RULES OF GOLF ON THE GREEN

PERMITTED
- Claw
- Cross-handed
- Long putter not anchored
- Traditional grip with mid-length putter
- Grip resting against forearms
- Traditional grip

PROHIBITED
- Belly putter anchored against stomach
- Anchor point created by forearms
- One or both forearms used against body
- Anchored against chin

Penalty
Anchoring the club in making a stroke would bring a non-stroke penalty in stroke play and loss of hole in match play, as with any other breach of Rule 14-1.

SIC NULLA FORSIT
On the Green

Herewith is a compilation of the Rules of Golf and Decisions as they affect play on the green. The organization follows the numbering of the Rules in the USGA, after the Definitions section.

I. Etiquette

II. Definitions

III. Rules and Decisions

IV. Appendix II

V. Resources

###

I. Etiquette

Section I

Etiquette

Introduction
This section provides guidelines on the manner in which the game of golf should be played. If they are followed, all players will gain maximum enjoyment from the game. The overriding principle is that consideration should be shown to others on the course at all times.

The Spirit Of The Game
Golf is played, for the most part, without the supervision of a referee or umpire. The game relies on the integrity of the individual to show consideration for other players and to abide by the Rules. All players should conduct themselves in a disciplined manner, demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at
all times, irrespective of how competitive they may be. This is the spirit of the
game of golf.

Safety
Players should ensure that no one is standing close by or in a position to be
hit by the club, the ball or any stones, pebbles, twigs or the like when they
make a stroke or practice swing.

Players should not play until the players in front are out of range.

Players should always alert greenstaff nearby or ahead when they are about to
make a stroke that might endanger them.

If a player plays a ball in a direction where there is a danger of hitting some-
one, he should immediately shout a warning. The traditional word of warning
in such situations is “fore.”

Consideration For Other Players
No Disturbance Or Distraction
Players should always show consideration for other players on the course and
should not disturb their play by moving, talking or making unnecessary noise.

Players should ensure that any electronic device taken onto the course does
not distract other players.

On the teeing ground, a player should not tee his ball until it is his turn to
play.

Players should not stand close to or directly behind the ball, or directly be-
hind the hole, when a player is about to play.

On The Putting Green
On the putting green, players should not stand on another player’s line of putt
or, when he is making a stroke, cast a shadow over his line of putt.
Players should remain on or close to the putting green until all other players in the group have holed out.

Scoring
In stroke play, a player who is acting as a marker should, if necessary, on the way to the next tee, check the score with the player concerned and record it.

Pace Of Play
Play At Good Pace And Keep Up
Players should play at a good pace. The Committee may establish pace of play guidelines that all players should follow.

It is a group’s responsibility to keep up with the group in front. If it loses a clear hole and it is delaying the group behind, it should invite the group behind to play through, irrespective of the number of players in that group. Where a group has not lost a clear hole, but it is apparent that the group behind can play faster, it should invite the faster moving group to play through.

Be Ready To Play
Players should be ready to play as soon as it is their turn to play. When playing on or near the putting green, they should leave their bags or carts in such a position as will enable quick movement off the green and towards the next tee. When the play of a hole has been completed, players should immediately leave the putting green.

Lost Ball
If a player believes his ball may be lost outside a water hazard or is out of bounds, to save time, he should play a provisional ball.

Players searching for a ball should signal the players in the group behind them to play through as soon as it becomes apparent that the ball will not easily be found. They should not search for five minutes before doing so. Having allowed the group behind to play through, they should not continue play until that group has passed and is out of range.

Priority On The Course

Geoff Mangum’s PuttingZone, Rules of Golf on the Green

geoff mangum’s puttingzone www.puttingzone.com 518 woodlawn ave greensboro nc 27401 336-340-9079
Unless otherwise determined by the Committee, priority on the course is determined by a group’s pace of play. Any group playing a whole round is entitled to pass a group playing a shorter round. The term “group” includes a single player.

**Care Of The Course**

**Bunkers**
Before leaving a bunker, players should carefully fill up and smooth over all holes and footprints made by them and any nearby made by others. If a rake is within reasonable proximity of the bunker, the rake should be used for this purpose.

**Repair Of Divots, Ball Marks And Damage By Shoes**
Players should carefully repair any divot holes made by them and any damage to the putting green made by the impact of a ball (whether or not made by the player himself). On completion of the hole by all players in the group, damage to the putting green caused by golf shoes should be repaired.

**Preventing Unnecessary Damage**
Players should avoid causing damage to the course by removing divots when taking practice swings or by hitting the head of a club into the ground, whether in anger or for any other reason.

Players should ensure that no damage is done to the putting green when putting down bags or the flagstick.

In order to avoid damaging the hole, players and caddies should not stand too close to the hole and should take care during the handling of the flagstick and the removal of a ball from the hole. The head of a club should not be used to remove a ball from the hole.

Players should not lean on their clubs when on the putting green, particularly when removing the ball from the hole.

The flagstick should be properly replaced in the hole before the players leave the putting green.
Local notices regulating the movement of golf carts should be strictly observed.

**Conclusion; Penalties For Breach**
If players follow the guidelines in this section, it will make the game more enjoyable for everyone.

If a player consistently disregards these guidelines during a round or over a period of time to the detriment of others, it is recommended that the Committee considers taking appropriate disciplinary action against the offending player. Such action may, for example, include prohibiting play for a limited time on the course or in a certain number of competitions. This is considered to be justifiable in terms of protecting the interests of the majority of golfers who wish to play in accordance with these guidelines.

In the case of a serious breach of etiquette, the Committee may disqualify a player under Rule **33-7**.

**II. Definitions**

**Section II**

**Definitions**

**Course**
The “**course**” is the whole area within any boundaries established by the **Committee** (see Rule **33-2**).

**Flagstick**
The “**flagstick**” is a movable straight indicator, with or without bunting or other material attached, centered in the **hole** to show its position. It must be circular in cross-section. Padding or shock absorbent material that might unduly influence the movement of the ball is prohibited.

**Hole**
The "hole" must be 4 1/4 inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least 4 inches (101.6 mm) deep. If a lining is used, it must be sunk at least 1 inch (25.4 mm) below the putting green surface, unless the nature of the soil makes it impracticable to do so; its outer diameter must not exceed 4 1/4 inches (108 mm).

**Holed**

A ball is "holed" when it is at rest within the circumference of the hole and all of it is below the level of the lip of the hole.

**Line Of Play**

The "line of play" is the direction that the player wishes his ball to take after a stroke, plus a reasonable distance on either side of the intended direction. The line of play extends vertically upwards from the ground, but does not extend beyond the hole.

**Line Of Putt**

The "line of putt" is the line that the player wishes his ball to take after a stroke on the putting green. Except with respect to Rule 16-1e, the line of putt includes a reasonable distance on either side of the intended line. The line of putt does not extend beyond the hole.

**Loose Impediments**

"Loose impediments" are natural objects, including:

- stones, leaves, twigs, branches and the like,
- dung, and
- worms, insects and the like, and the casts and heaps made by them, provided they are not:

- fixed or growing,
- solidly embedded, or
- adhering to the ball.
Sand and loose soil are *loose impediments* on the *putting green*, but not elsewhere.

Snow and natural ice, other than frost, are either *casual water* or *loose impediments*, at the option of the player.

Dew and frost are not *loose impediments*.

**Move Or Moved**

A ball is deemed to have “*moved*” if it leaves its position and comes to rest in any other place.

*obstructions.*

**Outside Agency**

In match play, an “*outside agency*” is any agency other than either the player’s or *opponent’s side*, any *caddie* of either *side*, any ball played by either *side* at the hole being played or any *equipment* of either *side*.

In stroke play, an *outside agency* is any agency other than the *competitor’s side*, any *caddie* of the *side*, any ball played by the *side* at the hole being played or any *equipment* of the *side*.

An *outside agency* includes a *referee*, a *marker*, an *observer* and a *forecaddy*. Neither wind nor water is an *outside agency*.

**Partner**

A “*partner*” is a player associated with another player on the same *side*.

In *threesome*, *foursome*, *best-ball* or *four-ball* play, where the context so admits, the word “player” includes his *partner* or *partners*.

**Putting Green**
The “putting green” is all ground of the hole being played that is specially prepared for putting or otherwise defined as such by the Committee. A ball is on the putting green when any part of it touches the putting green.

Rub Of The Green

A “rub of the green” occurs when a ball in motion is accidentally deflected or stopped by any outside agency (see Rule 19-1).

Stance

Taking the “stance” consists in a player placing his feet in position for and preparatory to making a stroke.

Stroke

A “stroke” is the forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking at and moving the ball, but if a player checks his downswing voluntarily before the clubhead reaches the ball he has not made a stroke.

Through The Green

“Through the green” is the whole area of the course except:

a. The teeing ground and putting green of the hole being played; and

b. All hazards on the course.

Wrong Putting Green

A “wrong putting green” is any putting green other than that of the hole being played. Unless otherwise prescribed by the Committee, this term includes a practice putting green or pitching green on the course.

III. Rules of Golf and Decisions

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Rule 1
The Game

RULE 1-1. General
The Game of Golf consists of playing a ball with a club from the **teeing ground** into the **hole** by a **stroke** or successive **strokes** in accordance with the **Rules**.

RULE 1-2. Exerting Influence On Movement Of Ball Or Altering Physical Conditions
A player must not (i) take an action with the intent to influence the movement of a *ball in play* or (ii) alter physical conditions with the intent of affecting the playing of a hole.

**Exceptions:**

1. An action expressly permitted or expressly prohibited by another Rule is subject to that other *Rule*, not Rule 1-2.

2. An action taken for the sole purpose of caring for the *course* is not a breach of Rule 1-2.

*Penalty For Breach Of Rule 1-2:*

**Match play** – Loss of hole; **Stroke play** – Two strokes.

*In the case of a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the Committee may impose a penalty of disqualification.

**Note 1:** A player is deemed to have committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2 if the Committee considers that the action taken in breach of this Rule has allowed him or another player to gain a significant advantage or has placed another player, other than his *partner*, at a significant disadvantage.

**Note 2:** In stroke play, except where a serious breach resulting in disqualification is involved, a player in breach of Rule 1-2 in relation to the movement of his own ball must play the ball from where it was stopped, or, if the ball was deflected, from where it came to rest. If the movement of a player's ball has been intentionally influenced by a *fellow-competitor* or other *outside agency*, Rule 1-4 applies to the player (see Note to Rule 19-1).

**DECISION 1-2/1**

**Line of Putt Altered Purposely by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor by Stepping on It**

**Q.** An opponent or a fellow-competitor purposely steps on the player's line of putt with the intention either of improving the line (e.g., by pressing down a
raised tuft of grass) or of damaging it (e.g., by making spike marks). What is the ruling?

A. In either case, the opponent or the fellow-competitor was in breach of Rule 1-2. The penalty is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play, unless the Committee decides to impose a penalty of disqualification – see the penalty statement of Rule 1-2.

In stroke play if the line of putt has been damaged, the player, in equity (Rule 1-4), may restore the line of putt to its previous condition. A player is entitled to the lie and line of putt he had when his ball came to rest. The line of putt may be restored by anyone.

DECISION 1-2/3.5
Player Repairs Hole After Holing Out But Before Opponent, Fellow-
Competitor or Partner Holes Out

Q. After holing out, a player observes that the edge of the hole is ragged. He pats the ragged edge with his hand and smoothes it. Does the player incur a penalty under Rule 1-2 if his opponent, fellow-competitor or partner has not holed out?

A. If the player smoothed the edge of the hole solely for the purpose of caring for the course, he was not in breach of Rule 1-2. However, if the smoothing of the ragged edge was in any way intended to influence the movement of his opponent’s, fellow-competitor's or partner's ball, or alter physical conditions with the intent of affecting the playing of the hole, he was in breach of Rule 1-2. It is recommended that a player should only smooth the ragged edge of a hole after all players in the group or match have completed play of the hole.

As the player had holed out, he is not subject to penalty under Rule 16-1a or Rule 13-2.

In a four-ball competition, if the player's partner had not completed play of the hole, the partner incurs the penalty for a breach of Rule 16-1a – see Definition of "Partner."
DECISION 1-2/4
Player Jumps Close to Hole to Cause Ball to Fall into Hole

Q. A player whose ball overhangs the lip of the hole jumps close to the hole in the hope of jarring the ground and causing the ball to fall into the hole. Is the player penalized under Rule 1-2 for trying to exert influence on the movement of his ball in play?

A. If the player's ball was at rest (or deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2) and does not move, Rule 1-2 does not apply because the player was attempting to move a ball at rest and this is specifically covered by Rule 18-2a (see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2). As the ball did not move, there was no penalty under Rule 18-2a.

If the player's ball was at rest (or deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2) and the ball moves, Rule 1-2 does not apply because Rule 18-2a specifically covers a ball at rest moved by the player – see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2. The player is deemed to have caused his ball to move and incurs a penalty of one stroke in both match play and stroke play under Rule 18-2a and the ball must be replaced.

If the player's ball was still moving when the player jumped, Rule 1-2 was the applicable Rule because the player took an action with the intent to influence the movement of the ball. In match play, he lost the hole. In stroke play, he incurred a penalty of two strokes and must play the ball from where it came to rest; if the ball was holed, the player completed play of the hole with his last stroke and must apply the two-stroke penalty under Rule 1-2.

DECISION 1-2/5
Player Putts with One Hand and Catches Ball in Hole with Other Hand

Q. A player whose ball is on the lip of the hole putts with one hand and catches the ball with his other hand after the ball is below the level of the lip of the hole. What is the ruling?

A. The player purposely stopped his moving ball.
In match play, he lost the hole – Rule 1-2.

In stroke play, he incurred a penalty of two strokes and was required to place his ball on the lip of the hole and hole out – Rule 1-2. If he did not do so, he was disqualified under Rule 3-2 for failing to hole out.

In order for a ball to be holed (see Definition of "Holed"), it must be at rest within the circumference of the hole.

DECISION 1-2/9
Player Presses Ball into Surface of Putting Green

Q. In replacing his ball but before putting it back into play, a player firmly presses the ball into the surface of the putting green in order to prevent it from being moved by the wind or gravity. What is the ruling?

A. In altering the surface of the putting green, the player has breached Rule 1-2 by intentionally taking action to influence the movement of a ball in play and to alter physical conditions that affect the playing of the hole.

In match play, the player loses the hole – Rule 1-2.

In stroke play, the player incurs a penalty of two strokes and must play the ball as it lies – Rule 1-2.

RULE 1-3. Agreement To Waive Rules
Players must not agree to exclude the operation of any Rule or to waive any penalty incurred.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 1-3:

Match play – Disqualification of both sides;

Stroke play – Disqualification of competitors concerned.

(Agreeing to play out of turn in stroke play – see Rule 10-2c)
RULE 1-4. Points Not Covered By Rules
If any point in dispute is not covered by the Rules, the decision should be made in accordance with equity.

FAQ Rule 1-1
"Gimmies"
Q. What is the Rule for allowing "gimmies"?
A. The Rules of Golf do not permit the use of "gimmies." Rule 1-1 states the Game of Golf consists in playing a ball from the teeing ground into the hole by a stroke or successive strokes in accordance with the Rules. Additionally, in stroke play, if a player fails to hole out and does not correct the error prior to playing a stroke from the next teeing ground, he shall be disqualified - see Rule 3-2. In match play, if the putt has not been conceded, (Rule 2-4) the player shall lose the hole.

- Flagstick Removed While Ball In Motion On Putting Green

FAQ Rule 1-2
Flagstick Removed While Ball in Motion on Putting Green
Q. Player B removes the flagstick and places it on the putting green behind the hole and putts. Player A, thinking B’s ball will strike the flagstick, picks up the flagstick, allowing B’s ball to roll beyond where the flagstick had been placed. What is the ruling?
A. Rule 24-1 specifically allows equipment of the players and the flagstick when attended, removed or held up to be moved when a ball is in motion even if doing so could influence the movement of a ball.

Other objects including loose impediments, other movable obstructions or golf balls that have not been lifted prior to the stroke may not be moved when a ball is in motion if doing so could influence the movement of a ball in motion.

- Players Agree To Repair Spike Marks

FAQ Rule 1-3
Players Agree to Repair Spike Marks

**Q.** Before beginning their round, Dave and Mike agree to repair all spike marks on the greens. Is there a penalty?

**A.** Yes. Dave and Mike are both disqualified for agreeing to waive the Rules.

- **What Is "Equity?"**

**Rule 2. Match Play**

- **Scoring In Match Play**
- **Putting Out After Stroke Conceded**

## Rule 2

**Match Play**

**RULE 2-1. General**

A match consists of one *side* playing against another over a *stipulated round* unless otherwise decreed by the *Committee*.

In match play the game is played by holes.

Except as otherwise provided in the *Rules*, a hole is won by the *side* that *holes* its ball in the fewer *strokes*. In a handicap match, the lower net score wins the hole.

The state of the match is expressed by the terms: so many “holes up” or “all square,” and so many “to play.”

A *side* is “dormie” when it is as many holes up as there are holes remaining to be played.

**RULE 2-2. Halved Hole**

A hole is halved if each *side holes* out in the same number of *strokes*. 
When a player has **holed** out and his **opponent** has been left with a **stroke** for the half, if the player subsequently incurs a penalty, the hole is halved.

**RULE 2-3. Winner Of Match**
A match is won when one **side** leads by a number of holes greater than the number remaining to be played.

If there is a tie, the **Committee** may extend the **stipulated round** by as many holes as are required for a match to be won.

**RULE 2-4. Concession Of Match, Hole Or Next Stroke**
A player may concede a match at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that match.

A player may concede a hole at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that hole.

A player may concede his **opponent's** next **stroke** at any time, provided the **opponent's** ball is at rest. The **opponent** is considered to have **holed** out with his next **stroke**, and the ball may be removed by either **side**.

A concession may not be declined or withdrawn.

(Ball overhanging hole – see Rule **16-2**)

**FAQ Rule 2-4**
Putting out After Stroke Conceded

**Q.** Scott puts out on the putting green after his opponent Joe conceded his next stroke? What is the penalty to Scott?

**A.** Scott does not incur a penalty. A concession may not be withdrawn. Joe’s concession stands and it is irrelevant whether Scott makes the putt or misses. (Rule 2-4). See also Decision 2-4/6.

- **Unsure Of Procedure**
- **Match Play General Penalty**

**Rule 3. Stroke Play**
RULE 2-5. Doubt As To Procedure; Disputes And Claims

In match play, if a doubt or dispute arises between the players, a player may make a claim. If no duly authorized representative of the Committee is available within a reasonable time, the players must continue the match without delay. The Committee may consider a claim only if it has been made in a timely manner and if the player making the claim has notified his opponent at the time (i) that he is making a claim or wants a ruling and (ii) of the facts upon which the claim or ruling is to be based.

A claim is considered to have been made in a timely manner if, upon discovery of circumstances giving rise to a claim, the player makes his claim (i) before any player in the match plays from the next teeing ground, or (ii) in the case of the last hole of the match, before all players in the match leave the putting green, or (iii) when the circumstances giving rise to the claim are discovered after all the players in the match have left the putting green of the final hole, before the result of the match has been officially announced.

A claim relating to a prior hole in the match may only be considered by the Committee if it is based on facts previously unknown to the player making the claim and he had been given wrong information (Rules 6-2a or 9) by an opponent. Such a claim must be made in a timely manner.

Once the result of the match has been officially announced, a claim may not be considered by the Committee, unless it is satisfied that (i) the claim is based on facts which were previously unknown to the player making the claim at the time the result was officially announced, (ii) the player making the claim had been given wrong information by an opponent and (iii) the opponent...
ponent knew he was giving wrong information. There is no time limit on considering such a claim.

Note 1: A player may disregard a breach of the Rules by his opponent provided there is no agreement by the sides to waive a Rule (Rule 1-3).

Note 2: In match play, if a player is doubtful of his rights or the correct procedure, he may not complete the play of the hole with two balls.

RULE 2-6. General Penalty
The penalty for a breach of a Rule in match play is loss of hole except when otherwise provided.

Rule 3
Stroke Play

RULE 3-1. General; Winner
A stroke-play competition consists of competitors completing each hole of a stipulated round or rounds and, for each round, returning a score card on which there is a gross score for each hole. Each competitor is playing against every other competitor in the competition.

The competitor who plays the stipulated round or rounds in the fewest strokes is the winner.

In a handicap competition, the competitor with the lowest net score for the stipulated round or rounds is the winner.

RULE 3-2. Failure To Hole Out
If a competitor fails to hole out at any hole and does not correct his mistake before he makes a stroke on the next teeing ground or, in the case of the last hole of the round, before he leaves the putting green, he is disqualified.

RULE 3-3. Doubt As To Procedure
a. Procedure
In stroke play, if a competitor is doubtful of his rights or the correct procedure during the play of a hole, he may, without penalty, complete the hole with two balls.

After the doubtful situation has arisen and before taking further action, the competitor must announce to his marker or fellow-competitor that he intends to play two balls and which ball he wishes to count if the Rules permit.

The competitor must report the facts of the situation to the Committee before returning his score card. If he fails to do so, he is disqualified.

Note: If the competitor takes further action before dealing with the doubtful situation, Rule 3-3 is not applicable. The score with the original ball counts or, if the original ball is not one of the balls being played, the score with the first ball put into play counts, even if the Rules do not allow the procedure adopted for that ball. However, the competitor incurs no penalty for having played a second ball, and any penalty strokes incurred solely by playing that ball do not count in his score.

b. Determination of Score for Hole
(i) If the ball that the competitor selected in advance to count has been played in accordance with the Rules, the score with that ball is the competitor's score for the hole. Otherwise, the score with the other ball counts if the Rules allow the procedure adopted for that ball.

(ii) If the competitor fails to announce in advance his decision to complete the hole with two balls, or which ball he wishes to count, the score with the original ball counts, provided it has been played in accordance with the Rules. If the original ball is not one of the balls being played, the first ball put into play counts, provided it has been played in accordance with the Rules. Otherwise, the score with the other ball counts if the Rules allow the procedure adopted for that ball.
Note 1: If a *competitor* plays a second ball under Rule 3-3, the *strokes* made after this Rule has been invoked with the ball ruled not to count and *penalty strokes* incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.

Note 2: A second ball played under Rule 3-3 is not a *provisional ball* under Rule 27-2.

**RULE 3-4. Refusal To Comply With A Rule**
If a *competitor* refuses to comply with a *Rule* affecting the rights of another *competitor*, he is disqualified.

**RULE 3-5. General Penalty**
The penalty for a breach of a *Rule* in stroke play is two strokes except when otherwise provided.

**CLUBS AND THE BALL**

**Rule 4**

**Clubs**

**RULE 4-1. Form And Make Of Clubs**

a. General
The player’s clubs must conform with this Rule and the provisions, specifications and interpretations set forth in Appendix II.

*Note:* The *Committee* may require, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), that any driver the player carries must have a clubhead, identified by model and loft, that is named on the current List of Conforming Driver Heads issued by the USGA.

b. Wear and Alteration
A club that conforms with the *Rules* when new is deemed to conform after wear through normal use. Any part of a club that has been purposely altered is regarded as new and must, in its altered state, conform with the *Rules*. 
RULE 4-2. Playing Characteristics Changed And Foreign Material

a. Playing Characteristics Changed

During a stipulated round, the playing characteristics of a club must not be purposely changed by adjustment or by any other means.

b. Foreign Material

Foreign material must not be applied to the club face for the purpose of influencing the movement of the ball.

*Penalty For Carrying, But Not Making Stroke With, Club Or Clubs In Breach Of Rule 4-1 Or 4-2:

Match play – At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round – Two holes.

Stroke play – Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round – Four strokes (two strokes at each of the first two holes at which any breach occurred).

Match play or stroke play – If a breach is discovered between the play of two holes, it is deemed to have been discovered during play of the next hole, and the penalty must be applied accordingly.

Bogey and par competitions – See Note 1 to Rule 32-1a.

Stableford competitions – See Note 1 to Rule 32-1b.

*Any club or clubs carried in breach of Rule 4-1 or 4-2 must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his marker or a fellow-competitor in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a breach has occurred. If the player fails to do so, he is disqualified.

Penalty For Making Stroke With Club In Breach Of Rule 4-1 Or 4-2:

Disqualification.
FAQ Rule 4-2
Tape or Gauze Applied to Club

Q. Is it permissible to add tape or gauze to any part of the club?
A. During the round, the playing characteristics of the club may not be changed – see Rule 4-2a.

Prior to the player’s stipulated round, tape or gauze may be applied to the grip of the club provided the application of such materials does not create a waist or bulge – see Appendix II; Part 3.

Tape applied to the club head or shaft is an external attachment which renders the club non-conforming (see Appendix II; Part 1a). The following are exceptions to the prohibition against external attachments provided such applications are made prior to the player’s stipulated round:

- Lead tape may be applied to the head or shaft of the club for the purpose of adding weight (see Decisions 4-1/4 and 4-2/0.5)
- Tape may be applied to the shaft of the club to protect it.
- Decals may be applied to the shaft for identification purposes. These decals may also be covered by clear tape.

- Club Broken After Slammed In Anger
- Club Broken When Used As A Cane
- Club Broken During Stroke, Practice Stroke, Or Practice Swing
- Types Of Clubs Selected For The Stipulated Round
- Umbrella Or Ball Retriever
- Can Partners Share Clubs?

Rule 5. The Ball

- Maximum Number Of Balls
- What If I Run Out Of Golf Balls?
- Status Of "X-Out" And "Practice" Balls
- Ball Breaks Into Pieces

Rule 6. The Player

- Handicap Recorded On Score Card By Committee Is Incorrect
- Switching Caddies During Round
- Lines Or Arrows Used To Mark Golf Ball
RULE 4-3. Damaged Clubs: Repair And Replacement

a. Damage in Normal Course of Play

If, during a stipulated round, a player’s club is damaged in the normal course of play, he may:

(i) use the club in its damaged state for the remainder of the stipulated round; or

(ii) without unduly delaying play, repair it or have it repaired; or

(iii) as an additional option available only if the club is unfit for play, replace the damaged club with any club. The replacement of a club must not unduly delay play (Rule 6-7) and must not be made by borrowing any club selected for play by any other person playing on the course or by assembling components carried by or for the player during the stipulated round.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-3A:

See Penalty Statements for Rule 4-4a or b, and Rule 4-4c.

Note: A club is unfit for play if it is substantially damaged, e.g., the shaft is dented, significantly bent or breaks into pieces; the clubhead becomes loose, detached or significantly deformed; or the grip becomes loose. A club is not unfit for play solely because the club’s lie or loft has been altered, or the clubhead is scratched.

b. Damage Other Than in Normal Course of Play

If, during a stipulated round, a player’s club is damaged other than in the normal course of play rendering it non-conforming or changing its playing characteristics, the club must not subsequently be used or replaced during the round.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-3B:

Disqualification.
c. Damage Prior to Round
A player may use a club damaged prior to a round, provided the club, in its damaged state, conforms with the Rules.

Damage to a club that occurred prior to a round may be repaired during the round, provided the playing characteristics are not changed and play is not unduly delayed.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-3C:**

See Penalty Statement for Rule 4-1 or 4-2.

(Undue delay – see Rule 6-7)

**RULE 4-4. Maximum Of Fourteen Clubs**
a. Selection and Addition of Clubs
The player must not start a stipulated round with more than fourteen clubs. He is limited to the clubs thus selected for that round, except that if he started with fewer than fourteen clubs, he may add any number, provided his total number does not exceed fourteen.

The addition of a club or clubs must not unduly delay play (Rule 6-7) and the player must not add or borrow any club selected for play by any other person playing on the course or by assembling components carried by or for the player during the stipulated round.

b. Partners May Share Clubs
*Partners* may share clubs, provided that the total number of clubs carried by the partners so sharing does not exceed fourteen.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-4A Or b, Regardless Of Number Of Excess Clubs Carried:**
Match play – At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round – Two holes.

Stroke play – Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round – Four strokes (two strokes at each of the first two holes at which any breach occurred).

Match play or stroke play – If a breach is discovered between the play of two holes, it is deemed to have been discovered during play of the hole just completed, and the penalty for a breach of Rule 4-4a or b does not apply to the next hole.

Bogey and par competitions – See Note 1 to Rule 32-1a.

Stableford competitions – See Note 1 to Rule 32-1b.

c. Excess Club Declared Out of Play

Any club or clubs carried or used in breach of Rule 4-3a(iii) or Rule 4-4 must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his marker or a fellow-competitor in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a breach has occurred. The player must not use the club or clubs for the remainder of the stipulated round.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 4-4C:

Disqualification.

Rule 5
The Ball

PLAYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES
Rule 6
The Player

RULE 6-1. Rules
The player and his caddie are responsible for knowing the Rules. During a stipulated round, for any breach of a Rule by his caddie, the player incurs the applicable penalty.

RULE 6-5. Ball
The responsibility for playing the proper ball rests with the player. Each player should put an identification mark on his ball.

FAQ Rule 6-5
Lines or Arrows Used to mark Golf Ball
Q. It is recommended placing an identification mark on my golf ball. May I use a line or an arrow that will also help me align the club face?
A. Rules 6-5 and 12-2 state that each player should put an identification mark on his ball. Thus, the Rules do not limit the type of markings a player may put on the ball (i.e. arrows, lines, words, etc). Additionally, there is no penalty for using such lines to "line up" prior to a stroke on the putting green or any place else on the course.

• One Score Card Issued For Four Players In One Group
• Handicap And Adding Scores On Score Card In Stroke Play
• Time Limit To Play A Stroke
• Cleaning Ball After Play Resumed

Rule 7. Practice
• Status Of Practice Swing
• Practice On Course Before Round - Match Play Vs. Stroke Play
• Practice Between Holes

Rule 8. Advice; Indicating Line of Play
• Asking Distance Between Objects
• Club Placed On Ground To Align Feet

Rule 10. Order of Play
• Order Of Play If All Balls Not On Putting Green
Rule 7
Practice

RULE 7-1. Before Or Between Rounds
a. Match Play
On any day of a match-play competition, a player may practice on the competition course before a round.

b. Stroke Play
Before a round or play-off on any day of a stroke-play competition, a competitor must not practice on the competition course or test the surface of any putting green on the course by rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface.

When two or more rounds of a stroke-play competition are to be played over consecutive days, a competitor must not practice between those rounds on any competition course remaining to be played, or test the surface of any putting green on such course by rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface.

Exception: Practice putting or chipping on or near the first teeing ground or any practice area before starting a round or play-off is permitted.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 7-1B:
Disqualification.

Note: The Committee may, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), prohibit practice on the competition course on any day of a match-play competition or permit practice on the competition course or part of the course (Rule 33-2c) on any day of or between rounds of a stroke-play competition.

RULE 7-2. During Round
A player must not make a practice stroke during play of a hole.

Between the play of two holes a player must not make a practice stroke, except that he may practice putting or chipping on or near:

a. the putting green of the hole last played,

b. any practice putting green, or

c. the teeing ground of the next hole to be played in the round, provided a practice stroke is not made from a hazard and does not unduly delay play (Rule 6-7).

Strokes made in continuing the play of a hole, the result of which has been decided, are not practice strokes.

