

# The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

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## Lift, Clean and Place aka Preferred Lies

Several times this year and it happened twice again recently, the person I was playing with asked if it was "Lift, Clean and Place". My answer was "No". The standard is to always play the ball as it lies except:

1. When our Woods courses are "cart path only", then it's "lift clean and place" through the green (i.e. anywhere on the course except for bunkers and penalty areas).
2. When our Woods courses are "cart path and rough", it's "lift clean and place" in the closely mown areas only (fairways and fringe around the green).

This standard is posted on the cork board in the hall outside the Pro Shop. The Pro Shop will post a sign when it is "cart part only" or "cart path and rough only" and often the starter or the attendant in the Pro Shop will also advise. If there is no sign, "play it as it lies" on all holes.

It should be noted that Lift, Clean and Place was not created to increase playability for the players, but to protect the course and in particular the closely mown areas from further damage resulting from environmental conditions, such as soft, or overly wet turf while still allowing for fair play.

### Tournaments and League Play

The Tournament Chair or The Tuesday Ladies Game Coordinator, in consultation with the Pro, can institute lift clean and place for individual Tournaments/Games they are in charge when there are unusual course conditions. They need to announce Lift, Clean and Place along with the distance allowed for placing the ball in advance so everyone plays under the same conditions. In the long run it is best to just follow the course standard.

### Do's and Don't's for Lift, Clean and Place

1. Before you lift your ball always mark your ball, preferable with a tee or your divot repair tool. If you do not mark it, it is a 1 stroke penalty.
2. Know what the distance is you can use when moving your ball. Often 6 inches is used to minimize the flexibility in adjusting the lie. If a club length is the standard, you may use up to your driver's length (estimate it if you have a different club in your hand) to measure the distance.

Often, especially when the length is greater than 6 inches, there is a caveat that you cannot improve the turf condition for your ball placement (e.g. if your ball is in the rough, it must stay in the rough). If you exceed the distance or turf improvement caveat without correcting your mistake it is a 2 stroke penalty (or loss of hole in Match Play) for playing from the wrong place.

### "Lift Clean and Cheat"....

is how the Pros sometime refer to preferred lies. In fact neither the USGA nor R&A like "preferred lies" and "winter rules" because they are felt to be too broadly misinterpreted. You can use the rule to your advantage and get out of interesting scenarios that would not be available if you play it as it lies. They have grudgingly relegated "Lift, Clean and Place" to the position of a local rule in the Rules of Golf. Back in 2003 when rain saturated Augusta during The Masters, Chris DeMarco thought Augusta adopting "Lift Clean and Place" as improbable, if not impossible and said "There'll be a female member at Augusta before they let us play lift, clean and place." which has turned out to be true. The USGA has not allowed it at The US Open Championship nor has the R&A allowed it at their Open Championship.

## Do's and Don'ts (continued)

3. Once you have placed your ball, you may not move it again... even if you mark it. Your ball is in play when you take your hand off the ball. If you do move it again and hit the ball it is a 2 stroke penalty. Even if you just tweak it after placing your ball, assess yourself a one stroke penalty and provided you did not move your ball from it's spot... just turned it.

This may not sound right because tweaking seems so minor. Think about it this way...if the format wasn't lift clean and place, you would not even think about bending down and tweaking your ball on the fairway or fringe. You would just play it as it lies

4. You must not place your ball nearer to the hole. If you are just barely on the fringe and are uncertain as to whether you are closer to the hole with one club length, just follow the outer curve of the fringe which will probably ensure you place ball is no nearer to the hole.
5. Don't roll your ball with the club instead of marking and placing it. If you do, assess yourself a 1 stroke penalty.

## Turf Issues on the Fairway – Play it as it Lies

Last year due to turf issues, we were advised by our Pro that you could move your ball out of the brown dead areas on the course. That promulgation was only for last year and was limited to only the brown turf areas on the fairway and fringe. It wasn't lift clean and place if you were on green turf. This year you must play it as it lies unless your ball in on the fringe

This year's promulgation is limited to only those brown/dead turf areas on the fringes of the green where you may move your ball one club length no closer to the hole to avoid having to putt from or through the brown/dead turf areas. Even with the 1 club length you may not be able to avoid it, but 1 club length is all you get. If you do not have these issues on the fringe, you must play your ball as it lies.

## Penalties for Playing Lift Clean and Place in Error

If you play "Lift, Clean, and Place" when you haven't been told to or are not following the standards listed on the first page, then you cannot post your score into GHIN for handicap purposes. If you start playing Lift, Clean and Place in error and someone tells you not to, then assess yourself a 2 stroke penalty for each time you did so or it is loss of hole in Match Play



Brian Spurlock-USA TODAY Sports

Squeegey-ing a Fairway to avoid Lift, Clean and Place during a PGA Championship

**Q&A - Are holes 6, 14, and 18 are always lift clean place because these holes are always cart path only?**

**No** - The reason holes 6 and 14 and 18 are "cart path only" is because each hole has a steep hill that is easily accessible if the golfer wanted to drive their cart to their errant shot. Steep grassy hills (especially when wet with morning dew) and golf carts do not go well together. So for safety reasons these holes are blocked off for carts.

**When are you allowed and not allowed to clean your ball when you lift it during play?**

You can clean your ball during play if you are :

1. Taking relief (i.e. from a penalty area, OB or unplayable lie).
2. Taking relief from a plugged lie.
3. When your ball is anywhere on the green
4. When Lift, Clean and Place is bring used.
5. During scramble type tournaments.

When you mark and lift your ball for the following reasons, you **cannot** clean your ball and the ball must be replaced as close as possible to its original lie

1. To identify your ball.
2. If your ball was move while you were searching for it.
3. If you think your ball is damaged and you want to check it.
4. If you are not on the green and your ball is in someone's way and they ask you to mark it.