

Rules of Handicapping

Definitions

Acceptable Score

A score from an *authorized format of play* which meets all the provisions set out within the *Rules of Handicapping* (see Rule 2 [Scores for Handicap Purposes](#)).

Active Season

The period of time when *acceptable scores* from a specified area should be submitted for handicap purposes, as determined by the *Authorized Association* where the round is played.

Adjusted Gross Score

A player's gross score, including any penalty strokes, adjusted for when:

- The player exceeds their maximum hole score,
- A hole is not played, or
- A hole is started but the player does not hole out.

(See Rule 3 [Adjustment of Hole Scores](#).)

Authorized Association

An entity that is authorized, in accordance with the structure set out by the United States Golf Association (USGA) and R&A Rules Limited (The R&A), to implement and administer the *Rules of Handicapping* within its *jurisdiction* and to carry out the responsibilities as delegated to it by the authority through which it is authorized. Such an entity must be a Multi-National, National or Regional Association, Federation or Union unless otherwise approved by the USGA and The R&A where no such entity exists.

Authorized Format of Play

A format of play eligible for handicap purposes, as determined by the *Authorized Association* where the round is played (see Rule [2.1a Played in an Authorized Format of Play](#)).

Bogey Player

A player with a *Handicap Index* of approximately 20.0 for men and approximately 24.0 for women.

Cap

The procedure that reduces or limits the amount by which a player's *Handicap Index* can increase when measured against the player's *Low Handicap Index*. There are two trigger points within the *cap* procedure:

- *Soft cap* – the point after which there is a reduction in the rate of upward movement of a *Handicap Index*.
- *Hard cap* – the point which sets the maximum limit for the upward movement of a *Handicap Index*.

(See Rule [5.8 Limit on Upward Movement of a Handicap Index](#).)

Certification of Score

The verification of a player's score. This can be evidenced in two ways:

- By a marker's physical signature or electronic certification, and/or
- Through *peer review*.

(See Rule [4.4 Certification of a Score](#).)

Course Handicap

The number of handicap strokes a player receives, before *handicap allowances*, from a specific set of tees as determined by the *Slope Rating* and the difference between *Course Rating* and *par* (see Rule [6.1 Course Handicap Calculation](#)).

Course Rating

An indication of the difficulty of a *golf course* for the *scratch player* under normal course and weather conditions (see [Appendix G: The Golf Course, Course Rating and Slope Rating](#)).

Exceptional Score

A *Score Differential* which is at least 7.0 strokes better than the player's *Handicap Index* at the time the round was played (see Rule [5.9 Submission of an Exceptional Score](#)).

Expected Score

The score a player is expected to achieve over a specified number of holes on a course of standard difficulty. It is calculated using the player's *Handicap Index* and attributes a numerical value against any hole or holes not played during a round.

General Play

When an organized competition is not being contested and golfers are playing:

- A casual round; or
- Competitively, but not in an event organized by a Committee.

Golf Club

An organization that is permitted, through affiliation to its *Authorized Association*, to administer and manage the *Handicap Index* of those players who have designated it as their *home club*, in accordance with the requirements of the *Rules of Handicapping*. To qualify for affiliation, a *golf club* may be required to satisfy certain requirements as determined by its *Authorized Association*.

Golf Course

An area of land where golf is played, made up of the following five areas as defined in the *Rules of Golf*:

1. The general area,
2. The teeing area a player must play from in starting the hole being played,
3. All penalty areas,
4. All bunkers, and
5. The putting green of the hole being played.

Each hole may have multiple teeing areas and, for handicap purposes, a *golf course* is made up of a designated set of tees on each hole. As such, each set of tees (or *golf course*) should have a separate *Course Rating* and *Slope Rating*, including one for each gender where appropriate.

Handicap Allowance

The percentage of a *Course Handicap* recommended to create equity for all players participating in a specific format of play (see [Appendix C: Handicap Allowances](#)).

Handicap Committee

The entity established by a *golf club* or an *Authorized Association* which is responsible for ensuring compliance with the obligations of the *golf club* or *Authorized Association* under the *Rules of Handicapping* (see Rule [1.3 Responsibilities of Player, Handicap Committee and Authorized Association](#) and [Appendix A: Rights and Responsibilities](#)).

Handicap Index

The measure of a player's demonstrated ability calculated against the *Slope Rating* of a *golf course* of standard playing difficulty (that is, a course with a *Slope Rating* of 113) (see Rule [5.2 Calculation of a Handicap Index](#)).

