

# THE CHANGES TO GOLF'S RULES - EFFECTIVE 1ST JANUARY 2019

## What You Need To Know - The Basics

### 1 New dropping height



- The ball must be dropped straight down from knee height.
- "Knee height" means the height of your knee when in a standing position.
- You do not need to be standing when the ball is dropped.
- A drop does not count if the ball touches you or your equipment before hitting the ground.
- A drop does count if the ball accidentally hits you or equipment after it has already hit the ground.

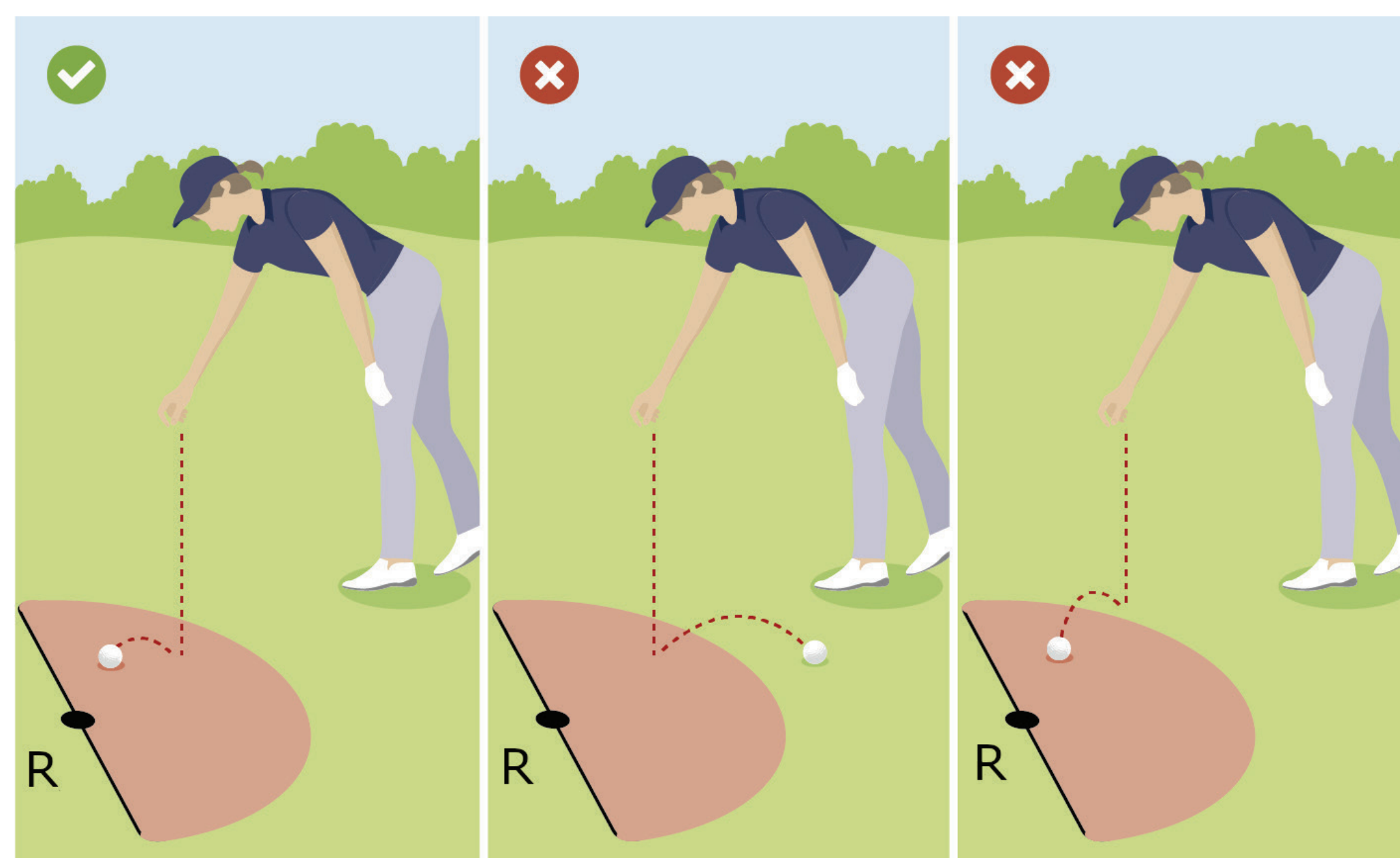


**Time reduced for ball search to 3 minutes**  
Your ball will be lost if you do not find it within 3 minutes (rather than the current 5 minutes).



