

6. Through the green



Definition. The term “through the green” refers to the entire area of the course excluding the teeing ground and the green of the hole to be played, and excluding all the hazards and areas which are out of bounds¹. In other words it includes every fairway and all areas of semi-rough, rough and fringe, plus all other teeing grounds, as well as greens which do *not belong* to the hole. If you are on any other part of the course (teeing ground, bunker, water hazard, out of bounds, green) please refer to the relevant chapter.



Through the green covers the largest area of the golf course—everything illustrated apart from the areas which have been crossed out.

Order of play. It is always the turn of the player whose ball is the farthest away from the hole². Not keeping to the correct order of play does NOT INCUR A PENALTY as long as no agreement has been made with the intention of giving one of the players a tactical advantage³. However it can be a breach of etiquette.

Balls close to each other. If two balls are so close together that they obstruct each other, one ball can be marked and picked up until the other one has been played⁴. The ball is then to be put back precisely in its original position. If the original lie has been changed the ball is to be placed in the nearest position which is as similar as possible—but of course, not nearer to the hole⁵.

Looking for a ball. If you cannot find the ball straight away and have to start looking for it you should get into the habit of checking your watch. After a search time of 5 minutes the ball is classed as lost and is not to be played any more under any circumstances⁶ (see page XY, “lost ball”). You should take a quick

Tip: If you find your ball in the rough and have to return to your golf bag to fetch a club you should leave your cap, glove or another object by the ball to ensure that you can find the spot again.



look behind before starting the search and let a group through if there is one waiting. In order to avoid misunderstandings you should inform your fellow-competitors of the brand and number of the missing ball once again before you start looking for it.

Ball moved during a search. If you unintentionally move the ball during the search you must put it back and you will receive 1 PENALTY STROKE⁷. However if a fellow-competitor is responsible for the ball being moved this comes WITHOUT PENALTY for both players and the ball must again be put back⁸. If you do not put it back you will be playing from the wrong spot and you will incur 2 PENALTY STROKES⁹.

Identifying the ball. If you cannot tell whether the ball found is yours you can mark its position and pick it up to identify it. However, before doing so you must inform your marker or a fellow-player of this and give him the opportunity to observe the entire procedure, otherwise you will incur 1 PENALTY STROKE¹⁰. If the ball is dirty you are permitted to scrape off the amount of dirt needed to identify it. The ball must then be put back in exactly the same position.

In order to avoid being suspected of trying to improve the lie you can ask a fellow-competitor to identify the ball for you. However caution is called for—some players think that they are behaving within the realms of “fair play” when they put your ball back in a slightly better position after identifying it or flatten the grass down around your ball in doing so. Such behaviour would result in 2 PENALTY STROKES for the other player¹¹ and this will also apply to you too if you go along with an improvement of this kind¹².

Advice and line of play. You are permitted to inquire about margins to areas which are out of bounds, pin positions and the position of hazards, or about other *matters of public information*, such as the rules¹³. You are also allowed to ask about the distance from *fixed* objects (for example distance markers, bunkers or a nearby tree) to the green. However you are *not permitted* to inquire about the distance from your ball to the green as this would be advice¹⁴. If you *request for* or *give* advice a 2 STROKE PENALTY will be incurred¹⁵.

If you cannot see the flag or the green you are allowed to ask a fellow-player to indicate the line of play. However the other player is not permitted to remain on the line of play while you are making your stroke¹⁶.

Playing the ball as it lies. Always bear in mind that the principle of the game of golf states that a ball must be played where it lies if the rules do not make provisions to the contrary¹⁷. You have to accept the lie as you find it. In particular, never attempt to improve the lie of the ball, the area of the intended stance or swing or the line of play in an unauthorised manner. You are not permitted to *move, bend or break off* anything growing or fixed *before* making a stroke. When addressing the ball you are only to ground the club gently and not press it into the ground. Breaches of this rule are punished with 2 PENALTY STROKES¹⁸.



Play the ball as it lies. Unjustified improvement of the ball's lie, the line of play or the area of stance or swing is penalised with 2 penalty strokes.

The only exception is when *taking up your stance*, when it is possible that moving, bending or breaking off something is *unavoidable*. This does NOT INCUR A PENALTY if it occurs when taking one's stance *fairly*, i.e. the player is not trying to gain an unjustified advantage but, for example, accidentally snaps off a small branch when entering a copse¹⁹.

Practice swing. Practice swings are generally permitted through the green but please do not make practice swings while a fellow-competitor is playing his shot as this could disturb his concentration. It is advisable to take practice swings from a spot far enough away from the ball to avoid the risk of moving the ball unintentionally. Avoid damaging the grass when making practice swings if at all possible. Always replace any divots made and tread them in well or fill them in with sand.

If you rip something off, bend or break something when making your practice swing, thus creating an advantage for the ensuing shot, you will incur 2 PENALTY STROKES²³.