Exception: When play has been suspended by the Committee, a player may, prior to resumption of play, practice (a) as provided in this Rule, (b) anywhere other than on the competition course and (c) as otherwise permitted by the Committee.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 7-2:

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.

Note 1: A practice swing is not a practice stroke and may be taken at any place, provided the player does not breach the Rules.

Note 2: The Committee may, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), prohibit:

(a) practice on or near the putting green of the hole last played, and
Rule 8
Advice; Indicating Line Of Play

RULE 8-1. Advice
During a stipulated round, a player must not:

a. give advice to anyone in the competition playing on the course other than his partner, or

b. ask for advice from anyone other than his partner or either of their caddies.

RULE 8-2. Indicating Line Of Play
a. Other Than on Putting Green
Except on the putting green, a player may have the line of play indicated to him by anyone, but no one may be positioned by the player on or close to the line or an extension of the line beyond the hole while the stroke is being made. Any mark placed by the player or with his knowledge to indicate the line must be removed before the stroke is made.

Exception: Flagstick attended or held up – see Rule 17-1.

b. On the Putting Green
When the player’s ball is on the putting green, the player, his partner or either of their caddies may, before but not during the stroke, point out a line for putting, but in so doing the putting green must not be touched. A mark must not be placed anywhere to indicate a line for putting.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule:

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.
Note: The Committee may, in the conditions of a team competition (Rule 33-1), permit each team to appoint one person who may give advice (including pointing out a line for putting) to members of that team. The Committee may establish conditions relating to the appointment and permitted conduct of that person, who must be identified to the Committee before giving advice.

INDICATING LINE OF PUTT
DECISION 8-2b/1
Caddie Casts Shadow to Indicate Line for Putting

Q. A caddie casts his shadow on the putting green for the purpose of indicating to the player a line for putting. Is this permissible?

A. Yes, but only if the shadow is removed prior to the stroke.

DECISION 8-2b/2
Caddie Attending Flagstick Advises Player to Aim at His Foot

Q. A player's ball lies on the putting green and his caddie attends the flagstick for him. The caddie suggests, before the stroke, that the player aim at the caddie's left foot. Is the player in breach of Rule 8-2b?

A. If the caddie had placed his foot in position for the purpose of pointing out the line for putting, the player was in breach of Rule 8-2b as soon as the caddie placed his foot in that position. The breach could not be corrected by the caddie subsequently moving his foot.

If the caddie did not initially place his foot in such a position for the purpose of pointing out the line for putting but subsequently suggested the player aim at his left foot, the player would be in breach of Rule 8-2b if the caddie did not move that foot to another position that does not indicate a line for putting prior to the stroke.

The same answer would apply if a player's partner attends the flagstick for him.

DECISION 8-2b/3
Caddie Touches Putting Green to Indicate Line of Play Before Player Chips from Off Green

Q. The caddie of a player who is preparing to play a chip shot from off the putting green touches the green with a club to indicate the line of play. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. The prohibition against touching the putting green to indicate the line of play applies only if the player's ball lies on the putting green.

DECISION 8-2b/4
Whether Team Captain Who Is Authorized to Give Advice May Be Required to Keep Off Putting Greens

Q. In a team competition, the Committee wishes to introduce a condition of competition permitting a Team Captain to give advice to members of his team, including pointing out a line for putting. However, it wishes to stipulate that he must keep off the putting greens. Is such a condition permitted?

A. Yes – see Note to Rule 8.

Rule 9
Information As To Strokes Taken

ORDER OF PLAY
Rule 10
Order Of Play

RULE 10-1. Match Play
a. When Starting Play of Hole
The side that has the honor at the first teeing ground is determined by the order of the draw. In the absence of a draw, the honor should be decided by lot.

The side that wins a hole takes the honor at the next teeing ground. If a hole has been halved, the side that had the honor at the previous teeing ground retains it.

b. During Play of Hole

After both players have started play of the hole, the ball farther from the hole is played first. If the balls are equidistant from the hole or their positions relative to the hole are not determinable, the ball to be played first should be decided by lot.

Exception: Rule 30-3b (best-ball and four-ball match play).

Note: When it becomes known that the original ball is not to be played as it lies and the player is required to play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule 20-5), the order of play is determined by the spot from which the previous stroke was made. When a ball may be played from a spot other than where the previous stroke was made, the order of play is determined by the position where the original ball came to rest.

c. Playing Out of Turn

If a player plays when his opponent should have played, there is no penalty, but the opponent may immediately require the player to cancel the stroke so made and, in correct order, play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule 20-5).

RULE 10-2. Stroke Play
a. When Starting Play of Hole

The competitor who has the honor at the first teeing ground is determined by the order of the draw. In the absence of a draw, the honor should be decided by lot.
The competitor with the lowest score at a hole takes the honor at the next teeing ground. The competitor with the second lowest score plays next and so on. If two or more competitors have the same score at a hole, they play from the next teeing ground in the same order as at the previous teeing ground.

**Exception:** Rule 32-1 (handicap bogey, par and Stableford competitions).

b. During Play of Hole

After the competitors have started play of the hole, the ball farthest from the hole is played first. If two or more balls are equidistant from the hole or their positions relative to the hole are not determinable, the ball to be played first should be decided by lot.

**Exceptions:** Rules 22 (ball assisting or interfering with play) and 31-4 (four-ball stroke play).

**Note:** When it becomes known that the original ball is not to be played as it lies and the competitor is required to play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule 20-5), the order of play is determined by the spot from which the previous stroke was made. When a ball may be played from a spot other than where the previous stroke was made, the order of play is determined by the position where the original ball came to rest.

c. Playing Out of Turn

If a competitor plays out of turn, there is no penalty and the ball is played as it lies. If, however, the Committee determines that competitors have agreed to play out of turn to give one of them an advantage, they are disqualified.

(Making stroke while another ball in motion after stroke from putting green – see Rule 16-1f)

(Incorrect order of play in foursome stroke play – see Rule 29-3)
DECISION 10-1c/3
Player Invites Opponent to Play First to Save Time

Q. In match play, it is A's turn to play but he realizes that he has accidentally left a club on the previous hole. He decides to return to retrieve the club, and suggests that his opponent B play first to save time. If B then plays out of turn as suggested, have the players agreed to waive the Rules in breach of Rule 1-3?

A. No. When done solely for the purpose of saving time, a player whose turn it is to play may invite his opponent to play first. The opponent is under no obligation to accept the offer to play first, but if he does so, the player has waived his right under Rule 10-1c to recall the stroke played out of turn. (Revised – Formerly 10-1a/3)

DECISION 10-2c/2
Competitors in Stroke Play Agree to Play Out of Turn But Not for Purpose of Giving One of Them an Advantage

Q. In stroke play, A and B agree to play out of turn at the 10th hole to save time. There is no penalty under Rule 10-2c because they did not do so in order to give one of them an advantage. However, are they liable to disqualification under Rule 1-3 for agreeing to exclude the operation of Rule 10-2a or 10-2b as the case may be?

A. No. Rule 10-2c specifically governs and permits the procedure in stroke play. Accordingly, Rule 1-3 does not apply. As to match play, see Decision 10-1c/3.

DECISION 10-2b/1
Competitor Objects to Fellow-Competitor Putting Out of Turn

Q. In stroke play, A's ball is 40 feet from the hole and B's is 30 feet away. A putts and his ball comes to rest four feet from the hole. A prepares to hole out before B putts. B objects and claims that under the Rules (Rule 10-2b) he is entitled to putt before A.
Although putting out of turn in stroke play is generally condoned, should the Committee allow A to putt out of turn in these circumstances?

A. If A had lifted his ball when the objection was lodged, the Committee should rule that A is not entitled to putt out of turn, in view of Rule 10-2b.

If A had not lifted his ball at the time the objection was lodged, the answer depends on whether B would require A to lift his ball under Rule 22 (Ball Assisting or Interfering with Play) before he (B) putts. If so, the Committee should rule that A is entitled to play out of turn, provided he does so without first lifting his ball, i.e., Rule 22-2 permits a competitor in stroke play who is required to lift his ball because of interference to "play first rather than lift."

If B would not require A to lift his ball before he (B) putts, the Committee should rule that A is not entitled to putt out of turn.

Although condoning putting out of turn in stroke play may be questionable in view of the explicit language of Rule 10-2b, there is no penalty for doing so (Rule 10-2c), it is not in conflict with the intent of Rule 10-2b, and it may tend to speed play. Accordingly, it is considered that the practice should not be discouraged.

FAQ Rule 10
Order of Play if All Balls not on Putting Green

Q. Clyde`s ball lies 10 feet from the hole, but in a bunker. Lew`s ball lies 15 feet from the hole on the putting green. Who must play first?

A. The ball farther from the hole must be played first, regardless of the location of the ball. Lew must play first from the putting green before Clyde plays from the bunker. (Rules 10-1b and 10-2b)

• Continuous Putting

FAQ Rule 10
Continuous Putting
Q. Are you entitled to "finish out" the hole if you have played and only have a tap in left? What is the penalty if you finish out of turn?
A. The answer is provided in Rule 10-1c for match play and Rule 10-2c for stroke play.

There is no penalty in either form of play if a player plays out of turn.

However, when a player has played out of turn in match play, the opponent may immediately recall the stroke played and require the player to play in the correct order.

Additionally, in stroke play only, a player who is required to lift a ball under Rule 22, may play first rather than lift. This is the practice often seen used by the professionals which leads to the general misunderstanding that a "continuous putting" rule exists.

- Procedure When Playing Out Of Turn In Match Play
- Order Of Play For Provisional Ball

Rule 11. Teeing Ground
- What Is A Tee?
- Use Of Tee With Bulge
- Use Of A Tee That Has Been Found By The Player
- Ball Falls Off Tee At Address
- Playing From Outside The Teeing Ground

Rule 12. Searching for and Identifying Ball
- Loose Impediments Moved In Hazard While Searching For Ball
- Lifting Ball For Identification

Rule 13. Ball Played as It Lies
- Removing Dew

TEEING GROUND
Rule 11
Teeing Ground
PLAYING THE BALL

Rule 12
Searching For And Identifying Ball

Rule 13
Ball Played As It Lies

RULE 13-1. General
The ball must be played as it lies, except as otherwise provided in the Rules.

(Ball at rest moved – see Rule 18)

RULE 13-2. Improving Lie, Area Of Intended Stance Or Swing, Or Line Of Play
A player must not improve or allow to be improved:

- the position or lie of his ball,
- the area of his intended Stance or swing,
- his Line Of Play or a reasonable extension of that line beyond the Hole, or
- the area in which he is to drop or place a ball,
by any of the following actions:

- pressing a club on the ground,
- moving, bending or breaking anything growing or fixed (including im-
  moveable Obstructions and objects defining Out Of Bounds),
- creating or eliminating irregularities of surface,
- removing or pressing down sand, loose soil, replaced divots or other
cut turf placed in position, or
- removing dew, frost or water.
However, the player incurs no penalty if the action occurs:

- in grounding the club lightly when **Addressing The Ball**,  
- in fairly taking his **Stance**,  
- in making a **Stroke** or the backward movement of his club for a **Stroke** and the **Stroke** is made,  
- in creating or eliminating irregularities of surface within the **Teeing Ground** or in removing dew, frost or water from the **Teeing Ground**, or  
- on the **Putting Green** in removing sand and loose soil or in repairing damage (Rule **16-1**).  

**Exception:** Ball in **hazard** – see Rule **13-4**.

**DECISION 13-2/36**  
**Competitor Sanctions Repair of Spike Damage on His Line of Putt by Fellow-Competitor**

**Q.** If a fellow-competitor purposely improves the competitor's line of putt by repairing spike damage, the fellow-competitor is penalized under Rule **1-2**. If the fellow-competitor's action is sanctioned, tacitly or otherwise, by the competitor, is the competitor also subject to penalty?

**A.** Yes, under Rule **13-2**, for allowing his line of play to be improved.

**Related Decisions:**

- **16-1a/16** Spike Mark on Line of Putt Repaired During Repair of Ball Mark.

- **16-1c/4** Repair of Spike Mark Damage Around Hole.

**FAQ Rule 13-2**  
**Removing Dew**

**Q.** I like to play early in the morning. Usually there is still dew on the ground during the first few holes. Is it permissible to sweep away the dew or mop it up with a towel around my ball?

**A.** Generally, improving the lie of the ball, the line of play, or the area of intended stance or swing by removing dew is a breach of Rule 13-2 (the penalty for which is loss of hole in match play or
two strokes in stroke play).

However, dew, frost or water may be removed from the teeing ground.

- **Placing Clubs Or A Rake In A Hazard**
- **Raking Bunker After Stroke - Ball Still In Bunker**
- **Position On Raking A Similar Hazard**

**Rule 14. Striking The Ball**

- **Using Club Other Than Putter On Putting Green?**

**RULE 13-3. Building Stance**
A player is entitled to place his feet firmly in taking his *stance*, but he must not build a *stance*.

**Rule 14**

**Striking The Ball**

**RULE 14-1. Ball To Be Fairly Struck At**
The ball must be fairly struck at with the head of the club and must not be pushed, scraped or spooned.

**DECISION 14-1/1**
Playing Stroke with Back of Clubhead

**Q.** May a player play a left-handed stroke with the back of the head of a right-handed club?

**A.** Yes. A player may play a stroke with any part of the clubhead, provided the ball is fairly struck at (Rule **14-1**) and the club conforms with Rule **4-1**.

**DECISION 14-1/2**
Striking Ball with Billiard-Type Motion
Q. A player holed a short putt by squatting behind the ball (but not on an extension of the line of putt behind the ball) and striking the ball with the bottom of the clubhead, using a motion similar to that used in playing a shot in billiards or shuffleboard. Was the player in breach of Rule 14-1?

A. Yes. Such a manner of moving the ball constitutes a push. In match play, the player loses the hole. In stroke play, the stroke counts and the player incurs a penalty of two strokes. (Revised)

DECISION 14-1/3
Putting with Wrong End of Putter

Q. A player misses a short putt and hastily holes the ball with the wrong (handle) end of his putter. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play for a breach of Rule 14-1, which requires that the ball be struck at with the head of the club. In stroke play, the stroke with the wrong end of the putter counts, and, since the ball was holed, the player had completed play of the hole.

DECISION 14-1/4
Striking Ball with Half an Inch Backswing

Q. A player's ball lies close to an out of bounds fence, but there is room behind the ball to insert an iron club or a putter and leave a space of half an inch between the ball and the face of the club. If the player plays a stroke with such a limited backswing, is he in breach of Rule 14-1?

A. It is possible to strike a ball fairly with a half inch backswing. However, in most such cases the player would be pushing the ball, contrary to Rule 14-1. In the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, it should be ruled that the player has pushed the ball.

In order to strike the ball fairly, it must be swung at with the clubhead. If the ball is moved by any other method, it has been pushed, scraped or spooned.
If a ball is fairly struck at, there is only momentary contact between the clubhead and the ball or whatever intervenes between the clubhead and the ball.

**DECISION 14-1/5**  
Moving Ball Lying Against Fence by Striking Other Side of Fence

**Q.** A player's ball lies against a board at the base of an out of bounds fence. He swings a club from the out of bounds side of the fence against the board, i.e., swings at the ball with the board intervening between the club and the ball. The stroke moves the board which causes the ball to move away from the fence. Is such a stroke permissible?

**A.** Yes. The player fairly struck at the ball even though other material intervened between the club and the ball. The Definition of "Out of Bounds" allows a player to "stand out of bounds to play a ball lying within bounds."

**DECISION 14-1/6**  
Player Holds Club with Left Hand and Moves Ball by Striking Shaft with Other Hand

**Q.** A player addresses his ball lying in high grass on a steep bank. His ball does not move, but the player believes it will move if he takes a backswing. Accordingly, the player holds the club with his left hand and strikes the shaft of the club with his right hand, thereby moving the ball. Is this permissible?

**A.** No. The player pushed the ball, contrary to Rule 14-1.

**RULE 14-1b**  
New 14-1b on anchoring in stroke

The R&A and The USGA announce final approval of Rule 14-1B that prohibits use of anchored strokes

Governing Bodies Issue Report Explaining Their Decision Following Comment Process New Rule to Take Effect on 1 January 2016, Allowing for Transitional Period Belly-Length and Long Putters Remain as Conforming Clubs
The R&A and the United States Golf Association (USGA), golf’s governing bodies, today announced the adoption of Rule 14-1b of the Rules of Golf that prohibits anchoring the club in making a stroke. The new Rule will take effect on 1 January 2016 in accordance with the regular four-year cycle for changes to the Rules of Golf.

Rule 14-1b, which was proposed on 28 November 2012, has now been given final approval by The R&A and the USGA following an extensive review by both organisations. The decision to adopt the new Rule came after a comprehensive process in which comments and suggestions from across the golf community were collected and thoroughly considered.

The R&A and the USGA have prepared a detailed report to explain the reasons for the decision to adopt Rule 14-1b. The report explains the principles on which the Rules of Golf are founded, why freely swinging the entire club is the essence of the traditional method of stroke, and why anchoring is a substantially different form of stroke that may alter and diminish the fundamental challenges of the game. It points out that the Rule will still allow the use of belly-length and long putters and that a wide variety of types of strokes remain for players to use. The report concludes that the new Rule should not adversely affect participation in the game, that it is not too late or unfair to require players to comply with it and that it will remove concerns about any potential advantage that anchoring provides. It also makes clear that one set of Rules is essential to the future health of the game. The report, entitled Explanation of Decision to Adopt Rule 14-1b of the Rules of Golf, can be found at www.RandA.org/anchoring or at www.usga.org/anchoring.

Peter Dawson, Chief Executive of The R&A said: “We took a great deal of time to consider this issue and received a variety of contributions from individuals and organisations at all levels of the game. The report published today gives a comprehensive account of the reasons for taking the decision to adopt the new Rule and addresses the concerns that have been raised. We recognise this has been a divisive issue but after thorough consideration we remain convinced that this is the right decision for golf.”

“Having considered all of the input that we received, both before and after the proposed Rule was announced, our best judgment is that Rule 14-1b is necessary to preserve one of the important traditions and challenges of the game – that the player freely swing the entire club,” said USGA President Geoff Mangum.
Glen D. Nager. “The new Rule upholds the essential nature of the traditional method of stroke and eliminates the possible advantage that anchoring provides, ensuring that players of all skill levels face the same challenge inherent in the game of golf.”

The current Rule 14-1 of the Rules of Golf will be re-numbered as Rule 14-1a, and new Rule 14-1b will be established as follows:

**RULE 14-1b Anchoring the Club**

*In making a stroke, the player must not anchor the club, either “directly” or by use of an “anchor point.”*

**Note 1:** The club is anchored “directly” when the player intentionally holds the club or a gripping hand in contact with any part of his body, except that the player may hold the club or a gripping hand against a hand or forearm.

**Note 2:** An “anchor point” exists when the player intentionally holds a forearm in contact with any part of his body to establish a gripping hand as a stable point around which the other hand may swing the club.

Rule 14-1b will not alter current equipment rules and allows for the continued use of all conforming golf clubs, including belly-length and long putters, provided such clubs are not anchored during a stroke. The new Rule narrowly targets only a few types of strokes, while preserving a golfer’s ability to play a wide variety of strokes in his or her individual style.

The 1 January 2016 timetable for implementation also provides an extended period in which golfers may, if necessary, adapt their method of stroke to the requirements of the new Rule.

David Rickman, Executive Director of Rules and Equipment Standards at The R&A, said: “This Rule change addresses the future and not the past. Everyone who has used an anchored stroke in the past, or who does so between now and 1 January 2016, will have played entirely within the Rules and their achievements will in no way be diminished.”

“The discussion around the Rule has been very helpful, and we appreciate that so many different perspectives were offered,” said USGA Executive Director Mike Davis. “We know that not everyone will agree with the new Rule,
but it is our hope that all golfers will accept that this decision is reasoned and motivated by our best judgment in defining the sport and serving the best interests of the game.”


**Explanation of decision to adopt Rule 14-1B of the Rules of Golf**

The R&A and the USGA have prepared a detailed report to explain the reasons for the decision to adopt Rule 14-1b.

**Image Gallery: Prohibited & Permitted Strokes**

Please click here to view images of the prohibited and permitted strokes by the change.

**Anchoring Infographic**

Please click here to view an infographic explaining prohibited and permitted strokes.

**Guidance for Players and Officials**

Please click here to view.

**FAQ Rule 14-1**

Using Club other than Putter on Putting Green?

**Q.** Is it permissible to use a club other than a putter to play a stroke on the putting green?

**A.** Yes, the Rules of Golf do not stipulate the type of club that must be used for making a stroke on the putting green or anyplace else on the golf course.

- Standing On Extension Of Line Of Play Or Line Of Putt

**RULE 14-2. Assistance**

a. Physical Assistance and Protection from Elements
A player must not make a stroke while accepting physical assistance or protection from the elements.

b. Positioning of Caddie or Partner Behind Ball

A player must not make a stroke with his caddie, his partner or his partner’s caddie positioned on or close to an extension of the line of play or line of putt behind the ball.

**Exception:** There is no penalty if the player’s caddie, his partner or his partner’s caddie is inadvertently located on or close to an extension of the line of play or line of putt behind the ball.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 14-1 Or 14-2:**

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

**DECISION 14-2/0.5**

**Meaning of "Elements"**

**Q.** What are considered "elements" under Rule 14-2a?

**A.** Elements include sunlight, rain, wind, snow and other weather conditions.

**DECISION 14-2/1**

**Player Aligns Partner's Club Before Stroke**

**Q.** A player aligns his partner's putter and then moves away before his partner plays. Is this permissible?

**A.** Yes. Rule 14-2 (Assistance) does not apply prior to making a stroke.

**DECISION 14-2/2**

**Player Holds Umbrella Over Own Head When Playing Stroke**

**Q.** A player playing in the rain holds an umbrella over his head with one hand while holing a very short putt, gripping the putter with the other hand. Is this permissible?
A. Yes. Rule 14-2a prohibits a player, while making a stroke, from accepting protection from the elements from someone other than himself. However, it does not prohibit him from protecting himself.

DECISION 14-2/2.5
Player Positions Bag for Purpose of Providing Shade for Ball

Q. A player positions his golf bag near the teeing ground for the purpose of blocking the sunlight from the position where he tees his ball. He then makes a stroke. Is he in breach of Rule 14-2?

A. Yes. As the player was not in contact with the golf bag, he accepted protection from the elements in breach of Rule 14-2a. This answer differs from that in Decision 14-2/2 as, in that case, the player was in contact with the umbrella.

While a player may not place an object or position a person for the purpose of blocking the sunlight from his ball, he may ask a person (e.g., a spectator) who is already in position not to move, so that a shadow remains over the ball, or to move, so that his shadow is not over the ball.

DECISION 14-2/3
Caddie Shields Player from Sun During Stroke

Q. May a player's caddie purposely stand between the player and the setting sun so that the sun's glare is not in the player's face while he is playing a stroke?

A. No. Such procedure is a breach of Rule 14-2a.

Decision related to 14-2/2.5 and 14-2/3:

• 4-1/5 Material Applied to Clubhead to Reduce Glare or For Protection.

FAQ Rule 14-2
Standing on Extension of Line of Play or Line of Putt
Q. My opponent or fellow-competitor always stands behind me while I am playing a stroke? Isn’t this a penalty?
A. Rule 14-2b only prohibits a player from allowing his partner or their caddies from standing in this position. While it may be a breach of Etiquette, there is no penalty under the Rules. A solution is to politely ask your opponent or fellow-competitor to move to one side or the other. (Rule 14-2b)

- Wearing Headphones Or Earplugs During Stipulated Round
- Rangefinders And Other Electronic Distance Measuring Devices
- Wind Socks
- Tape Or Gauze Applied To Club
- Application Of Exception 1 To Rule 14-3
- Ball Struck More Than Once
- Ball Moves After Address, Player Strikes Moving Ball

RULE 14-3. Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment And Unusual Use Of Equipment
The USGA reserves the right, at any time, to change the Rules relating to artificial devices, unusual equipment and the unusual use of equipment, and to make or change the interpretations relating to these Rules.

A player in doubt as to whether use of an item would constitute a breach of Rule 14-3 should consult the USGA.

A manufacturer should submit to the USGA a sample of an item to be manufactured for a ruling as to whether its use during a stipulated round would cause a player to be in breach of Rule 14-3. The sample becomes the property of the USGA for reference purposes. If a manufacturer fails to submit a sample or, having submitted a sample, fails to await a ruling before manufacturing and/or marketing the item, the manufacturer assumes the risk of a ruling that use of the item would be contrary to the Rules.

Except as provided in the Rules, during a stipulated round the player must not use any artificial device or unusual equipment (see Appendix IV for detailed specifications and interpretations), or use any equipment in an unusual manner:
a. That might assist him in making a stroke or in his play; or

b. For the purpose of gauging or measuring distance or conditions that might affect his play; or

c. That might assist him in gripping the club, except that:

1. (i) gloves may be worn provided that they are plain gloves;
2. (ii) resin, powder and drying or moisturizing agents may be used; and
3. (iii) a towel or handkerchief may be wrapped around the grip.

Exceptions:
1. A player is not in breach of this Rule if (a) the equipment or device is designed for or has the effect of alleviating a medical condition, (b) the player has a legitimate medical reason to use the equipment or device, and (c) the Committee is satisfied that its use does not give the player any undue advantage over other players.

2. A player is not in breach of this Rule if he uses equipment in a traditionally accepted manner.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule 14-3:
Disqualification.

Note: The Committee may make a Local Rule allowing players to use devices that measure or gauge distance only.

DECISION 14-3/6
Holding Ball in Hand Against Grip When Putting

Q. A player putts with a golf ball held in his left hand against the grip. He claims the pressure transmitted to the grip through the ball assists him in putting. Is such use of a ball permissible?

A. No. The player is using equipment in an unusual manner to assist him in making a stroke and is in breach of Rule 14-3.
DECISION 14-3/9
Player Putts with One Hand and Steadies Himself with Club Held in Other Hand

Q. A player, while putting with one hand, uses another club to lean on and steady himself. Is the use of the club in this manner considered to be use of equipment in an unusual manner, contrary to Rule 14-3?

A. Yes.

Related Decision:
• 17-1/5 Holding Flagstick With One Hand and Putting with Other Hand.

DECISION 14-3/11
Plumb-Line

Q. Is a plumb-line, i.e., a weight suspended on a string, an artificial device within the meaning of the term in Rule 14-3?

A. Yes. If a player uses such a device to assist him in his play, he is in breach of Rule 14-3.

DECISION 14-3/12
Club Used as Plumb-Line

Q. May a player use his putter as a plumb-line to assist him in determining the slope on a putting green?

A. Yes. Use of a club in this manner is traditionally accepted and Exception 2 to Rule 14-3 applies.

DECISION 14-3/12.5
Bottled Drink Used as a Level

Q. A player places a bottled drink on the putting green in order to gauge the slope of the green. Is the player in breach of Rule 14-3?
A. Yes. The player is using equipment in an unusual manner to assist him in his play contrary to Rule 14-3. However, if the placing of the bottle on the putting green was not for the purpose of gauging the slope, the player would not be in breach of Rule 14-3.

**DECISION 14-3/17**
**Player Listens to Music or Broadcast During Round**

Q. A player uses a device to listen to music, a radio broadcast or any other type of broadcast during a stipulated round. What is the ruling?

A. Under Rule 14-3a, a player may not use any artificial device or unusual equipment that "might assist him in making a stroke or in his play." Listening to music or a broadcast while making a stroke or for a prolonged period might assist the player in his play, for example, by eliminating distractions or promoting a good tempo. Therefore, the use of an artificial device to listen to music or a broadcast, whether or not through headphones, while making a stroke or for a prolonged period of time during a stipulated round is a breach of Rule 14-3. However, it would not be a breach of Rule 14-3 for a player to listen to a device briefly, for example, to obtain the results of another sporting event or traffic information, while walking between the putting green of one hole and the teeing ground of the next hole.

A Committee will have to consider all available facts and circumstances in determining whether a player using an artificial device to listen to music or a broadcast has done so for a prolonged period such that the action might have assisted the player in his play.

There is no restriction on listening to music or other broadcasts while practicing (whether on the practice ground or on the golf course, and whether by oneself or while playing with others), although club rules and disciplinary codes could apply in such circumstances.

**RULE 14-4. Striking The Ball More Than Once**
If a player’s club strikes the ball more than once in the course of a stroke, the player must count the stroke and add a penalty stroke, making two strokes in all.
RULE 14-5. Playing Moving Ball
A player must not make a stroke at his ball while it is moving.

Exceptions:
• Ball falling off tee – Rule 11-3
• Striking the ball more than once – Rule 14-4
• Ball moving in water – Rule 14-6

When the ball begins to move only after the player has begun the stroke or the backward movement of his club for the stroke, he incurs no penalty under this Rule for playing a moving ball, but he is not exempt from any penalty under the following Rules:

• Ball at rest Moved by player – Rule 18-2A
• Ball at rest moving after Address – Rule 18-2B
(Ball purposely deflected or stopped by player, partner or caddie – see Rule 1-2)

DECISION 14-5/1
Ball Moving During Backswing Struck While Still Moving

Q. A player's ball starts moving during his backswing and he strikes the ball while it is still moving. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty under Rule 14-5 because the ball began to move after the player had begun his backswing. However, if the player had caused the ball to move or addressed it, he incurred a penalty stroke – Rule 18-2a or b.

DECISION 14-5/2
Making Stroke at Oscillating Ball

Q. A player's ball lies on the putting green. The ball is oscillating because of the wind. May the player make a stroke at the ball while it oscillates?

A. Yes. As an oscillating ball is not moving as defined by the Rules of Golf, there is no penalty for making a stroke at an oscillating ball. The player must continue play without undue delay.
Related Decisions:

- **1-2/9** Player Presses Ball into Surface of Putting Green
- **18/2** Ball Oscillates During Address

**FAQ Rule 14-5**

**Ball Moves after Address, Player Strikes Moving Ball**

**Q.** After the player has addressed his ball and begun the backward movement of the club for his stroke, the player’s ball begins to move. The player continues his stroke and strikes the ball while it is still moving. Is there a penalty?

**A.** Unless it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause his ball to move, the player incurs a one stroke penalty under Rule 18-2b for his ball in play moving after he addressed it. If it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause his ball to move, there is no penalty under Rule 18-2b.

There is no penalty for playing a moving ball in this case as the ball started to move after the player had begun the backward movement for the stroke and he completed the stroke. Since the player completed the stroke he does not need to replace the ball.

Note: This FAQ has been updated to reflect the [2012 Rules Of Golf](#).

**Rule 15. Substituted Ball; Wrong Ball**

- Changing Golf Balls During A Hole Or A Stipulated Round
- Can I Use A Putting Ball?

**RULE 14-6. Ball Moving In Water**

When a ball is moving in water in a water hazard, the player may, without penalty, make a stroke, but he must not delay making his stroke in order to allow the wind or current to improve the position of the ball. A ball moving in water in a water hazard may be lifted if the player elects to invoke Rule 26.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 14-5 Or 14-6:**
Rule 15
Substituted Ball; Wrong Ball

RULE 15-1. General
A player must hole out with the ball played from the teeing ground, unless the ball is lost or out of bounds or the player substitutes another ball, whether or not substitution is permitted (see Rule 15-2). If a player plays a wrong ball, see Rule 15-3.

