D plays, Player A has abandoned the right to play and his or her score cannot count for the side (for example, if Player B missed his or her putt). The outcome would be different if Player B had been farther from the hole than Player D. If Player B putts first and misses, Player A would still have the right to complete the hole if he or she does so before Player D plays.

23.6/2 – Partners Must Not Unreasonably Delay Play When Playing in Advantageous Order

Examples of situations where the partners of side A-B play in an order they determine is best but may get a penalty under Rule 5.6a for unreasonably delaying play include when:

- Player A’s tee shot on a par-3 that is played entirely over a penalty area comes to rest in the penalty area while Player B’s tee shot comes to rest on the putting green. The side proceeds to the putting green without Player A playing a ball under the penalty area Rule. Player B takes four putts to complete the hole. Player A then decides to leave the putting green, go back to the tee and put another ball in play.

- After their tee shots, Player A’s ball is 220 yards from the hole and Player B’s ball is 240 yards from the hole. Player A makes his or her second stroke before Player B plays. Player A’s ball comes to rest 30 yards from the hole and the side decides to have Player A walk forward and make his or her third stroke.

23.6/3 – When Side in Match Play May Have Stroke Cancelled by Opponent

When both players of a side play from outside the teeing area in a Four-Ball match, only the last stroke played may be cancelled under Rule 6.1b.

For example, in a four-ball match with side A-B playing side C-D, if Player A and Player B both play from outside the teeing area with Player A playing first followed by Player B, side C-D may cancel the stroke of Player B, but not Player A.

Rule 6.1b requires that cancelling the stroke must be done promptly. This also applies if Player A and Player B both played when it was either Player C’s turn or Player D’s turn to play during play of the hole.

**Rule 23.7 Interpretations:**

23.7/1 – Partners May Continue to Give Advice and Share Clubs After Concurrent Match Ends

When concurrent Four-Ball and single matches are being played, the two players of a side are no longer partners after the Four-Ball match ends.

However, the two players that were partners are still allowed to give each other advice and share clubs for the remainder of both single matches.

For example, side A-B is playing side C-D in a Four-Ball match with concurrent single matches of Player A playing Player C and Player B playing Player D, both
matches of 18 holes. Player A and Player B are sharing clubs, all 14 of which Player A brought. If the Four-Ball match ends on the 16th hole, but both single matches are tied, Player A and Player B may continue to use the clubs they selected for play (the shared clubs) and give advice to each other, despite Player A and Player B no longer being partners.

**Rule 23.8a(2) Interpretations:**

**23.8a(2)/1 – Examples of When Player’s Breach Helps Partner’s Play**

In both Four-Ball match play and stroke play, when a player’s breach of a Rule helps his or her partner, the partner gets the same penalty.

Examples of when both partners of side A-B get the same penalty include:

- **With side A-B playing side C-D, Player B’s ball is near the hole** and in a position to help Player A aim his or her putt. Player C requires Player B to mark and lift Player B’s ball. Player B declines to lift the ball and Player A putts with Player B’s ball helping him or her to aim.

  Player B gets the general penalty under Rule 15.3a (Ball on Putting Green Helping Play) for failing to lift the helping ball and, since this helped Player A, Player A also gets the general penalty.

- **Player B takes a stance for a putt and makes the stroke while Player A deliberately stands in a location on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball for any reason.** Player B is in breach of Rule 10.2b(4) (Standing Behind Player) for taking a stance when Player A is in such a location and will get the general penalty.

  Further, when Player A’s putt is on the same line as Player B’s and Player B makes a stroke while Player A is on an extension of Player B’s line of play, Player B’s breach helped Player A so Player A also gets the same penalty as Player B.

- **Player A’s ball is out of bounds** and Player A decides not to complete the hole. Player B’s ball is a similar distance from the hole. Player A drops a ball near Player B’s ball and plays to the putting green and, by doing so, helps Player B.

  As the hole is not complete and the result has yet to be decided, Player A’s further play is considered practice in breach of Rule 5.5a (Practice Strokes While Playing Hole). As Player A’s practice helped Player B, Player B also gets the general penalty.

**23.8a(2)/2 – Example of When Player’s Breach Hurts Opponent’s Play**

In Four-Ball match play, if a player’s breach of a Rule hurts an opponent’s play, the player’s partner also gets the same penalty.

