

# 2025 USGA Rules Exam Answers

## 1. Correct Answer is C

According to the USGA Rules of Golf, a ball that lies in an area marked as Ground Under Repair (GUR) is considered to be in the Abnormal Course Condition area, regardless of whether it is on the fairway, rough, or any other part of the course.

Also see Rule 16.1a (Relief from Abnormal Course Conditions)

## 2. Correct Answer is B

According to Rule 5.3a of the USGA Rules of Golf, a player must start at their starting time and on the starting tee set by the Committee. The rule is very strict regarding late arrival:

- If a player arrives at the starting point, ready to play, within five minutes after their starting time, the penalty is two strokes in stroke play or loss of the first hole in match play.
- If the player arrives more than five minutes late, they are disqualified.

## 3. Correct Answer is False

Under the USGA Rules of Golf, a player is only entitled to free relief from an immovable obstruction (such as a sprinkler head) if the obstruction interferes with their stance, area of intended swing, or lie of the ball. However, there is a special exception for sprinkler heads near the green under the Model Local Rule F-5, which must be in effect for relief to apply:

This local rule provides free relief when:

1. The sprinkler head is within two club-lengths of the green.
2. The ball is within two club-lengths of the sprinkler head.
3. The sprinkler head intervenes on the line of play, and the ball is within two club-lengths of the green.

Since the scenario only states that the sprinkler head is within one club-length of the green and within two club-lengths of the ball but does not specify that the ball is within two club-lengths of the green, Player A would not automatically be entitled to relief unless the Model Local Rule F-5 is in effect and all conditions are met.

## 4. Correct Answer is C

Under the USGA Rules of Golf, a boundary fence is considered an integral part of the course and not an immovable obstruction, meaning there is no free relief allowed under Rule 16.1 (Abnormal Course Conditions). Since the player incorrectly assumed they were entitled to relief, lifted the ball, and played from a wrong place without returning it to its original position, the general penalty under Rule 14.7a applies.

## 5. Correct Answer is A

In a stroke play competition, the marker is responsible for recording the player's scores on the

scorecard and signing it to attest that the scores are correct. Since Player C is the marker for Player A, it is crucial that the scores for the completed holes are properly attested before Player C withdraws. The official should follow this process:

1. Have Player C sign the scorecard for the holes he has marked.
2. Ensure another player or official takes over as the marker for the remaining holes.
3. Immediately notify the Staff-In-Charge so they are aware of the situation and can handle any administrative needs related to Player C's withdrawal.

## **6. Correct Answer is False**

Under the USGA Rules of Golf, Rule 16.3 (Relief for Embedded Ball) does not apply in penalty areas. A player is not entitled to free relief for an embedded ball within a penalty area. The correct procedure would have been to either:

- Play the ball as it lies, or
- Take penalty relief under Rule 17.1d (Options for Relief from Penalty Area), which involves a one-stroke penalty.

Since the player took free relief incorrectly and played from a wrong place, the player incurs the general penalty (two strokes in stroke play) under Rule 14.7.

## **7. Correct Answer is B**

In stroke play, Rule 6.1b(2) states that a player must play a hole from inside the teeing area. By playing the 8th hole instead of the 6th, both players played from the wrong teeing area and thus receive the General Penalty of 2 strokes. If they don't correct their mistake before completing their next hole they are both disqualified!!

## **8. Correct Answer is False**

Under the USGA Rules of Golf, Rule 16.1 provides free relief from immovable obstructions (e.g., bird houses) only if the obstruction physically interferes with the player's stance, area of intended swing, or lie of the ball.

However, there is no free relief simply because the obstruction is on the line of play unless a Model Local Rule is in effect that specifically allows for such relief (e.g., relief from Temporary Immovable Obstructions, or TIOs, which is not the case here).

Since the bird house is 10 yards in front of the ball and only on the line of play, the player is not entitled to free relief, making the answer False.

