

Overview

- Loose Impediments (15.1)
- Movable Obstructions (15.2)
- Ball or Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play (15.3)
- Abnormal Course Conditions (16.1)
- Dangerous Animal Condition (16.2)
- Embedded Ball (16.3)
- Lifting Ball to See If Relief Condition Applies (16.4)

Overview – Loose Impediments

- Definition of Loose Impediments
- Removing Loose Impediments (15.1a)
- Ball Moves when Removing Loose Impediment (15.1b)

Definition: Loose Impediments

- Unattached Natural Objects:
 - ✓ Stones,
 - ✓ Loose grass,
 - ✓ Leaves,
 - ✓ Branches,
 - ✓ Sticks,
 - ✓ Dead animals, and
 - ✓ Animal waste



Definition: Loose Impediments

- Worms, insects and similar animals
 - ✓ That can be easily removed
- The mounds and webs they build



Definition: Loose Impediments

- **Not** Considered “Loose” (no relief)
if:
 - ✓ Attached,
 - ✓ Growing,
 - ✓ Solidly Embedded in the ground
(cannot be picked out easily), or
 - ✓ Sticking to the Ball

Definition: Loose Impediments

1. Special Cases – **NOT** Loose Impediments:

- Sand,
- Loose Soil,
- Dew,
- Frost, or
- Water



Definition: Loose Impediments

2. Special Cases (player's choice):

- **Snow** and **Natural Ice** (other than frost), either:
 - ✓ Loose impediments, or
 - ✓ Temporary water (when on the ground)



Definition: Loose Impediments

3. Special Cases:

- **Spider Webs**
(loose impediments even though attached to another object)



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Removing Loose Impediments

- May be removed **anywhere**
 - ✓ On or off the course
 - ✓ In any way



Removing Loose Impediments

- May be removed **anywhere**
 - ✓ On or off the course
 - ✓ In any way
- Two Exceptions
 - No removing loose impediments where ball must be **replaced**

Removing Loose Impediments

- May be removed **anywhere**
 - ✓ On or off the course
 - ✓ In any way
- Two Exceptions
 - ✓ No removing loose impediments where ball must be **replaced**
 - ✓ Also applies when play stopped, and
 - ✓ Does **NOT** apply on the putting green

Removing Loose Impediments

- May be removed **anywhere**
 - ✓ On or off the course
 - ✓ In any way
- Two Exceptions
 - ✓ No removing loose impediments where ball must be **replaced**
 - ✓ No deliberately removing loose impediments to affect ball in motion

2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- Definition of Loose Impediments
- Removing Loose Impediments (15.1a)

2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediments

- Ball must be replaced



Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediments

- Ball must be replaced
- Penalties
 - ✓ **One stroke** when ball is in:
 - General area,
 - Bunker, or
 - Penalty area



Ball Moved When Removing Loose Impediments

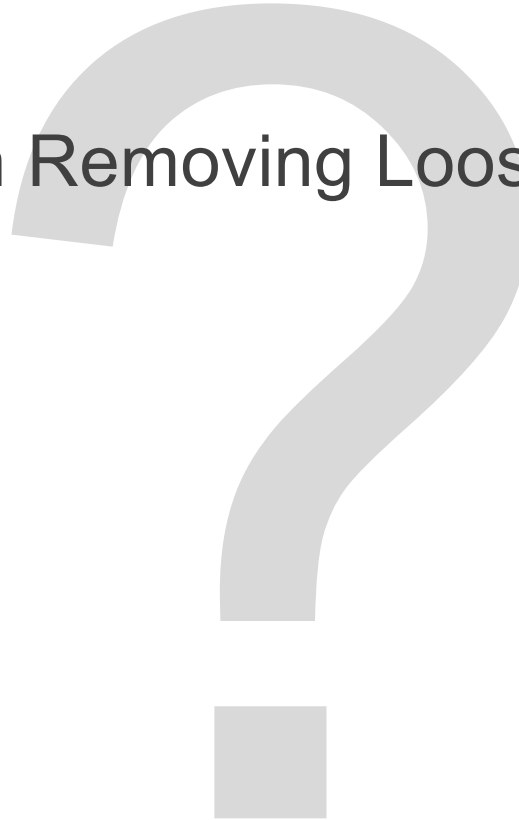
- Ball must be replaced
- Penalties
 - ✓ One stroke
 - ✓ Exceptions, no penalty
 - Putting green, (13.1d)
 - Teeing area, (6.2b(6))
 - During search, (7.4)
 - See other exceptions in 9.4b



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- **Ball Moves** when Removing Loose Impediment (15.1b)



Overview - Movable Obstructions

- Definitions – Obstructions, Movable Obstructions
- Removal of Movable Obstruction (15.2a(1))
- Relief for Ball **In** or **On** Movable Obstruction (15.2a(2))
- Relief for **Ball Not Found** In or On Movable Obstruction (15.2b)

2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Definition: Obstruction

- Any artificial object
 - ✓ Two Exceptions:
 - Integral objects, and
 - Boundary objects



Definition: Movable Obstruction

- An *obstruction* that can be moved
 - ✓ With reasonable effort,
 - ✓ Without damaging the obstruction, and
 - ✓ Without damaging the course

Definition: Movable Obstruction

- Examples:
 - ✓ Stakes (except boundary objects),
 - ✓ Golf carts,
 - ✓ Waste containers,
 - ✓ Benches,
 - ✓ Player equipment,
 - ✓ Flagsticks, and
 - ✓ Rakes



Definition: Movable Obstruction

- Movable parts of immovable obstructions
 - ✓ Treated as movable obstruction
 - ✓ Except when movable part is not meant to be moved



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Movable Obstruction Relief

- May be moved
 - ✓ Without penalty, and
 - ✓ **Anywhere** on or off course



Movable Obstruction Relief

- May be moved
 - ✓ Without penalty, and
 - ✓ **Anywhere** on or off course
- Two Exceptions:
 - ✓ Tee markers
(when ball in teeing area)



