

2022 Rules Corner

Index to monthly rule review:

Jan 2022 – Hitting The Wrong Ball (Rule 6.3)
Mar 2022 - Accidentally Hitting the Ball
Apr 2022 - Relief For Ball In A Yellow Penalty Area
Jul 2022 - Relief for Ball In A Red Penalty Area
Aug 2022 - Unusual Situations In A Penalty Area
Oct 2022 – More Unusual Situations In A Penalty Area
Nov 2022 – 2023 Rule Changes
Dec 2022 - Additional 2023 Rule Changes

[Link to USGA “Rules of Golf Explained” Videos](#)

JANUARY 2022

Hitting The Wrong Ball (Rule 6.3)

It has happened to all of us. You arrive at the green to find you have hit a stray ball found on the course rather than your own ball in play, or worse, you have hit your playing partner's or opponent's ball. What should you do?

In Stroke Play:

You must go back to the original spot/lie of your ball, estimated if not known exactly. Drop the original ball (or a substituted ball) and take the General Penalty (*two strokes*.) Complete the hole with this ball. Any strokes made with the wrong ball do not count. If two players hit each others' balls they must both go back and take the general penalty.

In Match Play:

If you played the wrong ball you take the general penalty which is *loss of hole* in Match Play. If two players hit each other's balls the first to make a stroke at the wrong ball gets the general penalty (loss of hole.) If it is not known which wrong ball was played first both players must go back and play out the hole with no penalty.

Exception to this rule: If hitting a ball out of moving water in a penalty area or in temporary water and it could not be identified before making the stroke, there is no penalty. The player must correct the mistake by playing her own ball from the original spot.

MARCH 2022

Accidentally Hitting the Ball

The USGA defines a “stroke” as the forward movement of the club with the intention to strike the ball. Therefore, if a player accidentally hits her ball when making a practice swing she has not made a stroke.

If this occurs on the tee area the ball is not yet in play and she merely retees with no penalty. (Rule 6.2b(5)&(6))

If this occurs on the putting green she must simply replace her ball to the original spot with no penalty. (Rule 13.1d(1))

If this occurs anywhere else, i.e. in a bunker, a penalty area, or in the general area the ball is already in play. This would not be considered a “stroke” because there was no intention to hit the ball, but because the ball was in play it incurs a penalty. In this case, she must replace her ball to the original spot and take a one stroke penalty. If she plays the ball without replacing it to the original spot it becomes a two stroke penalty (or loss of hole in match play.) (Rule 9.4)

APRIL 2022

Relief For Ball In A Yellow Penalty Area

In November we explored some new rules involving Penalty Areas. This month we will cover how to take relief from a Yellow Penalty Area. Rule 17.1d

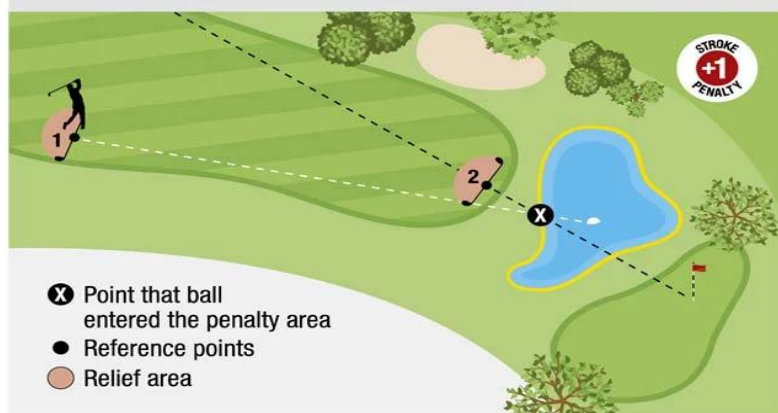
If a player’s ball is known or virtually certain to be in a Yellow Penalty Area these are the relief options, each for one penalty stroke:

- 1) Stroke-and-Distance Relief (a player may always play again from the original spot)
- 2) Back-on-the-Line-Relief

(See Explanatory Diagram on next page)

Note that the Relief Point and the Relief Area must NOT be in the Penalty Area and if more than one area of the course is located within one club-length of the Reference Point the ball must come to rest in the same area of the course the ball first touched when dropped in the relief area.

DIAGRAM #1 17.1d: RELIEF FOR BALL IN YELLOW PENALTY AREA



When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a yellow penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **two options**, each for one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6).

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The spot where the player's previous stroke was made (which if not known must be estimated)	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • Must be in the same area of the course as the reference point

- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
A point on the course chosen by the player that is on the reference line through point X (the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the yellow penalty area). There is no limit on how far back on the line the reference point may be	One club-length from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and • May be in any area of the course except the same penalty area

Player Notes:

In choosing this reference point, you should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee).

