



Rules Matters



No. 1 (9th April 2021)

RELIEF FOR BALL IN YELLOW PENALTY AREA - RULE 17.1d

Welcome to **Rules Matters**, where we attempt to explain some of the frequently used, but often misunderstood, golf rules. This first edition looks at the relief options available if you find yourself in a Yellow Penalty Area.

We have four Yellow Penalty Areas at Heswall - all are ponds, and you will find them in front of the 3rd, 7th, 8th and 11th greens. We have probably all been in them at some time or another, but what are our options for taking relief?

Let's take a look...at the 3rd Hole

So, you're a bit wayward with your second shot on the 3rd Hole and your ball flies towards the pond just in front of the green - and then either it just disappears from view or there's a familiar splash that tells you your ball is probably sunk. You walk in the direction of the pond.

If you have seen the splash there is usually no doubt your ball is in the penalty area. However, you could also find it has skipped out and landed at the edge of the pond, within the penalty area but above the water line.

Anyway, it is in there. What now?

You have two choices:

Option 1: If you can see the ball, you can play it as it lies if you wish.

NOTE: (1) The 2019 Rules revisions brought a change here so you can play the ball exactly as you would if it was in the General Area of the course. That means you can remove loose impediments, ground your club, (including touching the water) and even take practice swings.

(2) Beware...in taking a stance, making a practice swing or removing a loose impediment if you cause the ball to move then you must replace the ball and, unfortunately, you also incur one penalty stroke - even if you then decide to go for Option 2.

Option 2: You can play another ball from outside the penalty area by taking penalty relief. For **one penalty stroke**, you can take either:

- Stroke-and-distance relief; or
- Back-on-the-line relief

What is stroke-and-distance relief?

If you are taking **stroke-and-distance relief**, then you may play either the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made.

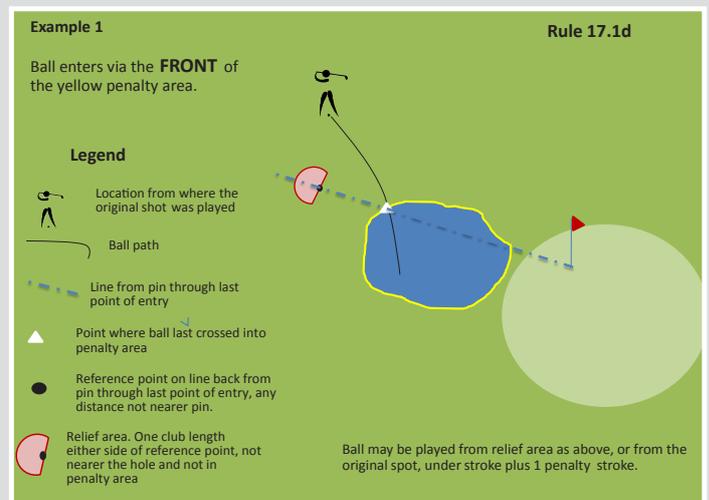
The relief area is within one club length of the spot from where the original ball was played (or estimated to have been played) but must not be nearer the hole.

What is back-on-the-line relief?

If you are taking **back-on-the-line-relief**, drop the original or another ball in a relief area (indicated by the pink semi-circle in Example 1) that is determined as follows:

- Estimate the point where your original ball last crossed the penalty area.
- Then imagine a straight line from the flag running through the point where your ball last crossed the penalty area.
- There is no limit on how far back on this line you can go.
- Once you have chosen your spot on this line, this is then called the *reference point*. It is good practice to mark this point with an object such as a tee.
- The relief area is within one club length of that *reference point* but must not be nearer the hole.
- Note that the spot where you drop your ball within the relief area must be outside the penalty area

See the example in Diagram 1 below





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My ball crosses the pond and then hits the bank at the far side of the pond beyond the penalty area, and then rolls back into the water - where do I take relief?

- The starting point is where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area so this would be the far side of the pond.
- Then imagine your straight line from the flag running through that point, and choose your *reference point* - that's the point you would mark with a tee. In practice in this example, that would be on the side of the pond from where you hit your original ball.
- Drop your ball in the relief area (as indicated by the pink semi-circle in Example 2), that is within one club length of your reference point but not nearer the hole
- Remember, the spot where you drop your ball within the relief area must be outside the penalty area.

