



Explanation for Each Major Topic in the World Handicap System

Each of these one-page documents explain a key topic in the WHS

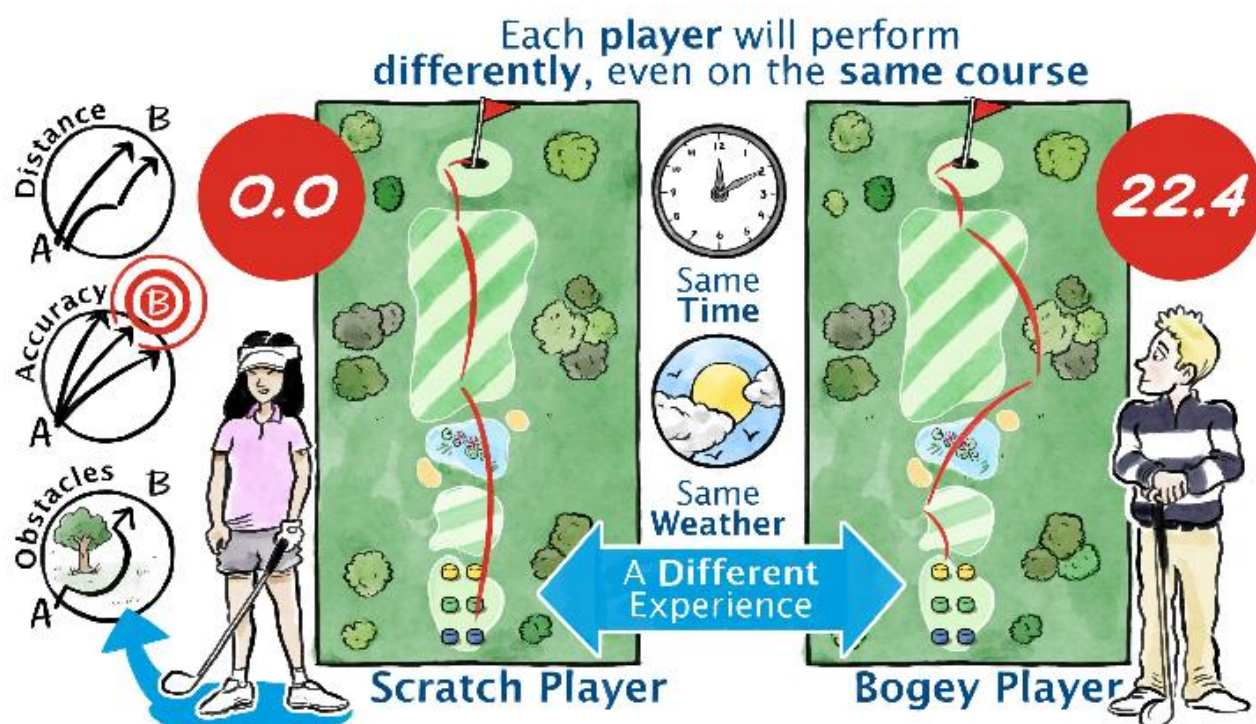
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Course Rating System

The USGA Course Rating System will be referred to as “The Course Rating System” and will join “The Rules of Handicapping” to form the World Handicap System.

Reasons for Change:

- The Course Rating System has been implemented by National Associations and allows a player’s Handicap Index to be used from course to course and country to country.
- To enable acceptable scores made at any rated golf course in the world to be submitted for handicap purposes.
 - For those who travel internationally, this will be a welcomed change as scores made outside the U.S. will easily be factored into their Handicap Index calculation.
- To provide an accurate and consistent measure of the difficulty of a golf course by ensuring that playing length and obstacle factors are evaluated the same way worldwide.
 - Since golf courses are rated by qualified teams trained by Authorized Associations, the integrity of the World Handicap System will be maintained.





