

FREE DROPS (version 11 March 2019)

(A DROP WITH NO PENALTY ... UNLESS YOU BREAK THE RULES)

from

ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITIONS, including IMMOVABLE OBSTRUCTIONS and G.U.R., and the RELIEF AREA

Note 1: Free relief drops are in many ways VERY DIFFERENT from the DEEMED UNPLAYABLE BALL RULE: refer to the unplayable ball questionnaire on the Whyalla Golf Club website.

Note 2: The answers are based on the Whyalla Golf Club policies – the WGC local rules - this includes:

- (1) preferred lies placement, within one club-grip length of the ball, on the fairway being played; and
- (2) a preferred lie from bare ground on the fairway being played: procedure - after dropping within one club length of the nearest point of relief on the fairway grass (not nearer the hole), and after the ball has come to rest, then placing the ball within one club-grip length; and
- (3) Compulsory relief from staked trees.
- (4) Ball in core hole mark ... (a) on the green free relief (place ball adjacent to the core hole)
(Note: no relief for holes in line of putt)
... (b) off the green free relief (drop the ball)
(Note: grip length relief applies if on fairway of hole in play after the drop)

Note 3: For “free drops” the 2019 “new” rules books provide clearer explanations for all golfers.

SECTION 1

OBSTRUCTIONS – MARKERS:

HOW TO DETERMINE IF A FREE DROP MAY SOMETIMES BE TAKEN (OR MUST BE TAKEN) FROM AN ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITION, e.g. fairway and distance marker stakes

RELIEF OR NO RELIEF

1. Do you get relief (i.e. the choice of a free drop) when a small white fairway marker peg interferes with your swing? Yes (Rule 16.1a)

(Note: Most of the pegs have now been removed from the fairway edges)

2. Do you get relief (i.e. the choice of a free drop) when a small white fairway marker peg or furrow interferes with your stance? Yes (Rule 16.1a)

3. Do you get relief (i.e. the choice of a free drop) if a distant marker post (e.g. 100 metre yellow marker post, a 150 metre blue marker post, or a 200m white marker post, or an executive course orange marker post) interferes with your stance or swing anywhere on the course? Yes (Rule 16.1a)

(Note: For more details about orange executive marker posts see number 6. Below)

4. If a free drop is available from fairway distant marker pegs at the Whyalla Golf Course do you have to take the free drop?

No, you have a choice. Whyalla GC is a “may drop” from marker pegs course - you have a choice at Whyalla. (Note 1.: On some courses you have no choice and must drop away: read each club’s local rules. Note 2.: See number 6. Below))

5. Do you get relief (i.e. the choice of a free drop) if a distant marker post is just two metres in front of the ball and in your line to the flag or green?

No - Rule 16.1a, *there is no relief for an obstruction in the line of play off the putting green* (Note: Be careful to check when visiting other golf clubs as a few clubs allow the removal of the markers and replacing them after the shot)

6. Do you get relief if an Executive Course orange marker post does not interfere with your stance or swing, i.e. orange post is in line with the ball and the green?

NO BUT the orange posts have been installed to meet health and safety Guidelines – they can be pulled out – play your shot and replace the post (rule 15.2a). The post must be replaced before teeing off on the next hole – penalty disqualification.

7. If your ball is inside the boundary, do you get relief (i.e. the choice of a free drop) if a white boundary peg interferes with your stance or your swing?

NO (Rules of Golf definition “boundary object”)

8. Do you get relief from all man-made trenches, marked or unmarked?

Yes – definition “Ground Under Repair (GUR)”
(Drop within one club length of the nearest point of relief, not closer to the hole.)

SECTION 2

G.U.R. – GROUND UNDER REPAIR

HOW TO DETERMINE IF A FREE DROP MAY BE TAKEN OR MUST BE TAKEN FROM SOME “ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITIONS”, e.g. G.U.R.

SECTION 2A – GUR ON THE PUTTING GREEN - RELIEF OR NO RELIEF

9. If your ball is inside GUR markers on a green (no temporary rules posted at the pro shop) do you HAVE TO take relief?

No. You may play it as it lies inside the GUR or take relief – you have a choice (rule 16.1a(2) – relief is “allowed” but not compulsory).

10. If your ball is inside GUR markers on a putting green may you play it as it lies in the GUR?

Yes (rule 16.1a(2) – if there is not a “no play zone notice” posted on the visible club notice board, you can play from within the GUR on the putting green).