RULE 15-2. Substituted Ball
A player may substitute a ball when proceeding under a Rule that permits the player to play, drop or place another ball in completing the play of a hole. The substituted ball becomes the ball in play.

If a player substitutes a ball when not permitted to do so under the Rules, that substituted ball is not a wrong ball; it becomes the ball in play. If the mistake is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6 and the player makes a stroke at a wrongly substituted ball, he loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play under the applicable Rule and, in stroke play, must play out the hole with the substituted ball.

Exception: If a player incurs a penalty for making a stroke from a wrong place, there is no additional penalty for substituting a ball when not permitted.

(Playing from wrong place – see Rule 20-7)

FAQ Rule 15-2
Can I use a Putting Ball?
Q. Once I reach the putting green, is it permissible to switch balls so I can putt with a ball that has "better feel?"
A. Rule 15-2 requires a player to hole out with the ball played from the teeing ground unless he is proceeding under a Rule that permits him to substitute another ball. Thus, the substitution of a ball on the putting green other than when permitted by the Rules (i.e., a ball unfit for play) is contrary to Rule 15-2. However, a player may change golf balls between the play of two holes.

- Both Players In Match Play Play Wrong Ball
- Wrong Ball Played From Hazard

Rule 16. The Putting Green
- Requirements For Hole Location On The Putting Green

RULE 15-3. Wrong Ball

a. Match Play

If a player makes a stroke at a wrong ball, he loses the hole.

If the wrong ball belongs to another player, its owner must place a ball on the spot from which the wrong ball was first played.

If the player and opponent exchange balls during the play of a hole, the first to make a stroke at a wrong ball loses the hole; when this cannot be determined, the hole must be played out with the balls exchanged.

Exception: There is no penalty if a player makes a stroke at a wrong ball that is moving in water in a water hazard. Any strokes made at a wrong ball moving in water in a water hazard do not count in the player’s score. The player must correct his mistake by playing the correct ball or by proceeding under the Rules.

(Placing and Replacing – see Rule 20-3)

b. Stroke Play

If a competitor makes a stroke or strokes at a wrong ball, he incurs a penalty of two strokes.
The competitor must correct his mistake by playing the correct ball or by proceeding under the Rules. If he fails to correct his mistake before making a stroke on the next teeing ground or, in the case of the last hole of the round, fails to declare his intention to correct his mistake before leaving the putting green, he is disqualified.

Strokes made by a competitor with a wrong ball do not count in his score. If the wrong ball belongs to another competitor, its owner must place a ball on the spot from which the wrong ball was first played.

Exception: There is no penalty if a competitor makes a stroke at a wrong ball that is moving in water in a water hazard. Any strokes made at a wrong ball moving in water in a water hazard do not count in the competitor’s score.

(Placing and Replacing – see Rule 20-3)

THE PUTTING GREEN

Rule 16

The Putting Green

RULE 16-1. General
a. Touching Line of Putt

The line of putt must not be touched except:

(i) the player may remove loose impediments, provided he does not press anything down;

(ii) the player may place the club in front of the ball when addressing it, provided he does not press anything down;

(iii) in measuring – Rule 18-6;

(iv) in lifting or replacing the ball – Rule 16-1b;
(v) in pressing down a ball-marker;

(vi) in repairing old hole plugs or ball marks on the putting green – Rule 16-1c; and

(vii) in removing movable obstructions – Rule 24-1.

(Indicating line for putting on putting green – see Rule 8-2b)

b. Lifting and Cleaning Ball
A ball on the putting green may be lifted and, if desired, cleaned. The position of the ball must be marked before it is lifted and the ball must be replaced (see Rule 20-1). When another ball is in motion, a ball that might influence the movement of the ball in motion must not be lifted.

c. Repair of Hole Plugs, Ball Marks and Other Damage
The player may repair an old hole plug or damage to the putting green caused by the impact of a ball, whether or not the player’s ball lies on the putting green. If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved in the process of the repair, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of repairing an old hole plug or damage to the putting green caused by the impact of a ball. Otherwise, Rule 18 applies.

Any other damage to the putting green must not be repaired if it might assist the player in his subsequent play of the hole.

d. Testing Surface
During the stipulated round, a player must not test the surface of any putting green by rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the surface.

**Exception:** Between the play of two holes, a player may test the surface of any practice putting green and the putting green of the hole last played, unless the Committee has prohibited such action (see Note 2 to Rule 7-2).
e. Standing Astride or on Line of Putt

The player must not make a stroke on the putting green from a stance astride, or with either foot touching, the line of putt or an extension of that line behind the ball.

**Exception:** There is no penalty if the stance is inadvertently taken on or astride the line of putt (or an extension of that line behind the ball) or is taken to avoid standing on another player’s line of putt or prospective line of putt.

f. Making Stroke While Another Ball in Motion

The player must not make a stroke while another ball is in motion after a stroke from the putting green, except that if a player does so, there is no penalty if it was his turn to play.

(Lifting ball assisting or interfering with play while another ball in motion – see Rule 22)

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 16-1:**

- Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

(Position of caddie or partner – see Rule 14-2)

(Wrong putting green – see Rule 25-3)

**DECISION 16/1**

**Mud on Ball Touches Putting Green But Ball Itself Does Not Touch Green**

**Q.** A player's ball lies off the putting green, overhanging but not touching the green. A clump of mud adhering to the ball touches the green. Is the ball considered to be on the green?

**A.** No. However, if a ball lies on the green but does not actually touch the green because it is perched on mud, the ball is considered to be on the green.
RULE 16-2. Ball Overhanging Hole
When any part of the ball overhangs the lip of the hole, the player is allowed enough time to reach the hole without unreasonable delay and an additional ten seconds to determine whether the ball is at rest. If by then the ball has not fallen into the hole, it is deemed to be at rest. If the ball subsequently falls into the hole, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke, and must add a penalty stroke to his score for the hole; otherwise, there is no penalty under this Rule.

(Undue delay – see Rule 6-7)

DECISION 16/2
Ball Embedded in Side of Hole; All of Ball Below Lip of Hole

Q. A player's ball embeds in the side of a hole. All of the ball is below the level of the lip of the hole. What is the ruling?

A. The ball should be considered holed even though all of the ball is not within the circumference of the hole as required by the Definition of "Holed."

DECISION 16/3
Ball Embedded in Side of Hole; All of Ball Not Below Lip of Hole

Q. A player's ball embeds in the side of a hole. Part of the ball is above the level of the lip of the hole. What is the ruling?

A. The ball is not holed – see Definition of "Holed." The player may play the ball as it lies or lift the ball under Rule 16-1b, repair the damage under Rule 16-1c and place the ball on the lip of the hole.

DECISION 16/4
Hole-Liner Not Sunk Deep Enough

Q. Players discover that a hole-liner, although sunk below the putting green surface, is not sunk at least one-inch below the surface as prescribed in the Definition of "Hole." What should they do?
A. The players should call the matter to the attention of a member of the Committee if one is present. If feasible, the member of the Committee should attempt to have the fault corrected.

However, the players must continue play in the meantime, because correction might not be possible and, if possible, might take considerable time. (Revised)

DECISION 16/5
Ball Strikes Edge of Hole-Liner and Bounces Out of Hole

Q. A player's ball struck the rim of a hole-liner, which had not been sunk deep enough, and bounced out of the hole. Should the ball be considered holed in such circumstances?

A. No. Under the Definition of "Holed," the ball must be at rest within the circumference of the hole.

DECISION 16/5.5
Player Holes Short Putt and Allegedly Removes Ball from Hole Before It Is at Rest

Q. A player strikes a short putt into the hole and removes the ball from the hole. His opponent or a fellow-competitor claims he heard the ball bouncing in the bottom of the hole-liner at the time the player was removing the ball from the hole, and therefore the ball cannot be considered holed in view of the Definition of "Holed" which states: "A ball is holed when it is at rest within the circumference of the hole ...". What is the ruling?

A. The ball is holed. The words "at rest" are in the Definition of "Holed" to make it clear that if a ball falls below the lip and thereafter bounces out, it is not holed.

Related Decision:
• 1-2/5 Player Putts with One Hand and Catches Ball in Hole with Other Hand.
DECISION 16/7
Two Holes on Each Green of Nine-Hole Course

Q.1. Is it permissible for a Committee to make two holes on each green of a nine-hole course, one (A) for use in play of the first nine holes and the other (B) for use in play of the second nine?

2. If so, what is the status of hole B on each green when hole A is in use, and vice versa?

A.1. Yes.

2. The hole not in use on each green is a hole made by a greenkeeper – see Definition of "Ground Under Repair" – and Rule 25-1 is applicable.

Related Decision:
• 16-1c/3 Old Hole Plug Sunk or Raised on Line of Putt.

Other Decisions related to "The Putting Green: General": See "Ball Lifted," "Ball Placed or Replaced" and "Putting Green" in the Index.

DECISION 16-1a/1
Brushing Aside or Mopping Up Casual Water on Line of Putt

Q. May a player whose ball lies on the putting green brush aside casual water on his line of putt, or mop it up with a towel?

A. No. Such action would be a breach of Rule 16-1a (Touching Line of Putt).

DECISION 16-1a/3
Removing Dew or Frost from Line of Putt

Q. May a player brush dew or frost from his line of putt?

A. No. Rule 16-1a prohibits touching the line of putt except in removal of loose impediments, repair of ball marks, etc. Dew or frost are not loose im-
pediments – see Definition of "Loose Impediments." Accordingly, such action would be a breach of Rule 16-1a.

Related Decision:
- 13-2/35 Removal of Dew or Frost.

DECISION 16-1a/4
Removing Casual Water from Hole

Q. A player, whose ball lies on the putting green, removes casual water from the hole without touching the inside of the hole. Is this permissible?

A. As the player has not touched the line of putt, he is not in breach of Rule 16-1a. However, the player is in breach of Rule 13-2 which prohibits improving the line of play by removing water. The player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play.

Related Decisions:
- 16-1d/4 Testing for Wetness of Surface of Putting Green Behind Ball.
- 33/1 Removal of Casual Water or Loose Impediments on Putting Green by Committee.

DECISION 16-1a/5
Touching Inside of Hole

Q. Prior to putting, a player touched the inside of the hole. Should he be considered to have touched his line of putt in breach of Rule 16-1a?

A. Yes, unless the hole was materially damaged and the player was entitled to repair it – see Decision 16-1a/6. The line of putt includes the hole except in the unusual case when a player makes a stroke from the putting green away from the hole.

DECISION 16-1a/6
Damaged Hole; Procedure for Player
Q. Prior to putting, a player discovers that the hole has been damaged. What is the proper procedure?

A. If the damage is not clearly identifiable as a ball mark, then:

(a) If the damage is such that the proper dimensions of the hole have not been changed materially, the player should continue play without repairing the hole. If he touches the hole in such circumstances, a breach of Rule 16-1a occurs.

(b) If the proper dimensions of the hole have been changed materially, the player should request the Committee to have the hole repaired. If a member of the Committee is not readily available, the player may repair the damage, without penalty.

If a player repairs a materially damaged hole when a member of the Committee is readily available, he incurs a penalty for a breach of Rule 16-1a.

Decisions related to 16-1A/5 and 16-1A/6:

• 1-2/3.5 Player Repairs Hole After Holing Out But Before Opponent, Fellow-Competitor or Partner Holes Out.

• 33-2b/1.5 Committee Wishes to Move Hole During Stroke-Play Round Due to Severity of Location.

• 33-2b/2 Relocating Hole After Ball Already Positioned Nearby on Putting Green.

DECISION 16-1a/7
Player Repairs Depression on Line of Putt Created When Partially Embedded Acorn Removed

Q. A player removed with his hand an embedded acorn on his line of putt. The acorn was not solidly embedded, so it was a loose impediment. The player then repaired the depression in which the acorn lay. Was the repair of the depression a breach of Rule 16-1a?
A. Yes.

Related Decision:
• **23/9** Embedded Acorn.

**DECISION 16-1a/8**
Loose Impediments Removed from Line of Putt with Cap or Towel

**Q.** A player touches his line of putt in brushing aside loose impediments with his cap or with a towel. Is this permissible?

**A.** Yes, provided he did not press anything down.

**DECISION 16-1a/9**
Brushing Loose Impediments Off Line of Putt with Palm of Hand

**Q.** A player, with about one dozen strokes with the whole palm of his hand, attempted to remove small leaves, which are difficult to remove by any method, from his line of putt. Is this permissible?

**A.** Yes, provided the player did not press anything down (Rule **16-1a(i)**) and, if the surface were roughened, he did not do so with the intention of testing the surface of the putting green (Rule **16-1d**). Given the nature of his acts, any doubt as to whether he pressed anything down should be resolved against the player.

Related Decision:
• **16-1d/6** Caddie Roughens Surface of Putting Green But Player Does Not Benefit.

**DECISION 16-1a/10**
Loose Impediments Brushed Along Line of Putt Rather Than to Side

**Q.** In removing loose impediments from his line of putt by brushing with a putter, a player brushed along the line for about one foot before brushing the impediments to the side. Did the player infringe Rule **16-1**?
A. Under Rule 16-1a, a player is allowed to brush aside loose impediments on his line of putt. The casual movement of the putter along the line of putt would not be a breach of the Rules unless in the process the player did something to the putting green that improved his line of putt, (e.g., pressed down a raised tuft of grass), in which case he would be in breach of Rule 13-2.

DECISION 16-1a/11
Raised Tuft of Grass on Line of Putt Brushed to Determine Whether It Is Loose

Q. A player cannot determine whether a raised tuft of grass on his line of putt is loose or is attached to its roots. The player brushes the raised tuft lightly with his hand to make a determination and discovers that the tuft is attached. What is the ruling?

A. A player is entitled to touch and move a natural object on his line of putt for the specific purpose of determining whether the object is loose, provided that if the object is found not to be loose, (1) it has not become detached and (2) it is returned to its original position before the next stroke if failure to do so would result in a breach of Rule 13-2. The touching of the line of putt in these circumstances is not a breach of Rule 16-1a.

Except as otherwise permitted in the Rules (e.g., in repairing a ball mark), if a player touches or moves a natural object on his line of putt other than to determine whether it is loose and it is found to be attached, the player cannot avoid a breach of Rule 16-1a by returning the object to its original position.

Related Decision:
• 13-2/26 Natural Object Interfering with Swing Moved to Determine Whether It Is Loose.

DECISION 16-1a/12
Player Walks on Line of Putt

Q. A player walked on his line of putt. Did he incur a penalty for a breach of Rule 16-1a?
A. Yes, if he did so intentionally. No, if he did so accidentally and the act did not improve the line.

DECISION 16-1a/13
Line of Putt Damaged Accidentally by Opponent, Fellow-Competitor or Their Caddies

Q. An opponent, fellow-competitor or one of their caddies accidentally steps on and damages the player's line of putt. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. Rule 1-2 is not applicable as the physical conditions were not altered with the intent of affecting the playing of the hole.

In equity (Rule 1-4), the player may have the line of putt restored to its original condition. The player is entitled to the lie and line of putt he had when his ball came to rest. The line of putt may be restored by anyone.

If it is not possible to restore the line of putt, the player would be justified in requesting the Committee to grant relief. If the damage is severe enough, the Committee may declare the area to be ground under repair, in which case the competitor may take relief under Rule 25-1b(iii).

Related Decisions: See "Equity: player entitled to lie, line of play and stance when ball comes to rest after stroke" in the Index.

DECISION 16-1a/15
Mushroom Growing on Line of Putt

Q. A mushroom is growing on a player's line of putt. Is the player entitled to relief?

A. The player would be justified in discontinuing play and requesting the Committee to remove the mushroom. The Committee should comply.
If such an abnormal condition is a recurring problem on a course, the Committee should make a Local Rule to the effect that mushrooms on the putting green are to be treated as ground under repair.

Related Decision:
16-1c/3 Old Hole Plug Sunk or Raised on Line of Putt.

**DECISION 16-1a/16**

**Spike Mark on Line of Putt Repaired During Repair of Ball Mark**

**Q.** A player stepped on a ball mark in the act of repairing it and incidentally pressed down a spike mark on his line of putt. Did the player incur a penalty under Rule 16-1a?

**A.** Yes, unless the spike mark was so close to the ball mark that it was impractical to repair the ball mark without affecting the spike mark.

Related Decisions:

- **13-2/36** Competitor Sanctions Repair of Spike Damage on His Line of Putt by Fellow-Competitor.

- **16-1c/4** Repair of Spike Mark Damage Around Hole.

**DECISION 16-1a/16.5**

**Spike Mark on Line of Putt Pressed Down When Player Repairs Old Hole Plug**

**Q.** An old hole plug is raised on the player's line of putt. The player steps on the hole plug to make it level with the surface of the putting green. In so doing he presses down a spike mark within the hole plug. Was the player in breach of Rule 16-1a when he pressed down the spike mark?

**A.** No. Rule 16-1a permits touching the line of putt "in repairing old hole plugs."
If the spike mark had been near but not within the old hole plug, the ruling would be different. In these circumstances, the player would have been able to step on the hole plug without affecting the spike mark.

**DECISION 16-1a/17**

Ball Lifted on Putting Green Placed Ahead of Ball-Marker and Then Moved Back to Original Position

**Q.** When replacing his ball on the putting green, a player has a habit of placing the ball ahead of his ball-marker and then rolling or sliding the ball to its original position. Is such a procedure permissible?

**A.** Such a procedure is not recommended but is not a breach of Rule 16-1a, which permits touching the line of putt in lifting (or replacing) the ball. However, if in the process the player does something to the putting green that improves his line of putt (e.g., presses down a raised tuft of grass), he is in breach of Rule 13-2.

Related Decisions:

- **16-1d/3** Player Returns Ball to Spot from Which It Was Lifted by Rolling It with Putter.

- **20-1/19** Placing Object Marking Position of Ball Other Than Behind Ball.

Other Decisions related to Rule 16-1A: See "Line of Putt" and "Putting Green: line of putt" in the Index.

**DECISION 16-1b/1**

Ball on Putting Green Lifted Because Player Feared Ball Might Move

**Q.** A player lifted his ball on the putting green under Rule 16-1b, cleaned it and replaced it. As the player approached the ball to make his next stroke, he feared the ball might move. So he lifted the ball again, replaced it and played. What is the ruling?
A. There is no penalty, provided the player marked the position of his ball both times. Rule 16-1b permits the lifting of a ball on the putting green in these circumstances.

DECISION 16-1b/2
Ball Lifted from Putting Green; Ball Replaced While Another Ball in Motion But Then Lifted Because Moving Ball Might Strike It

Q. A's ball comes to rest on the putting green 20 feet from the hole. He marks the position of and lifts his ball so that B, whose ball is also on the putting green, but farther from the hole, can play first. While B's ball is in motion, A replaces his ball. He then realizes that B's ball might strike his ball. A re-marks the position of and lifts his ball to ensure the balls will not collide. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. The replacing and subsequent lifting of A's ball is considered to be an extension of his initial authority to lift the ball under Rule 16-1b, and accordingly the prohibition in that Rule against lifting a ball while another ball is in motion does not apply. Rule 22 does not apply in this case because the ball was initially lifted under Rule 16-1b.

DECISION 16-1b/3
Ball Lifted from Putting Green; Ball Replaced While Another Ball in Motion Subsequently Deflects Ball

Q. A's ball comes to rest on the putting green 20 feet from the hole. He marks the position of and lifts his ball so that B, whose ball is also on the putting green, but farther from the hole, can play first. While B's ball is in motion, A replaces his ball. B's ball strikes A's ball. What is the ruling?

A. If A's action was unintentional (i.e., not for the purpose of deflecting B's ball), Rule 19-5a applies. There is no penalty to either player since A had lifted his ball and it was not lying on the putting green immediately prior to B's stroke. A must replace his ball, and B must play his ball as it lies.

If A's action was for the purpose of deflecting B's ball, A is in breach of Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Condi-
tions). The penalty is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play, unless the Committee decides to impose a penalty of disqualification – see the penalty statement under Rule 1-2. In stroke play, B must replay his stroke, without penalty – see Note under Rule 19-1. Rule 16-1b does not apply as this Rule deals with the lifting of a ball on a putting green, but not its placement.

DECISION 16-1b/4
Ball Lifted from Putting Green by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor While Player's Ball in Motion

Q.A's ball is on the putting green 20 yards from the hole. The ball of B, his opponent or fellow-competitor, is also on the putting green five yards to the right of the hole. A putts and, while the ball is in motion and still 15 yards from the hole, B marks and lifts his ball in order to clean it prior to making his stroke. A played a poor putt and his ball came to rest a yard short of B's ball-marker. What is the ruling?

A.Under Rule 16-1b, B is penalized if lifting his ball might have influenced the movement of A's ball. The determination as to whether there is a reasonable possibility that B's ball might have influenced the movement of A's ball is made by reference to the situation at the time B lifted his ball.

In this case, as B's ball was lying some distance from A's intended line of putt and A's ball had only traveled a short distance at the time that B lifted his ball, it was reasonable for B to assume that the lifting of his ball would not influence the movement of A's ball, despite the fact that A's ball came to rest quite close to the spot from which B's ball was lifted.

When assessing the possibility that A's ball might have collided with B's ball and thus that, by lifting his ball, B might have influenced the movement of A's ball, the following are among the factors that should be taken into account:

- the distance of B's ball from A's line of putt
- the line on which A's ball was moving, and
- the contours of the putting green.
Any doubt as to whether there is a reasonable possibility that the lifting of the ball might have influenced the movement of the ball in motion is resolved against the player who lifted his ball.

Decisions related to 16-1B/3 and 16-1B/4:

- **1-2/0.5** Serious Breach of Rule 1-2.

- **1-2/1** Line of Putt Altered Purposely by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor by Stepping on It.

- **17-3/2** Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Attending Flagstick for Player Fails to Remove It; Player's Ball Strikes Flagstick.

- **19-1/5** Ball Deliberately Deflected or Stopped on Putting Green by Fellow-Competitor.

Other Decisions related to Rule 16-1B: See "Ball Lifted: putting green" in the Index.

**DECISION 16-1c/1**
**Repair of Ball Mark a Second Time**

**Q.** A ball mark has been repaired by a player. The ball mark is on the line of putt of a following player. May the following player further repair the ball mark?

**A.** Yes, provided it is still clearly identifiable as a ball mark.

**DECISION 16-1c/1.5**
**Ball Mark Partially on and Partially Off Putting Green Is on Line of Play**

**Q.** If a player's ball lies just off the putting green and there is a ball mark on his line of play, he is entitled to repair the ball mark if it is on the green (Rule 16-1c), but not if it is off the green (Rule 13-2). What is the ruling if a ball mark on the line of play is partially on and partially off the green?
A. Since it is impracticable to allow the repair of only that part of the ball mark which is on the putting green, the player may repair the entire ball mark.

**DECISION 16-1c/2**

**Ball Mark in Position to Assist Opponent**

Q. A and B are playing a match. At a par-3 hole, both are on the green with their tee shots. A's ball comes to rest four feet from the hole. B's ball is fifteen feet from the hole. Upon reaching the green, A prepares to repair his ball mark. B tells A not to do so until he (B) has putted because A's ball mark is so situated that B's ball might be deflected into the hole by it. A objects, stating that he wishes to repair his ball mark immediately. May A do so?

A. No, if A repairs the ball mark, he loses the hole (see Decision 2/3) for intentionally denying B's right to have the ball mark left in position. Although A is permitted to repair the ball mark under Rule 16-1c, and accordingly would not be in breach of Rule 1-2 for doing so (see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2), he must comply with B's request not to repair the ball mark. (Revised)

**DECISION 16-1c/3**

**Old Hole Plug Sunk or Raised on Line of Putt**

Q. A player's ball lies on the green. An old hole plug is sunk or raised on the player's line of putt. What relief is available to the player?

A. The player may attempt to raise or lower the plug to make it level with the surface of the putting green – Rule 16-1c. If this is impossible, he may discontinue play and request the Committee to raise or lower the plug. If the Committee cannot level the plug without unduly delaying play, the Committee should declare the plug to be ground under repair, in which case the player would be entitled to relief under Rule 25-1b(iii).

Related Decisions:

- 16/7 Two Holes on Each Green of Nine-Hole Course.
- 16-1a/15 Mushroom Growing on Line of Putt.
• 25/17 Sunken Hole Plug.

• 25/18 Hole of Removed Stake Defining Water Hazard.

• 33-8/30 Local Rule Permitting the Repair of Turf Plugs on the Putting Green That Are Not 41 ¼ "4 Inches in Diameter.

**DECISION 16-1c/4**

**Repair of Spike Mark Damage Around Hole**

**Q.** A player's ball lies on or near the putting green. Before playing his next stroke, he taps down spike marks in the vicinity of the hole. Is this permissible?

**A.** No. Such action would be a breach of Rule 16-1c since repair of spike marks in the vicinity of the hole might assist the player in his subsequent play of the hole.

Related Decisions:

• 13-2/36 Competitor Sanctions Repair of Spike Damage on His Line of Putt by Fellow-Competitor.

• 16-1a/16 Spike Mark on Line of Putt Repaired During Repair of Ball Mark.

**TESTING SURFACE OF PUTTING GREEN**

**DECISION 16-1d/1**

**Player Concedes Opponent's Next Stroke and Rolls or Knocks Ball to Opponent**

**Q.** A player concedes his opponent's next stroke and either picks up the opponent's ball and rolls it to the opponent or knocks it back to him with a club. The player did so only for the purpose of returning the opponent's ball to him, not to test the surface of the putting green. Was the player in breach of Rule 16-1d (Testing Surface)?

**A.** No. Such casual action is not a breach of Rule 16-1d.
DECISION 16-1d/2  
Player Concedes Opponent's Next Stroke and Knocks His Ball Away Along Own Line of Putt

Q. A player concedes his opponent's next stroke and knocks his ball away on the same line on which he (the player) must subsequently putt. Is this a breach of Rule 16-1d?

A. It is a question of fact whether or not the player's action was for the purpose of testing the surface of the putting green. The manner and apparent purpose of the action would be the determining factors in each individual case.

DECISION 16-1d/3  
Player Returns Ball to Spot from Which It Was Lifted by Rolling It with Putter

Q. A player marks the position of his ball on the putting green, lifts the ball and sets it aside. When it is his turn to putt, he rolls the ball with his putter back to the spot from which it was lifted. Was the player in breach of Rule 16-1d (Testing Surface)?

A. No, provided the action of rolling the ball was not for the purpose of testing the surface of the green. This method of replacing a ball is not recommended, but it is not a breach of the Rules.

Decision related to 16-1D/1 through 16-1D/3:
• 16-1a/17 Ball Lifted on Putting Green Placed Ahead of Ball-Marker and Then Moved Back to Original Position.

DECISION 16-1d/4  
Testing for Wetness of Surface of Putting Green Behind Ball

Q. A player placed the palm of his hand on the putting green behind his ball to determine if the green was wet. He did not roughen or scrape the surface. Was the player in breach of Rule 16-1d (Testing Surface)?
A. No. Rule 16-1d only prohibits rolling a ball or roughening or scraping the putting surface for testing purposes. Since the line of putt was not touched, Rule 16-1a also was not infringed.

Related Decisions:
- 16-1a/4 Removing Casual Water from Hole.
- 33/1 Removal of Casual Water or Loose Impediments on Putting Green by Committee.

**DECISION 16-1d/5**
*Rubbing Ball on Putting Green for Cleaning Purposes*

Q. May a player clean his ball by rubbing it on the putting green?

A. Yes, provided the act is not for the purpose of testing the surface of the putting green. It is recommended that a ball be cleaned in other ways to eliminate any question as to the player's intentions.

**DECISION 16-1d/6**
*Caddie Roughens Surface of Putting Green But Player Does Not Benefit*

Q. A player's caddie tests the surface of the putting green by roughening the grass. The player tells him immediately that he is not allowed to do that under the Rules. The player receives no information from the caddie about the condition of the green. Is the player penalized under Rule 16-1d?

A. Yes. The reference to the player in Rule 16-1d includes his caddie. Thus, the Rule prohibits the caddie, as well as the player, from testing the surface of the putting green. Under Rule 6-1, the player incurs the applicable penalty for a breach of a Rule by his caddie.

Related Decisions:
- 8-1/17 Request for Advice Made in Error to Opponent's Caddie Withdrawn Before Advice Given.
STANDING ASTRIDE OR ON LINE OF PUTT
DECISION 16-1e/1
Meaning of "Line of Putt" in Context of "Standing Astride or on Line of Putt"

Q. With reference to the above illustration, the broken line is a direct line from the ball to the hole and the solid line is the line on which the player intends his ball to travel. Which line is the "line of putt" for purposes of application of Rule 16-1e (Standing Astride or on Line of Putt)? If the broken line is the "line of putt," the player will be in breach of Rule 16-1e. If the solid line is the "line of putt," he will not be in breach of the Rule.

A. The solid line is the "line of putt."

FAQ Rule 16
Requirements for Hole Location on the Putting Green
Q. What are the requirements for establishing a hole location on the putting green?
A. The USGA frequently receives requests for guidelines with respect to selection of hole locations on the putting greens, particularly during competitions. There are no rules regarding hole locations, so there is no such thing as an "illegal" hole location. The USGA believes that many factors affect selection of hole locations. The first and most important is good judgment in deciding what
will give fair results. Do not be tricky in locating holes. Following are specific points:

1. Study the design of the hole as the architect intended it to be played. Know the length of the shot to the green and how it may be affected by the probable conditions for the day - that is, wind and other weather elements, conditions of the turf from which the shot will be played, and holding quality of the green.

2. There must be enough putting green surface between the hole and the front and the sides of the green to accommodate the required shot. For example, if the hole requires a long iron or wood shot to the green, the hole should be located deeper in the green and further from its sides than should be the case if the hole requires a short pitch shot. In any case, it is recommended that generally the hole be located at least four paces from any edge of the green. If a bunker is close to the edge, or if the ground slopes away from the edge, the distance should be greater, especially if the shot is more than a pitch. Consideration should be given to fair opportunity for recovery after a reasonably good shot that just misses the green.

3. An area two to three feet in radius around the hole should be as nearly level as possible and of uniform grade. In no case should holes be located in tricky places, or on sharp slopes where a ball can gather speed. A player above the hole should be able to stop the ball at the hole.

4. Consider the condition of nearby turf, especially taking care to avoid old hole plugs which have not completely healed.

5. Holes should be cut as nearly on the vertical as possible, not plumb with the contour of the green.

6. There should be a balanced selection of hole locations for the entire course with respect to left, right, central, front and back positions. For example, avoid too many left positions with resulting premium on drawn or hooked shots.

7. For a competition played over several days, the course should be kept in balance daily as to degree of difficulty. In a stroke competition, the first hole of the first round is as important as the last hole of the last round, and so the course should not be set up appreciably more difficult for any round - balanced treatment is the aim. An old concept of making the course progressively harder round after round is fallacious.
One form of balanced daily treatment is to select six quite difficult, six which are moderately difficult and six which are relatively easy.

8. During practice days before a competition, locate holes in areas not to be used during the competition and which will not result in areas to be used being impaired by foot traffic.

