

## RULE 16

### Rule 16 – Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions), Dangerous Animal Situations, Embedded Ball

#### Purpose of Rule 16:

**Rule 16** covers when and how you may take free relief from interference by **abnormal course conditions** and **dangerous animal situations**.

- ▶ Because such conditions and situations are not considered part of your challenge in playing the game, you are normally allowed relief without penalty when they interfere with your ball that lies anywhere on the course except in a **penalty area**.
- ▶ You normally take relief by **dropping** your ball in and playing it from a **relief area** based on the **nearest point of complete relief**, so that you are completely free of the interference.

The Rule also allows you to take free relief when your ball is **embedded** in its own pitch mark in the general area.

#### 16.1 Abnormal Course Conditions (Including Immovable Obstructions)

This Rule covers relief from interference by *animal holes*, *ground under repair*, *immovable obstructions* or *temporary water*.

These are collectively called abnormal course conditions, but each of these terms has a separate Definition.

##### a. When You May Take Relief

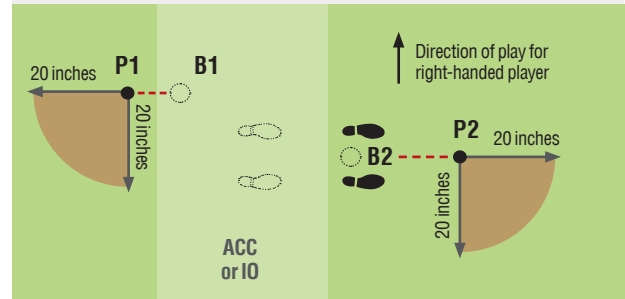
#### Meaning of Interference by Abnormal Course Condition.

Interference exists when:

- ▶ Your ball touches or lies in or on an *abnormal course condition*, or
- ▶ An *abnormal course condition* interferes with your area of intended *stance* or area of intended swing, or
- ▶ Only when your ball is on the *putting green*, an *abnormal course condition* on or off the *putting green* intervenes on your *line of play*.

When your ball is off the *putting green*, intervention on your *line of play* is not interference under this Rule.

**FIGURE 16.1a: RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITIONS (INCLUDING IMMOVABLE OBSTRUCTIONS)**



Relief is allowed for interference by an abnormal course condition (ACC), including an immovable obstruction (IO), when your ball touches or lies in or on the condition (B1), or the condition interferes with your area of intended stance or swing (B2). For a right-handed player, the nearest point of complete relief for B1 is very close to the condition (P1). For B2, it is farther from the condition to accommodate the stance (P2).

**You May Take Relief Anywhere on Course Except Penalty Area.**

You are allowed to take relief from interference by an *abnormal course condition* under this Rule only when both:

- › The *abnormal course condition* is on the *course*, and
- › Your ball lies anywhere on the *course*, except in a *penalty area*.

**No Relief Where Clearly Unreasonable to Play Your Ball.** There is no relief under this Rule:

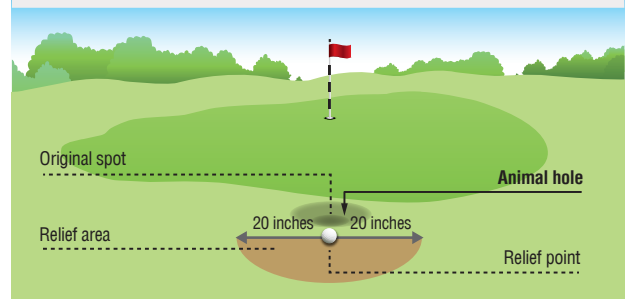
- › When playing your ball as it lies would be clearly unreasonable for a reason other than the interference (which could be the case, for example, when your ball is at rest in a bush and you are unable to make a *stroke* because of the bush), or
- › When interference exists only because you choose a club, type of *stance* or swing or direction of play that is clearly unreasonable under the circumstances.

**b. Relief for Your Ball in General Area**

If your ball is in the *general area* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, **without penalty** you may *drop* your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and play it from this *relief area*:

- › **Reference Point:** The *nearest point of complete relief* in the *general area*.
- › **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **but** with these limits:
- › **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - Must be in the *general area*,
  - Must not be nearer the *hole* than the reference point, and
  - You must have complete relief from all interference by the *abnormal course condition*.

**FIGURE 16.1b: RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN GENERAL AREA**



When your ball lies in the general area and there is interference by an ACC, you can take relief **without penalty**. You should identify the nearest point of complete relief and then must drop a ball and play it from within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) of that point. The relief area must be in the general area, not nearer the hole, and provide complete relief from the interference.

