**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A Few Words from Us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>About the WSGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Get more from your WSGA membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Important Dates &amp; Schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>USGA Handicap System Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>Tips on Adding, Inactivation, or Deleting a Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>USGA Handicap System Licensing Program for Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-18</td>
<td>Handicap Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>Common Handicap Committee Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>Modification of USGA Handicap Indexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tips for Auditing Member Score Postings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>Handicap Essentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>WSGA Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Club Representative Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Allocation of Handicap Strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-34</td>
<td>Handicap Allowances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Players competing from Different Tees or Men and Women from the Same Set of Tees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Handicap Chairperson Newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>“Join Now” Feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Junior Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-40</td>
<td>Course Rating Basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Temporary Greens and/or Tees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Course Handicaps Explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Target Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Adjusting Holes Scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Become a WSGA Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Department Directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47-53</td>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear WSGA Handicap Chairpersons;

A new year is upon us and it will certainly be a busy one of change. A new GHIN platform will be implemented early in the year and the World Handicap System will be coming in 2020. We are excited about all the new things coming about in the game of golf and are ready to get everyone up to speed.

We hope you find the information contained within this electronic document as a resource guide while administering the USGA Handicap System. Please have this handy with you when having handicap committee meetings.

The job of a Handicap Chairperson can be a challenging one. We know you are the first line of defense when it comes to overseeing the Handicap System, but we also recognize you want to be out there having fun just like the rest of your members. To that end, we encourage everyone to seek out help. You cannot hope to be successful in a vacuum, unaided by your Board, fellow members, and facility staff.

It is also crucial to have a meeting early on with your Board and Golf Pro to educate them on the basics of the Handicap System and the contents of your own Handicap Policy. You will need their buy-in and backing.

There are no changes to the USGA Handicap System this year as we are still in the 2018-19 cycle. The World Handicap System will be discussed extensively with all of you later this year, so you are ready for January 1. There will be plenty of education opportunities by webinar/seminar coming this Fall.

GHIN is releasing a new platform this year. This will include new golfer products (App, GHIN.com, Kiosk) and a new administration system. Be on the lookout for more information coming soon.

We will continue to issue the Preferred Lies monthly newsletter. We want to engage with you as much as possible and hope this is a better way to get pertinent information out to you in a timely manner. This newsletter will be even more important to get this new information out to all of you. Please make sure your email is current with us, so you do not miss any news from our department.

If you end up vacating your Handicap Chair position, please call our office immediately, so we can update our records with the new Chair.

Lastly, we want to say THANK YOU! Being the Handicap Chairperson at your club is not an easy position and we greatly appreciate your support. With your efforts, the USGA Handicap System is properly administered and creates a fair and equitable environment for all.

And of course, don’t hesitate to call or email us anytime.

We greatly appreciate your continuing commitment to the WSGA and your own club.

Have a wonderful 2019 golf season,

Kevin Jones
Director of Handicapping and Course Rating

Collin Westwood
Manager of Handicapping and GHIN Services
In 1922, the Washington State Golf Association (WSGA) was formed in order to conduct the Men’s State Amateur Golf Championship. Since its humble beginnings 95 years ago, the WSGA has evolved into one of the largest amateur golf associations in the United States providing a multitude of benefits and services to more than 69,000 individual members at over 690 member golf clubs throughout the state of Washington and Northern Idaho.

The WSGA is a 501(c)4 non-profit amateur golf association governed by volunteer, amateur golfers who employ a full-time, professional staff. The WSGA also serves as the only statewide representative of the United States Golf Association (USGA).

**Mission Statement:** Enriching the lives of people in Washington and Northern Idaho through the many social, recreational, and lifetime benefits of the game of golf.

**WSGA Core Values:**
- **Integrity:** Conduct business with highest moral and ethical standards.
- **Inclusiveness:** Provide opportunities for all people interested in the game of golf.
- **Stewardship:** Celebrate and embrace golf’s history and traditions.
- **Excellence:** Strive for the best in all endeavors.
- **Service:** Provide superior support for all clubs and individual members.
- **Volunteerism:** Give back to communities through the game of golf.