11. If your ball is near the GUR markers, on the green in play, **can any part of your golf shoes** be touching the GUR (inside the GUR) when you play your shot?

Yes, if you have not taken any relief, and the area has not been declared a “no play zone”

(Note: If you have taken relief your heels cannot touch the GUR or the signs or the bunting – rule 16.1d – must take complete relief).

12. If there is a large area of GUR on a part of a green, (e.g. 20% to 50% of the green) are there occasions when there is no point on the green that is nearer to the hole and the player must then play the ball as it lies or place the ball at the nearest point of relief... and this is off the green but wide of the GUR?

Yes. Diagram 16.1d (in the rule book) allows maximum relief from the condition but not nearer the hole ...and this means that the nearest point of relief may be off the green to the side of the GUR. (Note: The ball in this instance is placed even if off the green)

13. Can you move GUR pegs or GUR bunting (coloured flags and ropes) if they interfere with your putting stroke (e.g. the putter back swing)?

Yes, if the pegs, GUR signs or/and bunting can be removed without unreasonable effort, without unduly delaying play and without causing damage – definition “moveable obstruction”. But you could be disqualified if you don’t replace the pegs and bunting after playing the shot and before teeing off at the next hole.

14. On the green, can you move GUR pegs or GUR bunting (coloured flags and ropes) if they interfere with your putting stance?

Yes and No

No If you have taken relief...must take full relief (diagram 16.1d)

Yes if you have not taken relief and there is no specific local rule displayed by the committee forbidding this (definition – “moveable obstruction”).

15. If your ball was in GUR on the green, when the nearest point of relief is on the green, do you drop or place the ball at the nearest point of relief?

Place the ball. (Diagram 16.1d)

16. If your ball was in GUR on the green in play, and the nearest point of relief is off the green, do you drop or place the ball at the nearest point of relief?

Although the relief is off the green, the ball is placed (diagram 16.1d)

SECTION 2B – GUR ON THE “GENERAL AREA” - RELIEF OR NO RELIEF

(General Area is the whole course EXCEPT the tee and green in play, not penalty areas, and not bunkers)

17. If your ball is inside GUR markers (“Abnormal Course Condition”) on the fairway in play, (and there is no compulsory relief notice) do you have to take relief from the GUR (i.e. do you have to drop away)?

No, you may play it as it lies, and you can ground your club if you want: relief is allowed but not compulsory (Rule 16.1a(1)).

18. Can you move GUR pegs or/and GUR bunting (colour flags and ropes) on the course (in “The General Area”) if they interfere with your stance or swing?

Yes ... if you have not taken relief ... but be careful to replace them before you move on or you could be disqualified.

Refer to answer in number 13. above.

19. (1) If your ball is inside GUR markers on any fairway may you take relief (no other temporary rules posted at the pro shop)?

Yes, relief applies to all Abnormal course conditions (this includes GUR) no matter where it is on the course (Rule 16.1b).

(2) If your ball is inside GUR markers in the rough may you take relief (no other temporary rules posted at the pro shop)?

Yes, relief applies to all GUR no matter where it is on the course (Rule 16.1b).

(3) If your ball is inside GUR markers on any fairway may you play it as it lies in the GUR (no other temporary rules posted at the pro shop)?

Yes – it is not compulsory to take relief (rule 16.1a) in this instance.

(Note: If the Committee has labeled it a “No Play Zone” on the club notice board relief is compulsory.)

(4) If your ball is inside GUR markers in the rough anywhere on the course (i.e. the general area) may you play it as it lies in the GUR (no other temporary rules posted at the pro shop)?

Yes (Rule 16.1a) – relief is allowed not compulsory.

(5) Can you ground your club before playing the ball from within the GUR?

Yes, even in penalty areas, the club may touch the ground at address, but not within a bunker (Rule 17.1b).

20. Is there a free drop if growing grass in GUR interferes with your backswing and your ball and stance are outside of the GUR?

Yes - GUR definition includes grass rooted in the area (rule 16.1a(1)).

21. Do you get relief (i.e. a free drop) if GUR pegs or/and bunting are a few metres away in your line of play to the green?

No, there is no free drop BUT the pegs, GUR signs, or/and bunting can be removed with reasonable effort, without undue delay of lay, and without causing damage – definition “moveable obstruction”. But you could be disqualified if you don’t replace the pegs and bunting after playing the shot and before teeing off at the next hole.