**c. Relief for Your Ball in Bunker**

If your ball is in a *bunker* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, you may take relief **without penalty** or **with penalty**:

**Relief Without Penalty: Playing from Bunker.** You may take relief **without penalty** under Rule 16.1b, **except** that the *nearest point of complete relief* and the *relief area* must be in the *bunker*.

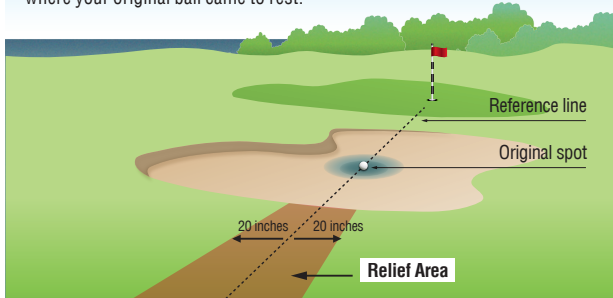
If you have no such *nearest point of complete relief* in the *bunker*, you may still take this relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* in the *bunker* as the reference point for the *relief area*.

**Relief With Penalty: Playing from Behind Bunker Using Back-On-A-Line Relief Procedure.** For **one penalty stroke**, you may drop your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and play it from this *relief area* behind the *bunker*:

- › **Reference Line for Relief Area:** Line from the *hole* through the spot where your original ball came to rest.
- › **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Line:** The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) on either side of the reference line, **but** with these limits:
- › **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - May be in any *area of the course*,

**FIGURE 16.1c: RELIEF WITH PENALTY FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION IN BUNKER**

For **one penalty stroke**, you may drop your original ball that was in the bunker, or a substituted ball, and play it from a relief area behind the bunker. Your Reference Line runs from the hole through the spot in the bunker where your original ball came to rest.



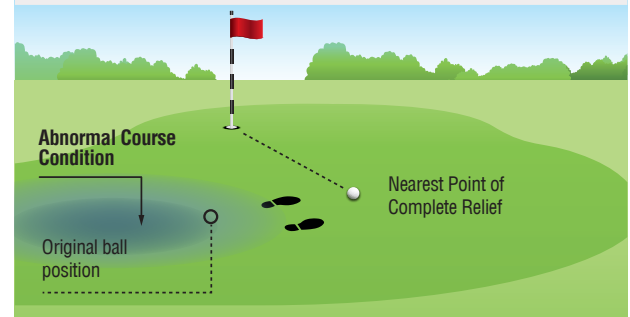
You may drop the ball within the relief area that is 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) on either side of the reference line. The only exception is that you may not drop the ball in the bunker where it came to rest. There is no limit to how far back you may go to drop the ball.

- Must be behind the *bunker* where the ball came to rest, and
- No limit to how far back you may drop the ball.

#### **d. Relief for Your Ball on Putting Green**

If your ball is on the *putting green* and there is interference by an *abnormal course condition* on the *course*, you may take relief **without penalty** by placing your original ball or a *substituted ball* on the spot of the *nearest point of complete relief*.

**FIGURE 16.1d: RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION ON PUTTING GREEN**



When your ball is on the putting green and there is interference by an ACC, **without penalty** you may place a ball on the spot of the nearest point of complete relief. That point must be either on the putting green or in the general area.

If it is impossible to take complete relief, you may still take relief **without penalty** by placing your ball at the point of maximum available relief either on the putting green or in the general area.

- › The *nearest point of complete relief* must be either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.
- › If you have no such *nearest point of complete relief*, you may still take this relief by using the *point of maximum available relief* that is either on the *putting green* or in the *general area*.

#### e. Relief for Your Ball in Abnormal Course Condition But not Found

If your ball has not been found but is *known* or *virtually certain* to have come to rest in an *abnormal course condition*:

- › You may take relief using the estimated point where your ball last crossed the edge of the *abnormal course condition* as the spot of the ball for purposes of finding the *nearest point of complete relief*.
- › **But** if it is not *known* or *virtually certain* that your ball came to rest in an *abnormal course condition*, you must play under penalty of *stroke and distance*.

#### f. You Must Take Relief from Interference by No Play Zone in Abnormal Course Condition

**When Your Ball Lies in No Play Zone in Abnormal Course Condition.** You must not play your ball as it lies. You must take relief as provided above.

**No Play Zone Interferes with Your Stance or Swing.** If your ball lies outside a *no play zone*, but a *no play zone* in an *abnormal course condition* or anything growing in it interferes with your area of intended *stance* or swing, you must not play your ball as it lies.

Instead, you must take relief in one of two ways:

- › As provided above in this Rule, or
- › You may take unplayable ball relief.

