

## Keeping it Local

Local Rules are generally introduced for a particular course or competition when situations occur that warrant slight modifications to the existing Rules of Golf. Over the years, many Local Rules have become part of the Rules themselves. For example, the use of distance measuring devices, which previously was allowed only through a Local Rule, is now permitted by Rule 4.3a(1).

Rarely has a Local Rule been confusing or controversial, but the new Local Rule called Alternative to Stroke and Distance for a Lost Ball or Ball Out of Bounds is an exception. This Local Rule, when implemented by a Committee, allows a player who has not played a provisional ball to drop a ball near where his or her original ball is estimated to have crossed the out of bounds line or is lost instead of returning to the spot of the previous stroke to play under stroke and distance.

A lot of confusion surrounds this Local Rule as many golfers believe it is now one of the 24 Rules of Golf. Golfers have tried to use the Local Rule procedure when the Committee had not implemented it, and others have tried to use the Local Rule for a ball that is lost in a penalty area. In such cases, the players played from a wrong place and may be required to correct the error if the breach was serious.

The Local Rule was created to allow players an extra relief option other than returning to the location of the previous stroke, thereby improving the pace of play.

- The Local Rule must be implemented by the Committee. It is not one of the Rules of Golf. It is appropriate for casual rounds or when golfers are playing their own competition but should not be used for competitions involving professional or elite amateur players. If clubs decide to implement this Local Rule for general play, but not for club competitions, they should ensure that every golfer is aware of this before play begins.
- The Committee may restrict this Local Rule to certain holes.
- A player using this Local Rule will incur two penalty strokes. While most relief options in the Rules come with just one penalty stroke, the additional penalty here is meant to be comparable to what could have been achieved if the player had proceeded under the stroke and distance option for a lost ball or a ball that is out of bounds.
- The relief area in which a player must drop and play from will generally be quite large and must be in the general area of the course. When the player drops a ball in the relief area it must come to rest in the relief area and be played from the relief area.
- This Local Rule may not be used for a ball that is known or virtually certain to be in a penalty area. In that case the player's only relief options are under Rule 17.
- This Local Rule may not be used for an unplayable ball. Relief for such is available under Rule 19 and in most cases comes with only one penalty stroke.
- If a provisional ball has been played, this procedure may not be used unless both the original ball and the provisional ball can't be found or are out of bounds. In which case, the player may use this Local Rule for the provisional ball.

Below is the text of the Local Rule and three diagrams that will help you understand the procedure.

### **Model Local Rule E-5 Alternative to Stroke and Distance for a Lost Ball or Ball Out of Bounds**

"When a player's ball has not been found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player may proceed as follows rather than proceeding under stroke and distance.

For **two penalty strokes**, the player may take relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in this relief area (see [Rule 14.3](#)):

Two Estimated Reference Points:

**(a). Ball Reference Point:** The point where the original ball is estimated to have:

- Come to rest on the course, or
- Last crossed the edge of the course boundary to go out of bounds.

**(b). Fairway Reference Point:** The point of fairway of the hole being played that is nearest to the ball reference point, **but** is not nearer the hole than the ball reference point.

For purposes of this Local Rule, "fairway" means any area of grass in the general area that is cut to fairway height or less.

If a ball is estimated to be lost on the course or last crossed the edge of the course boundary short of the fairway, the fairway reference point may be a grass path or a teeing ground for the hole being played cut to fairway height or less.

Size of Relief Area Based on Reference Points: Anywhere between:

- A line from the hole through the ball reference point (and within two club-lengths to the outside of that line), and
- A line from the hole through the fairway reference point (and within two club-lengths to the fairway side of that line).

**But** with these limits:

Limits on Location of Relief Area:

- Must be in the general area, and
- Must not be nearer the hole than the ball reference point.

Once the player puts a ball in play under this Local Rule:

- The original ball that was lost or out of bounds is no longer in play and must not be played.
- This is true even if the ball is found on the course before the end of the three-minute search time (see [Rule 6.3b](#)).

