

Rule of the Month - Dropping the Ball

The relevant rule for this situation is [Rule 20-2 Dropping and Re-Dropping](#). There are also a number of [decisions](#) on the rules of golf that apply.

The most common circumstances where you might need to drop the ball are:

1. Electing to taking relief from an immovable obstruction ([Rule 24-2](#)), an abnormal ground condition ([Rule 25-1](#)) or a wrong putting green ([Rule 25-3](#)).
2. Electing to declare your ball as unplayable ([Rule 28](#)).

Let's test our knowledge with a few questions - answers at the bottom.

- a. Do you have to take relief from an [obstruction](#)?
- b. How do you determine the [nearest point of relief](#)?
- c. What is the correct way to drop the ball?
- d. What do you do if the ball rolls away from where you drop it?
- e. Are you penalised if you drop the ball using an incorrect procedure?

Here are a few observations about this rule:

- The first thing to decide is if it is in your best interests to take relief or to play the ball as it lies.
- To do this you need to determine the nearest point of relief and assess the likely position that the ball will come to rest and decide if this is better or not from the original position.
- The nearest point of relief is not the nearest point of convenience. There is only one nearest point of relief.
- You must drop the ball within 1 club length of the nearest point of relief, not nearer the hole.
- If the ball comes to rest in a correct position you can then play the ball (you can even change the club and type of shot you were going to play).

Let's look at some specific examples that we might encounter at North Adelaide.

1. Interference from the water control box on the left hand side of the 11th fairway. The ball comes to rest just on the right side of the box.



- a. For a right handed player the nearest point of relief is just to the left of the box
- b. This may seem very inconvenient but under no circumstances can free relief be taken at the point on the right of the box.

2. On the path adjacent to the garden bed between the 12th green and the 13th tee.



- a. The nearest point of relief is actually behind the ball in the garden bed. The player may be advised to play the ball as it lies rather than take relief.
- b. The player is not entitled to take relief from both the path and the garden bed in a single procedure, unless they have tried to proceed under these Rules but find themselves back where they started.

- c. The nearest point of relief from the garden bed may be under the tree behind the garden bed.

Answers.

- a. Generally the player gets to choose if they want to take relief or not. Sometimes you must take relief for example if a GUR area is declared as compulsory relief. The rules of golf do not guarantee that you will be better off after taking relief so the player is well advised to decide carefully if taking relief is the best option for them in any given situation.
- b. The nearest point of relief is where there is no interference from the obstruction for the stroke the player would have made from the original position with the original club.
- c. To drop the ball you must stand erect with the ball at shoulder height and at arm's length. You cannot spin or toss the ball in any way at all.
- d. If the ball comes to rest in a wrong position ([Rule 20-2c](#)) it must be dropped again. If this happens again you must place the ball at the spot where the ball hit the course.
- e. If you drop the ball with an incorrect procedure there is no penalty if you correct your mistake before you play the ball. There is no limit as to how many times you can do this.

