

NEAREST POINT OF RELIEF

In cases where your ball or your stance is affected by an Immovable Obstruction or some other unusual condition, you are PERMITTED relief. *But it is important to remember that the relief is from the obstruction only, and DOES NOT guarantee a better lie.* In some cases the nearest relief may be a difficult or even an impossible lie. In which case, you may be better off to play the ball as it lies or call it an unplayable lie and proceed under that rule – you are not required to take relief unless the Course Management requires it – usually staked trees and environmentally-sensitive areas. Check your course rules if in doubt.

NEVER TOUCH YOUR BALL UNTIL YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY SURE OF HOW YOU WANT TO PROCEED.

Immoveable Obstructions are generally anything artificial (i.e. man made) such as irrigation equipment, yardage markers, towers (as on #9), and paths and roads. However, the obstruction must not mark or be in an 'out of bounds' area. (Local rules may give additional situations.)

Unusual Conditions allowing relief are generally things like casual water, ground under repair, staked trees (if so designated by the Course Management) and sometimes Environmentally-Sensitive Areas (ESA). Check your course rules if it has ESAs since some courses allow relief while others treat them as a hazard.

CART PATH AND ROADS are a common cause for seeking relief, although the rules for finding the Nearest Point of Relief are the same in all cases. (See next page for help with Cart Paths & Roads.)

HOW TO PROCEED:

NOTE THAT IF YOU TAKE RELIEF YOU MUST TAKE FULL RELIEF. You may not simply move the ball a few inches from the cart path and still stand on the cart path. It is full relief or no relief, so it may be better to play the ball as it lies. Worried about damaging a club? Use your putter to bang the ball off the path or call it unplayable and take 2 club lengths and a one stroke penalty.

YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED RELIEF IF YOUR BALL WOULD BE UNPLAYABLE IF THE PATH OR OBSTRUCTION WERE NOT THERE. If in doubt, ask yourself if your ball would be playable if the obstruction were not there.

1 - Find the nearest point of relief. If in doubt, take the club you would most likely use and simulate the stance and swing you expect to use at the nearest point to where the ball lies where the interference ceases to exist. Where the club head touches the ground is your 'reference point' for the nearest point of relief. Mark that point with a tee or coin.

2 - Using any club you wish (including your driver) measure one club length from the point you have marked with a tee or coin away from the obstruction, but not nearer the hole. Mark this point as well.

3 - Pick up your ball and drop it between the two points you have marked, noting that the permitted drop area extends back from the nearest point as well as to the side. (See diagram on next page.)

Right-handed player, Diagrams #1, #2 & #3

Diagram #1

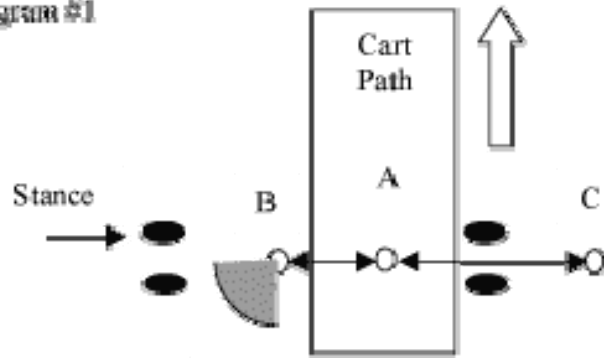


Diagram #2

The "nearest point of relief" is on the left, even though the ball is on the right side of the cart path.

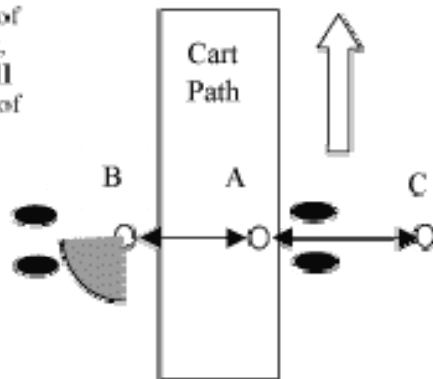


Diagram #3

The "nearest point of relief" is on the right side of this wide cart path.

