BWGC - Rules of Golf - Player Guide

1. Ruling on Shots (Shot Determination)

- **Whiff (Intentional Swing)**
    - **Explanation:** If you made a stroke with the intent to hit the ball, it counts as *1 stroke* even if you missed contact.
    - **Example:** If you whiff on the tee shot, your next shot from the same spot is your *2nd shot*.
- **Accidentally Moving the Ball**
    - **Teeing Area / Putting Green:** Exception applies if the ball is not yet "in play" or is on the green. There is no penalty; simply replace the ball on its original spot.
    - **Fairway / Rough / Bunker:** If the ball moves during preparation (even without intent to hit), it is *1 Penalty Stroke*. You *must replace* the ball to its original spot.

  Note: If you do not replace it and play from the new spot, it becomes the General Penalty (*2 Strokes*).

    - **Standard:** A penalty only applies if the ball leaves its original spot. If it merely oscillates (wobbles) and returns to the original spot, there is no penalty.

2. Winter Rules (Preferred Lies)

- **Scope:** Applicable anywhere in the General Area
- **Exclusion:** Strictly prohibited in Bunkers and Penalty Areas**.**
- **Local Rule:** You may mark, lift, and clean your ball. It must be replaced within 6 inches of its original spot, staying in the *same cut of grass* (e.g., fairway to fairway, rough to rough) and no closer to the hole.
    - ***Note:*** *The ball may be moved only once per shot without penalty.*

3. Free Relief: Abnormal Course Conditions (Appendix A)

- **Scope:** Cart paths, sprinkler heads, control boxes, temporary water (casual water), Ground Under Repair (GUR), animal holes, *(**Note**: For Animal Scat and Bird Droppings, see the specific rule below).*
- **Condition:** Interference exists if the ball lies in/on the condition, or if it interferes with your stance or area of intended swing.
- **Requirement:** The player must take *full relief* from the condition, ensuring no interference exists for both the ball and the stance at the new spot.

Special Case: Relief from Animal Scat and Bird Droppings

A player whose ball is on or touching animal scat or bird droppings, may either;

a. Remove the droppings as **"Loose Impediment"** under Rule 15.1, or
b. Take free relief under **"Ground Under Repair"** Rule 16.1. The player may lift, clean, and drop the ball within one club-length, no closer to the hole, and in the *same cut of grass*.

Procedure (Step-by-Step):

1. **Find the Nearest Point of Complete Relief (NPCR):** Identify the closest point where the condition (e.g., cart path, water) no longer interferes with the lie, stance, or swing, and is not nearer the hole. (For paths, usually the side the ball is biased toward).
2. **Reference Point:** Simulate the address with the intended club to ensure *full relief*. Mark this point with a tee.
3. **Measure Area:** Measure *one club length* from the reference point using your longest club (Driver).
4. **Drop: Drop the ball from knee height.**
    - ***Note:*** If the ball rolls out of the relief area, re-drop. If it rolls out a second time, place the ball exactly where it first touched the ground on the second drop.

4. Bunker Rules (1 vs. 2 Penalty Strokes) (Appendix B)

- **No Penalty:** Moving from temporary water in a bunker to a dry spot within the bunker.
- **1 Stroke Penalty:** Unplayable Lie relief *within the bunker* (Back-on-the-line or Lateral), or Stroke and Distance (playing from previous spot).
- **2 Stroke Penalty:** Back-on-the-line relief *outside the bunker* (dropping on grass behind the bunker).
- **Prohibited:** Touching the sand with the clubhead during a practice swing or address results in the *General Penalty (2 Strokes)*.

5. Target & Surface Improvements

- **Grounding vs. Pressing:** Lightly resting the club on the ground (grounding) is permitted. However, firmly pressing the clubhead into the ground to improve the lie or create an aiming mark—either in front of or behind the ball—is prohibited. *(Penalty: 2 Strokes)*
- **Aiming Aids & Stance:** You may not set a club (or any other object) down on the ground to help with alignment. If an object is placed on the ground to aid aiming, it must be removed *before* you begin to take your stance. *(Penalty: 2 Strokes)*
- **Placing Objects:** Placing leaves, stones, or other items to indicate a line of play is strictly prohibited. *(Penalty: 2 Strokes)*
- **Pressing on the Green:** Pressing the putter into the putting green to create a track or groove along your line of putt is prohibited. *(Penalty: 2 Strokes)*

  > ***Note:*** Removing loose impediments or repairing ball marks and old hole plugs on the green is allowed.

- **Recommendation:** Since it can be difficult from a distance to distinguish between lightly grounding the club and illegally pressing it, be mindful to avoid firmly pressing the clubhead into the ground around your ball to prevent any unnecessary misunderstandings.

