

SOME COMMON GOLF RULES EXPLAINED

IN A LAKE, RIVER OR STREAM

RULE 26: WATER HAZARDS

Yellow stakes (normal water hazard)

You have two options here. Either play again from as near as possible to where you hit from or drop back from the hazard. Move back from the hazard with the point at which the ball last crossed the edge of the water hazard directly between you and the hole then drop the ball. One shot penalty

Red stakes (lateral water hazard)

You've one extra option here. Take the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the water hazard, measure two club lengths (not nearer the hole) and mark the spot. You can clean the ball before you drop it. The ball can roll two club lengths from the point at which it strikes the course. One shot penalty.

BALL RESTING ON DEBRIS

RULE 23: LOOSE IMPEDIMENTS

Natural objects such as stones, twigs and leaves can be moved from around your ball - unless you are in a hazard.. Be careful here though. If your ball moved after you have moved any loose impediment within a club length, you will be deemed to have moved it. There is a one shot penalty and you have to put the ball in the original position.

BALL IN THE TREES

RULE 12 DON'T IMPROVE YOUR LIE

How often do you see your playing partners step in to the trees to play their shot only to start stamping down the rough to give themselves a better stance or start pushing back branches so they have an easier swing? Well if they do, it's a penalty because you must not improve any of the following by moving, breaking or bending anything growing or fixed to make it easier to swing:

- The position or lie of the ball
- The area where you will stand to swing
- The line of play out of trouble
- The area where you want to drop the ball if you are taking a penalty shot

PLUGGED IN THE BUNKER LIP

RULE 25 ABNORMAL GROUND CONDITIONS

The earthy lip of the bunker may not look like part of the bunker itself - it is. You'll have to take a penalty drop if it's unplayable and what's worse, you'll have to drop the ball in the bunker (you cannot use a drop to escape from the sand). Free relief when plugged is only available when you're on the green or a "closely-mown area" off the green, which basically means on the fairway, fringe, run off areas etc

BALL/MARKER MOVES ON PUTTING GREEN

RULE 20: LIFTING, DROPPING AND PLACING

You must always mark the position of your ball on the green before you lift it. You can mark the ball in any way you like as long as you replace it in exactly the same place from which it was lifted. But what if your ball marker moves? If it moves accidentally as you lift the ball, you must replace the marker directly back to where it was. There is no penalty for doing this as long as the marker was moved by accident.

What if the ball moves once you have replaced it in front of the marker? As long as you have not addressed the ball, there is no penalty and you simply reposition the ball in its original spot. If you have addressed it and the wind causes the ball to move, there is a one shot penalty.

BALL IN DEEP ROUGH

RULE 20: DROPPING AND REDROPPING

If you find your ball in deep rough and find you cannot play it then you can choose to take a penalty drop. Measure two club lengths (not nearer the hole) from where your ball originally sat, or if you prefer, move backwards as far as you like **while keeping your ball's position between you and the hole**. Mark this point and drop the ball. If it rolls more than two club lengths away from the spot or nearer the hole than it originally was, you have to drop it again. If it does it a second time you can place it.

MUD ON BALL

RULE 21; CLEANING THE BALL

You can clean your ball whenever the rules allow you to lift it e.g. on the green, if winter rules apply but if there is just a bit of mud on it and you are on the fairway, you are out of luck. There are a few important exceptions to the rule allowing you to clean a lifted ball. If you are lifting it to identify if it is unfit for play or to identify it, then you can't clean it. When you are marking it anywhere other than the green i.e. when it interferes with your opponent's shot on the fairway or similar, then you are not permitted to clean it. There's a one shot penalty if you do.

LOST BALL

RULE 27 LOST BALL

If you lose your ball or hit it out of bounds you must drop a ball as near to the spot from where you last hit it and take a one shot penalty. But what if you are not sure the ball is lost? If in doubt play a provisional ball and tell your playing partners you are doing so. You must play the ball before anyone else heads off in search of your first ball. If you find your original ball you may go on to play it and pick up the provisional. If not then the provisional ball becomes the one in play and you must add the penalty shot to your score.