**WSGA Vision:** The WSGA will be the leader and the primary resource in promoting and providing opportunities for anyone interested in the game of golf. Through the development of strong alliances and partnerships within and beyond the golf industry, we will exemplify and enhance what the overall enjoyment and growth of the game is all about. We will enthuse our members and partners by giving back to the game and by providing more inclusive and tangible benefits to enhance the membership experience. The WSGA-owned and operated facility will be a warm and welcoming place for all and serve as the foundation for the organization to establish programs that benefit the people and communities of the region.

**Provides USGA Handicap Indexes Through the GHIN System**
- Issues an official USGA Handicap Index through the USGA GHIN system (largest in the world)
- More than 69,000 members annually
- 24 Handicap revisions (updated the 1st and 15th of every month) resulting in the most up-to-date and accurate USGA Handicap Indexes
- Receive USGA Handicap Index Report (eRevision) via e-mail
- See page 5 for more great benefits
Conducts Championships of Excellence

Conducts major amateur championships for all playing levels and gender – Men’s Amateur Championship, Women’s Amateur Championship, Men’s Mid-Amateur Championship, Women’s Mid-Amateur Championship, Senior Men’s Amateur Championship, Senior Women’s Amateur Championship, Super Senior Men’s Amateur Championship, Super Senior Women’s Amateur Championship, Men’s Best-Ball, Senior Men’s Best-Ball, Women’s Best-Ball, Champion of Champions, and Parent-Child. The WSGA also conducts six Winter Series Tournaments in Winter and Spring.

Pacific Northwest Golf Association Membership

All WSGA members are automatically members of the Pacific Northwest Golf Association (PNGA). PNGA member benefits include championship eligibility into regional amateur championships, and receiving the *Pacific Northwest Golfer* magazine with the Golf Washington insert direct-mailed to your home four times a year.

The Home Course

Located in historic DuPont, Washington you will find The Home Course of the Pacific Northwest Golf Association and Washington State Golf Association. The golf course opened in 2007. A research of the history of the area tells us that a golf course may have been established next to the historic Fort Nisqually in the early 1800s. As a member of the WSGA you are entitled to play The Home Course at a reduced green fee. In the future, you will find many other golf entities housing their offices at the home of amateur golf in the Pacific Northwest, The Home Course.

Administers USGA Course and Slope Rating System

Up to 70 courses rated annually (30 additional with laser measuring service).

Conducts USGA Qualifying’s in the State of Washington

Conducts USGA national championship qualifying for the following events:

- U.S. Open
- U.S. Women’s Open
- U.S. Senior Open
- U.S. Senior Women’s Open
- U.S. Amateur
- U.S. Women’s Amateur
- U.S. Mid-Amateur
- U.S. Senior Amateur
- U.S. Senior Women’s Amateur
- U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball
- U.S. Men’s Amateur Four-Ball
- U.S. Junior Amateur
- U.S. Girl’s Junior
Supports Evans Caddie Scholarship Program in the State of Washington

Supports over 25 Evans Caddie Scholars with full tuition and housing scholarships at UW and WSU. Evans Cup fundraising tournaments and other programs have raised more than $2.0 million since 1992.

Provides Financial Support for Washington Junior Golf Association

Largest financial contributor to WJGA – supports statewide competitive programs for young golfers.

Supports Legislative Lobbyist in Olympia to keep the WSGA and its members and member golf clubs apprised of issues related to the golf industry

Provides Financial Support for Turfgrass Research at Northwest Universities

Annual financial contribution to Northwest Turfgrass Association which conducts turf research to enhance environmentally friendly methods of maintaining golf courses.

Provides Financial Support for the First Green of Washington

Annual financial contributor to FGOW – supports high school curriculum designed to teach the “Links as Labs” philosophy. First Green is an innovative environmental education outreach program using golf courses as environmental learning labs. Golf course superintendents and/or local golf course representatives host students on field trips where they test water quality, collect soil samples, identify plants, design plantings, assist in stream bed restoration and are involved in the ecology and environmental aspects of the golf course. The students are also introduced to many other aspects of golf.

Administers USGA Rules of Golf and Amateur Status Reinstatement Program

Washington Golf Economic Impact Study

In order to educate legislators about the importance of golf to the region’s economic health, the WSGA helped to revive the Golf Alliance of Washington and funded an Economic Impact Study, which found that the golf industry in overall revenue impact is the fourth highest in the state, and generates revenue comparable to the combined revenues of all the state’s other major spectator sports - football, baseball, soccer, etc.

