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The Rules of Golf



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In This Presentation

Finding and Identifying Ball (Rule 7)

Ball Played as it Lies; Ball at Rest Lifted or Moved (Rule 9)

Ball in Motion Deflected (Rule 11)

Ball Handling (Rule 14)



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Finding & Identifying Ball

(Rule 7)



How to Fairly Search for Ball

A player is responsible for finding their ball *in play* after each *stroke*.

The player may **fairly search** for the ball by taking **reasonable actions** to find and identify it, such as:

- moving sand and water, and
- moving or bending grass, bushes, tree branches and other growing or attached natural objects,
- and also breaking such objects, **but** only if such breaking is a result of other **reasonable actions** taken to find or identify the ball.



How to Fairly Search for Ball



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If taking such reasonable actions as part of a fair search **improves the conditions affecting the stroke:**

- There is **no penalty** under Rule 8.1a if the *improvement* results from a **fair search**.
- **But** if the *improvement* results from actions that exceeded what was reasonable for a fair search,
 - the player gets the **general penalty** for breach of Rule 8.1a.

The player may also remove loose impediments and moveable obstructions as allowed by those Rules.



How to Identify Ball



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A player's ball at rest may be identified in any one of these ways:

- By the **player or anyone** else seeing a ball come to rest where it is known to be the player's ball.
- By seeing the player's **identifying mark** on the ball...
- By finding a ball with the **same brand, model, number and condition** as the player's ball in an area where the player's ball is expected to be...

If an identical ball is in the same area and there is no way to know which one is the player's ball, these do not apply.



Lifting Ball to Identify It

If a ball might be a player's ball but cannot be identified as it lies:

- The player may lift the ball to identify it (including by rotating it), **but:**
- The spot of the **ball must first be marked**, and the ball must not be cleaned more than needed to identify it (**except** on the putting green)



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Lifting Ball to Identify It

If the player

- lifts their ball under this Rule when not reasonably necessary to identify it (**except** on the putting green),
- fails to *mark* the spot of the ball before lifting it or
- cleans it when not allowed,

the player gets **one penalty stroke**.



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Ball Accidentally Moved During Search



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There is no penalty if the player's ball is accidentally *moved* by:

- the player,
- *opponent* or
- anyone else

while trying to find or identify it.

The ball must be *replaced* on its original spot (which if not known must be estimated).



Questions



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Ball Played as it Lies; Ball at Rest Lifted or Moved (Rule 9)



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Definition of Moved

When a ball at rest

- Has left its original spot and
- Come to rest on any other spot,
- And this can be seen by the naked eye

This applies whether the ball has gone up, down, or horizontally in any direction away from its original spot.





Deciding Whether Ball Moved

A Player's ball at rest is treated as having *moved* if it is **known** **or virtually certain** that it did.

Known or virtually certain means more than just possible or probable.

It means that either:

- There is conclusive evidence that the event in question happened to the player's ball, such as when the player or other witnesses saw it happen,
- or
- Although there is a very small degree of doubt, all reasonably available information shows that it is **at least 95% likely** that the event in question happened.



Deciding What Caused Ball to Move



Four Possible Causes:

1. **Natural Forces**

- Wind, water, or the forces of gravity

2. **The Player**

- Including player's caddie, partner, or partner's caddie

3. **The Opponent**

- Including opponent's caddie

4. **Outside Influence**

- Another player in stroke play, an animal, a spectator or anything else





What to Do & Possible Penalties

1. Natural Forces

- No penalty, play the ball from its new spot
- Two exceptions

2. The Player

- One penalty stroke, must *replace* the ball on its original spot
- Five exceptions

3. The Opponent

- Opponent receives one penalty stroke, must *replace* the ball on its original spot.
- Three exceptions

4. Outside Influence

- No penalty, must *replace* the ball on its original spot

Ball Moved by Natural Forces Exceptions:



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Two Exceptions:

- Ball on putting green moves after having been lifted and replaced
- Ball at rest moves to another area of the course or OB after being dropped, placed or replaced



What to Do & Possible Penalties

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- **One penalty stroke**, must *replace* the ball on its original spot
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- No penalty, must *replace* the ball on its original spot

Ball Moved by Player



Five Exceptions Where Player Would Avoid Penalty:

- Player Allowed to Lift or Move Ball
- Accidental Movement in Trying to Find or Identify Ball
- Accidental Movement on Putting Green
- Accidental Movement Anywhere Except on Putting Green While Applying Rule
- Ball Moves After Coming to Rest Against Player or Equipment



What to Do & Possible Penalties

1. Natural Forces

- No penalty, play the ball from its new spot
- Two exceptions

2. The Player

- One penalty stroke, must *replace* the ball on its original spot
- Five exceptions

