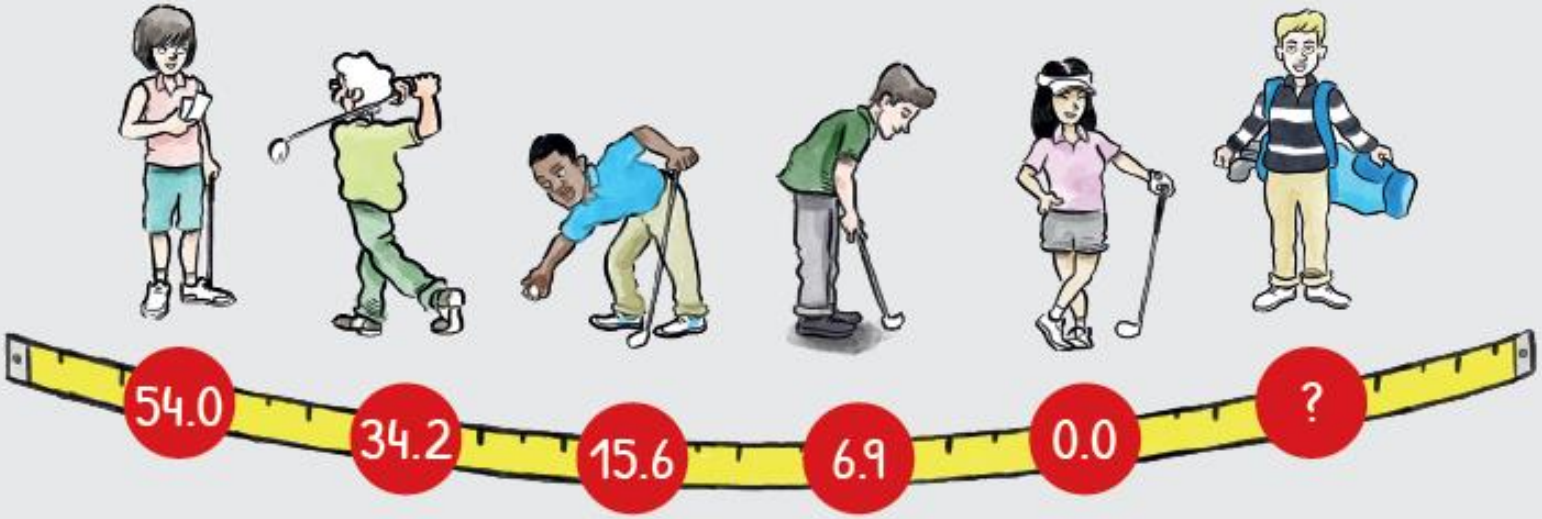
WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM

R&A USGA

CONGU

THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL GOLF UNIONS



Rules of Handicapping

Player Reference Guide

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Introduction

This simple guide offers golfers in Great Britain and Ireland a high-level overview of the World Handicap System and the Rules of Handicapping, and has been put together by the Council of National Golf Unions ("CONGU").

It contains details specific to the way the system is administered within GB&I. For further details, please contact your National Association.

Purpose of the World Handicap System

The purpose of the WHS is to provide maximum enjoyment for all who play the game by enabling players of any ability, from anywhere in the world, to play and compete with others on a fair basis.

What is a Handicap Index?

A Handicap Index calculated under the WHS provides you with a portable measure of your demonstrated playing ability that is consistent with how all other golfers will be measured around the world.

It can be used to track your progress and to play in a casual or a competitive round with any other player.

All players are encouraged to establish and maintain a Handicap Index.

How do I get one?

By joining a golf club.

This will allow your club to manage and maintain your handicap record in accordance with the Rules of Handicapping.

Every golf club has a Handicap Committee.

If you have any questions about the Rules of Handicapping or local procedures, it will be there to help you.

How do I get one?

Once you have joined a golf club, there is nothing to stop you from playing and submitting scores.

Scores from all individual formats of stroke play (competition and recreational) are acceptable for handicap purposes, provided you:

- ✓ Ensure another person is present during the round;
- ✓ Play to the Rules of Golf; and
- ✓ Your score is attested.

Once you have submitted scores from a total of 54 holes, made up of 9 or 18-hole scores, you will be allocated an initial Handicap Index.

