

The USGA Handicap System

What every golfer should know

Who is involved?

- USGA
- SNGA
- Your Golf Club
- Handicap Committee
- Individual Players



USGA's Role



- Sets policies, procedures and standards
- Oversees compliance
- USGA Handicap Index is a privilege that must be earned, and is not a right
- Two basic premises
 - Each player will try to make the best score at every hole in every round
 - The player will post every acceptable round for peer review

SNGA's Role



- Performs licensing function
- Rates courses – USGA course rating and slope updated periodically
- Administers handicap system
- Establishes revision schedule – currently 1st and 15th of each month
- Assists member clubs and players

Your Club's Role

- Obtains license from SNGA
- Needs bylaws
- Needs handicap committee
- Makes scores available for peer review

Handicap Committee Role

- Must be comprised mostly of members and chaired by a member
- Member compliance and training – require proper posting of scores
- Handicap adjustments – Index must reflect player's scoring ability
- Assist with score posting and peer review

Player's Role and Responsibilities

- Learn and correctly use system
- Abide by USGA rules
- Know your Course Handicap
 - May be different at each course and tee box
- A player may not use any of the rules to manipulate his handicap
- Post all acceptable scores as defined by the USGA

What do you mean by “handicap”?

- Three different definitions with different uses
 - USGA Handicap Index
 - Course handicap
 - Handicap allowance

What do you mean by “handicap”?

- USGA Handicap Index
 - Compares players’ scoring ability
 - Portable from course to course and tee to tee
 - Used for conversion to course handicap
 - Revised on the 1st and 15th of each month

What do you mean by “handicap”?

- Course handicap
 - The number of strokes required from a specific set of tees to adjust player’s score to that of a scratch golfer
 - Calculated based on your Index and the Slope Rating
 - Most commonly used for individual games from same tee box
 - Each player should know, or be able to look up, his or her course handicap
 - Posted on bulletin boards in locker rooms or in pro shop
 - In club’s handicap computer
 - Via GHIN/SNGA app
 - This is the basis for adjusting posted scores for ESC and for holes not played

What do you mean by “handicap”?

- Handicap allowance
 - Established by tournament or event committee
 - Varies based on the type of game being played
 - Intended to make games fair
 - This is the number typically shown on a scorecard
- Includes various adjustments
 - Use of low index
 - Percentages that vary for team games
 - Players competing from different tees
 - Lowest player may be adjusted to 0

Establishing a Handicap Index[®]

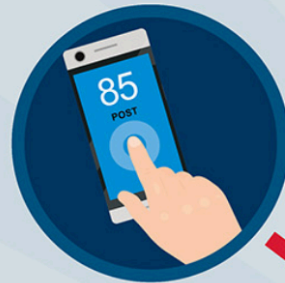


A player does not establish a Handicap Index from a specific set of tees.

ANYONE, ANYWHERE, FROM ANY SET OF TEES

Myth Buster: One of the questions we get at the USGA is "Do I establish my handicap from a certain set of tees?"

No, a player does not establish a Handicap Index from a set of tees. Here's why:



ENTER
SCORES



STANDARD FORMULA
APPLIED



RESULT:
A PORTABLE
HANDICAP
INDEX

Adjusted Gross Score -
USGA Course Rating™ x 113 / Slope Rating®
= Handicap Differential™



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GHIN[®]

a USGA service

Equitable Stroke Control (ESC)

- Individual hole scores must be adjusted using the following table:

Course Handicap	Maximum Score
9 or less	Double Bogey
10-19	7
20-29	8
30-39	9
40 or more	10



- ESC is applied to every hole for every round – no exceptions

Facts and Figures

- How well should you play?
 - Most players play to their course handicap or better about 25% of the time
 - Most players average three strokes higher than their course handicap
- Biggest areas needing improvement
 - Equitable Stroke Control
 - Posting all acceptable scores

Acceptable Scores

- USGA rules require ALL acceptable scores to be posted
- What is acceptable?
 - Any round where 7 or more holes are played
 - Scores made on any USGA-rated course in an active season (Southern Nevada is always in active season)
 - Scores made in any game under the principles of the rules of golf
 - Player plays his own ball
 - Includes stroke play, match play, team games

Less than 18 holes

- 9 hole scores are automatically combined by the system to create an 18-hole score
- For unplayed holes (like when a match is finished before 18 holes), player must take par, plus any handicap stroke(s), based on his Course Handicap
- 7 or 8 holes must be posted as 9 hole scores using this procedure
- 10-12 holes must be posted as 9 hole scores, ignoring any holes past 9
- 13 or more holes must be posted as 18 hole scores, using the above procedure

Unacceptable Scores

- Fewer than 7 holes played
- Course played is in an inactive season, or is less than 3,000 yards for 18 holes, or is not rated
- Majority of holes not played in accordance with the principles of the Rules of Golf
- Player is limited to less than 14 clubs, or restricted to certain clubs only
- Rounds played alone

Player Adjustments

- ESC
- Hole not played under rules of golf – par, plus any handicap strokes (e.g., mulligan)
- Hole started but not finished (e.g., gimme)
 - “most likely score”
 - Cannot exceed ESC limit
- Unrated tees – see table in handicap manual

Posting Scores

- ESC Adjusted Score
- Date
- Course Rating and Slope
- Score type (H,A,T,C,I)
- Course Name and Tees (optional)
- Best practice is to note date and tees played on scorecard
- Scores must be posted as soon as practical and available for peer review



Handicap Committee Adjustments

- Handicap Committee is required to adjust a player's index if:
 - The player's ability is changing rapidly
 - Numerous away scores are inflating Index
 - Player fails to post all acceptable scores
 - Player manipulates handicap
- The USGA encourages Handicap Committees to withdraw a player's Index for repeated violations
- Penalty Scores – these are posted by handicap committee when a player fails to post a score or does not observe the spirit of the USGA Handicap System

Further Reference

- USGA.org
- Printed version of Handicap Manual
- SNGA.org and SNGA staff
- Handicap Committee members
- Pro shop staff and PGA professionals