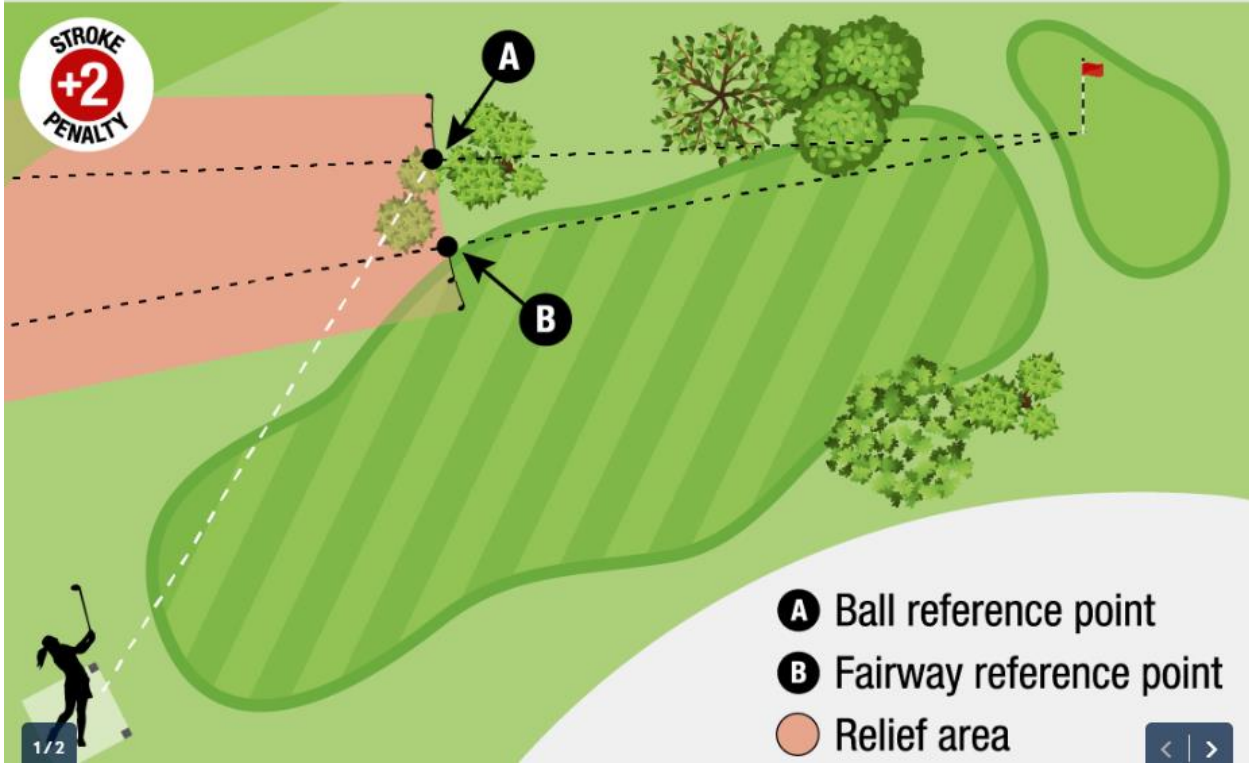
**But** the player may not use this option to take relief for the original ball when:

- That ball is known or virtually certain to have come to rest in a penalty area, or
- The player has played another ball provisionally under penalty of stroke and distance (see [Rule 18.3](#)).

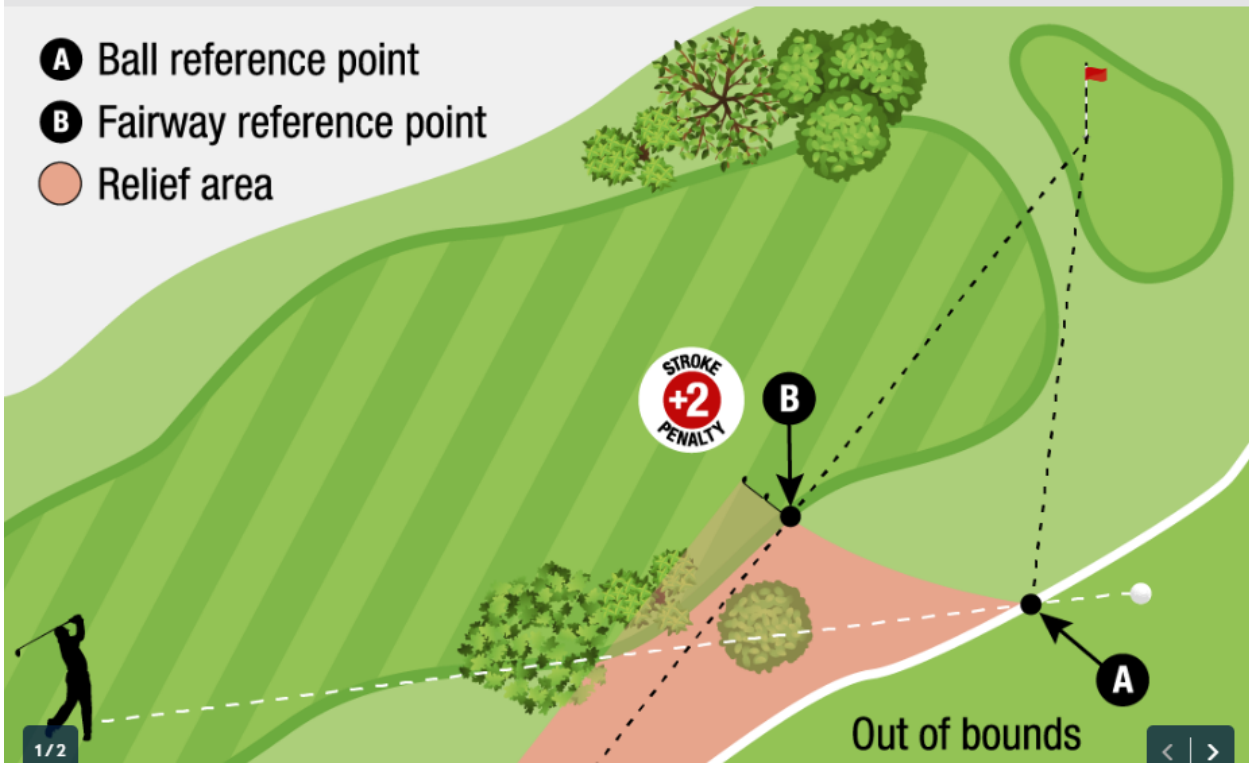
A player may use this option to take relief for a provisional ball that has not been found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds.