In addition to the game’s recreational value, golf is a key industry which contributes to the vitality of Washington’s economy. In 2007, Washington’s golf industry generated a direct economic impact of $1.2 billion.

Golf brings visitors to the state, drives new construction and residential development, generates retail sales, and creates demand for a myriad of goods and services. When the indirect and induced effects of golf-related activities are considered, Washington’s golf economy supported approximately $2.5 billion of economic activity, including $116 million in tax revenue, and over 29,000 jobs with $796.3 million in wage income.
Get more from your WSGA membership

Free online golf savings pass with offers from courses throughout Washington, Northern Idaho and beyond. Save on golf travel packages, sporting events wagolfpass.com

Receive up to 70% savings in lodging and entertainment thewsga.org/wsgarewards

Discounts on game tickets wagolfpass.com

Discounts on premium logoed apparel thewsga.vanguardproshop.com

$75 off swing evaluation or lesson plan golftec.com/washington-state

Save on GPS tracking and score posting app golfshotgps.com/wsga
Important Dates & Schedules

Championships Registration Begins

January 16, 2019

Visit www.thewsga.org to view the WSGA Championships Schedule and register online.

Club Roster Inactivation Deadline

January 31, 2019

All inactivation’s must be completed and transmitted to GHIN no later than 8:59 pm (PST) on January 31, 2019. It is the policy of the WSGA to not issue credits for any incorrect member(s) on your Club’s roster after the Inactivation Deadline.

First Day to Post Scores

March 1, 2019

All acceptable scores from rounds played within the boundaries of the WSGA from this date until November 14th must be posted as soon as practicable. If a member plays in an area that is/was still accepting scores during the non-score posting period (November 15th to the last day of February) those scores should also be posted as soon as practicable.

Last Day to Post Scores

November 14, 2019

Scores from rounds played before November 15, 2019 may be posted at any time, including during the Inactive score posting season. Scores from rounds played within the boundaries of the WSGA during the non-score posting period of November 15th to the last day of February are never acceptable for handicap purposes.
USGA Handicap System Philosophy

The Washington State Golf Association strongly believes that the following statements underscore the essential message of the USGA Handicap System. We ask that every WSGA member join us in upholding these important ideals that support the integrity of golf. These excerpts are from the USGA Handicap System Manual, 2016-2019.

- A player must earn a USGA Handicap Index.
- No player has an inherent right to a USGA Handicap Index without providing full evidence of ability to the golf club’s Handicap Committee.
- Fair handicapping depends upon full and accurate information regarding a player’s potential scoring ability as reflected by a complete scoring record.
- The two basic premises underlying the USGA Handicap System are that each player will try to make the best score at every hole in every round, regardless of where the round is played, and that the player will post every acceptable round for peer review. The player and the player’s Handicap Committee have joint responsibility for adhering to these premises.
- Peer review is the ability of golfers to gain an understanding of a player’s potential ability and to form a reasonable basis for supporting or disputing a score that has been posted. Members of a golf club must have a reasonable and regular opportunity to play together. Access must be provided to scoring records, as well as to a Handicap Index list, for inspection by others, including, but not limited to, fellow club members.
Check Your Database Before Adding or Reactivating a Member

Simply go the Reports menu and pull up a Player report, or a regular Handicap Report. You may want to run two reports, one for Active and one for Inactive players. You may also click into Player Management, and check your scrolling alpha list one by one. By checking your roster first you may see at a glance if the player you need to add is in your PC as an existing inactive record (then just reactivate) or not (add as a new member). If you have a new member who says they have been on the GHIN system before but they do not remember their number, please call the WSGA office to inquire before simply adding them to your roster as new. This will allow you to transfer the existing GHIN record for your new member into your club with their old scoring record attached.

Do I Inactivate or Delete a Player?

