

2019 Major Changes to Rules of Golf

New USGA Rules of Golf take effect on January 1, 2019. There are many substantive changes and the entire Rules book has been reorganized. There are now 24 Rules in place of the current 33, and many rules now use illustrations to explain what must be done.

You need to become familiar with these new Rules as they define how the game is played and you are expected to recognize when you have breached a Rule and are subject to a penalty. Rules 1.2 & 1.3.

There is abbreviated “Player’s Edition of the Rules” that eliminates various rules and information used to administer golf competitions. Copies of the Player’s Edition are available in the Golf Shop or from the USGA. Both the Player’s Edition and the Full Rules and Rules Interpretations are available on the USGA web site (under Playing). You can also access the Rules via Android and iOS mobile apps available from the usual Google/Apple sources.

The USGA web site also includes many helpful resources, including very short videos, assist you in learning about the new rules. See, for example, <http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/major-changes.html>

There also are some videos on Youtube.com, including this 9-minute video on the 20 most important changes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chPOtfLUHC0&feature=youtu.be>

To help get you up to speed, the following is a guide to the major changes in the new Rules:

A. Areas of Course

Parts of the golf course have been renamed as follows:

General Area: All areas of the course **except** (1) the *teeing area* you must play from in starting the hole you are playing, (2) all *penalty areas*, (3) all *bunkers*, and (4) the *putting green* of the hole you are playing. Rule 2.2 and Definitions.

Penalty Area: **Red** staked or lined areas from which relief with a one-stroke penalty is allowed if your ball comes to rest there. Penalty areas are no longer limited to water hazards and may include areas previously marked as out of bounds or desert areas. Relief is under Rule 17. See Rule 17 and Definitions. (Note – The Rules provide for yellow staked penalty areas, but the SaddleBrooke One Golf Committee has decided to eliminate those in favor of red staked relief areas.)

No Play Zone: Part of the course from which play is prohibited. Rule 2.4 and Definitions. Relief from no play zones may be without penalty or with a one stroke penalty, depending on how the no play zone is marked. No play zones are usually marked by **blue** stakes or lines. If the stakes are entirely blue, or **blue with a green top**, relief is **without penalty** under Rule 16.1a & 16.1b. If the stakes are **red** with a **green top**, relief is under Rule 17.1d or 17.2, with a **one stroke penalty**.

Relief Area: The area where you must drop a ball when taking relief under a Rule. The size of this relief area is always based on a “Reference Point,” such as where the ball last crossed the edge of a penalty area or went out of bounds.

B. New Option for Ball Lost or Out of Bounds--By Local Rule

When your ball is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds or is lost anywhere other than in a penalty area, you may proceed under this Local Rule in place of stroke-and-distance relief. But you cannot use this rule if a provisional ball has been played.

For **two** penalty strokes, you may take relief by dropping a ball in a relief area no closer to the hole than (A) where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest on the course or gone out of bounds and (B) the **nearest edge of the fairway** which is no closer to the hole than A, as shown below:

GOLF'S NEW RULES: STROKE AND DISTANCE

A new Local Rule will provide an alternative to stroke-and-distance relief for a ball that is lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds. This new Local Rule will be available beginning January 1, 2019.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS

LOST BALL

If the Local Rule is in effect, you can still take stroke-and-distance relief, but you will now have the following additional option that comes with a penalty of two strokes:

A

DETERMINE SPOT where your ball went out of bounds (left diagram) or is likely to be lost (right diagram).

B

FIND NEAREST FAIRWAY EDGE no closer to the hole.

C

DROP YOUR BALL IN SHADED AREA as defined on one side by a line from the hole through point A and on the other side by a line from the hole through point B, and not nearer the hole. The relief area is extended on both sides by two club-lengths.

This Local Rule is not intended for higher levels of play, such as professional or elite amateur level competitions.

The width of the relief area is defined by lines from the hole through points A and B plus two club-lengths outside those lines (e.g., an additional two club-lengths into

the fairway.) Three additional diagrams, including one for a ball lost or out of bounds around a green, are on pages 9-11 at the end of this document.

C. Pace of Play

Rule 5.6 expressly states that golf should be played at a prompt pace. Specifically:

- It is recommended that you make a stroke in no more than 40 seconds (and usually in less time) after you are (or should be) able to play without interference or distraction.
- In stroke play, play “ready golf” in a safe and responsible way (i.e., you may play out of turn if it is safe to do so.)
- In match play, you and your opponent may agree that one of you will play out of turn to save time.
- If you unreasonably delay play, you may be assessed penalty strokes, or ultimately be disqualified. Rule 5.6a

D. Reasonable Judgement

When you need to make an estimate, your “reasonable” judgement will be accepted. Rule 1.3. Examples include where your ball crossed the edge of a penalty area, where to replace your ball, when taking relief, or the location of your knee when dropping a ball.

