

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

17. Procedure for Dropping and Playing a Ball from a Relief Area

Current Rule: When taking relief (with or without penalty) under many of the Rules, the player is required to use this dropping procedure:

- The player must drop the ball while standing erect and holding the ball at shoulder height and arm's length; or else it must be re-dropped (Rule 20-2a).
- The ball must first strike the course in a specified place and must not strike any person or equipment before coming to rest; or else it must be re-dropped (Rule 20-2b).
- The ball is then to be played from where it comes to rest, **except** that if it ends up in any of 9 specific locations (such as nearer to the hole or more than 2 club-lengths from where it struck the course), it must be re-dropped (Rule 20-2c).
- If the ball comes to rest in any of those 9 locations when dropped a second time, the player must place the ball where it first struck the course on the second drop.

2019 Rule: Players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways as detailed in Rule 14.3:

- How a ball may be dropped is simplified; the only requirement will be that the ball be let go from knee height so that it falls through the air and does not touch any part of the player's body or equipment before it hits the ground.
- The focus of the dropping procedure will be on a specific "relief area" set by the Rule under which relief is being taken and will be either one or two club-lengths from a reference point (and may have certain other limitations).
- The ball will need only to be dropped in and come to rest in the relief area; and there will be no re-drop requirement if the dropped ball accidentally hits a person or object after hitting the ground but before coming to rest in the relief area.
- If the dropped ball comes to rest outside the relief area, it will be dropped a second time; if it comes to rest outside the relief area after being dropped a second time it will be placed where it first touched the ground.
- If the placed ball will not come to rest on that spot after two attempts, the player will then place the ball on the nearest spot (not nearer the hole) where it will come to rest.

Reasons for Change:

- The new procedure lowers the height from which the ball is dropped to increase the chance that it stays within the relief area.
- Requiring the player to drop a ball (as opposed to placing it) will retain a desired randomness about where the ball will end up:
 - The player has no guarantee that the ball will come to rest on a desired spot or in a good lie.
 - This is especially the case when a ball is dropped in more difficult conditions such as thick rough or longer grass.

- The new procedure avoids giving players more relief than necessary:
 - A dropped ball is currently allowed to roll up to two club-lengths from where it hits the ground – so that, for example, it can end up being played up to three club-lengths from the nearest point of relief from a cart path or ground under repair, or up to four club-lengths from where the original ball went into a lateral water hazard or where it was unplayable.

Requiring the dropped ball to come to rest in and be played from the same relief area where it was dropped will make it much more likely that the ball will be played from close to where it originally came to rest.
- Allowing the player to drop a ball from knee height will help to limit the extent to which a ball will embed in sand in a bunker.
- The new procedure will mean there will be greater consistency across all relief procedures, making it simpler for players to know where and how to drop a ball:
 - For example, many times today a player is required to drop a ball as near as possible to a certain spot (such as where the previous stroke was made or where a ball was embedded) and questions can arise about whether it was dropped near enough to that spot.
 - The new procedure when dropping with reference to a spot will be to drop a ball anywhere in a relief area measured one or two club-lengths from (but not nearer the hole than) that spot.
- It will be simpler for players to know when to re-drop a ball:
 - A player currently needs to know the nine re-dropping scenarios in Rule 20-2c; these are difficult to understand and apply and this is a widely misunderstood Rule.
 - Under the new Rule, the player will only need to know that the ball must be re-dropped if it comes to rest outside the relief area.

Explanation for Rule Change in 2019

13. Fixed Distances Used for Measuring

Current Rule: Club-lengths are used to measure the limits of many areas under the Rules:

- There is no fixed definition of a club-length, therefore when measuring a player may choose any club in his or her bag to measure a club-length.
- Players with long putters can drop in areas other players cannot reach.

2019 Rule: A club-length will be defined as the length of the longest club in the player's bag, except that this cannot be his or her putter.

- The relief area for dropping a ball will be a fixed size of either one or two club-lengths depending on which relief Rule is being used.
- The relief area is a fixed size for each player and is pre-determined based on the clubs the player has selected for play.

Reasons for Change:

- The definition of a club-length as the longest club other than a putter will mean that a player cannot choose which club to measure with based on the situation.
- For example, players will no longer be able to make a strategic choice about the size of the relief area by choosing a longer club so that the player can reach a location that is farther from the nearest point of relief or other reference point.
- Using the longest club for measuring will minimize the inconsistency in the size of a relief area between players (including eliminating the advantage for players who currently can use a long putter for measuring).