

Explanation of Golf Rule 16

Rule 16 Overview

Rule 16 covers situations where a player's ball or stance is affected by abnormal conditions on the course. These include:

- Abnormal course conditions (Rule 16.1): Such as ground under repair, temporary water, immovable obstructions (like cart paths), or animal **mounds and** holes. Players are entitled to free relief when such conditions interfere with the lie of the ball, the area of intended stance, or the area of intended swing.
- Embedded ball (Rule 16.3): Relief is allowed for a ball embedded in its own pitch mark in the general area (other than sand).
- Dangerous animal condition (Rule 16.2): If a ball is near a dangerous animal (for example, a wasp nest, snake, or alligator), free relief is available to protect the player's safety.

Relief Procedure

When taking relief under Rule 16, a player must:

1. Identify the nearest point of complete relief, no closer to the hole.
2. Drop a ball within one club-length of that spot, again no closer to the hole.

Quick Examples

- Cart Path: Your ball comes to rest on a paved cart path. You may take free relief by finding the nearest point where the ball would be off the path (no closer to the hole) and drop within one club-length.
- Temporary Water: After rain, you find standing water around your ball **or around your stance** on the fairway. Free relief is given by dropping away from the water, **no closer to the hole at the nearest point where the ball or your stance is unaffected by the water.**
- Embedded Ball: Your approach shot plugs into soft ground in the **fairway or rough**. You may take free relief by marking the spot, lifting the ball, and dropping it within one club-length of the original location, no closer to the hole.
- Dangerous Animal: Your ball stops near a fire ant mound. You are entitled to free relief for safety, finding the nearest safe spot no closer to the hole.

Important Note

Rule 16 does not provide free relief when a ball is in a penalty area or when interference is only because the player chooses an unreasonable stance, swing, or direction of play. **It also does not provide free relief if your ball is in a spot that otherwise would be**

unplayable. Relief from a lie that involves Rule 19 (Unplayable Ball) which involves a penalty stroke, overrides free relief from Rule 16 (Abnormal Course Condition).

Summary

In summary, Rule 16 exists to ensure that players are not unfairly penalized for abnormal course conditions while still preserving the challenge and fairness of the game., HOWEVER, it does not allow Free Relief from a lie, stance, or swing path that renders the ball unplayable, such as tree roots, shrubbery, ice plant, or non-active animal mounds,. The question to ask is “If the cart path, bush/ice plant/tree root/etc ,or animal mound were NOT there, would the ball be playable?” If the answer is NO, then there is no Free Relief from the cart path.