Hi all,

The unplayable lie rule is pretty simple, but it is one of the most misused, confused or violated rules of golf, especially among amateur hackers like us.

It should be noted that you are allowed to declare any ball unplayable, as long as it is not in a water hazard. For example, some people don’t like hitting out of bunkers (especially some of ours) and there is no rule saying that you have to hit out of a bunker. You are free to declare any ball unplayable (even in a bunker) as long as you take the appropriate penalty and drop/option.

**Question:**

I have declared my ball "unplayable", so now what do I do?

**Answer:**

Once you declare your ball unplayable, you have three options which all carry a penalty of one stroke:
The Unplayable Lie Rule
Oct 3, 2014

1. Under penalty of one stroke, play a ball as nearly as possible to the spot from which the original ball was last played, no nearer to the hole. If it was on the tee, you can re-tee. If the shot was not from the tee, you must drop. This is known as “stroke and distance”.

2. Under penalty of one stroke, take a drop within two club lengths of where the ball is at rest, not nearer the hole. As discussed two weeks ago, you measure from where the ball is sitting, NOT from the edge of the giant bush it is sitting in. If you can’t find relief within two club lengths from where the ball is located, you need to choose a different option.

3. Under penalty of one stroke, draw a line from the hole to where the ball is located and drop anywhere behind that point, keeping the point between you and the hole. Again, if you can’t find relief on this imaginary line going backward (see diagram), you can’t use this option.
Now, you may ask yourself, why would I ever take an unplayable lie in the bunker? Well, let’s assume that you hit your approach shot on the 5th Hole at CMR into the greenside bunker. If you knew that it was going to take you five shots to get out of that bunker, you might want to think about taking an unplayable lie. If you don’t think this is funny, trust me…it is!!! You can ask Duncan can explain it to you...

However, there is a caveat to the rule when you are in a bunker. If you choose to take an unplayable lie in the bunker, and you want to use option 2 or 3 above, you must drop the ball in the bunker. In other words you can’t use two club lengths or the extension of the line between your ball and the hole to get you out of the sand. If you want to get out of the sand completely, you must use option 1 (replay the prior shot).

For those of you going out to the desert, have a great weekend! As always, please let me know if you have any questions on this topic, or would like a particular rule to be discussed in the coming weeks.

- Chris

**Swing Thought for Tomorrow:**

“If there is a ball on the fringe and a ball in the bunker, yours is the one in the bunker. If both balls are in the bunker, yours is the one in the footprint.”