

A FREE DROP

By Richard E. Todd,
The Golf Rules Guy

Nearly everyone knows if your golf ball lands on a cart path **free relief** is allowed. Ask a golfer what that means and how to implement it and you'll likely receive several different answers.

Let's clarify the rule and put to bed some urban legends regarding USGA rule# 24-2.

- ▶ **You are allowed relief from an immovable obstruction:** A cart path is one example of an immovable obstruction – anything artificial that can't be moved and gets in the way of your stance or swing. (Some exceptions exist.)
- ▶ **You can drop within 1 club length:** you must measure with the club you planned to use for your next shot. You can't use your 47" driver when the next swing will be with your 33" wedge.
- ▶ **From nearest point of relief,** no nearer the hole: Here's where the fights break out! You do not automatically drop in the fairway! You need to find the closest spot where you can set your ball, stand, and swing without interference from the obstruction (ex: cart path). Your 'nearest point of relief' could be behind a tree. **Remember, you are getting relief from the cart path, nothing else.** You may be better off hitting from the concrete than dropping in the grass, which is a choice many have made.



Measure the distance from where your ball is on the pavement to the areas you want to drop your ball so that you can have a clear footing to swing. Whichever spot is closest is your drop-zone.

Your nearest point of relief depends on if you're right or left handed, where on the path the ball lands, and how the road is angled in comparison to the green.

Your ball must strike a part of the course when dropped and **you may clean your ball before dropping.** There is a **two-stroke penalty if you fail to properly follow these rules.**

I know golfers that have been playing for decades and still get this rule wrong. That's why I wrote **The Golf Rules** series. See my entertaining and educational books for additional help in tackling the rules and etiquette of golf.



Richard E Todd, author of The Golf Rules series and Short Stories from the Long Links, has been heard on the PGA Tour radio station and seen in On The Green magazine.

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