6. OB, Penalty Areas, and Collisions (Appendix C)

- **Out of Bounds (White Stakes):** Stroke and Distance. You must take a *1-stroke penalty* and replay from where the previous stroke was made. *If you are unsure whether your ball is OB, hit a Provisional Ball.*
- **Penalty Areas (Red Stakes):** *1 Penalty Stroke*.
    - **Stroke-and-Distance:** Play again from where you hit your previous shot.
    - **Back-on-the-Line:** Drop on a line extending straight back from the hole through the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area.
    - **Lateral Relief:** Drop within *2 club-lengths* of the entry point (where the ball last crossed the edge), no closer to the hole.
- **Collision on the Green while putting (Appendix D):** If your ball, played *from the putting green*, hits another ball at rest on the green, you incur *2 Penalty Strokes*. The moved ball is replaced; your ball is played as it lies. *(Always ask others to mark their balls).*
- **Collision off the Green:** *No penalty*. The moved ball is replaced; your ball is played as it lies.
- **Wrong Ball:** Playing a ball that is not yours results in *2 Penalty Strokes*. The strokes made with the wrong ball do not count. You must find and play your *correct ball from where it originally lies*. The wrong ball must be replaced by its owner. *(Always identify your ball mark/number).*

7. Course Specifics

- **Boundary Fences:** All boundary fences are treated as Out of Bounds (OB). You must either play the ball as it lies (if not OB) or treat it as an unplayable ball under Rule 19.
- **Protective Fences:** Protective fences are located between the #3 teeing area and the #9 hole, and between the #17 teeing area and the #18 hole. (Free relief)
- **Driving Range Boundary:** The perimeter fence of the Driving Range and any ball that comes to rest inside the range is Out of Bounds.
- **Penalty Areas and OB Markings:** Penalty areas are marked by red stakes and/or red painted lines. Out of Bounds (OB) is marked by white stakes and/or white painted lines.
- **Free Relief (Immovable Obstructions):** Free relief is provided from gravel drains, drainage lines on fairways, and all cart paths. Any bare ground making contact with a cart path is considered part of the cart path.
- **Butterfly Garden (#16 Fairway):** Any ball landing in the butterfly garden to the left of the #16 fairway, near #17 tee, must take mandatory free relief. No shot is allowed to be played from within the garden, or near enough to the area to cause damage.
- **Distance Measuring Devices (DMD):** Rule 4.3a is in effect, allowing the use of distance measuring devices. However, the use of effective playing distances (e.g., slope-based or "plays-like" information) is strictly prohibited.
- **Rulings and Playing Two Balls:** If you are doubtful of a procedure, you may invoke Rule 20.1c(3) and complete the hole with two separate balls without penalty. Before taking further action, you must:
    a. Announce your intent to play two balls to your marker or a fellow competitor.
    b. Declare which ball you wish to count for your score if the rules permit.
    c. Play out the hole with both balls and record separate scores for a ruling by the committee after the round.

[Appendix A: Abnormal Course Conditions]

1. Scope & Criteria: "When can I move it?"

Free relief is allowed for **Cart paths, sprinkler heads, GUR, animal holes, and temporary water.** Damp ground is not enough; one of the following must apply:

- **Physical Interference:** The ball lies on the condition, or it interferes with your stance/swing.
- **Visible Water:** Water is visible around the ball or wells up under your feet.
- **Embedded Ball:** The ball is plugged into its own pitch mark.
- **Thick Mud / Waterlogged:** The ground is excessively muddy or waterlogged.
- **Animal Dung (Special Case):** Treated as GUR *only* if the ball is on it or it's adhering to the ball. (Relief for lie of ball only; no relief for stance/swing).

2. Procedure: "Where do I go?"

- **Nearest Point of Complete Relief (NPCR):** Find the nearest spot where there is no water/mud interference for your ball OR your stance.
- **Maximum Relief:** If the entire area is wet and no completely dry spot exists, find the point of "maximum available relief" (the least wet spot).
- **Restrictions:** You must *never get closer to the hole.*
- **Area Match:** You must stay in the *same cut of grass* (Rough stays in Rough, Fairway stays in Fairway).

3. Execution: "How to drop?"

- **Step 1 (Consent):** Before picking up your ball, find your intended relief spot, point to it, and ask your foursome: *"Is it okay if I drop here?"*
- **Step 2 (Measure):** Once agreed, mark that spot with a tee. Your relief area is *1 club-length* (using your Driver) from that tee, no closer to the hole.
- **Step 3 (Drop):** Stand straight and drop the ball from knee height into that relief area, and play on.

[Appendix B: Detailed Bunker Rules]

Key Principle: For 1 penalty stroke, the drop **must remain inside the bunker** and must **not be closer to the hole**.

When taking **1 Penalty Stroke relief in a bunker**, you must follow one of these three options:

1. Back-on-the-line Relief

Scenario: When the ball is plugged in the bunker lip or lies in a very difficult position.

