

# 2019 USGA Major Rule Change of the Week...

Major Rule Change - *Touching loose impediments or ground in a penalty area*

Under Rule 17

- *There will no longer be any special restrictions when a ball is in a “penalty area” (the expanded designation for the areas that includes what are now called water hazards.)*
- *A player will be allowed to touch or move loose impediments and touch the ground with hand or clubs (such as grounding the club right behind the ball or practice swings.) for any reason, subject only to the prohibitions on improving conditions for the stroke.*

USGA “Reasons for Change”

- *A strict prohibition on touching or moving loose impediments or touching the ground in a water hazard has never been practical, and so a series of exceptions had to be recognized in rule 13-4, rule 12-1 and various other decisions.*
- *This has created confusion and complications in applying the rules, such as needing to decided when a player was or was not “testing”, what constitutes touching “as a result of or to prevent falling”, and similar questions about applying exceptions.*

[Click here to watch the video explanation of Rule 17](#)



*Each of these rules changes will take effect on January 1, 2019.*

*Our hope is to make as many golfers knowledgeable of the upcoming rules changes before the new year.*

*Good Luck & Play Well!*