## **9. The correct answer is: C**

Under Rule 12.2b(1) of the USGA Rules of Golf, a player must not deliberately touch sand in a bunker with their club in making a practice swing. Doing so is a breach of the rule.

In match play, the general penalty is loss of hole.

While a player in match play can choose to overlook a breach of the Rules by their opponent (Rule 3.2d(4)), this applies only to situations not involving serious breaches or where there is no advantage gained. However, the act of grounding the club in a bunker is a specific rules violation that cannot be waived by an opponent, as it involves a situation where a rule has clearly been breached.

Therefore, Player A incurs the general penalty, which in match play is loss of the hole, regardless of Player B's attempt to overlook the breach.

## **10. The correct answer is: C**

In a USGA sanctioned event, when there is a dispute between a player and an official regarding a ruling, the proper procedure is to seek a second opinion from the Official-in-Charge. This approach ensures that the ruling is made fairly and in accordance with the Rules of Golf.

Key Points:

- Under Rule 18.2a, a ball is considered lost if it is not found within 3 minutes of starting the search. If the ball is not found, the player must proceed under stroke and distance.
- For a player to take penalty area relief under Rule 17.1, there must be virtual certainty (95% or higher probability) that the ball is in the penalty area. If this standard is not met, the ball is lost.
- Since the official is unsure if the ball is in the penalty area, and the player disagrees with the ruling, the best course of action is to involve the Official-in-Charge to provide a final decision.

## **11. The Correct Answer is False**

Under the USGA Rules of Golf, when a player hits a provisional ball, the player is allowed a single 3-minute search period to find both the original ball and the provisional ball if they are in the same area.

**Explanation:**

- Rule 18.3c(2) specifies that if both balls are in the same area, the player has 3 minutes total to search for either ball, not 3 minutes for each ball.
- If the original ball is found within 3 minutes, the provisional ball must be abandoned.
- If the original ball is not found within 3 minutes, the provisional ball becomes the ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance.

## **12. The correct answer is: A**

**Explanation:**

Under Rule 7.4 of the USGA Rules of Golf, if a ball cannot be identified, a player (or their caddie) is allowed to lift the ball to identify it, provided they mark its position first. If the ball turns out not to belong to the player, it must be replaced without penalty.

Since Player A's caddie was searching for Player A's ball and needed to identify the ball found in the rough, this action is permitted. Upon discovering that it was not Player A's ball but Player B's, the caddie correctly notified Player B, and the ball can be replaced without penalty.

There is no penalty because the Rules of Golf allow this as part of the search and identification process.

### **13. The correct answer is: True**

Under Rule 3.2b(1) of the USGA Rules of Golf, in match play, a player may concede their opponent's next stroke, a hole, or the entire match. A concession of the next stroke can be made verbally or by an action that clearly indicates concession, and once made, it cannot be declined or withdrawn.

In this scenario, Player A reasonably misunderstood Player B's statement as a concession of the next stroke. Since this misunderstanding was reasonable, there is no penalty for lifting the ball without marking it. However, since the stroke was not actually conceded, the ball must be replaced on its original spot.

The answer is True, as the rules provide leniency for reasonable misunderstandings in match play, and the ball can be replaced without penalty.

### **14. The correct answer is A**

#### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 3.3b(3) of the USGA Rules of Golf, once a player has returned their scorecard, and left the scoring area, the scores on the card are considered final. Any mistakes, including incorrect scores for a hole, result in a penalty:

- If the score recorded for a hole is higher than the actual score, the higher score stands (no penalty).
- If the score recorded for a hole is lower than the actual score, the player is disqualified.
- If the player leaves the scoring area (typically defined by a physical boundary or an official's instruction), the scorecard cannot be changed.

Since Player A left the scoring area and then realized the mistake, the official must enforce the disqualification penalty.

