

MGC Welcome Pack, part 3: The Rules of Golf & Etiquette

The Rules

The Rules of Golf are administered by 2 main governing bodies:

- In the UK & Europe, **the R&A** which was originally part of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, but is now a separate organisation.
- In the Americas, **the USGA** (United States Golf Association)



It is important that you have a good working knowledge of the rules – it isn't necessary to learn every rule off by heart, as long as you know how to access the rules when a rules situation arises.

The R&A has a comprehensive [rules website](#) from which you can download a rules app on your phone.

There is more rules information [on the MGC website](#), including explanatory videos which are well worth a watch.

Etiquette

Golf etiquette refers to 'unwritten' rules and practices designed to make the game of golf safer and more enjoyable for everyone. The overriding principle being that consideration should be shown to others on the course at all times. You should always:

- Replace divots (except on tees), repair pitch marks and rake bunkers.
- Avoid talking, moving or distracting another golfer when they are playing a shot. This includes standing where you or your shadow is in the player's eyeline (especially directly behind or in front of the line of the shot).
- Avoid walking on the line of another player's putt on the green, or casting your shadow on or near the line of the putt.
- Take care not to damage the hole or the green when removing or replacing the flagstick.
- Avoid playing a shot when the group in front (or anyone else) are potentially in range.
- Shout "**Fore**" when a shot is heading towards other golfers.
- Avoid throwing clubs in anger, swearing or generally behaving in a petulant way.
- Avoid taking trolleys and buggies onto wet/muddy areas, across tees or within 3 metres of greens.

- Be aware of your pace of play and invite other groups to play through if you are holding them up.
- At the end of the round, shake hands with your fellow players, congratulate the winners, console the losers, and thank them for their company.

Definitions in the Rules of Golf

Addressing the Ball: Taking your **Stance** and **Grounding** the club prior to making a stroke.

Attend the Flagstick: When playing any shot (usually a putt) a player may ask another player or caddie to attend the flagstick, i.e. to hold the flagstick during the stroke and remove it before the ball arrives at the hole.

Club Length: the length of the longest club in a player's bag, excluding the putter. Used in defining the **Teeing Area** and the **Relief Area** when taking relief under a rule.

Caddie: Someone that helps a player during a round by carrying their clubs, attending the flagstick, giving advice, etc.

Concession: In **Match Play**, you may concede your opponent's next stroke and they count the stroke as holed. Also known as a 'gimme', A hole or match may also be conceded at any time.

Drop: To pick up the ball and drop it from knee height in another spot in accordance with the rules. The ball must be dropped in and come to rest in the **Relief Area**.

Embedded Ball: When a ball is in its own pitch-mark and part of the ball is below the level of the ground. Free relief is allowed when the ball is anywhere in the **General Area**.

Grounding the Club: Touching the ground with the sole of the club at address.

Honour: The right to play first from the **Teeing Area**; determined by the lowest **Gross Score** on the previous hole. At other times the player furthest from the hole plays first, although playing out of order is encouraged to speed up play in **Ready Golf**.

Holed: When a ball is at rest in the hole after a stroke and the entire ball is below the surface of the putting green.

If a ball comes to rest against the **flagstick** left in the hole and any part of the ball is in the hole below the surface of the **Putting Green**, the ball is treated as holed even if the entire ball is not below the surface.

Local Rules: Rules that are specific to each individual golf club. You can see the Mapperley Local rules on the noticeboard and [on the website](#).

Details of any temporary Local Rules are shown on the whiteboard outside the Pro shop.

Lost: The status of a ball that is not found in 3 minutes after the player begins to search for it.

Mark: To show the spot where a ball is located by either placing a ball-marker behind the ball, or holding a club behind or next to the ball. This is done to show the spot where the ball must be replaced or dropped after it is lifted.

Nearest Point of Relief: The reference point for defining the **Relief area** when taking **relief** under a Rule. See the examples on pages 3 to 5.

Penalty Stroke: A stroke added to the score for an infraction of the rules or when taking some types of **relief**.

Provisional Ball: Another ball played from where the last stroke was played (to save time) when the original ball may be **Out of Bounds** or **Lost** outside of a **Penalty Area**.

Ready Golf: Playing out of turn in a safe and responsible way to help the pace of play.

Relief: Dropping or placing the ball in a more favourable position under the Rules.

Relief Area: The area where a player must **drop** a ball and the ball must come to rest when taking relief under a Rule. See pages 4 to 6 for further guidance.

Second Ball: A player who is uncertain about the right procedure in **Strokeplay** may complete the hole with two balls and seek clarification as to the correct procedure later.

Stance: The position of the feet when addressing the ball.

Stroke: The forward movement of the club when attempting to strike the ball.

Stroke & Distance: Playing a ball from where the last stroke was played from under a 1 stroke penalty after the original ball was **Lost**, **Out of Bounds** or **Unplayable**.