22a. Does GUR have to be marked with pegs or/and signs or/and lines or/and bunting?

No. A hole dug on the course, and the dirt dug from it, for work or pipe repairs is GUR whether marked as GUR or not; and the hole and related debris is still GUR if it extends above ground beyond the pegs (GUR definition).

Note: The A5 size Rules of Golf Book better explains this than the player’s edition.

22b. Is a nest of swarming bull ants GUR?

Answer: It is a “Dangerous Animal Condition” (rule16.2) and free relief is allowed.

SECTION 3

TREE BLOWN OVER – STAKED TREE – VEHICLE TRACK

HOW TO DETERMINE IF A FREE DROP IS AVAILABLE – (a) FROM A TREE BLOWN OVER BY THE WIND, (b) NEAR A STAKED TREE, or (c) WHEN A CART TRACK INTERFERES WITH YOUR PLAY.

SECTION 3(a) – TREE BLOWN OVER ON THE FAIRWAY - RELIEF OR NO RELIEF

23a. If your ball has run into the foliage of a tree that has blown over onto the fairway of the hole in play, but there are some roots still in the ground

(1) Do you get a free relief drop?

No ... it is not a loose impediment (see definition of Loose Impediment) it is an attached natural object (rule 8.1a).

(1) You may play the ball as it lies, or

(2) You may declare it unplayable and continue under the unplayable ball rule (with what the locals call a “penalty drop”), or

3) You could request a ruling from the Committee (rule 20.1b(2)) and the Committee would be justified in declaring the area covered by the tree (or trees after a storm) as GUR (rule 20.3) or

(4) You can play 2 balls – one as unplayable and a second ball in equity claiming G.U.R. and then let the Committee decide at the end of your round before submitting your score card (rule 20.1c(3)).

(2) Can you deem the ball as unplayable and play it under any of 3 unplayable ball options?
Yes (rule 19.1)

(3) Can you play 2 balls – one as unplayable and a second ball in equity claiming G.U.R. and then let the committee decide at the end of your round before submitting your scorecard?
Yes (rule 20.1c(3)) (but you cannot do this in match play competitions (rule 20.1b(4)))

23b. If your ball has run into the foliage of a tree that has blown over onto the putting green of the hole in play, (some roots still in the ground) is there relief (e.g. a free placement)?

Yes (equity and rule 16.1d)

23c. If your ball has run into the foliage of a tree, that has blown over on an adjacent fairway to the hole in play, and it interferes with your stance or swing, is there a free drop?

No, it is an attached natural object (rule 8.1a)

Refer to the answer for question '23a'

23d. If your ball has run into the foliage of a tree that has blown over onto another green, NOT the hole in play, is there relief from the tree (e.g. a free placement)?

No. There is no relief from the tree (unless the Committee has made a rule re GUR or temporary obstruction and blown over trees) BUT YOU MUST TAKE a free compulsory drop off the green (Rule 13.1f(1) and 13.1f(2)).

24a. If your ball has run into the foliage of a tree blown over anywhere in “The General Area” (General Area is the whole course EXCEPT the tee and green in play, not penalty areas, and not bunkers) is relief available (e.g. a free drop)?

No relief ...UNLESS the workers have begun to remove it and piled some pieces next to it, or it has been marked or declared as GUR or an abnormal course condition by the Committee.

24b. If your ball has run into the foliage of a large branch that has fallen, and it is disconnected from the tree, anywhere “in the general area” is there a free relief drop?

No free drop, BUT the large loose impediment may be removed ALTERNATIVELY, part of the large loose impediment may be broken off and removed, taking care at all times not to move the ball (Definitions “Loose Impediments”).

On the green only, when moving a loose impediment, even if the ball is moved accidentally there is no penalty but it must be replaced (not dropped) as close as possible to the original spot (rule 13.1d).

SECTION 3(b) – DIRT CAR PATH - RELIEF OR NO RELIEF

25. If your ball is on a made gravel or crusher-dust path (e.g. used by carts and buggies etc) do you have the choice of a free drop?

Yes – Abnormal Course Condition (Definition: obstruction)

26. If your ball is on a dirt car track (e.g. a worn track used by the green keepers) do you have the choice of a free drop?

Yes ... there is a local Whyalla Golf Club rule allowing this for all car paths.

(Note: When playing away, check each club’s “Notice to Competitors” as some or all paths may be defined as obstructions (Local Rule 8F: F-1)

27. If your ball is in an awkward position 30cm above or below your feet due to a worn dirt car or tractor path, do you have the choice of a free drop?