Course Handicap Calculation

A Course Handicap will represent the number of strokes a player receives in relation to the Par of the tees being played. The formula will include a Course Rating minus Par adjustment

$$\text{Course Handicap} = \text{Handicap Index} \times (\text{Slope Rating} \div 113) + (\text{Course Rating} - \text{Par})$$

*If the Course Rating is higher than par, then Course Handicap will go up.
If the Course Rating is lower than par, then Course Handicap will go down.*

Reasons for Change:

- Under the previous system, when players competed from different tees, a Course Handicap adjustment based on the Course Rating difference had to take place to make the game fair.
 - This adjustment was necessary because players competing from different tees were competing with different benchmarks (different Course Ratings).
 - The adjustment under Section 3-5, as we once knew, has generated confusion and there were challenges with its implementation over the years.
- Applying Course Rating minus Par within the Course Handicap calculation will allow players to compete from different tees without any adjustment – unless a difference in Par exists.
- Under the previous system, it was common for Course Handicap values to change very little from tee to tee.
 - Confusion existed because the Course Handicap value only accounted for the number of strokes needed to play to the respective Course Rating.
- Course Handicap values will change more from tee to tee, as they will represent the number of strokes to play to Par. Par is a term that resonates with golfers, so setting Par as the benchmark for a Course Handicap adds simplicity to handicapping.
- Players will be able to determine their Target Scores (the score they'll shoot if they play to their handicap) by simply adding their Course Handicap + Par.



Playing Handicap Calculation

The term “Playing Handicap” will represent the number of strokes a player receives in a competition. The following formula will be used to determine a Playing Handicap:

$$\text{Playing Handicap} = \text{Course Handicap} \times \text{Handicap Allowance}$$

If players are competing from tees with different Pars, then the player(s) competing from the tees with the higher Par will receive an additional stroke(s) based on the difference.

Reasons for Change:

- By introducing the term Playing Handicap, there will be a clear distinction between two key Rules of Handicapping definitions, where both serve specific purposes:
 - A Course Handicap will be used to adjust individual hole scores (Net Double Bogey and Net Par procedures).
 - Playing Handicaps will be used for net competition purposes – including determining the results and winner(s).
- Under the previous system, confusion existed because there was only one defined term that often represented two different values.
 - For example – With the previous system, a player with a Course Handicap of 21 participating in a four-ball stroke play competition and using the recommended Handicap Allowance of 85% received 18 strokes during the round. In 2020, the 18 strokes received will be their Playing Handicap.
- The defined term Playing Handicap will be intuitive and ensure that both terms are applied properly.

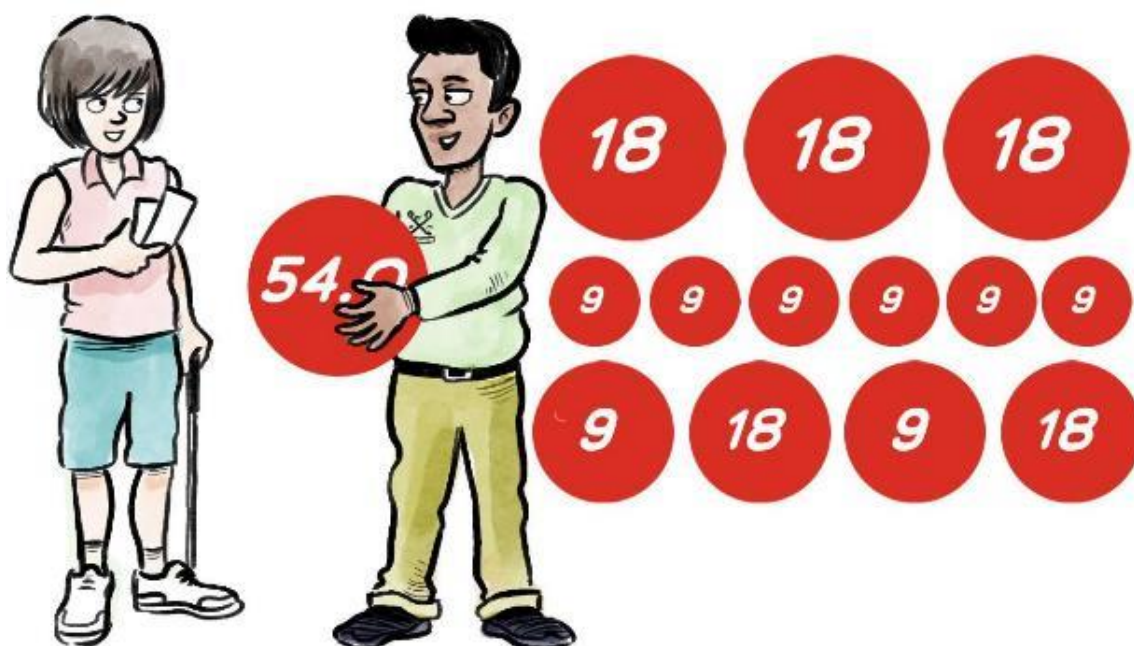
Minimum Number of Scores Required to Obtain a Handicap Index