JULY 2022

Relief For Ball In A **RED** Penalty Area

This month we will explore how to take relief from a **Red** Penalty Area.

If a player's ball is known or virtually certain to be in a Red Penalty Area the player again has the previously discussed (April 2022) options for relief:


- 1) Stroke-and-Distance Relief
- 2) Back-on-the-Line Relief
- 3) Lateral Relief
 - a. The Reference Point is again the estimated point where the ball crossed the margin of the Penalty Area
 - b. But the size of the Relief Point is now two club-lengths

DIAGRAM #2 17.1d: RELIEF FOR BALL IN RED PENALTY AREA

X Point that ball entered the penalty area
● Reference points
○ Relief area

When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a red penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has **three options**, each for one penalty stroke:

- (1) The player may take stroke-and-distance relief (see point (1) in Diagram #1 17.1d).
- (2) The player may take back-on-the-line relief (see point (2) in Diagram #1 17.1d).
- (3) The player may take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking lateral relief is point X.

Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
The estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area (point X)	Two club-lengths from the reference point 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and• May be in any area of the course except the same penalty area

AUGUST 2022

Unusual Situations In A Penalty Area

Recently we have covered how to take relief from **Yellow** and **Red** Penalty Areas. This month we explore some unusual situations encountered in Penalty Areas.

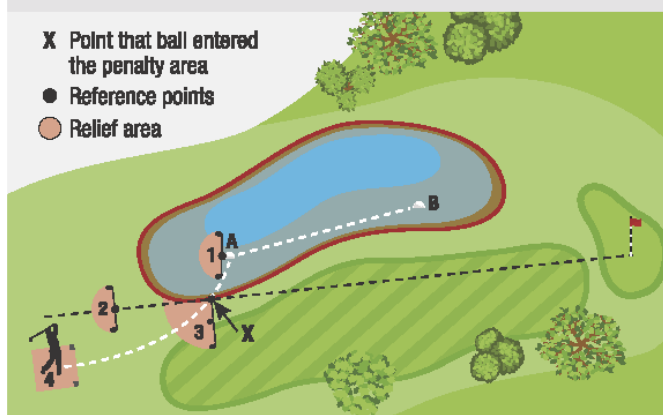
1. When a ball is in a No Play Zone in a Penalty Area the ball cannot be played as it lies and relief must be taken as discussed previously. This situation arises frequently at The Vineyard and other area courses where No Play Zones are Environmental Areas marked by **red** stakes with **green** tips.
2. A player does not get relief from an Immovable Object if the Object is in a Penalty Area.
 - a. An example of this might be a bridge crossing a stream that is a Penalty Area. If the player's ball lands on the bridge there is no free relief. The ball may be played as it lies or relief may be taken in the usual ways. This situation may arise at Rancho Bernardo Inn and other area courses.
3. When a Dangerous Animal condition interferes with the play of the ball in a Penalty Area the player may
 - a. Take Free Relief in the Penalty Area (no closer to the hole) or
 - b. Take Penalty Relief outside the Penalty Area for ONE penalty stroke

OCTOBER 2022

More Unusual Situations In A Penalty Area

1. When a ball played from a Penalty Area situation comes to rest in the same or a different Penalty Area, Rule 17.2a delineates how relief is to be taken.

DIAGRAM #1 17.2a: BALL PLAYED FROM PENALTY AREA COMES TO REST IN SAME PENALTY AREA

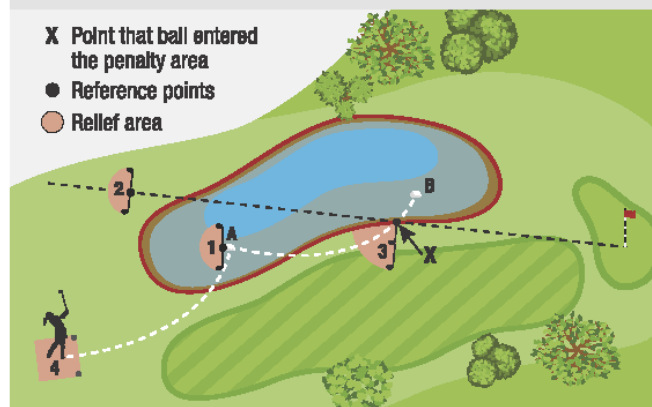


A player plays from the teeing area to point A in the penalty area. The player plays the ball from point A to point B. If the player chooses to take relief, for one penalty stroke there are four options. The player may:

- (1) Take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made at point A (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6) and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (2) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (3) Take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking relief is point X, and the original ball or another ball must be dropped in and played from the two club-length relief area, and the player is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (4) Play the original ball or another ball from the teeing area as that was where he or she made the last stroke from outside the penalty area, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

If the player selected option (1) and then decided not to play the dropped ball, the player may take back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in relation to point X, or play again from the teeing area, adding an additional penalty stroke for a total of two penalty strokes, and would be playing his or her 5th shot.