For example, side A-B are playing side C-D in a Four-Ball match. Player A provides the wrong number of strokes he or she has taken to either Player C or Player D while all four players are in contention during a hole. Side C-D bases its strategy on this information and one of them makes a stroke. Player A gets the general penalty under Rule 3.2d(1) (Telling Opponent about Number of Strokes Taken) for not giving the right number of strokes taken. Player B gets the same penalty because the breach hurt an opponent’s play. Side A-B therefore loses the hole.

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23.8a(2)/3 – Giving Wrong Number of Strokes Taken or Failing to Tell Opponent about Penalty Is Never Considered to Hurt Opponent When Player Is Out of Contention

When a player in a Four-Ball match is out of contention on a hole and he or she either gives the wrong number of strokes taken or fails to notify an opponent about a penalty, it is never considered to hurt the opponent’s play since the player’s score on the hole will not be relevant in the match.

For example, side A-B is playing side C-D in a Four-Ball match. Player A has taken 3 strokes, Player B 5 strokes, Player C 4 strokes, and Player D has already picked up. Player B causes his or her ball to move and gets one penalty stroke under Rule 9.4. Player B does not tell anyone that he or she got a penalty, replaces the ball and makes the stroke. Player A and Player C then both hole out for scores of 5. Since B failed to tell side C-D about the penalty, he or she is disqualified from the hole under Rule 3.2d. But, since Player B’s score had no relevance in the outcome of that hole (on the basis that B scored more than 5, C holed his or her next stroke for a 5 and D had picked up), the breach did not hurt Player C or Player D. Therefore, Player A gets no penalty.
Rule 24.2 Interpretations:

24.2/1 – Disqualification May Apply to One or All Rounds in Team Play

If a player is disqualified from a round in a team competition in which not all scores count towards the team’s total score, the disqualification applies only to that round of the competition.

However, if a player is disqualified for failing to meet the Code of Conduct standards under Rule 1.2b, it is up to the Committee to determine whether that disqualification is for that round only or the duration of the competition.

Rule 24.4 Interpretations:

24.4/1 – Committee May Establish Limits for Team Captains and Advice Givers

The Committee may adopt a Local Rule limiting who may serve as a team captain or advice giver and also limit the conduct of a team captain or advice giver.

Examples of limitations include:

• Permitting only an amateur golfer to serve as a team captain and/or advice giver.

• Stating that team captains and/or advice givers are not permitted on putting greens.

• That advice must be given in person and not via radio, telephone or other electronic means.
DEFINITIONS
Advice/1 – Verbal Comments or Actions That Are Advice

Examples of when comments or actions are considered *advice* and are not allowed include:

- A player makes a statement regarding club selection that was intended to be overheard by another player who had a similar *stroke*.

- In individual *stroke play*, Player A, who has just *holed out* on the 7th hole, demonstrates to Player B, whose ball was just off the *putting green*, how to make the next *stroke*. Because Player B has not completed the hole, Player A gets the penalty on the 7th hole. But, if both Player A and Player B had completed the 7th hole, Player A gets the penalty on the 8th hole.

- A player’s ball is lying badly and the player is deliberating what action to take. Another player comments, “You have no shot at all. If I were you, I would decide to take unplayable ball relief.” This comment is *advice* because it could have influenced the player in deciding how to play during a hole.

- While a player is setting up to hit his or her shot over a large *penalty area* filled with water, another player in the group comments, “You know the wind is in your face and it’s 250 yards to carry that water?”

Advice/2 – Verbal Comments or Actions That Are Not Advice

Examples of comments or actions that are not *advice* include:

- During play of the 6th hole, a player asks another player what club he or she used on the 4th hole that is a par-3 of similar length.

- A player makes a second *stroke* that lands on the *putting green*. Another player does likewise. The first player then asks the second player what club was used for the second *stroke*.

- After making a *stroke*, a player says, “I should have used a 5-iron” to another player in the group that has yet to play onto the *green*, but not intending to influence his or her play.

- A player looks into another player’s bag to determine which club he or she used for the last *stroke* without touching or moving anything.

- While lining up a putt, a player mistakenly seeks *advice* from another player’s *caddie*, believing that *caddie* to be the player’s *caddie*. The player immediately realizes the mistake and tells the other *caddie* not to answer.