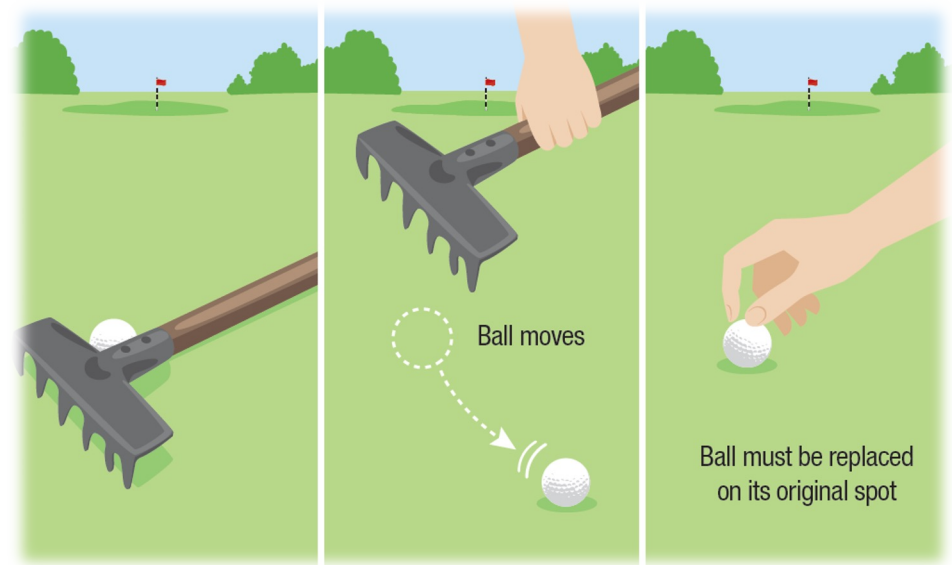
Movable Obstruction Relief

- May be moved
 - ✓ Without penalty, and
 - ✓ **Anywhere** on or off course
- Two Exceptions:
 - ✓ Tee markers (when ball in teeing area)
 - ✓ To deliberately affect a ball in motion



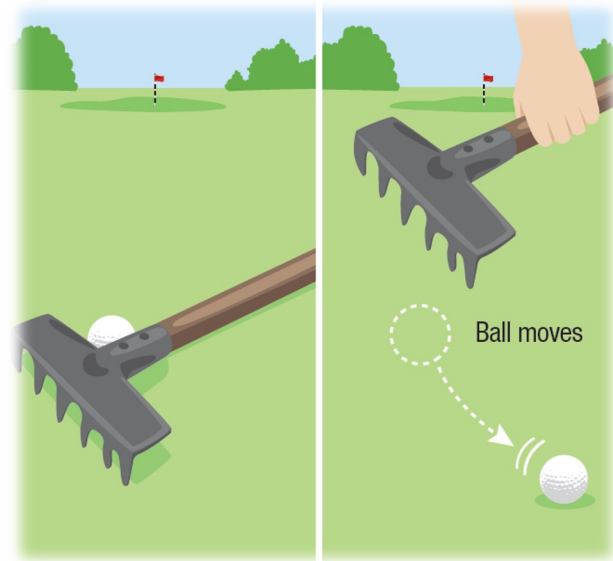
Movable Obstruction Relief

- If ball moves
 - ✓ No penalty, and
 - ✓ Replace on original spot



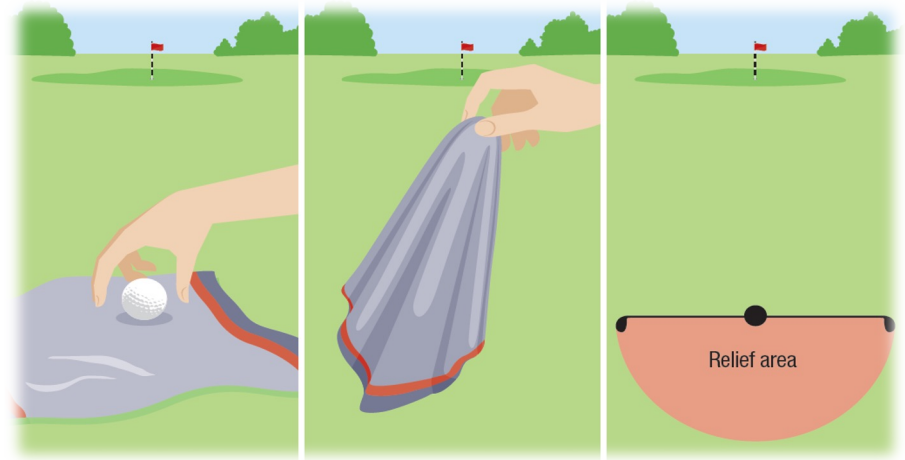
Movable Obstruction Relief

- If ball moves
 - ✓ No penalty, and
 - ✓ Replace on original spot
- Original spot not known
 - ✓ Estimate spot, and
 - ✓ Replace on that spot



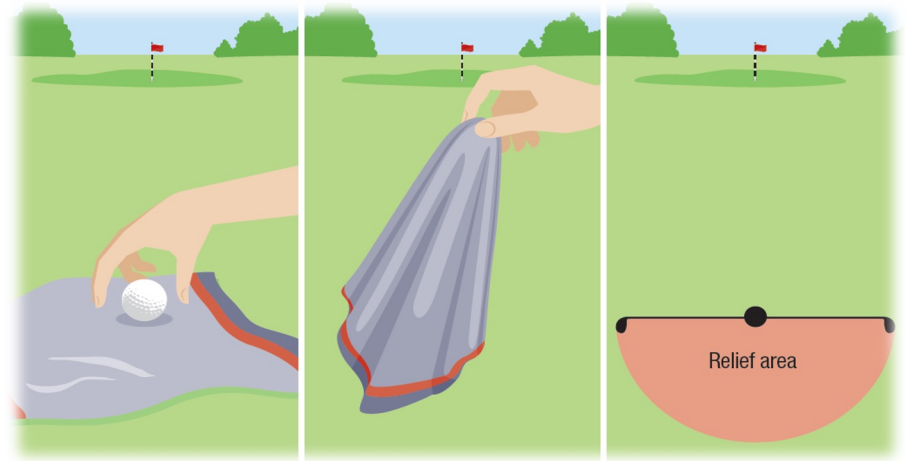
Relief for Ball In or On Movable Obstructions

