

**Dropping Procedure:** When taking relief (from an abnormal course condition or penalty area, for example), golfers will now drop from **knee height**. This will ensure consistency and simplicity in the dropping process while also preserving the randomness of the drop. (Key change: the proposed Rules released in 2017 suggested dropping from any height).

**Measuring in taking relief:** The golfer's relief area will be measured by using the **longest club** in his/her bag (other than a putter) to measure one club-length or two club-lengths, depending on the situation, providing a consistent process for golfers to establish his/her relief area. (Key change: the proposed Rules released in 2017 suggested a 20-inch or 80-inch standard measurement).

**Removing the penalty for a double hit:** The penalty stroke for accidentally striking the ball more than once in the course of a stroke has been removed. Golfers will simply count the one stroke they made to strike the ball. (Key change: the proposed Rules released in 2017 included the existing one-stroke penalty).

**Balls Lost or Out of Bounds:** Alternative to Stroke and Distance: A new Local Rule will now be available in January 2019, permitting committees to allow golfers the option to drop the ball in the vicinity of where the ball is lost or out of bounds (including the nearest fairway area), under a two-stroke penalty. It addresses concerns raised at the club level about the negative impact on pace of play when a player is required to go back under stroke and distance. The Local Rule is not intended for higher levels of play, such as professional or elite level competitions. (Key change: this is a new addition to support pace of play)

**Elimination or reduction of "ball moved" penalties:** There will be no penalty for accidentally moving a ball on the putting green or in searching for a ball; and a player is not responsible for causing a ball to move unless it is "virtually certain" that he or she did so.

**Relaxed putting green rules:** There will be no penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits an unattended flagstick in the hole; players may putt without having the flagstick attended or removed. Players may repair spike marks and other damage made by shoes, animal damage and other damage on the putting green and there is no penalty for merely touching the line of putt.

**2019 Rule:** Rule 13.1c (2) allows repair of almost any damage on the green:

- "Damage on the putting green" will be defined to include all types of damage (such as ball-marks, shoe damage, indentations from a club or flagstick, animal damage, etc.), **except** aeration holes, natural surface imperfections or natural wear of the hole.

**Relaxed rules for "penalty areas" (currently called "water hazards"):**

**2019 Rule:** Under Rule 17:

- There will no longer be any special restrictions when a ball is in a "penalty area" (the expanded designation for the area that includes what are now called water hazards).
- A player will be allowed to touch or move loose impediments and touch the ground with hand or club (such as grounding the club right behind the ball) for any reason, subject only to the prohibition on improving conditions for the stroke (see new Rule 8.1a)

**Pace-of-play support:** Reduced time for searching for a lost ball (**from five minutes to three**); affirmative encouragement of "ready golf" in stroke play; recommending that players take no more than 40 seconds to play a stroke and other changes intended to help with pace of play.

### **Relaxed bunker rules:**

**2019 Rule:** Under Rules 12.2a and 12.2b, the player will be allowed to touch or move loose impediments in a bunker and will be generally allowed to touch the sand with a hand or club; but a limited **prohibition continues so that the player must not:**

- Deliberately touch the sand in a bunker with a hand, club, rake or other object to test the condition of the sand to learn information for the stroke, or
- Touch the sand in a bunker with a club in making a practice swing, in grounding the club right in front of or behind the ball, or in making the backswing for a stroke.

**Relying on player integrity:** A player's "reasonable judgment" when estimating or measuring a spot, point, line, area or distance will be upheld, even if video evidence later shows it to be wrong; and elimination of announcement procedures when lifting a ball to identify it or to see if it is damaged.

**2019 Rule: Embedded Ball: The current default position in the Rules will be reversed:**

- Rule 16.3 will allow relief for a ball embedded anywhere in the "general area" (that is, the area currently known as "through the green"), except when embedded in sand.
- But a Committee may adopt a Local Rule restricting relief to a ball embedded in those parts of the general area cut to fairway height or less.
- In taking relief, the player will drop the original ball or a substituted ball within one club-length of (but not nearer the hole than) the spot right behind where the ball was embedded.
- **More than 30 "how-to apply" videos and a summary of the principal changes are now available at <http://www.golf.org.au/newrules>. Additional education tools will be released in September.**