Animal Hole/1 – Isolated Animal Footprint or Hoof Mark Is Not Animal Hole

An isolated *animal* footprint that is not leading into an *animal hole* is not a hole made by an *animal* but rather is an irregularity of the surface from which relief without penalty is not allowed. However, when such damage is on the *putting green*, it may be repaired (Rule 13.1c(2) – Improvements Allowed on Putting Green).

Boundary Object/1 – Status of Attachments to Boundary Object
Objects that are attached to a boundary object, but are not part of that boundary object, are obstructions and a player may be allowed free relief from them. If the Committee does not wish to provide free relief from an obstruction attached to a boundary object, it may introduce a Local Rule providing that the obstruction is an integral object, in which case it loses its status as an obstruction and free relief is not allowed.

For example, if angled supports are so close to a boundary fence that leaving the supports as obstructions would essentially give players free relief from the boundary object, the Committee may choose to define the supports to be integral objects.

**Boundary Object/2 – Status of Gate Attached to Boundary Object**

A gate for getting through a boundary wall or fence is not part of the boundary object. Such a gate is an obstruction unless the Committee chooses to define it as an integral object.

**Boundary Object/3 – Movable Boundary Object or Movable Part of Boundary Object Must Not Be Moved**

Boundary objects are treated as immovable, even if part of the object is designed to be movable. To ensure a consistent approach, this applies to all boundary objects.

An example of how a movable boundary object may come into play during a round includes when a boundary stake interferes with a player’s stance so he or she pulls the stake out of the ground (a breach of Rule 8.1a), but part of it breaks during removal. If the player realizes the mistake before making the next stroke, he or she may restore the improved conditions by replacing enough of the broken boundary stake to restore the interference to what it was before the stake was removed.

But if the improvement cannot be eliminated (such as when a boundary object has been bent or broken in such a way that the improvement cannot be eliminated), the player cannot avoid penalty.

**Club-Length/1 – Meaning of “Club-Length” When Measuring**

For the purposes of measuring when determining a relief area, the length of the entire club, starting at the toe of the club and ending at the butt end of the grip is used. However, if the club has a headcover on it or has an attachment to the end of the grip, neither is allowed to be used as part of the club when using it to measure.

**Club-Length/2 – How to Measure When Longest Club Breaks**

If the longest club a player has during a round breaks, that broken club continues to be used for determining the size of his or her relief areas. However, if the longest club breaks and the player is allowed to replace it with another club (Exception to Rule 4.1b(3)) and he or she does so, the broken club is no longer
considered his or her longest club.

If the player starts a *round* with fewer than 14 clubs and decides to add another club that is longer than the clubs he or she started with, the added club is used for measuring so long as it is not a putter.

**Equipment/1 – Status of Items Carried by Someone Else for the Player**

Items, other than clubs, that are carried by someone other than a player or his or her *caddie* are *outside influences*, even if they belong to the player. However, they are the player’s *equipment* when in the player’s or his or her *caddie’s* possession.

For example, if a player asks a spectator to carry his or her umbrella, the umbrella is an *outside influence* while in the spectator’s possession.

However, if the spectator hands the umbrella to the player, it is now his or her *equipment*.

**Flagstick/1 – Objects Are Treated as Flagstick When Used as Flagstick**

If an artificial or natural object is being used to mark the position of the *hole*, that object is treated the same as the *flagstick* would be.

For example, if the *flagstick* has been removed and a player wants the position of the *hole* indicated but does not want to waste time getting the *flagstick*, someone else may indicate the position of the *hole* with a club. But, for the purpose of applying the Rules, the club is treated as if it were the *flagstick*.

**Ground Under Repair/1 – Damage Caused by Committee or Maintenance Staff Is Not Always Ground Under Repair**

A hole made by maintenance staff is *ground under repair* even when not marked as *ground under repair*. However, not all damage caused by maintenance staff is *ground under repair* by default.

Examples of damage that is not *ground under repair* by default include:

- A rut made by a tractor (but the Committee is justified in declaring a deep rut to be *ground under repair*).
- An old *hole* plug that is sunk below the *putting green* surface, but see Rule 13.1c (Improvements Allowed on Putting Green).

