

MAJOR RULES CHANGES FOR 2019

Search time is reduced to three minutes.

If a **ball moves during search** or during the identification process, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced. (The ball still must be marked before lifting to identify it.)

A ball is considered **embedded** when it is in its own pitch-mark as the result of the player's previous stroke anywhere on the course other than on the teeing area of the hole being played, all bunkers and penalty areas on the course, the putting green of the hole being played, or in any sandy area in the general area of the course.

Drop from knee height.

Drops are in a **defined relief area**. (Previously, balls were dropped in a specific area, such as within two club lengths, or on or as near as possible to a spot on a line.)

When **measuring** a relief area, the length of the club length or club lengths is based on the longest club other than a putter in the player's bag.

A ball can always be **substituted** when taking relief under a Rule.

Complete relief is required from all **wrong greens** (which include all putting greens and practice putting and chipping greens other than the putting green of the hole being played. There can be no interference from the wrong green for lie, area of intended stance, and area of intended swing.

If the **ball accidentally hits** the player, another player, an opponent, anyone's caddie, or any of their equipment, there is no penalty and the ball is played as it lies (***except when played from the putting green***).

If the **ball accidentally moves on the putting green**, there is no penalty and the ball is replaced. It does not matter if the movement was by the player, her caddie or partner, another player, opponent, or any of their caddies or equipment.

If the **ball moves on the putting green by natural forces** such as wind, water, or gravity after being marked, lifted, and replaced, the ball is replaced. It does not matter if the ball marker has been lifted or not. If the ball has not been lifted and replaced and it is moved by natural forces, the ball is played from its new position.

There is no penalty for a **double hit**.

In a bunker the player is still prohibited from taking a practice swing, grounding the club immediately in front of or behind the ball, or testing the condition of the bunker. However, there is no penalty for

accidentally touching the sand such as by leaning on the club or striking the sand in frustration after a stroke.

Loose impediments can be removed anywhere, including bunkers and penalty areas. There is still a penalty if the player moves the ball while moving the loose impediment—so be careful!

When proceeding under the **Unplayable Ball Rule** the player still must declare she is taking relief under this Rule.

The player has three relief options, each with a one stroke penalty, when taking relief under the **Unplayable Ball Rule**. These are stroke and distance, finding a reference point and relief area taking back on the line relief which keeps the ball and the flagstick in a straight line, going back as far as the player wishes, and lateral relief which is dropping within two club lengths of the position of the ball, no nearer the hole.

An additional relief option is available for **unplayable balls in a bunker**. For an additional penalty stroke (a total of two) the player can take relief outside the bunker keeping the point where the ball lay and the flagstick in a straight line. The player can choose a reference point on this line and then measure a one club length relief area.

Most **damage to the green** can be repaired. This includes shoe damage, ball marks, old hole plugs, animal damage, and damage from the maintenance staff or a player in a preceding group who might have damaged the side of the hole with the flagstick. There is **no** relief from aeration holes or other maintenance procedures.

There is no longer a penalty for **touching the line of play** on the putting green.

A player can **putt with the flagstick in the hole** or out of the hole from anywhere on the course. There is no penalty for hitting the flagstick if it is in the hole.

Positioning a club for **alignment** is not allowed, nor is having the player's caddie or partner assist with alignment. The player will incur the general penalty (2 strokes in stroke play, loss of hole in match play.)

Players will no longer make a claim in match play. They will now **ask for a ruling**.