WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM | KEY FEATURES
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This guide sets out the key elements of the Handicap Index calculation under the new World Handicap System.

The World Handicap System includes the Rules of Handicapping and the Course Rating System. Its purpose is to make the game of golf enjoyable and to enable as many golfers as possible the opportunity to:

✓ Obtain and maintain a Handicap Index.
✓ Use their Handicap Index on any golf course around the world.
✓ Compete, or play a casual round, with anyone else on a fair and equal basis.
The vision to unify the six different handicap systems in use around the world into a single World Handicap System required the commitment of, and collaboration between, many organizations. All of the following organizations have provided their support to this important initiative and played their part in establishing the key principles, which shaped the proposals and drove forward the project to the point where a new World Handicap System can be introduced to the golfing world from January 2020.
Each player will perform differently on the same course. A bogey player will generally find more challenges with distance, accuracy and obstacles than the scratch player.

Course Rating and Slope Rating allow the handicap system to reflect this – enabling golfers of differing abilities to play together and have a fair and enjoyable game.

Course Rating represents the playing difficulty for the scratch player under normal conditions. Slope Rating represents the difference in difficulty for all other players, compared to the scratch player.

Course Ratings are carried out by qualified teams, as if normal, midseason course and weather conditions exist.

Once the evaluation is completed, a Course Rating and Slope Rating is calculated for each set of tees. This information – along with the number of strokes you will receive for your round – should be available on a look-up chart on or near the first tee or through an app.

Each hole is assessed separately for the scratch and bogey golfer for effective playing length (such as altitude, roll, elevation and wind) and obstacles (such as trees, penalty areas, recoverability and rough, green size).
Basis of Calculation of Handicap Index

At the core of the calculation of your Handicap Index is your score.

When a player submits a score it is converted into a score differential – taking into account the Course Rating and Slope Rating of the golf course played and the playing conditions on the day.

Because your worst scores are discarded, your Handicap Index is designed to reflect the score you are capable of achieving on a good day.

A record of your scores is maintained in a scoring record by your home club.

A Handicap Index is calculated by averaging the best 8 score differentials from the last 20 rounds.

The more scores you can submit, the more accurately your Handicap Index will reflect your golfing ability.

Your worst scores are discarded.
Capping Excessive Increases in Handicap Index

The Handicap Index should always reflect your demonstrated ability.

But even the best players can have a series of bad scores, which don’t truly reflect their underlying ability.

28.6

Soft Cap

32.1

To combat this, there are automatic caps in the handicap formula,

28.6

Hard Cap

33.6

Ensuring your Handicap Index won’t rise too quickly due to a short run of poor form.

Your lowest Handicap Index within the 12 months prior to your last score acts as a baseline.

28.6

When your new Handicap Index calculates at more than three strokes higher than your Low Handicap Index,

+3

limiting any upward movement in your Index to a maximum of 5 strokes above your Low Handicap Index.

As a second safeguard, there’s a hard cap

+5

Both caps apply automatically, with no need to carry out calculations yourself.

Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov

You can play your round, confident that whatever happens on the course, your updated Handicap Index will continue to reflect your ability.
Exceptional Scores

A great round of golf can be a one-off, but sometimes it demonstrates that a player can score significantly better than their current Handicap Index would suggest.

The Rules of Handicapping, include additional adjustments within the handicap calculation when a player submits a score at least 7 strokes below their Handicap Index at the time the round was played. This is an exceptional score and merits an additional adjustment of -1 to the updated Handicap Index.

When the adjustment is considered excessive for a player, the Handicap Committee can override it, helping ensure the Handicap Index truly reflects a player’s ability.

It’s going to be a few months yet!

How long until you’re fully recovered?

The application of this adjustment, to all of the scores within the player’s scoring record, ensures that the exceptional score continues to be reflected within the players Handicap Index for at least 20 scores.
Your Handicap Index reflects your demonstrated ability as a golfer. The more scores (or evidence) you submit, the more accurate that reflection will be.

Having a Handicap Index that truly reflects your ability gives you the strokes you need to do well and maximize your enjoyment - whoever or wherever you are playing.

To ensure the quality of the scores submitted, only certain types of scores are acceptable for handicap purposes. To qualify, your round must be played:

- According to the Rules of Golf
- In an authorized format of play
- Over a minimum number of holes
- With at least one other person
- On a course with a current Course Rating and Slope Rating
- During an active season

Authorized Associations decide which scores should be submitted, from a wide range of different formats, so that submitting a score for handicap purposes needn’t be a special occasion.
Maximum Hole Score for Handicap Purposes

The Handicap Index should always reflect your demonstrated ability.