Simple! If there is a chance that the player will rejoin the club in the future, simply inactivate the player and they will remain in your club’s database on your club’s computer. If, however, there is most likely no chance that they will rejoin your club you should remove them from your club’s computer by deleting them. This will remove them from your club’s computer but not from the GHIN Mainframe. It is advisable to print out the score history of the player prior to deletion, so that you may have it on hand in the event that player does return, or simply to give to the player to take away with him. If you have a member who has passed away, please contact the WSGA and ask that the player be removed permanently from GHIN. Eventually, their GHIN Number, with no prior scores or membership information contained in it will be assigned to a new golfer at another club. If you have deleted a player and find that they would like to rejoin your club, please phone the WSGA office to ask us to do a search for their record. If that record is available, the WSGA Staff can transfer the player back into your club for you. If, however, you would like to do the transfer yourself the WSGA Staff will give you the GHIN Number of the player so that you can do the transfer.
Save Time and Inactivate/Activate a Large Number of Members At One Time

Would you like a way to save time in activating/inactivating a number of golfers at one time? Instead of changing each person’s status individually you can save time and do so either through the computer at your club or through the GHP Online Club site (http://ghp.ghin.com/GHPOnline/Club/LogonClub.aspx).

• Using the WSGA Handicap Computer at your club go to the Club Management tab. Please choose your Service (Men, Women, etc.) from those listed in the top center of the page. Once you do that you will see two columns of names listed below that. The left hand column is a list of those members who still reside on your club’s computer but who are currently inactive at GHIN. The column to the right contains a list of those golfers currently active at GHIN. To inactivate all of your currently active golfers please click on the double arrow pointing to the left. Then, as members pay their WSGA Membership dues for the year, you can return to this page and move them from the Inactive to Active column.
• You can use GHP On-Line Club from any Internet connected computer at www.ghp.ghin.com/GHPOnline/Club/logonClub.aspx. Once there, please enter 20 for the Association Number, your Club Number (You do not need to put in your service number) and finally your club’s password. Click Login. This will take you to a screen where each service is listed. On the menu bar, click on “My Golfers” in the upper left hand side of the page.

To change the status of your members immediately, choose “Change Golfer Statuses.”

• Choose Service - Men’s, or Women’s or leave on All
• Choose Status - Active or Inactive, or leave on All
• The Search All Golfers button will load list according to the above filters
• Individual checkboxes appear next to each name. Go through the list of members you wish to inactivate, then click the Inactivate Selected Golfers button. This action is immediate.
• If you wish to complete a ‘mass’ inactivation, click Inactivate Entire Roster button.
• Conversely, you can use this same procedure for those inactive members who have paid their dues and you wish to activate.
USGA Handicap System Licensing Program for Clubs

Any group wishing to be a WSGA Member Club must contact the WSGA to begin the licensing process. If the group does not want to be a WSGA Member Club they must contact the USGA Handicap Department to begin the licensing process. Once a non-WSGA club completes the licensing application at the USGA the WSGA is asked to review the licensing application and confirm that the golf club will follow the National Revision Schedule and the inactive season schedule (November 15th to the last day of February) established by the WSGA.

A “golf club” is an organization of at least 10 individual members that operates under bylaws with Committees (especially a Handicap Committee) to supervise golf activities, provide peer review, and maintain the integrity of the USGA Handicap System (see Club Compliance Checklist, Section 8-2m and Decision 2/7). A golf club must be licensed by the USGA to utilize the USGA Handicap System. A golf club can obtain a license directly from the USGA or through its membership in an authorized golf association that is already licensed by the USGA and that has jurisdiction in the geographic area that includes the principal location of the golf club.

Members of a golf club must have a reasonable and regular opportunity to play golf with each other. They must be able to return scores personally, and these scores must be readily available for inspection by others, including, but not limited to, fellow members and the club’s Handicap Committee.

Any licensed golf club is subject to an audit by the USGA to ensure compliance. When a golf club is chosen for an audit, the authorized golf association in the area will be notified. A golf club to be audited should receive assistance from the authorized golf association that initially contacted regarding the licensing process, regardless of whether the golf club is a member of the association. (See Appendix G.)

Each WSGA Member Club must submit a Club Licensing Program Application for each licensing cycle. Licensing cycles are typically four years in length but may change (As with the 2016-2019 licensing cycle) due to changes instituted by the USGA. This document should be reviewed and must be signed by a representative of each club, preferably the Handicap Chairperson and returned to the WSGA office. If the club’s Handicap Chairperson changes during a licensing cycle, a new licensing agreement must be forwarded to the WSGA offices.