E. Time to Search for a Ball

The maximum time allowed to search for a lost ball is **three minutes** after you begin to search for it. After that is deemed lost. Rule 18.2a

F. Procedures for Taking Relief

1. The one or two club length *relief area* for dropping a ball is measured using the ***longest club in your bag*** other than a putter. See Definition of Club-Length.
2. The ball must be dropped from ***knee height when standing***. Rule 14.3b
3. The ball must be dropped in the *relief area* (Rule 14.3b) and come to rest in the *relief area* (Rule 14.3c).
4. When taking relief (free relief or under penalty) you may ***substitute a ball*** (or use the original ball). Rule 14.3a and Rules 15-19. Note--If your ball must be ***replaced*** after it was lifted or moved, you must use the original ball unless there is an exception under Rule 14.2a.
5. Any ball that is *virtually certain* to have come to rest in a No Play Zone cannot be played as it lies and is to be played under Rule 16.1. See Rule 16.1e and Local Rules.

G. Penalty Areas (Rule 17)

1. If your ball has not been found and it is known or *virtually certain* that it came to rest in a penalty area, you do not have to take stroke-and-distance relief (and return to where the previous stroke was taken). Rule 17.1c.
2. If you decide to play your ball from the penalty area, you will be allowed to (a) touch or move loose impediments and (b) touch the ground with a hand or a 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 Rule 8.1a).
3. There is no penalty if you make a stroke at a ball moving in water. Rule 10.1d, exception 3.
4. Relief options for a ball in a **red** staked penalty area are generally the same as under the previous rules except the opposite side relief option has been eliminated under new Rule 17. Your three options for a ball in a **red** staked penalty area are:
 - Take lateral relief within two club lengths of the estimated reference point where the ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area, but not nearer the hole than the reference point.
 - Take back-on-the-line relief using the hole and the point where the ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area.
 - Take stroke-and-distance relief by returning to the place where you hit the previous shot.

Rule 17.1d Diagram # 2, reproduced below:



5. Note--When your ball is in a penalty area, there is no relief for interference by an abnormal ground condition (Rule 16.1), an embedded ball (Rule 16.3) or an unplayable ball (Rule 17). Your only relief option is under Rule 17. Rule 17.3.

H. **Bunkers** (Rule 12)

- 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.
- Actions you are allowed to do in a bunker, such as (a) smoothing the bunker to care for the course, (b) placing your clubs or equipment in the bunker, and (c) leaning on a club to rest, stay balanced, or prevent a fall, are listed in Rule 12.2b.

3. If your ball in a bunker is unplayable, there is an additional relief option to take back-on-the-line relief outside the bunker for two penalty strokes. Rule 19.3, option 4.

I. Ball at Rest Moved

1. There is no penalty if a ball is accidentally moved while trying to find or identify it. If this happens, ball must be replaced in original spot (or estimated spot if original spot not known). Rule 7.4
2. There is no penalty if a ball begins to move only after you begin the backswing for a stroke. Rule 10.1d, exception 1.
3. On the putting green, there is no penalty if a ball or ball marker is accidentally moved. The ball must be replaced on the original spot (or estimated one if original spot not known). Rule 13.1d.
3. On the putting green, if natural forces cause your ball to move, the ball must be replaced if you have ***already lifted and replaced*** the ball. If the ball has not been lifted and replaced, the ball must be played from its new spot. Rule 13.1d.
4. There is a new standard for determining whether a ball at rest moved -- A player, opponent or outside influence will be treated as having caused the ball to move only if it was ***known or virtually certain*** to be the case; otherwise it will be assumed that natural forces caused it to move. Rule 9.2
5. When replacing a ball on its original spot, that spot may be estimated if the original spot is unknown. Rule 14.2c

J. Ball in Motion

1. There is no penalty if, when making a stroke, your club accidentally hits the ball more than once. Rule 10.1a
2. There is no penalty if your ball in motion *accidentally* hits any person or *outside influence* (defined term). Rule 11.1a. If this happens, the ball must be played as it lies, except:
 - a. When your ball played from anywhere except the putting green comes to rest on any person, animal, or moving outside influence.
 - b. When your ball played from the putting green accidentally hits any person, animal, or moving obstruction (including another ball on motion) on the putting green. Rule 11.1b.
2. If a ball in motion has been deliberately deflected or stopped by a player or it hits equipment that has been deliberately positioned, there is normally a penalty and the ball must not be played as it lies. Rule 11.2