**Penalty for Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Local Rule: General Penalty Under [Rule 14.7a](#)**

### MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 1: BALL NOT FOUND



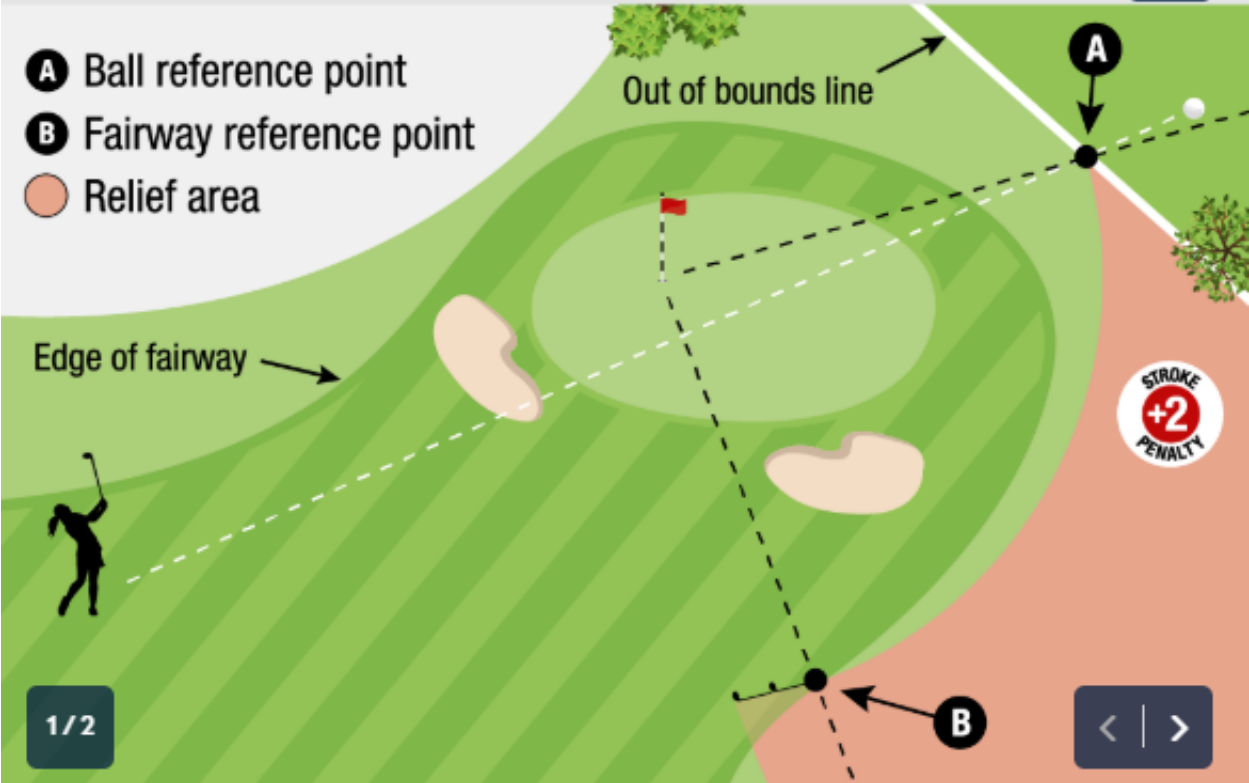
### MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 2: BALL OUT OF BOUNDS



**MLR E-5 DIAGRAM 3: BALL NOT FOUND OR OUT OF BOUNDS CLOSE TO GREEN**



- A** Ball reference point
- B** Fairway reference point
- Relief area



1/2



STROKE  
+2  
PENALTY