### **15. The correct answer is: B**

#### **Explanation:**

When taking lateral relief from a red penalty area under Rule 17.1d(3), the player must drop a ball within a two club-length relief area and it must come to rest within that relief area.

Since the ball rolled more than two club-lengths from the reference point and the player played it without re-dropping, the player played from a wrong place.

### Penalty Breakdown:

1. The player already incurred one penalty stroke for taking penalty area relief.
2. By playing from a wrong place, the player incurs the general penalty (two strokes in stroke play) under Rule 14.7.

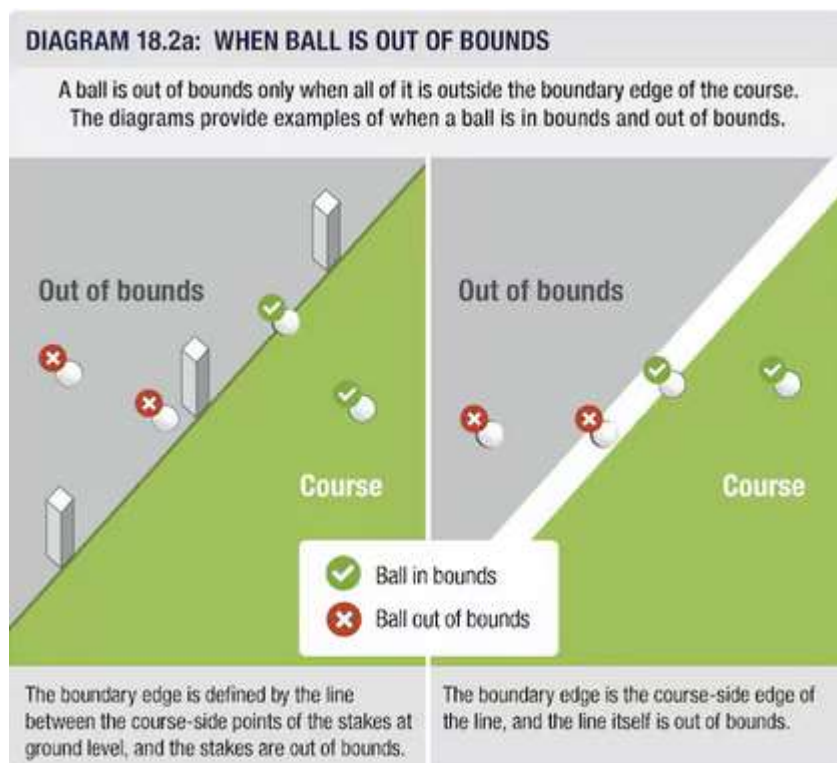
However, since the general penalty (two strokes) also covers the original penalty for playing from the wrong place, the player is only penalized with the general penalty of two strokes, not a total of three strokes.

## 16. The correct answer is: False

### Explanation:

According to the USGA Rules of Golf, out of bounds is defined by the course-side edge of white stakes or fence posts at ground level.

- The stakes or fence posts themselves are not considered out of bounds, only the line they define is.
- Any ball that is beyond the line defined by the course-side edges of the stakes or posts is considered out of bounds, but a ball that is touching or on the line is still in bounds.
- Here's diagram that helps understand this.



## **17. The correct answer is: C**

### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 14.3b of the USGA Rules of Golf, when taking relief, the player is generally required to drop a ball from knee height in the relief area.

If the player places the ball instead of dropping it as required and then makes a stroke, the player has played from a wrong place.

### **Penalty:**

- The general penalty for playing from a wrong place in stroke play is two strokes (Rule 14.7a).
- The only situation where placing a ball is allowed is when the rules specifically permit it (e.g., when replacing a ball on a spot), which does not apply to taking relief scenarios.

## **18. The correct answer is: B**

### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 11.1b of the USGA Rules of Golf, if a player's ball in motion is deliberately deflected or stopped by a person, the player must estimate where the ball would have come to rest if it had not been deflected.