9. Anticipate the players’ traffic patterns. Locate holes for early rounds so that good hole locations for later rounds will not be spoiled by players leaving the green.

10. In match play, a hole location may, if necessary, be changed during a round provided the players in each match play with the hole in the same location. In stroke play, Rule 33-2b requires that all competitors in a single round play with each hole cut in the same position, but see Exception to that Rule. When 36 holes are played in one day, it is not customary for hole locations to be changed between rounds, but there is no Rule to prohibit changing them. If they are changed, all players should be informed.

11. The greenkeeper who cuts the holes should make sure that the Rules of Golf are observed, especially the requirements that the hole not exceed 4 ¼ inches in outer diameter and that the hole-liner be sunk at least one inch below the putting green surface.

1. Note: This FAQ has been updated to reflect the 2012 Rules Of Golf.

13.

1. Note: This FAQ has been updated to reflect the 2012 Rules Of Golf.

15.

1. Below you can view videos related to this Rule.

1. Video

1. Ball overhanging the lip of the hole

1. While Meg Mallon was leading during the second round of the 1996 Jamie Farr Classic, her birdie putt on the 17th hole stopped, overhanging the lip of the hole.

1. RealPlayer

1. Windows Media Player

1. High Bandwidth

1. Low Bandwidth

1. Video

Geoff Mangum’ PuttingZone, Rules of Golf on the Green
1. **Putt came to rest overhanging the lip of the hole.**
   1. At the 1999 Spanish Open, Alvaro Salto's putt came to rest overhanging the lip of the hole. Select a video format from the right to learn about the provisions of Rule 16-2, "Ball Overhanging Hole" and how it applied to Salto's situation.

- RealPlayer
- Windows Media Player
  1. High Bandwidth
  1. High Bandwidth
  1. Low Bandwidth
  1. Low Bandwidth

• **Damaged Hole**

**FAQ Rule 16-1**

**Damaged Hole**

**Q.** Our group reaches the putting green, and we've noticed the hole is damaged. What should we do?

**A.** If the damage is a ball mark, you may repair it. (Rule 16-1c). However, if the damage is something other than the ball mark, the answer depends on the extent of the damage. A hole that is damaged, but the dimensions of the hole have not been materially changed, must not be touched, and you must continue play of the hole. If the hole is damaged materially, a member of the Committee should be requested to repair the damage. In this case, you may only repair the hole if a Committee member is not readily available. Repairing the hole when not permitted will result in a breach of Rule 16-1a for touching the line of putt.

• **Usga Position On Spikemarks**

**FAQ Rule 16-1**

**USGA Position on Spikemarks**

**Q.** What is the USGA position on spikemarks?

**A.** The Rules of Golf are based on two fundamental principles: (1) play the ball as it lies and (2) play the course as you find it. Permitting the repair of spike marks on a player's line of play or putt would be contrary to these fundamental principles. Rule 16-1c permits the repair of old hole plugs and ball marks but does not permit the repair of spike damage or other irregularities of surface on the putting green if they are on a player's line of play or putt or might assist him in his subsequent play of the hole. The distinction
lies in the fact that old hole plugs and ball marks are easily identifiable as such, whereas it is impossible to differentiate between spike damage and other irregularities of surface on the putting green. Permitting the repair of spike marks would also inevitably lead to a slower place of play. Please note that proper etiquette recommends that damage to the putting green caused by golf shoe spikes be repaired on completion of the hole by all players, just as a player should fill up and smooth over all holes and footprints made by him before leaving a bunker. We feel that improved education and players’ consideration for others rather than a change in the Rules of Golf is the proper solution to the problem.

- **Reaching Across Hole To Tap In Short Putt**

**FAQ Rule 16-1**
Reaching Across Hole to Tap in Short Putt

**Q.** A player reaches across the hole to tap in a short putt (the hole is between the player and the ball). Is this a breach of Rule 16-1e, Standing Astride or on the Line of Putt?

**A.** No. The line of putt does not extend beyond the hole. There is no penalty for making a stroke in this manner, provided the ball is fairly struck at and not raked into the hole. (Definition of "Line of Putt" and Rule 16-1e).

- **Ball Overhanging Lip Falls Into Hole**

**16-2. Ball Overhanging Hole**
When any part of the ball overhangs the lip of the **hole**, the player is allowed enough time to reach the **hole** without unreasonable delay and an additional ten seconds to determine whether the ball is at rest. If by then the ball has not fallen into the **hole**, it is deemed to be at rest. If the ball subsequently falls into the **hole**, the player is deemed to have **holed** out with his last **stroke**, and **must add a penalty stroke** to his score for the hole; otherwise, there is no penalty under this Rule.

(Undue delay – see Rule 6-7)
DECISION 16-2/0.5
Ball Overhanging Hole Is Lifted, Cleaned and Replaced; Ball Then Falls into Hole

Q. After an approach shot, a player's ball is overhanging the hole. The player walks up to the hole without unreasonable delay and notices that there is mud on the ball. The player marks the position of the ball and lifts it. He then cleans the ball and replaces it. The ball remains on the lip of the hole for about five seconds and then, as the player is preparing to tap it into the hole, the ball falls into the hole. What is the ruling?

A. Under Rule 16-2, if a ball falls into the hole after it is deemed to be at rest, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke and he shall add a penalty stroke to his score for the hole. In this case, when the player marked the position of the ball it must have been at rest. The ball must be considered to have been at rest when it was replaced; otherwise, it would have to be replaced again (Rule 20-3d).

Accordingly, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke and must add a penalty stroke to his score for the hole.

DECISION 16-2/2
Ball Overhanging Hole Knocked Away by Opponent Before Player Determines Status

Q. In a match between A and B, A puts and his ball apparently comes to rest, but is overhanging the hole. Within five seconds, B concedes A's next stroke and knocks his ball away. Was B entitled to knock A's ball away?

A. No. Under Rule 16-2, A is allowed a reasonable time to reach the hole and an additional ten seconds to determine whether his ball is at rest. Since B infringed A's rights, in equity (Rule 1-4), B lost the hole, assuming that A's putt was not for a half, in which case Rule 2-2 (Halved Hole) would apply.

Related Decisions:
• 1-2/4 Player Jumps Close to Hole to Cause Ball to Drop; Ball Moves.
**DECISION 16-2/4**

**Ball Overhanging Lip of Hole Moves When Flagstick Removed**

**Q.** After a stroke from just off the putting green, a player's ball comes to rest overhanging the lip of the hole but not resting against the unattended flagstick. The player reaches the hole without unreasonable delay and removes the flagstick. The ball either rolls away from the hole or falls into the hole. What is the ruling?

**A.** It is a question of fact whether the player's actions caused the ball to move and any doubt should be resolved against the player.

The flagstick is a movable obstruction. If the movement of the ball was directly attributable to the removal of the flagstick, the ball must be replaced on the lip of the hole without penalty (Rule 24-1a). If the player caused the ball to move but the movement of the ball was not directly attributable to the removal of the flagstick, the ball must be replaced on the lip of the hole, and the player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a.

If the player's actions did not cause the ball to move and the ball fell into the hole, the provisions of Rule 16-2 apply, whether the removal of the flagstick occurs before or after the lapse of time contemplated by Rule 16-2.

If the player's actions did not cause the ball to move and the ball moved to another position, the player must play the ball from that new position.

If an opponent or fellow-competitor were to remove the flagstick without the player's authority, before the ball is deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2 and as a result of this action causes the ball to move, the opponent or fellow-competitor has infringed the player's rights as, under Rule 16-2, the player is allowed a reasonable time to reach the hole and an additional ten seconds to determine whether his ball is at rest. In equity (Rule 1-4), the opponent or
fellow-competitor incurs the loss-of-hole penalty in match play or a two-stroke penalty in stroke play. The player incurs no penalty and, in stroke play, must place the ball on the lip of the hole.

If an opponent or fellow-competitor were to remove the flagstick without the player's authority, before the ball is deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2, and this does not cause the ball to move, and the ball falls into the hole, the provisions of Rule 16-2 apply.

Related Decisions:

• **2-4/8** Player Concedes Opponent's Next Stroke and Plays Before Opponent Has Opportunity to Lift Ball.

• **3-4/1** Competitor Not Given Opportunity to Lift Ball Assisting Fellow-Competitor.

• **17-4/2** Ball Resting Against Flagstick; Putt Conceded and Ball Removed Before Player Can Remove Flagstick.

• **22/6** Competitor Requests That Ball in Position to Assist Him Not Be Lifted.

• **30-3f/11** Request to Lift Ball That Might Assist Partner Not Honored.

**DECISION 16-2/5**

**Ball Overhanging Lip of Hole Moves and Strikes Flagstick During Removal of Flagstick**

**Q.** After a stroke from off the putting green, a player's ball overhangs the lip of the hole. While the player is removing the flagstick, the ball falls into the hole, striking the flagstick. The player’s actions did not cause the ball to move. What is the ruling?

**A.** In equity (Rule 1-4), there is no penalty under Rule 17. If the ball came to rest within the circumference of the hole with all of it below the level of the lip of the hole, the ball is holed. If, after striking the flagstick, the ball is de-
flected out of the hole, the ball must be placed on the lip of the hole without penalty.

The answer with regard to Rule 17 is not affected by how much time elapses before the ball falls into the hole after the player reaches the hole.

There would be a penalty stroke under Rule 16-2 if the ball falls into the hole after it is deemed to be at rest under that Rule.

If, prior to the lapse of the period specified by Rule 16-2, an opponent or fellow-competitor were removing the flagstick without the player's authority and the ball fell into the hole and struck the flagstick before coming to rest outside the hole, the opponent or fellow-competitor would, in equity (Rule 1-4), incur the loss-of-hole penalty in match play or a two-stroke penalty in stroke play as he would be considered to have infringed the player's rights under Rule 16-2. In such a case in stroke play, the player would be required to replace the ball on the lip of the hole.

FAQ Rule 16-2

Ball Overhanging Lip Falls into Hole

Q. Gina has played two strokes and her ball is lying on the putting green. She plays her third stroke and the ball is overhanging the hole. Before Gina can reach her ball, it falls into the hole. What is Gina's score for the hole?

A. 3. As the ball fell into the hole before 10 seconds after Gina reached the hole had passed, she is considered to have holed out with her third stroke. If Gina had reached the ball, waited 10 seconds, then the ball fell into the hole, Gina's score for the hole would have been 4.

Rule 17. The Flagstick

• Replacing Flagstick After Ball Played From Putting Green Comes To Rest Off Green

Rule 17
The Flagstick

RULE 17-1. Flagstick Attended, Removed Or Held Up
Before making a stroke from anywhere on the course, the player may have the flagstick attended, removed or held up to indicate the position of the hole.

If the flagstick is not attended, removed or held up before the player makes a stroke, it must not be attended, removed or held up during the stroke or while the player’s ball is in motion if doing so might influence the movement of the ball.

Note 1: If the flagstick is in the hole and anyone stands near it while a stroke is being made, he is deemed to be attending the flagstick.

Note 2: If, prior to the stroke, the flagstick is attended, removed or held up by anyone with the player’s knowledge and he makes no objection, the player is deemed to have authorized it.

Note 3: If anyone attends or holds up the flagstick while a stroke is being made, he is deemed to be attending the flagstick until the ball comes to rest.

(Moving attended, removed or held-up flagstick while ball in motion – see Rule 24-1)

DECISION 17/1
Attachment to Flagstick to Indicate Position of Hole on Green

Q. A thin disc or sleeve is attached to the flagstick to indicate the distance of the hole from the front of the green. If the disc is placed near the bottom of the flagstick it means that the hole is at the front of the green; if it is placed near the top of the flagstick it means that the hole is at the back of the green. Is this permitted?

A. Yes, provided the attachment is circular in cross-section.
DECISION 17/2
Different Colored Flags Used to Indicate Position of Hole on Green

Q. May a Committee use flagsticks with flags of two different colors, one color being used when the hole is at the front of the green and the other when the hole is at the back?

A. Yes.

DECISION 17/3
Flagstick Tapered or of Varying Diameters

Q. May a flagstick be tapered or have a slender metal ferrule at the base?

A. Yes. The Definition does not prohibit sections of varying diameters. The Definition requires that the flagstick be circular in cross-section. This is to prohibit non-circular features in the lower part of the flagstick.

DECISION 17/3.5
Reflector on Flagstick

Q. To aid in the use of distance measuring devices, a course has reflectors on its flagsticks. However, the reflectors are not circular in cross-section. Is the use of such reflectors permissible?

A. Yes. The use of small non-circular reflectors is an exception to the requirement in the Definition of "Flagstick" that a flagstick and any attachment to it must be circular in cross-section.

Related Decisions:

- 8-1/2 Exchanging Distance Information.
- 14-3/0.5 Local Rule Permitting Use of Distance-Measuring Device.
- 14-3/0.7 Player Obtains Distance Information Measured with Electronic Device.
DECISION 17/4
Adjustment of Flagstick; Player's Rights

Q. A player playing from off the putting green and wishing to leave the flagstick in the hole may find that the flagstick is leaning towards his ball (a disadvantage) or away from his ball (an advantage). What are the player's rights in such a situation?

A. As the player is entitled to play the course as he finds it, the flagstick may be left as it is. Alternatively, the flagstick may be centered in the hole, as contemplated by the Definition of "Flagstick."

The flagstick may not be intentionally adjusted to a more favorable position than centered. To do so would infringe Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions).

An opponent or fellow-competitor who centers the flagstick incurs no penalty, but the player may have it restored to its original position. (Revised)

DECISION 17/6
Ball Lodged in Flag Attached to Flagstick

Q. A player's ball lodges in the flag attached to a flagstick. What is the procedure?

A. A flagstick is a movable obstruction and Rule 24-1 applies. However, in taking relief the player may not place the ball in the hole. Therefore, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player must place the ball on the lip of the hole when taking relief.

DECISION 17/7
Hole-Liner Pulled Out by Flagstick Attendant and Ball Falls into Unlined Hole

Q. A flagstick attendant removes the flagstick and, in the process, pulls out the hole-liner. The player's ball rolls into the unlined hole. What is the ruling?
A. The player incurs no penalty and the ball is holed. A hole need not contain a lining – see Definition of "Hole."

**DECISION 17/8**

**Ball Strikes Hole-Liner Pulled Out with Flagstick**

**Q.** A player played a stroke from the putting green. The ball struck the hole-liner, which had stuck to the bottom of the flagstick and had come out of the hole when the person attending the flagstick removed the flagstick. Is there any penalty?

**A.** No. A hole-liner is an outside agency. Accordingly, if the hole-liner was moving when the ball struck it, the stroke is canceled and the ball must be replaced – Rule 19-1b. If the hole-liner was not moving, the ball must be played as it lies – Rule 19-1. In case of doubt, the ball must be played as it lies.

**DECISION 17/9**

**Attendant Removes Flagstick Whereupon Knob Falls from Top of Flagstick and Deflects Ball**

**Q.** After a player putts, the flagstick attendant removes the flagstick and a knob attached to the top of the flagstick falls off. The knob strikes the player's moving ball and deflects it. What is the ruling?

**A.** Once detached the knob was no longer a part of the flagstick. It was an outside agency. Therefore, the stroke is canceled and the ball must be replaced – Rule 19-1b.

Other Decisions related to Rule 17: See "Flagstick" in the Index.

**DECISION 17-1/1**

**Meaning of "Stands Near the Hole"**

**Q.** Note 1 to Rule 17-1 states that, if anyone "stands near the hole," he is deemed to be attending the flagstick. Is such a person considered to be standing "near the hole" if he is close enough to touch the flagstick?
A. Yes.

DECISION 17-1/2
Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Declines to Attend Flagstick

Q. Does a player have any redress if he requests his opponent or a fellow-competitor to attend the flagstick for him and the opponent or fellow-competitor declines?

A. No.

DECISION 17-1/3
Flagstick Attended by Referee, Observer or Marker at Player's Request

Q. A player requests a referee, observer or marker to attend the flagstick and the referee, observer or marker does so. Is the player subject to penalty?

A. A referee or observer should not attend the flagstick – see Definitions of "Referee" and "Observer." However, a player incurs no penalty if he makes such a request and the referee or observer complies.

A marker may attend the flagstick even if he is not a fellow-competitor.

DECISION 17-1/4
Flagstick Attendant Stands Behind Hole

Q. May a person attending the flagstick stand directly behind the hole, instead of to the side of it?

A. Yes. A flagstick attendant might have to stand behind the hole to avoid standing on the line of putt of another player.

DECISION 17-1/4.5
Flagstick Attendant Removes Flagstick and Holds It Upright Behind Hole; End of Flagstick Touches Green
Q. A player preparing to putt asks his caddie to attend the flagstick. The caddie removes the flagstick from the hole and holds it upright two or three inches directly behind the hole, with the end of the flagstick touching the putting green. He attends the flagstick in this manner to eliminate the risk of the flagstick sticking in the hole. Is such a procedure a breach of the Rules?

A. No, but such a practice is not recommended because of the possibility of damage to the putting green.

DECISION 17-1/5
Holding Flagstick with One Hand and Putting with Other Hand

Q. A player holds the flagstick with one hand and holes a short putt, gripping the putter with his other hand. Is this permissible?

A. Yes, provided the flagstick has been removed from the hole and the ball therefore does not strike it. If the ball were to strike the flagstick, a breach of Rule 17-3a would occur.

Related Decision:
• 14-3/9 Player Putts with One Hand and Steadies Himself with Club Held in Other Hand.

FAQ Rule 17-1
Replacing Flagstick after Ball Played from Putting Green Comes to Rest off Green

Q. Amy had the flagstick removed from the hole before playing on the putting green. She misjudged the distance, and the ball rolled off the green. May she have the flagstick replaced in the hole before playing her next stroke?
A. Yes. There is nothing in Rule 17 that prohibits the replacement of the flagstick during play of the hole.

• Attending Flagstick When Ball Off Putting Green

FAQ Rule 17-1
Attending Flagstick When Ball Off Putting Green

**Q.** May I have the flagstick attended when my ball lies off the putting green?

**A.** Yes, the provisions of Rule 17-1 apply regardless of the location of the ball, provided the attending does not unduly delay play.

Below you can view videos related to this Rule.

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**RULE 17-2. Unauthorized Attendance**

If an **opponent** or his **caddie** in match play or a **fellow-competitor** or his **caddie** in stroke play, without the player’s authority or prior knowledge, attends, removes or holds up the **flagstick** during the **stroke** or while the ball is in motion, and the act might influence the movement of the ball, the **opponent** or **fellow-competitor** incurs the applicable penalty.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 17-1 Or 17-2:**

- **Match play** – Loss of hole; **Stroke play** – Two strokes.

*In stroke play, if a breach of Rule 17-2 occurs and the **competitor’s** ball subsequently strikes the **flagstick**, the person attending or holding it or anything carried by him, the **competitor** incurs no penalty. The ball is played as it lies, except that if the **stroke** was made on the **putting green**, the **stroke** is canceled and the ball must be replaced and replayed.*

**DECISION 17-2/1**

**Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Attends Flagstick Without Authority But Ceases Attendance on Instruction of Player**
Q. While a player is preparing to play from near the putting green, his opponent or fellow-competitor attends the flagstick without the player’s authority or prior knowledge. The player makes the stroke, looks up and sees the flagstick being attended. While the ball is in motion, the player tells the opponent or fellow-competitor to leave the flagstick in the hole and step away, which he does. What is the ruling?

A. Since the unauthorized attendance might have influenced the movement of the ball, the opponent or fellow-competitor was in breach of Rule 17-2. The opponent or fellow-competitor does not avoid the penalty under Rule 17-2 by ceasing his attendance of the flagstick.

In match play, the opponent loses the hole (Rule 17-2).

In stroke play, the fellow-competitor is penalized two strokes and the ball is played as it lies. If the player's ball strikes the flagstick, the player incurs no penalty (Rule 17-2).

DECISION 17-2/2
Flagstick Attended by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Without Authority While Player's Ball in Motion

Q. A player plays from just off the putting green with the flagstick in the hole. While the ball is in motion and still 20 yards from the hole, an opponent or fellow-competitor, without the authority of the player, removes the flagstick as he mistakenly believes that the player will be penalized if his ball strikes the flagstick in the hole. The ball comes to rest five yards short of the hole. What is the ruling?

A. Under Rule 17-2, the opponent or fellow-competitor is penalized if the removal of the flagstick might have influenced the movement of the ball. The determination as to whether there is a reasonable possibility that the removal of the flagstick might have influenced the movement of the ball is made by reference to the situation at the time the flagstick was removed.
In this case, since the flagstick was removed before it was possible to know what the result of the stroke might be, and since the intention of the player making the stroke was to get the ball as close to the hole as possible, at the moment the flagstick was removed it was reasonably possible that its removal might have influenced the movement of the ball. Therefore, the opponent loses the hole in match play or the fellow-competitor incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play for a breach of Rule 17-2.

If a flagstick is removed, attended, or held up without authority by an opponent or fellow-competitor while a ball is in motion, but at the time of the action it is not reasonably possible that the ball will reach the hole or, having gone past the hole, will return to the hole (e.g., as a result of the slope of the putting green, wind, etc.), there is no breach of Rule 17-2.

**RULE 17-3. Ball Striking Flagstick Or Attendant**
The player’s ball must not strike:

a. The *flagstick* when it is attended, removed or held up;

b. The person attending or holding up the *flagstick* or anything carried by him; or

c. The *flagstick* in the *hole*, unattended, when the *stroke* has been made on the *putting green*.

**Exception:** When the *flagstick* is attended, removed or held up without the player’s authority – see Rule 17-2.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 17-3:**

**Match play** – Loss of hole; **Stroke play** – Two strokes and the ball must be played as it lies.

**DECISION 17-3/1**
**Holing Out Without Ball Touching Flagstick**
Q. A player plays a stroke from the putting green without having the flagstick attended. The ball stops momentarily on the lip of the hole and then falls into the hole. The player claims that the ball fell into the hole without striking the flagstick and therefore he incurs no penalty under Rule 17-3. Is the claim valid?

A. No. A ball is not holed until it is at rest in the hole – see Definition of "Holed." If the flagstick is in the hole, it is impossible for a ball to come to rest in the hole without striking the flagstick.

DECISION 17-3/2
Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Attending Flagstick for Player Fails to Remove It; Player's Ball Strikes Flagstick

Q. A's ball lies on the putting green. A requests B, his opponent or fellow-competitor, to attend the flagstick, and B complies. A putts and B fails to remove the flagstick. A's ball strikes the flagstick. What is the ruling?

A. If B failed to remove the flagstick for the purpose of causing A to incur a penalty, B is disqualified, in both match play and stroke play, under Rule 33-7 for taking an action contrary to the spirit of the game. In stroke play, in equity (Rule 1-4), A must replay the stroke without penalty.

If B's failure to remove the flagstick was with the intent to influence the movement of A's ball (e.g., for the purpose of preventing A's ball from going beyond the flagstick), B is in breach of Rule 1-2, and loses the hole in match play or incurs a two-stroke penalty in stroke play, whether the ball strikes the flagstick or not. In stroke play, if the ball struck the flagstick and as a result A suffered significant advantage or disadvantage, then the Committee could consider B to have committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the penalty for which is disqualification. Whether or not B has committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, in stroke play, if A's ball struck the flagstick, in equity (Rule 1-4), A must replay the stroke without penalty – see Note 2 to Rule 1-2.

If B's failure to remove the flagstick was not deliberate (e.g., the flagstick stuck in the hole-liner or B was distracted and did not see A putt), since B was acting on A's behalf, A incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two
strokes in stroke play under Rule 17-3. A must play the ball as it lies. B incurs no penalty.

Related Decisions:

• **1-2/0.5** Serious Breach of Rule 1-2.

• **1-2/1** Line of Putt Altered Purposely by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor by Stepping on It.

• **16-1b/3** Ball Lifted from Putting Green; Ball Replaced While Another Ball in Motion Subsequently Deflects Ball.

• **16-1b/4** Ball Lifted from Putting Green by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor While Player's Ball in Motion.

• **19-1/5** Ball Deliberately Deflected or Stopped on Putting Green by Fellow-Competitor.

**DECISION 17-3/3**

**Ball Strikes Flagstick Lying on Ground**

**Q.** Generally, the player's ball must not strike the flagstick when removed from the hole (Rule 17-3). What is the ruling in the following situations:

1. (a) A player putts too strongly and his ball strikes the flagstick which has been removed by someone in his match or group and placed on the ground behind the hole.
2. (b) A player plays his second shot to the green and the ball strikes the flagstick, which had been blown down by the wind and was lying on the ground.
3. (c) A player, not believing he can reach the green which is occupied by the preceding match or group, plays his second shot at a par-5 hole and the ball rolls onto the green and strikes the flagstick which has been removed from the hole and placed on the ground by someone in the preceding match or group.

**A.**
1. (a) The player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 17-3A.
2. (b) & (c) No penalty is incurred. Rule 17-3A is not applicable in either case. It applies only when the flagstick has been removed with the player's authority or prior knowledge by someone in the player's match or group.

DECISION 17-3/4
Flagstick Attended by Partner Without Express Authority of Player; Ball Strikes Flagstick or Partner

Q. In four-ball play, A is preparing to play from off the putting green. B, A's partner, attends the flagstick without A's knowledge or express authority. A plays and his ball strikes B or the flagstick. What is the ruling?

A. If the flagstick is attended by the player's caddie, his partner or his partner's caddie, i.e., by a member of the player's side, it is deemed to be attended with the player's knowledge and authority.

Accordingly, in match play A is disqualified from the hole (Rule 17-3b), but B incurs no penalty (Rule 30-3f).

In stroke play, A incurs a penalty of two strokes and must play the ball as it lies (Rule 17-3b), but B incurs no penalty (Rule 31-8).

DECISION 17-3/5
Flag Struck by Ball When Flagstick Attended

Q. While the flagstick was being attended, a player's ball struck the flag attached to the flagstick. Did the player incur a penalty under Rule 17-3a?

A. Yes. The flag is part of the flagstick.

DECISION 17-3/6
Marking Position of Hole with Club
Q. The flagstick has been removed. A wants the position of the hole marked but he does not want to waste time retrieving the flagstick. So A asks B to place the grip end of his putter in the hole. Is this permissible?

A. Yes, but a putter used to mark the position of the hole must be treated as a flagstick for the purposes of applying the Rules.

RULE 17-4. Ball Resting Against Flagstick
When a player’s ball rests against the flagstick in the hole and the ball is not holed, the player or another person authorized by him may move or remove the flagstick, and if the ball falls into the hole, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke; otherwise, the ball, if moved, must be placed on the lip of the hole, without penalty.

BALL RESTING AGAINST FLAGSTICK
DECISION 17-4/1
Ball Resting Against Flagstick Lifted Before Being Holed

Q. A player's ball is resting against the flagstick, but it is not holed because all of it is not below the level of the lip of the hole. However, the player, believing the ball is holed, picks it up. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 20-1 for lifting his ball without marking its position. The player must replace the ball against the flagstick and may then apply Rule 17-4.

Related Decision:
• 30-3f/3 Player's Ball Resting Against Flagstick Lifted Before Being Holed; Others in Match Pick Up Mistakenly Believing Player Won Hole.

FAQ Rule 17-3
Ball Strikes Person Attending Flagstick
Q. Shawn has asked Jerry to attend the flagstick while he plays. The ball rolls towards Jerry and strikes his foot. What is the ruling?
A. Shawn incurs a penalty as the ball struck the person he had authorized to attend the flagstick. When Shawn asked Jerry to do so, he assumed all responsibility for Jerry`s actions.

DECISION 17-4/2
Ball Resting Against Flagstick; Putt Conceded and Ball Removed Before Player Can Remove Flagstick

Q. In a match, A plays a stroke from off the green and his ball comes to rest against the flagstick. B, A's opponent, concedes A's next stroke and removes A's ball. Despite B's concession, is A entitled to have the ball replaced to enable him to exercise his rights under Rule 17-4?

A. Yes. When A's ball was resting against the flagstick, Rule 17-4 applied and A was entitled to have the flagstick moved or removed to see whether the ball would fall into the hole. B had no right to remove the ball and concede the next stroke until A had had an opportunity to proceed under Rule 17-4. By removing A's ball, B was in breach of Rule 18-3b and incurred a penalty stroke; A should then have replaced his ball against the flagstick and applied Rule 17-4.

DECISION 17-4/3
Ball Resting Against Flagstick Moves Away from Hole When Flagstick Removed by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor

Q. A player's ball is resting against the flagstick. Without the player's authority, his opponent or a fellow-competitor removes the flagstick and the ball moves away from the hole. What is the ruling?

A. In match play, the opponent incurs a penalty stroke and the ball must be replaced against the flagstick (Rule 18-3b).

In stroke play, the ball must be replaced against the flagstick without penalty to anyone (Rule 18-4).
In either form of play, the player may then move or remove the flagstick as prescribed in Rule 17-4.

DECISION 17-4/4
Ball Resting Against Flagstick Moves Away from Hole When Flagstick Removed by Player; Ball Not Placed on Lip of Hole

Q. A player's ball is resting against the flagstick. The player removes the flagstick and the ball moves away from the hole. The player plays the ball from its new position, holing the putt. What is the ruling?

A. The player was required to place the ball on the lip of the hole (Rule 17-4). In match play, the player loses the hole – Rules 17-4 and 2-6.

In stroke play, the player incurs a penalty of two strokes and the ball is holed – Rules 17-4 and 3-5.

Other Decisions related to Rule 17-4:
• 16-2/4 Ball Overhanging Lip of Hole Moves When Flagstick Removed

• 16-2/5 Ball Overhanging Lip of Hole Moves and Strikes Flagstick During Removal of Flagstick

FAQ Rule 17-4
Holing Ball with Flagstick in Hole after Stroke from off Putting Green
Q. Jeff played a stroke from off the putting green. The ball came to rest in the hole, leaning against the flagstick, and all of the ball was below the lip of the hole. What should Jeff do?
A. Jeff's ball is holed. The provisions of Rule 17-4 do not apply once the ball is holed. (Definition of "Holed" and Rule 17-4)

BALL MOVED, DEFLECTED OR STOPPED
Rule 18
Ball At Rest Moved
Rule 18. Ball at Rest Moved
  • Ball In Play Moved By Wind Or Gravity

RULE 18-1. By Outside Agency
If a ball at rest is *moved* by an outside agency, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced.

**Note:** It is a question of fact whether a ball has been *moved* by an outside agency. In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that an outside agency has *moved* the ball. In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must play the ball as it lies or, if the ball is not found, proceed under Rule 27-1.

DECISION 18/2
Ball Oscillates During Address

**Q.** In addressing the ball, a player accidentally causes the ball to oscillate, but it returns to its original position. Has the ball "moved"?

**A.** No.

(Player’s ball at rest moved by another ball – see Rule 18-5)

DECISION 18/4
Television Evidence Shows Ball at Rest Changed Position But by Amount Not Reasonably Discernible to Naked Eye

**Q.** A player addresses his ball. He observes a slight motion of the ball but believes that it has only oscillated and has not left its original position. He therefore plays the ball as it lies. Later, the Committee becomes aware from television evidence that the ball had in fact left its position and come to rest in another place, although that change of position was such that it was not reasonably discernible to the naked eye at the time of the incident. What is the ruling?
A. The ball is deemed not to have moved and therefore there is no penalty under Rule 18-2b. The Definition of "Moved" – when a ball "leaves its position and comes to rest in any other place" – does not contemplate movements of the ball that are only discernible through the use of high definition television or any other form of sophisticated technology.