- Ball **in** or **on** obstruction
(except for putting green)
 - ✓ Lift ball and obstruction
 - ✓ **Drop** original or another ball



Relief for Ball In or On Movable Obstructions

- Ball **in** or **on** obstruction
(except for putting green)
 - ✓ **Reference Point:** estimated point under where ball was
 - ✓ **Relief Area:**
 - One club-length
 - Same area of the course as reference point
 - Not nearer the hole



Relief for Ball In or On Movable Obstructions

- Ball **in** or **on** obstruction
(on putting green)
 - ✓ Lift ball and obstruction
 - ✓ **Place** original or another ball
 - ✓ Right under spot where ball was



Relief for Ball Not Found

- **With Knowledge or Virtual Certainty**
- Relief is allowed
 - ✓ **Reference Point:** estimated point under where ball last crossed the outer edge (on the course)
 - ✓ **Relief Area:** use applicable relief area described in Rule



Relief for Ball Not Found

- **Without** Knowledge or Virtual Certainty:
 - ✓ Relief not allowed
 - ✓ Stroke-and-distance required if ball not found



Questions

- Definitions – Obstructions, Movable Obstructions
- Removal of Movable Obstruction (15.2a(1))
- Relief for Ball **In** or **On** Movable Obstruction (15.2a(2))

Overview – Ball or Ball-Marker Helping/Interfering

- Ball on Putting Green **Helping** Play (15.3a)
- Ball **Interfering** With Play Anywhere (15.3b)
- Ball-Marker **Helping** or **Interfering** (15.3c)

Ball Helping Play

- **Ball Helping Play**
 - ✓ Example: ball serving as possible backstop
 - ✓ Applies only to balls on putting green
- **Your ball:** you may mark and lift it
- **Another player's ball:** you or any other player can require that ball be lifted



Ball Helping Play

- In **stroke play**, if
 - ✓ Two or more players agree to leave helping ball in place, and
 - ✓ The stroke is made
- Agreeing players get *general penalty*
- Player required to lift may play first



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Ball Helping Play

- In **match play**:
 - ✓ Opponents may agree to leave helping ball in place



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- Ball on Putting Green **Helping Play** (15.3a)



Ball Interfering with Play

- Meaning of “Interference”
 - ✓ Might interfere with stance,
 - ✓ Might interfere with swing,
 - ✓ Reasonable chance ball after a stroke could hit ball at rest, or
 - ✓ Close enough to distract player making stroke



Ball Interfering with Play

- Procedure:
 - ✓ Player next to play can require interfering ball to be marked and lifted



Ball Interfering with Play

- In stroke play, interfering ball may be played first
- Player of interfering ball cannot lift without being asked (except on putting green)
- Penalty for lifting when not asked (except on putting green)
- Ball may not be cleaned (except on putting green)



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Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

- If it is your ball-marker:
 - ✓ Move it out of the way



Ball-Marker Helping or Interfering with Play

- If it is your ball-marker:
 - ✓ Move it out of the way
[Dec. 20-1/11]
- If it belongs to another player:
 - ✓ Require them to move it



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- Ball **Interfering** With Play Anywhere (15.3b)
- Ball-Marker **Helping** or **Interfering** (15.3c)

Overview – Abnormal Course Conditions

- When Relief Allowed (16.1a(1))
- Relief Procedures (16.1b, 16.1c and 16.1d)
- Relief for Ball Not Found (16.1e)
- Abnormal Course Condition No Play Zone (16.1f)

Meaning of Interference

- When Relief Allowed:
 - ✓ Ball **touches**,
 - ✓ Ball is **in** or **on**,
 - ✓ **Intended stance** interference,
 - ✓ **Intended swing** interference,
 - ✓ On **line of play**
(putting green only)
- Distraction alone is **not** interference



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

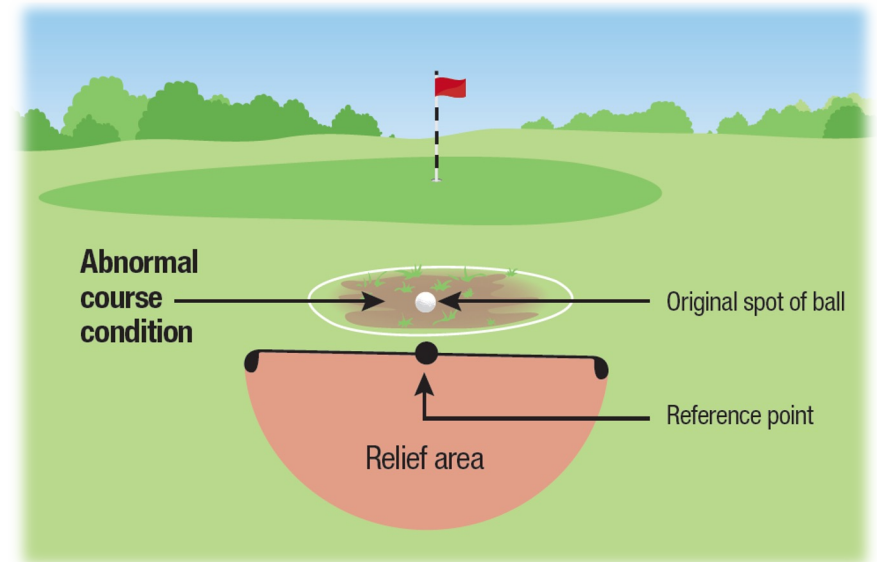
Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions

- Relief allowed anywhere
- Three Exceptions:
 - ✓ Ball in penalty area,
 - ✓ Abnormal course condition is not on course, and
 - ✓ Clearly unreasonable stroke or play choices



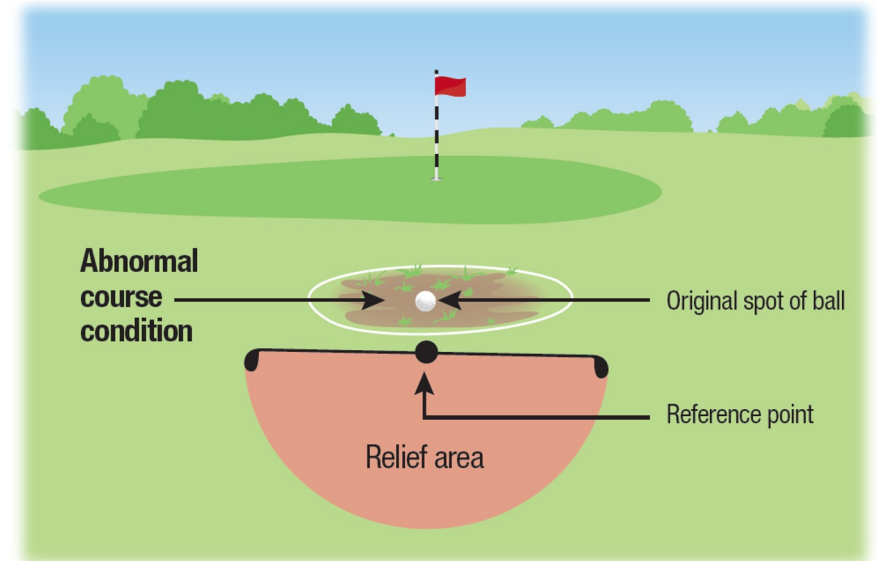
General Area Relief Procedure

- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Nearest point of complete relief
(in general area)



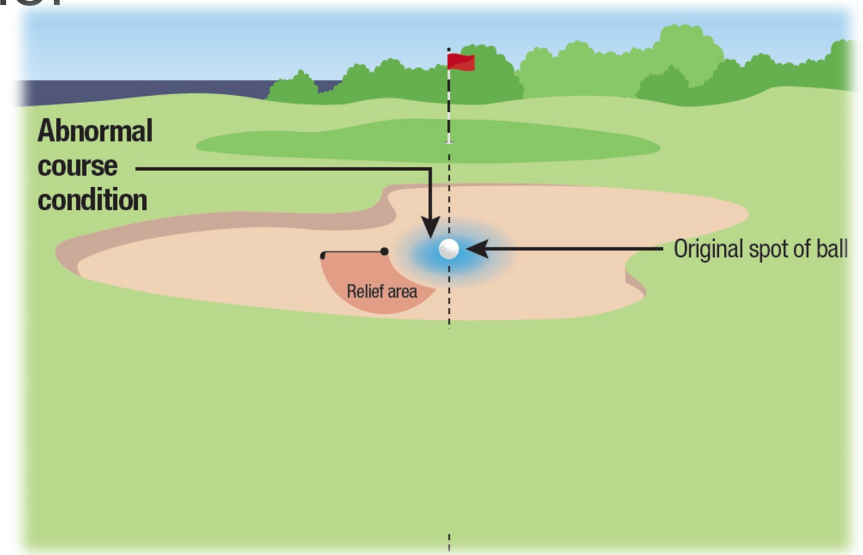
General Area Relief Procedure

- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Nearest point of complete relief
(in general area)
- **Relief Area:**
 - ✓ **One** club-length,
 - ✓ In **general area**,
 - ✓ **Not nearer hole** than reference point, and
 - ✓ Must take **complete relief**



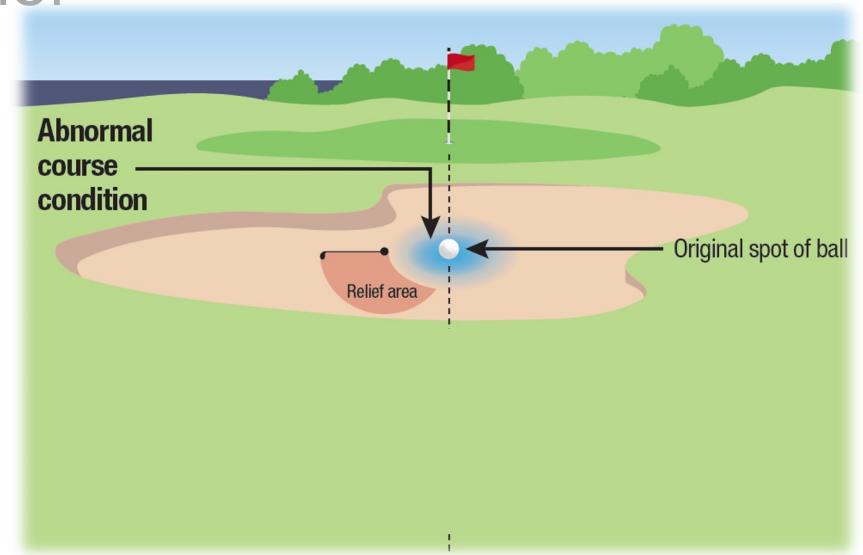
Bunker Relief Procedure (free relief)

- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Nearest point of complete relief
(in bunker)