**Ground Under Repair/2 – Ball in Tree Rooted in Ground Under Repair Is in Ground Under Repair**

If a tree is rooted in *ground under repair* and a player’s ball is in a branch of that tree, the ball is in *ground under repair* even if the branch extends outside the defined area.

If the player decides to take free relief under Rule 16.1 and the spot on the ground directly under where the ball lies in the tree is outside the *ground under repair*, the reference point for determining the *relief area* and taking relief is that spot on
the ground.

Ground Under Repair/3 – Fallen Tree or Tree Stump Is Not Always Ground Under Repair

A fallen tree or tree stump that the Committee intends to remove, but is not in the process of being removed, is not automatically ground under repair. However, if the tree and the tree stump are in the process of being unearthed or cut up for later removal, they are “material piled for later removal” and therefore ground under repair.

For example, a tree that has fallen in the general area and is still attached to the stump is not ground under repair. However, a player could request relief from the Committee and the Committee would be justified in declaring the area covered by the fallen tree to be ground under repair.

Holed/1 – All of the Ball Must Be Below the Surface to Be Holed When Embedded in Side of Hole

When a ball is embedded in the side of the hole, and all of the ball is not below the surface of the putting green, the ball is not holed. This is the case even if the ball touches the flagstick.

Holed/2 – Ball Is Considered Holed Even Though It Is Not “At Rest”

The words “at rest” in the definition of holed are used to make it clear that if a ball falls into the hole and bounces out, it is not holed.

However, if a player removes a ball from the hole that is still moving (such as circling or bouncing in the bottom of the hole), it is considered holed despite the ball not having come to rest in the hole.

Immovable Obstruction/1 – Turf Around Obstruction Is Not Part of Obstruction

Any turf that is leading to an immovable obstruction or covering an immovable obstruction, is not part of the obstruction.

For example, a water pipe is partly underground and partly above ground. If the pipe that is underground causes the turf to be raised, the raised turf is not part of the immovable obstruction.

Known or Virtually Certain/1 – Applying “Known or Virtually Certain” Standard When Ball Moves

When it is not “known” what caused the ball to move, all reasonably available information must be considered and the evidence must be evaluated to determine if it is “virtually certain” that the player, opponent or outside influence caused the ball to move.

Depending on the circumstances, reasonably available information may include, but is not limited to:
• The effect of any actions taken near the ball (such as movement of loose impediments, practice swings, grounding club and taking a stance),
• Time elapsed between such actions and the movement of the ball,
• The lie of the ball before it moved (such as on a fairway, perched on longer grass, on a surface imperfection or on the putting green),
• The conditions of the ground near the ball (such as the degree of slope or presence of surface irregularities, etc.), and
• Wind speed and direction, rain and other weather conditions.

**Known or Virtually Certain/2 – Virtual Certainty Is Irrelevant if It Comes to Light After Three-Minute Search Expires**

Determining whether there is knowledge or virtual certainty must be based on evidence known to the player at the time the three-minute search time expires.

Examples of when the player’s later findings are irrelevant include when:

• A player’s tee shot comes to rest in an area containing heavy rough and a large animal hole. After a three-minute search, it is determined that it is not known or virtually certain that the ball is in the animal hole. As the player returns to the teeing area, the ball is found in the animal hole.

Even though the player has not yet put another ball in play, the player must take stroke-and-distance relief for a lost ball (Rule 18.2b – What to Do When Ball is Lost or Out of Bounds) since it was not known or virtually certain that the ball was in the animal hole, when the search time expired.

• A player cannot find his or her ball and believes it may have been picked up by a spectator (outside influence), but there is not enough evidence to be virtually certain of this. A short time after the three-minute search time expires, a spectator is found to have the player’s ball.

The player must take stroke-and-distance relief for a lost ball (Rule 18.2b) since the movement by the outside influence only became known after the search time expired.

**Known or Virtually Certain/3 – Player Unaware Ball Played by Another Player**

It must be known or virtually certain that a player’s ball has been played by another player as a wrong ball to treat it as being moved.

For example, in stroke play, Player A and Player B hit their tee shots into the same general location. Player A finds a ball and plays it. Player B goes forward to look for his or her ball and cannot find it. After three minutes, Player B starts back to the tee to play another ball. On the way, Player B finds Player A’s ball and knows then that Player A has played his or her ball in error.