The maximum hole score for handicap purposes during your initial 54 holes is par + 5. This adjustment will be made automatically within the handicap software.

Maximum Handicap Index

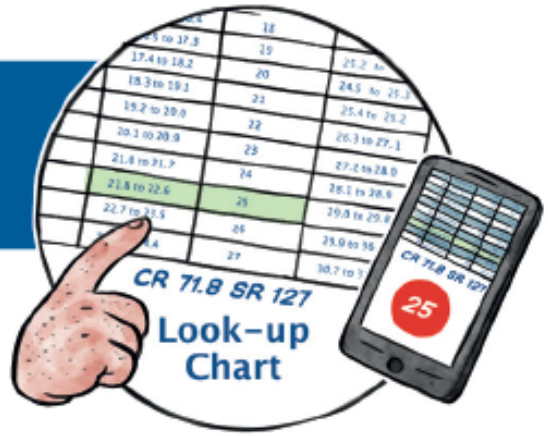
With a maximum Handicap Index of 54.0, the WHS is designed to be inclusive of all golfers, regardless of age, gender or ability. Competition fixture lists and Terms of the Competition should be set up by your Handicap or Competition Committee – to ensure that all golfers feel included, have plenty of opportunity to compete with other golfers and have the chance of doing well.

Your Handicap Index is the portable number you take with you from course to course. Keep reading to find out how to convert that number into the handicap you use on the golf course.

Calculate your Course Handicap

Once you have decided which tees you are going to play, you must convert your Handicap Index into a Course Handicap. Your Course Handicap provides you with the number of strokes you need to help you play to your handicap based on the difficulty of the course and the set of tees you will be playing.

The conversion process is easy—and can be done by using a look-up table located near the first tee, your Club software or a mobile app.



For those of you who like numbers, you can do it yourself using the following formula for an 18-hole round:

Course Handicap = Handicap Index x (Slope Rating / 113)

NOTE: The calculation for a 9-hole round is different.

Handicap Allowances

Depending on the format of play, a handicap allowance may be applied to your Course Handicap.

Playing Handicap = **Course Handicap** X **Handicap Allowance**

Example: The recommended handicap allowance for individual Stroke Play events is 95%, which means a player could have a Course Handicap of 15 and a Playing Handicap of 14.

If players are competing from different tees, a further adjustment may be necessary for any differences in Course Rating.

NOTE: If you are playing a recreational round for handicap purposes, you will need to pre-register before you play.

Know where you get your strokes

Compare your Course Handicap to the stroke index on the Scorecard.

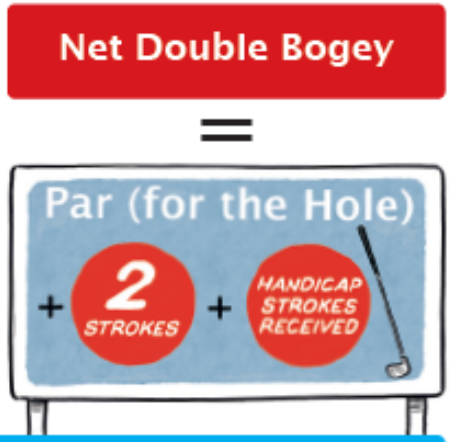
The **stroke index** identifies where your handicap strokes are received, with stroke index 1 being the hole where a stroke is most needed by most players.

In this example, the player has a Course Handicap of 10, which means the player will receive one handicap stroke on holes allocated 1 through 10 (marked with a tick symbol)

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
Yardage	393	133	375	490	333	378	155	416	357	3030
Par	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	35
Stroke Index	5 ✓	17	9 ✓	1 ✓	11	7 ✓	15	3 ✓	13	
Player A										

Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN
Yardage	341	152	360	131	471	323	314	375	340	2807
Par	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	35
Stroke Index	8 ✓	16	6 ✓	18	2 ✓	10 ✓	14	4 ✓	12	
Player A										

Maximum Hole Score



If you happen to struggle on a hole and the format of play allows (e.g. Stableford and Maximum Score formats), you may not need to finish it.

The maximum hole score for handicap purposes is net double bogey and, if the format of play does allow, you can pick up once you have reached that maximum limit.

