



Marking Your Ball and Ball Markers

Marking Your Ball

The spot of a ball to be lifted and replaced must be marked. To mark your ball means to

- Place a ball marker right behind or right next to your ball, or
 - Hold a club on the ground right behind or right next to your ball.
- 14.1.a,b

Five Ways to Get a Penalty

- **Penalty.** If you lift your ball without marking its spot, mark its spot in a wrong way, or make a stroke with a ball marker left in place, you get *one penalty stroke*.
- **Penalty.** If you are asked to move your marker by someone who is putting, and you forget to move it back, then putt from the wrong spot, you get a *2 stroke penalty*.

Taking Relief Under a Rule: When lifting your ball, you are *not* required to mark the spot.

Who May Lift Your Ball: Your ball may be lifted *only by you or anyone you authorize*, but you must *give such authorization each time* before your ball is lifted rather than giving it generally for the round. Exception: Your *caddie* may lift your ball on a putting green without authorization.

Ball Marker. An *artificial* object when used to mark the spot of a ball to be lifted, such as a tee, a coin, an object made to be a ball marker, or another small piece of equipment. [\[USGA Def\]](#)

[Equipment.](#) Anything used, worn, held, or carried by the player or the player's caddie.

Penalty. If you mark your ball in a wrong way by using a marker that is *not artificial*, you get a one-stroke penalty. If you mark the spot of your ball with a natural object or make a stroke with a ball-marker left in place, you get one penalty stroke. [\[Rule 14.1.a\]](#)

Accidental Marker Movement. There is no penalty for accidentally causing your ball-marker to move. If this happens, you must either replace the ball-maker or replace your ball on its original spot before making your next stroke (see Rule 13.1d(1)). [\[Rules FAQs\]](#) [\[Rule 13.1d.\]](#)

Accidental Ball Movement. If you move your ball while trying to mark it, simply replace the ball without penalty. [\[Rule 13.1d.\]](#)

In Play: When a Rule refers to a ball marker being moved, this means a ball marker in place on the course to mark the spot of a ball that has been lifted and not yet replaced. [\[Def\]](#)

When a ball marker is in place to mark the spot of a ball in play:

- If the ball has not been lifted, it is still in play, and
- If the ball has been lifted and replaced, it is in play even if the ball marker has not been removed.

Large Ball Markers. When poker chips, etc., are used near the cup or another player's line, they can be of concern to other players. Consider also carrying a smaller object for a marker, or for the player putting to have the chip moved. This might be a putter length on longer putts.

Interference. You may ask another player to mark their ball if it interferes with your line. [\[15.3\]](#)