A Handicap Index will be issued to a player after three 18-hole scores are submitted and a revision takes place.

- ❑ Scores can be made up of any combination of 9-hole and 18-hole scores.
- ❑ Revisions will be daily, so a player's Handicap Index will become active the day after their third 18-hole score is submitted.

Reasons for Change:

- One of the key principles of the World Handicap System is to enable as many golfers as possible the opportunity to establish and maintain a Handicap Index.
- By requiring fewer scores, players who only play sporadically may be more likely to obtain a Handicap Index.
- Statistics show that players with a Handicap Index play more rounds of golf, so making it easier to get a Handicap Index can help increase participation



Maximum Handicap Index

The maximum Handicap Index for all golfers will be 54.0, regardless of gender.



Reasons for Change:

- To make the game more welcoming to new players and incentivize beginners to establish and maintain a Handicap Index.
- To provide all players with a more precise measure of their demonstrated ability and allow players of all skill levels to track their progress in the game.
- By encouraging novice and recreational players to get a Handicap Index, they'll be provided with opportunities to learn about the Rules of Handicapping.
- Statistics show that players with a Handicap Index play more rounds of golf. Therefore, making the system more welcoming can help grow the game and create a more sustainable future.
- Although the maximum Handicap Index is 54.0, the Committee in charge of the Competition can set a lower maximum limit for entry or use in competitions.



Maximum Hole Score (Net Double Bogey)

The maximum hole score for each player will be limited to a Net Double Bogey, calculated as follows:

Double Bogey + handicap strokes a player receives (or gives) based on their Course Handicap
("or gives" only applies to plus handicap players)

A player with a Course Handicap of 11 receives one stroke on the first 11 allocated stroke holes.

On a par-4 hole with a *stroke index* of 6, the player's *net double bogey* score is calculated as follows:

Par	+	Two Strokes (Double Bogey)	+	Stroke(s) Received	=	Max
4		2		1		7

Reasons for Change:

- While this is a change for all who have used the USGA Handicap System, Net Double Bogey has been used successfully in many parts of the world – as it is the equivalent to zero points in the Net Stableford format of play.
- The Net Double Bogey adjustment is more consistent from hole to hole than the ESC procedure.
 - For example – Using the ESC procedure, a player with a Course Handicap of 21 would have the same maximum score (8) on each hole – regardless of the Par or difficulty of the hole.
 - By factoring in Par and Stroke Index values under the Net Double Bogey procedure, adjusted hole scores will be more precise and reflective of each player's demonstrated ability.



Hole(s) Not Played

When a player does not play a hole, the score recorded for handicap purposes is *net par*.

- A score of Net Par (what used to be Par Plus) will be used for holes not played, and the maximum hole score for handicap purposes will be a Net Double Bogey. Having a Course Handicap that is relative to Par will ensure that the correct number of strokes are received and applied for both procedures.

Nine-Hole Scores

Players will no longer have a nine-hole index (N)

To submit a nine-hole score, a player must play 7 to 13 holes under the Rules of Golf. When 14 or more holes are played, the score submitted qualifies as an 18-hole score.

- ☐ nine-hole scores are combined in the order that they are received and used to produce an 18-hole Score Differential.

$$\begin{array}{c} 9 + 9 = \\ 18 \end{array}$$

Reasons for Change:

- To ensure that each player has one Handicap Index and one Scoring Record under the World Handicap System.
- The method for calculating a Handicap Index will be the same worldwide, and this applies whether a player submits all 9-hole scores, 18-hole scores, or a combination of both.
- To enhance the integrity of the Handicap Index calculation.
 - Under the previous system, when a player with a nine-hole Handicap Index (N) competed in an 18-hole competition, doubling their nine-hole Handicap Index (N) was not always fair – as the player(s) doubling their nine-hole Handicap Index (N) were sometimes at a disadvantage and received one or two fewer strokes than they would with an 18-hole Handicap Index.



