

BOUNDS, MARGINS AND COURSE HIERARCHY

The game of golf has specialized terminology and Rules for determining a ball's status regarding which of the specific Rules apply when a ball lies on one of the parts of the course. Thus, knowing the defined parts of the course and their margins are essential to applying the Rules. Furthermore, when a ball lies in contact with two or more individual parts of the course, there is a Course Hierarchy for determining which Rule applies to the ball. To completely determine this Course Hierarchy, it is necessary to mention parts of the several relevant definitions relating to their specific bounds and margins and when a ball is considered to lie in that part of the course.

- Course - The "course" is the whole area within any boundaries established by the Committee.
- Water Hazard - When the margin of a water hazard is defined by stakes, the stakes are inside the water hazard, and the margin of the hazard is defined by the nearest outside points of the stakes at ground level. When both stakes and lines are used to indicate a water hazard, the stakes identify the hazard and the lines define the hazard margin. When the margin of a water hazard is defined by a line on the ground, the line itself is in the water hazard. The margin of a water hazard extends vertically upwards and downwards. A ball is in a water hazard when it lies in or any part of it touches the water hazard.
- Bunker - Grass-covered ground bordering or within a bunker, including a stacked turf face (whether grass-covered or earthen), is not part of the bunker. A wall or lip of the bunker not covered with grass is part of the bunker. The margin of a bunker extends vertically downwards, but not upwards. A ball is in a bunker when it lies in or any part of it touches the bunker.
- Putting Green - A ball is on the putting green when any part of it touches the putting green.
- Through the Green - "Through the green" is the whole area of the course except: (i) the teeing ground and putting green of the hole being played; and (ii) all hazards on the course.
- Out of Bounds - When out of bounds is defined by reference to stakes or a fence or as being beyond stakes or a fence, the out of bounds line is determined by the nearest inside points at ground level of the stakes or fence posts (excluding angled supports). When both stakes and lines are used to indicate out of bounds, the stakes identify out of bounds and the lines define out of bounds. When out of bounds is defined by a line on the ground, the line itself is out of bounds. The out of bounds line extends vertically upwards and downwards. A ball is out of bounds when all of it lies out of bounds.

- Teeing Ground - The “teeing ground” is a rectangular area two club-lengths in depth, the front and the sides of which are defined by the outside limits of two tee-markers. A ball is outside the teeing ground when all of it lies outside the teeing ground.

The Course Hierarchy of Rules is this:

When a ball lies in contact with two or more of the above listed parts of the course, for the purpose of applying the Rules it is deemed to lie on the part of the course higher on the list excepting when a ball is (i) completely out of bounds, (ii) completely outside the teeing ground, and (iii) simultaneously in contact with two or more of a teeing ground, a bunker and a putting green.

For a ball in the situation of exception (i), the ball lies out of bounds, for exception (ii) the ball is not within the teeing ground and for exception (iii) there is no guidance in the Rules for determining which condition applies. Fortunately it would not be physically possible for a ball to lie in this latter situation.