When determining whether or not his ball at rest has moved, a player must make that judgment based on all the information readily available to him at the time, so that he can determine whether the ball must be replaced under Rule 18-2b or another applicable Rule. 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 will be deemed to be 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 is deemed to have moved. As the player did not replace the ball, he incurs a penalty under the applicable Rule and Rule 20-7c for playing from a wrong place.

These principles apply to any review of technological evidence by the Committee, whether before the player makes his next stroke or any time thereafter. These principles also apply in a situation in which the player made no determination whether or not his ball at rest moved (e.g., because he had walked away from his ball after addressing it, was not looking at his ball, or otherwise did not observe any motion of the ball or have any reason to believe that his ball might have moved).

Before determining whether his ball has moved, it is advisable for the player to obtain information from nearby witnesses to the incident and to seek guidance from a referee if one is immediately available. (New)

DECISION 18/2
Ball Oscillates During Address
Q. In addressing the ball, a player accidentally causes the ball to oscillate, but it returns to its original position. Has the ball "moved"?

A. No.

DECISION 18-1/3
Player Unaware Ball Moved by Outside Agency Does Not Replace Ball

Q. In stroke play, a player's ball was moved by an outside agency. Neither the player nor his caddie was aware that his ball had been moved, so the player played the ball without replacing it. He then learned that his ball had been moved. What is the ruling?

A. As it was not known or virtually certain that the ball had been moved by an outside agency when the player played the ball, he proceeded properly and incurred no penalty – see the Note to Rule 18-1.

DECISION 18-1/4
Spectator Says Ball Was Moved by Outside Agency But Player Not Sure

Q. A spectator tells a player that his ball has been moved by an outside agency. Neither the player nor his caddie was aware the ball had been moved. Is the player obliged to take the spectator's word and replace the ball on the spot from which the spectator said it was moved?

A. No. In stroke play, if it is impractical to get a decision from the Committee, the player should, under Rule 3-3, hole out both with the original ball and a second ball played from the spot from which the original ball is alleged to have been moved, and request the Committee to decide the matter at the end of the round. In reaching a decision the Committee should interrogate the spectator, if possible.

In match play, if there is no referee or representative of the Committee available within a reasonable time, the player and his opponent should, if possible, agree on the place from which the player should play his next stroke. If agreement cannot be reached, the player must proceed as he thinks best, and if the opponent does not agree with the action taken, he should
lodge a claim under Rule 2-5 so that the Committee may make a decision under Rule 34-3.

DECISION 18-1/12
Ball Replaced and at Rest Is Thereafter Moved by Wind

Q. A player replaces his ball on the putting green and the ball is at rest. Before the player addresses the ball, a sudden gust of wind blows the ball farther from the hole. The player plays the ball from its new position. Is that correct?

A. Yes. Wind is not an outside agency – see Definition of "Outside Agency." Accordingly, Rule 18-1 does not apply.

RULE 18-2. By Player, Partner, Caddie Or Equipment
a. General
Except as permitted by the Rules, when a player’s ball is in play, if

(i) the player, his partner or either of their caddies:

• lifts or moves the ball,

• touches it purposely (except with a club in the act of addressing the ball), or

• causes the ball to move, or

(ii) the equipment of the player or his partner causes the ball to move,

the player incurs a penalty of one stroke.

If the ball is moved, it must be replaced, unless the movement of the ball occurs after the player has begun the stroke or the backward movement of the club for the stroke and the stroke is made.
Under the Rules there is no penalty if a player accidentally causes his ball to move in the following circumstances:

- In searching for a ball covered by sand, in the replacement of Loose Impediments moved in a Hazard while finding or identifying a ball, in probing for a ball lying in water in a Water Hazard or in searching for a ball in an Obstruction or an Abnormal Ground Condition – Rule 12-1
- In repairing a Hole plug or ball mark – Rule 16-1C
- In measuring – Rule 18-6
- In lifting a ball under a Rule – Rule 20-1
- In placing or replacing a ball under a Rule – Rule 20-3A
- In removing a Loose Impediment on the Putting Green – Rule 23-1
- In removing movable Obstructions – Rule 24-1

b. Ball Moving After Address

If a player’s ball in play moves after he has addressed it (other than as a result of a stroke), the player is deemed to have moved the ball and incurs a penalty of one stroke.

The ball must be replaced, unless the movement of the ball occurs after the player has begun the stroke or the backward movement of the club for the stroke and the stroke is made.

Exception: If it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause his ball to move, Rule 18-2b does not apply.

DECISION 18-2a/7
Ball Moved by Wind Replaced

Q. In stroke play, a competitor's ball was moved by wind. Since wind is not an outside agency (see Definition of "Outside Agency"), he should have played it from where it came to rest, but he replaced it. What is the ruling?

A. The competitor incurred one penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a, and, before playing his next stroke, he should have replaced the ball on the spot where it came to rest after being moved by the wind. If he did not do so, he incurred a total penalty of two strokes – see penalty statement under Rule 18.
DECISION 18-2a/13
Ball Lifted Without Authority and Cleaned

Q. A player's ball comes to rest on the apron of a green. Mistakenly believing that the ball is on the green, the player marks, lifts and cleans it. The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a for lifting the ball without authority under the Rules. Does the player incur an additional penalty stroke under Rule 21 for cleaning the ball?

A. No. Rule 21 states that a ball may be cleaned when lifted except when it has been lifted in accordance with Rule 5-3, 12-2 or 22.

DECISION 18-2a/18
Opponent's Ball Knocked Away by Player After Concession Moves Player's Ball

Q. In singles match play, A concedes B's next stroke and knocks B's ball away. B's ball in motion moves A's ball. What is the ruling?

A. As A caused his own ball to move, he incurred a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a, and he must replace his ball.

DECISION 18-2a/20
Ball in Play Moved Accidentally by Practice Swing

Q. A player makes a practice swing and accidentally moves his ball in play with his club. Has he made a stroke?

A. No. He had no intention of moving the ball – see Definition of "Stroke." However, he incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a for moving his ball in play, and the ball must be replaced.

DECISION 18-2a/23
Ball Knocked from Lip of Hole in Disgust

Q. In stroke play, a competitor's ball stops on the lip of the hole. In disgust the competitor knocks his ball off the green with the back of his putter. What is the ruling?
A. The competitor must replace the ball under penalty of one stroke (Rule 18-2a). The competitor is not considered to have made a stroke.

DECISION 18-2a/33
Rotating Ball on Putting Green Without Marking Position

Q. A player rotates his ball on the putting green to line up the trademark with the hole. He did not lift the ball, mark its position or change its position. Is there a penalty?

A. Yes, one stroke for touching the ball other than as provided for in the Rules (Rule 18-2a). Under Rules 16-1b and 20-1, a ball on the putting green may be lifted (or touched and rotated) after its position has been marked. If the player had marked the position of the ball before rotating it, there would have been no penalty.

Related Decisions:
• 12-2/2 Touching and Rotating Half-Buried Ball in Rough for Identification Purposes.

• 20-3a/2 Using Line on Ball for Alignment.

DECISION 18-2b/1
Ball Moves After Address; Movement May Have Been Due to the Effects of Gravity

Q. A player addressed his ball and it subsequently moved. It is uncertain what caused the ball to move as the conditions at the time were calm, there were no outside agencies present and the player did nothing obvious to cause the ball to move. The player believed that, as he did not cause his ball to move, it must have moved as a result of the effects of gravity and, therefore, the Exception to Rule 18-2b should apply. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2b and the ball must be replaced.
The effects of gravity do not satisfy the Exception to Rule 18-2b. The Exception only applies when it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause his ball to move. In order to meet this standard, it must be known or virtually certain that some other observable factor (e.g., wind, water or an outside agency) caused the ball to move. Otherwise, the player is deemed to have caused the movement and Rule 18-2b applies. (New)

**DECISION 18-2b/4**

**Ball Moves After Player Grounds Club Short Distance Behind Ball But Before Grounding Club Immediately Behind Ball**

**Q.** A player's routine prior to making a stroke is as follows: he first grounds the club a short distance behind, but not immediately behind the ball. Then, he places the clubhead immediately behind the ball and makes the stroke.

If the ball moves after he grounds the club a short distance behind, but before he grounds it immediately behind, the ball, does he incur a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2b (Ball Moving After Address)?

**A.** No. A player has not addressed the ball until he has placed the clubhead immediately in front of or behind the ball – see Definition of "Addressing the Ball."

However, it is a question of fact to be resolved by reference to all available evidence whether the player in fact caused the ball at rest to move. If the player did so, he incurs a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2a and must replace his ball. Otherwise, the ball must be played from its new location without penalty unless another Rule applies.

**DECISION 18-2b/5**

**Ball Moves When Club Rested on Grass Immediately Behind Ball**

**Q.** A player's ball is at rest. He rests his club on the grass immediately behind the ball and the ball moves. What is the ruling?

**A.** If the grass had been compressed to the point where it would support the weight of the club, the club is considered grounded. Therefore, the player has
addressed the ball and Rule 18-2b applies. The player incurs a one-stroke penalty and must replace his ball unless it is known or virtually certain that some other agency (e.g., a dog or wind) caused the ball to move.

If the grass had not been compressed to the point where it would support the weight of the club, the player has not grounded his club and, therefore, has not addressed his ball. The player incurs no penalty under Rule 18-2b, but he is subject to penalty under Rule 18-2a if the player's actions caused the ball to move.

DECISION 18-2b/5.5
Placing Clubhead on Ground in Front of Ball When Addressing

Q. A player places his clubhead on the ground immediately in front of the ball without pressing anything down. Before the player grounds the club behind the ball, the ball moves. Has the player "addressed the ball" so that he is subject to penalty under Rule 18-2b?

A. Yes.

DECISION 18-2b/7
Ball Moves After Player Addresses It and Then Steps Away

Q. A player addresses his ball. Realizing that the ball is precariously balanced and may move, he steps away from the ball and starts again. This time he does not address the ball, but before he strikes the ball, it moves. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2b and the ball must be replaced, unless it is known or virtually certain that something else (e.g., wind) caused the ball to move.

DECISION 18-2b/8
Player Addresses Ball, Steps Away, Lifts Ball and Replaces It; Ball Then Moves

Q. On the putting green, a player addressed the ball. He stepped away from the ball, marked its position and lifted it. He then replaced the ball and, be-
fore he addressed it, the ball moved. Since the ball was lifted and out of play after it was addressed, was the player subject to penalty under Rule 18-2b when it moved after it was put back into play?

A. No. The ball must be played as it lies. Once the ball has been lifted the presumption inherent in the Rule that the act of addressing the ball caused the ball to move is no longer valid.

DECISION 18-2b/10
Ball Falls into Hole After Being Addressed

Q. A player's ball overhangs the lip of the hole. He addresses the ball and it falls into the hole. What is the ruling?

A. The ball is not holed. The player incurs a penalty stroke and the ball must be replaced. Although Rule 16-2 applies when a player's ball overhangs the lip of the hole, Rule 18-2b, which specifically applies when a player's ball moves after he has addressed it, overrides Rule 16-2 in this case.

If the player does not replace the ball and hole out, in stroke play he is disqualified under Rule 3-2.

DECISION 18-2b/11
Ball Moved by Another Agency After Address

Q. After a player has addressed his ball in play, some other agency (e.g., a ball played by another player) moves the player's ball. Is the player subject to penalty under Rule 18-2b?

A. No. As it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause the ball to move, Rule 18-2b does not apply – see Exception under Rule 18-2b. In such a case where an agency directly causes a ball to move, the Rule applicable to that agency (e.g., Rule 18-1, 18-2a, 18-3, 18-4 or 18-5) applies. (Revised)

DECISION 18-2b/12
Ball Moves After Address and Is Stopped by Player's Club
Q. After a player addresses his ball, the ball moves backward. Before the player can remove his club, the ball is stopped by the clubhead. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule **18-2b** and the ball must be replaced. A further penalty under Rule **19-2** (Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped by Player) does not apply in these circumstances, as the act of his clubhead stopping the ball was related to the initial act of his ball moving after address – see Principle 4 of Decision **1-4/12**.

If it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause the ball to move, Rule **18-2b** does not apply (see Exception to Rule **18-2b**). In such circumstances, the player would incur a one-stroke penalty under Rule **19-2** for accidentally deflecting or stopping his ball in motion with his equipment, and must play the ball as it lies.

**Experts Explain: Ball Moving After Address**
*Posted: 12/21/2011*

By John Van der Borght

**On Jan. 1, 2012, The Rules Of Golf Will Change. One Change That Has Received Significant Interest Is To Rule 18-2B (Ball Moving After Address) Regarding A Ball That Moves After Address.**

Rule 18-2b states:

If a player’s ball in play moves after he has addressed it (other than as a result of stroke), the player is deemed to have moved the ball and incurs a penalty stroke.

The ball must be replaced, unless the movement of the ball occurs after the player has begun the stroke or the backward movement of the club for the stroke and the stroke is made.

This part of Rule 18-2b has not changed. What has changed is that an “Exception” has been added:

**Exception:** If it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause the ball to move, Rule 18-2b does not apply.
This means that if you know your ball was moved by something else, such as a dog, a person or another ball, or you are virtually certain that wind or water caused your ball to move, you are not subject to penalty under Rule 18-2b.

If some agency such as a dog, person or ball moved your ball, you would need to go the appropriate section of Rule 18 to determine if there is a penalty to be applied. In all these cases, the ball must be replaced.

If wind or water moved the ball, there would be no penalty and the ball would not be replaced but would be played from where it came to rest. In general, it would need to be quite a windy day with fast greens to apply this exception.

What if the ball merely falls into a small indentation on the green after address? Decision 18-2b/11 states, “Gravity is not in itself an element that should be considered when applying the Exception to Rule 18-2b; therefore unless it is known or virtually certain that some agency other than gravity (e.g. outside agency or wind) caused the ball to move after address, the player is subject to a one stroke penalty under Rule 18-2b and must replace the ball.”

**When Rule 18-2a Is Still Applicable**

If you have not addressed your ball then Rule 18-2b would not apply, but you should be aware that Rule 18-2a (Ball at Rest Moved by Player, Partner, Caddie or Equipment) may apply. Rule 18-2a says that if you caused your ball in play to move you may be liable for a penalty. Rule 18-2a lists a number of circumstances when the player is not penalized, but in all other cases there is a penalty. Regardless, Rule 18 requires that your ball be replaced.

Frequently, players know they haven’t addressed their ball and think they can’t be penalized, but they may still have caused the ball to move. (For example, if you bounce your club off the
ground 2 inches behind the ball and the ball drops off a small tuft of grass at that same instant.) Your action could easily have caused the ball to move and you should be penalized one stroke under Rule 18-2a.

Was It Gravity?
.Posted: 2/18/2014

By John Van der Borght, Manager, Rules Communications

Is It A Penalty If Gravity Appears To Be The Cause Of Your Ball Moving After Address?

Your ball is on the putting green and you’ve lifted it, cleaned it and replaced it. After reading your putt, you are ready to play. You place your club on the ground immediately behind the ball. But before you hit the ball, it rocks and falls forward, moving $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch. What is the ruling?

**Rule 18-2B – Ball At Rest Moved – After Address** states that once you have **Addressed Your Ball**, which you did when you grounded the club immediately behind the ball, you are deemed to have caused any movement that occurs. In 2012, an Exception was added to this Rule which states that if it is known or virtually certain that some other agency caused your ball to move, you are not penalized for the movement and must proceed appropriately under the Rules (see also Decision 18-2B/11 – Ball Moved By Another Agency After Address). This Exception was added to cover situations such as a ball that is moved by wind on a blustery day.

However, what if it isn’t windy at all? Can you claim that gravity caused your ball to move? The answer to this question is found in the new Decision 18-2B/1 – Ball Moves After Address; Movement May Have Been Due To The Effect Of Gravity. The Decision states, “The effects of gravity do not satisfy the Exception to Rule 18-2b. The Exception only applies when it is known
or virtually certain that the player did not cause his ball to move. In order to meet this standard, it must be known or virtually certain that some other observable factor (e.g., wind, water or an outside agency) caused the ball to move. Otherwise, the player is deemed to have caused the movement and Rule 18-2b applies.” Since gravity is not considered to be an “observable” factor, the Exception to Rule 18-2b cannot apply.

Therefore, when your ball moves after address and there is no observable outside factor involved, you are penalized one stroke and must replace the ball. Remember, when your ball is teetering on the edge of a small bump or a severe slope in the green, be very careful or consider putting without grounding your golf club.

The USGA will provide up to two Rules of Golf books for a minimal shipping-and-handling charge. Contact the USGA Order Department at 1-800-336-4446, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (ET) or go to the USGA Shop on usga.org.

Staying Put
Posted: 5/27/2009

Have You Ever Played On A Windy Day When, On A Relatively Fast Or Sloping Putting Green After Marking, Lifting And Perhaps Giving Your Golf Ball A Good Cleaning, You Attempt To Replace It, But It Won’t Stay In Place?

There is a Rule to help out: If the ball will not stay at rest after you replace it, you must proceed in accordance with Rule 20-3d (Ball Fails to Come to Rest on Spot), which says the following:

If a ball when placed fails to come to rest on the spot on which it was placed, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced. If it still fails to come to rest on that spot:

(i) except in a hazard, it must be placed at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the hole and not in a hazard:
(ii) in a hazard, it must be placed in the hazard at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the hole.

If a ball when placed comes to rest on the spot on which it is placed, and it subsequently moves, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, unless the provisions of any other Rule apply.

There is a spot on the golf course where the ball will come to rest and it might be off the putting green -- you’ve simply got to find that nearest spot.

The last part of the Rule explains that once the ball is replaced and at rest, if it subsequently moves as a result of wind or gravity, the ball must be played from where it came to rest, without penalty.

**FAQ Rule 18-2**

Ball in Play Moved by Wind or Gravity

**Q.** A player replaces his ball on the putting green and the ball is at rest. Without addressing the ball the player steps away to read his putt.

The ball moves either due to the wind or the slope of the putting green. How should the player proceed?

**A.** The player must play his ball from the new position without penalty.

If the ball was moved into the hole then the player is deemed to have holed out with his previous stroke (Decision 20-3d/1).

Note: It is not relevant whether the player had removed his ball-marker before the ball was moved by the wind or gravity as the player's ball was in play when it was replaced (Rule 20-4).

Below you can view videos related to this Rule.

**Video**

*Outside agency decided to wreak havoc with the ball*
At the 1998 Players Championship, Steve Lowery's ball was at rest on the green when an outside agency decided to wreak havoc with the ball.

FAQ Rule 18-2
Practice Swing Accidentally Moves Ball in Play
Q. While making a practice swing, Brenda accidentally moved her ball in play with her club. What is the ruling?
A. Brenda incurs a one stroke penalty, and must replace the ball to its original position. If she fails to replace the ball, she will incur a total penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. Please refer to the Penalty Statement under Rule 18. (Rule 18-2a and Decision 18-2a/20)

Below you can view videos related to this Rule.

Video
Outside agency decided to wreak havoc with the ball
At the 1998 Players Championship, Steve Lowery's ball was at rest on the green when an outside agency decided to wreak havoc with the ball.

FAQ Rule 18-2
Player Addresses Ball, Backs Away; Ball Then Moves
Q. A player addresses his ball. Realising that the ball is precariously balanced and may move, he steps away from the ball and starts again. This time he does not address the ball, but before he strikes the ball, it moves. What is the ruling?
A. The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2b and the ball must be replaced, unless it is known or virtually certain that something else (e.g., wind) caused the ball to move. (Decision 18-2b/7)

Note: This FAQ has been updated to reflect the 2012 Rules Of Golf.

- Practice Swing Accidentally Moves Ball Before Stroke On Teeing Ground
- Opponent Steps On Ball During Search
- Fellow-Competitor Moves Ball

RULE 18-3. By Opponent, Caddie Or Equipment In Match Play
a. During Search

If, during search for a player’s ball, an opponent, his caddie or his equipment, moves the ball, touches it or causes it to move, there is no penalty. If the ball is moved, it must be replaced.

b. Other Than During Search

If, other than during search for a player’s ball, an opponent, his caddie or his equipment, moves the ball, touches it purposely or causes it to move, except as otherwise provided in the Rules, the opponent incurs a penalty of one stroke. If the ball is moved, it must be replaced.

(Playing a wrong ball – see Rule 15-3)

(Ball moved in measuring – see Rule 18-6)

RULE 18-4. By Fellow-Competitor, Caddie Or Equipment In Stroke Play

If a fellow-competitor, his caddie or his equipment, moves the player’s ball, touches it or causes it to move, there is no penalty. If the ball is moved, it must be replaced.

(Playing a wrong ball – see Rule 15-3)
FAQ Rule 18-4
Fellow-Competitor Moves Ball
Q. My fellow-competitor in stroke play moved my ball. Is he penalized?
A. No. There is no penalty to either of you, and the ball must be replaced.

- Ball At Rest Moved By Another Ball

RULE 18-5. By Another Ball
If a ball in play and at rest is moved by another ball in motion after a stroke, the moved ball must be replaced.

FAQ Rule 18-5
Ball at Rest Moved by Another Ball
Q. Steve’s ball was at rest on the putting green. Cindy plays from just off the green and her ball hits Steve’s ball. What must Steve do?
A. Under Rule 18-5, Steve must replace his ball back to its original position. (See related FAQ under Rule 19) Cindy must play her ball as it lies. There is no penalty to either player in either match play or stroke play. In stroke play only, if Cindy’s ball lay on the putting green prior to the stroke, she would incur a penalty of two strokes.

Rule 19. Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped
- Ball In Motion Hits Another Ball At Rest

RULE 18-6. Ball Moved In Measuring
If a ball or ball-marker is moved in measuring while proceeding under or in determining the application of a Rule, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of measuring. Otherwise, the provisions of Rule 18-2a, 18-3b or 18-4 apply.

*Penalty For Breach Of Rule:

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.
*If a player who is required to replace a ball fails to do so, or if he makes a stroke at a ball substituted under Rule 18 when such substitution is not permitted, he incurs the general penalty for breach of Rule 18, but there is no additional penalty under this Rule.

**Note 1:** If a ball to be replaced under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be substituted.

**Note 2:** If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered, see Rule 20-3b.

**Note 3:** If it is impossible to determine the spot on which a ball is to be placed or replaced, see Rule 20-3c.

**DECISION 18-6/2**
**Ball Moved by Flagstick When Measuring**

**Q.** In measuring with the flagstick to determine the order of play, the player accidentally moves his ball in play with the flagstick. What is the ruling?

**A.** The answer depends on whether the movement of the ball was directly attributable to the specific act of measuring – see Rule 18-6.

If the player was holding or touching the flagstick in the act of measuring when it touched and moved the ball, the movement of the ball was directly attributable to the specific act of measuring. There is no penalty and the ball must be replaced.

If the movement of the ball was not directly attributable to the specific act of measuring (e.g., the player dropped the flagstick on the ball), the player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a and the ball must be replaced.

**Rule 19**
**Ball In Motion Deflected Or Stopped**
RULE 19-1. By Outside Agency
If a player’s ball in motion is accidentally deflected or stopped by any outside agency, it is a rub of the green, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, except:

a. If a player’s ball in motion after a stroke other than on the putting green comes to rest in or on any moving or animate outside agency, the ball must through the green or in a hazard be dropped, or on the putting green be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball came to rest in or on the outside agency, but not nearer the hole, and

b. If a player’s ball in motion after a stroke on the putting green is deflected or stopped by, or comes to rest in or on, any moving or animate outside agency, except a worm, insect or the like, the stroke is canceled. The ball must be replaced and replayed.

If the ball is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be substituted.

Exception: Ball striking person attending or holding up flagstick or anything carried by him – see Rule 17-3b.

Note: If a player’s ball in motion has been deliberately deflected or stopped by an outside agency:

(a) after a stroke from anywhere other than on the putting green, the spot where the ball would have come to rest must be estimated. If that spot is:

(i) through the green or in a hazard, the ball must be dropped as near as possible to that spot;

(ii) out of bounds, the player must proceed under Rule 27-1; or

(iii) on the putting green, the ball must be placed on that spot.
(b) after a stroke on the putting green, the stroke is canceled. The ball must be replaced and replayed.

If the outside agency is a fellow-competitor or his caddie, Rule 1-2 applies to the fellow-competitor.

(Player’s ball deflected or stopped by another ball – see Rule 19-5)

DECISION 19-1/3  
Ball Played from Putting Green Deflected by Moving Outside Agency; Stroke Not Replayed

Q. In stroke play, a competitor putts and his ball is deflected by a moving outside agency other than a worm, insect or the like. The competitor did not replay the stroke as required by Rule 19-1b, holed out and then played from the next tee. What is the ruling?

A. The stroke that was deflected by the outside agency does not count in the competitor's score. When the competitor failed to replay the stroke he played from a wrong place. If the breach was a serious one, he is disqualified – Rule 20-7c. Otherwise, the score with the original ball counts and he incurs a penalty of two strokes for breach of Rule 19.

DECISION 19-1/5  
Ball Deliberately Deflected or Stopped on Putting Green by Fellow-Competitor

Q. At the last hole of a stroke-play event, A's ball lies on the putting green. A has a putt to beat B by one stroke. A puts and B, seeing that A's ball might go into the hole, deliberately deflects it. What is the ruling?

A. A must replay his stroke, without penalty – see Note under Rule 19-1. As B's act of deliberately deflecting his fellow-competitor's ball placed A at a significant disadvantage, B should be considered to have committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions) and should be disqualified.
DECISION 19-1/6
Ball Picked Up or Deflected by Dog on Putting Green After Stroke from Off Green

Q. A ball played from off the green was about a foot from the hole and still in motion when it was moved by a dog to a spot about ten feet from the hole. The ball was either deflected by the dog or the dog picked it up, ran with it and dropped it. What is the ruling?

A. If the ball was deflected, it would be played as it lay, without penalty, from the spot to which it was moved by the dog (Rule 19-1).

If the dog picked up the ball, the player should have placed the ball, without penalty, as near as possible to the spot where the original ball was when the dog picked it up (Rule 19-1a).

DECISION 19-1/7
Ball Picked Up or Deflected by Dog on Putting Green After Stroke on Green

Q. A player plays a stroke on the putting green and, while the ball is still in motion, it is picked up and carried away, or is deflected, by a dog. What is the ruling?

A. In either case, the stroke is canceled and the ball must be replaced (Rule 19-1b).

Other Decisions related to Rule 19-1: See "Ball Deflected or Stopped: by outside agency" in the Index.

RULE 19-2. By Player, Partner, Caddie Or Equipment
If a player’s ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by himself, his partner or either of their caddies or equipment, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke. The ball must be played as it lies, except when it comes to rest in or on the player’s, his partner’s or either of their caddies’ clothes or equipment, in which case the ball must through the green or in a hazard be dropped, or on the putting green be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under
the place where the ball came to rest in or on the article, but not nearer the 
hole.

Exceptions:
1. Ball striking person attending or holding up flagstick or anything carried by 
him – see Rule 17-3b.


(Ball purposely deflected or stopped by player, partner or caddie – see Rule 1-2)

FAQ Rule 19-2
Ball Deflected by Player's Equipment
Q. What is the ruling if my ball in motion is accidentally deflected 
by my equipment?
A. In either form of play (match play or stroke play) the player in-
curs a one-stroke penalty and must play the ball as it lies.

• Ball Deflected By Opponent

RULE 19-3. By Opponent, Caddie Or Equipment In Match Play
If a player’s ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by an opponent, his 
caddie or his equipment, there is no penalty. The player may, before another 
stroke is made by either side, cancel the stroke and play a ball, without pen-
alty, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last 
played (Rule 20-5) or he may play the ball as it lies. However, if the player 
elects not to cancel the stroke and the ball has come to rest in or on the opp-
onent’s or his caddie’s clothes or equipment, the ball must through the 
green or in a hazard be dropped, or on the putting green be placed, as near 
as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball came to rest in 
or on the article, but not nearer the hole.

Exception: Ball striking person attending or holding up flagstick or anything 
carried by him – see Rule 17-3b.
Ball purposely deflected or stopped by opponent or caddie – see Rule 1-2

**FAQ Rule 19-3**

**Ball Deflected by Opponent**

**Q.** What is the ruling if my ball in motion is accidentally deflected by my opponent, his equipment or caddie in match play?

**A.** There is no penalty and you may play the ball as it lies or cancel and replay the stroke.

- **Ball Deflected By Fellow-Competitor**

**RULE 19-4. By Fellow-Competitor, Caddie Or Equipment In Stroke Play**

See Rule 19-1 regarding ball deflected by outside agency.

**Exception:** Ball striking person attending or holding up flagstick or anything carried by him – see Rule 17-3b.

**FAQ Rule 19-4**

**Ball Deflected by Fellow-Competitor**

**Q.** What is the ruling if my ball in motion is accidentally deflected by my fellow-competitor, his equipment or caddie in stroke play?

**A.** There is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies - see Rule 19-1.

**Rule 20. Lifting, Dropping and Placing; Playing from Wrong Place**

- **Club To Be Used In Measuring Club-Lengths**
- **Procedure For Moving Ball-Marker To The Side**

**RULE 19-5. By Another Ball**

**a. At Rest**

If a player’s ball in motion after a stroke is deflected or stopped by a ball in play and at rest, the player must play his ball as it lies. In match play, there is no penalty. In stroke play, there is no penalty, unless both balls lay on the putting green prior to the stroke, in which case the player incurs a penalty of two strokes.
b. In Motion

If a player's ball in motion after a stroke other than on the putting green is deflected or stopped by another ball in motion after a stroke, the player must play his ball as it lies, without penalty.

If a player's ball in motion after a stroke on the putting green is deflected or stopped by another ball in motion after a stroke, the player's stroke is canceled. The ball must be replaced and replayed, without penalty.

**Note:** Nothing in this Rule overrides the provisions of Rule 10-1 (Order of Play in Match Play) or Rule 16-1f (Making Stroke While Another Ball in Motion).

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule:**

**Match play** – Loss of hole; **Stroke play** – Two strokes.

**BALL DEFLECTED OR STOPPED BY ANOTHER BALL**

**DECISION 19-5/1**

Player Lifts His Ball on Putting Green and Sets It Aside; Opponent's or Fellow-Competitor's Ball Played from Green Subsequently Strikes Player's Ball

Q. B lifts his ball on the putting green and sets it aside elsewhere on the green. A then putts and his ball is deflected or stopped by B's ball. What is the ruling?

A. Since A's ball was deflected by B's equipment (see Note 1 under Definition of "Equipment"), Rules 19-3 and 19-4 apply.

In match play, A incurs no penalty and has the option of playing his ball as it lies or canceling and replaying the stroke – Rule 19-3.

In stroke play, A incurs no penalty and must play his ball as it lies – Rules 19-4 and 19-1.
In either form of play, B must replace his ball on the spot from which it was lifted – Rule 20-3a.

Rule 19-5a does not apply because B's ball was not in play.

