



# WGA Golf Rules Series: Penalty Areas

All hazards are now referred to as penalty areas. Yellow stakes generally mark areas that the golfer must cross rather than go around; red stakes designate lateral penalty areas. Penalty areas with yellow stakes will usually have two sets of stakes with a penalty area between them—think the pond on hole #2 and the ravine on hole #7.

## **Penalty Areas with Yellow Stakes:**

If the Ball was hit from the far side of the penalty area (penalty area between the ball and the green), options are:

1. Hit again from the same spot (1 penalty stroke)
2. Drop the ball outside the hazard with the hazard between the ball and the green. The point where the ball entered the hazard directly on the line between the drop and the flag. There is no limit to how far back the player can go on this line, even if it improves the lie (eg fairway vs. rough).(1 penalty stroke).
3. Hit the ball out of the hazard (no penalty). You are no longer prohibited from grounding your club in the hazard.

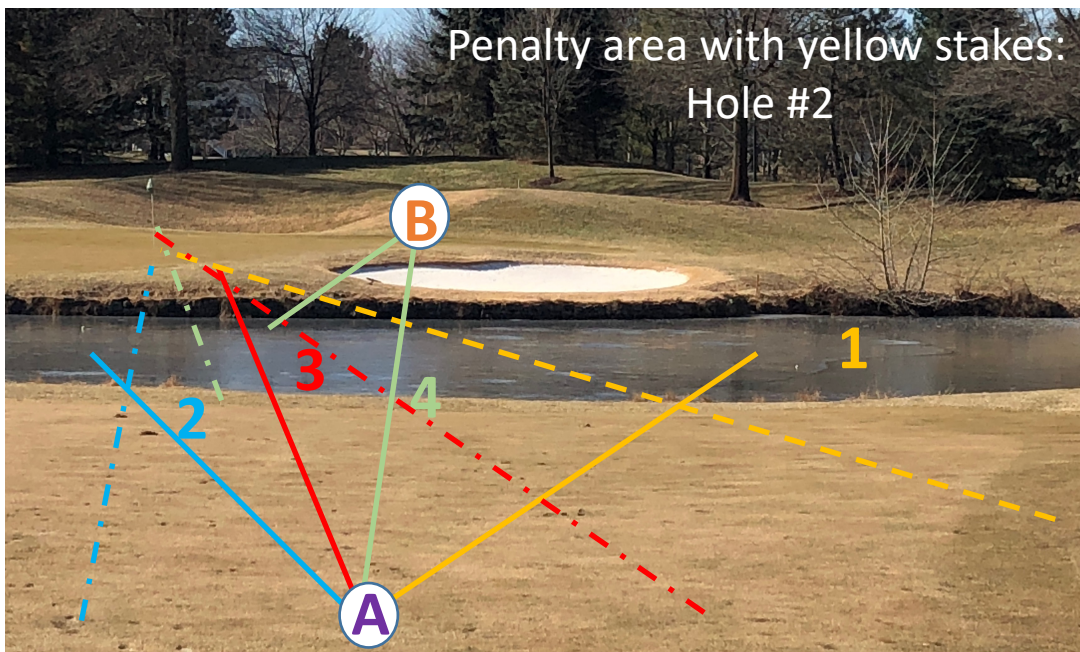
The options are the same whether the ball entered the penalty area from the near or far side of the penalty area relative to the green (ie didn't clear the penalty area or cleared it then rolled or bounced back in). In either case, Option 2 is available only from the side of penalty area furthest from the green. (The player must remove the ball from the hazard to take this form of relief. If the ball entered the hazard from the green side, the line between the point where the ball entered the hazard and the flag is all within the hazard until you exit the hazard on the fairway side). You can play the ball where it lies on either side of the penalty area.

If the Ball was hit from the the green side of the penalty area but then re-entered the penalty area (example a chip from behind the hole that rolls back into the hazard), options are:

1. Hit again from the same spot (1 penalty stroke)
2. Hit the ball out of the hazard (no penalty). You are no longer prohibited from grounding your club in the hazard.

If you try to hit your ball out of the penalty area but the ball does not exit the penalty area, you still have the same options available for the subsequent shot. Once the ball crosses the line to exit the penalty area, options from that point forward are based on that shot, not the shot that put the ball into the penalty area.

You can never take an unplayable lie or drop 2 club lengths from the point where the ball entered the penalty area when there are yellow stakes.



Four players hit from spot A. **Players 1 and 2** hit into the water. **Player 3** ball crosses the greenside hazard line but rolls back into the penalty area (water or grass). **Player 4** ball clears the penalty area to spot B but goes back into the penalty area on their next shot.

What options are available to each player?