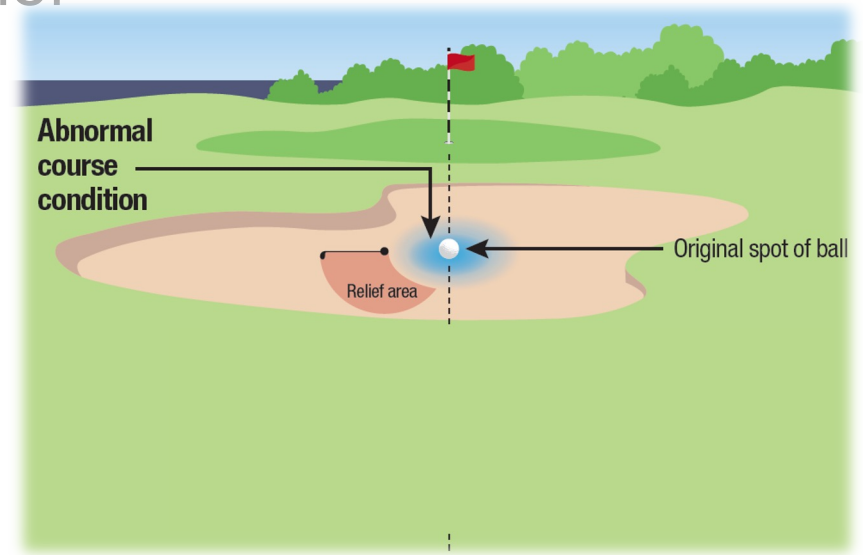
Bunker Relief Procedure (free relief)

- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Nearest point of complete relief (in bunker)
- **Relief Area:**
 - ✓ **One** club-length,
 - ✓ In **bunker**,
 - ✓ **Not nearer hole** than reference point, and
 - ✓ **Complete relief**, if possible



Bunker Relief Procedure (free relief)

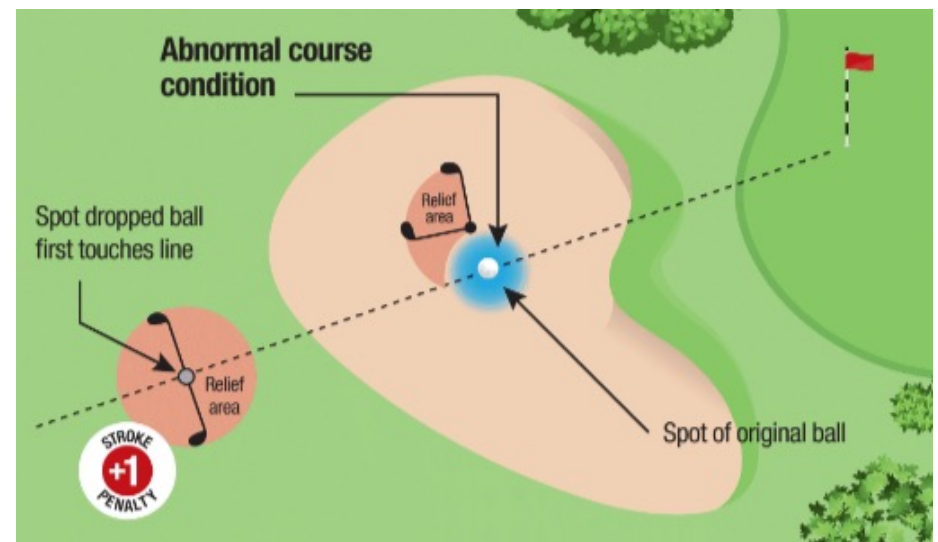
- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Nearest point of complete relief (in bunker)
- **Relief Area:**
 - ✓ **One** club-length,
 - ✓ In **bunker**,
 - ✓ **Not nearer hole** than reference point, and
 - ✓ **Maximum relief**, if complete relief **NOT** possible



Bunker Relief Procedure (penalty relief)

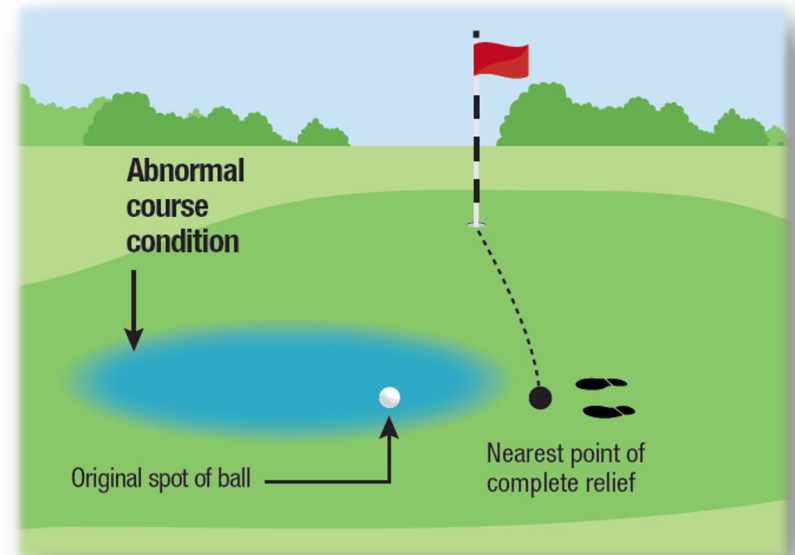
- **Use Back-on-the-Line Relief:**

- ✓ Outside bunker
- ✓ On any part of the course
- ✓ Must drop on the line



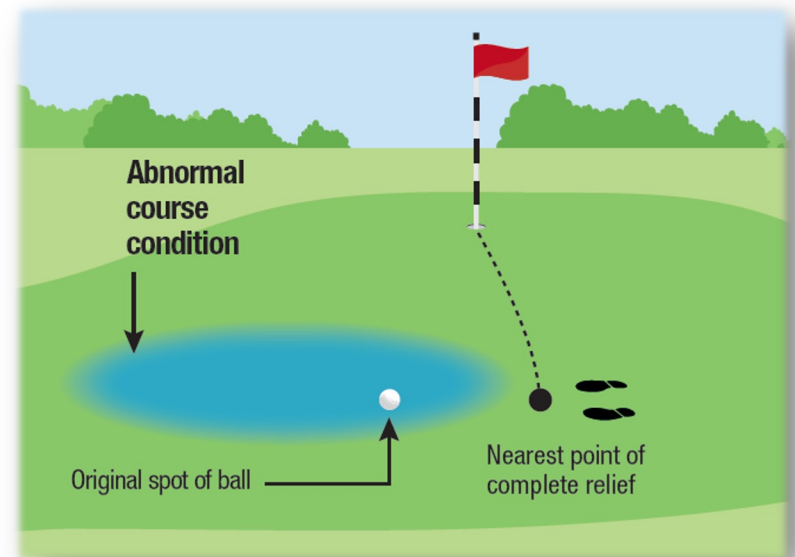
Putting Green Relief Procedure

- **Relief Procedure:**
 - ✓ Nearest point of complete relief
 - ✓ Place original or another ball on that spot
 - Must be on putting green, or
 - In general area