**Spike mark repairs allowed on green**  
You will be allowed to repair almost any damage to the green, including spike marks and animal damage.

### 2 Dropping procedure: Ball must land in and come to rest in relief area



For your relief procedure to be completed, your ball must be dropped so it:

- First strikes the ground in the relief area,
- AND THEN comes to rest in the relief area.

#### Q&A on relief areas

**How big is my relief area (shaded area in the picture)?**

Your relief area includes any ground that is within one club-length of point R (and that is not nearer the hole than point R). EXCEPT that you get two club-lengths when you are taking relief under the lateral option in either the unplayable ball rule or the penalty area rule.

**Sometimes under the old Rules I had a relief area to drop in and at other times I had to drop right at the reference point (point R in the picture). Is this the same under the new Rules?**

There is greater consistency under the new Rules. In every situation under the new Rules you get a full relief area to drop in – except when you're taking relief by playing again from the tee or taking relief from something on the green.

**Where do I play from if I'm taking relief by playing again from the tee or if I'm taking relief from something on the green?**

When playing again from the tee you can tee your ball up anywhere in the teeing area. When taking relief from something on the green you just place a ball at the nearest point of relief.

**What does 'reference point' (point R in the picture) refer to?**

The 'reference point' is the point from which the size of the relief area is measured. When taking relief from either GUR or from an immovable obstruction your reference point is 'the nearest point of relief'. When taking 'stroke-and-distance' relief your reference point is the spot where the previous stroke was played. When taking relief from a penalty area your reference point is where the ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area margin.



**Flagstick can remain in when putting**  
You will be allowed to hit the unattended flagstick in the hole when putting.



**Longest club, putter aside, to be used for measuring**  
The club to be used for measuring purposes in all relief situations is the longest club in your bag, other than your putter.

### Other major changes that come into effect on 1 January 2019:

- **Loose impediments in a bunker or penalty area.** Removal of loose impediments in a bunker or a penalty area now allowed.
- **Ball accidentally moved while searching.** Replace with no penalty.
- **Ball or ball-marker accidentally moved on green.** Replace with no penalty.
- **Touching line of play on green.** Touching your line of play on the green now allowed.
- **Two-stroke penalty relief allowed from bunker.** Back-on-the-line relief is allowed outside a bunker for two penalty strokes.
- **New standard for deciding if your ball moved because of your actions.** The Rules consider you to have moved your ball only if it is known or virtually certain that you were the cause (that is, it is at least 95% likely that you were the cause).
- **Ball change allowed in all situations when taking relief.** In free-relief situations, as well as in penalty situations, you are entitled to change your ball.
- **Use of clubs damaged during round.** A club damaged during a round can continue to be used, even if you damaged it in anger. You are still not allowed to replace a damaged club during a round if you were responsible for the damage.
- **New procedure for taking back-on-the-line relief.**
  - When taking back-on-the-line relief you drop a ball in a relief area that is based on a line going straight back from the hole from either: where the ball was lying if it is an unplayable ball situation; or where the ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area if it is a penalty area situation.
  - You pick a point on this line, and drop a ball within one club-length of the point (but not nearer the hole than the point). You should indicate the point by using an object (such as a tee). It is also acceptable to pick a reference point by using a loose impediment or a mark on the grass.
  - If you don't pick a specific point, the point is treated as being the spot on the line that is the same distance from the hole as where the dropped ball first touched the ground.

**READY GOLF (in Stableford, Stroke Play, and Par).**  
The new Rules actively encourage Ready Golf.

**Recommendation of 40 seconds to play a stroke.**

It is recommended that you play each stroke in no more than 40 seconds – and usually more quickly than that.

### Terminology changes for the defined areas of the course

#### Penalty areas

- The terms 'water hazard' and 'lateral water hazard' are removed and replaced by 'penalty areas'.
- The red and yellow markings all stay the same.
- The relief procedures remain almost the same. The one minor change is that the previous option to take opposite-margin relief from red penalty areas is removed.
- The new Rules allow any of the following to be marked as red or yellow penalty areas: desert, areas with dense bushes or trees, etc.

#### General area

- This is a new term. It replaces 'through the green'.

The **general area** covers the entire area of the course except for the following:

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 The teeing area | 3 Penalty areas     |
| 2 Bunkers         | 4 The putting green |