Five Significant Changes to the Handicap Index calculation

These topics are discussed in detail on the mentioned pages in this handout

- 1) **The minimum number of scores required:**
(see page 5)

3

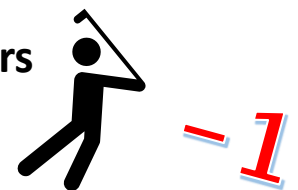
- 2) **The number of differentials used:**
(see page 10)

8 of 20

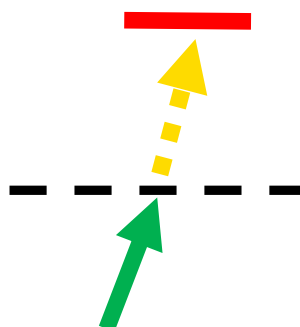
- 3) **A Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)**
(see page 11)



- 4) **An Exceptional Score Reduction that considers all scores (ESR)**
(see page 12)



- 5) **The Addition of a Soft Cap and Hard Cap to limit upward movement**
(see page 13)





Basis of a Handicap Index

Number of Differentials Used

When a score is submitted, it will be converted to a Score Differential based on the Course Rating and Slope Rating of the tees that were played. In addition, a Playing Conditions Calculation will be included to account for any abnormal course or weather conditions.

$$(113 / \text{Slope Rating}) \times (\text{Adjusted Gross Score} - \text{Course Rating} - \text{PCC})$$

A Handicap Index will then be calculated by averaging a player's 8 best Score Differentials out of their most recent 20

Your
Handicap
Index is
based on:



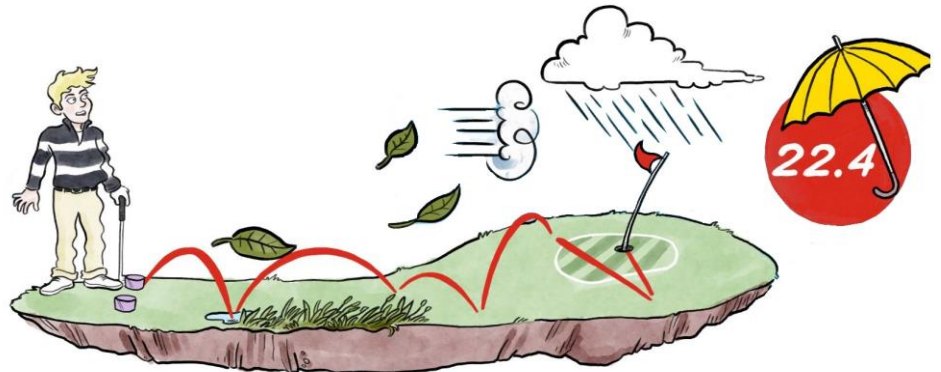
Reasons for Change:

- Moving to an 8 of 20 system will allow for greater responsiveness to good scores and eliminate the need for a bonus for excellence – which was often difficult to explain.
 - Since players with a higher Handicap Index tend to have more fluctuation within their Scoring Records, using 8 of 20 will allow their better scores to weigh more heavily and create more equity across all Handicap Index ranges.
- Including a Playing Conditions Calculation will ensure that each Score Differential is reflective of a player's performance in a given round (More on Page 11).
- The Exceptional Score Reduction procedure is designed to be intuitive by evaluating all scores as opposed to just "T-scores." (More on Page 12)
- Limiting the extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index will ensure that a temporary loss of form does not cause a player's Handicap Index to move too far from their demonstrated ability. (More on Page 13)
- Incorporating these safeguards will add integrity to the system and support Handicap Committees by ensuring the accuracy of each member's Handicap Index.

Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)

When abnormal course or weather conditions cause scores to be unusually high or low on a given day, a “Playing Conditions Calculation” will adjust Score Differentials to better reflect a player’s actual performance. The “PCC” is:

- ❑ An automatic procedure by the computation service that compares the scores submitted on the day against expected scoring patterns,
- ❑ Conservative in nature and applied in integer values (range: -1, +1, +2, +3), and
- ❑ Applied in the Score Differential calculation of all players – even those who submit their score(s) on a later date.



