

Back to basics

A primer on water hazards and lateral water hazards

Yes, the rules of golf might, at times, be complicated. But often, players make it worse by failing to know some of the basics and then compound the problem by proceeding incorrectly.

In 2011, *Chicago District Golfer* will return to the basics—explaining some fundamental situations that players frequently encounter during a round. This month: much of what every golfer should know about water hazards (yellow stakes and lines) and lateral water hazards (red stakes and lines).

First, these kinds of hazards need not have water in them. While this perhaps is more common in desert climates, where the terrain customarily is dry except after sudden downpours, this is important to know because a golfer *always* has the option of playing the ball as it lies. One common misconception is that a player

must take a drop and add a penalty whenever a ball has been hit into a water hazard or a lateral hazard. That's not so; if a player wants to try to play a ball from inside a hazard, that is permissible.

When deciding how to proceed after a ball has been hit into a water hazard or lateral water hazard, it is important to know where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard. The margin of the hazard is *not* where the water begins; it is the yellow or red line painted between stakes. The reason why the margin of the hazard is not represented where the water begins is that, in the cases of shifting tides and fast-moving water, the level could be dramatically different within minutes.

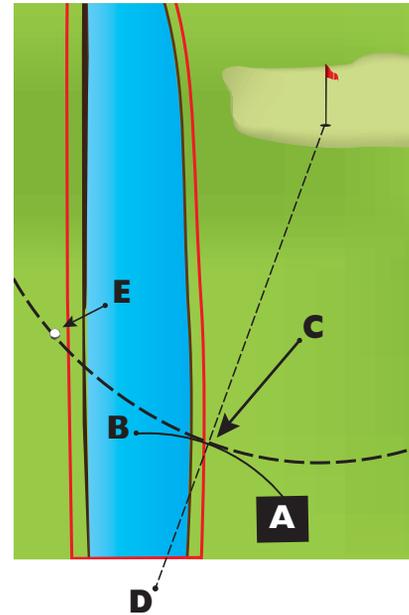
The first thing to determine is, did the ball cross a line denoting a water hazard (a yellow line) or lateral water hazard (a red line)?

- To proceed where a water hazard is involved, there are three options for a player and three options *only*.

- 1) With no penalty, play the ball as it lies (Point B in the diagram at left).

- 2) Under penalty of one stroke, play a ball as near as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (Point A). (Note: In the rare case where a player hits his ball into a water hazard or lateral hazard from a stroke taken on the green, the ball must be placed, not dropped.)

- 3) Under penalty of one stroke, drop a ball behind the water hazard, keeping the point at which the original ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard (Point C) 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.

- To proceed where a lateral water hazard is involved, a player has two more choices in addition to the options presented previously.

- 4) Under penalty of one stroke, drop a ball outside the water hazard within two club-lengths of and not nearer the hole than the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the hazard. (Point C in the diagram above).

- 5) Under penalty of one stroke, drop a ball outside the water hazard within two club-lengths of and not nearer the hole than a point on the opposite margin of the water hazard equidistant from the hole (Point E).

Of course, the easiest way to deal with hazards is to avoid hitting into them. But as we all know, that's easier said than done. 🏌️

