



WGA Golf Rules Series: Loose Impediments vs. Movable Obstructions

A loose impediment is generally a natural object like a stick or leaf. A movable obstacle is generally a man-made object like a rake or sign. Fun fact: a dead animal is a loose impediment; a live animal is a movable obstacle.

Loose Impediments (natural)	Movable Obstruction (artificial)
stones	bunker rakes
leaves	other players' golf clubs
branches, twigs, pine cones	stakes (except out of bounds)
dung and droppings	signage and ropes
insects	bottles and cans
worms and their casts	score cards
spiders and their webs	pens and pencils
fruit skins	paper, tissues
ant hills	plastic bags
dead birds and animals	packets and boxes
aeration plugs	match sticks or cigarettes
clods of earth	abandoned balls
gravel	loose stones from a wall
crushed shells	cables
wood chips	doors or windows

The one exception is that soil and sand are NOT loose impediments short of the green.

Outside of hazards, players can move either a loose impediment or a movable obstacle. Within a hazard, movable obstacles can still be moved, but loose impediments cannot.

- Example: the ball comes to rest against a dead bug or bird in a bunker. It must be played as it lies; the player cannot move the bug or bird.
- Example: the ball rolls just inside a lateral hazard under a leaf. The player cannot pick up the leaf. If the ball is just outside the lateral hazard, the leaf can be removed.

Because sand and soil are not loose impediments short of the green, they cannot be removed except on the green.

On the green, a player can move anything even sand or soil.

If the player causes their ball to move while removing the impediment or obstacle, they incur a 1 stroke penalty.