Example: A player with a Course Handicap of 10 receives 1 stroke on holes with stroke index 1 to 10. Therefore:

- On a par 4 hole with stroke index 10, their maximum hole score is 4 (par) + 2 (double bogey) + 1 (stroke received) = 7
- On a par 5 hole with stroke index 5, their maximum hole score is 5 (par) + 2 (double bogey) + 1 (stroke received) = 8
- On a par 3 hole with stroke index 15, their maximum hole score is 3 (par) + 2 (double bogey) + 0 (stroke received) = 5

Hole not played

If you did not play a hole for a valid reason, you should either leave the hole score blank or mark the hole as 'not played' (NP). A score of Net Par will be used for this hole, calculated as follows:

Net Par = **Par** + **Handicap strokes received**

An incomplete round will only be acceptable for handicap purposes if you have played at least 9 holes (for a 9-hole score) or 10 holes (for an 18-hole score).

Valid reasons for not playing a hole include:

- ✓ Failing light or bad weather
- ✓ Player injury or illness
- ✓ A hole being declared out of play by the Committee for maintenance or reconstruction purposes

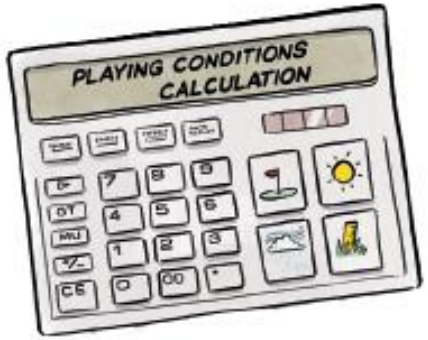
Invalid reasons for not playing a hole include:

- ✗ Not playing a hole for the purpose of gaining a scoring advantage (high or low)

Submit your score

Submit your score in accordance with Club procedures **as soon as possible after you have completed your round.** It must be certified by a marker.

The prompt submission of your score is important as it will enable:



Your score to be included in the daily PLAYING CONDITIONS CALCULATION

and

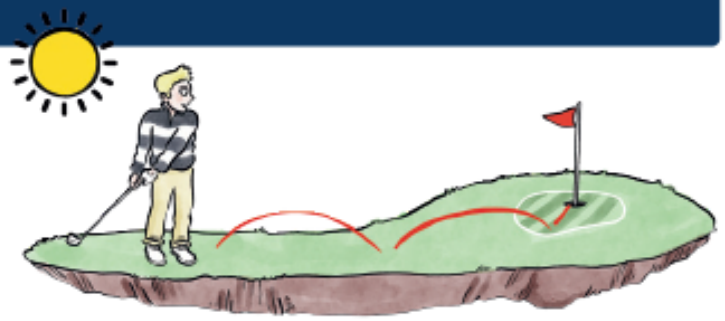
Your Handicap Index to be UPDATED READY FOR YOUR NEXT ROUND

Playing Conditions Calculation

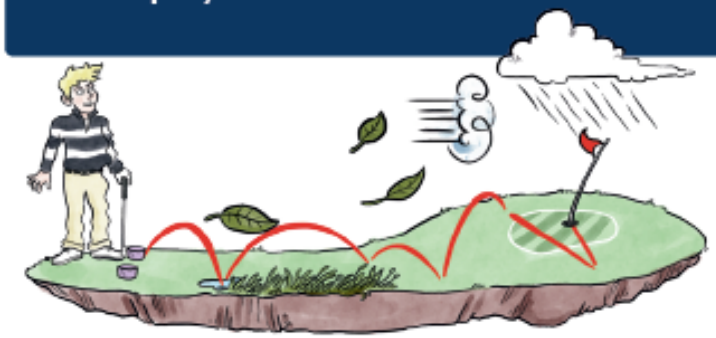
At the end of each day, a **playing conditions calculation (PCC)** takes place automatically, behind the scenes, to determine if scores made at the course were **significantly** higher or lower then expected.

If scores were unusually low or high, a PCC adjustment between **–1 and +3** will be applied to your score differential calculation to reflect the playing conditions on the day.

A negative (–) adjustment means the course played easier than normal.



A positive (+) adjustment means the course played more difficult than normal.



A PCC of 0 means the course played as expected, which will be the case more often than not.