Putting Green Relief Procedure

- **Relief Procedure:**
 - ✓ If **no complete relief** is available:
 - Use maximum available relief as reference point
 - ✓ Must be on putting green, or
 - ✓ In general area



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- Meaning of Interference (16.1a(1))
- Relief Procedures (16.1b, 16.1c and 16.1d)

Abnormal Course Condition Ball Not Found

- **With Knowledge or Virtual Certainty:**
 - ✓ **Starting Point:** estimated point where ball last crossed the outer edge (on the course)
 - ✓ **Reference Point:** nearest point of complete relief from starting point
 - ✓ **Relief Area:** use applicable relief area described in Rule

Abnormal Course Condition Ball Not Found

- **Without** Knowledge or Virtual Certainty:
 - ✓ Relief not allowed
 - ✓ Stroke-and-distance required if ball not found

2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

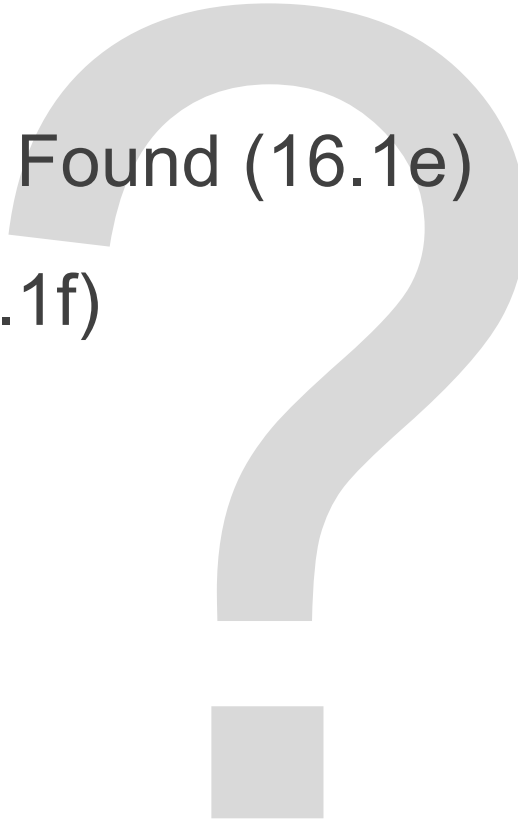
No Play Zone - Abnormal Course Condition

- Ball must not be played
- Free relief required

2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- Relief for Ball Not Found (16.1e)
- No Play Zone (16.1f)



Overview – Dangerous Animal Condition

- Meaning of “Dangerous Animal Condition” (16.2a)
- When Relief is Allowed (16.2a)
- Relief Procedure (16.2b)

Meaning of Dangerous Animal Condition

- When animal near ball could cause serious physical injury to player if ball played



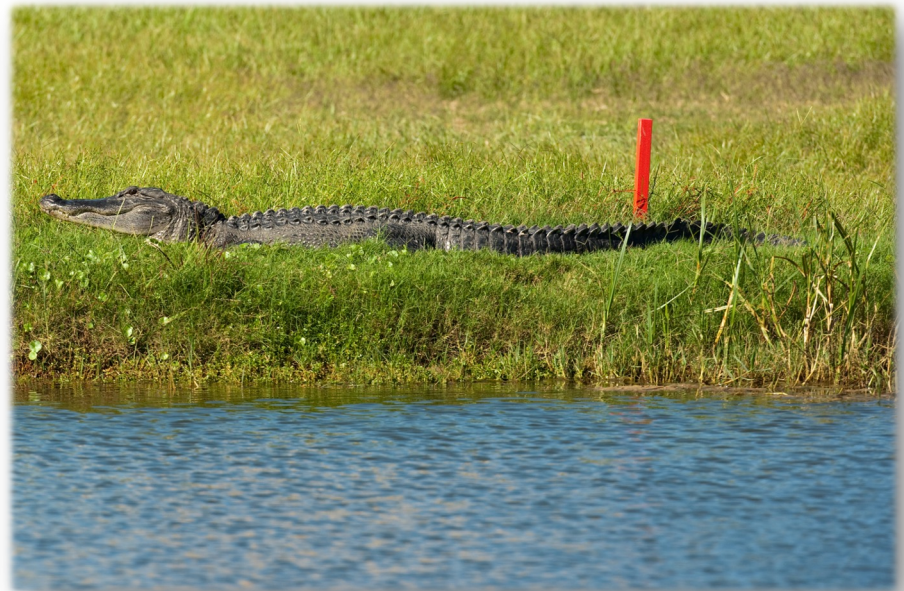
Meaning of Dangerous Animal Condition

- Examples:
 - ✓ Poisonous snake,
 - ✓ Stinging bee,
 - ✓ Alligator,
 - ✓ Fire ants, or
 - ✓ A bear



When Relief is Allowed

- Allowed **anywhere** on the course
- Two Exceptions:
 - ✓ Stroke **clearly unreasonable** for another reason, or



When Relief is Allowed

- Allowed **anywhere** on the course
- Two Exceptions:
 - ✓ Interference exists through use of **clearly unreasonable**:
 - Club,
 - Stance,
 - Swing, or
 - Direction of play



Free Relief from Dangerous Animal Condition

Procedure (except penalty area):

