

NEW GOLF RULES FROM JANUARY 1, 2019

DROPPING THE BALL

In 2019, players will continue to drop a ball when taking relief, (either free relief or under penalty) but the dropping procedure will be changed in several ways:

- 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"** (either one or two club-lengths from a reference point depending on the Rule under which relief is being taken (and may have certain other limitations)).
- The ball will need only to be **dropped in and come to rest** in the relief area
- **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:**
 - No longer able to roll up to two club-lengths from where it hits the ground.
 - Now 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:**
 - Now avoid questions about whether it was dropped near enough to a specific spot.
 - Now simply drop a ball anywhere in a relief area measured one or two club-lengths from (but not nearer the hole than) than a given 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; 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.