Calculation of Score Differential

Once the PCC is determined, your final score differential will be calculated—representing the handicap you 'played to' for that round relative to the difficulty of the course played, as determined by the Course Rating and Slope Rating, and the playing conditions.

Course Rating

Slope Rating

A score of 80 on a difficult course may result in a lower score differential than a 77 on an easier one.

Likewise:

A high score on a day when conditions are challenging may result in a lower score differential, which has the potential to become one of the best 8 within your scoring record.

Basic calculation

A Handicap Index is designed to represent your demonstrated ability.

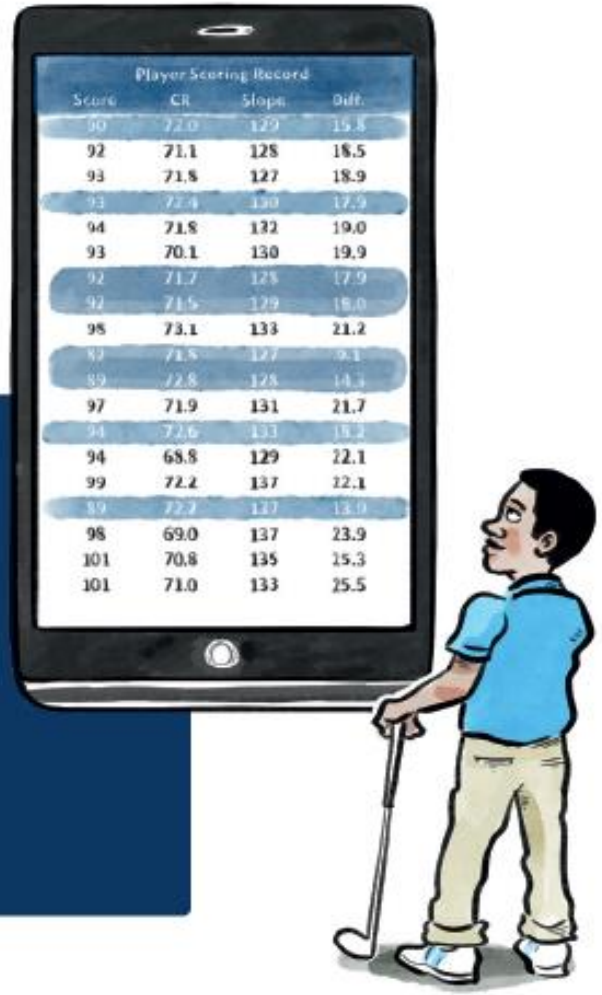
It is calculated by averaging the best 8 score differentials out of the most recent 20 within your scoring record.

The player's Handicap Index in this example is calculated as follows:

	15.8
	17.9
	17.9
+	18.0
	9.1
	14.3
	18.2
	13.0
=	**124.2**

= 124.2 ÷ 8

= <u>15.6</u>



If your round is exceptional

If a score produces a score differential that is 7.0 strokes or better than your Handicap Index at the time the round is played, it is subject to an exceptional score reduction.

If the score differential is between 7.0 and 9.9 strokes better, your Handicap Index will be reduced by 1.0 stroke.

If the score differential is 10.0 or more strokes better, your Handicap Index will be reduced by 2.0 strokes.

If your Handicap Index is going up

Even the best players struggle from time to time – and although form changes, a player's underlying ability does not change rapidly.

To prevent your Handicap Index from increasing too quickly, every time it is updated, the 8 of 20 calculation is compared to the lowest Handicap Index that you have achieved during the last 365 days.

If the difference is more than 3.0 strokes:

A soft cap will be applied, which slows down the rate of increase.

If the difference is more than 5.0 strokes:

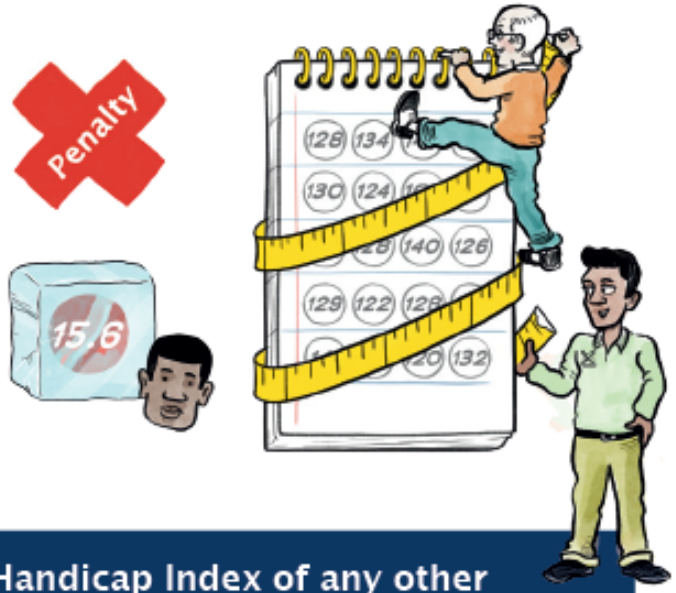
A hard cap will prevent any additional upward movement after the soft cap is applied.

The Handicap Committee may override the cap in exceptional circumstances, such as injury.

Safeguards

The Rules of Handicapping include a range of safeguards to protect the field and to mitigate against any player that might try to circumvent the Rules in order to gain an advantage. **These include:**

- Handicap Committee Review
- Application of a penalty score for failure to submit a score
- Adjusting a Handicap Index to more accurately reflect the player's ability
- Freezing a Handicap Index for a period of time
- Withdrawing a Handicap Index



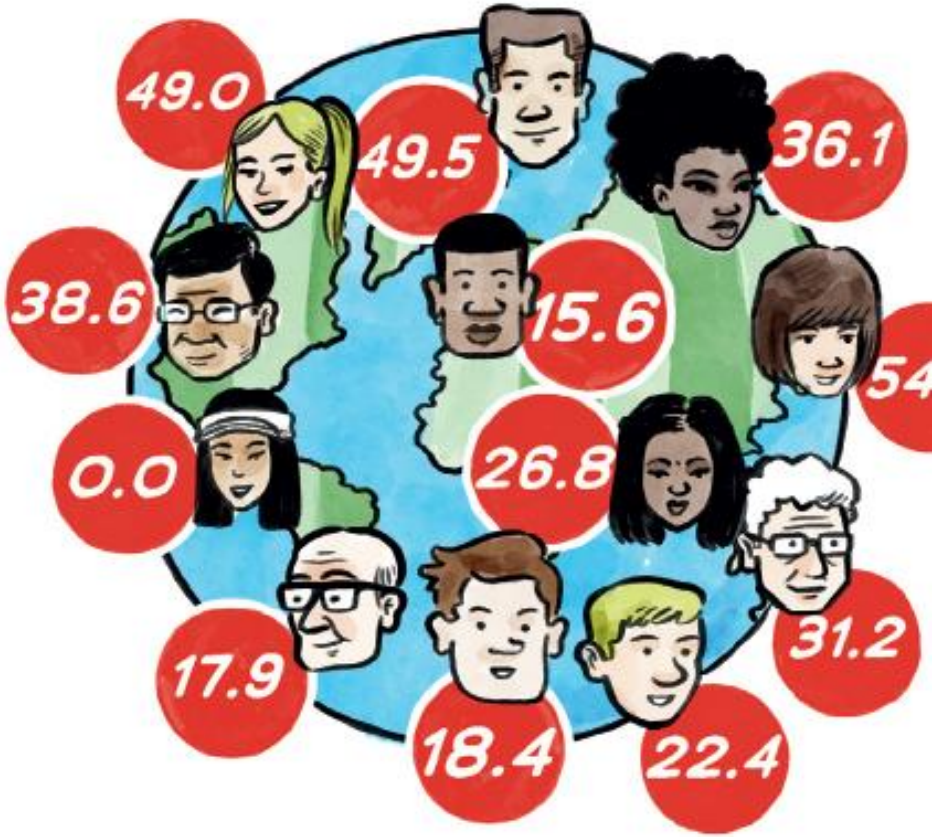
If you ever feel that your Handicap Index or the Handicap Index of any other golfer needs to be reviewed, contact your golf club or Handicap Committee.

Now that you can track your progress and play with others on a fair basis, you just need to enjoy yourself the next time you tee it up...

and don't forget to submit your score.

Keep up-to-date with the latest news about the World Handicap System at:

www.englandgolf.org
www.scottishgolf.org
www.walesgolf.org
www.golfireland.ie
www.randa.org



Notes

1

54.0

2

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