

Reference: USGA website at <http://www.usga.org/playing/rules/books/rules.html>
(1/15/09)

*Rule 27. Ball Lost or Out of
Bounds; Provisional Ball*

Definitions

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

27-1. Stroke and Distance; Ball Out of Bounds; Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes

■a. Proceeding Under Stroke and Distance

At any time, a player may, **under penalty of one stroke**, play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)), i.e., proceed under penalty of stroke and distance.

Except as otherwise provided in the [Rules](#), if a player makes a [stroke](#) at a ball from the spot at which the original ball was last played, he is deemed to have proceeded **under penalty of stroke and distance**.

■b. Ball Out of Bounds

If a ball is [out of bounds](#), the player must play a ball, **under penalty of one stroke**, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)).

■c. Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes

If a ball is [lost](#) as a result of not being found or identified as his by the player within five minutes after the player's [Side](#) or his or their [caddies](#) have begun to search for it, the player must play a ball, **under penalty of one stroke**, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule [20-5](#)).

Exceptions:

1. If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball that has not been found is in an [obstruction](#) (Rule [24-3](#)) or is in an [abnormal ground condition](#) (Rule [25-1c](#)), the player may proceed under the applicable [Rule](#).

2. If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball that has not been found has been moved by an [outside agency](#) (Rule [18-1](#)) or is in a [water hazard](#) (Rule [26-1](#)), the player must proceed under the applicable [Rule](#).

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE [27-1](#):

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

27-2. Provisional Ball

■a. Procedure

If a ball may be [lost](#) outside a [water hazard](#) or may be [out of bounds](#), to save time the player may play another ball provisionally in accordance with Rule [27-1](#). The player must inform his opponent in match play or his [marker](#) or a [fellow-competitor](#) in stroke play that he intends to play a [provisional ball](#), and he must play it before he or his [partner](#) goes forward to search for the original ball.

If he fails to do so and plays another ball, that ball is not a [provisional ball](#) and becomes the [ball in play](#) under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule [27-1](#)); the original ball is [lost](#).

(Order of play from teeing ground - see Rule [10-3](#).)

Note: If a [provisional ball](#) played under Rule [27-2a](#) might be [lost](#) outside a [water hazard](#) or [out of bounds](#), the player may play another [provisional ball](#). If another [provisional ball](#) is played, it bears the same relationship to the previous [provisional ball](#) as the first [provisional ball](#) bears to the original ball.

■b. When Provisional Ball Becomes Ball in Play

The player may play a [provisional ball](#) until he reaches the place where the original ball is likely to be. If he makes a [stroke](#) with the [provisional ball](#) from the place where the original ball is likely to be or from a point nearer the [hole](#) than that place, the original ball is [lost](#) and the [provisional ball](#) becomes the [ball in play](#) under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule [27-1](#)).

If the original ball is [lost](#) outside a [water hazard](#) or is [out of bounds](#), the [provisional ball](#) becomes the [ball in play](#), under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule [27-1](#)).

If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball is in a [water hazard](#), the player must proceed in accordance with Rule [26-1](#).

Exception: If it is known or virtually certain that the original ball is in an [obstruction](#) (Rule [24-3](#)) or an [abnormal ground condition](#) (Rule [25-1c](#)), the player may proceed under the applicable [Rule](#).

■ c. When Provisional Ball to Be Abandoned

If the original ball is neither [lost](#) nor [out of bounds](#), the player must abandon the [provisional ball](#) and continue playing the original ball. If he makes any further [strokes](#) at the [provisional ball](#), he is playing a [wrong ball](#) and the provisions of Rule [15-3](#) apply.

Note: If a player plays a [provisional ball](#) under Rule [27-2a](#), the [strokes](#) made after this Rule has been invoked with a [provisional ball](#) subsequently abandoned under Rule [27-2c](#) and [penalty strokes](#) incurred solely by playing that ball are disregarded.