

I Can Drop it—Where???

BY RYAN FARB

GOLF'S NEW RULES: STROKE AND DISTANCE
 A new Local Rule provides an alternative to stroke-and-distance relief for a ball that is lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds, effective January 1, 2019.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS

LOST BALL

If the Local Rule is in effect, you can still take stroke-and-distance relief, but you now have the following additional option that comes with a penalty of two strokes:

A DETERMINE SPOT where your ball went out of bounds (left diagram) or is likely to be lost (right diagram).

B FIND NEAREST FAIRWAY EDGE no closer to the hole.

C DROP YOUR BALL IN SHADED AREA as defined on one side by a line from the hole through point A and on the other side by a line from the hole through point B, and not nearer the hole. The relief area is extended on both sides by two club-lengths.

This Local Rule is not intended for higher levels of play, such as professional or elite amateur level competitions.

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nearest point on the hole you’re playing, not nearer the hole of grass in the general area cut to fairway height or less.

Next, imagine a line going from the hole through both of those reference points. You’ve now created a large area between those two points, not closer to the hole, that will be eligible relief area. But then you add an additional two club-lengths on either side of that area, including going two club-lengths into the fairway; (if your first reference point is on the OB line, this part doesn’t apply). All of this area is your eligible relief area. The ball does not need to be dropped in the fairway; if you’d prefer a fluffy lie in the rough, go for it. In practice, most players have just been finding the fairway reference point and dropping within two club-

With the implementation of the 2019 Rules, a lot of focus has shifted from some of the changes that were designed specifically for the average golfer to those affecting the professional golfer. New clarifications regarding Rule 10.2b(4) (also colloquially known as the “caddie alignment” Rule, though it is a little more than that) and allowing the replacement of significantly damaged clubs by Local Rule really addressed situations occurring at the professional level. Here at the NCGA, however, the majority of the questions coming through the office have revolved around one single topic that is completely irrelevant to the professional game—Local Rule E-5: Alternative to Stroke and Distance for Lost Ball or Ball Out of Bounds.

The actual text of this Local Rule is too long to print, so this article is going to try and sum up the most important points and answer the most frequently asked questions about the new Local Rule:

What is E-5?

The new Local Rule (E-5 is the Model Local Rule number for reference), provides you an additional option for relief when your ball is either out of bounds or lost. This new relief option costs **two** penalty strokes but gives you a large relief area (including a two club-length swath into the nearest fairway cut) so that you don’t have to waste time by returning to the previous spot under penalty of stroke and distance.

How Does it Work?

The best thing to do is to read the Model Local Rule and check out the very helpful diagrams to see exactly where you’ll be dropping the ball. But here is the quick summary: You need to estimate two reference points: 1) the estimated point where either a) your ball is lost or b) the ball crossed the boundary and went OB, and; 2) the

lengths of that point, no nearer the hole, which is perfectly fine.

In order to use this option, it costs you two penalty strokes. The end result is essentially identical to you playing a decent provisional ball to the edge of the fairway, in both cases you’d be playing your fourth shot from the fairway (if your tee shot was the lost or OB ball).

Is This a New Rule?

Yes and no. The Model Local Rule is new for the 2019 Rules. However, it is very important to know that this is a Local Rule and is only in effect if the Committee puts it into effect. It does not apply automatically.

What if I play a provisional ball?

If you play a provisional ball when this Local Rule is in effect, the Local Rule option goes away. You must either find the original ball on the course and proceed or continue with the provisional ball under penalty of stroke and distance.

What if my Local Rule relief area option is not that good?

The Local Rule is an additional option. Nothing prevents you from proceeding under penalty of stroke and distance by playing again from the previous spot.

What if I can’t find the nearest fairway point?

There is always a fairway reference point, even if it doesn’t seem like it. Sometimes this point might take you on an arc all the way around the other side of the putting green. Sometimes it might be the walking path through the rough. Sometimes it might be the cut area of the tee pad you just played from, but you should always be able to find a fairway reference point, even if it is a significant distance away from the OB or Lost reference point. 🍌

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