Players 1 & 2:

1. Hit again from spot A (1 stroke penalty)
2. Drop the ball outside the penalty area with the point where the ball entered the penalty area directly on the line between the drop and the flag. There is no limit to how far back the player can go on this line, even if it improves the lie (eg fairway vs. rough). (1 stroke penalty)

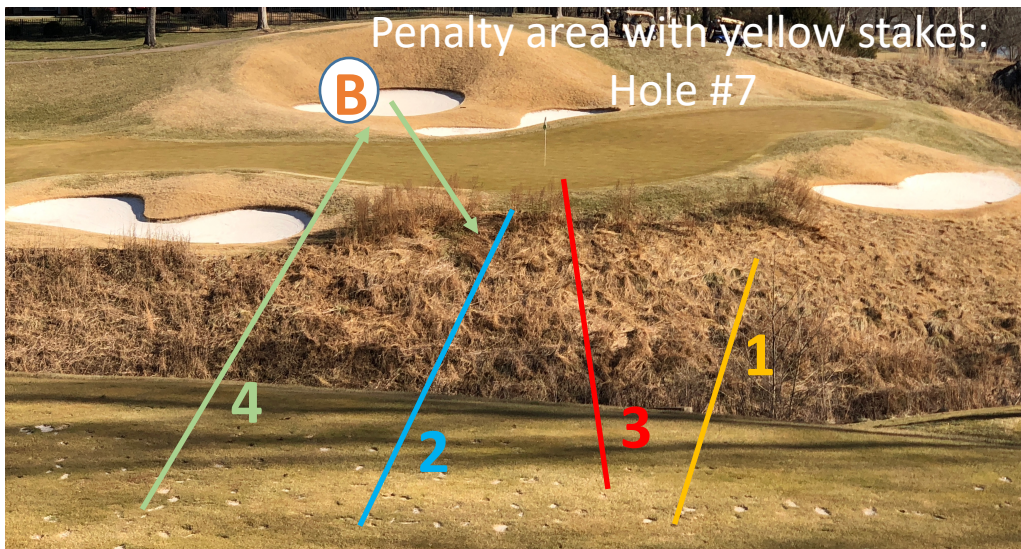
Player 3

1. Play the ball where it lies (no penalty)\*\*
2. Drop the ball outside the penalty area with the point where the ball entered the penalty area directly on the line between the drop and the flag. There is no limit to how far back the player can go on this line even if it improves the lie (eg fairway vs. rough). Player must drop on the fairway side of the penalty area in order to take the ball out of the penalty area (1 stroke penalty)
3. Hit again from the spot of the previous shot either spot A (1 stroke penalty)

Player 4

1. Play the ball where it lies if it's inside the penalty area line but not in the water (no penalty)\*\*
2. Hit again from spot B (1 stroke penalty)

*\*\*if the shot doesn't exit the penalty area, each subsequent shot is based on the spot where the ball originally entered the penalty area (the spot where it came back from the green into the penalty area) until the ball exits the penalty area. And yes, all the strokes count.*



Players hit from tee box. **Player 1** is clearly out of play. **Player 2** doesn't know if they can find their ball. **Player 3** ball crosses the greenside penalty area line and rolls back into the penalty area but is findable. **Player 4** ball lands in the bunker spot B but goes back into the penalty area on their next shot.

What options are available to each player?

*No one has the option to drop within 2 club lengths of where ball entered the hazard or take an unplayable lie. The option to drop along the line back from the flag to the point where the ball entered the hazard isn't practical due to hole layout.*

Player 1: Hit again from the tee or drop zone (1 stroke penalty)

Players 2:

1. Hit again from tee/drop zone (1 stroke penalty)
2. Take a provisional. Per USGA rules, provisionals are not allowed for water hazards. However, WGA association rule will allow a provisional to maintain pace of play. See provisional notes.

Player 3:

1. If accessible, play the ball where it lies (no penalty)
2. Hit again from the teebox or the drop area (1 stroke penalty)

Player 4:

1. If accessible, play the ball where it lies (no penalty)
2. Hit again from spot B (1 stroke penalty)

*Provisional:*

- a) *If the original ball is found, it MUST be played. If the provisional is a great shot, opponent is entitled to find the original ball and force player to use it.*
- b) *If the provisional is out of play, hit again from tee or drop zone. If original ball is found, no additional strokes for the out of play provisional or subsequent shot.*

## Penalty Areas with Red Stakes (lateral penalty areas):

Generally, penalty areas that you have the option to go around instead of across will be marked as lateral penalty areas with red stakes. The lakes on 4, 8, and 16 are examples of lateral penalty areas because you can plan around them.

