

DEFINITIONS - Effective 2016 with ** Notes

The Definitions are listed alphabetically and, in the *Rules* themselves, defined terms are in *italics*.

Abnormal Ground Conditions

An "*abnormal ground condition*" is any *casual water*, *ground under repair* or hole, cast or runway on the *course* made by a *burrowing animal*, a reptile or a bird.

****** *Must be on the course and temporary and abnormal for that course. A hole made by a burrowing animal is not always/only the burrow for habitation.*

****** *A cast is not a loose impediment unless the sand or loose soil is on the putting green.*

Addressing the Ball

A player has "*addressed the ball*" when he has grounded his club immediately in front of or immediately behind the ball, whether or not he has taken his *stance*.

Advice

"*Advice*" is any counsel or suggestion that could influence a player in determining his play, the choice of a club or the method of making a *stroke*.

Information on the *Rules*, distance or matters of public information, such as the position of *hazards* or the *flagstick* on the *putting green*, is not *advice*.

****** *Advice is a comment that "could" influence. Geography/ topography is public information.*

Ball Deemed to Move

See "*Move or Moved*."

Ball Holed

See "*Holed*."

Ball Lost

See "*Lost Ball*."

Ball in Play (Revised)

A ball is "*in play*" as soon as the player has made a *stroke* on the *teeing ground*. It remains *in play* until it is *holed*, except when it is *lost*, *out of bounds* or lifted, or another ball has been *substituted*, whether or not the substitution is permitted; a ball so *substituted* becomes the *ball in play*.

A *ball in play* that has been marked but not lifted remains *in play*. A ball that has been marked, lifted and replaced is back *in play* whether or not the ball-marker has been removed.

If a ball is played from outside the *teeing ground* when the player is starting play of a hole, or when attempting to correct this mistake, the ball is not *in play* and Rule 11-4 or 11-5 applies. Otherwise, *ball in play* includes a ball played from outside the *teeing ground* when the player elects or is required to play his next *stroke* from the *teeing ground*.

Exception in match play: *Ball in play* includes a ball played by the player from outside the *teeing ground* when starting play of a hole if the *opponent* does not require the *stroke* to be canceled in accordance with Rule 11-4a.

****** *A ball put into play from the teeing ground is in play when a stroke is made (R 11-1).*

A substituted ball is a ball that is dropped or placed and is in play when dropped or placed.

Best-Ball

See "Forms of Match Play."

Bunker

A "bunker" is a hazard consisting of a prepared area of ground, often a hollow, from which turf or soil has been removed and replaced with sand or the like.

Grass-covered ground bordering or within a *bunker*, including a stacked turf face (whether grass-covered or earthen), is not part of the *bunker*. A wall or lip of the *bunker* not covered with grass is part of the *bunker*. The margin of a *bunker* extends vertically downwards, but not upwards.

A ball is in a *bunker* when it lies in or any part of it touches the *bunker*.

****** *A ball is also in a bunker when it rests on an object (obstruction, loose impediment) in the bunker. A ball overhanging a bunker is not in the bunker.*

****** *Ball on or in vegetation in a bunker and not touching the sand is not in the bunker. Margin is downwards only.*

Burrowing Animal

A "burrowing animal" is an animal (other than a worm, insect or the like) that makes a hole for habitation or shelter, such as a rabbit, mole, groundhog, gopher or salamander.

Note: A hole made by a non-burrowing animal, such as a dog, is not an *abnormal ground condition* unless marked or declared as *ground under repair*.

****** *A hole that is made by a burrowing animal includes a hole that is not the burrow.*

Caddie

A "caddie" is one who assists the player in accordance with the *Rules*, which may include carrying or handling the player's clubs during play.

When one *caddie* is employed by more than one player, he is always deemed to be the *caddie* of the player sharing the *caddie* whose ball (or whose *partner's* ball) is involved, and equipment carried by him is deemed to be that player's *equipment*, except when the *caddie* acts upon specific directions of another player (or the *partner* of another player) sharing the *caddie*, in which case he is considered to be that other player's *caddie*.