3. The Opponent

- Opponent receives **one penalty stroke**, must *replace* the ball on its original spot.
- Three exceptions

4. Outside Influence

- No penalty, must *replace* the ball on its original spot



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Ball Moved by Opponent

Three Exceptions Where Opponent Would Avoid Penalty:

- Opponent allowed to lift or move ball
- Marking and lifting players ball on putting green by mistake
- Same exceptions as the player (e.g. when searching)



What to Do & Possible Penalties

1. Natural Forces

- No penalty, play the ball from its new spot
- Two exceptions

2. The Player

- One penalty stroke, must *replace* the ball on its original spot
- Five exceptions

3. The Opponent

- Opponent receives one penalty stroke, must *replace* the ball on its original spot.
- Three exceptions

4. Outside Influence

- No penalty, must *replace* the ball on its original spot

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Ball in Motion Deflected

(Rule 11)



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Rule 11 Overview

Rule 11.1 – Accidents Happen

Rule 11.2 – Deliberately Putting Things in the Way

Rule 11.3 – Deliberately Taking Things Out of the Way



11.1 – Accidents Happen

Place from Where Ball Must Be Played

If played from OFF the Putting Green: No penalty – Play the ball as it lies (few exceptions)

If played from ON the Putting Green – No penalty (with exception) and...

Play the ball as it lies if it strikes:

- A loose impediment
- An animal defined as a loose impediment (i.e. worms or insects)
- The player
- The player's club used to make the stroke
- A ball in play at rest
- The flagstick or flagstick attendant
- A ball marker

Cancel and replay the stroke if it strikes:

- An animal (not defined as loose impediment)
- Another Person (player or person attending the flagstick don't count)
- Other movable obstruction (including ball in motion)





11.1 – Accidents Happen

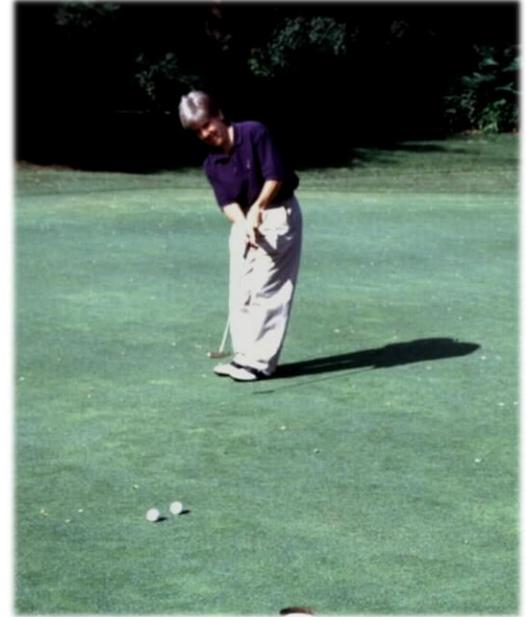
Exception:

Ball Played on Putting Green In Stroke Play

If the player's ball in motion

- hits another ball at rest on the *putting green*
- and both balls were on the *putting green* before the *stroke*,

the player gets the **general penalty (two penalty strokes)**.





Rule 11.2 – Deliberately Putting Things in the Way

When Rule Applies:

This rule applies when it is *known or virtually certain* that a player's ball in motion was **deliberately deflected or stopped by a person**, which is when:

- A person deliberately touches the ball in motion, or
- The ball in motion hits any
 - equipment or other object or
 - any person...

that **a player deliberately positioned or left in a particular location** so that the *equipment*, object or person might deflect or stop the ball in motion.





Rule 11.2 – Deliberately Putting Things in the Way

When Penalty Applies to a Player

A player gets the **general penalty** if they deliberately deflect or stop any ball in motion.

This is true whether it is

- the player's own ball or
- a ball played by an *opponent* or
- a ball played by another player in stroke play.

If an object is used to stop or deflect the ball, the player must have **intent** and the **ball must hit** the object to receive the **general penalty**.



Rule 11.2 – Deliberately Putting Things in the Way



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Place from Where Ball Must Be Played

Ball played from OFF the Putting Green:

- Ball played from where it most likely would have come to rest using one club-length relief area in correct area of the course.
- If the ball would have come to rest out of bounds, the only option is *stroke-and-distance*.

Ball played from ON the Putting Green:

- Cancel and replay the stroke

Rule 11.3 – Deliberately Taking Things Out of the Way



When a ball is in motion,

- a player must not deliberately take any of these actions to affect where that ball might come to rest:
 - Alter physical conditions by taking any of the actions listed in Rule 8.1a, or
 - Lift or remove a *loose impediment* or a *movable obstruction*.

A player would receive the **general penalty** for taking any of these actions, even if does not affect where the ball comes to rest.