If your ball enters a red-staked penalty area, you have the yellow-staked penalty area options plus the additional option to drop a ball two club lengths from where you entered the penalty area. (The option to drop a ball two club lengths from the opposite side of the penalty area has now been eliminated.)

Important Note: your ball enters the penalty area where it **last crossed** the penalty area line, regardless of whether it touched land.

A player hitting over a lateral penalty area potentially crosses the hazard line twice: (a) on the near side when they enter the penalty area and (b) on the far side when they exit the penalty area having crossed the penalty area.

If a ball crosses the far penalty area line then rolls out bounces back into the penalty area, the ball exited the penalty area then re-entered the penalty area from the far side and the player may drop on the far side of the penalty area.

However, if the ball lands short of the penalty area line, it never exited the penalty area, so it entered the penalty area on the side furthest from the green. The player's options are determined based on that entry point.

You can take an unplayable lie in a red-staked penalty area. The ball must stay within the 2 club length relief area when dropped; it can no longer be dropped in the relief area but roll up to 2 club lengths from where it hit the ground.

Penalty area with red stakes:  
Hole #5



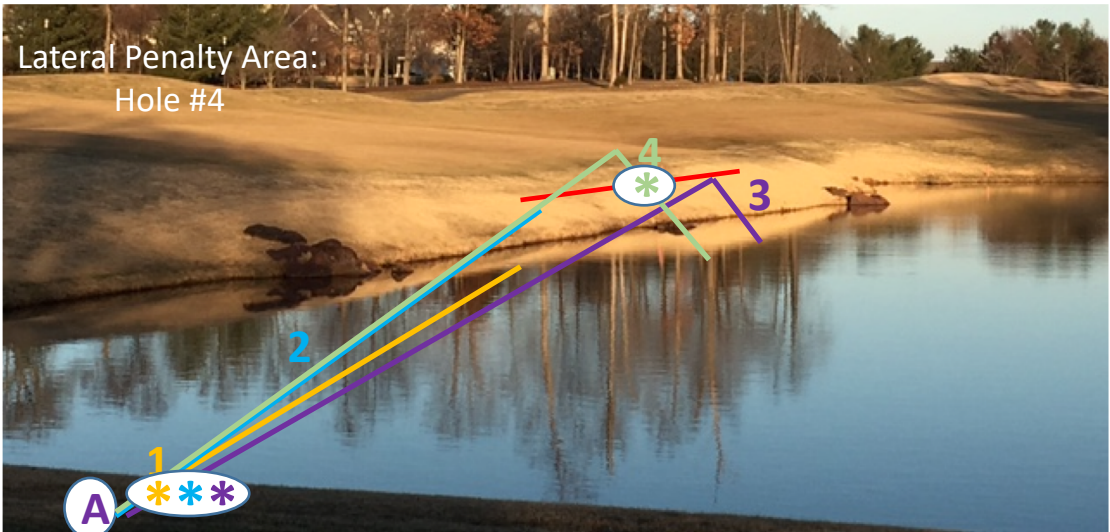
Three players hit from the teebox. **Player 1** hits into the water. **Player 2's** ball crosses the greenside penalty area line but rolls back into the penalty area (water or grass). **Player 3** hits into the bunker but their bunker shot goes into the lake.

What options are available to each player? (all options incur 1 stroke penalty)

1. Hit again from spot A – available to all players
2. Drop the ball outside the penalty area with the point where the ball entered the penalty area directly on the line between the drop and the flag—not available to any players since they would have to hit out of the lake.
3. Play the ball where it lies\*\*—available only to Player 2 and only if their ball stopped short of the water.
4. Drop a ball two club lengths from where it entered the penalty area—available to all players

*\*\*if the shot doesn't exit the penalty area, each subsequent shot is based on the spot where the ball originally entered the penalty area (the spot where it came back from the green into the penalty area) until the ball exits the penalty area. And yes, all the strokes count.*

Lateral Penalty Area:  
Hole #4



Players hit from tee box. **Player 1** goes directly into the water. **Player 2** lands inside the red line and sticks. **Player 3** lands inside the red line and rolls back into the water. **Player 4** crosses the red line and rolls back into the water. What options are available to each player?

1. Hit again from spot A – available to all players
2. Drop the ball outside the penalty area with the point where the ball entered the penalty area directly on the line between the drop and the flag—not available to any players; there’s no place on the green where the line from the flag to the penalty area line isn’t in the lake
3. Play the ball where it lies\*\*—available only to Player 2
4. Drop a ball two club lengths from where it entered the penalty area—available to all players

**BUT**—the asterisks mark the spot where the ball entered the penalty area. Only Player 4 crossed the penalty area line and exited the penalty area, so only Player 4 gets to drop across the lake.