Reasons for Change:

- To provide a mechanism that allows a better assessment of the difficulty of a course on a particular day
 - Golf is an outdoor sport with many factors that can impact scoring (weather, rough height, hole locations, etc.). A score of 90 made under challenging conditions could be a more impressive performance than an 88 under normal conditions – and incorporating a Playing Conditions Calculation allows this to be represented.
- This is one of the more modern features of the system, but a similar calculation has been used successfully in other parts of the world
- The Playing Conditions Calculation will also be used to identify if the Course Rating of a golf course needs to be reviewed by the local Authorized Golf Association.
 - The PCC is designed to be conservative, so if an adjustment is taking place 4-5 days a week, then the Course Rating may not be accurately representing the difficulty of the golf course.
 - The ability to identify such courses will provide enhanced integrity to the system.



Exceptional Score Reduction (ESR)

When a player submits a score that produces a Score Differential of 7.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, they will be subject to an Exceptional Score Reduction.

- ❑ When the Score Differential is between 7.0 and 9.9 strokes below their current Handicap Index, a -1 reduction is applied to the most recent 20 score differentials. When the Score Differential is 10.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, a -2.0 reduction is applied to the most recent 20 score differentials.
- ❑ Scores submitted after the exceptional score will not contain the -1 or -2 adjustment (unless they are also exceptional), which will allow reduction to gradually work itself out of a Scoring Record.

<i>Score Differential Relative to Index</i>	<i>7.0 – 9.9 strokes lower</i>	<i>10.0 + strokes lower</i>
<i>ESR Adjustment</i>	-1	-2

Reasons for Change:

- To simplify the automatic reduction process.
 - Section 10-3 of “The USGA Handicap System” was confusing. Players did not want to post “Tournament Rounds” or “T Scores” and there were many inconsistencies with how scores were being posted.
 - Since T-scores were also retained for 12-months and compared to the Handicap Index at each revision, it was possible for T-scores that were not exceptional at the time they were made to become exceptional at a later date (back door reduction). This was an inequity in the system.
 - This new procedure will be straightforward and intuitive. When a player submits an exceptional score (no matter when it is played), they will receive an automatic adjustment of -1 or -2 to the appropriate differentials.
- Handicap research shows that players who have shot 7.0 strokes below their Handicap Index are more likely to do so again in the future
- By considering all scores in the Exceptional Score Reduction procedure, a player’s Handicap Index will be more responsive to exceptional performances in competitive and recreational play.



Limit on Upward Movement of a Handicap Index (Cap)

A “soft cap” and “hard cap” will be included within the Handicap Index calculation by looking at the Low Handicap Index.

- ❑ Low Handicap Index - The lowest Handicap Index achieved by a player within the last 12 months.
- ❑ The soft cap will suppress the upward movement of a Handicap Index by 50 percent if a 3.0 stroke increase takes place within 12 months.
- ❑ The hard cap will restrict upward movement if, after the application of the soft cap, a 5.0 stroke increase takes place within 12 months.



Reasons for Change:

- A “Low Handicap Index” will be made visible to players. This value will serve as the baseline for the soft cap and hard cap procedures..
 - A Low Handicap Index will be established once a player has at least 20 acceptable scores in their scoring record. At this point, the soft cap and hard cap procedures will begin taking effect.
 - A newly determined Low Handicap Index will be considered each time an acceptable score is submitted and a Handicap Index is updated.
- The automatic calculation will prevent extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index, as well as assist Handicap Committees as an anti-abuse safeguard.
 - When special circumstances exist, such as injury, the Handicap Committee will have the ability to override the soft cap or hard cap
- This procedure will favor the consistent player, as players who have significant volatility in their scoring history over a 12-month period will be impacted by it more often.