**DECISION 19-5/1.5**
**Ball Lifted and Replaced; Ball Then Rolls and Strikes Ball on Putting Green**

**Q.** In stroke play, after a stroke from the putting green, a competitor marks the position of and lifts his ball from the putting green. After he replaces the ball at rest, and before he addresses it, the ball rolls and strikes his fellow-competitor's ball, which was lying on the putting green. Is the player in breach of Rule 19-5a?

**A.** No. The competitor incurs no penalty and must play the ball from its new position. After the competitor had lifted and replaced his ball, any subsequent movement is not considered to be "after a stroke" for the purposes of Rule 19-5a.

**DECISION 19-5/1.7**
**Ball Dropped on Putting Green by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Falls on Player's Moving Ball**

**Q.** A makes a stroke on the putting green. B, A's opponent or a fellow-competitor, accidentally drops his ball, which he had lifted, and it falls on A's ball, which is still in motion. What is the ruling?

**A.** In match play, since A's ball was deflected by B's equipment (see Note 1 under Definition of "Equipment"), Rule 19-3 applies. A has the option of playing his ball as it lies or canceling and replaying the stroke. Neither A nor B incurs a penalty.

In stroke play, A's ball was deflected by a moving outside agency. Therefore, A must cancel and replay his stroke, without penalty, under Rule 19-1b. B incurs no penalty.
In either form of play, B must replace his ball on the spot from which it was lifted – Rule 20-3a.

Rule 19-5b does not apply because B's ball was not in motion after a stroke.

**DECISION 19-5/2**
**Competitor's Ball Played from Putting Green Strikes Ball on Green Belonging to Competitor Playing in Another Group**

**Q.** In stroke play, C and D are playing together. A and B are playing immediately behind C and D. C's ball lies on the putting green and, since D is searching for his ball, C and D invite A and B to play through. Subsequently, A putts and his ball strikes C's ball. What is the ruling?

**A.** A incurs a penalty of two strokes and must play his ball as it lies (Rule 19-5). C must replace his ball without penalty (Rule 18-5).

**DECISION 19-5/4**
**Competitor's Ball Played from Putting Green Touches But Does Not Move Ball of Fellow-Competitor Lying on Green**

**Q.** In stroke play, A putts and his ball comes to rest touching B's ball. B's ball did not move nor did B's ball prevent A's from rolling any farther. What is the ruling?

**A.** Since A's ball was not deflected or stopped by B's ball, A incurs no penalty under Rule 19-5 or any other Rule. However, if there is any doubt as to whether B's ball moved or prevented A's ball from rolling any farther, it should be resolved against A.

**FAQ Rule 19-5**
**Ball in Motion Hits Another Ball at Rest**

**Q.** Steve’s ball was at rest on the putting green, and Cindy plays from just off the green, and her ball hits Steve’s ball. What must Cindy do?
A. Cindy must play her ball as it lies with no penalty. In stroke play only, if Cindy's ball lay on the putting green prior to the stroke, she will incur a penalty of two strokes. (See related FAQ under Rule 18)

- Ball Deflected Or Stopped By Golf Cart Shared By Two Players
- Ball Deflected By Player's Equipment

**RELIEF SITUATIONS AND PROCEDURE**

**Rule 20**

**Lifting, Dropping And Placing; Playing From Wrong Place**

**RULE 20-1. Lifting And Marking**

A ball to be lifted under the *Rules* may be lifted by the player, his *partner* or another person authorized by the player. In any such case, the player is responsible for any breach of the *Rules*.

The position of the ball must be marked before it is lifted under a *Rule* that requires it to be replaced. If it is not marked, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke and the ball must be replaced. If it is not replaced, the player incurs the general penalty for breach of this Rule but there is no additional penalty under Rule 20-1.

If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved in the process of lifting the ball under a *Rule* or marking its position, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball. Otherwise, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under this Rule or Rule 18-2a.

**Exception:** If a player incurs a penalty for failing to act in accordance with Rule 5-3 or 12-2, there is no additional penalty under Rule 20-1.
Note: The position of a ball to be lifted should be marked by placing a ball-marker, a small coin or other similar object immediately behind the ball. If the ball-marker interferes with the play, stance or stroke of another player, it should be placed one or more clubhead-lengths to one side.

LIFTING AND MARKING BALL
DECISION 20-1/0.5
Whether Player Himself Must Lift Ball

Q. Rule 20-1 states: "A ball to be lifted under the Rules may be lifted by the player, his partner or another person authorized by the player." On the other hand, other Rules, e.g., Rules 24-2b(i) and 25-1b(i), state that the player shall lift the ball. Does Rule 20-1 override other Rules which imply that the player himself must lift the ball?

A. Yes.

Related Decision:
• 20-3a/0.5 Whether Player Himself Must Place or Replace Ball.

DECISION 20-1/0.7
Lifting Ball to Determine Application of Rule

Q. May a player lift his ball to determine whether he is entitled to relief under a Rule (e.g., to determine whether his ball is in a hole made by a burrowing animal or is embedded)?

A. In equity (Rule 1-4), if a player has reason to believe he is entitled to relief from a condition, the player may lift his ball, without penalty, provided he announces his intention in advance to his opponent in match play or his marker or fellow-competitor in stroke play, marks the position of the ball before lifting it, does not clean the ball and gives his opponent or fellow-competitor an opportunity to observe the lifting.

If the ball lies in a position that entitles the player to relief, he may take relief under the applicable Rule. If the player is entitled to relief and fails to
comply with this procedure, there is no penalty provided he takes relief under the applicable Rule (see Decision 18-2a/12).

If the ball does not lie in a position from which the player is entitled to relief, or if the player is entitled to relief but decides not to take it, the ball must be replaced, and the opponent, marker or fellow-competitor must be given the opportunity to observe the replacement. If a player who is required to replace the ball fails to do so before making a stroke, he incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 20-3a, but there is no additional penalty for failure to comply with the procedure for lifting or under Rule 20-1 or 21.

If the player lifts a ball without having reason to believe that it lies in a position from which he is entitled to relief without penalty or if the ball does not lie in a position which entitles the player to relief and the player fails to comply with this procedure, he incurs a penalty of one stroke but there is no additional penalty under Rule 20-1 or 21.

Related Decision:
- **5-3/7** Ball Thought to Be Unfit for Play; Committee Involvement.

**DECISION 20-1/1**
**Ball Lifted from Putting Green in Mistaken Belief It Is Wrong Ball**

Q. A player, mistakenly believing the ball he has played onto a putting green is a wrong ball, picks the ball up without marking its position. He then discovers that the ball is his ball in play. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty stroke and he must replace his ball (Rule 20-1).

**DECISION 20-1/2**
**Player's Ball Lifted by Opponent Without Authority**

Q. In a match between A and B, B without A’s authority, marked the position of, and lifted, A’s ball on the putting green. Is B subject to penalty?
A. Yes. Under Rule 20-1, a player's ball may be lifted by his opponent only with the authority of the player. Since B was not entitled to lift A's ball, B incurred a penalty stroke (Rule 18-3b).

DECISION 20-1/3
Ball Marked and Lifted by Opponent Without Player's Authority; Player Lifts Ball-Marker, Claims Hole and Opponent Disputes Claim

Q. In a match, B marks the position of A's ball and lifts it without A's authority. B holes out. A picks up the ball-marker with which B had marked the position of his (A's) ball and claims the hole. B disputes the claim. What is the ruling?

A. B incurs a penalty stroke (Rule 18-3b) for lifting A's ball without authority. A incurs a penalty stroke for lifting the ball-marker (Rule 20-1). A must replace his ball and hole out; otherwise, A loses the hole.

DECISION 20-1/4
Competitor's Ball Lifted Without Authority by Fellow-Competitor

Q. In stroke play, a fellow-competitor lifts a competitor's ball on the putting green without the authority of the competitor. Such action is contrary to Rule 20-1. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty and the ball must be replaced (Rule 18-4).

Decision related to 20-1/2, 20-1/3 and 20-1/4:
• 30-3f/10 Player's Ball Lifted Without Authority by Opponent in Four-Ball Match.

DECISION 20-1/5
Competitor's Ball Lifted Without Authority by Fellow-Competitor's Caddie Who Subsequently Substitutes Another Ball Which Competitor Plays

Q. A competitor's ball lying on the putting green is lifted by a fellow-competitor's caddie without the authority of the competitor. Subsequently,
the fellow-competitor's caddie by mistake substitutes another ball and the competitor plays it. The error is then discovered. What is the ruling?

**A.** When a competitor authorizes another person to lift his ball, the competitor is responsible for any breach of the Rules (Rule 20-1). The converse is generally true, i.e., the competitor is not responsible for a breach of a Rule caused by the unauthorized lifting of his ball. Thus, in this case, the competitor should not be penalized under Rule 15-2. The competitor should hole out with the substituted ball, without penalty.

Related Decisions:
- **15-2/2** Player Mistakenly Substitutes Another Ball on Putting Green; Error Discovered Before Stroke Played.
- **20-6/3** Ball Mistakenly Substituted When Dropped; Correction of Error.

**DECISION 20-1/5.5**
**Ball-Marker Moved Accidentally by Player**

**Q.** A player marked the position of his ball on the putting green and lifted the ball. When it was the player's turn to play, he could not find his ball-marker. Subsequently, he found the ball-marker stuck to the sole of his shoe. He concluded that he had accidentally stepped on it while assisting his partner in lining up a putt. What is the ruling?

**A.** The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 20-1 which requires that the position of a ball be marked before it is lifted, and contemplates that the ball-marker will remain in position until the ball is replaced. The player must place the ball as near as possible to its original position but not nearer the hole – Rule 20-3c.

Under the last paragraph of Rule 20-1, a player is exempt from penalty if his ball-marker is accidentally moved in the process of lifting the ball or marking its position. In this case the ball-marker was not moved during such process.
DECISION 20-1/6
Ball-Marker Moved Accidentally by Player in Process of Marking Position of Ball

Q. A player marked the position of his ball with a coin, lifted the ball and pressed down the coin with the sole of his putter. He walked to the edge of the green and then noticed that the coin had stuck to the sole of the putter. What is the ruling?

A. In this case, the movement of the ball-marker was directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of the ball.

Accordingly, no penalty is incurred and the ball or the ball-marker must be replaced. If the spot where the ball or the ball-marker lay is not known, it must be placed as near as possible to where it lay but not nearer the hole (Rule 20-3c).

DECISION 20-1/6.5
Ball-Marker Pressed Down by Opponent

Q. In a match, the player's ball-marker on the putting green is pressed down by the opponent. Is the opponent in breach of the Rules?

A. No. Rule 18-3b does not apply to ball-markers. However, if the ball-marker were moved such that it no longer accurately marked the position of the ball, in equity (Rule 1-4), the opponent would incur a penalty of one stroke. If the opponent pressed down the ball-marker with the authority of the player and that act caused it to move, there would be no penalty to either player (see Decision 20-1/6).

DECISION 20-1/7
Ball-Marker Moved by Opponent's Caddie Accidentally

Q. In match play, a player's caddie accidentally moved his opponent's ball-marker with his foot. What is the ruling?
A. In equity (Rule 1-4), the opponent must replace his ball or ball-marker as near as possible to the spot where it lay and the player incurs a penalty of one stroke. (Revised)

Related Decisions:
- **2-4/5** Whether Lifting Opponent's Ball-Marker Is Concession of Next Stroke.
- **30/5** In Four-Ball Match Player with Putt for Half Picks Up in Error at Suggestion of Opponent Based on Misunderstanding.

**DECISION 20-1/8**
**Ball-Marker Lifted by Player Who Mistakenly Believes He Has Won Hole**

Q. A player, mistakenly believing he has won a hole, picks up his ball-marker. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a one-stroke penalty (Rule 20-1) and must replace his ball.

Related Decisions:
- **2-4/3** Player Lifts Ball in Mistaken Belief That Next Stroke Conceded.
- **2-4/3.5** Stroke Conceded by Caddie.
- **9-2/5** Incorrect Information Causes Opponent to Lift His Ball-Marker.

**DECISION 20-1/9**
**Ball-Marker Lifted by Outside Agency**

Q. A marked the position of his ball on the putting green while a following match or group was playing through. After the following match or group had played through, A could not find his ball-marker. It apparently had been lifted by one of the players playing through. What is the ruling?
A. Under Rule 20-3c, A must place his ball as near as possible to where it lay on the green.

DECISION 20-1/10.5
Ball-Marker Moved by Wind or Casual Water During Stipulated Round

Q. During a stipulated round, a player marked the position of and lifted his ball under a Rule. Prior to the player replacing his ball, wind or casual water moved his ball-marker. What is the procedure?

A. The ball or ball-marker must be replaced without penalty. If a ball has been lifted under a Rule which requires it to be replaced, it must be placed on the spot from which it was lifted (Rule 20-3a).

DECISION 20-1/11
Ball-Marker in Position to Assist Another Player

Q. A player marks the position of his ball on the putting green and the ball-marker is so located that it might be of assistance to the opponent or a fellow-competitor in lining up his putt. Accordingly, the player prepares to move his ball-marker one or two clubhead-lengths to the side, but the opponent or fellow-competitor says he wants the ball-marker left where it is. What is the ruling?

A. The player is entitled to move his ball-marker to the side. The opponent or fellow-competitor may not insist on its being left where it is in view of the purposes of Rules 8-2b and 22-1.

Related Decision:
• 22/6 Competitor Requests That Ball in Position to Assist Him Not Be Lifted.

DECISION 20-1/12
Ball-Marker Moved Accidentally by Player After Having Moved Loose Impediments

Q. A player marked the position of his ball on the putting green with a coin and lifted the ball. He then placed his finger on the coin, while he brushed...
aside some loose impediments so that he did not move the coin. On lifting his finger the coin initially stuck to his finger before falling to the ground and coming to rest in a different position. What is the ruling?

A. The act of placing the finger on the coin is considered to be an extension of the marking process (see Decision 20-1/6). Therefore, as the movement of the coin was directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of the ball, the player incurs no penalty and the ball or ball-marker must be replaced (Rule 20-1).

DECISION 20-1/13
Ball Accidentally Kicked by Player Asked to Lift It Due to Interference

Q. A requests B to lift B's ball because it interferes with A's play. As B is walking up to his ball to lift it, he accidentally kicks it. What is the ruling?

A. B incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a because the movement of the ball was not directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball (see Rule 20-1). B must replace his ball. (Revised)

Related Decision:
• 12-1/5 Player Kicks Ball While Probing for It in Water in Water Hazard.

DECISION 20-1/14
Ball Moved by Putter Dropped by Player Approaching Ball to Lift It

Q. A player, approaching his ball on the putting green to lift it, dropped his putter on his ball and moved it. Is it correct that there is no penalty in view of Rule 20-1 under which a player incurs no penalty if he accidentally moves his ball in the process of lifting it?

A. No. The player incurred a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a because the movement of the ball was not directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball.

DECISION 20-1/15
Meaning of "Directly Attributable" in Rules 20-1 and 20-3a

Q. What is meant by the phrase "directly attributable to the specific act" in Rules 20-1 and 20-3a?

A. In Rule 20-1 the phrase means the specific act of placing a ball-marker behind the ball, placing a club to the side of the ball, or lifting the ball such that the player's hand, the placement of the ball-marker or the club, or the lifting of the ball causes the ball or the ball-marker to move.

In Rule 20-3a the phrase means the specific act of placing or replacing a ball in front of a ball-marker, placing a club to the side of a ball-marker or lifting the ball-marker such that the player's hand, the placement of the ball or club, or the lifting of the ball-marker causes the ball or the ball-marker to move.

Under either Rule, any accidental movement of the ball or the ball-marker which occurs before or after this specific act, such as dropping the ball or ball-marker, regardless of the height from which it was dropped, is not considered to be "directly attributable" and would result in the player incurring a penalty stroke.

DECISION 20-1/15.5
Lie Altered By Act of Marking Position of Ball

Q. A player marks the position of his ball, and as a result of the act of marking, there is a change in the lie of the ball. Is the player required to restore the lie he had before marking the position of the ball?

A. No. The act of placing a marker may result in some change in the lie of the ball, for example, from grass being depressed by the weight of the marker, or grains of sand being moved in the placement or removal of a marker. Such occurrences may improve or worsen the lie of the ball, and the player must accept the result.
If the player attempted to restore the lie under these circumstances, or if the lie was improved from actions which exceeded what was necessary to the process of marking, he would be subject to penalty under Rule 13-2.

Related Decisions:

- **13-2/15** Area of Intended Swing Improved by Removing Immovable Obstruction.
- **13-2/15.5** Position of Ball Worsened When Obstruction Removed; Player Replaces Obstruction.

**DECISION 20-1/16**  
**Method Used to Mark Position of Ball**

**Q.** The Note to Rule 20-1 provides that "the position of a ball to be lifted should be marked by placing a ball-marker, a small coin or other similar object immediately behind the ball." Is a player penalized if he uses an object that is not similar to a ball-marker or small coin to mark the position of his ball?

**A.** No. The provision in the Note to Rule 20-1 is a recommendation of best practice, but there is no penalty for failing to act in accordance with the Note.

Examples of methods of marking the position of a ball that are not recommended, but are permissible, are as follows:

- placing the toe of a club at the side of, or behind, the ball;
- using a tee;
- using a loose impediment;
- scratching a line, provided the putting green is not tested (Rule 16-1d) and a line for putting is not indicated (Rule 8-2b). As this practice may cause damage to the putting green, it is discouraged.
However, under Rule 20-1 it is necessary to physically mark the position of the ball. Reference to an existing mark on the ground does not constitute marking the position of a ball. For example, it is not permissible to mark the position with reference to a blemish on the putting green.

When moving a ball or ball-marker to the side to prevent it from interfering with another player's stance or stroke, the player may measure from the side of the ball or ball-marker. In order to accurately replace the ball on the spot from which it was lifted, the steps used to move the ball or ball-marker to the side should be reversed.

DECISION 20-1/17
Tee Marking Position of Player's Ball Deflects Opponent's Ball

Q. In a match, B used a wooden tee to mark the position of his ball. A's ball was deflected by the tee. What is the ruling?

A. The tee was not B's equipment – see Definition of "Equipment." There is no penalty. A must play his ball as it lies.

A should have requested B to move the tee one or more clubhead-lengths to the side or to mark the position of his ball with a ball-marker, a small coin or other similar object – see Note under Rule 20-1.

DECISION 20-1/19
Placing Object Marking Position of Ball Other Than Behind Ball

Q. When marking the position of a ball, must the ball-marker be placed behind the ball, or may it also be placed to the side of or in front of the ball?

A. There is no restriction. However, if a player positions his ball-marker in front of the ball on the putting green and in the process does something to the green that improves the line of putt (e.g., presses down a raised tuft of grass), he is in breach of Rule 13-2.
Placing a ball-marker in front of the ball is not recommended but it is not a breach of Rule 16-1a because this Rule permits touching the line of putt in lifting a ball, and marking the position of the ball is part of the lifting process.

**DECISION 20-1/20**  
**Player Places Ball-Marker Approximately Two Inches Behind Ball**

**Q.** A player consistently places his ball-marker approximately two inches behind the ball on the green. He says that he does so to ensure that he does not accidentally move the ball. Does such a procedure comply with the Rules?

**A.** No. A player who places a ball-marker two inches behind his ball cannot be considered to have marked the position of the ball with sufficient accuracy. Accordingly, each time he does so, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke, as provided in Rule 20-1, and must place the ball as near as possible to the spot from which it was lifted (Rule 20-3c).

The player's action was unnecessary because Rule 20-1 states that no penalty is incurred if a ball is accidentally moved in the process of marking or lifting it under a Rule.

Decision related to 20-1/19 and 20-1/20:

• 16-1a/17 Ball Lifted on Putting Green Placed Ahead of Ball-Marker and Then Moved Back to Original Position.

**DECISION 20-1/22**  
**Knocking Ball Aside After Marking Position Instead of Lifting**

**Q.** A player, whose ball is on the putting green, marks the position of his ball and knocks the ball aside with his putter instead of lifting it. What is the ruling?

**A.** Knocking the ball aside was the equivalent of lifting it under Rule 20-1. There would be no penalty unless the act was for the purpose of testing the putting surface (Rule 16-1d) or playing a practice stroke (Rule 7-2).
Other Decisions related to Rule 20-1: See "Ball Lifted" and "Marking Position of Ball" in the Index.

FAQ Rule 20-1
Procedure for Moving Ball-Marker to the Side

**Q.** When moving a ball-marker to the side, must the position of the ball be marked first and then the ball-marker moved, or can I simply measure to the side of the ball?

**A.** The player may either mark the position of the ball, measure to one side of the mark, and move the ball-marker to that spot, or he may place the putter head directly to the side of the ball and place the ball-marker, thereby eliminating one step. See Decision 20-1/16.

- **Who May Replace A Ball?**

RULE 20-3. Placing And Replacing

a. By Whom and Where

A ball to be placed under the Rules must be placed by the player or his partner.

A ball to be replaced under the Rules must be replaced by any one of the following: (i) the person who lifted or moved the ball, (ii) the player, or (iii) the player’s partner. The ball must be placed on the spot from which it was lifted or moved. If the ball is placed or replaced by any other person and the error is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke. In any such case, the player is responsible for any other breach of the Rules that occurs as a result of the placing or replacing of the ball.

If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved in the process of placing or replacing the ball, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of placing or replacing the ball or removing the ball-marker. Otherwise, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a or 20-1.
If a ball to be replaced is placed other than on the spot from which it was lifted or moved and the error is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6, the player incurs the general penalty, loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play, for a breach of the applicable Rule.

b. Lie of Ball to be Placed or Replaced Altered
If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered:

(i) except in a hazard, the ball must be placed in the nearest lie most similar to the original lie that is not more than one club-length from the original lie, not nearer the hole and not in a hazard;

(ii) in a water hazard, the ball must be placed in accordance with Clause (i) above, except that the ball must be placed in the water hazard;

(iii) in a bunker, the original lie must be re-created as nearly as possible and the ball must be placed in that lie.

Note: If the original lie of a ball to be placed or replaced has been altered and it is impossible to determine the spot where the ball is to be placed or replaced, Rule 20-3b applies if the original lie is known, and Rule 20-3c applies if the original lie is not known.

Exception: If the player is searching for or identifying a ball covered by sand – see Rule 12-1a.

c. Spot Not Determinable
If it is impossible to determine the spot where the ball is to be placed or replaced:

(i) through the green, the ball must be dropped as near as possible to the place where it lay but not in a hazard or on a putting green;

(ii) in a hazard, the ball must be dropped in the hazard as near as possible to the place where it lay;
(iii) on the **putting green**, the ball must be placed as near as possible to the place where it lay but not in a **hazard**.

**Exception:** When resuming play (Rule 6-8d), if the spot where the ball is to be placed is impossible to determine, it must be estimated and the ball placed on the estimated spot.

d. Ball Fails to Come to Rest on Spot

If a ball when placed fails to come to rest on the spot on which it was placed, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced. If it still fails to come to rest on that spot:

(i) except in a **hazard**, it must be placed at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the **hole** and not in a **hazard**;

(ii) in a **hazard**, it must be placed in the **hazard** at the nearest spot where it can be placed at rest that is not nearer the **hole**.

If a ball when placed comes to rest on the spot on which it is placed, and it subsequently **moves**, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, unless the provisions of any other **Rule** apply.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 20-1, 20-2 Or 20-3:**

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

*If a player makes a **stroke** at a ball **substituted** under one of these Rules when such **substitution** is not permitted, he incurs the general penalty for breach of that Rule, but there is no additional penalty under that Rule. If a player drops a ball in an improper manner and plays from a wrong place or if the ball has been put into play by a person not permitted by the **Rules** and then played from a wrong place, see Note 3 to Rule 20-7c.*

**LIFTING AND REPLACING BALL: BY WHOM AND WHERE**

**DECISION 20-3a/0.5**

Whether Player Himself Must Place or Replace Ball
Q. Rule 20-3a provides that, in some instances, a person other than the player may place or replace the player's ball. On the other hand, other Rules, e.g., Rule 12-2, state that the player must place or replace the ball. Does Rule 20-3a override other Rules that imply that the player himself must place or replace the ball?

A. Yes.

Related Decision:
- 20-1/0.5 Whether Player Himself Must Lift Ball.

DECISION 20-3a/1
Ball Moved in Removing Ball-Marker After Replacing Ball

Q. A player replaces his ball under a Rule and, in the act of removing the object marking its position, accidentally moves the ball. What is the ruling?

A. Removal of the ball-marker is part of the replacement process. As the movement of the ball was directly attributable to the act of replacing it, under Rule 20-3a, no penalty is incurred, and the ball must be replaced. (Revised)

Related Decision:
- 20-1/15 Meaning of "Directly Attributable" in Rules 20-1 and 20-3a.

DECISION 20-3a/2
Using Line on Ball for Alignment

Q. May a player draw a line on his ball and, when replacing his ball, position the ball so that the line or the trademark on the ball is aimed to indicate the line of play?

A. Yes.

Related Decision:
- 18-2a/33 Rotating Ball on Putting Green Without Marking Position.
Lifting And Replacing The Ball

There Are Several Common Occurrences During A Round Of Golf Where A Player Is Going To Lift Their Ball And In Some Of These Cases They Will Need To Put The Ball Back To Where It Was Lifted. Perhaps The Most Common Occurrence Is A Ball Lifted From The Putting Green Under Rule 16-1B (Lifting And Cleaning Ball).

There are several common occurrences during a round of golf where a player is going to lift their ball and in some of these cases they will need to put the ball back to where it was lifted. Perhaps the most common occurrence is a ball lifted from the putting green under Rule 16-1b (Lifting and Cleaning Ball). The process of returning a ball to its previous location is called “replacing” and is covered under Rule 20-3a (Placing and Replacing).

Who can do the replacing? That depends on the form of play and, to some extent, the owner of the ball.

Before we have the need to know who can replace a player’s ball we need to understand just who can lift it. Rule 20-1 permits the player to lift his ball, but also allows the player to authorize anyone else to do so as well (but the player is on the hook that the authorized party does so properly)!

So, if a player marks the position of his ball on the putting green and lifts it, only he can replace. If he has employed a caddie and he gives the caddie permission to lift his ball that is at rest on the putting green, either the player or the caddie can replace it. If the form of play included a partner, than in both cases mentioned above, the player’s partner would also be able to replace the ball.

FAQ Rule 20-3
Who may Replace a Ball?
Q. Brian asked Kevin to mark his (Brian`s) ball while Brian was raking the bunker after playing his stroke. Is Kevin the only one who can replace Brian`s ball?
A. No. The player, his partner or the person who lifted it may replace a ball. In this case, as Brian does not have a partner, either Brian or Kevin may replace the ball. (Rule 20-3a).

- **Serious Breach Of Playing From The Wrong Place**

**RULE 20-4. When Ball Dropped Or Placed Is In Play**
If the player`s *ball in play* has been lifted, it is again in play when dropped or placed.

A *substituted ball* becomes the *ball in play* when it has been dropped or placed.

**RULE 20-5. Making Next Stroke From Where Previous Stroke Made**
When a player elects or is required to make his next *stroke* from where a previous *stroke* was made, he must proceed as follows:

(a) **On the Teeing Ground**: The ball to be played must be played from within the *teeing ground*. It may be played from anywhere within the *teeing ground* and may be teed.

(b) **Through the Green**: The ball to be played must be dropped and when dropped must first strike a part of the *course through the green*.

(c) **In a Hazard**: The ball to be played must be dropped and when dropped must first strike a part of the *course* in the *hazard*.

(d) **On the Putting Green**: The ball to be played must be placed on the *putting green*.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule 20-5**: 

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**Geoff Mangum’s PuttingZone, Rules of Golf on the Green**

geoff mangum’s puttingzone  www.puttingzone.com  518 woodlawn ave greensboro nc 27401 336-340-9079
Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

RULE 20-6. Lifting Ball Incorrectly Substituted, Dropped Or Placed
A ball incorrectly substituted, dropped or placed in a wrong place or otherwise not in accordance with the Rules but not played may be lifted, without penalty, and the player must then proceed correctly.

RULE 20-7. Playing From Wrong Place
a. General
A player has played from a wrong place if he makes a stroke at his ball in play:

(i) on a part of the course where the Rules do not permit a stroke to be made or a ball to be dropped or placed; or

(ii) when the Rules require a dropped ball to be re-dropped or a moved ball to be replaced.

Note: For a ball played from outside the teeing ground or from a wrong teeing ground – see Rule 11-4.

b. Match Play
If a player makes a stroke from a wrong place, he loses the hole.

c. Stroke Play
If a competitor makes a stroke from a wrong place, he incurs a penalty of two strokes under the applicable Rule. He must play out the hole with the ball played from the wrong place, without correcting his error, provided he has not committed a serious breach (see Note 1).

If a competitor becomes aware that he has played from a wrong place and believes that he may have committed a serious breach, he must, before making a stroke on the next teeing ground, play out the hole with a second ball played in accordance with the Rules. If the hole being played is the last hole
of the round, he must declare, before leaving the putting green, that he will play out the hole with a second ball played in accordance with the Rules.

If the competitor has played a second ball, he must report the facts to the Committee before returning his score card; if he fails to do so, he is disqualified. The Committee must determine whether the competitor has committed a serious breach of the applicable Rule. If he has, the score with the second ball counts and the competitor must add two penalty strokes to his score with that ball. If the competitor has committed a serious breach and has failed to correct it as outlined above, he is disqualified.

Note 1: A competitor is deemed to have committed a serious breach of the applicable Rule if the Committee considers he has gained a significant advantage as a result of playing from a wrong place.

Note 2: If a competitor plays a second ball under Rule 20-7c and it is ruled not to count, strokes made with that ball and penalty strokes incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded. If the second ball is ruled to count, the stroke made from the wrong place and any strokes subsequently taken with the original ball including penalty strokes incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.

Note 3: If a player incurs a penalty for making a stroke from a wrong place, there is no additional penalty for:

(a) substituting a ball when not permitted;

(b) dropping a ball when the Rules require it to be placed, or placing a ball when the Rules require it to be dropped;

(c) dropping a ball in an improper manner; or

(d) a ball being put into play by a person not permitted to do so under the Rules.
FAQ Rule 20-7
Serious Breach of Playing from the Wrong Place

Q. What constitutes a serious breach of playing from the wrong place?
A. A serious breach has occurred if the player has gained a significant advantage as a result of playing from a wrong place. (Note 1 to Rule 20-7c)

or 22, there is no additional penalty under Rule 21.

Rule 21
Cleaning Ball

Definitions
All defined terms are in *italics* and are listed alphabetically in the Definitions section.

A ball on the *putting green* may be cleaned when lifted under Rule 16-1b. Elsewhere, a ball may be cleaned when lifted, except when it has been lifted:

a. To determine if it is unfit for play (Rule 5-3);

b. For identification (Rule 12-2), in which case it may be cleaned only to the extent necessary for identification; or

c. Because it is assisting or interfering with play (Rule 22).

If a player cleans his ball during play of a hole except as provided in this Rule, he incurs a penalty of one stroke and the ball, if lifted, must be re-placed.

