

## 7 Accidents in Golf That Feel Like Penalties But Aren't

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Have you ever been patiently waiting for the putting green to clear, and you take a few practice swings out in the fairway only to accidentally hit your ball? Or how about when you're hitting out of very thick rough, and you feel and hear your club hit the ball twice? And how many times have you walked up to your ball on the putting green and accidentally moved it while putting down your ball marker?

These types of accidents happen all the time, and there's a lot of confusion about which of these situations will actually earn you a penalty. Let's explore the seven accidents that will *not* cause your score to increase with penalty strokes no matter how much they feel like they should.

### **When Your Ball Falls of the Tee Before You Get to Swing**

We've all done this before: you tee up your ball, and as you begin to set up to it, you accidentally cause your ball to fall off the tee. In addition to feeling a bit embarrassed and befuddled, you have to pause a moment to consider if this is actually a stroke and what you should do about it. Luckily, [there's no penalty if you accidentally cause your ball to fall off the tee](#) since you didn't make an intentional swing at it and you're still in the teeing area. Just take a deep, cleansing breath and put it back on tee!

### **When You Kick Your Ball on the Green**

If you walk up to your ball on the putting green and accidentally kick the ball, move it with your club, nudge it while putting down your ball marker, or in any other way accidentally cause it to move, no big deal. [There's no penalty for accidentally moving your ball while on the green.](#) Simply replace your ball on its original spot or the estimated spot if the exact spot is unknown, and give yourself a moment to calmly read your putt.

Sometimes a ball at rest on the green will begin moving on its own from wind or gravity. If this happens, there's also no penalty and whether or not you replace it depends on what happened before it moved. If you had already lifted and replaced your ball on the green, then you will replace the ball in its original spot. If you had not yet lifted and replaced the ball, you must play it as it lies—and hopefully it lies in the hole!

### **When You Run Over Your Ball When Looking For it**

Okay, I'm the first to admit that I don't always hit my ball in the fairway. Sometimes I'm in the rough. And at some courses, the rough is *really rough* so finding my ball isn't always easy. I'll just go ahead and admit further that I've actually run over my ball with my golf cart while searching for it. Thank the golf gods there's no penalty for that!

If you, your caddie, or anyone else [accidentally causes your ball to move while searching](#) for or identifying your ball, there is no penalty. You'll just replace the ball in its original or estimated spot. You'll need to recreate the original lie as best as you can, so if your ball was buried in the rough like mine tends to be, you'll have to bury it back again.

### **When You Hit the Ball Twice in the Same Stroke**

Double-Double.

No, I'm not talking about In-N-Out Burgers here. Let's chat about double hitting your ball. When you're in thick rough or a bunker, you might feel yourself double hitting your ball with no idea how you did it. Luckily, as of January 1, 2019, [there is no longer a penalty for accidentally hitting your ball twice](#)—just be sure it actually was an accident and not some fancy trick shot around a tree.

### **When Your Ball Hits Your Friend**

So yeah, I might have been a little anxious to try to hit my bunker shot and hadn't warned my girlfriends I was coming out of the sand. And my ball might have hit one of them in the thigh, and it might have caused a bruise. Well, the bruise will heal—trust me—but am I going to have to a penalty stroke for that?

Thankfully, [rule 11](#) says if your ball in motion accidentally hits a person, animal, equipment or anything else, [there's no penalty](#) and you'll play the ball from where it comes to rest, though there's an exception when putting from the putting green and you hit another player's ball in stroke play.

### **When You Weren't Ready to Drop it Yet**

You're getting ready to take a drop, perhaps for free relief from a cart path, and the ball accidentally falls out of your hand before you were ready to actually take your knee-height drop. You might think you're up the creek without a paddle, but relax [there's no penalty](#). Simply pick up your ball and begin the procedure again for taking a drop.

### **BUT You Can Still Earn a Penalty for Some Accidents**

Other than in the teeing area and putting green, if you accidentally cause your ball to move—as a result of a practice swing or anything else you might have done—anywhere else on the course, [you will earn yourself one penalty stroke](#), and you must replace the ball on its original spot or estimated spot. Sounds kind of harsh since it was just an accident, but since the rules forgive us for so much, I guess I can live with this one.

The rules of golf can be complicated but taking them one at a time and asking questions while you're out on the course is the best way to learn. I'm not an LPGA/PGA professional or rules official, but if I can learn the rules of golf, I promise, you can too!