Yes ... there is a local Whyalla GC rule allowing this for all car paths.

(Note: when playing away, check each club’s “Notice to Competitors” as some or all paths may be defined as obstructions)

28. If your ball is near the edge of a worn dirt car or tractor path and the edge of the path interferes with your backswing do you have the choice of a free drop?

Yes – local rule (see 27. above)

SECTION 3(c) – STAKED TREES - RELIEF OR NO RELIEF

29. If your ball is near a staked tree do you get relief if the tree is

(a) Less than 1 metre high?

Yes, provided the tree interferes with your intended swing or stance it is a “no play zone” (rule 16.1f and local rule E-18 and E-10) (Whyalla Golf Club local rules notice board ... there is no height restriction)

(b) Less than 2 club lengths high?

Yes ... there is no height restriction; see answer to 29 (a)

(c) More than two club lengths high?

Yes ... there is no height restriction: see answer 29 (a)

(d) A grown 15 metre high gum tree?

Yes ... there is no height restriction; see answer 29 (a)

30. If the ball is within one club length of a staked tree on the Whyalla course

(a) Do you have to (must) drop away from a staked tree?

Yes, reference is the Whyalla Golf Club 2018-2019 Handbook, it is compulsory to drop away from a staked tree if it interferes with your stance or swing. This means that your follow through, back-swing, stance, or body CANNOT hit or touch the staked tree. (Note: Some away courses, as did Whyalla GC in the past, have local MUST drop policies giving a distance not just interference or touching; at these courses you must drop according to their local rule...the local rule may give a distance, e.g. one club length, or the local rule might say no interference or touching of the staked tree, regardless of how good a position the ball is in. It may mean a compulsory drop even if the intended swing doesn't interfere with the tree at all ...see their local rules.)

(b) May you drop away if the staked tree does not interfere with your swing?

No, not at the Whyalla GC. At the Whyalla GC if the tree or stake do not interfere with you stance or swing you cannot move the ball with free relief. (Note: Refer to the note in the answer to question 30(a).)

(c) Is the nearest point of relief where you could swing without hitting the staked tree or where you could swing without hitting any tree or shrub?

Nearest point of relief is where you could swing (your normal shot to the green) without hitting the staked tree, (and adjacent staked trees).

(Note: You then measure (or estimate) and drop within one club length from that spot – see rules diagram 16.1a and diagram 16.1b)

(d) Is Whyalla Golf Club a “must drop course” when your ball is within 1 metre of a staked tree?

No, you cannot move the ball unless the staked tree will be interfered with or be touched by your swing or stance (The Whyalla Golf Club card states staked trees/shrubs are “immovable obstructions”, hence is an “abnormal course condition” and rule 16 applies; the Whyalla GC Handbook states -MUST TAKE RELIEF from interfering staked trees... see answer to 30(a))

SECTION 4

DETERMINING THE NEAREST POINT OF RELIEF for FREE DROPS

31. For one player, are there 2 nearest points of relief in any situation?

Almost never (and you cannot make out you are left and right handed: see Definition "Nearest Point of Complete Relief")

32. Is the nearest point of relief always the same for left and right handed golfers?

No (The nearest point is relevant to the golfers normal swing and stance and, for left and right handed golfers, this would be on opposite sides of the ball.)

33. How is the nearest point of relief from fairway markers determined?

(a) Is the nearest point of relief the nearest clear bit of ground?

NO (Nearest point of relief is the nearest point on the course which avoids interference-by your swing or stance - from the SPECIFIC "abnormal course" condition, not nearer the hole, but may not be relief from other things e.g. saltbush)

(b) Is the nearest point of relief the place where the ball will give the best line to the hole?

No (refer 33(a))

(c) Is the nearest point of relief the closest place where the club (the club you would use for your next shot if there was no obstruction) would sit on the ground (e.g. golf stance towards the hole) if you take a stance and can swing without interference from the ONE immovable obstruction (e.g. a staked tree or "abnormal course condition").

Yes (Definition "Nearest Point of Complete Relief") (i.e. the place where the ball would have to move the least from its original spot for you to swing while not touching and missing the obstruction)

34. Could the nearest point of relief be

(a) Unluckily in the centre of a large saltbush?

Yes, the relief is from the obstruction not the saltbush. (Note: Hope the saltbush doesn't cover the entire "relief area")

(b) Unluckily in the centre of a giant gum tree?