If a player who is required to replace a ball fails to do so, he incurs the general penalty under the applicable Rule, but there is no additional penalty under Rule 21.
**Exception:** If a player incurs a penalty for failing to act in accordance with Rule 5-3, 12-2 or 22, there is no additional penalty under Rule 21.

**FAQ Rule 21**
When Permissible to Clean Ball

**Q.** Can you list the situations when a player is permitted to clean the ball?

**A.** A player may clean his ball at any time when it has been lifted, except for when it has been lifted under Rule 5-3 (Ball Unfit for Play), Rule 12-2 (Identifying Ball), and Rule 22 (Ball Interfering with or Assisting Play).

Decision 20-1/0.7 (Lifting Ball to Determine Application of Rule) further stipulates that the ball may not be cleaned when it is lifted to determine if the player is entitled to relief under a Rule (e.g. whether the ball lies in an abnormal ground condition or is embedded in its own pitch-mark).

**Rule 22. Ball Assisting or Interfering with Play**

- Ball Lifted On Thought It Will Interfere With Another Player
- Requesting A Fellow-Competitor To Leave Ball To Assist Play

**Rule 22**
**Ball Assisting Or Interfering With Play**

**RULE 22-1. Ball Assisting Play**
Except when a ball is in motion, if a player considers that a ball might assist any other player, he may:

- **a.** Lift the ball if it is his ball; or
- **b.** Have any other ball lifted.

A ball lifted under this Rule must be replaced (see Rule 20-3). The ball must not be cleaned, unless it lies on the putting green (see Rule 21).
In stroke play, a player required to lift his ball may play first rather than lift the ball.

In stroke play, if the Committee determines that competitors have agreed not to lift a ball that might assist any competitor, they are disqualified.

**Note:** When another ball is in motion, a ball that might influence the movement of the ball in motion must not be lifted.

**RULE 22-2. Ball Interfering With Play**
Except when a ball is in motion, if a player considers that another ball might interfere with his play, he may have it lifted.

A ball lifted under this Rule must be replaced (see Rule 20-3). The ball must not be cleaned, unless it lies on the putting green (see Rule 21).

In stroke play, a player required to lift his ball may play first rather than lift the ball.

**Note 1:** Except on the putting green, a player may not lift his ball solely because he considers that it might interfere with the play of another player. If a player lifts his ball without being asked to do so, he incurs a penalty of one stroke for a breach of Rule 18-2a, but there is no additional penalty under Rule 22.

**Note 2:** When another ball is in motion, a ball that might influence the movement of the ball in motion must not be lifted.

**Penalty For Breach Of Rule:**

- **Match play** – Loss of hole; **Stroke play** – Two strokes.

**BALL ASSISTING OR INTERFERING WITH PLAY**

**DECISION 22/1**
Mental Interference by Another Ball
Q. In order for A to be entitled to have B's ball lifted because of interference, does B's ball have to be on or near A's line of play and thus in a position to interfere physically with A's ball? Or may A also have B's ball lifted if it is off his line of play but catches his eye and thus constitutes mental interference?

A. A player may, under Rule 22-2, have another ball lifted if the ball interferes either physically or mentally with his play.

Related Decision:

• 24-2a/1 Mental Interference by Obstruction.

**DECISION 22/2**

**Player Claims That Another Ball Lying 30 Yards Away Interferes with His Play**

Q. B's ball is three feet from the green on a direct line to the hole with A's ball which is 30 yards from the green. May A require B to lift his ball, on the grounds that the ball interferes with his play?

A. Yes.

**DECISION 22/3**

**Player Requests Another Player to Lift His Ball in Absence of Reasonable Possibility Ball Might Interfere or Assist**

Q. A's ball is on the putting green. B's ball is 100 yards from the green. B requests A to lift his ball under Rule 22-2 as it might interfere with his (B's) play. This happens several times during the round. Is such procedure permissible?

A. Rule 22 is intended to cover situations where there is a reasonable possibility that one ball might assist or interfere with another ball. If the Rule is being abused, as in this case, the Committee would be justified in penalizing B for undue delay (Rule 6-7).

**DECISION 22/5**

**Assisting Ball Lifted by Opponent Replaced on Request; Player's Ball Then Strikes Opponent's Ball and Opponent Lodges Claim**
Q. In a match between A and B, A's ball is near the hole in a position to serve as a backstop for B's ball. A lifts his ball to clean it. B requests A to replace his ball before he (B) putts. A protests but B insists that, under the Rules, A must replace his ball immediately. A replaces his ball but disputes B's right to require him to do so and claims the hole. B putts and his ball strikes A's ball and stops very close to the hole. A replaces his ball and holes out for a 4. B then holes out for a 4. The match continues and the claim is later referred to the Committee. How should the Committee rule?

A. The hole stands as played. The Rules do not require A to replace his ball, but B was not in breach of the Rules by asking A to replace it – see Rule 22-1.

DECISION 22/6
Competitor Requests That Ball in Position to Assist Him Not Be Lifted

Q. In stroke play, B's ball lies just off the putting green. A's ball lies near the hole in a position to serve as a backstop for B's ball. B requests A not to lift his ball. Is such a request proper?

A. No. If A and B agree not to lift a ball that might assist B, both players are disqualified under Rule 22-1.

Related Decisions:
• 2-4/8 Player Concedes Opponent's Next Stroke and Plays Before Opponent Has Opportunity to Lift Ball.

• 3-4/1 Competitor Not Given Opportunity to Lift Ball Assisting Fellow-Competitor.

• 20-1/11 Ball-Marker in Position to Assist Another Player (player asks it not be moved).

• 30-3f/11 Request to Lift Ball That Might Assist Partner Not Honored.

DECISION 22/7
Ball Assisting Fellow-Competitor on Putting Green; Procedure for Referee If Competitor Does Not Lift Ball

Q. In stroke play, a competitor's ball is in a position to assist the play of a fellow-competitor and the competitor is in a position to lift the ball under Rule 22-1 without delaying the fellow-competitor's play. However, the competitor does not take any action to invoke the Rule. Would a referee be justified in intervening and requesting the competitor to invoke the Rule to protect himself and the rest of the field?

A. Yes. If the competitor were to object, there would be strong evidence of an agreement not to lift the ball for the purpose of assisting the fellow-competitor in breach of Rule 22-1. The referee would be justified in so advising the competitors involved and warning that failure to lift the ball would result in disqualification under Rule 22-1.

FAQ Rule 22
Requesting a Fellow-Competitor to Leave Ball to Assist Play

Q. Is it permissible for two fellow-competitors in stroke play to agree to leave the ball of one of the players near the hole to assist the other player in playing his ball from just off the putting green?

A. No. In stroke play, competitors (including partners) may not agree to leave a ball in place to assist the other competitor. The penalty for agreeing to leave the ball in place in stroke play would be disqualification. – Rule 22-1

Note: This FAQ has been updated to reflect the 2012 Rules Of Golf.

Rule 23. Loose Impediments
- Stones In Bunkers
- Why Sand And Loose Soil Are Not Loose Impediments Off The Putting Green

Rule 23
Loose Impediments
RULE 23-1. Relief
Except when both the loose impediment and the ball lie in or touch the same hazard, any loose impediment may be removed without penalty.

If the ball lies anywhere other than on the putting green and the removal of a loose impediment by the player causes the ball to move, Rule 18-2a applies.

On the putting green, if the ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved in the process of the player removing a loose impediment, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the removal of the loose impediment. Otherwise, if the player causes the ball to move, he incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a.

When a ball is in motion, a loose impediment that might influence the movement of the ball must not be removed.

Note: If the ball lies in a hazard, the player must not touch or move any loose impediment lying in or touching the same hazard – see Rule 13-4c.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule:
Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

DECISION 23/5
Ant Hill

Q. Is an ant hill a loose impediment?

A. Yes. An ant hill is a cast or heap made by an insect. A player is entitled to remove an ant hill under Rule 23-1. (Revised)

DECISION 23/5.5
Status of Insect-Like Creatures
The definition of "Loose Impediments" provides that worms, insects and the like are loose impediments. The term "the like" includes creatures such as spiders. A web made by a spider is considered to be a cast made by an insect and is also a loose impediment, even if attached to another object.

DECISION 23/8
Worm Partially Underground

Q. Is a worm, when half on top of the surface of the ground and half below, a loose impediment which may be removed? Or is it fixed or solidly embedded and therefore not a loose impediment?

A. A worm which is half underground is not "fixed or growing" or "solidly embedded" within the meaning of those terms in the Definition of "Loose Impediments." Accordingly, such a worm may be removed under Rule 16-1a(i) or Rule 23.

DECISION 23/9
Embedded Acorn

Q. Is an embedded acorn a loose impediment?

A. Not if the acorn is solidly embedded – see Definition of "Loose Impediments."

Related Decision:
• 16-1a/7 Player Repairs Depression on Line of Putt Created When Partially Embedded Acorn Removed.

DECISION 23/11
Loose Soil from Cast of Hole Made by Burrowing Animal

Q. A player's ball lies through the green in the cast of a hole made by a burrowing animal. In addition to his relief options under Rule 25, may the player remove the loose soil, which forms the cast, from around his ball?
A. No. The cast made by a burrowing animal is not a loose impediment – see Definition of "Loose Impediments." (Revised)

Related Decisions:
• 23/5 Ant Hill.
• 25/23 Molehills.

DECISION 23/12
Aeration Plugs

Q. Are plugs of compacted soil produced through aeration of fairways loose impediments?

A. Yes. Loose soil is not a loose impediment. However, such plugs, since they consist of compacted soil, are loose impediments.

Related Decision:
• 25/15 Aeration Holes.

DECISION 23/13
Lump of Earth

Q. Is a loose lump of earth a loose impediment?

A. Yes. Loose soil is not a loose impediment except on the putting green. However, a lump of earth is not loose soil. (Revised)

DECISION 23-1/1
Means by Which Loose Impediments May Be Removed

Q. Worm casts are loose impediments. By what means may such casts be removed?
A. Loose impediments may be removed by any means, except that, in removing loose impediments on the line of putt, the player must not press anything down (Rule 16-1a).

DECISION 23-1/5
Removal of Insect on Ball

Q. A live insect is stationary or crawling on a player's ball. What may the player do to remove the insect?

A. A live insect is not considered to be adhering to the ball, and therefore is a loose impediment – see Definition of "Loose Impediments."

If the player's ball lies through the green, the player may remove the insect with his fingers or blow the insect off the ball, but if doing so causes the ball to move, there is a penalty under Rule 18-2a. If the player's ball lies on the putting green, the player may take the same actions, but there is no penalty if he causes the ball to move provided the movement is directly attributable to the removal of the loose impediment (see Rule 23-1).

If the player's ball lies in a hazard, the insect is considered to be in the hazard and the player may not touch or physically remove the insect from the ball (Rule 13-4c). However, as the insect is animate and capable of moving on its own, the player may take action, such as waving his hand, a club or towel, to encourage the insect to move. If the insect moves, there is no penalty, provided the player has not touched the insect while it is on the ball, touched the ground in the hazard or water in the water hazard with his hand or club, or moved the ball. (Revised)

Related Decisions:
• 13-4/16.5 Flying Insect in Water Hazard.

• 23-1/12 After Ball Addressed on Putting Green Ball Moved in Removal of Loose Impediment.

DECISION 23-1/10
Removal of Loose Impediments Affecting Player's Play

Q. A player with a downhill putt picks up loose impediments between his ball and the hole but leaves some behind the hole. An opponent or fellow-competitor removes loose impediments behind the hole that might have served as a backstop for the player's ball. What is the ruling?

A. In equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled, but not required, to replace the loose impediments.

The opponent or fellow-competitor is permitted to remove the loose impediments by Rule 23-1, and accordingly he is not in breach of Rule 1-2 (see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2). However, if the opponent or fellow-competitor has refused to comply with a request from the player not to remove the loose impediments, the opponent loses the hole (see Decision 2/3) or the fellow-competitor is disqualified (Rule 3-4) for intentionally denying the player's right to have the loose impediments left in position.

The same principles apply to the removal of a movable obstruction in similar circumstances.

DECISION 23-1/11

Ball Moved Accidentally by Foot During Removal of Loose Impediment on Putting Green

Q. A player in the process of removing a loose impediment on the putting green accidentally moved his ball with his foot. What is the ruling?

A. The player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a, and the ball must be replaced.

Rule 23-1 provides that the player incurs no penalty if, on the putting green, his ball is accidentally moved in the process of removing a loose impediment. However, this Rule applies only where the moving of a ball is directly attributable to removal of a loose impediment. In this case, removal of the loose impediment did not cause the ball to move.
DECISION 23-1/12
After Ball Addressed on Putting Green Ball Moved in Removal of Loose Impediment

Q. After a player addresses his ball on the putting green, an insect alights on the ball. The player bends over without moving his feet and, in attempting to brush the insect off the ball, moves the ball several inches. Is the player subject to a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2b?

A. No. An insect is a loose impediment – see Definition of "Loose Impediments" and Decision 23-1/5.

Under Rule 23-1, a player incurs no penalty if a ball on the putting green moves while he is in the process of removing a loose impediment. Rule 23-1 overrides Rule 18-2b in this case.

Related Decisions:
- 13-4/16.5 Flying Insect in Water Hazard.
- 20-1/12 Ball-Marker Moved Accidentally By Player After Having Moved Loose Impediments.
- 23-1/5 Removal of Insect on Ball.
- 23-1/5.5 Status of Insect on Ball in Bunker.

FAQ Rule 23-1
Why Sand and Loose Soil are Not Loose Impediments off the Putting Green

Q. What is the reason why sand and loose soil are not loose impediments off the putting green?
A. Sand and loose soil are part of the earth. Permitting the player to remove sand and soil other than on the putting green would inevitably lead to situations in which the player would be at liberty to remove a great deal of earth from the area of his intended swing and stance, improving the lie beyond the extent that should be permitted. Additionally, the putting green is an area specifically de-
signed for putting and sand and loose soil are not commonplace on such a surface.

Below you can view videos related to this Rule.

Video

Loose Impediments
Dealing with loose impediments

View Video

• Assistance In Removing Large Loose Impediments

Rule 24. Obstructions
• Bushes Or Boulders Used As Yardage Markers
• Status Of Stakes Defining Water Hazards
• Ball Lying Against Rake In Bunker
• Explanation Of Determining Nearest Point Of Relief
• Taking "Complete Relief" From Obstruction
• Relief From Immovable Obstructions When Ball In Water Hazard

Rule 25. Abnormal Ground Conditions, Embedded Ball and Wrong Putting Green
• Player Steps Around Ball To Force Up Water
• Explanation Of Determining Nearest Point Of Relief
• Entire Bunker Filled With Casual Water
• Soft, Mushy Earth
• Embedded Ball Rule
• Stance On Wrong Putting Green

Rule 24
Obstructions

RULE 24-1. Movable Obstruction
A player may take relief, without penalty, from a movable obstruction as follows:

a. If the ball does not lie in or on the obstruction, the obstruction may be removed. If the ball moves, it must be replaced, and there is no penalty, pro-
vided that the movement of the ball is directly attributable to the removal of the obstruction. Otherwise, Rule 18-2a applies.

b. If the ball lies in or on the obstruction, the ball may be lifted and the obstruction removed. The ball must through the green or in a hazard be dropped, or on the putting green be placed, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball lay in or on the obstruction, but not nearer the hole.

The ball may be cleaned when lifted under this Rule.

When a ball is in motion, an obstruction that might influence the movement of the ball, other than equipment of any player or the flagstick when attended, removed or held up, must not be moved. (Exerting influence on ball – see Rule 1-2)

Note: If a ball to be dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be substituted.

RULE 24-2. Immovable Obstruction
a. Interference
Interference by an immovable obstruction occurs when a ball lies in or on the obstruction, or when the obstruction interferes with the player’s stance or the area of his intended swing. If the player’s ball lies on the putting green, interference also occurs if an immovable obstruction on the putting green intervenes on his line of putt. Otherwise, intervention on the line of play is not, of itself, interference under this Rule.

b. Relief
Except when the ball is in a water hazard or a lateral water hazard, a player may take relief from interference by an immovable obstruction as follows:

(i) Through the Green: If the ball lies through the green, the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, within one club-length of and not nearer
the **hole** than the **nearest point of relief**. The **nearest point of relief** must not be in a **hazard** or on a **putting green**. When the ball is dropped within one club-length of the **nearest point of relief**, the ball must first strike a part of the **course** at a spot that avoids interference by the immovable **obstruction** and is not in a **hazard** and not on a **putting green**.

(ii) **In a Bunker**: If the ball is in a **bunker**, the player must lift the ball and drop it either:

(a) **Without penalty**, in accordance with Clause (i) above, except that the **nearest point of relief** must be in the **bunker** and the ball must be dropped in the **bunker**; or

(b) **Under penalty of one stroke**, outside the **bunker** keeping the point where the ball lay directly between the **hole** and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind the **bunker** the ball may be dropped.

(iii) **On the Putting Green**: If the ball lies on the **putting green**, the player must lift the ball and place it, without penalty, at the **nearest point of relief** that is not in a **hazard**. The **nearest point of relief** may be off the **putting green**.

(iv) **On the Teeing Ground**: If the ball lies on the **teeing ground**, the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, in accordance with Clause (i) above.

The ball may be cleaned when lifted under this Rule.

(Ball rolling to a position where there is interference by the condition from which relief was taken – see Rule 20-2c(v))

**Exception**: A player may not take relief under this Rule if (a) interference by anything other than an immovable **obstruction** makes the **stroke** clearly impracticable or (b) interference by an immovable **obstruction** would occur only through use of a clearly unreasonable **stroke** or an unnecessarily abnormal **stance**, swing or direction of play.
Note 1: If a ball is in a water hazard (including a lateral water hazard), the player may not take relief from interference by an immovable obstruction. The player must play the ball as it lies or proceed under Rule 26-1.

Note 2: If a ball to be dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be substituted.

Note 3: The Committee may make a Local Rule stating that the player must determine the nearest point of relief without crossing over, through or under the obstruction.

RULE 24-3. Ball In Obstruction Not Found
It is a question of fact whether a ball that has not been found after having been struck toward an obstruction is in the obstruction. In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that the ball is in the obstruction. In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must proceed under Rule 27-1.

a. Ball in Movable Obstruction Not Found
If it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in a movable obstruction, the player may substitute another ball and take relief, without penalty, under this Rule. If he elects to do so, he must remove the obstruction and through the green or in a hazard drop a ball, or on the putting green place a ball, as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the movable obstruction, but not nearer the hole.

b. Ball in Immovable Obstruction Not Found
If it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in an immovable obstruction, the player may take relief under this Rule. If he elects to do so, the spot where the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the obstruction must be determined and, for the purpose of applying this Rule, the ball is deemed to lie at this spot and the player must proceed as follows:
Through the Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot through the green, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 24-2b(i).

In a Bunker: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot in a bunker, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 24-2b(ii).

In a Water Hazard (including a Lateral Water Hazard): If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot in a water hazard, the player is not entitled to relief without penalty. The player must proceed under Rule 26-1.

On the Putting Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the immovable obstruction at a spot on the putting green, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 24-2b(iii).

Penalty For Breach Of Rule:

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

Rule 25
Abnormal Ground Conditions, Embedded Ball And Wrong Putting Green

RULE 25-1. Abnormal Ground Conditions
a. Interference

Interference by an abnormal ground condition occurs when a ball lies in or touches the condition or when the condition interferes with the player’s stance or the area of his intended swing. If the player’s ball lies on the putting green, interference also occurs if an abnormal ground condition on the putting green intervenes on his line of putt. Otherwise, intervention on the line of play is not, of itself, interference under this Rule.
Note: The **Committee** may make a Local Rule stating that interference by an abnormal ground condition with a player’s stance is deemed not to be, of itself, interference under this Rule.

b. Relief

Except when the ball is in a water hazard or a lateral water hazard, a player may take relief from interference by an abnormal ground condition as follows:

(i) **Through the Green**: If the ball lies through the green, the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest point of relief. The nearest point of relief must not be in a hazard or on a putting green. When the ball is dropped within one club-length of the nearest point of relief, the ball must first strike a part of the course at a spot that avoids interference by the condition and is not in a hazard and not on a putting green.

(ii) **In a Bunker**: If the ball is in a bunker, the player must lift the ball and drop it either:

(a) Without penalty, in accordance with Clause (i) above, except that the nearest point of relief must be in the bunker and the ball must be dropped in the bunker or, if complete relief is impossible, as near as possible to the spot where the ball lay, but not nearer the hole, on a part of the course in the bunker that affords maximum available relief from the condition; or

(b) **Under penalty of one stroke**, outside the bunker keeping the point where the ball lay directly between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind the bunker the ball may be dropped.

(iii) **On the Putting Green**: If the ball lies on the putting green, the player must lift the ball and place it, without penalty, at the nearest point of relief that is not in a hazard or, if complete relief is impossible, at the nearest position to where it lay that affords maximum available relief from the condition, but not
nearer the hole and not in a hazard. The nearest point of relief or maximum available relief may be off the putting green.

(iv) On the Teeing Ground: If the ball lies on the teeing ground, the player must lift the ball and drop it, without penalty, in accordance with Clause (i) above.

The ball may be cleaned when lifted under Rule 25-1b.

(Ball rolling to a position where there is interference by the condition from which relief was taken – see Rule 20-2c(v))

Exception: A player may not take relief under this Rule if (a) interference by anything other than an abnormal ground condition makes the stroke clearly impracticable or (b) interference by an abnormal ground condition would occur only through use of a clearly unreasonable stroke or an unnecessarily abnormal stance, swing or direction of play.

Note 1: If a ball is in a water hazard (including a lateral water hazard), the player is not entitled to relief, without penalty, from interference by an abnormal ground condition. The player must play the ball as it lies (unless prohibited by Local Rule) or proceed under Rule 26-1.

Note 2: If a ball to be dropped or placed under this Rule is not immediately recoverable, another ball may be substituted.

c. Ball in Abnormal Ground Condition Not Found

It is a question of fact whether a ball that has not been found after having been struck toward an abnormal ground condition is in such a condition. In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that the ball is in the abnormal ground condition. In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must proceed under Rule 27-1.

If it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in an abnormal ground condition, the player may take relief under this Rule. If he
elects to do so, the spot where the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the abnormal ground condition must be determined and, for the purpose of applying this Rule, the ball is deemed to lie at this spot and the player must proceed as follows:

(i) Through the Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the abnormal ground condition at a spot through the green, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 25-1b(i).

(ii) In a Bunker: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the abnormal ground condition at a spot in a bunker, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 25-1b(ii).

(iii) In a Water Hazard (including a Lateral Water Hazard): If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the abnormal ground condition at a spot in a water hazard, the player is not entitled to relief without penalty. The player must proceed under Rule 26-1.

(iv) On the Putting Green: If the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the abnormal ground condition at a spot on the putting green, the player may substitute another ball, without penalty, and take relief as prescribed in Rule 25-1b(iii).

DECISION 25/5
Casual Water on Putting Green Visible When Player Walks Beside Line of Putt But Not Visible Elsewhere

Q. A player's ball lies on a putting green. Casual water is not visible on the green. However, when the player walks beside his line of putt, casual water is visible around the player's feet. Is the player entitled to relief?

A. Not unless there is casual water visible around the player's feet when he takes his stance – see Definition of "Casual Water."

DECISION 25/6
**Status of Saliva**

**Q.** What is the status of saliva?

**A.** In equity (Rule 1-4), saliva may be treated as either an abnormal ground condition (Rule 25-1) or a loose impediment (Rule 23-1), at the option of the player.

**DECISION 25/11**

**Grass Cuttings**

Grass cuttings are ground under repair only if they have been piled for removal – see Definition of "Ground Under Repair." If cuttings piled for removal interfere with a player's stance or swing, the player is entitled to relief under Rule 25-1b.

Grass cuttings are loose impediments (see Definition of "Loose Impediments"), whether or not they are piled for removal, and may be removed by the player – Rule 23-1.

**DECISION 25/14**

**Explanation of "Hole Made by Greenkeeper" in Definition of "Ground Under Repair"**

**Q.** What constitutes a "hole made by a greenkeeper"?

**A.** A "hole made by a greenkeeper" is usually ground temporarily dug up in connection with course maintenance, such as a hole made in removing turf or a tree stump, laying pipelines, etc.

**DECISION 25/15**

**Aeration Holes**

**Q.** Is an aeration hole a hole made by a greenkeeper within the meaning of that term in the Definition of "Ground Under Repair"?

**A.** No.
Related Decision:
• 23/12 Aeration Plugs.

DECISION 25/16
Rut Made by Tractor

Q. Is a rut made by a tractor considered a hole made by a greenkeeper and thus ground under repair? If not, should the Committee declare such a rut to be ground under repair?

A. Such a rut is not a hole made by a greenkeeper. The Committee would be justified in declaring a deep rut to be ground under repair, but not a shallow indentation made by greenkeeping equipment.

Related Decision:
• 25/12 Cracks in Earth.

DECISION 25/17
Sunken Hole Plug

Q. Is an old hole plug which has sunk below the level of the surface of the putting green a hole made by a greenkeeper and therefore ground under repair?

A. No. Rule 16-1c applies.

DECISION 25/19.5
Footprint of Burrowing Animal, Reptile or Bird

Q. Is the footprint of a burrowing animal, a reptile or a bird a "hole, cast or runway" within the meaning of these terms in the Definition of "Abnormal Ground Conditions"?

A. No. A footprint is an irregularity of surface from which there is no relief without penalty.
**DECISION 25/23**

Molehills

Molehills are casts made by a burrowing animal. Accordingly, a player having interference from a molehill, or the remains of a molehill, is entitled to relief under Rule **25-1b**, provided, in the latter instance, the remains are still identifiable as a cast made by a burrowing animal.

**DECISION 25-1a/2**

Casual Water on Putting Green Intervenes Between Ball Off Green and Hole

Q. A player's ball lies just off the putting green and casual water on the green intervenes between the ball and the hole. Is the player entitled to relief?

A. No. In addition, Rule **13-2** prohibits the player from removing casual water from his line of play.

Related Decision:

• **25-1b/10.5** Casual Water on Putting Green; Whether Player Entitled to Relief for Intervention If Ball Is on Green and Nearest Point of Relief Is Off Green.

**DECISION 25-1b/10**

Casual Water on Putting Green; Nearest Point of Relief Is Off Green

Q. A player whose ball is on a putting green is entitled to relief from casual water. However, the nearest position affording complete relief which is not nearer the hole or in a hazard is off the green in the rough. If the player opts to take relief, must he place the ball in the rough?

A. Yes. See Rule **25-1b(iii).**

**DECISION 25-1b/10.5**

Casual Water on Putting Green; Whether Player Entitled to Relief for Intervention If Ball Is on Green and Nearest Point of Relief Is Off Green
Q. In Diagram X, a player's ball lies at Point 1 in casual water on the putting green. In Diagram Y, a player's ball lies at Point 1 on the putting green with casual water intervening on his line of putt.

Under Rule 25-1b(iii), the player is not entitled to place the ball at Point 4, which is on the green, because Point 4 is farther from Point 1 than either Point 2 or Point 3, both of which are off the green. It would seem that Point 2 may be the correct point because there is no relief if a ball lies off the green and casual water on the green intervenes on the line of play. In taking relief must the player place the ball at Point 2 or Point 3?

A. Since, in both diagrams, the ball lies on the putting green, the player is entitled to relief with respect to the lie of the ball and intervention on his line. Accordingly, in either case the player must place the ball at Point 3, the nearest point which affords complete relief with respect to both situations.

DECISION 25-1b/25
Ball Enters Burrowing Animal Hole in Bunker and Is Found Underneath Putting Green

Q. A ball enters a burrowing animal hole in a greenside bunker and is found underneath the putting green. As the ball is not in the bunker or on the putting green, is relief taken in accordance with Rule 25-1b(i), i.e., through the green?
A. Yes. The player would drop the ball without penalty on a part of the course through the green within one club-length of the nearest point to its position in the burrowing animal hole that avoids interference from the condition and is not in a hazard, not on a putting green and not nearer the hole.

**RULE 25-2. Embedded Ball**
A ball embedded in its own pitch-mark in the ground in any closely mown area through the green may be lifted, cleaned and dropped, without penalty, as near as possible to the spot where it lay but not nearer the hole. The ball when dropped must first strike a part of the course through the green. “Closely mown area” means any area of the course, including paths through the rough, cut to fairway height or less.

**EMBEDDED BALL**
**DECISION 25-2/0.5**
**When Ball Embedded in Ground**
A ball is deemed to be embedded in the ground only if:

- the impact of the ball landing has created a pitch-mark in the ground,
- the ball is in its own pitch-mark, and
- part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

Provided that these three requirements are met, a ball does not necessarily have to touch the soil to be considered embedded (e.g., grass, loose impediments or the like may intervene between the ball and the soil).

Any doubt as to whether a ball is embedded should be resolved against the player. (Revised)
DECISION 25-2/1
Ball Bounces Out of Its Pitch-Mark and Spins Back into It

Q. A player's ball lands in soft ground in a closely mown area through the green, bounces out of its pitch-mark and then spins back into the pitch-mark. Is the player entitled to relief under Rule 25-2?

A. Yes. If a ball spins back into its pitch-mark, it is embedded in the pitch-mark.

RULE 25-3. Wrong Putting Green
a. Interference
Interference by a wrong putting green occurs when a ball is on the wrong putting green. Interference to a player's stance or the area of his intended swing is not, of itself, interference under this Rule.

b. Relief
If a player's ball lies on a wrong putting green, he must not play the ball as it lies. He must take relief, without penalty, as follows:
The player must lift the ball and drop it within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest point of relief. The nearest point of relief must not be in a hazard or on a putting green. When dropping the ball within one club-length of the nearest point of relief, the ball must first strike a part of the course at a spot that avoids interference by the wrong putting green and is not in a hazard and not on a putting green. The ball may be cleaned when lifted under this Rule.

Penalty For Breach Of Rule:

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

WRONG PUTTING GREEN
DECISION 25-3/1
Status of Double Green Serving Hole Not Being Played

Q. One half of a U-shaped putting green serves as the 11th green and the other half serves as the 17th green. In play of the 17th hole, if a ball comes to rest on the part of the green serving the 11th hole, does Rule 25-3 (Wrong Putting Green) apply?

A. No, not unless the Committee divides the green by use of stakes or a line and declares one part to be the green of the 11th hole and the other part to be the green of the 17th hole. The Definition of "Putting Green" gives a Committee this right.

FAQ Rule 25-3
Stance on Wrong Putting Green
Q. Does a player have to take relief if only his stance (but not the ball) is on a wrong putting green?
A. No, the ball must be played as it lies. Rule 25-3 applies only when the ball itself is on a wrong putting green.

Below you can view videos related to this Rule.

Video
Abnormal Ground Conditions
Dealing with abnormal ground conditions
Nearest Point of Relief

How to determine your nearest point of relief

Abnormal ground condition

During the 1996 U.S. Amateur Championship, while battling for the title with Tiger Woods, Steve Scott hit a tee shot that came to rest on this French drain in the fairway. The rutted drain had been declared an “abnormal ground condition,” and under Rule 25-1, Scott therefore was entitled to relief without penalty.