**PENALTY FOR MAKING STROKE IN BREACH OF RULE 16.1f:** You have played from a *wrong place* and get the *general penalty* for breach of Rule 14.7.

## 16.2 Dangerous Animal Situation

For an explanation on when a “dangerous *animal* situation” exists and how to take relief - [see full Rules](#).

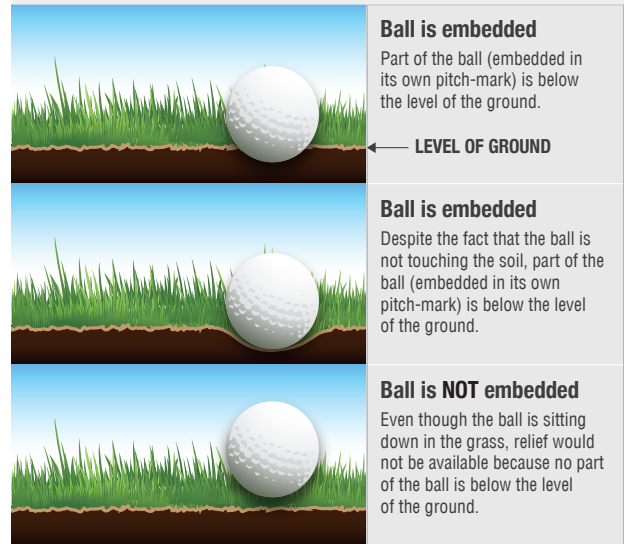
## 16.3 Embedded Ball

### a. When You May Take Relief

#### Meaning of Embedded.

- › Your ball is “*embedded*” when it is in its own pitch-mark made after your *stroke* and part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

FIGURE 16.3a: WHEN A BALL IS EMBEDDED



- › Your ball does not necessarily have to touch the soil to be *embedded* (for example, grass and *loose impediments* may be between the ball and the soil).

**Your Ball Must Be Embedded in General Area.** You are allowed relief only when your ball is *embedded* in the *general area*.

- › If your ball is *embedded* anywhere other than the *general area*, you are not entitled to relief under this Rule.
- › **But** if your ball is *embedded* on the *putting green*, you may *mark*, lift and clean the ball, repair the damage caused by its impact, and *replace* the ball on the *marked spot* (see Rule 13.1b).

#### b. How You Take Relief for Embedded Ball

If your ball is *embedded* in the *general area*, you may take relief **without penalty** by dropping your original ball or a *substituted ball* in and playing it from this *relief area*:

- › **Reference Point:** Spot right behind where your ball is *embedded*.
- › **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** The entire area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) from the reference point, **but** with these limits:
- › **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
  - Must be in the *general area*, and
  - Not nearer the *hole* than the reference point.

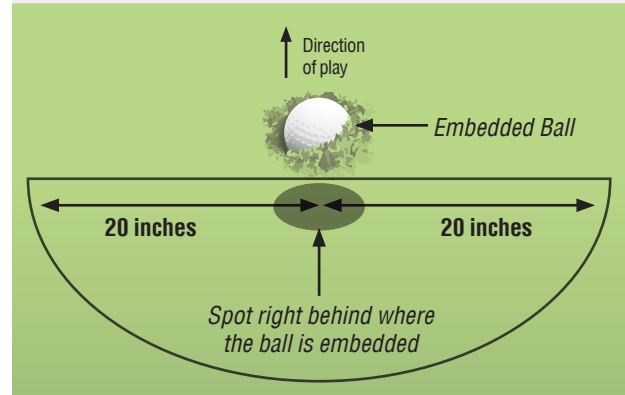
**Exceptions – Relief Not Allowed for Your Ball Embedded in General Area in Two Situations:**

- › Your ball is *embedded* in sand in a part of the *general area* that is not cut to fairway height or less, or
- › Interference by anything other than the ball being *embedded* makes your *stroke* clearly unreasonable (which could be the case, for example, when your ball is *embedded* below a

bush and you would be unable to make a *stroke* because of the bush).

**PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 16.1a-e, 16.2, 16.3:**  
**General Penalty.**

FIGURE 16.3b: RELIEF FOR EMBEDDED BALL



When your ball is embedded in the general area, you may take relief without penalty using a Reference Point directly behind where your ball is embedded. You must drop a ball in and play from a relief area within 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) of that Reference Point that is in the general area and is not nearer the hole.

#### 16.4 Lifting Ball to See If It Lies in Condition Where Relief Allowed

For an explanation on what to do when you reasonably believe your ball lies in a condition where you are entitled to relief under Rules 15 or 16 but cannot decide without lifting it - [see full Rules](#).