

The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

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Unplayable Lies & Times You Think You Should Get Free Relief But Don't

Why don't I get free relief from a dangerous course condition such as poison ivy or other dangerous plants and shrubs?

Unlike dangerous animals that come and go, poison ivy and dangerous plant and shrubs are a natural part of the surface of course, so there is no free relief.

There are a lot of rock/shale surfaces in the rough that could injure me or ruin my club if I hit them during my stroke, shouldn't I get free relief?

This is a natural surface on the course so no free relief. However in any area of the course, including penalty areas and bunkers, you may remove loose impediments, including rocks, so long as you do not move your ball.

What if my ball lands in a tree or shrub or in tree roots, do I get free relief?

Sorry but you do not. These are natural objects attached to the golf course. Play the course as you find it.

I get free relief from Penalty Stakes that could interfere with my stance or swing, so why don't I get free relief from Out of Bound Stakes?

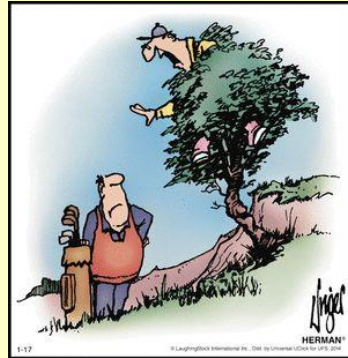
OB Stakes/Boundaries indicate where the course ends and are considered "fixed" (just like tee markers) according to the Rules of Golf. Moving these fixed objects is view as altering the course so they cannot be move without penalty.

What if I don't want to hit from poison ivy or rocks or atop of a tree, what should I do?

Anytime you don't want to hit your ball from where is lies, you can declare the ball unplayable. No reason is needed and you can do this on any part of the course except in a penalty area. Here are your 3 options for relief for an unplayable lie (also shown as a diagram on the next page):

1. **Stroke and Distance Relief** - take a 1 stroke penalty and replay your ball at the point where you last hit it. Take your drop within one club length of where you estimate you last played from
2. **Back on the Line Relief** - take a 1 stroke penalty and using the flagstick as one reference point, and the spot where your ball came to rest as a second point, move straight back behind your ball along that line as far as you want. You then take a drop within 1 club length of the reference line. **Please note, this is not the same line as the trajectory of your original shot (see diagram).**

Yes, this can happen!



"Will you quit arguing and give me my seven iron?"

In the final round of the 2013 Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill, Sergio Garcia's drive landed in a tree near the par 4 - 10th fairway. The tree was an old live oak with thick branches. After climbing the tree, Sergio identified the ball as his and asked for an iron. From about 15 feet up the tree, using the iron, Sergio hit his second shot one-handed and backwards on to the fairway, thereby avoid a penalty stroke for an unplayable lie. As PGA tour likes to say "These guys are good".

If you think your ball is in a tree, you must first identify it before you can declare it an unplayable lie. Otherwise your ball is a lost ball.

3. **Lateral Relief** - Take a 1 stroke penalty and drop within 2 clubs lengths of your ball, no closer to the hole.

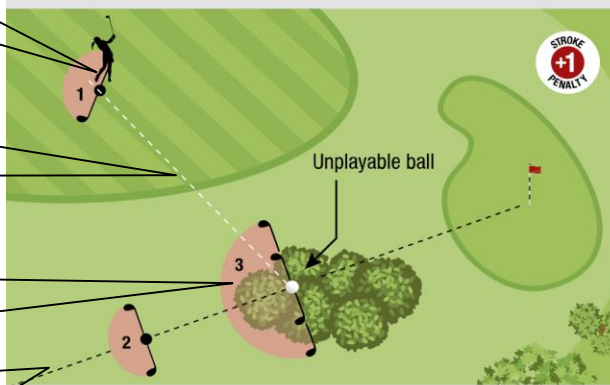
1. Replay within one club length of your original shot

You **cannot** drop anywhere along this line, only at the spot for your original shot.

3. Lateral Relief – drop 2 clubs lengths from ball, no nearer the hole

2. Back on the Line Relief – drop anywhere along this line within 1 club length line, behind your ball

DIAGRAM 19.2: RELIEF OPTIONS FOR BALL UNPLAYABLE IN GENERAL AREA



A player decides that his or her ball in a bush is unplayable. The player has **three options**, in each case adding one penalty stroke:

If I am close to the front lip of a bunker, or in a very deep bunker, can I take an unplayable lie in a bunker?

Yes, and there are 4 options as shown in the diagram.

- Three options listed above are available with a 1 stroke penalty which you might consider when your ball is close to the lip of the bunker.
- A fourth option is Back on the Line relief outside the bunker has a 2 stroke penalty and might be attractive for deep greenside bunkers. This option is new with the 2019 revised rules and was implemented to speed up play and help players finish the hole. A 2 stroke penalty was thought to be severe enough that the practice wont become a common method for better players who are able to easily escape from the sand.

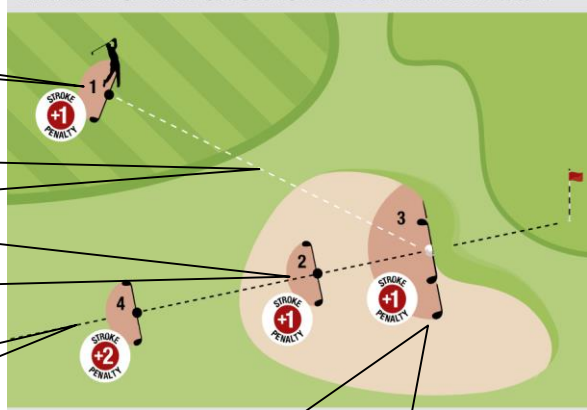
1. Replay within one club length of your original shot

You **cannot** drop anywhere along this line, only at the spot for your original shot.

2. Back on the Line Relief In the Bunker - drop anywhere along this line within 1 club length line, behind your ball.

2. Back on the Line Relief Outside the Bunker - drop anywhere along this line within 1 club length line, behind your ball with a 2 stroke penalty.

DIAGRAM 19.3: RELIEF OPTIONS FOR BALL UNPLAYABLE IN BUNKER



3. Lateral Relief – drop 2 clubs lengths from ball, no nearer the hole

Be careful where you drop ...

when taking lateral Relief. If your ball drops on more rocks, poison ivy etc. you do not get to re-do the drop. If you don't want to hit from where your ball dropped, you must take a second unplayable lie. This will require a second penalty stroke.

Any Ball can be called Unplayable (except in a penalty area)

During a TV broadcast, a Pro was doing a "lesson". His putt was 3 feet from the hole, but he missed the putt. Shortly after rolling past the hole, the ball caught a downhill slope and rolled off the green into a collection area on the fairway. Instead of playing from the fairway, he deemed the ball unplayable, took a 1 stroke penalty and put the ball back where he hit it from, 3 feet from the hole.



"I had heard that the traps on this course were brutal, but this is ridiculous."