****** *For any breach of a Rule by his caddie, the player incurs the applicable penalty. (Rule 6-1)*

Casual Water

"Casual water" is any temporary accumulation of water on the *course* that is not in a *water hazard* and is visible before or after the player takes his *stance*. Snow and natural ice, other than frost, are either *casual water* or *loose impediments*, at the option of the player. Manufactured ice is an *obstruction*. Dew and frost are not *casual water*.

A ball is in *casual water* when it lies in or any part of it touches the *casual water*.

****** *Casual water must be on the course and not in a water hazard. Must be visible affecting lie or area of stance, or visible when feet are stationary in the stance. Frozen water on the course is either casual water or a loose impediment. Overflow beyond the margin of a water hazard is casual water.*

Committee

The "*Committee*" is the committee in charge of the competition or, if the matter does not arise in a competition, the committee in charge of the *course*.

Competitor

A "*competitor*" is a player in a stroke-play competition. A "*fellow-competitor*" is any person with whom the *competitor* plays. Neither is *partner* of the other.

In stroke play *foursome* and *four-ball* competitions, where the context so admits, the word "*competitor*" or "*fellow-competitor*" includes his *partner*.

****** *A fellow-competitor is a competitor in the same group. A partner is not a fellow-competitor.*

Course

The "*course*" is the whole area within any boundaries established by the *Committee* (see Rule 33-2).

****** *The course is comprised of four parts - all included in these Definitions:
1) The Teeing Ground, 2) Hazards, 3) the Putting Green, 4) Through the Green*

Equipment (Revised)

"*Equipment*" is anything used, worn, held or carried by the player or the player's *caddie*, except:

- any ball that the player has played at the hole being played, and
- any small object, such as a coin or a tee, when used to mark the position of the ball or the extent of an area in which a ball is to be dropped.

Note 1: A ball played at the hole being played is *equipment* when it has been lifted and not put back into play.

Note 2: *Equipment* includes objects placed on the *course* for the care of the *course*, such as rakes, while they are being held or carried.

Note 3: When *equipment* is shared by two or more players, the shared *equipment* is deemed to be the *equipment* of only one of the players sharing it.

If a shared golf cart is being moved by one of the players sharing it (or his *partner* or either of their *caddies*), the cart and everything in it are deemed to be that player's *equipment*. Otherwise, the cart and everything in it are deemed to be the *equipment* of the player sharing the cart whose ball (or whose *partner's* ball) is involved.

Other shared *equipment* is deemed to be the *equipment* of the player who last used, wore, held or carried it. It remains that player's *equipment* until it is used, worn, held or carried by the other player (or his *partner* or either of their *caddies*).

****** *A shared golf cart is considered to be the player's equipment unless a fellow-competitor or opponent is moving the cart. (Partners and caddies have the status of the related player.)*

****** *Shared equipment is deemed to be equipment of the user until in possession of the other person.*

Fellow-Competitor

See "*Competitor*."

Flagstick

The "*flagstick*" is a movable straight indicator, with or without bunting or other material attached, centered in the hole to show its position. It must be circular in cross-section. Padding or shock absorbent material that might unduly influence the movement of the ball is prohibited.

Forecaddie

A "*forecaddie*" is one who is employed by the *Committee* to indicate to players the position of balls during play. He is an *outside agency*.

Forms of Match Play

Single: A match in which one player plays against another player.

Threesome: A match in which one player plays against two other players, and each *side* plays one ball.

Foursome: A match in which two players play against two other players, and each *side* plays one ball.

Three-Ball: Three players play a match against one another, each playing his own ball. Each player is playing two distinct matches.

Best-Ball: A match in which one player plays against the better ball of two other players or the best ball of three other players.

Four-Ball: A match in which two players play their better ball against the better ball of two other players.

Forms of Stroke Play

Individual: A competition in which each *competitor* plays as an individual.

Foursome: A competition in which two *competitors* play as *partners* and play one ball.

Four-Ball: A competition in which two *competitors* play as *partners*, each playing his own ball. The lower score of the *partners* is the score for the hole.

If one *partner* fails to complete the play of a hole, there is no penalty.

Note: For bogey, par and Stableford competitions, see Rule 32-1.

Four-Ball

See "*Forms of Match Play*" and "Forms of Stroke Play."