Player A gets the general penalty for playing a wrong ball and must then play his or her own ball (Rule 6.3c). Player A’s ball was not lost even though both players searched for more than three minutes because Player A did not start searching for his or her ball; the searching was for Player B’s ball. Regarding Player B’s ball, Player B’s original ball was lost and he or she must put another ball in play under...
penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 18.2b), because it was not known or virtually certain when the three-minute search time expired that the ball had been played by another player.

**Loose Impediment/1 – Status of Fruit**

Fruit that is detached from its tree or bush is a loose impediment, even if the fruit is from a bush or tree not found on the course.

For example, fruit that has been partially eaten or cut into pieces, and the skin that has been peeled from a piece of fruit are loose impediments. But, when being carried by a player, it is his or her equipment.

**Loose Impediment/2 – When Loose Impediment Becomes Obstruction**

Loose impediments may be transformed into obstructions through the processes of construction or manufacturing.

For example, a log (loose impediment) that has been split and had legs attached has been changed by construction into a bench (obstruction).

**Loose Impediment/3 – Status of Saliva**

Saliva may be treated as either temporary water or a loose impediment, at the option of the player.

**Loose Impediment/4 – Loose Impediments Used to Surface a Road**

Gravel is a loose impediment and a player may remove loose impediments under Rule 15.1a. This right is not affected by the fact that, when a road is covered with gravel, it becomes an artificially surfaced road, making it an immovable obstruction. The same principle applies to roads or paths constructed with stone, crushed shell, wood chips or the like.

In such a situation, the player may:

• Play the ball as it lies on the obstruction and remove gravel (loose impediment) from the road (Rule 15.1a).

• Take relief without penalty from the abnormal course condition (immovable obstruction) (Rule 16.1b).

The player may also remove some gravel from the road to determine the possibility of playing the ball as it lies before choosing to take free relief.

**Loose Impediment/5 – Living Insect Is Never Sticking to a Ball**

Although dead insects may be considered to be sticking to a ball, living insects are never considered to be sticking to a ball, whether they are stationary or moving. Therefore, live insects on a ball are loose impediments.
Lost/1 – Ball May Not Be Declared Lost

A player may not make a ball lost by a declaration. A ball is lost only when it has not been found within three minutes after the player or his or her caddie or partner begins to search for it.

For example, a player searches for his or her ball for two minutes, declares it lost and walks back to play another ball. Before the player puts another ball in play, the original ball is found within the three-minute search time. Since the player may not declare his or her ball lost, the original ball remains in play.

Lost/2 – Player May Not Delay the Start of Search to Gain an Advantage

The three-minute search time for a ball starts when the player or his or her caddie (or the player’s partner or partner’s caddie) starts to search for it. The player may not delay the start of the search in order to gain an advantage by allowing other people to search on his or her behalf.

For example, if a player is walking towards his or her ball and spectators are already looking for the ball, the player cannot deliberately delay getting to the area to keep the three-minute search time from starting. In such circumstances, the search time starts when the player would have been in a position to search had he or she not deliberately delayed getting to the area.

Lost/3 – Search Time Continues When Player Returns to Play a Provisional Ball

If a player has started to search for his or her ball and is returning to the spot of the previous stroke to play a provisional ball, the three-minute search time continues whether or not anyone continues to search for the player’s ball.

Lost/4 – Search Time When Searching for Two Balls

When a player has played two balls (such as the ball in play and a provisional ball) and is searching for both, whether the player is allowed two separate three-minute search times depends on how close the balls are to each other.

If the balls are in the same area where they can be searched for at the same time, the player is allowed only three minutes to search for both balls. However, if the balls are in different areas (such as opposite sides of the fairway) the player is allowed a three-minute search time for each ball.

Movable Obstruction/1 – Abandoned Ball Is a Movable Obstruction

An abandoned ball is a movable obstruction.

Moved/1 – When Ball Resting on Object Has Moved

For the purpose of deciding whether a ball must be replaced or whether a player gets a penalty, a ball is treated as having moved only if it has moved in relation to a specific part of the larger condition or object it is resting on, unless the entire object the ball is resting on has moved in relation to the ground.
An example of when a ball has not *moved* includes when:

- A ball is resting in the fork of a tree branch and the tree branch moves, but the ball’s spot in the branch does not change.