Daily Revisions

Posting Scores in a Timely Manner

A player's Handicap Index will update daily, provided that the player submitted a score the day before. **On days where the player does not submit a score, no update will take place.**

Reasons for Change:

- To provide players with a more responsive and up-to-date Handicap Index.
 - Prior to 2020, a newly submitted score could potentially wait two weeks before it was factored into the player's Handicap Index calculation.
- To streamline the process of establishing a Handicap Index
 - After a player submits their third acceptable 18-hole score (made up of any combination of 9-hole and 18-hole rounds), they will be issued a Handicap Index the next day
- To encourage players to submit scores as soon as practicable, preferably before midnight on the day of play.
 - Since the Playing Conditions Calculation will use scores submitted at a course each day, it is crucial that scores are posted on the same day of play.
 - If a PCC was applied on a particular day and a player forgot to post, if a score is backdated, the score will receive the PCC adjustment.



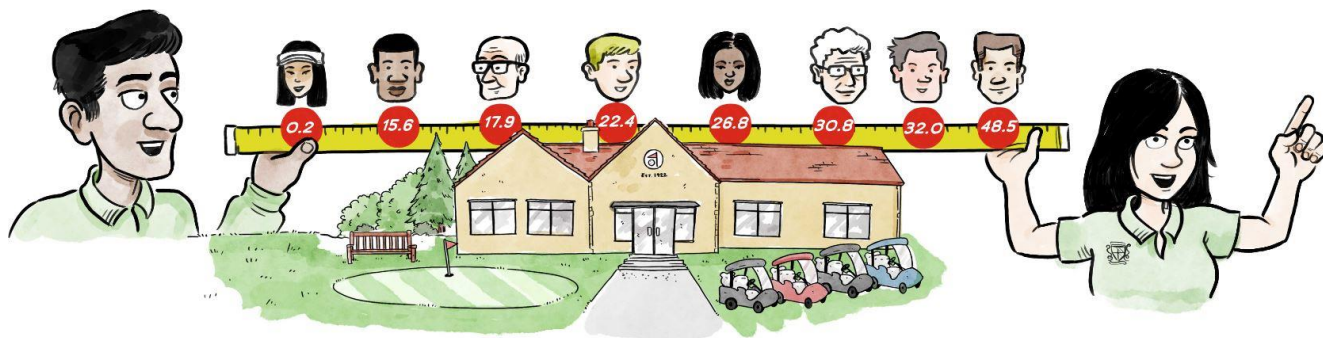
Handicap Committee

The Handicap Committee continues to play a vital role in the successful administration of a player's Handicap Index and is equipped with tools to intervene when the calculated Handicap Index is no longer reflective of the player's demonstrated ability.

Used appropriately, these tools are designed to ensure that players are treated fairly and consistently from golf club to golf club.

The Committee in charge of a competition also plays an important role in setting appropriate Terms of the Competition for all participating players. This can include setting a maximum handicap index or determining handicap allowances.

See Appendix C in the *Rules of Handicapping*.



**The USGA has published a
Handicap Committee Guide
that is available online.**

**CDGA.org/WHS
or
USGA.org/WHS**



Allied Golf Associations

The CDGA is your Allied Golf Association (AGA)

Adjudicating Par (Appendix F)

Because of the new Course Handicap calculation, Net Par and Net Double Bogey, it's important to have accurate pars for each hole determined for both men and women. Ideally par will be printed alongside each hole on the scorecard. If a dispute arises the AGA will determine what the par will be based on length of the hole and how the hole was designed.

Stroke Index Allocation (Appendix E)

If a club asks the AGA for a recommendation on Stroke Index Allocation, this will now be determined by Course Rating data. All Stroke Index Allocations will use a triad or pod system with odd numbers on the front and even numbers on the back (in a majority of cases).

- A recommendation for the #1 and #2 index holes to be in the middle triad (if possible)
- Then the #2/#4 and #3/#6 stroke holes would be placed in the remaining triads that did not have the #1/#2 stroke hole.
 - This helps to spread out the lowest 3 stroke holes on each 9.
 - It is also recommended to avoid back to back low (6 or less) stroke holes

Here is a sample of a Stroke Allocation:

Hole Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Front 9									
Sample Table	11	15	3	7	17	1	9	13	5
Hole Number	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Back 9									
Sample Table	12	4	16	8	2	18	6	10	14



Questions?

If you have any questions regarding the **World Handicap System (WHS)**, you may contact:

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WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM



in association with