On the fringe of a wrong putting green

During the 2002 Ryder Cup, Tiger Woods’ ball came to rest on the fringe of a wrong putting green. Rule 25-3 says interference from a wrong putting green occurs only when the ball rests actually on that green.

Rule 26. Water Hazards (Including Lateral Water Hazards)

- Explanation Of Rule 26-1B Vs. "Line Of Flight"
- Ball Rolling Back Into Water Hazard

Rule 27. Ball Lost or Out of Bounds; Provisional Ball

- Ball Thought To Be Embedded Is Lost
- Original Ball Found, Player Wishes To Continue With Provisional Ball
- Provisional Ball Played For Ball That May Be In Water Hazard
- Original Ball Found And Declared Unplayable, Player Wishes To Continue With Provisional Ball

Rule 28. Ball Unplayable

- Ball Unplayable In A Hazard
- Explanation Of Two Club-Length Option

Rule 29. Threesomes and Foursomes

- Playing Of Provisional Ball
- Playing From Teeing Ground In Threesomes And Foursomes
Rule 30. Three-Ball, Best-Ball and Four-Ball Match Play
  • Request To Lift Ball That Might Assist Partner Not Honored

Rule 31. Four-Ball Stroke Play
  • Breach Of 14 Club Rule By One Partner
  • Scoring In Four-Ball Stroke Play

Rule 33. The Committee
  • Combining Match Play And Stroke Play
  • Water Hazard Not Marked
  • One Scorecard Issued For Four Players In One Group
  • Round Finishes In A Tie, How Should Winner Be Determined

Rule 34. Disputes and Decisions
  • Penalties After Close Of Competition In Stroke Play

Rule 26
Water Hazards (Including Lateral Water Hazards)

Rule 27
Ball Lost Or Out Of Bounds; Provisional Ball

Rule 28
Ball Unplayable

OTHER FORMS OF PLAY
Rule 29
Threesomes And Foursomes
Rule 30
Three-Ball, Best-Ball And Four-Ball Match Play

Rule 31
Four-Ball Stroke Play

Rule 32
Bogey, Par And Stableford Competitions

ADMINISTRATION
Rule 33
The Committee

RULE 33-1. Conditions; Waiving Rule
The Committee must establish the conditions under which a competition is to be played.

The Committee has no power to waive a Rule of Golf.

Certain specific Rules governing stroke play are so substantially different from those governing match play that combining the two forms of play is not practicable and is not permitted. The result of a match played in these circumstances is null and void and, in the stroke play competition, the competitors are disqualified.
In stroke play, the Committee may limit a referee’s duties.

RULE 33-2. The Course
a. Defining Bounds and Margins
The Committee must define accurately:

(i) the course and out of bounds,

(ii) the margins of water hazards and lateral water hazards,

(iii) ground under repair, and

(iv) obstructions and integral parts of the course.

b. New Holes
New holes should be made on the day on which a stroke-play competition begins and at such other times as the Committee considers necessary, provided all competitors in a single round play with each hole cut in the same position.

Exception: When it is impossible for a damaged hole to be repaired so that it conforms with the Definition, the Committee may make a new hole in a nearby similar position.

Note: Where a single round is to be played on more than one day, the Committee may provide, in the conditions of a competition (Rule 33-1), that the holes and teeing grounds may be differently situated on each day of the competition, provided that, on any one day, all competitors play with each hole and each teeing ground in the same position.

c. Practice Ground
Where there is no practice ground available outside the area of a competition course, the Committee should establish the area on which players may practice on any day of a competition, if it is practicable to do so. On any day of a
stroke-play competition, the Committee should not normally permit practice on or to a putting green or from a hazard of the competition course.

d. Course Unplayable

If the Committee or its authorized representative considers that for any reason the course is not in a playable condition or that there are circumstances that render the proper playing of the game impossible, it may, in match play or stroke play, order a temporary suspension of play or, in stroke play, declare play null and void and cancel all scores for the round in question. When a round is canceled, all penalties incurred in that round are canceled.

(Procedure in discontinuing and resuming play – see Rule 6-8)

CUTTING OF NEW HOLES
DECISION 33-2b/1
Holes Relocated and/or Tee-Markers Moved During Stroke-Play Round

Q. During a round in a stroke-play competition, one or more holes were relocated and/or tee-markers moved. What is the proper procedure?

A. If this was authorized by the Committee, the round should be declared null and void. In stroke play, the Committee is prohibited from relocating a hole and from moving tee-markers except as provided in the Exception and Note to Rule 33-2b or in circumstances such as those in Decisions 25-1b/4 or 33-2b/1.5.

If this was done without the authority or sanction of the Committee, generally the round should be declared null and void. However, if the course has not been altered significantly and no competitor has been given an undue advantage or disadvantage, the Committee would be justified in letting the round stand.

DECISION 33-2b/1.5
Committee Wishes to Move Hole During Stroke-Play Round Due to Severity of Location
Q. During a round in a stroke-play competition, the Committee discovers that one of the holes is positioned such that the ball will not stop near the hole due to the severity of the slope at the hole. As a result, the majority of players who have played the hole have taken an excessive number of putts to hole out. What are the Committee's options in such circumstances?

A. There is no good solution in such a case, and the Committee, taking into account all factors (e.g., how severe the hole location is, how many players have completed play of the hole and where the hole is in the round), should take the course of action that it considers to be the fairest to all the players. In the circumstances described, the following are examples of actions the Committee may take:

(a) Have play continue with the hole location unchanged on the basis that the conditions are the same for all players in the field;

(b) Keep the hole in the same location but take some action, e.g., watering the putting green between groups, to make the hole location less severe;

(c) Declare the round null and void and have all players start the round again.

(d) Suspend play, relocate the hole and have the players who played the hole return at the conclusion of their rounds to replay the hole. The score for the hole for these players is the score achieved when the hole is replayed;

(e) Have all players disregard their score for the hole in question and play another hole (whether on the competition course or elsewhere) for their score for the hole.

Options (d) and (e) should be taken only in extreme circumstances because they alter the stipulated round for some or all players.

DECISION 33-2b/2
Relocating Hole After Ball Already Positioned Nearby on Putting Green
Q. A's ball comes to rest on the putting green four feet from the hole. B's ball then strikes the hole, severely damaging the hole before coming to rest off the putting green, 30 feet from the hole. The players attempt to repair the damage caused by the impact of the ball as permitted by Rule **16-1c**, but they are unable to restore the hole to its proper dimensions and call for a ruling. What should the Committee do?

A. The Committee should attempt to repair the hole so that it conforms with the Definition of "Hole." If this is not possible, the players may complete the hole with the hole in its damaged state. It is not desirable to relocate the hole, as provided in the Exception to Rule **33-2b**, before all players in the group have completed play of the hole. However, the Committee may relocate the hole in a nearby similar position if it is necessary to ensure the proper playing of the game.

If it was necessary to relocate the hole before A and B made their next strokes, as A's ball was on the putting green, in equity (Rule **1-4**), the Committee should require A to relocate his ball to a position comparable to that which his stroke had given him originally. As B's ball was off the putting green, the Committee should require B to play his ball as it lies. The same principle would apply in match play.

Decisions related to **33-2B/1** through **33-2B/2**:

• **16-1a/6** Damaged Hole; Procedure for Player.

• **25-1b/4** Casual Water Covering Teeing Ground.

**DECISION 33-2d/2**

**Hole Surrounded by Casual Water**

If all the area around a hole contains casual water, in stroke play the course should be considered unplayable and the Committee should suspend play under Rule **33-2d**. In match play, the Committee should relocate the hole.

Related Decisions:

• **16-1a/6** Damaged Hole; Procedure for Player.
•\textbf{25-1b/4} Casual Water Covering Teeing Ground.

\textbf{RULE 33-7. Disqualification Penalty; Committee Discretion}
A penalty of disqualification may in exceptional individual cases be waived, modified or imposed if the \textbf{Committee} considers such action warranted.

Any penalty less than disqualification must not be waived or modified.

If a \textbf{Committee} considers that a player is guilty of a serious breach of etiquette, it may impose a penalty of disqualification under this Rule.

\textbf{DECISION 33-7/2}
\textbf{Modifying Penalty for Not Holing Out in Stroke Play}

\textbf{Q.} In stroke play, a competitor missed a short putt at the 16th hole, knocked his ball off the green, picked it up and teed off at the next hole without having holed out at the 16th.

After the competitor returned his score card, a fellow-competitor brought the matter to the attention of the Committee. The competitor admitted the error and expressed the view that his fellow-competitors were unsportsmanlike in not calling the error to his attention when the incident occurred.

In such circumstances, would the Committee be justified in modifying to two strokes the disqualification penalty provided in Rule \textbf{3-2}?

\textbf{A.} No. Rule \textbf{33-7} should never be invoked in the case of disqualification for failing to hole out in stroke play. The competitor in such a case has not played the course.

Failure of the fellow-competitors to advise the competitor of his error is not a good reason for modifying the penalty. It is the responsibility of the competitor to know the Rules.

\textbf{DECISION 33-7/6}
\textbf{Competitor Repeatedly Replaces Ball Nearer Hole on Green}
Q. On completion of a round in stroke play, a competitor's marker reports that the competitor, after lifting his ball on the putting green, repeatedly placed it nearer the hole than the spot from which it was lifted. The Committee, after gathering all available evidence, concludes that the marker's report is correct. What should the Committee do?

A. The competitor should be disqualified under Rule 33-7.

RULE 33-8. Local Rules
a. Policy
The Committee may establish Local Rules for local abnormal conditions if they are consistent with the policy set forth in Appendix I.

b. Waiving or Modifying a Rule
A Rule of Golf must not be waived by a Local Rule. However, if a Committee considers that local abnormal conditions interfere with the proper playing of the game to the extent that it is necessary to make a Local Rule that modifies the Rules of Golf, the Local Rule must be authorized by the USGA.

DECISION 33-8/7
Local Rule Requiring Player to Play Out of Turn on Putting Green

Q. A proposed Local Rule would require that, on the putting green, a player must play continuously until he has holed out. Would such a Local Rule be acceptable?

A. No. Such a Local Rule would modify Rules 10-1b and 10-2b, which require that the ball farther from the hole shall be played first.

DECISION 33-8/10
Local Rule Prohibiting Removal of Flagstick

Q. May a Committee make a Local Rule for winter-time play prohibiting removal of the flagstick? The purpose would be to reduce traffic around the hole in the winter when the putting greens are very soft.
A. No. Such a Local Rule would modify the Rules of Golf.

**DECISION 33-8/11**

Local Rule Waiving Penalty for Ball Striking Unattended Flagstick

**Q.** Is it permissible for a Committee to make a Local Rule for winter play waiving the penalty incurred under Rule 17-3c (Ball Striking Flagstick When Unattended) in order to reduce the damage caused to the area around the hole and to speed up play?

A. No.

**DECISION 33-8/24**

Local Rule Permitting Relief from Edging Grooves Around Putting Green

**Q.** Edging grooves are cut at the perimeters of the putting greens, or just beyond the fringes of the greens, to prevent creeping grasses (e.g., bermuda-grass) from encroaching. If a ball comes to rest in or on such a groove, it is impossible to play the ball with any degree of accuracy. Would a Local Rule providing relief be authorized?

A. Yes. If an edging groove touches the green, the Committee may make a Local Rule giving relief if a ball lies in or on such a groove or the groove interferes with the area of intended swing, but not solely because the groove might affect the player's stance. The Local Rule should read as follows:

"If a ball lies in or on an edging groove around a putting green, or if the groove interferes with the area of the player's intended swing, the ball may, without penalty, be lifted, cleaned and placed in the nearest position to where it lay that is not nearer the hole and avoids interference by the condition, whether on or off the putting green."

If edging grooves do not touch the green, the Committee may declare them to be ground under repair and provide relief under Rule 25-1 as follows:

"The grooves around the fringes of the putting greens are ground under repair. However, interference by a groove with the player's stance is deemed
not to be, of itself, interference under Rule 25-1. If the ball lies in or touches the groove or the groove interferes with the area of intended swing, relief is available under Rule 25-1."

**DECISION 33-8/33**
Local Rule Prohibiting Dropping on Apron When Ball on Wrong Putting Green

**Q.** Balls from the 13th tee frequently come to rest on the 15th green, and the point of nearest relief under Rule 25-3 is the closely mown apron of the green. Much damage is being caused to this apron. May the Committee make a Local Rule requiring that a ball be dropped not only clear of the putting surface but also clear of the apron of this green?

**A.** Yes. The following wording for a Local Rule is suggested:

"For the purpose of Rule 25-3, the putting green of the 15th hole includes the apron surrounding the green."

A player in doubt as to the conformity of a club should consult the USGA.

A manufacturer should submit to the USGA a sample of a club to be manufactured for a ruling as to whether the club conforms with the Rules. The sample becomes the property of the USGA for reference purposes. If a manufacturer fails to submit a sample or, having submitted a sample, fails to await a ruling before manufacturing and/or marketing the club, the manufacturer assumes the risk of a ruling that the club does not conform with the Rules.

The following paragraphs prescribe general regulations for the design of clubs, together with specifications and interpretations. Further information relating to these regulations and their proper interpretation is provided in “A Guide to the Rules on Clubs and Balls.”

Where a club, or part of a club, is required to meet a specification within the Rules, it must be designed and manufactured with the intention of meeting that specification.
Rule 34
Disputes And Decisions

RULE 34-1
Penalties after close of competition in stroke play
Q. Once a stroke play competition has closed, may a player ever be penalized?
A. Yes. He may be disqualified in the four situations listed under Rule 34-1b. No other penalty may be waived, modified or imposed after the competition has closed.

Miscellaneous
• How To Count Putts

FAQ Rule Misc.
How to Count Putts
Q. Our club has a game each week for the lowest putts. What is the recommended method for counting putts?
A. The Rules of Golf do not address how statistics are kept. In USGA Championships where putts are counted, the player has made his first putt once he has made a stroke from the putting green and all subsequent strokes are counted as putts. It is up to the Committee in charge of the event to determine how putts will be counted and the method used for counting.

• One Ball Condition
• Determining Flights
• Scrambles
• Validity Of Hole In One
• Using The Online Rules Of Golf
• Holing Ball While Another Ball Is In Hole

FAQ Rule Misc.
Holing Ball While Another Ball is in Hole
Q. Is it a breach of a Rule for a ball to be holed while another ball is at rest in the hole?
A. No.

Both balls are holed (see Definition of "Holed") and there are no penalties incurred by either player.

It is a breach of Etiquette for the first player to leave his ball in the hole if the second player has asked him to remove it.

- **Rules Change Process**
- **How Do I Become A Rules Official?**

### IV. Appendix II

1. **Clubs**
   
a. **General**

A club is an implement designed to be used for striking the ball and generally comes in three forms: woods, irons and putters distinguished by shape and intended use. A putter is a club with a loft not exceeding ten degrees designed primarily for use on the **putting green**.

The club must not be substantially different from the traditional and customary form and make. The club must be composed of a shaft and a head and it may also have material added to the shaft to enable the player to obtain a firm hold (see 3 below). All parts of the club must be fixed so that the club is one unit, and it must have no external attachments. Exceptions may be made for attachments that do not affect the performance of the club.

b. **Adjustability**

All clubs may incorporate features for weight adjustment. Other forms of adjustability may also be permitted upon evaluation by the USGA. The following requirements apply to all permissible methods of adjustment:

(i) the adjustment cannot be readily made;
(ii) all adjustable parts are firmly fixed and there is no reasonable likelihood of them working loose during a round; and

(iii) all configurations of adjustment conform with the Rules.

During a stipulated round, the playing characteristics of a club must not be purposely changed by adjustment or by any other means (see Rule 4-2a).

c. Length
The overall length of the club must be at least 18 inches (0.457 m) and, except for putters, must not exceed 48 inches (1.219 m).

![Fig. 1](image)

For woods and irons, the measurement of length is taken when the club is lying on a horizontal plane and the sole is set against a 60 degree plane as shown in Fig. 1. The length is defined as the distance from the point of the intersection between the two planes to the top of the grip. For putters, the measurement of length is taken from the top of the grip along the axis of the shaft or a straight line extension of it to the sole of the club.

d. Alignment
When the club is in its normal address position the shaft must be so aligned that:

(i) the projection of the straight part of the shaft on to the vertical plane through the toe and heel must diverge from the vertical by at least 10 degrees (see Fig. II). If the overall design of the club is such that the player can effectively use the club in a vertical or close-to-vertical position, the shaft may be required to diverge from the vertical in this plane by as much as 25 degrees;
(ii) the projection of the straight part of the shaft on to the vertical plane along the intended *line of play* must not diverge from the vertical by more than 20 degrees forwards or 10 degrees backwards (see Fig. III).
Except for putters, all of the heel portion of the club must lie within 0.625 inches (15.88 mm) of the plane containing the axis of the straight part of the shaft and the intended (horizontal) line of play (see Fig. IV).

Fig. III
2. Shaft
   a. Straightness

The shaft must be straight from the top of the grip to a point not more than 5 inches (127 mm) above the sole, measured from the point where the shaft ceases to be straight along the axis of the bent part of the shaft and the neck and/or socket (see Fig. V).
b. Bending and Twisting Properties
At any point along its length, the shaft must:

(i) bend in such a way that the deflection is the same regardless of how the shaft is rotated about its longitudinal axis; and

(ii) twist the same amount in both directions.

c. Attachment to Clubhead
The shaft must be attached to the clubhead at the heel either directly or through a single plain neck and/or socket. The length from the top of the neck and/or socket to the sole of the club must not exceed 5 inches (127 mm),
measured along the axis of, and following any bend in, the neck and/or socket (see Fig. VI).

**Exception for Putters:** The shaft or neck or socket of a putter may be fixed at any point in the head.

3. Grip (See Fig. Vii)
The grip consists of material added to the shaft to enable the player to obtain a firm hold. The grip must be fixed to the shaft, must be straight and plain in form, must extend to the end of the shaft and must not be molded for any part of the hands. If no material is added, that portion of the shaft designed to be held by the player must be considered the grip.
(i) For clubs other than putters the grip must be circular in cross-section, except that a continuous, straight, slightly raised rib may be incorporated along the full length of the grip, and a slightly indented spiral is permitted on a wrapped grip or a replica of one.
(ii) A putter grip may have a non-circular cross-section, provided the cross-section has no concavity, is symmetrical and remains generally similar throughout the length of the grip. (See Clause (v) overleaf).

(iii) The grip may be tapered but must not have any bulge or waist. Its cross-sectional dimensions measured in any direction must not exceed 1.75 inches (44.45 mm).

(iv) For clubs other than putters the axis of the grip must coincide with the axis of the shaft.

(v) A putter may have two grips provided each is circular in cross-section, the axis of each coincides with the axis of the shaft, and they are separated by at least 1.5 inches (38.1 mm).

4. Clubhead

a. Plain in Shape

The clubhead must be generally plain in shape. All parts must be rigid, structural in nature and functional. The clubhead or its parts must not be designed to resemble any other object. It is not practicable to define plain in shape precisely and comprehensively. However, features that are deemed to be in breach of this requirement and are therefore not permitted include, but are not limited to:

(I) All Clubs

- holes through the face;
- holes through the head (some exceptions may be made for putters and cavity back irons);
- facsimiles of golf balls or actual golf balls incorporated into the head;
- features that are for the purpose of meeting dimensional specifications;
- features that extend into or ahead of the face;
- features that extend significantly above the top line of the head;
- furrows in or runners on the head that extend into the face (some exceptions may be made for putters); and
- optical or electronic devices.

(ii) Woods And Irons
• all features listed in (i) above;
• cavities in the outline of the heel and/or the toe of the head that can be viewed from above;
• severe or multiple cavities in the outline of the back of the head that can be viewed from above;
• transparent material added to the head with the intention of rendering conforming a feature that is not otherwise permitted; and
• features that extend beyond the outline of the head when viewed from above.

b. Dimensions, Volume and Moment of Inertia

(I) Woods

When the club is in a 60 degree lie angle, the dimensions of the clubhead must be such that:

• the distance from the heel to the toe of the clubhead is greater than the distance from the face to the back;
• the distance from the heel to the toe of the clubhead is not greater than 5 inches (127 mm); and
• the distance from the sole to the crown of the clubhead, including any permitted features, is not greater than 2.8 inches (71.12 mm).

These dimensions are measured on horizontal lines between vertical projections of the outermost points of:

• the heel and the toe; and
• the face and the back (see Fig. VIII, dimension A);

and on vertical lines between the horizontal projections of the outermost points of the sole and the crown (see Fig. VIII, dimension B). If the outermost point of the heel is not clearly defined, it is deemed to be 0.875 inches (22.23 mm) above the horizontal plane on which the club is lying (see Fig. VIII, dimension C).
The volume of the clubhead must not exceed 460 cubic centimeters (28.06 cubic inches), plus a tolerance of 10 cubic centimeters (0.61 cubic inches).

When the club is in a 60 degree lie angle, the moment of inertia component around the vertical axis through the clubhead’s center of gravity must not exceed 5900 g cm² (32.259 oz in²), plus a test tolerance of 100 g cm² (0.547 oz in²).

(ii) Irons
When the clubhead is in its normal address position, the dimensions of the head must be such that the distance from the heel to the toe is greater than the distance from the face to the back.

(iii) Putters (See Fig. IX)
When the clubhead is in its normal address position, the dimensions of the head must be such that:

- the distance from the heel to the toe is greater than the distance from the face to the back;
- the distance from the heel to the toe of the head is less than or equal to 7 inches (177.8 mm);
- the distance from the heel to the toe of the face is greater than or equal to two thirds of the distance from the face to the back of the head;
- the distance from the heel to the toe of the face is greater than or equal to half of the distance from the heel to the toe of the head; and
• the distance from the sole to the top of the head, including any permitted features, is less than or equal to 2.5 inches (63.5 mm).

For traditionally shaped heads, these dimensions will be measured on horizontal lines between vertical projections of the outermost points of:

• the heel and the toe of the head;
• the heel and the toe of the face; and
• the face and the back;

and on vertical lines between the horizontal projections of the outermost points of the sole and the top of the head.

For unusually shaped heads, the toe to heel dimension may be made at the face.

c. Spring Effect and Dynamic Properties

The design, material and/or construction of, or any treatment to, the clubhead (which includes the club face) must not:

(i) have the effect of a spring which exceeds the limit set forth in the Pendulum Test Protocol on file with the USGA; or

(ii) incorporate features or technology including, but not limited to, separate springs or spring features, that have the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead’s spring effect; or

(iii) unduly influence the movement of the ball.
**Note:** (i) above does not apply to putters.

d. Striking Faces
The clubhead must have only one striking face, except that a putter may have two such faces if their characteristics are the same, and they are opposite each other.

5. Club Face
a. General
The face of the club must be hard and rigid and must not impart significantly more or less spin to the ball than a standard steel face (some exceptions may be made for putters). Except for such markings listed below, the club face must be smooth and must not have any degree of concavity.

b. Impact Area Roughness and Material
Except for markings specified in the following paragraphs, the surface roughness within the area where impact is intended (the “impact area”) must not exceed that of decorative sandblasting, or of fine milling (see Fig. X).

![Fig. X](image.png)

The whole of the impact area must be of the same material (exceptions may be made for clubheads made of wood).
c. Impact Area Markings

If a club has grooves and/or punch marks in the impact area they must meet the following specifications:

(I) Grooves
- Grooves must be straight and parallel.
- Grooves must have a symmetrical cross-section and have sides which do not converge (see Fig. XI).

*For clubs that have a loft angle greater than or equal to 25 degrees, grooves must have a plain cross-section.

- The width, spacing and cross-section of the grooves must be consistent throughout the impact area (some exceptions may be made for woods).
- The width (W) of each groove must not exceed 0.035 inches (0.9 mm), using the 30 degree method of measurement on file with the USGA.
- The distance between edges of adjacent grooves (S) must not be less than three times the width of the grooves, and not less than 0.075 inches (1.905 mm).
- The depth of each groove must not exceed 0.020 inches (0.508 mm).
- *For clubs other than driving clubs, the cross-sectional area (A) of a groove divided by the groove pitch (W+S) must not exceed 0.0030 square inches per inch (0.0762 mm2/mm) (see Fig. XII).
• Grooves must not have sharp edges or raised lips.
• For clubs that have a loft angle greater than or equal to 25 degrees, groove edges must be substantially in the form of a round having an effective radius which is not less than 0.010 inches (0.254 mm) when measured as shown in Fig. XIII, and not greater than 0.020 inches (0.508 mm). Deviations in effective radius within 0.001 inches (0.0254 mm) are permissible.

![Conforming vs. Non-Conforming Grooves](image)

(ii) Punch Marks
• The maximum dimension of any punch mark must not exceed 0.075 inches (1.905 mm).
• The distance between adjacent punch marks (or between punch marks and grooves) must not be less than 0.168 inches (4.27 mm), measured from center to center.
• The depth of any punch mark must not exceed 0.040 inches (1.02 mm).
• Punch marks must not have sharp edges or raised lips.
• *For clubs that have a loft angle greater than or equal to 25 degrees, punch mark edges must be substantially in the form of a round having an effective radius which is not less than 0.010 inches (0.254 mm) when measured as shown in Figure XIII, and not greater than 0.020 inches (0.508 mm). Deviations in effective radius within 0.001 inches (0.0254 mm) are permissible.

**Note 1:** The groove and punch mark specifications above indicated by an asterisk (*) apply only to new models of clubs manufactured on or after January 1, 2010 and any club where the face markings have been purposely altered, for example, by re-grooving. For further information on the status of clubs available before January 1, 2010, please refer to the Informational Club Database at [www.USGA.org](http://www.USGA.org).

**Note 2:** The Committee may require, in the conditions of competition, that the clubs the player carries must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications.
specifications above indicated by an asterisk (*). This condition is recommended only for competitions involving expert players. For further information, refer to Decision 4-1/1 in “Decisions on the Rules of Golf.”

d. Decorative Markings
The center of the impact area may be indicated by a design within the boundary of a square whose sides are 0.375 inches (9.53 mm) in length. Such a design must not unduly influence the movement of the ball. Decorative markings are permitted outside the impact area.

e. Non-Metallic Club Face Markings
The above specifications do not apply to clubheads made of wood on which the impact area of the face is of a material of hardness less than the hardness of metal and whose loft angle is 24 degrees or less, but markings which could unduly influence the movement of the ball are prohibited.

f. Putter Face Markings
Any markings on the face of a putter must not have sharp edges or raised lips. The specifications with regard to roughness, material and markings in the impact area do not apply.

A player in doubt as to whether use of a device or other equipment would constitute a breach of the Rules should consult the USGA.

A manufacturer should submit to the USGA a sample of a device or other equipment to be manufactured for a ruling as to whether its use during a stipulated round would cause a player to be in breach of Rule 14-3. The sample becomes the property of the USGA for reference purposes. If a manufacturer fails to submit a sample or, having submitted a sample, fails to await a ruling before manufacturing and/or marketing the device or other equipment, the manufacturer assumes the risk of a ruling that use of the device or other equipment would be contrary to the Rules.
The following paragraphs prescribe general regulations for the design of devices and other equipment, together with specifications and interpretations. They should be read in conjunction with Rule 11-1 (Teeing) and Rule 14-3 (Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment).

1. Tees (Rule 11)
A tee is a device designed to raise the ball off the ground. A tee must not:

- be longer than 4 inches (101.6 mm);
- be designed or manufactured in such a way that it could indicate Line Of Play;
- unduly influence the movement of the ball; or
- otherwise assist the player in making a Stroke or in his play.

2. Gloves (Rule 14-3)
Gloves may be worn to assist the player in gripping the club, provided they are plain.

A “plain” glove must:

- consist of a fitted covering of the hand with a separate sheath or opening for each digit (fingers and thumb); and
- be made of smooth materials on the full palm and gripping surface of the digits.

A “plain” glove must not incorporate:

- material on the gripping surface or inside of the glove, the primary purpose of which is to provide padding or which has the effect of providing padding. Padding is defined as an area of glove material which is more than 0.025 inches (0.635 mm) thicker than the adjacent areas of the glove without the added material; **Note:** Material may be added for wear resistance, moisture absorption or other functional purposes, provided it does not exceed the definition of padding (see above).
- straps to assist in preventing the club from slipping or to attach the hand to the club;
- any means of binding digits together;
- material on the glove that adheres to material on the grip;
features, other than visual aids, designed to assist the player in placing his hands in a consistent and/or specific position on the grip;
- weight to assist the player in making a Stroke;
- any feature that might restrict the movement of a joint; or
- any other feature that might assist the player in making a Stroke or in his play.

3. Shoes (Rule 14-3)
Shoes that assist the player in obtaining a firm stance may be worn. Subject to the conditions of competition, features such as spikes on the sole are permitted, but shoes must not incorporate features:

- designed to assist the player in taking his Stance and/or building a Stance;
- designed to assist the player with his alignment; or
- hat might otherwise assist the player in making a Stroke or in his play.

4. Clothing (Rule 14-3)
Articles of clothing must not incorporate features:

- designed to assist the player with his alignment; or
- that might otherwise assist the player in making a Stroke or in his play.

5. Distance-Measuring Devices (Rule 14-3)
During a stipulated round, the use of any distance measuring device is not permitted unless the Committee has introduced a Local Rule to that effect (see Note to Rule 14-3 and Appendix I; Part B; Section 9).

Even when the Local Rule is in effect, the device must be limited to measuring distance only. Features that would render use of the device contrary to the Local Rule include, but are not limited to:

- the gauging or measuring of slope;
- the gauging or measuring of other conditions that might affect play (e.g., wind speed or direction, or other climate-based information such as temperature, humidity, etc.);
- recommendations that might assist the player in making a Stroke or in his play (e.g., club selection, type of shot to be played, green reading or any other advice related matter); or
• calculating the effective distance between two points based on slope or other conditions affecting shot distance.

Such non-conforming features render use of the device contrary to the Rules, irrespective of whether or not:

• the features can be switched off or disengaged; and
• the features are switched off or disengaged.

A multi-functional device, such as a smartphone or PDA, may be used as a distance measuring device provided it contains a distance measuring application that meets all of the above limitations (i.e., it must measure distance only). In addition, when the distance measuring application is being used, there must be no other features or applications installed on the device that, if used, would be in breach of the Rules, whether or not they are actually used.
V. Resources for the Rules of Golf

The USGA and the R&A jointly administer the Rules of Golf and convene every four years to consider revision of the Rules. These website resources and books are helpful in understanding the history, traditions, and meanings of the Rules of Golf:

**USGA Rules and Decisions**

Includes Rules, Decisions under the Rules, FAQs, Quizzes, and Experts Explain certain Rules.

**R&A Rules of Golf**

Includes Rules, Decisions under the Rules, Quizzes, New Rules, Rules Academy, and Rules News.

**History of the Rules of Golf**

Presenting the Rules of Golf in the historical evolution from 1700s to 2012 edition.

**Golf Rules Illustrated**
Various USGA books illustrating the Rules of Golf.

**USGA Rules of Golf Explained**

Short videos on some common Rules situations.

**R&A Quick Guide to common situations**

Short videos on common Rules situations.

**About.com Golf Rules at a Glance**

Short explanations, FAQs, and a Rules Forum for posing questions and answers.

**Fabio Bensaja’s Golf Rules Illustrated**

Slides illustrating most basic Rules.