The Net Double Bogey Adjustment sets a maximum score on any hole for handicap purposes.

A bad hole might mean you can no longer win the competition...

But on occasion even the best golfers have bad days and bad holes.

Ensuring bad holes don’t impact your Handicap Index too severely.

Working out your Net Double Bogey score on a hole is simple and calculated as follows:

Par (of the Hole) + Strokes + Handicap Strokes Received

Where the format of play allows, you should pick up your ball when you reach this maximum hole score.
The World Handicap System is designed to be inclusive and accessible to new golfers. They need only submit a small number of scores, in any combination of 9 or 18-hole scores, to obtain an initial Handicap Index—the maximum being 54.0.

Offering a Handicap Index up to 54.0 provides greater incentives for new golfers to keep playing.

Responsive updates ensure a Handicap Index continues to reflect a player’s golfing ability.

To ensure continued enjoyment of the game for all golfers, Club Committees should encourage proper etiquette and a good pace of play, reminding players they can pick up when appropriate if the format of play allows.
Abnormal Playing Conditions

Course Ratings and Slope Ratings measure course difficulty under normal conditions. Not every day is normal – factors such as weather and course set-up can change the way a golf course plays. None of these things should affect the integrity of your Handicap Index.

But, as every golfer knows...

The result is a higher score on a tough day may still count as a good score and may be used to calculate your updated Handicap Index – ensuring it continues to reflect your ability. The PCC compares actual scores against expected scores. If scores submitted match expectations, no adjustment is made. To ensure they don’t, a Playing Conditions Calculation is carried out automatically for each course, each day, provided at least eight eligible players have submitted acceptable scores.

But if the PCC shows players have performed significantly better or worse than expected, the calculation automatically adjusts score differentials accordingly.

**Course Rating**

**Slope Rating**

**Score**

**Tough Day**

**High Score**

**Good Score**

**21.6**

**22.4**

**MINIMUM NUMBER**

**ELIGIBLE PLAYERS**

**Expected Scores**

**Match Expected Scores**

**Better**

**Worse**

**Playing Conditions Calculation**
Timely Submission of Scores

The prompt submission of acceptable scores from authorized formats of play is an important part of ensuring the integrity of your Handicap Index.

In the most serious cases, such as repeated failure to submit acceptable scores, the Handicap Committee has discretion to apply an additional penalty score, reset the player’s Handicap Index or consider other disciplinary procedures.

If you fail to submit a score promptly when required, the Handicap Committee will determine whether there was a valid reason, such as forgetfulness or injury.

If the reason was valid and an acceptable score is still discoverable, that score will be posted to your scoring record and your Handicap Index updated.

If the score is not discoverable, the Handicap Committee may post a penalty score.

If there was no valid reason and an acceptable score is discoverable, the Handicap Committee will post that score to your scoring record.
Responsive Updates of Handicap Index

Updated daily, your Handicap Index is designed to give you a responsive, real-time reflection of your demonstrated golfing ability.

By submitting scores as soon as possible after your round, you ensure your score is incorporated into the course’s daily playing conditions calculation.

Even when playing away from your home club, you should submit your score promptly.

However many times you play today – and wherever you play your round – your updated Handicap Index should be ready for you to use tomorrow, or soon after, giving you the strokes you need to enjoy your game.

If playing another round before your Handicap Index is updated, the Handicap Committee can decide which Playing Handicap will be used for that round.

If you are unable to submit your score on the day of play, the Playing Conditions Calculation for the day will still be applied when your score is submitted.
Handicap Committee Review

The Handicap Index should always reflect a player’s demonstrated ability.

To ensure this, it is strongly recommended that Handicap Committees review the Handicap Index for all their home club members at least once each calendar year.

When reviewing each Handicap Index, the Handicap Committee should consider all available information about a player before deciding whether any adjustments are required.

Regular handicap reviews help ensure the game is played on a fair and equal basis for all members, wherever they are playing and whoever they are playing against.

Additionally, the Handicap Committee has power to withdraw or reinstate a player’s Handicap Index in certain circumstances, or to adjust it due to a player’s temporary or permanent disability.

A player’s Handicap Index may be adjusted upwards or downwards. The Committee may also freeze it, or place a block on it moving upwards, for a defined period.
Keep up-to-date with the latest news about the World Handicap System at: www.whs.com

Email: support@whs.com