Foursome

See "*Forms of Match Play*" and "Forms of Stroke Play."

Ground Under Repair

"*Ground under repair*" is any part of the *course* so marked by order of the *Committee* or so declared by its authorized representative. All ground and any grass, bush, tree or other growing thing within the *ground under repair* are part of the *ground under repair*. *Ground under repair* includes material piled for removal and a hole made by a greenkeeper, even if not so marked. Grass cuttings and other material left on the *course* that have been abandoned and are not intended to be removed are not *ground under repair* unless so marked.

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When the margin of *ground under repair* is defined by stakes, the stakes are inside the *ground under repair*, and the margin of the *ground under repair* is defined by the nearest outside points of the stakes at ground level. When both stakes and lines are used to indicate *ground under repair*, the stakes identify the *ground under repair* and the lines define the margin of the *ground under repair*. When the margin of *ground under repair* is defined by a line on the ground, the line itself is in the *ground under repair*. The margin of *ground under repair* extends vertically downwards but not upwards.

A ball is in *ground under repair* when it lies in or any part of it touches the *ground under repair*.

Stakes used to define the margin of or identify *ground under repair* are *obstructions*.

Note: The *Committee* may make a Local Rule prohibiting play from *ground under repair* or an environmentally-sensitive area defined as *ground under repair*.

****** *GUR is on the course - includes areas under construction and abnormal damage. Generally, GUR is marked with white lines. Vegetation rooted in an area marked as GUR and overhanging the margin of the GUR is part of GUR - imagine that all of the vegetation is painted white.*

Hazards

A "hazard" is any *bunker* or *water hazard*.

Hole

The "hole" must be 4 1/4 inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least 4 inches (101.6 mm) deep. If a lining is used, it must be sunk at least 1 inch (25.4 mm) below the *putting green* surface, unless the nature of the soil makes it impracticable to do so; its outer diameter must not exceed 4 1/4 inches (108 mm).

Holed

A ball is "holed" when it is at rest within the circumference of the *hole* and all of it is below the level of the lip of the *hole*.

Honor

The player who is to play first from the teeing ground is said to have the "honor."

****** *The term "honor" applies only to teeing ground.*

Lateral Water Hazard

A "lateral water hazard" is a *water hazard* or that part of a *water hazard* so situated that it is not possible, or is deemed by the *Committee* to be impracticable, to drop a ball behind the *water hazard* in accordance with Rule 26-1b. All ground and water within the margin of a *lateral water hazard* are part of the *lateral water hazard*.

When the margin of a *lateral water hazard* is defined by stakes, the stakes are inside the *lateral water hazard*, and the margin of the *hazard* is defined by the nearest outside points of the stakes at ground level. When both stakes and lines are used to indicate a *lateral water hazard*, the stakes identify the *hazard* and the lines define the *hazard* margin. When the margin of a *lateral water hazard* is defined by a line on the ground, the line itself is in the *lateral water hazard*. The margin of a *lateral water hazard* extends vertically upwards and downwards.

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A ball is in a *lateral water hazard* when it lies in or any part of it touches the *lateral water hazard*. Stakes used to define the margin of or identify a *lateral water hazard* are *obstructions*.

Note 1: That part of a *water hazard* to be played as a *lateral water hazard* must be distinctively marked. Stakes or lines used to define the margin of or identify a *lateral water hazard* must be red.

Note 2: The *Committee* may make a Local Rule prohibiting play from an environmentally-sensitive area defined as a *lateral water hazard*.

Note 3: The *Committee* may define a *lateral water hazard* as a *water hazard*.

Line of Play

The "*line of play*" is the direction that the player wishes his ball to take after a *stroke*, plus a reasonable distance on either side of the intended direction. The *line of play* extends vertically upwards from the ground, but does not extend beyond the *hole*.

****** *There is a line of play for every stroke.*

Line of Putt

The "*line of putt*" is the line that the player wishes his ball to take after a *stroke* on the *putting green*. Except with respect to Rule 16-1e, the *line of putt* includes a reasonable distance on either side of the intended line. The *line of putt* does not extend beyond the *hole*.

