

Reference: USGA website at <http://www.usga.org/playing/rules/books/rules.html>
(2/16/09)

*Rule 26. Water Hazards (Including
Lateral Water Hazards)*

Definitions

All defined terms are in *italics* and are listed alphabetically in the Definitions section.

26-1. Relief for Ball in Water Hazard

It is a question of fact whether a ball that has not been found after having been struck toward a [water hazard](#) is in the [hazard](#). In order to apply this Rule, it must be known or virtually certain that the ball is in the [hazard](#). In the absence of such knowledge or certainty, the player must proceed under Rule [27-1](#).

If a ball is in a [water hazard](#) or if it is known or virtually certain that a ball that has not been found is in a [water hazard](#) (whether the ball lies in water or not), the player may **under penalty of one stroke**:

- a. Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)); or
- b. Drop a ball behind the [water hazard](#), keeping the point at which the original ball last crossed the margin of the [water hazard](#) directly between the [hole](#) and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind the [water hazard](#) the ball may be dropped; or
- c. As additional options available only if the ball last crossed the margin of a [lateral water hazard](#), drop a ball outside the [water hazard](#) within two club-lengths of and not nearer the [hole](#) than (i) the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the [water hazard](#) or (ii) a point on the opposite margin of the [water hazard](#) equidistant from the [hole](#).

When proceeding under this Rule, the player may lift and clean his ball or [substitute](#) a ball.

(Prohibited actions when ball is in hazard - see Rule [13-4](#).)

(Ball moving in water in a water hazard - see Rule [14-6](#).)

26-2. Ball Played Within Water Hazard

a. Ball Comes to Rest in Same or Another Water Hazard

If a ball played from within a [water hazard](#) comes to rest in the same or another [water hazard](#) after the [stroke](#), the player may:

(i) proceed under Rule [26-1](#)a. If, after dropping in the [hazard](#), the player elects not to play the dropped ball, he may:

(a) proceed under Rule [26-1](#)b, or if applicable Rule [26-1](#)c, adding the additional penalty of one stroke prescribed by the Rule and using as the reference point the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of this [hazard](#) before it came to rest in this [hazard](#); or

(b) add an additional penalty of one stroke and play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the last [stroke](#) from outside a [water hazard](#) was made (see Rule [20-5](#)); or

(ii) proceed under Rule [26-1](#)b, or if applicable Rule [26-1](#)c; or

(iii) under penalty of one stroke, play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the last [stroke](#) from outside a [water hazard](#) was made (see Rule [20-5](#)).

b. Ball Lost or Unplayable Outside Hazard or Out of Bounds

If a ball played from within a [water hazard](#) is [lost](#) or deemed unplayable outside the [hazard](#) or is [out of bounds](#), the player may, after taking a penalty of one stroke under Rule [27-1](#) or [28a](#):

(i) play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot in the [hazard](#) from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)); or

(ii) proceed under Rule [26-1](#)b, or if applicable Rule [26-1](#)c, adding the additional penalty of one stroke prescribed by the Rule and using as the reference point the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the [hazard](#) before it came to rest in the [hazard](#); or

(iii) add an additional penalty of one stroke and play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the last [stroke](#) from outside a [water hazard](#) was made (see Rule [20-5](#)).

Note 1: When proceeding under Rule [26-2b](#), the player is not required to drop a ball under Rule [27-1](#) or [28a](#). If he does drop a ball, he is not required to play it. He may alternatively proceed under Rule [26-2b\(ii\)](#) or [\(iii\)](#).

Note 2: If a ball played from within a [water hazard](#) is deemed unplayable outside the [hazard](#), nothing in Rule [26-2b](#) precludes the player from proceeding under Rule [28b](#) or [c](#).

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

[Match play](#) - Loss of hole; [Stroke play](#) - Two strokes.