

Lost Ball

A ball does not become *lost* by declaration e.g. “I declare that ball lost”

A ball is deemed “*lost*” if:

- a. It is not found or identified as his by the player within five minutes after the player’s *side* or his or their *caddies* have begun to search for it; or
- b. The player has made a *stroke* at a *provisional ball* from the place where the original ball is likely to be or from a point nearer the *hole* than that place (see Rule 27-2b); or
- c. The player has put another ball into play under penalty of stroke and distance (see Rule 27-1a); or
- d. The player has put another ball into play because it is known or virtually certain that the ball, which has not been found, has been moved by an *outside agency* (see Rule 18-1), is in an *obstruction* (see Rule 24-3), is in an *abnormal ground condition* (see Rule 25-1c) or is in a *water hazard* (see Rule 26-1); or
- e. The player has made a *stroke* at a *substituted ball* (see the extracts below from the ‘Decisions on the Rules of Golf’).

Decision 27 - 1/1

Q. A player plays from the teeing ground, searches briefly for his ball and then goes back and tees another ball. Before he plays the teed ball, and within the five-minute search period, the original ball is found. May the player abandon the teed ball and play the original ball?

A. Yes. The teed ball was not in play since the player had not yet made a stroke at it – see Definition of “Ball in Play” – and the original ball was not lost – see Definition of “Lost Ball”. (Revised)

Decision 27 - 1/2

Q. A player plays his second shot, searches for his ball briefly and then goes back and drops another ball under Rule 27-1. Before he plays the dropped ball, and within the five-minute search period, the original ball is found. Is the player required to continue with the dropped ball?

A. Yes. When the player put the substituted ball into play at the spot of the previous stroke with the intent to play a ball under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 27-1), the original ball was lost (see Definition of “Lost Ball”). Therefore, Rule 20-6 does not apply, and he must continue with the substituted ball.

In other words, if you walk back to the tee, tee up the ball and before it is struck your original ball is found, you can play the original.

If you walk back to play a stroke other than your stroke from the teeing ground and you've already dropped a ball, you must play the dropped ball (as it is now the ball in play) and not the original.

Time spent in playing a *wrong ball* is not counted in the five-minute period allowed for search.