• As of January 1, 2016, each existing WSGA Member Club is required to complete an Annual USGA Handicap System Educational Assessment. Any WSGA Member Club joining the Association after January 1, 2016 must complete both a USGA Handicap System Seminar, whether conducted by the WSGA, USGA or the online version available at the USGA website and the Annual USGA Handicap System Educational Assessment. It is advised that a club member, preferably the Handicap Chairperson, be the individual who completes the assessment. To facilitate consistency in handicap administration at your club and to give the Committee enough time to learn the system, it is recommended that your Handicap Chairperson remain in their position for at least one licensing cycle.

• Each Handicap Chairperson must be an active member of their WSGA member club at the time they serve as Handicap Chairperson. The Handicap Chairperson cannot be an employee of the facility, as per USGA Handicap System policies.

If you have any questions on the Certification & Licensing Program, please call the WSGA Handicapping Department at 1-877-300-1344 or e-mail Collin Westwood at collin.westwood@thewsga.org.
Handicap Committee

An essential element of the USGA Handicap System is the Handicap Committee. Each golf club or authorized golf association utilizing the USGA Handicap System must appoint a Handicap Committee to ensure the integrity of each Handicap Index it issues. This committee must make certain that the members comply with the USGA Handicap System.

8-1. Composition of the Handicap Committee

1. Under USGA guidelines, the Handicap Committee is comprised of a majority of fellow golfers (members) of the club. They are there to maintain the integrity of the USGA Handicap System and to provide peer review. Club employees (even the Golf Professional or their assistants) may serve on the Committee, however, they may not serve as Chairperson, nor set or enforce policy. Because club employees’ main responsibility is pleasing the members, it is nearly impossible for them to play an impartial role.

2. The position of Handicap Chairperson requires a substantial amount of time and a basic knowledge of the USGA Handicap System. The more information the Handicap Chairperson gives the members, the more cooperation the Chairperson is likely to receive. (See Decision 8-1/1 and 8-1/1.5.)

3. A good Handicap Committee will have an odd number of members in order to break ties if a vote is needed and might include a Handicap Chairperson, a Co-Chairperson, and a board member (to make 3). Or, a Handicap Chairperson of each of the men’s and women’s groups, along with their Co-Chairpersons and a Golf Professional (to make 5).

4. The Handicap Committee as a whole should meet before the start of the season to review The USGA Handicap System manual and to establish procedures for handicapping. The procedures should include information outlining score posting and the responsibilities of the Handicap Committee for posting penalty scores or adjusting a Handicap Index. Including local rules on Preferred Lies and tournament issues is also a great idea. During the season, the Handicap Committee should meet as needed to review and audit scoring records (including tournament scores) and resolve compliance problems.

5. The accuracy of the USGA Handicap System is dependent on complete scoring records. The Handicap Committee is responsible for seeing that players turn in all acceptable scores for peer review. A club will not enjoy fair games without full score reporting from all members. The Handicap Committee is essentially vouching for each member’s Handicap Index. So, it is essential that each player has a Handicap Index that represents their potential ability. Technically, it is both the Handicap Committee’s and the player’s responsibility (jointly) to adhere to the principles of the Handicap System.
8-2. Duties and Responsibilities

The Handicap Committee within the golf club is responsible for all aspects of the USGA Handicap System, including the computation of each member’s Handicap Index. The Handicap Committee must verify that all acceptable scores are reported for handicap purposes, and that recorded scores are available for peer review. In addition, the Handicap Committee has the authority to make the determination if course conditions are so poor that score posting should be suspended. If score posting is to be suspended for an extended period, the golf club must notify and obtain approval from the Washington State Golf Association.

A. Communication With Members

It is advisable to communicate, at the very minimum, before the season starts in order to outline the USGA Handicap System and their responsibilities, to stress the importance of reporting all acceptable scores and to report the Handicap Committee’s policies. The members may be advised of such matters as the following:

1. How and where scores are to be returned;
2. If handicap cards or labels are issued (see Section 6-4);
3. How each Handicap Index is verified at each revision;
4. The National Revision Schedule;
5. The duration of the inactive season (November 15th to the last day of February) established by the Washington State Golf Association;
6. How away scores are posted during any inactive season;
7. Handicap Index adjustment responsibilities of the Handicap Committee (See Sections 8-4 and 10-3);
8. Penalties for players failing to return scores (see Section 8-4b);
9. Which rounds will be designated as tournament scores. (See Section 8-2 & 10-3.)