Ball moved when taking a practice swing. If you take a practice swing and accidentally move your ball in doing so this does not count as a stroke (as you did not intend to hit the ball²⁴) and you are to put the ball back with 1 PENALTY STROKE²⁵. If you do not put it back you will incur 2 PENALTY STROKES for playing from the wrong spot²⁶.

Ball moved when addressing the ball. If your ball moves after you have addressed it (i.e. after taking your stance and grounding your club²⁰) it will be classed as having been moved by you and you must put it back, under PENALTY OF 1 STROKE²¹. If you do not put it back you will be playing from the wrong spot and you will therefore incur 2 PENALTY STROKES²².

Tip: If the ball has an awkward or unsteady lie (e.g. on a slope, on leaves, in long grass or in a strong wind) it is advisable not to ground the club, as the ball might move.



Loose impediments. Loose impediments are all *natural* objects which are *loose*, i.e. not fixed, not growing, nor firmly embedded or sticking to the ball (therefore this term does not include fo-

liage growing on a tree, a branch which is dead but which is still fixed to the tree, creepers and climbing plants and an embedded stone etc.). Sand and loose soil are only classed as loose impediments on the green²⁷.



Loose impediments are natural objects which are loose, i.e. not growing, fixed or firmly embedded (stone!).

You are permitted to remove loose impediments WITHOUT PENALTY anywhere through the green²⁸. However if your ball moves in doing so you must put it back under PENALTY OF 1 STROKE²⁹. If you do not put it back you will incur 2 PENALTY STROKES for playing from the wrong spot³⁰.

If you suspect that your ball could be moved when you remove loose impediments it is advisable to play it as it lies instead of taking any unnecessary risks.

Obstructions. *Artificial* objects are termed obstructions. They are divided into *movable* and *immovable* obstructions. No objects which are used to define out of bounds are classed as obstructions³¹.

Movable obstructions. Movable obstructions include all artificial (man-made) objects which *can be moved* with a reasonable amount of effort and within an appropriate length of time (except for out of bounds posts)³².

Through the green

Movable obstructions are artificial objects which can be moved. However, please note that out of bounds posts are never to be removed.



You are permitted to remove movable obstructions anywhere **WITHOUT PENALTY**. If your ball moves on doing so you must put it back **WITHOUT PENALTY**³³. If you do not put it back you will incur **2 PENALTY STROKES** for playing from the wrong spot³⁴.

You are also entitled to free relief even if the ball is lying *in* or *on* the movable obstruction. Mark the position of the ball underneath the obstruction. Then pick the ball up, remove the obstruction and *drop* the ball as near as possible to the position marked³⁵.

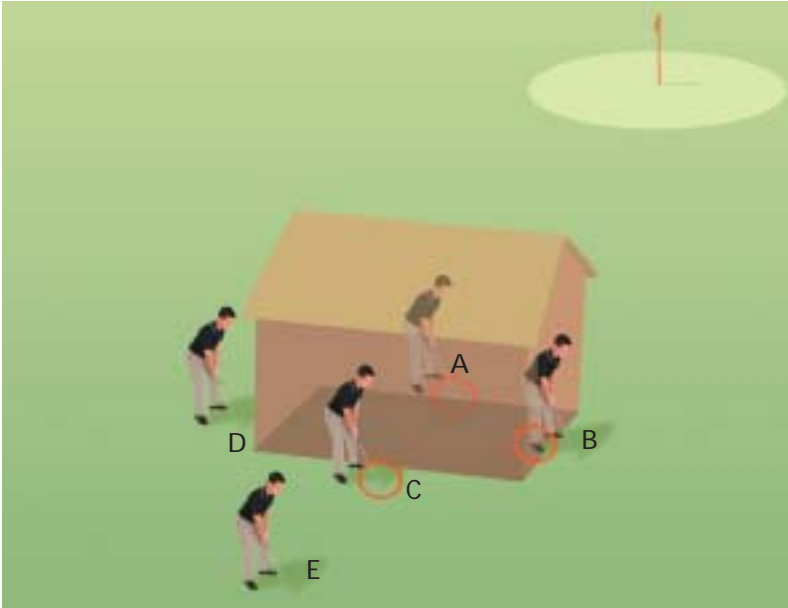
Immovable obstructions. Immovable obstructions are artificial objects which *cannot be moved* (except for posts, fences, walls etc. which delineate out of bounds)³⁶.

Immovable obstructions are artificial objects which cannot be moved. Roads and paths are only classed as artificial if they have an artificial surface (i.e. relief is not given from ordinary farm tracks and dirt paths!).

Tree stakes are also included and Local Rules often even state that the staked tree itself is classed as an obstruction.



You are only given relief **WITHOUT PENALTY** from an immovable obstruction if it interferes with your *stance* or your *swing* (interference with the line of play is not sufficient)³⁷.



Interference by an immovable obstruction only occurs when the player's stance or swing is physically obstructed.

In the illustration with the hut this is the case with points A (backswing), B (stance) and C (follow through) and the player is entitled to free relief.

In the case of D and E the player can take his stance freely and make a swing without interference, therefore the ball has to be played as it lies. Whether or not the hut is in his line of play is immaterial.