Rule 11.3 – Deliberately Taking Things Out of the Way



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Exceptions Where Player Would Not Receive Penalty

This rule does not prohibit a player from lifting or moving:

- A removed *flagstick*,
- A ball at rest on the *putting green*, or
- *Equipment* belonging to any player.



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Ball Handling

(Rule 14)



How to Mark a Ball

Before lifting a ball under a Rule requiring the ball to be replaced on its original spot, the player must *mark* the spot.



If the player

- lifts the ball without marking its spot,
- *marks* its spot in a wrong way, or
- makes a *stroke* with a *ball-marker* left in place,

The player gets **one penalty stroke**.





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Definition of Mark

To show the spot where a ball is at rest by either:

- Placing a ball-marker
 - right behind,
 - right next to the ball, or
 - holding a club on the ground right behind or next to the ball.

This is done to show the spot where the ball must be *replaced* after it is lifted.





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Definition of Ball-Marker

An artificial object when used to *mark* the spot of a ball to be lifted, such as

- a tee,
- a coin,
- an object made to be a *ball-marker*, or
- another small piece of *equipment*.





Who May Lift Ball

The player's ball may be lifted only by:

- the player,
- a partner,
- anyone the player authorizes,

but such authorization

- must be given each time before the ball is lifted rather than given generally for the round.

Exception – The caddie may lift the player's ball without authorization when the player's ball is on the putting green.



Cleaning the Golf Ball



A ball lifted from the putting green may **always** be cleaned (see Rule 13.1b).

A ball lifted from anywhere else may always be cleaned **except** when it is lifted:

- To see if it is cut or cracked (see Rule 4.2c(1))
- To identify it (see Rule 7.3)
- Because it interferes with play (Rule 15.3b(2))
- To see if it lies in a condition where relief is allowed (see Rule 16.4)
- **One penalty stroke** if cleaned when not allowed





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Dropping Ball Procedure

Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way

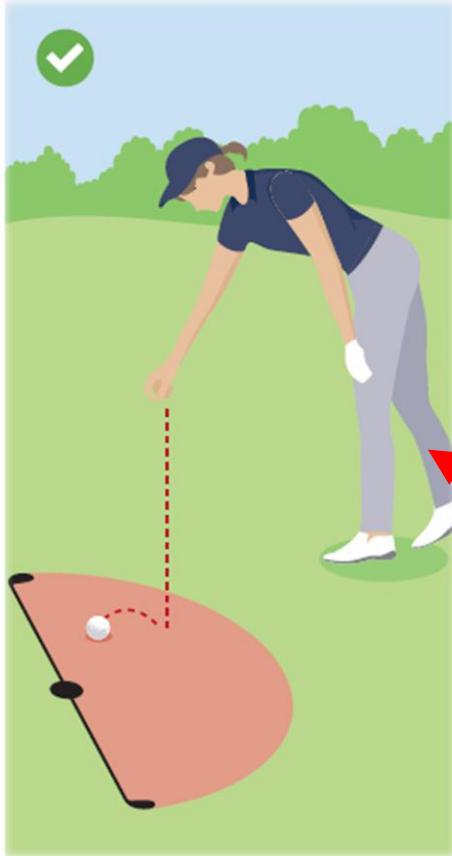
The player must drop a ball in the right way, which means all of these things...

- (1) Player Must Drop Ball.
- (2) Ball Must Be Dropped
 - Straight Down
 - from Knee Height
 - Without Touching Player or Equipment before it hits the ground
- (3) Ball Must Be Dropped in Relief Area (or on Line).





Dropping Ball Procedure



“Knee height” means:

- the height of the player’s knee
- when in a standing position.

The player may be either inside or outside the *relief area* when *dropping* the ball.





Dropping Ball Procedure

What to Do if Ball Dropped in Right Way Comes to Rest Outside Relief Area:

- Drop a ball in the right way a second time
- If that ball also comes to rest outside the *relief area*, the player must place a ball on the spot where the ball *dropped* the second time first touched the ground.





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Dropping Ball Procedure

Original Ball or Another Ball May Be Used

The player may use any ball each time they *drop* or place a ball under a Rule.

This is true for both free relief rules and penalty relief rules.

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Coming Up Next Week

Free Relief Procedures

- Abnormal Course Conditions & Embedded Ball (Rule 16)
- Loose Impediments and Movable Obstructions (Rule 15)

Penalty Relief Procedures

- Penalty Areas (Rule 17)
- Unplayable Ball (Rule 19)
- Stroke & Distance, Ball Lost/Out of Bounds, Provisional (Rule 18)



Additional Rules Resources

- **USGA Rules Section**
 - Helpful videos, additional resources, and free Rules 101 online course
 - www.usga.org
- **The Roving Official Website**
 - Additional rules content and quiz questions
 - www.therovingofficial.com