3. When a ball is in motion, you must not deliberately alter physical conditions or lift or move a loose impediment or movable obstruction to affect where the ball might come to rest. Except, you may move a removed flagstick, a ball at rest on the putting green, or another player's equipment (other than a ball at rest anywhere except the putting green or a ball-marker anywhere on the course.) Rule 11.3

K. The Putting Green (Rule 13)

1. There is no penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits a flagstick left in the hole. Rule 13.2a. If your ball comes to rest against a flagstick left in the hole, and any part of your ball is in the hole below the surface of the putting green, your ball is treated as holed. Rule 13.2c.
2. There is no penalty for merely touching the line of play on the putting green. See Rule 13.
3. Under Rule 13.1c, you can now repair any damage on the putting green, including shoe damage and spike marks, except damage due to:
 - Normal maintenance practices such as aeration holes and grooves from vertical mowing,
 - Natural surface imperfections such as weeds, diseased or bare areas or areas of uneven growth,
 - Irrigation, rain, or natural forces, or
 - Natural wear of the hole.
4. You may not set down an object, such as a club, on or off the putting green to show your line of play on the green. Rule 10.2b
5. As noted above, on the putting green:
 - There is no penalty if a ball or ball marker is accidentally moved. The ball must be replaced on original spot (or estimated one if original spot not known. Rule 13.1d.
 - If natural forces cause your ball to move, the ball must be replaced if you have ***already lifted and replaced*** the ball. If the ball has not been lifted and replaced, the ball must be played from its new spot. Rule 13.1d.

L. Embedded Ball

You may take relief without penalty for a ball **embedded** in its own pitch mark ***anywhere*** in the **General Area** except if (a) it is embedded in sand in a part of the General Area that is not cut to fairway height or less, or (b) when interference makes your stroke clearly unreasonable (e.g., when a bush or tree makes a stroke unreasonable). Rule 16.3a.

M. Equipment

1. A player is allowed to keep using and/or to repair any club damaged during the round, no matter what the damage and even if the player damaged it in anger. Rule 4.1a.
2. A player is not allowed to replace a damaged club, except when it is damaged during the round by an outside influence or natural forces or by someone other than the player or his or her caddie. Full Rule 4.1b.
3. Distance measuring devices are now allowed unless there is a Local Rule prohibiting their use. Rule 4.3 in the Full Rules. There is no such Local Rule at SaddleBrooke.

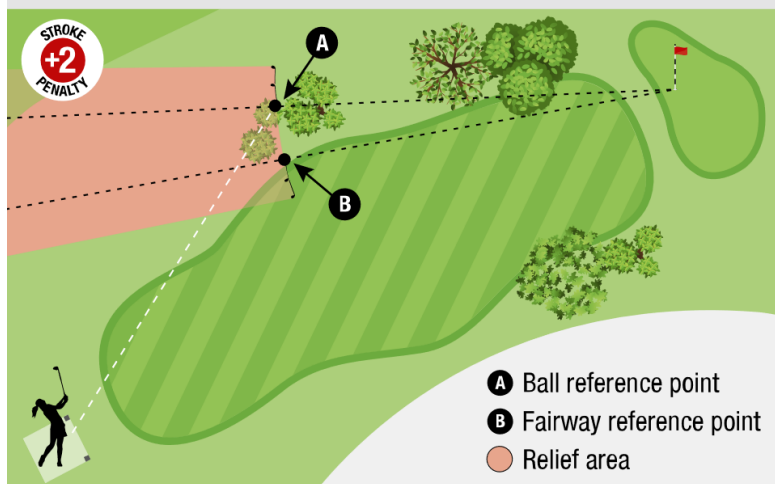
N. Misc.

1. If you need to lift your ball to identify it, you no longer need to announce your intention to another person or give that person a chance to observe that process. See Rules 4.2c, 7.3, and 16.4.
2. If your ball ends up on the wrong putting green, your feet must now be off the green before you determine your relief area. See Rule 13.1f, diagram.

