

Ball to be Fairly Struck at—Rule 14.1

Rule 14.1 states that the ball must be fairly struck at with the head of the club and must not be pushed, scraped or spooned. The “head of the club” obviously excludes tapping a ball into the hole with the wrong end of the putter (Decision 14-1/3). However, a player can play a stroke with the back of the clubhead (D. 14-1/1). What if a player’s ball is very close to an out of bounds fence. Can the ball be fairly struck at? Decision 14-1/4 gives us the answer.

14-1/4 Striking Ball with Half an Inch Backswing

Q. A player's ball lies close to an out of bounds fence, but there is room behind the ball to insert an iron club or a putter and leave a space of half an inch between the ball and the face of the club. If the player plays a stroke with such a limited backswing, is he in breach of Rule 14-1?

A. It is possible to strike a ball fairly with a half-inch backswing. However, in most such cases the player would be pushing the ball, contrary to Rule 14-1. In the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, it should be ruled that the player has pushed the ball.

In order to strike the ball fairly, it must be swung at with the clubhead. If the ball is moved by any other method, it has been pushed, scraped or spooned.

If a ball is fairly struck at, there is only momentary contact between the clubhead and the ball or whatever intervenes between the clubhead and the ball.