

A General Summary of Hazards, Out of Bounds, Lost Ball, Provisional Ball, and Unplayable Lies

These are just a summary, copied from the "Easy Way to Learn Golf Rules" and various websites. There are many more rules of golf and details outlined by the USGA. Please refer to the USGA Official Rules of Golf for those.

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Page 1 of 2

A hazard is any bunker or water hazard.

Water hazards - Any body of water or ditch (even if there is no water in it) marked by **yellow lines or stakes**. Everything within those boundaries is the hazard. A ball is in a water hazard when it lies in or any part of it touches the water hazard. (#6, #7, #10, #16, #18)

1. Play another ball from the same place you played the first one, count both strokes, and take a one-stroke penalty. If your first ball was played from the tee, you may tee the second ball.
2. You may play it as it lies, remembering that you cannot ground your club in a hazard. No penalty stroke is added.
3. Drop a ball behind the hazard, keeping the spot where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped, taking a one-stroke penalty. You may drop as far back as you want.

A lateral water hazard - is one that generally runs parallel to the hole and is marked by **red lines or stakes**. (#1, #5, #8, #10, #11, #12, #14, #16)

1. You may play it as a water hazard, meaning you may choose any of the 3 options outlined above.
2. You may drop a ball within 2 club lengths of the point where the ball last crossed the hazard margin (or a point on the opposite margin equidistant from the hole), but not closer to the hole, taking a one-stroke penalty.
3. You may drop a ball within 2 club lengths of the point on the opposite side of the hazard equidistant from the hole where the ball last crossed the hazard margin, but not closer to the hole, taking a one-stroke penalty.

Bunker - The basic rule is, as in a water hazard, you can't touch the sand with your club before you make the stroke. You also may not remove any debris, such as sticks or leaves.

OUT OF BOUNDS

Out of bounds areas are usually defined by white stakes, sometimes by a line on the ground and sometimes by a fence or wall. The entire ball must lie out of bounds. If any part of it is in bounds, you can play it if possible. The player is the sole judge of whether it is out of bounds. Remember, this is a game of honor. You cannot, however, remove the stakes, dismantle the fence or remove the wall even if it interferes with your swing. You can stand out of bounds to play a ball that is in bounds. If your ball goes out of bounds, you must count the stroke and replay the shot, adding a penalty stroke. This is called the stroke and distance penalty. You count the stroke, you lose the distance and add another stroke. In other words, go back to where you hit the original shot and do it again. In the case of a drive, you're now hitting your third shot from the tee.

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Page 2 of 2

LOST BALL

If you hit your ball into rough, bushes, trees or other area and aren't sure where it is, you have no more than five minutes to look for it. If you can't find it within that time, the ball is lost and you have to replay. The rule is the same as for a shot out of bounds, count the stroke, return to the original spot, add a penalty stroke and hit it again.

PROVISIONAL BALL

If you think your ball may be lost or out of bounds, you're allowed to hit a provisional ball to save you the time and effort of returning back to the original spot to hit another. If your first ball is indeed out of bounds or can't be found, play the provisional. If your first ball is found and in play, pick up the provisional ball. When you hit a provisional ball, announce your intentions: "I'm going to hit a provisional ball." If you're in a tournament and you don't do it that way, the provisional ball becomes the one in play even if you find your first ball.

UNPLAYABLE LIE

If your ball lands in a place that you cannot hit from, such as lodged against a tree or under a bush, you have three options: (remember the player becomes the sole judge of whether a ball is unplayable)

1. You can drop within two club-lengths of the spot where the ball lay, no closer to the hole, which is the most commonly used and best option if you can get adequate relief from your predicament. Add a one-stroke penalty.
2. You can proceed under the same rule as for a ball that is lost or out of bounds, returning to the original spot and replaying. Add a one-stroke penalty.
3. You can drop as far back as you want from the point where your ball lay, keeping that point between you and the hole. Add a one-stroke penalty.