Examples of when a ball has *moved* include when:

- A ball is resting in a stationary plastic cup and the cup itself moves in relation to the ground because it is being blown by the wind.
- A ball is resting in or on a stationary motorized cart that starts to move.

**Moved/2 – Television Evidence Shows Ball at Rest Changed Position but by Amount Not Reasonably Discernible to Naked Eye**

When determining whether or not a ball at rest has *moved*, a player must make that judgment based on all the information reasonably available to him or her at the time, so that he or she can determine whether the ball must be *replaced* under the Rules. When the player’s ball has left its original position and come to rest in another place by an amount that was not reasonably discernible to the naked eye at the time, a player’s determination that the ball has not *moved* is conclusive, even if that determination is later shown to be incorrect through the use of sophisticated technology.

On the other hand, if the Committee determines, based on all of the evidence it has available, that the ball changed its position by an amount that was reasonably discernible to the naked eye at the time, the ball will be determined to have *moved* even though no-one actually saw it *move*. 
Nearest Point of Complete Relief/1 – Diagrams Illustrating Nearest Point of Complete Relief

In the diagrams, the term “nearest point of complete relief” in Rule 16.1 (Abnormal Course Conditions) for relief from interference by ground under repair is illustrated in the case of both a right-handed and a left-handed player.

The nearest point of complete relief must be strictly interpreted. A player is not allowed to choose on which side of the ground under repair the ball will be dropped, unless there are two equidistant nearest points of complete relief. Even if one side of the ground under repair is fairway and the other is bushes, if the nearest point of complete relief is in the bushes, then that is the player’s nearest point of complete relief.

![Diagram Illustrating Nearest Point of Complete Relief](image-url)

**Legend:**
- **B1** = position of ball in abnormal course condition
- **P1** = nearest point of complete relief to B1
- **Relief area P1-A-A** = area within which ball is dropped, radius of one club-length from P1
- **B2** = position of ball in abnormal course condition
- **P2** = nearest point of complete relief to B2
- **Relief area P2-C-C** = area within which ball is dropped, radius of one club-length from P2
- **Notional stance required to play ball at P2 with club with which the player would expect to make the stroke**
Nearest Point of Complete Relief/2 – Player Does Not Follow Recommended Procedure in Determining Nearest Point of Complete Relief

Although there is a recommended procedure for determining the nearest point of complete relief, the Rules do not require a player to determine this point when taking relief under a relevant Rule (such as when taking relief from an abnormal course condition under Rule 16.1b (Relief for Ball in General Area)). If a player does not determine a nearest point of complete relief accurately or identifies an incorrect nearest point of complete relief, the player only gets a penalty if this results in him or her dropping a ball into a relief area that does not satisfy the requirements of the Rule and the ball is then played.

Nearest Point of Complete Relief/3 – Whether Player Has Taken Relief Incorrectly If Condition Still Interferes for Stroke with Club Not Used to Determine Nearest Point of Complete Relief

When a player is taking relief from an abnormal course condition, he or she is taking relief only for interference that he or she had with the club, stance, swing and line of play that would have been used to play the ball from that spot. After the player has taken relief and there is no longer interference for the stroke the player would have made, any further interference is a new situation.

For example, the player’s ball lies in heavy rough in the general area approximately 230 yards from the green. The player selects a wedge to make the next stroke and finds that his or her stance touches a line defining an area of ground under repair.
The player determines the nearest point of complete relief and drops a ball in the prescribed relief area according to Rule 14.3b(3) (Ball Must Be Dropped in Relief Area) and Rule 16.1 (Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions).

The ball rolls into a good lie within the relief area from where the player believes that the next stroke could be played with a 3-wood. If the player used a wedge for the next stroke there would be no interference from the ground under repair. However, using the 3-wood, the player again touches the line defining the ground under repair with his or her foot. This is a new situation and the player may play the ball as it lies or take relief for the new situation.

Nearest Point of Complete Relief/4 – Player Determines Nearest Point of Complete Relief but Is Physically Unable to Make Intended Stroke

The purpose of determining the nearest point of complete relief is to find a reference point in a location that is as near as possible to where the interfering condition no longer interferes. In determining the nearest point of complete relief, the player is not guaranteed a good or playable lie.