- The player must place a ball on the estimated spot if the original ball is not immediately recoverable.
- Since the ball would have come to rest in a bunker, the ball must be placed in the bunker at the estimated spot.

This rule applies to any deliberate action by a spectator or outside influence, ensuring the player is not penalized for outside interference. Therefore, option B is the correct ruling.

## **19. The correct answer is False**

Under Rule 4.1b(4) of the USGA Rules of Golf, if a player loses a club during a round (other than being damaged or broken during the normal course of play), the player is not permitted to replace it unless:

- The club is broken or significantly damaged during the normal course of play (not through abuse).
- The player may only replace it if it is promptly done and without unreasonable delay.

Since the club was lost and not damaged, the player is not allowed to replace it, and attempting to do so would result in a penalty under the Rules of Golf.

## **20. The correct answer is: C**

### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 8.1a(1) of the USGA Rules of Golf, a player is not allowed to improve the conditions affecting the stroke by moving, bending, or breaking any growing or attached natural object (such as a branch with water on it).

By removing water from the branch through practice swings, the player improved the conditions affecting the stroke by eliminating the distraction of the water. This constitutes a breach of Rule 8.1a, which results in the general penalty.

### **Penalty:**

- The general penalty in stroke play is two strokes.
- The penalty is applied because the player altered the conditions in a way that could provide an advantage.

## **21. The correct answer is: True**

### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 14.7a of the USGA Rules of Golf, when a player plays a ball from a wrong place in stroke play, the player incurs the general penalty, which is two strokes.

In this situation:

- The player incorrectly played from the spot where the ball was set aside, rather than replacing it on its original marked spot.
- This constitutes playing from a wrong place.
- The general penalty applies, and the player must continue play without correcting the mistake.

The player may not return to correct the mistake, as the Rules require the player to accept the stroke made and the penalty applied.

## **22. The correct answer is: A**

### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 15.2a(1) of the USGA Rules of Golf, a player (or their caddie) may remove a movable obstruction (such as a sand wedge) anytime, even if a ball is in motion.

Since the sand wedge was not intentionally placed to indicate the line of play and was only set down casually, there is no penalty for removing it while the ball is in motion.

Additionally, the Rules of Golf allow for the removal of the flagstick without penalty, provided it is done in a reasonable manner.

### **23. The correct answer is: B**

#### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 17.1c of the USGA Rules of Golf, for a player to take penalty area relief, there must be virtual certainty (95% or more probability) that the ball is in the penalty area. In this scenario, the group was 99% certain, so taking relief initially was correct.

However, once the player found the original ball outside the penalty area:

- The player was not allowed to play the original ball since they had already put a new ball in play under the penalty area relief rule.
- By playing the original ball after declaring it as the ball they wished to score with, the player played a wrong ball and thus played from a wrong place.

#### **Penalty:**

- The general penalty in stroke play is two strokes (Rule 14.7a).
- Additionally, when a player plays two balls under Rule 20.1c(3), the player must proceed correctly. Since the player made an incorrect choice, the general penalty applies.

### **What about a declaring the dropped ball to be a “provisional.”**

Under Rule 18.3, a provisional ball may only be played if the ball might be lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds.

- Since the group was 99% certain the ball was in the red penalty area, Rule 17.1c applies, and the player must either:
- Take penalty area relief under a one-stroke penalty, or
- Continue searching for the original ball within the 3-minute search time.

### **24. The correct answer is False**

#### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 9.4b of the USGA Rules of Golf, if a player accidentally causes their ball to move while it is in play in the general area, the player incurs a one-stroke penalty, and the ball must be replaced to its original spot.

The correct procedure is:

1. Add a one-stroke penalty to the player's score.
2. Replace the ball on its original spot. If the exact spot is not known, the player must estimate the spot.

If the player plays the ball from the new spot without replacing it, they would incur an additional penalty for playing from a wrong place under Rule 14.7.