No interference. An immovable obstruction does not cause an interference if the player is only obstructed visually or feels impeded in any other way.

In the illustration with the sprinkler head this is the case with points A and B and the player is not entitled to free relief.

However, in the case of C and D the player cannot take up his stance freely or make his swing without interference and he is therefore given free relief.

Through the green

To take relief **WITHOUT PENALTY** from immovable obstructions proceed as follows: First, determine the spot through the green which is nearest to the ball and where you are no longer obstructed. This point is not to be closer to the hole. Then drop the ball within 1 club-length³⁸.

A cart path is an immovable obstruction (artificial) and the player is entitled to free relief if his ball is on the road (swing is obstructed) or if he would have to stand on the path (stance obstructed).

Determine the nearest spot where you can take your stance and make your swing without obstruction and take a drop within 1 club-length.

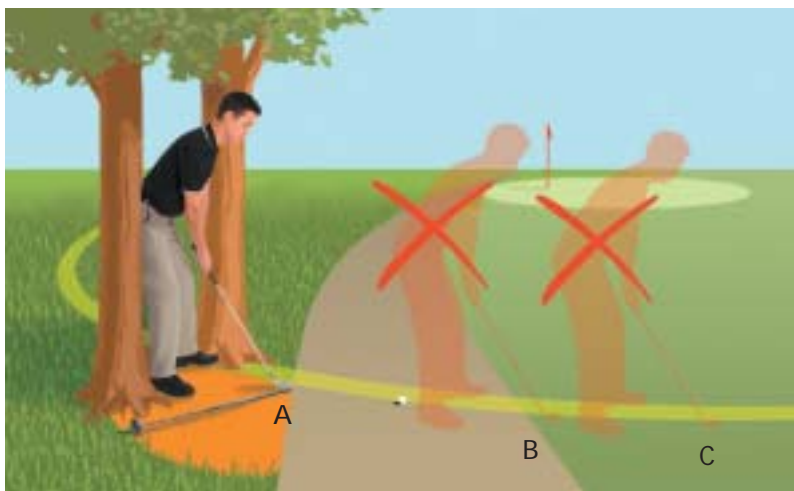


However you *do not have to* take relief. In some cases it would be more prudent to play the ball where it lies, especially when the nearest point of relief is behind a tree, in the rough or in another unfavourable position of any kind.

Caution. You cannot choose which side of the cart path to drop on. It must be the side where the nearest point is. In the illustration the player has to go to the left, to point A.

While point B is the same distance away it is not far enough as the player has to take complete relief and is not permitted to take up his stance on the path. Point C is further away than point A.

(The situation would be reversed if the player was left-handed.)



Please note that some Local Rules declare certain facilities (e.g. roads and paths) to be an integral part of the course therefore relief **WITHOUT PENALTY** IS NOT given in these cases³⁹.

Abnormal ground conditions. *Casual water* (sites where water has temporarily collected e.g. puddles, ice and snow)⁴⁰ as well as *ground under repair* (GUR, usually marked with blue stakes, lines etc. or mentioned in the Local Rules)⁴¹ are classed as abnormal ground conditions. The term also includes certain precisely defined animal tracks such as *holes, casts or paths of burrowing animals, reptiles and birds*⁴².



Abnormal ground conditions. This mainly includes two particular conditions—puddles and ground under repair (usually marked in blue).

Although the tracks of certain types of animals are also included, in practice they rarely play an important role. Animals do not usually wait next to their tracks and this makes them difficult to identify.

If you move your ball unintentionally when searching in abnormal ground conditions the ball must be put back and in this particular case this does NOT INCUR A PENALTY⁴³.

If your ball is *lying in* abnormal ground conditions or your *stance* or *swing* is obstructed by abnormal ground conditions you can take relief WITHOUT PENALTY by determining the nearest point through the green where the condition no longer causes interference and drop the ball within 1 club-length⁴⁴ (the same procedure as for immovable obstructions). In doing so you must bear in mind that, as always, this spot cannot be closer to the hole than the ball's original position.

In this case too you do not have to take relief and are permitted to play the ball where it lies (as long as the Local Rules do not specify that taking relief is compulsory e.g. in order to protect young plants).

Ground under repair is usually marked in blue or mentioned in the Local Rules. Find the nearest point where the ball is no longer in GUR and where you do not have to take your stance within it and drop the ball within 1 club-length, without penalty.



Ball lost in abnormal ground conditions. If you are absolutely positive that your ball can only be lost in abnormal ground conditions and not anywhere else you will also be given free relief (however, if you only suspect this to be the case it is to be treated as an ordinary “lost ball”, see page XY). First of all determine the point where the ball last entered the area concerned. From this point you determine the nearest point of relief through the green, not closer to the hole, and drop a new ball **WITHOUT PENALTY** within 1 club-length⁴⁵.

Ball lost in abnormal ground conditions. The same procedure as above, however in this case the starting point is not the ball, but the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the GUR.

Locate the nearest point of relief and drop the ball without penalty within 1 club-length.