****** *The ball must be on the putting green for there to be a line of putt. The line of putt could extend off the putting green.*

Loose Impediments

"*Loose impediments*" are natural objects, including:

- stones, leaves, twigs, branches and the like,
- dung, and
- worms, insects and the like, and the casts and heaps made by them,

provided they are not:

- fixed or growing,
- solidly embedded, or
- adhering to the ball.

Sand and loose soil are *loose impediments* on the putting green, but not elsewhere.

Snow and natural ice, other than frost, are either *casual water* or *loose impediments*, at the option of the player.

Dew and frost are not *loose impediments*.

****** *Natural objects, not growing, not rooted in the ground, not fixed or solidly embedded that can be picked-up individually. About 2mm size or larger is a loose impediment for picking up. Anything adhering to a ball is not a loose impediment. Solidly embedded → needs prying or digging.*

Lost Ball

A ball is deemed "lost" if:

- a. It is not found or identified as his by the player within five minutes after the player's *side* or his or their *caddies* have begun to search for it; or
- b. The player has made a *stroke* at a *provisional ball* from the place where the original ball is likely to be or from a point nearer the *hole* than that place (see Rule 27-2b); or
- c. The player has put another *ball into play* under penalty of stroke and distance under Rule 26-1a, 27-1 or 28a; or
- d. The player has put another *ball into play* because it is known or virtually certain that the ball, which has not been found, has been moved by an *outside agency* (see Rule 18-1), is in an *obstruction* (see Rule 24-3), is in an *abnormal ground condition* (see Rule 25-1c) or is in a *water hazard* (see Rule 26-1b or c); or
- e. The player has made a *stroke* at a *substituted ball*.

Time spent in playing a *wrong ball* is not counted in the five-minute period allowed for search.

**** Cannot declare a ball lost. Ball dropped or placed not under an applicable Rule, and not played - original ball is not lost unless the five minute search period has expired.**

**** A ball played from where previous stroke was made becomes the ball in play. Original is lost.**

**** Items a - e above are the five ways that a ball in play is caused to be a "Lost Ball".**

Marker

A "marker" is one who is appointed by the *Committee* to record a *competitor's* score in stroke play. He may be a *fellow-competitor*. He is not a *referee*.

**** Markers are responsible for attesting the score card for the player(s) whose score they marked.**

Move or Moved

A ball is deemed to have "moved" if it leaves its position and comes to rest in any other place.

**** Ball that only oscillates did not move, as defined. Consider three dimensions in determining whether a ball has moved.**

Nearest Point of Relief

The "nearest point of relief" is the reference point for taking relief without penalty from interference by an immovable *obstruction* (Rule 24-2), an *abnormal ground condition* (Rule 25-1) or a *wrong putting green* (Rule 25-3).

It is the point on the *course* nearest to where the ball lies:

- (i) that is not nearer the *hole*, and
- (ii) where, if the ball were so positioned, no interference by the condition from which relief is sought would exist for the *stroke* the player would have made from the original position if the condition were not there.

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Note: In order to determine the *nearest point of relief* accurately, the player should use the club with which he would have made his next *stroke* if the condition were not there to simulate the *address* position, direction of play and swing for such a *stroke*.

****** For Rules 24-2, 25-1 and 25-3. *NPR is a defined spot on the course; in certain cases, procedure requires the club that would have been used for the original location of the ball (and same swing) be used to determine NPR. (See Decision 24-2b/1 for the recommended procedure.)*

Observer

An "*observer*" is one who is appointed by the *Committee* to assist a *referee* to decide questions of fact and to report to him any breach of a *Rule*. An *observer* should not attend the *flagstick*, stand at or mark the position of the *hole*, or lift the ball or mark its position.

Obstructions

An "*obstruction*" is anything artificial, including the artificial surfaces and sides of roads and paths and manufactured ice, except:

- a. Objects defining *out of bounds*, such as walls, fences, stakes and railings;
- b. Any part of an immovable artificial object that is *out of bounds*, and
- c. Any construction declared by the *Committee* to be an integral part of the *course*.

An *obstruction* is a movable *obstruction* if it may be moved without unreasonable effort, without unduly delaying play and without causing damage. Otherwise it is an immovable *obstruction*.

Note: The *Committee* may make a Local Rule declaring a movable *obstruction* to be an immovable *obstruction*.