Local Rule Ball Lost or Out of Bounds

Ball Not Found

MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 1: BALL NOT FOUND



When a player's ball has not been found, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief, or when Model Local Rule E-5 is introduced, the player has the additional option to drop a ball in and play from the relief area described below for two penalty strokes:

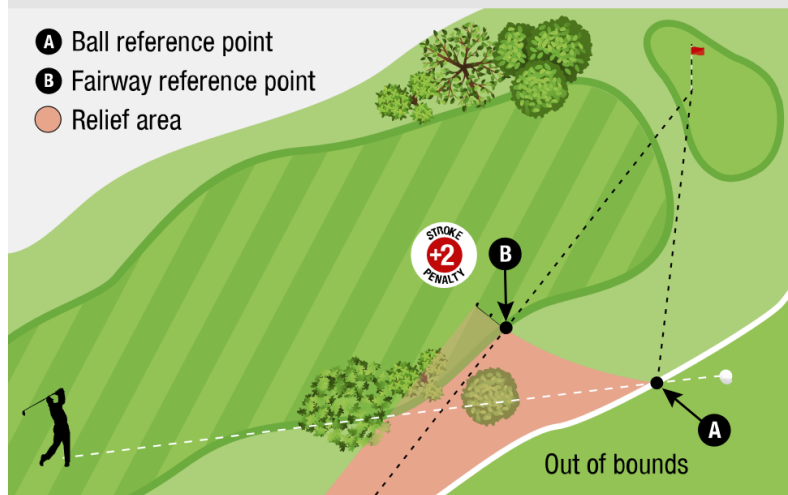
Reference Points	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
<p>A. Ball Reference Point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest on the course (point A)</p> <p>B. Fairway Reference Point: The point of fairway of the hole being played (point B) that is nearest to the ball reference point, but is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point</p>	<p>Anywhere between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A line from the hole through the ball reference point (point A) (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line), and A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (point B) (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line) 	<p>The relief area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point, and Must be in the general area

Player Notes:

As the relief area is likely to be very large, the ball could roll a considerable distance from the spot where it first strikes the ground and not need to be dropped again.

Ball Out of Bounds

MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 2: BALL OUT OF BOUNDS



When a player's ball is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief, or when Model Local Rule E-5 is introduced, the player has the additional option to drop a ball in and play from the relief area described below for two penalty strokes:

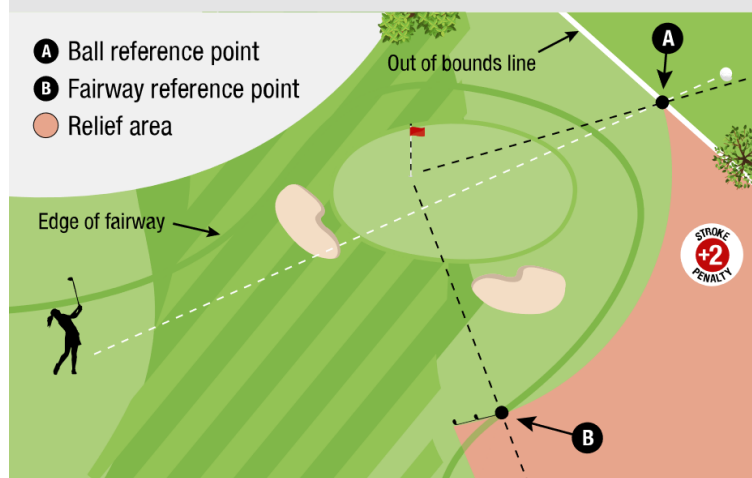
Reference Point	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
A. Ball Reference Point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have last crossed the edge of the course boundary to go out of bounds (point A)	Anywhere between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A line from the hole through the ball reference point (point A) (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line but still on the course), and • A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (point B) (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line) 	The relief area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point, and • Must be in the general area
B. Fairway Reference Point: The point of fairway of the hole being played (point B) that is nearest to the ball reference point, but is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point		

Player Notes:

As the relief area is likely to be very large, the ball could roll a considerable distance from the spot where it first strikes the ground and not need to be dropped again.

Ball Lost or Out of Bounds Close to Green

MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 3: BALL NOT FOUND OR OUT OF BOUNDS CLOSE TO GREEN



When a player's ball has not been found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player may take stroke-and-distance relief, or when Model Local Rule E-5 is introduced, the player has the additional option to drop a ball in and play from the relief area described below for two penalty strokes:

Reference Points	Size of Relief Area	Limits on Relief Area
<p>A. Ball Reference Point: The point where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest on the course or last crossed the edge of the course boundary to go out of bounds (point A)</p> <p>B. Fairway Reference Point: The point of fairway of the hole being played (point B) that is nearest to the ball reference point, but is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point</p>	<p>Anywhere between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A line from the hole through the ball reference point (point A) (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line), and A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (point B) (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line) 	<p>The relief area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point, and Must be in the general area

Player Notes:

As the relief area is likely to be very large, the ball could roll a considerable distance from the spot where it first strikes the ground and not need to be dropped again.