Unplayable: A player may declare a ball unplayable anywhere on the course (except in a **Penalty Area**) and take relief under a 1 shot penalty.

Winter Rules: Special Local Rules in place during the winter. You can see the Mapperley Winter Rules on the notice boards and [on the website](#).

Wrong Ball: Any ball that a stroke is made at other than the ball in play.

Wrong Green: Any green on the course other than the **Putting Green** for the hole the player is playing. Wrong Greens are part of the **General Area**.

How to determine where to take relief

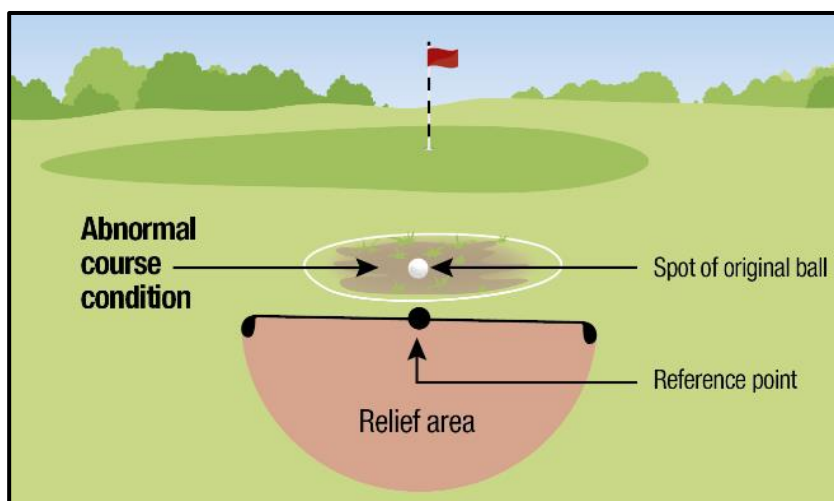
a) From an Abnormal Course Condition (ACC)

Interference exists when any one of these is true:

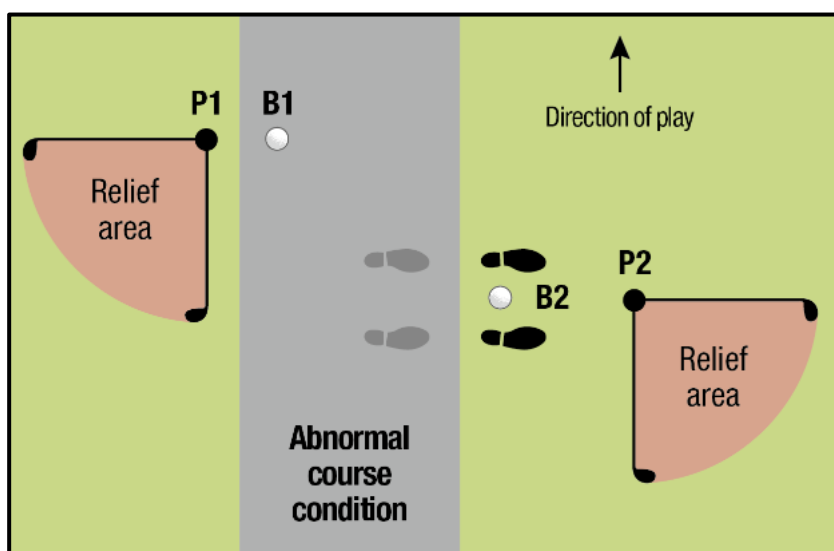
- The player's ball touches or is in or on an ACC,
- An ACC physically interferes with the player's intended stance or swing, or
- Only when the ball is on the Putting green, an ACC on or off the putting green intervenes on the line of play.

First identify the nearest point that is completely free from interference and is not nearer the hole than where the ball lies (the Reference point). Mark the position with a tee peg or similar. The Relief area where you will drop your ball is anywhere within one club-length of the reference point that is not nearer the hole.

When the Reference point is behind the Abnormal course condition, the Relief area will be approximately a semi-circle:



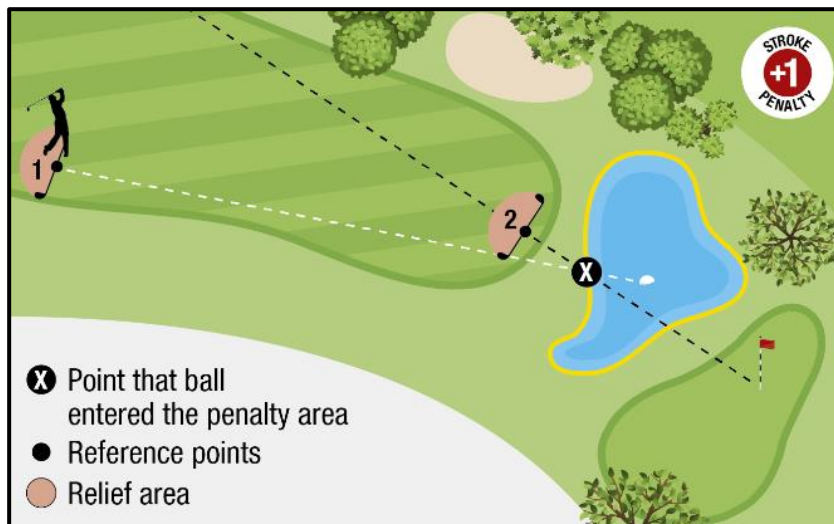
When the Reference point is to the side of the Abnormal course condition, the position will vary depending on whether the player is right handed (P1) or left handed (P2) and the Relief area will be approximately a quarter circle:



b) From a Yellow Penalty Area

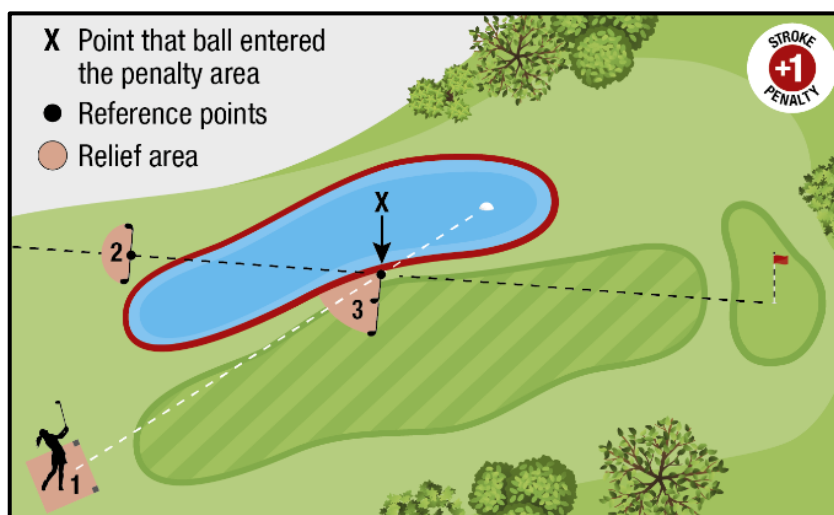
There are 2 Relief Areas available from a Yellow Penalty Area, under a 1 stroke penalty:

- [1] Within 1 club-length of the place from where the previous stroke was played (or anywhere in the Teeing area if the previous stroke was played from there), or
- [2] Within 1 club-length of any point 'back on a line' from the hole that passes through the point where the ball entered the Penalty Area (X).



c) From a Red Penalty Area

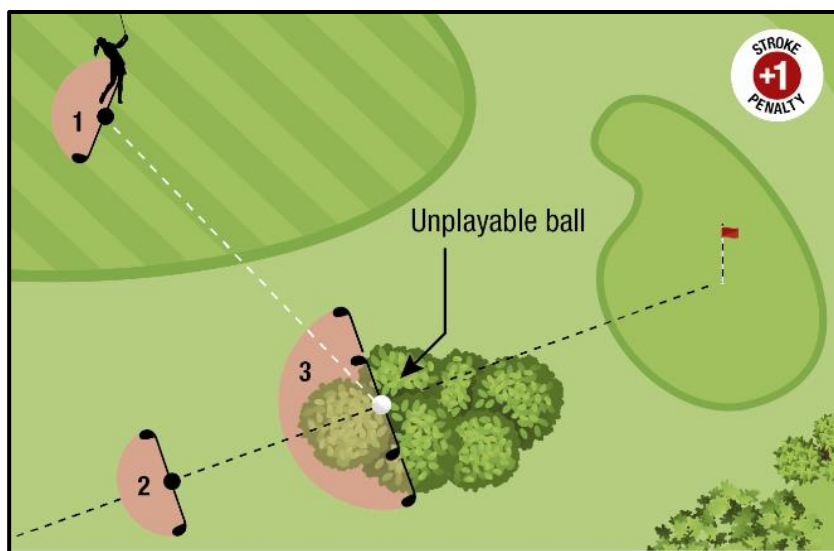
There are the same 2 Relief Areas as for a Yellow Penalty Area, plus a third option within 2 club-lengths of the point where the ball entered the Penalty Area (X).



d) For an Unplayable Ball

There are 3 available Relief areas for an Unplayable ball in the General Area, under a 1 stroke penalty:

- [1] Within 1 club-length of the place from where the previous stroke was played (or anywhere in the Teeing area if the previous stroke was played from there), or
- [2] Within 1 club-length of any point 'back on a line' from the hole that passes through the place where the ball lies, or
- [3] Within 2 club-lengths of the place where the ball lies.



- [4] When the ball lies in a bunker there is a further to option to drop the ball outside the bunker 'back on a line' from the hole for an additional penalty stroke.