****** *Boundary walls, perimeter fences and any object that defines OB are not obstructions. Artificial objects within water hazards are frequently defined as integral parts of the course.*

Opponent

An "*opponent*" is a member of a *side* against whom the player's *side* is competing in match play.

Out of Bounds

"*Out of bounds*" is beyond the boundaries of the *course* or any part of the *course* so marked by the *Committee*.

When *out of bounds* is defined by reference to stakes or a fence or as being beyond stakes or a fence, the *out of bounds* line is determined by the nearest inside points at ground level of the stakes or fence posts (excluding angled supports). When both stakes and lines are used to indicate *out of bounds*, the stakes identify *out of bounds* and the lines define *out of bounds*. When *out of bounds* is defined by a line on the ground, the line itself is *out of bounds*. The *out of bounds* line extends vertically upwards and downwards.

A ball is *out of bounds* when all of it lies *out of bounds*. A player may stand *out of bounds* to play a ball lying within bounds.

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Objects defining *out of bounds* such as walls, fences, stakes and railings are not *obstructions* and are deemed to be fixed. Stakes identifying *out of bounds* are not obstructions and are deemed to be fixed.

Note 1: Stakes or lines used to define *out of bounds* should be white.

Note 2: A *Committee* may make a Local Rule declaring stakes identifying but not defining *out of bounds* to be *obstructions*.

****** *Objects defining out of bounds are fixed objects and must not be moved to assist play. A ball is out of bounds when the entire ball is out of bounds. A white line defining out of bounds is out of bounds.*

Outside Agency

In match play, an "*outside agency*" is any agency other than either the player's or *opponent's side*, any *caddie* of either *side*, any ball played by either *side* at the *hole* being played or any *equipment* of either *side*.

In stroke play, an *outside agency* is any agency other than the *competitor's side*, any *caddie* of the *side*, any ball played by the *side* at the *hole* being played or any *equipment* of the *side*.

An *outside agency* includes a *referee*, a *marker*, an *observer* and a *forecaddie*. Neither wind nor water is an *outside agency*.

****** *Items belonging to a partner or caddies, or opponent's side, are not outside agencies. A fellow-competitor is an outside agency. An opponent is not an outside agency. A partner and a partner's caddie are not outside agencies. Spectators are outside agencies as are other things such as rabbits, trees and road-runners.*

Partner

A "*partner*" is a player associated with another player on the same *side*.

In *threesome*, *foursome*, *best-ball* or *four-ball play*, where the context so admits, the word "player" includes his *partner* or *partners*.

Penalty Stroke

A "*penalty stroke*" is one added to the score of a player or *side* under certain *Rules*. In a *threesome* or *foursome*, *penalty strokes* do not affect the order of play.

Provisional Ball

A "*provisional ball*" is a ball played under Rule 27-2 for a ball that may be *lost* outside a *water hazard* or may be *out of bounds*.

****** *Key statement: "for a ball that may be lost outside a water hazard or may be out of bounds".*

Putting Green

The "*putting green*" is all ground of the hole being played that is specially prepared for putting or otherwise defined as such by the *Committee*. A ball is on the *putting green* when any part of it touches the *putting green*.

Referee

A "referee" is one who is appointed by the *Committee* to decide questions of fact and apply the *Rules*. He must act on any breach of a *Rule* that he observes or is reported to him.

A *referee* should not attend the *flagstick*, stand at or mark the position of the *hole*, or lift the ball or mark its position.

Exception in match play: Unless a *referee* is assigned to accompany the players throughout a match, he has no authority to intervene in a match other than in relation to Rule 1-3, 6-7 or 33-7.

****** *While not authorized to intervene, a referee during match play who is assigned as an on-course Rules Official may respond to questions about the Rules.*

Rub of the Green

A "rub of the green" occurs when a ball in motion is accidentally deflected or stopped by any *outside agency* (see Rule 19-1).

Rule or Rules

The term "Rule" includes:

- a. The Rules of Golf and their interpretations as contained in "Decisions on the Rules of Golf";
- b. Any Condition of Competition established by the *Committee* under Rule 33-1 and Appendix I;
- c. Any Local Rules established by the *Committee* under Rule 33-8a and Appendix I; and
- d. The specifications on:
 - (i) clubs and the ball in Appendices II and III and their interpretations as contained in "A Guide to the Rules on Clubs and Balls"; and
 - (ii) devices and other *equipment* in Appendix IV.