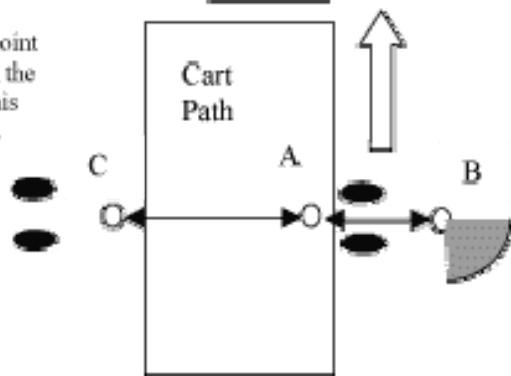
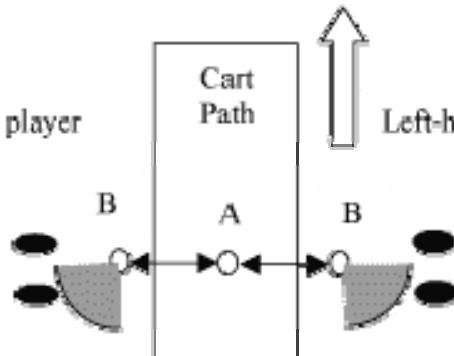


Diagram #4

Right-handed player

Left-handed player



Taking relief from a cart path is a two step procedure.

In Diagrams #1, #2, #3 and #4 Point A is the original position of the ball on the cart path.

Step 1 involves finding the "nearest point of relief."

Simulate an address position on the left side of the cart path (Diagrams #1 & #2 -- right side Diagrams #3 & #4). Point B is where the ball would be positioned and club would be grounded in the simulated address position. Point B is not nearer the hole than Point A, avoids interference from the cart path for lie, stance and area of intended swing and is not in a hazard or on a putting green.

Next, simulate an address position on the right side of the cart path (Diagrams #1 & #2, left side Diagram #3). Point C is not nearer the hole, avoids interference from the cart path and is not in a hazard or on a putting green.

Line A-B is shorter than line A-C, therefore, Point B is "the nearest point of relief."

Step 2 involves dropping the ball on a part of the course within one club-length of Point B, not nearer the hole than Point A, where there is no interference from the cart path for lie, stance and area of intended swing and is *not* in a hazard or on a putting green (shaded area).

The "nearest point of relief" and drop area will be different for a right-handed player than for a left-handed player.

Please keep in mind that the relief without penalty procedure in Rule 24-2b provides relief from the cart path, but does not guarantee a good lie, stance or area of intended swing. Thus, if Point B is in high rough or in the middle of a hedge, the player's best choice might be to play the ball as it lies from the cart path.

Remember to pick up your measuring club before dropping the ball – if it hits your club it must be redropped. And take a good look at the drop area. You have a triangle into which drop the ball. Where is the best lie? Don't drop it into a divot!

If the ball rolls more than 2 club lengths away from the point within the legal drop area or ends up nearer the hole,

you must re-drop. If it rolls away again, place the ball at the point it first touched the ground on the 2nd drop. (See Rule 20-2c for other, less common reasons why you must re-drop.)

Be smart and remember that you may drop anywhere in the triangle drop zone. If there are better lies near the drop zone, dropping near the edge of the zone and allowing the ball to roll a bit out of the zone may well get you a better lie.

EASY REMINDERS FOR RELIEF FROM A CART PATH

[Most of the time the 'Point of Nearest Relief' is obvious, so in everyday play and if you really understand the process, go ahead and mark only the spot where the club touches the ground, and estimate where you stand (#5) and the 'quarter circle' (#6). This speeds up play]

- 1 - Do Not Touch the Ball until you are absolutely sure of what you want to do.
- 2 - With the club you intend to use, simulate the stance you would take, and mark where the club touches the ground with a tee or coin.
- 3 - Do the same thing on the other side of the path.
- 4 - Decide which tee or coin is closest to where your ball lies. (The ball should still be there - see #1)
- 5 - With any club (including your driver) measure 1 club length from the correct marked spot and mark that spot also. It must not be nearer the hole.
- 6 - Your drop area is defined by an imaginary line between the two markers, and extends in a quarter-circle from the nearest point of relief mark backwards.
- 7 - NOW pick up your ball and drop it within the defined area.
- 8 - If it rolls nearer the hole or more than two club lengths from the point where it was dropped, it must be re-dropped, and if it rolls away again place the ball at the point it first touched the ground on the 2nd drop.
- 9 - Remember, you are allowed a quarter-circle plus two club lengths in which you ball may come to rest. Think ahead and get the best spot.
- 10 - Remember you must take full relief, or choose to take no relief, and that the relief is from the obstruction only, not tree roots or other factors that make the ball unplayable.

[Disclaimer: This series is designed to give easy to understand instructions on everyday situations at STWGC. They do not cover all the odd situations that can occur and you may read about in big tournaments. If you encounter something out of the ordinary, consult the Rule Book, get an opinion from a Rules Committee Member, or if necessary (especially in Stroke Play), play a 2nd ball and get a ruling as soon as you finish playing. Jan La Fetra]