

Rule 13-2 – Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play
(R & A Decisions on the Rules of Golf 2010 – 2011)

13-2/22 KNOCKING DOWN LEAVES WITH PRACTICE SWING

Q A player's ball lies near a tree or bush. The player takes a practice swing near his ball and knocks down leaves in the area of his intended swing. Is this a breach of Rule 13-1?

A The answer depends on whether the area of the intended swing is improved. In some cases, the knocking down of a number of leaves would not improve the area of the intended swing as the player has to swing through a number of remaining leaves when making his stroke. In such circumstances, there would be no breach of the Rules. In other cases, the knocking down of one leaf might improve the area of the intended swing, in which case there would be a breach of Rule 13-1.

If a player has improved the area of his intended swing by knocking down a leaf or a number of leaves, he cannot avoid penalty under Rule 13-2 by subsequently changing the area of his wing when he actually makes the stroke.

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Matchplay – Loss of hole; Stroke play – two strokes

13-2/24 KNOCKING DOWN LEAVES WITH PRACTICE SWING

Q A player, intending to play in a certain direction, took a practice backswing for a stroke in that direction and broke a branch impeding his backswing. The player then decided to play in a different direction. The area of his intended swing for a stroke in this new direction was not improved by the breaking of the branch. In such circumstances, would the player incur a penalty under Rule 13-2?

A YES. The player was in breach of Rule 13-2 as soon as he improved the area of the originally intended swing. The penalty is not avoided if he subsequently plays in another direction, even if the breaking of the branch had no effect on the area of the swing for a stroke in the new direction.

Related Decisions:

13-2/1.7 Player having fairly taken stance changes direction of play.

13-2/14 Breaking branch interfering with backswing on teeing ground.

Penalty for Breach of Rule:

Matchplay – Loss of hole; Stroke play – two strokes

NOTE: There is no penalty if a branch is broken or leaf(s) knock down during the FORWARD swing when the player plays his swing.