Handicap Review

A procedure carried out by the *Handicap Committee* to determine if the *Handicap Index* of any *member* who has designated that *golf club* as their *home club* needs to be adjusted (see

Rule [7.1a Conducting a Handicap Review and Adjusting a Handicap Index](#) and [Appendix D: Handicap Review](#)).

Hard Cap (see Cap)

Home Club

A player's primary *golf club* designated by the player to ensure their *Handicap Index* is managed in accordance with the *Rules of Handicapping*.

Inactive Season

The period of time when scores in a specified area cannot be submitted for handicap purposes, as determined by the *Authorized Association* where the round is played.

Jurisdiction

The geographic territory in which an *Authorized Association* administers the *Rules of Handicapping*.

Low Handicap Index

The lowest *Handicap Index* calculated for the player during the 365-day period (one year) preceding the day on which the most recent score on their *scoring record* was played (see Rule [5.7 Low Handicap Index](#)).

Member

An individual who joins a *golf club* in a manner determined by club policy, which allows the player to obtain a *Handicap Index*.

Most Likely Score

The score a player records for handicap purposes for a hole that is started but where the player does not hole out (see Rule [3.3 When a Hole is Started But Player Does Not Hole Out](#)).

Net Double Bogey

A score equal to the *par* of a hole plus two strokes and adjusted for any handicap strokes applied on that hole. A *net double bogey* is a player's maximum hole score for handicap purposes (see Rule [3.1 Maximum Hole Score for Handicap Purposes](#)).

Net Par

A score equal to the *par* of a hole adjusted for any handicap strokes applied on that hole (see Rule [3.2 When a Hole is Not Played](#)).

Par

The score that a *scratch player* would generally be expected to achieve on a hole under normal course and weather conditions, allowing for two strokes on the putting green (see [Appendix F: Establishing Par](#)). The *Authorized Association*, or at the discretion of the National Association the *golf club*, is responsible for adjudicating *par* (see [Appendix A: Rights and Responsibilities](#)).

Peer Review

The process by which a score or *Handicap Index* can be confirmed or challenged (see Rule [4.4 Certification of a Score](#)).

Penalty Score

A score posted at the discretion of the *Handicap Committee* for a player who:

- Fails to submit an *acceptable score*, and/or
- Does not complete their round, or does not play one or more holes, for an invalid reason (see).

Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)

The statistical calculation that determines if conditions on a day of play differed from normal playing conditions to the extent that they significantly impacted players' performance. Examples of conditions that could impact players' performance include:

- Course conditions,
- Weather conditions, and
- Course set-up.

(See Rule [5.6 Playing Conditions Calculation](#).)

Playing Handicap

The *Course Handicap* adjusted for any *handicap allowances* or Terms of the Competition. It represents the actual number of strokes the player gives or receives for the round being played (see Rule [6.2 Playing Handicap Calculation](#)).

Rules of Golf

The *Rules of Golf* as approved by the United States Golf Association ("USGA") and R&A Rules Limited ("The R&A"), including any Local Rules the Committee adopts for the competition or the *golf course*.

Rules of Handicapping

The *Rules of Handicapping* as approved by the United States Golf Association ("USGA") and R&A Rules Limited ("The R&A") and administered by the *Authorized Association* within its *jurisdiction*.

Score Differential

The difference between a player's *adjusted gross score* and the *Course Rating*, reflecting the *Slope Rating* and the *playing conditions calculation*. It is the numerical value attributed to a score achieved on a *golf course* on a specific day that is posted into the player's *scoring record*. A *Score Differential* must be an 18-hole value or its calculated equivalent.

(See Rule [5.1 Calculation of a Score Differential](#)).

Scoring Record

A history of a player's *acceptable scores* along with:

- The player's current *Handicap Index*,
- The player's *Low Handicap Index*,
- Other details about each round (such as, the date the round was played), and
- Any applicable adjustments (for example, an *exceptional score*).

(See [Appendix B: Player's Scoring Record](#).)

Score Type

A designation that identifies the type of *acceptable score* that appears within a player's *scoring record* (see [Appendix B: Player's Scoring Record](#)).

Scratch Player

A player with a *Handicap Index* of 0.0.

Slope Rating

An indication of the relative difficulty of a *golf course* for players who are not *scratch players* compared to players who are *scratch players* (see [Appendix G: The Golf Course, Course Rating and Slope Rating](#)).

Soft Cap (see Cap)

Stroke Index

The value assigned to each hole on a *golf course* to indicate where handicap strokes are given or received (see [Appendix E: Stroke Index Allocation](#)).