For example, if a player is unable to make a stroke from what appears to be the required relief area as measured from the nearest point of complete relief because either the direction of play is blocked by a tree, or the player is unable to take the backswing for the intended stroke due to a bush, this does not change the fact that the identified point is the nearest point of complete relief.

After the ball is in play, the player must then decide what type of stroke he or she will make. This stroke, which includes the choice of club, may be different than the one that would have been made from the ball’s original spot had the condition not been there.

If it is not physically possible to drop the ball in any part of the identified relief area, the player is not allowed relief from the condition.

Nearest Point of Complete Relief/5 – Player Physically Unable to Determine Nearest Point of Complete Relief

If a player is physically unable to determine his or her nearest point of complete relief, it must be estimated, and the relief area is then based on the estimated point.

For example, in taking relief under Rule 16.1, a player is physically unable to determine the nearest point of complete relief because that point is within the trunk of a tree or a boundary fence prevents the player from adopting the required stance.

The player must estimate the nearest point of complete relief and drop a ball in the identified relief area.

If it is not physically possible to drop the ball in the identified relief area, the player is not allowed relief under Rule 16.1.

No Play Zone/1 – Status of Growing Things Overhanging a No Play Zone

The status of growing things that overhang a no play zone depends on the type of
no play zone. This will matter since the growing things may be part of the no play zone, in which case the player is required to take relief.

For example, if a no play zone has been defined as a penalty area (where the edges extend above and below the ground), any part of a growing object that extends beyond the edges of the no play zone is not part of the no play zone. However, if a no play zone has been defined as ground under repair (which includes all ground inside the defined area and anything growing that extends above the ground and outside the edges), anything overhanging the edge is part of the no play zone.

Obstruction/1 – Status of Paint Dots and Paint Lines

Although artificial objects are obstructions so long as they are not boundary objects or integral objects, paint dots and paint lines are not obstructions.

Sometimes paint dots and lines are used for purposes other than course marking (such as indicating the front and back of putting greens). Such dots and lines are not an abnormal course condition unless the Committee declares them to be ground under repair (see Committee Procedures; Model Local Rule F-21).

Outside Influence/1 – Status of Air and Water When Artificially Propelled

Although wind and water are natural forces and not outside influences, artificially propelled air and water are outside influences.

Examples include:

• If a ball at rest on the putting green has not been lifted and replaced and is moved by air from a greenside fan, the ball must be replaced (Rule 9.6 and Rule 14.2).

• If a ball at rest is moved by water coming from an irrigation system, the ball must be replaced (Rule 9.6 and Rule 14.2).

Replace/1 – Ball May Not Be Replaced with a Club

For a ball to be replaced in a right way, it must be set down and let go. This means the player must use his or her hand to put the ball back in play on the spot it was lifted or moved from.

For example, if a player lifts his or her ball from the putting green and sets it aside, the player must not replace the ball by rolling it to the required spot with a club. If he or she does so, the ball is not replaced in the right way and the player gets one penalty stroke under Rule 14.2b(2) (How Ball Must Be Replaced) if the mistake is not corrected before the stroke is made.

Stroke/1 – Determining If a Stroke Was Made

If a player starts the downswing with a club intending to strike the ball, his or her action counts as a stroke when:
• The clubhead is deflected or stopped by an outside influence (such as the branch of a tree) whether or not the ball is struck.

• The clubhead separates from the shaft during the downswing and the player continues the downswing with the shaft alone, whether or not the ball is struck with the shaft.

• The clubhead separates from the shaft during the downswing and the player continues the downswing with the shaft alone, with the clubhead falling and striking the ball.

The player’s action does not count as a stroke in each of following situations:

• During the downswing, a player’s clubhead separates from the shaft. The player stops the downswing short of the ball, but the clubhead falls and strikes and moves the ball.

• During the backswing, a player’s clubhead separates from the shaft. The player completes the downswing with the shaft but does not strike the ball.

• A ball is lodged in a tree branch beyond the reach of a club. If the player moves the ball by striking a lower part of the branch instead of the ball, Rule 9.4 (Ball Lifted or Moved by Player) applies.

Wrong Ball/1 – Part of Wrong Ball Is Still Wrong Ball

If a player makes a stroke at part of a stray ball that he or she mistakenly thought was the ball in play, he or she has made a stroke at a wrong ball and Rule 6.3c applies.