Yes, the relief is from the obstruction not the tree. (Note: Hope the gum tree doesn't cover the entire "relief area")

35. Would it be wise to leave your ball near the "Abnormal Course Condition" (obstruction) until you have worked out if the nearest point of relief is actually a sensible point of relief?

Yes, because a golfer may be better off to play the ball from where it lies rather than from the middle of some saltbush or tall grass.

36a. What club do you use to determine THE NEAREST POINT OF RELIEF? (a) any club in the bag, (b) the driver, (c) any club you like, or (d) the normal club you would use to hit towards the green if there was no "Abnormal Course Condition" (obstruction)?

The correct answer is (d). (Definition of "Relief Area in the larger rule book) (This may be a 3 wood for a short hitter and a 9 iron for Tiger Woods ... BUT IT IS NOT any club in the bag. (This is different from unplayable ball penalty relief drops, where longest club (not putter) is used.)

36b. What club do you use to determine the dropping zone (“relief area”) for a free relief drop after locating the nearest point of relief? (a) any club in your bag, (b) the driver, (c) the normal club you would use to hit towards the green if there was no obstruction, or (d) the club of your intended shot?

(a) Longest club in the bag (not putter) – diagram 16.1d

37. Once the relief point (nearest point of free relief) is determined how far from that spot (not nearer the hole) **may** the ball be dropped? (a) within 1 club length, (b) within 2 club lengths, (c) within 3 club lengths, or (d) within 4 club lengths?

(a) within 1 club (probably your driver) length of the spot – diagram 16.1a and 16.1b

(Note 1.: In a bunker the relief must be in the bunker – diagram 16.1c.)

(Note 2.: On the green the relief is by placing the ball at the spot)

38. What is the next step after determining the relief point (the nearest point of relief), for a ball lying in ‘the general area’ on the course (not in bunker or penalty area or on the green)?

Which answer is correct (a) or (b)

(a) Drop the ball on the spot, or

(b) Work out (using the longest club as a guide) a semi-circle area where to drop the ball?

The correct answer is (b) -Work out the semi circle (rule 16). If the ground is sloping could use tees for markers, most pros do every time, but the relief area does not have to be marked out with tees or pegs (R &A priority relief area video)

39. Do you have to mark the semi-circle of the dropping area (relief area) before you drop the ball?

No, although marking the extent of the area is recommended it is not mandatory (R &A priority relief area video).

40. If the semi-circle, where the ball is to be dropped is all bush or long grass, can you leave the ball in its original position and play it from where it lies without relief?

Yes...just make sure you have not picked up the ball and there is no local “mandatory relief”. (You do not have to take relief unless there is a local ‘Must-take-relief’ rule for that “abnormal course condition”.)

41. What is the furthest distance the ball can finish from the relief spot after it is dropped (a free drop) in the semi circle? (a) 1 club length, (b) 2 club lengths, (c) 3 club lengths, (d) 4 club lengths, or (e) less than one club length

The correct answer is (e) – less than one club length – ball must finish in the relief area (rule 14.3c).

42. If the ball when dropped in the relief area (club-length semi-circle) rolls back to where the obstruction interferes again with your stance or swing what must you do (free drops only)?

Drop the ball again (re-drop) – ball must finish in the relief area (Rule 14.3c).

43. If the ball when dropped a second time, in the relief area, rolls back to where the obstruction interferes again with your stance or swing what can you do?

(a) Can you drop it a 3rd time?

No (Rule 14.3c)

(b) Can you play it as it lies?

No (Diagram 14.3c)

(c) Do you place it where it dropped the first time?

No (Rule 14.3c – must try a second drop)

(d) Do you place it where it hit the ground when dropped the second time?

Yes (Rule 14.3c)

Acknowledgement Notes

Note 1: These answers are based on the Players Edition of the Rules of Golf 2019, Rules of Golf 2019, and the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf

Note 2: A special thank you to all of the golfers from the Whyalla Golf Club who gave up their time, edited the questionnaire, and have helped with the answers (Harry, Ian, Charlie, Gray, Ged, Diana, the helpers in the Whyalla golf shop, and also the late Mr Barry Rhodes).

Note 3: These answers may change over time, although local rules cannot be contrary to the rules of golf, the committee may make rules in equity to promote "fair and pleasant play". ("Committee Procedures – Section 1 – pp376-378)