B. Display each USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating of the Club

The USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating from every set of tee markers should be printed on the club scorecard and posted in a prominent place at the club, preferably by means of a poster certified by the Washington State Golf Association. The Ratings should also be easily retrievable on the screen of any computer used for score posting.

C. Displaying USGA Rating and Slope Rating of Area Courses

A list of each USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating of area courses can be provided by the WSGA and posted at the place where scores are returned. If a computer is used for score posting, the list should be made easily available for viewing on the screen.
D. Posting Course Handicap Tables

The Course Handicap (Slope Conversion) Table from every set of tee markers, as issued to a golf club by the Washington State Golf Association, must be posted in a prominent place at the club, on or near the first tee of every course at the club, and in any other place considered beneficial for assisting with the process of converting a Handicap Index to a Course Handicap. The Handicap Committee is responsible for obtaining these tables from the Washington State Golf Association and assuring their display. Each table should show the tee’s USGA Slope Rating and USGA Course Rating, as well as the corresponding Course Handicap for a player’s Handicap Index.

E. Utilization of the Current USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating

A club must accept and use the USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating that has been issued by the Washington State Golf Association. If a club disagrees with its Ratings, it may request that the Washington State Golf Association review the Ratings. A separate USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating must be made from each set of tee markers as practicable for each gender.

F. Examining Results of Competitions

The Handicap Committee should examine results of competitions. If net scores of any players appear exceptional, the Handicap Committee should take appropriate action under procedures in Sections 8-4 and 10-3. (See Appendix E) The golf club or Handicap Committee should forward exceptional tournament scores of guests to the guest’s golf club or golf association.

G. Maintaining Players’ Records

The Handicap Committee is responsible for maintaining players’ records, including prominently displaying a Handicap Index list. Current scoring records of all players in the club from the most recent revision must be available to all members and others as noted in the definition of peer review. It is preferable for only one Committee member to be responsible for players’ records and keeping the Handicap Index of each member up-to-date. Even though each WSGA Member Club uses a computer to display scoring information and to compute handicaps, the Handicap Committee still has the responsibility of reviewing the data entered into and received from the computer or computation service and applying all other procedures of the USGA Handicap System.

H. New-Member Records

The Handicap Committee has the responsibility for obtaining the scoring record (including USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating accompanying each score) of a new member. The Handicap Committee may seek the scoring record through the player’s previous golf club, authorized golf association, or computation service, or by communicating directly with the player. If a record is unavailable, the new member must post five scores and have a handicap revision take place. If a new member has posted five scores and has not yet undergone a handicap revision period, please contact the WSGA Handicap Department if a USGA Handicap Index is needed before the next revision. (See Section 6-6 and Decision 6-1/1.)
I. Resigned Member Records

The scoring record of a member who resigns should be preserved by the former golf club or authorized golf association for at least one year in the event a new golf club may need it. Generally, GHIN “purges” the records of individuals who have not been active or posted any scores in the last three or four years. If the WSGA cannot find a membership record of a player who had a GHIN Number, their record has either been purged by GHIN or that player had more than one GHIN Number and the two numbers have been merged. The USGA Handicap System requires that a player must be a member of a golf club in order to have a USGA Handicap Index. If an individual resigns their membership with your club, you are to immediately inactivate their membership at GHIN. The Handicap Index of a resigned member remains valid only until the next revision date at the club which issued the Handicap Index.

J. Corrections in Records and Calculations

The Handicap Committee must review the accuracy of scoring records and information entered by any computation service. If any errors exist, the Committee must investigate and inform the Washington State Golf Association, which will correct the scoring record as soon as practical and no later than the next revision date. The Handicap Committee must issue a corrected Handicap Index as soon as possible after a scoring error is recognized. A golf club may wish to consult the Washington State Golf Association for assistance. All reports shall be amended to reflect the corrected information. (See Decision 5-2a/2).

K. Club Handicap Cards

The Handicap Committee may issue each player a handicap card or label displaying the Handicap Index. (See Section 6-4.)

L. Cooperation With Other Committees

The Handicap Committee may check periodically and consult with other club committees, including, but not limited to:

1. The allocation of handicap-stroke holes on the course according to USGA guidelines (see Section 17);
2. The determination of course set up and par (see Section 15 & 16);
3. The determination if course conditions are too poor, that score posting should be suspended (See Section 7);
4. Work with the tournament committee/committee in charge of the competition to determine whether scores will be defined as tournament scores (see Section 2, Section 8-2, Section 10, and Decisions 10-3/1 through 10-3/6);
5. The maintenance of playing difficulty of the course (see Section 15);
6. Invocation of any Local Rule on preferred lies (see Section 7-1).
7. In working with other committees, the Handicap Committee has the responsibility to provide handicap information in a timely manner.