Therefore, the statement is False because the player is not allowed to play the ball from the new spot. The ball must be replaced to avoid an additional penalty.

### **25. The correct answer is: C**

A player may concede a hole to their opponent at any time prior to the start or conclusion of the hole.

#### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 3.2b(2) of the USGA Rules of Golf, in match play, a player may concede a hole to their opponent at any time before the hole is completed. This concession can be made either before the hole begins or at any point during play of the hole, and it is final once made.

### **26. The correct answer is: True**

#### **Explanation:**

The "One Ball Rule" is an optional Local Rule (Model Local Rule G-4) that may be implemented at USGA events and other high-level competitions.

#### **What the One Ball Rule Requires:**

- The player must use the same brand and model of golf ball throughout the round.
- If a player substitutes a ball that is a different make or model, they incur the general penalty (two strokes in stroke play or loss of hole in match play) for each hole where the rule is breached.
- The rule is typically applied in professional and elite amateur events to maintain consistency and fairness.
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### **27. The correct answer is: C**

#### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 15.1 of the USGA Rules of Golf, loose impediments are natural objects that are not fixed, growing, solidly embedded, or sticking to the ball. These include:

- Stones, loose grass, leaves, branches, and twigs (as long as they are not attached or growing).
- Plugs of compacted soil, such as aeration plugs, are considered loose impediments and can be removed.

#### **Why the Other Options Are Incorrect:**

- Option A: Leaves and twigs that are still attached and/or growing are not loose impediments because they are not loose.
- Option B: Loose blades of grass that are sticking to the ball are not considered loose impediments under the Rules of Golf.

## **28. The correct answer is: C**

### **Explanation:**

The USGA and MGA (Metropolitan Golf Association) typically follow a Pace of Play Policy, which usually involves the following steps:

1. Warning: If a group is behind pace, the official should inform the group and encourage them to catch up.
2. Monitoring: The official should then monitor the group's progress.
3. Escalation: If the group does not improve their pace, they may be subject to timing and potential penalties if they do not comply.

### **Why This is the Best Approach:**

- The group is only 5 minutes behind pace, which is not yet a severe breach.
- The official's role at this stage is to warn the group, giving them a chance to improve their pace.
- By radioing the Staff in Charge, the official keeps the tournament officials informed and allows for consistent application of the pace of play policy.

### **Why the Other Options are Incorrect:**

- Option A: Simply waiting for instructions may delay action and potentially worsen the pace of play.
- Option B: Penalizing the group immediately is too severe without giving a warning first, unless the group has already been warned previously.

## **29. The Correct Answer is: False**

### **Explanation:**

Under Rule 16.3b of the USGA Rules of Golf, a player cannot take relief for an embedded ball when the ball has been dropped while taking relief from a different condition, such as an immovable obstruction.

### **Key Points:**

- Relief for an embedded ball under Rule 16.3 is only available when a ball is embedded in its own pitch mark in the general area, as a result of a stroke.
- When a ball is dropped to take relief and plugs into the ground, it is not considered embedded under the rule.
- If the ball is in the relief area but in a poor lie, the player must play it as it lies or, if allowed, take additional relief under the applicable rule (e.g., unplayable ball relief).

## **30. The correct answer is: A**

## Explanation:

Under Rule 14.4 of the USGA Rules of Golf, a ball is considered in play when it has been replaced on its original spot, even if the ball-marker has not been removed.

- The marker remaining on the ground does not affect the status of the ball.
- The player is not penalized for leaving the ball-marker in place, although it is recommended to remove it to avoid confusion.

## **31. The correct answers are A, B, C (but not D)**

A is Correct under Rule 17.1d(1)

B is Correct under Rule 17.1d(2)

C is Correct under Rule 17.1.d(3)

D is INCORRECT because you may only declare a ball to be unplayable if it is NOT in a Penalty Area