- Nearest point of complete relief (not nearer the hole) where the dangerous animal condition doesn't exist



Free Relief from Dangerous Animal Condition

Procedure (except penalty area):

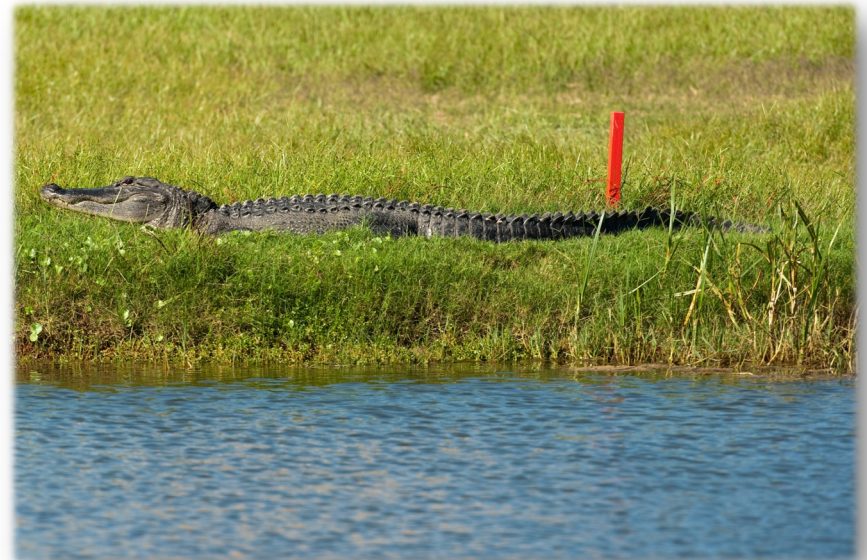
- Use Abnormal Course Condition relief procedure:
 - ✓ 16.1b – for general area,
 - ✓ 16.1c – for bunker, or
 - ✓ 16.1d – for putting green



Free Relief from Dangerous Animal Condition

Procedure (in penalty area):

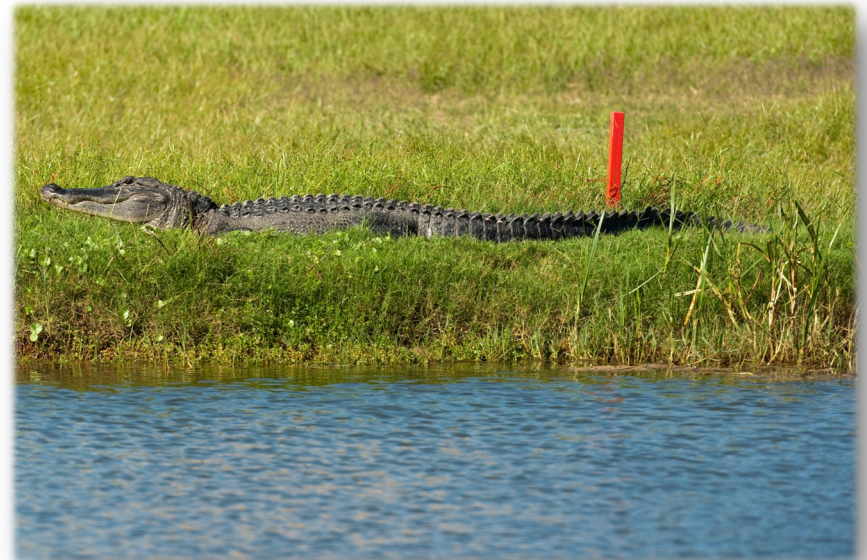
- May take relief under Rule 16.1b, but
 - ✓ The nearest point of complete relief, and
 - ✓ The relief area must be in the penalty area



Free Relief from Dangerous Animal Condition

Procedure (in penalty area):

- For **one penalty stroke**:
 - ✓ Use any option in Rule 17.1
(penalty area relief Rule)



Questions

- Meaning of “Dangerous *Animal* Condition” (16.2a)
- When Relief is Allowed (16.2a)
- Relief Procedure (16.2b)

Overview – Embedded Ball

- Meaning of “Embedded” (16.3a(2))
- Free Relief permitted when ball lies (16.3a(1))
 - ✓ In the **entire** general area
(with two exceptions)
 - ✓ On the Putting Green

Overview – Embedded Ball

- Meaning of “Embedded” (16.3a(2))
- Free Relief permitted when ball lies (16.3a(1))
 - ✓ In the **entire** general area (with two exceptions)
 - ✓ On the Putting Green
- Relief Procedures (16.3b)

Significant Changes – Embedded Ball

- Relief allowed throughout general area
 - ✓ Can limit relief to fairway height or less by Local Rule
- Two Relief Procedures
- Guidance to question of doubt about whether ball in **its own** or **another** pitch-mark



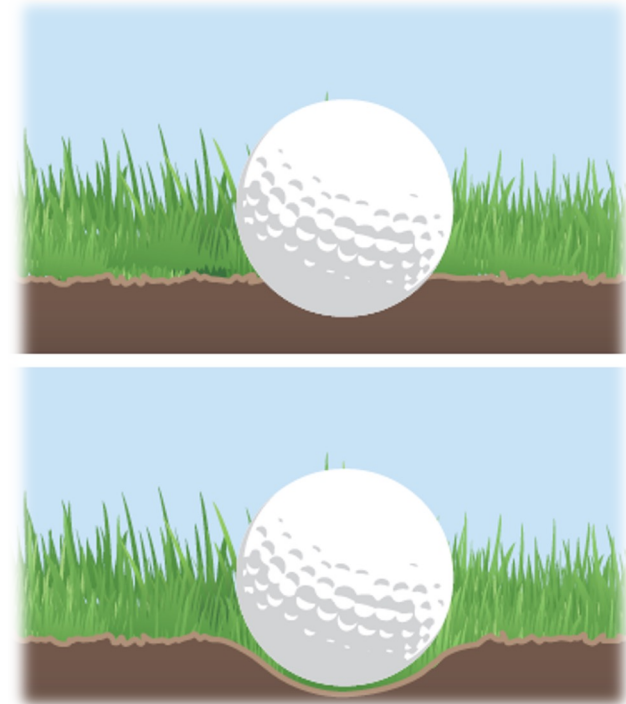
Embedded Ball Free Relief

- Meaning of Embedded:
 - ✓ Ball in its own pitch-mark,
 - ✓ A result of previous stroke, and
 - ✓ Part of the ball below surface of ground