M. Requirements for Compliance

To determine if a golf club is complying with the USGA Handicap System, please see checklist on Page 50 of the USGA Handicap System Manual.
8-3 Handicap Revisions

The Handicap Committee at the golf club is responsible for following the revision schedule and procedures of the Washington State Golf Association.

A. Revision Schedule, Frequency of Revisions, and Inactive Season

A domestic golf club must follow the National Revision Schedule. Under the National Revision Schedule, each Handicap Index must be revised on the 1st and the 15th of each month. For an international golf club, each Handicap Index must be revised no less often than once a month and no more often than once every two weeks during the active season in accordance with the revision schedule as established by the authorized golf association that has jurisdiction in its area. Each authorized golf association may establish an inactive season for its region (See Section 6-2). If so, it must establish the dates on which the inactive season starts and ends. These dates, along with the National Revision Schedule for Handicap Index revisions, are to be distributed to all member clubs and non-member clubs in its region. Any non-member club of an authorized golf association must observe the National Revision Schedule and any inactive season established by the authorized golf association that has jurisdiction in its area. A handicap revised on a more frequent schedule, including one updated every time a score is posted, is not a Handicap Index, and must be identified with an “L” to show that it is a local handicap.

B. Scores Made In an Area Observing an Inactive Season

Scores made in an area when the authorized golf association has declared an inactive season must not be accepted for handicap purposes, (e.g. scores within the boundaries of the WSGA in December.) However, scores made in an area having an active season (e.g., score made in Arizona in December) must be posted as soon as practicable.

8-4. Penalty Scores, Handicap Index Adjustment and Withdrawal

A player must earn a Handicap Index. No player has an inherent right to a Handicap Index without providing full evidence of ability to the golf club’s Handicap Committee. A Handicap Index must be changed only as warranted by the USGA Handicap System. Only the Handicap Committee where a player maintains a handicap can adjust that player’s Handicap Index. There must be no automatic increases at the beginning of one playing season or year to the next. A Handicap Index is continuous from one playing season or year to the next. (See Decision 8-4a/1 & Section 6-1.)
A. Penalty Score for Failure to Post

If a player fails to post an acceptable score as soon as practicable after completion of the round, the Handicap Committee has three options:
1. Post the actual score.
2. Post a penalty score equal to either the lowest or highest Handicap Differential in the player’s scoring record. A “scoring record” is a file of up to twenty of the most recent scores posted by a player, plus any Eligible Tournament Scores, along with appropriate USGA Course Rating, Slope Rating, course name, and date of each score. This should be done as soon as possible after the infraction is discovered. If you are not sure how to determine what the penalty score should be, you can let the USGA Handicap System Software on your club’s handicap computer do that for you. All you need to do is call up a player’s record, click on the Scores button at the bottom of the page and then on the Scores Management page click on the Add Button and then either the Low Penalty or High Penalty button.
3) Post the actual score and a penalty score.
   The Handicap Committee is not required to notify the player prior to posting a penalty score.

B. Handicap Index Adjustment by Handicap Committee

The Handicap Committee has the responsibility of making certain that each player has a Handicap Index reflecting potential ability. Under the following circumstances, it will be necessary for the Handicap Committee to adjust the player’s Handicap Index. However, the following list is not all inclusive, and a Handicap Committee has the ultimate authority to adjust a Handicap Index under any circumstance that it feels necessary to do so. Before an adjustment becomes effective, the Handicap Committee must give the player an opportunity to explain the circumstances surrounding the proposed adjustment, either in writing or by appearing before the Handicap Committee. When an adjustment does become effective, it must be identified with the letter M, reflecting that the Handicap Committee has modified the Handicap Index (e.g. 4.9M). Note: See Appendix B for a sample letter notifying a player of Handicap Index adjustment.

