

Penalty Strokes and Courses of Action in Stroke Play Quick Reference

DISCLAIMER: This document is provided to help you make quick decisions on the golf course for commonly applied rules. It is intended to summarize, but not change, the USGA rules. Consult USGA.org for exact wording and interpretation of all golf rules when in doubt.

No Penalty

- a. You accidentally move your ball while taking a practice swing or while removing movable obstructions. Move your ball back to its original location.
- b. Another player hits your ball. Place a new ball in the location of your original ball.
- c. Your ball accidentally hits a person, animal, or equipment. Play your ball from where it comes to rest.
- d. You hit from off the green **and** your ball strikes another player's ball on the green. Your ball is played from where it lies. The other player's ball is moved back to its original position. Neither player takes a penalty.
- e. Your ball lands in a yellow or red penalty area. You may play your ball as it lies without taking a penalty stroke provided the area is **not designated a No Play Zone**. If the penalty area is a No Play Zone, you must drop outside the area and take a one-stroke penalty.

Free Relief

The following circumstances allow you to take free relief by dropping your ball within one club length of the nearest location where your swing and stance are no longer affected by the obstruction and is not closer to the hole.

- a. Your ball is in a sensitive area, such as new grass, a young tree, flowers, etc.
- b. Your ball is in an area under repair
- c. Your ball or stance is in casual water or excess water is where there is normally no water
- d. Your swing or stance is obstructed by man-made objects, such as cart paths, trash cans, fences, sprinklers, drains, etc. This does not apply to man-made fences or walls that mark the boundary of the course.

If your ball lands in a divot on the fairway only, NIHGA amended rules permit you to move your ball up to six inches and no closer to the hole without penalty.

One-Stroke Penalty

You incur a one-stroke penalty if:

- a. Your ball is lost or unplayable in a yellow or red penalty area. Drop within 2 club lengths from where the ball crossed into the penalty area but no closer to the hole. Alternatively, you may drop as far back as you would like on a straight line with the flagstick and where your ball came to rest.
- b. You deem your ball to be unplayable. Drop within 2 club lengths of where the ball rests. Alternatively, you may drop as far back as you would like on a straight line with the flagstick and where your ball came to rest. If your ball is unplayable in a bunker, the

one-stroke penalty applies **only if you drop within the bunker**. If you drop outside the bunker, it is a two-stroke penalty.

- c. Your ball is lost outside of a penalty area or out-of-bounds, **and you elected to play a provisional ball** from the original location before you proceeded to look for your ball. You must play your provisional ball and take one penalty stroke.

Two-Stroke Penalty

You incur a two-stroke penalty if:

- a. Your ball is lost outside of a penalty area or out-of-bounds, and you have **not played a provisional ball**. Drop a ball in the area anywhere between where your ball is presumed to be lost or crossed the boundary and 2 club lengths into the fairway from the edge nearest the ball and no closer to the hole.
- b. You hit some else's ball. Replace the ball with one of your own before you tee off on the next hole.
- c. You putt your ball while it is on the green and it strikes another player's ball on the green. Your ball is played from where it lies. The other player's ball is moved back to its original position. The other player does not take a penalty stroke.