Side

A "side" is a player, or two or more players who are *partners*. In match play, each member of the opposing *side* is an *opponent*. In stroke play, members of all *sides* are *competitors* and members of different *sides* playing together are *fellow-competitors*.

****** *Caddies are not a member of the side although commonly referred to as part of a side. They are associated with the side and the side is accountable for the actions of a caddie during the stipulated round.*

Single

See "Forms of Match Play" and "Forms of Stroke Play."

Stance

Taking the "stance" consists in a player placing his feet in position for and preparatory to making a *stroke*.

Stipulated Round

The "stipulated round" consists of playing the holes of the *course* in their correct sequence unless otherwise authorized by the *Committee*. The number of holes in a *stipulated round* is 18 unless a smaller number is authorized by the *Committee*. As to extension of *stipulated round* in match play, see Rule 2-3.

Stroke

A "*stroke*" is the forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking at and moving the ball, but if a player checks his downswing voluntarily before the clubhead reaches the ball he has not made a *stroke*.

** *Key word is "intention". "Forward" is direction of play.*

Substituted Ball (Revised)

A "*substituted ball*" is a ball put into play for the original ball that was either *in play, lost, out of bounds* or lifted, whether or not the substitution was permitted. A *substituted ball* becomes the *ball in play* when it has been dropped or placed (see Rule 20-4).

***Remember how a ball is put into play - placed or dropped or stroke from teeing ground.*

Teeing Ground

The "*teeing ground*" is the starting place for the hole to be played. It is a rectangular area two club-lengths in depth, the front and the sides of which are defined by the outside limits of two tee-markers. A ball is outside the *teeing ground* when all of it lies outside the *teeing ground*.

** *A player has only one teeing ground on each hole.*

Three-Ball

See "*Forms of Match Play.*"

Threesome

See "*Forms of Match Play.*"

Through the Green

"*Through the green*" is the whole area of the *course* except:

- a. The *teeing ground* and *putting green* of the hole being played; and
- b. All *hazards* on the *course*.

Water Hazard

A "*water hazard*" is any sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, surface drainage ditch or other open water course (whether or not containing water) and anything of a similar nature on the *course*. All ground and water within the margin of a *water hazard* are part of the *water hazard*.

When the margin of a *water hazard* is defined by stakes, the stakes are inside the *water hazard*, and the margin of the *hazard* is defined by the nearest outside points of the stakes at ground level. When both stakes and lines are used to indicate a *water hazard*, the stakes identify the *hazard* and the lines define the *hazard* margin. When the margin of a *water hazard* is defined by a line on the ground, the line itself is in the *water hazard*. The margin of a *water hazard* extends vertically upwards and downwards.

A ball is in a *water hazard* when it lies in or any part of it touches the *water hazard*.

Stakes used to define the margin of or identify a *water hazard* are *obstructions*.

Note 1: Stakes or lines used to define the margin of or identify a *water hazard* must be yellow.

Note 2: The *Committee* may make a Local Rule prohibiting play from an environmentally-sensitive area defined as a *water hazard*.

Wrong Ball (Revised)

A "wrong ball" is any ball other than the player's:

- *ball in play*;
- *provisional ball*; or
- second ball played under Rule 3-3 or Rule 20-7c in stroke play.

Ball in play includes a ball *substituted* for the *ball in play*, whether or not the substitution is permitted. A *substituted ball* becomes the *ball in play* when it has been dropped or placed (see Rule 20-4).

****** *If a ball lies on the course and is not the player's ball in play, a ball provisionally in play or a second ball, it is a wrong ball when played.*

****** *A ball that is dropped or placed is not a wrong ball (it is a substituted ball) - except in continuation of play of a wrong ball as described in Decision 15/11.*

Wrong Putting Green

A "wrong putting green" is any *putting green* other than that of the hole being played. Unless otherwise prescribed by the *Committee*, this term includes a practice *putting green* or pitching green on the *course*.