- **The Procedure**
  - **Visualize the Line:** Imagine a straight line extending from the hole through the spot where the ball lies.
  - **Choose the Spot:** Move as far back as you like on that line, staying within the bunker.
  - **Execute the Drop:** Drop the ball *from knee height* directly on that imaginary line. (The spot where the ball first touches the ground becomes *the automatic reference point*).**Scope:** A circular relief area is created within *one club-length in any direction (360 degrees)* from the point where the ball first touched the ground.
- **The Relief Area**
  - **Scope:** A circular relief area is created within *one club-length in any direction (360 degrees)* from the point where the ball first touched the ground.
  - **In-Play Condition:** The ball is in play if it comes to *rest within this one club-length* area. You must play it as it lies; do not move it by hand.
  - **Re-drop Condition:** You must re-drop if the ball rolls outside the relief area, rolls out of the bunker, or stops closer to the hole. (If it rolls out after a second drop, place the ball exactly where it first touched the ground on the second drop).

2. Lateral Relief

Scenario: A better lie is available slightly to the side.

- **Method**: *Drop within 2 club lengths* (using Driver) of the ball's original spot, no closer to the hole.
- **Condition**: The ball must remain in the bunker.

3. Stroke-and-Distance Relief

- **Method**: Return to the spot of your previous shot and replay.

Important Notes:

- **Escaping the Bunker**: You cannot drop outside the bunker for 1 penalty stroke unless you use “Stroke and Distance”. To drop *behind* the bunker on the grass, you must take *2 Penalty Strokes*.

Loose Impediments & Movable Obstructions

- **Movable Obstructions** (Rakes, trash): Can be removed anywhere *without penalty*. If the ball moves, replace it without penalty. (If the ball is *on* the obstruction, mark, lift, remove obstruction, and Place the ball).
- **Loose Impediments** (Stones, leaves): Can be removed in the bunker. However, if the ball moves during removal, it is *1 Penalty Stroke* and the ball *must be replaced.*
  - ***Tip**: If the item is touching the ball, it is safer not to touch it.*

Bunker Prohibitions (General Penalty: 2 Strokes)

- **Testing:** You cannot touch the sand to test its condition.
- **Grounding:** You cannot touch the sand with the club right in front of or behind the ball (hover the club).
- **Backswing:** You cannot touch the sand during your backswing.
- **Improving Lie**: You cannot smooth the sand or stomp to improve your lie or stance before the shot.

[Appendix C: Detailed Penalty Area & OB Rules]

1. Lateral Relief (Red Penalty Areas Only)

- **How it works:** Find the point of entry where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area.
- **The Area:** Drop your ball within *two club-lengths* from that point, no closer to the hole. (Measure using your Driver).

2. Back-on-the-Line Relief

- **How it works:** Visualize an imaginary line extending straight back from the hole through the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area. Move as far back as you like on this line and drop the ball *from knee height directly onto the line.*

- **Setting the Reference Point:** You do not need to mark a spot beforehand; the point where the dropped ball *first touches the ground* automatically becomes your reference point.

- **The Area:** A circular relief area is established within *one club-length in any direction (360 degrees)* from the point where the ball first touched the ground.

- **In-Play Condition:** The ball is in play if it comes to rest *within this one club-length area*. (However, even if it stays within the area, you must re-drop if the ball ends up closer to the *hole than the point where it first touched the ground).*

3. Stroke-and-Distance Relief (For OB or Penalty Areas)

- **How it works:** Return to the spot of your previous stroke.

- **The Area:** Drop within *one club-length* of that spot.

- ***Note**: If your last shot was from the tee, you may tee it up again.*

4. Dropping Procedure (The Essentials):

- **Knee Height:** Stand straight and drop the ball *from knee height*.

- **Staying in Area:** The ball must stay within the relief area. If it rolls out twice, *place* it where it first touched the ground on the second drop.

- **No Closer to the Hole:** The ball must never end up closer to the hole than your reference point.

[Appendix D: Marking on the Green]

1. General Rules for Marking

- **Always Mark First:** You must place a ball-marker right behind or next to your ball before lifting it. *(Penalty for lifting without marking: 1 Stroke).*
- **Requesting a Mark:** If another player's ball or marker interferes with your line of putt, you may ask them to mark and move it.
- **Collision Penalty:** If your putt from the green hits another ball at rest on the green, you incur *2 Penalty Strokes*. *(Always ask others to mark to avoid this).*

2. Moving a Marker (When interfering with another's line)

If your marker is in another player's way, move it using this method:

- **Step 1 (Reference):** Pick a fixed, immovable object in the distance (e.g., a specific tree, building, or stake).
- **Step 2 (Measure & Move):** Place your *putter head* (or the *entire putter length* for more space) next to your marker, aligned with your fixed object. Move the marker to the other end of the putter.
- **Step 3 (Replace - CRITICAL):** After the other player putts, you *MUST* return your marker to its original spot using the same reference point. *(Penalty for playing from the moved spot: 2 Strokes).*