Embedded Ball Free Relief

- Ball **NOT** Embedded, if:
 - ✓ It has been stepped on (or run over by a cart),
 - ✓ Driven into ground without becoming airborne, or
 - ✓ As a result of dropping it



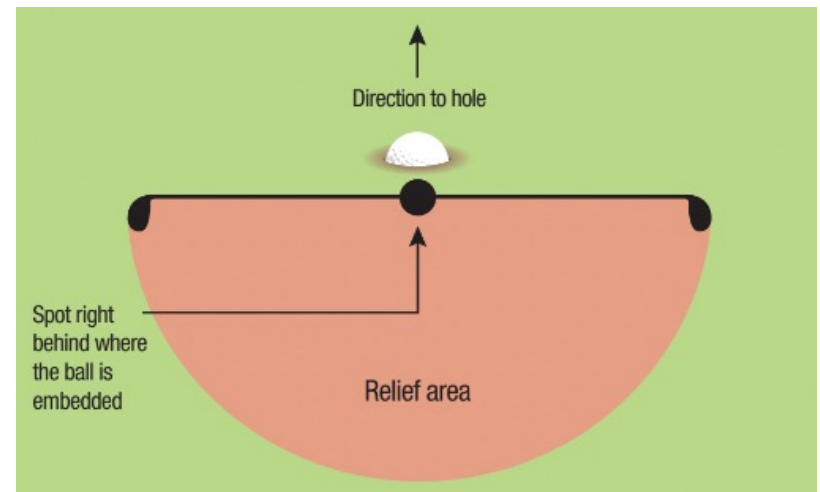
Embedded Ball Free Relief

- When you can't tell if your ball is in **its own** pitch-mark or **another**:
 - ✓ You may treat ball as embedded and take relief if...
 - ✓ It is reasonable to conclude from all available information ball is in its own pitch-mark



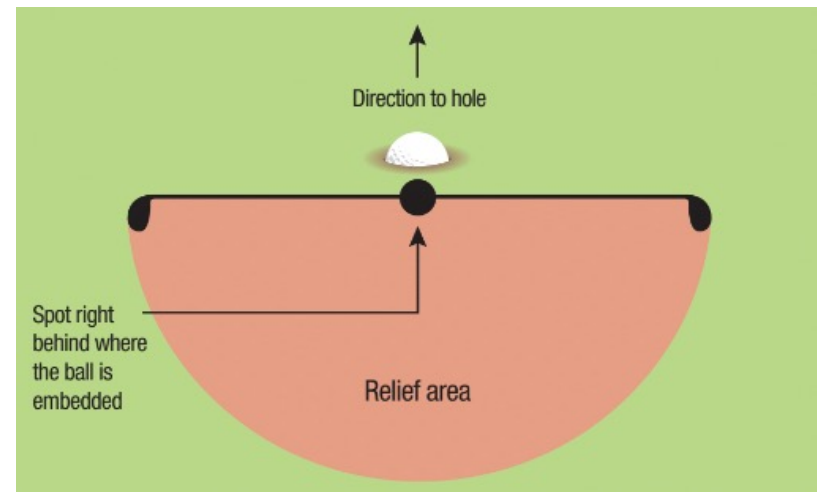
Embedded Ball Free Relief in General Area

- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Spot in the **general area** right behind where ball embedded in the general area



Embedded Ball Free Relief in General Area

- **Reference Point:**
 - ✓ Spot right behind where ball embedded in the general area
- **Relief Area:**
 - ✓ One club-length,
 - ✓ Not nearer hole than reference point, and
 - ✓ In general area



Embedded Ball Free Relief in General Area

- Two Exceptions – No relief
 - ✓ Ball embedded in sand
 - In part of general area,
 - Not cut to fairway height or less



Embedded Ball Free Relief in General Area

- Two Exceptions – No relief
 - ✓ Ball embedded in sand
 - In part of general area,
 - Not cut to fairway height or less
 - ✓ Interference from something else makes stroke clearly unreasonable



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Embedded Ball Free Relief on Putting Green

- Mark and lift your ball,
- Repair the ball-mark, and
- Replace on repaired original spot



Questions

- Meaning of “Embedded” (16.3a(2))
- Relief for Ball Embedded in General Area (16.3b)
- Relief for Ball Embedded on Putting Green (16.3b)

2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Overview – Lifting to See If Relief Rule Applies

- Can be done anywhere
- Must follow procedure

Lifting to See If Free Relief Rule Applies to You

- If you reasonably believe a free relief rule may apply to you
- But cannot decide without lifting your ball to see if relief is allowed
- No announcement required
- is required



Lifting to See If Free Relief Rule Applies to You

- **Procedure:**

- ✓ Ball must be marked before lifting, and
- ✓ Lifted ball must **NOT** be cleaned (except on putting green)



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Lifting to See If Free Relief Rule Applies to You

- **Not** Entitled to Relief:
 - ✓ Replace your original ball



Lifting to See If Free Relief Rule Applies to You

- **One-stroke penalty** applies if:
 - ✓ **Lift** without a reasonable belief you are entitled to relief,
 - ✓ **Fail to mark** before lifting, or
 - ✓ **Clean** your ball (except on the putting green)



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Lifting to See If Free Relief Rule Applies to You

- No penalty if you are entitled to free relief and take relief



2023 Rules of Golf – Free Relief

Questions

- Lifting to Determine if Relief Applies (16.4)