My ball is heading straight towards the green but pitches short of the green and takes a right-angled bounce into the pond - where do I take relief?

- Again, your starting point is where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area so this would be on the edge of the pond.
- Then imagine your straight line from the flag running through that spot, determine your *reference point* as far back as you like on this line. That's the point you would mark with a tee.
- Drop your ball in the relief area (again, indicated by the pink semi-circle in Example 3), that is within one club length of your reference point but not nearer the hole
- In this situation, you may find you are able to drop your ball in the relief area within one club length of the reference point and avoid having to take your next shot over the pond (as indicated by the pink quarter-circle in Example 3).
- Remember though that the spot where you drop your ball within the relief area must be outside the penalty area.

What if I just think the ball is in there, but I'm not sure?

Not good enough, I'm afraid. You need to *know, or be virtually certain*, that the ball came to rest in a penalty area. If it did, you then have the option to take either penalty relief option (stroke-and-distance relief, or back-on-the-line relief). If you don't *know* or are not *virtually certain* you must take stroke-and-distance relief.

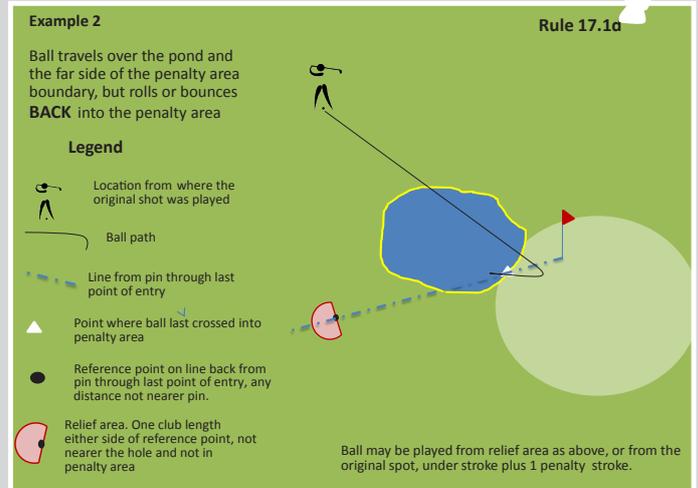
Known or virtually certain means there is either:

- ✓ Conclusive evidence it happened - so you or someone else saw it: or
- ✓ You are 95% certain it happened. In other words, even though there's a very small degree of doubt, after assessing all available evidence you conclude the ball must have come to rest in the penalty area.
- ✗ Remember though, if you look anywhere else for your ball other than the penalty area you are probably not *virtually certain* it's in there!

What about relief from the other Yellow Penalty Areas at Heswall - on the 7th, 8th and 11th holes?

Exactly the same rules and principles apply.

See the example in Diagram 2 below



See the example in Diagram 3 below



Finally, some yellow penalty area do's and don'ts

- ✓ DO consider whether you can play the ball as it lies before deciding to take penalty relief
- ✓ DO remove loose impediments and ground your club if you want to as this is now permitted in a penalty area
- ✓ However, DO take care not to cause the ball to move when preparing to take your stroke, otherwise you will incur an additional one stroke penalty
- ✓ If taking back-on-the-line relief, DO carefully line up the flag and the spot where your ball last crossed the penalty area to determine your reference point before taking your penalty drop
- ✓ DO ensure the spot where you drop your ball within the relief area is outside the penalty area
- ✗ DON'T drop your ball sideways, regardless of where the flag is - that is not permitted, as you must first determine where you can drop your ball (the relief area) by going back on a line running from the flag through the point where your ball last crossed the edge of the penalty area
- ✗ DON'T use the point where your ball last crossed the penalty area as the reference point - you have to go back on that line (though as little or as far as you like) to ensure that the spot where you drop your ball within the relief area is not nearer the hole and is outside the penalty area
- ✗ DON'T use the additional relief option you get with a RED penalty area, which we will cover in detail in the next edition of **Rules Matters**