

Every time I officiate or even play, the question comes up. When do I have to find a Nearest Point of Complete Relief (NPCR)?

For starters, it has nothing to do with relief from a penalty area. Here is the definition of NPCR, straight from the Rule Book – with my explanation in italics.

What is the Nearest Point of Complete Relief?

“The reference point for taking free relief from an abnormal course condition (Rule 16.1), dangerous animal condition (Rule 16.2), wrong green (Rule 13.1 f) or no play zone (Rules 16.1 f and 17.1 f), or in taking relief under local Rules. *These are the only five situations where NPCR has to be determined!*

It is the estimated point where the ball would lie that is:

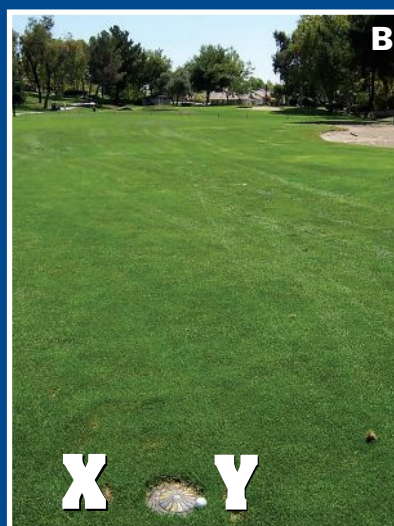
- Nearest to the ball’s original spot, but not nearer the hole than that spot
 - In the required area of the course, and
 - Where the condition does not interfere with the stroke the player would have made from the original spot if the condition was not there.”
- Note that “interference” refers to swing, stance and lie. Your ball may lie on a pristine fairway, but your feet are on a cart path. Your NPCR must give you complete relief for swing, stance AND lie. So, in this example, your feet must be completely off the cart path when you establish your NPCR.

Estimating this reference point requires the player to identify the choice of club, stance, swing and line of play he or she used for that stroke.

This is asking you to imagine that your ball is in such a position that there is no interference to your swing, stance or lie. What club would you use? That is the club you should use to determine your NPCR. Determine your NPCR by taking your stance and grounding your club as if you were going to strike a ball towards your intended direction. Where your

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club touches the ball is the NPCR, if it meets the criteria above. You then drop a ball within the one-club length dropping area. So, you may be in a situation where you’d use a pitching wedge to determine your NPCR, and then use your driver to measure the one-club length dropping area.

Take a look at the accompanying photos. The NPCR is almost always going to be different for a right-hander versus a left-hander. Where is the NPCR for a right-handed and left-handed player in Photo A? (The green is ahead in the photo).

In this example, Y (see Photo B) is the nearest point of relief for both a right-handed player and for a left-handed player. If you chose X as the point for a right-hander in the example, note that is not the point nearest to where the ball lays. It doesn’t meet the first criteria! As a right-hander with your ball positioned at Y, the Kirby (yardage) marker would not interfere with your swing, stance or lie. You may want to argue with me that it is a mental interference since it’s between

your feet and where the ball lies, and I would have to tell you that the Rules of Golf don’t give you any relief for that!

Finally, remember that you are entitled to free relief from an abnormal course condition, dangerous animal condition or wrong green. You can choose to take free relief or not! However, you must take free relief for a no play zone.

If a Local Rule is in effect, it will tell you if it’s a choice or mandatory. I mention this because when you determine your NPCR it may not be a nice place. It may be in the middle of a tree trunk, on the side of a steep hill, on a cart path or in an ugly lie, and the one club-length dropping area may not get you out of bad territory! So, before you pick up your ball, figure out where your NPCR is. Look at your dropping area and then make your decision about whether or not to take free relief.

Keep in mind, there is no relief under Rule 16.1, when the stroke you would make is clearly unreasonable. 🍷

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