This pamphlet does not contain the entire language for each rule. This is to serve as a quick reference guide.

For the full rules, please see the USGA Rules of Golf book.
The ball must be dropped the correct way, which includes the following three actions:

1) Player must drop his or her own ball.
2) Ball must be let go of from a location at knee height so the ball:
   - Falls straight down, without throwing, spinning or rolling it or using any other motion that might affect where the ball will come to rest, and;
   - Does not touch any part of the body or equipment before it hits the ground.
3) Ball must be dropped in the relief area. Player may stand inside or outside the relief area when dropping the ball.

A ball must be dropped straight down from knee height. “Knee height” means the height of a player’s knee when in a standing position. But the player does not have to be in a standing position when the ball is dropped.

When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a yellow penalty area or the player wishes to take relief, the player has two options, each for one penalty stroke:

1) Player may take stroke-and-distance relief by playing the original ball or another ball from a relief area based on where the previous stroke was made (see Rule 14.6 or diagram above).
2) Player may take back-on-the-line relief by dropping the original ball or another ball in a relief area based on a reference line going straight back from the hole through point X. The reference point is a point on the course chosen by the player that is on the reference line through point X (point where the ball last crossed the edge of the yellow penalty area). There is no limit on how far back on the line the reference point may be. The relief area is one club-length from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole that the reference point and may be in any area of the course, except the same penalty area.

When it is known or virtually certain that a ball is in a red penalty area and the player wishes to take relief, the player has three options, each for one penalty stroke:

1) Player may take stroke-and-distance relief (see point (1) in above diagram or Rule 17.1d).
2) Player may take back-on-the-line relief (see point (2) in above diagram or Rule 17.1d).
3. Player may take lateral relief (red penalty area only). The reference point for taking lateral relief is point X, which is the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the edge of the red penalty area. The relief area is two club-lengths from the reference point, is not nearer to the hole that the reference point and may be in any area of the course, except the same penalty area.

Players have three minutes to find their golf ball. The clock starts when the player arrives at the area where it is estimated the ball to be and start searching for it.

Ball moved during search:

- If a player accidentally moves their own ball during a search, there is no penalty.
- If a player knows exactly where the ball was, it should be placed directly on that spot.
- If a player does not know exactly where the ball was, they should estimate it as best they can and place it on that estimated spot, including how “high or low” it was sitting in the grass.