



So What's New?

Under Rule 14.3, when taking relief, the player will always be allowed the choice of substituting a ball or using the original ball, including:

- When taking penalty relief as well as when taking free relief (Rules 15-19), and
- Any other time the player is required to drop and play a ball, such as when returning to play from where a previous stroke was made after the stroke is cancelled.

Reasons for change

The requirement to use the original ball in some relief situations but not others is confusing, hard to remember and leads to unnecessary penalties. Taking a consistent approach that always allows a player the choice of substituting a ball or using the original ball is much simpler.

There is no need for a different procedure based on whether the player is taking relief with penalty or without penalty:

- The penalty is applied for reasons to do with where the ball ended up (lost, out of bounds, in a penalty area or unplayable), not with which ball is played next.
- For example, if a ball lies in easy reach of the player, there is no reason to require the original ball to be used when taking relief because of interference by an animal hole, while allowing substitution when taking relief because the ball is unplayable.

This change will eliminate the need when taking free relief whether the original ball is "not immediately recoverable", which can raise questions in various cases such as when the ball is in a few inches of temporary water or is under a prickly bush.

This will also draw a clearer and more intuitive line between when substitution is allowed in returning a ball to play and when the original ball must be returned to play:

- Substitution will be allowed only when a player is taking relief under any Rule - that is, when the player is required or allowed to play the next stroke from somewhere other than where the original ball came to rest.
- Substitution will not be allowed when a ball was lifted or moved, and the Rules require it to be replaced on its original spot - in that case, the original ball must still be used (unless it cannot be recovered with reasonable effort and in a few seconds).