DIAGRAM #2 17.2a: BALL PLAYED FROM PENALTY AREA COMES TO REST IN SAME PENALTY AREA HAVING EXITED AND RE-ENTERED



A player plays from the teeing area to point A in the penalty area. The player plays the ball from point A to point B, with the ball exiting the penalty area but crossing back into the penalty area at point X. If the player chooses to take relief, for one penalty stroke there are four options. The player may:

- (1) Take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made at point A (see Rule 14.6 and Diagram 14.6) and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (2) Take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X, and is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (3) Take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking relief is point X, and the original ball or another ball must be dropped in and played from the two club-length relief area, and the player is playing his or her 4th shot.
- (4) Play the original ball or another ball from the teeing area as that was where he or she made the last stroke from outside the penalty area, and is playing his or her 4th shot.

If the player selected option (1) and then decided not to play the dropped ball, the player may take back-on-the-line relief or lateral relief in relation to point X, or play again from the teeing area, adding an additional penalty stroke for a total of two penalty strokes, and would be playing his or her 5th shot.

[Link to USGA Rule #17 & 17.2a Diagrams](#)

2. When a ball played from a Penalty Area situation is Lost or Out of Bounds or Unplayable Outside the Penalty Area, the player may sometimes be required or choose to take stroke-and-distance relief because the original ball is either:
 - out of bounds or lost outside the penalty area (Rule 18.2) , or
 - Unplayable outside the penalty area (Rule 19.2a)
- a) If taking stroke-and-distance relief the ball is dropped in the original spot in the penalty area for ONE penalty stroke. The player may then play that ball OR take relief outside the penalty area for an additional penalty stroke (TWO total).
- b) The player may also directly take relief from outside the penalty area without first dropping the ball in the penalty area BUT still gets a total of TWO penalty strokes.

NOVEMBER 2022

The **USGA** is issuing 5 major rule changes for 2023.

1. Players with **disabilities** include players who are blind, are amputees, use assistive ability devices, or have intellectual disabilities. The Rules of Golf authorized Modifications to the Rules that could be adopted by the Committee in charge of a competition. They did not automatically apply to every competition. But starting in 2023, they become firm rules and always apply to players with disabilities.
2. Previously a player was required to put her **handicap on the score card** before turning it in to the Committee. However, starting in 2023 you are no longer required to have your handicap on your score card and will not be penalized if you have the wrong handicap on the card. It is the responsibility of the Committee to verify the handicaps.
3. In the past if a club was **damaged** by the player during a round it could not be replaced. Now starting in 2023 if you damage a club (as long as it was not deliberate) you may replace it. If your club is damaged by an outside force or another player you can still replace it as before.
4. Previously a **ball moved by natural forces**, such as wind, was played from the new spot (except on the putting green when it is replaced on the original spot.) But starting in 2023, a ball moved by natural forces that comes to rest in **another part of the course** must be returned to its original spot with no penalty.
5. The **back-on-the-line relief** rule which is used for an unplayable ball or ball in a penalty area was complicated and wordy. It also required that the dropped ball come to rest no nearer the hole. This rule has been simplified to merely state that the ball must be dropped on the **line** and come to rest within one club length of where it hits the ground **in any direction**, including nearer the hole.

DECEMBER 2022

Last month we detailed the 5 most important **rule changes** for **2023**. There are a few more to know about.

1. Rule 10.2b(4) says you cannot stand behind your partner to gain information about your side's next stroke. It also makes clear that a caddie cannot stand behind a person putting to gain information. Now the same is **explicitly** stated for foursomes (Rule 22.6) and fourball play (Rule 23.8.)
2. In the old rules penalties for too many clubs, late to the tee and unreasonable delay of game in Stableford competitions were decided by the committee after the round and before signing the card. Now penalties are added just as they are in stroke play. For example, if you have 15 clubs in your bag there is a 2-stroke penalty for each hole up to 4 max. You can still not have any score lower than "0" for any hole. This also applies to Par/Bogey competitions.
3. Rule 11 stated that a ball in motion that hits any person or outside influence must be played as it lies and there is no penalty. Exception 2 to that rule said that on the **putting surface** the ball must be returned to its original spot and the stroke did not count. NOW the rule has been amended so that if a ball on the putting surface hits the player, his club used to make the stroke or an INSECT the stroke counts and the ball must be played as it lies. In an odd twist the old rule would have required you to replay a putt if it hit an insect and still dropped into the hole. With the new rule you would no longer be required to re putt.