1. Improving Faster than the System Can React-A player recently taking up the game may improve too rapidly for a Handicap Index calculated by the standard procedure to reflect his potential ability. For example, a player who is practicing aspects of that player’s game and/or taking playing lessons (see Decision 5-1d/1) may not have a scoring record that exhibits potential ability and may need a Handicap Index adjustment.
2. Numerous Away Scores Change Handicap Index-If a player’s Handicap Index increases by 3.0 or more due to the posting of numerous away scores, and subsequent scores (two or three rounds) at the player’s club clearly indicate that the increased Handicap Index is too high, the Handicap Committee must adjust the player’s Handicap Index downward.
3. Temporary Disability-An increase in a Handicap Index must not be granted because a player’s game is temporarily off or the player has discontinued play. However, an increased handicap may be given for a temporary disability. The increased handicap is not a Handicap Index, and it must be identified by the letter “L” to indicate that it is for local use. For example, a player having had recent surgery may be given a higher handicap while recovering. (See Local Handicap, Decisions 8-4c/1, 8-4c/2).
4. **Player Manipulates Round**—The Handicap Committee must adjust or withdraw the Handicap Index of a player who manipulates scores. (See Section 8-4f.) Examples of manipulating scores include the following:

(a) Posting erroneous information to the scoring record;
(b) Stopping play prior to 7 holes to avoid posting scores;
(c) Repeatedly playing more than one ball to avoid posting scores (See Decision 5-1a/5);
(d) Not adjusting hole scores under Section 4;
(e) Deliberately reporting more or fewer strokes than actually scored;
(f) Deliberately taking extra strokes to inflate a score.
(g) Not observing either or both of the two basic premises that underlie the USGA Handicap System (See Section 1-1).

5. **Continued violations of Section 5-1e.**

The Handicap Committee is responsible for identifying and notifying a player who regularly violates any provision within Section 5-1e (Unacceptable Scores). If the player persists in violating clause(s) within Section 5-1e after being notified by the Handicap Committee, the Handicap Committee is authorized and encouraged to consider withdrawal of the player’s Handicap Index.

C. **Duration of Adjustment by Handicap Committee**

The Handicap Committee must determine how long a player’s Handicap Index is to remain modified or withdrawn. At each handicap revision date, the Handicap Committee should compare the modified Handicap Index to the value determined by normal computation method under Section 10-2. For example, the Handicap Committee may lift a modified Handicap Index of 4.9M, when subsequent scores posted to a player’s scoring record produce a lower Handicap Index (e.g., 4.0).

D. **Tournament Performance Review**

The Handicap Committee must review the reduction of a player’s Handicap Index for exceptional tournament scores. The procedure for reducing a player’s Handicap Index is explained in Section 10-3 and is an automatic calculation. After each handicap revision, the Handicap Committee should reevaluate the player’s reduced Handicap Index under Section 10-3, choosing one of the following:

1. Continue to allow the reduction to run its normal course, as described in Section 10-3d,
2. Further reduce the Handicap Index (See Section 10-3e),
3. Override the reduction. For example, the Handicap Committee may override, or cancel a reduction of the Handicap Index of a player who has returned, say, 50 tournament scores, and whose Handicap Index reduction was based on early scores.
4. Decrease the amount of the reduction.
E. Handicap Index Withdrawal

The Handicap Committee must withdraw the Handicap Index of a player who repeatedly fails to meet the player responsibilities under the USGA Handicap System. Before any action is taken, the player must be advised of the information available to the Handicap Committee and be invited to respond to the Handicap Committee either in writing or by appearing in person. A withdrawn Handicap Index may be reinstated under conditions set forth by the Handicap Committee. (See Decision 5-2a/4.)
Q: May a Handicap Committee require returning of scorecards from players before allowing a score to be posted?

A: No. You can ask that a scorecard accompany a score, but you cannot take punitive action regarding the player’s scoring record or Handicap Index if they do not turn in a card with the score. You can request, however, that from time-to-time that cards be turned in for audit reasons, or if the Committee is collecting cards for a future stroke-hole analysis. You cannot refuse a score that doesn’t have an accompanying scorecard.

Q: What scores can/cannot be used for handicapping?

A: Please see Sections 5-1a, 1b, 1c and 1d for an explanation of “Acceptable Scores.” Please see Section 5-1e of the USGA Handicap System for an explanation of “Unacceptable Scores.”

Q: When should a golfer adjust their scores?

A: Please see Section 4 of the USGA Handicap System for the three times (Unfinished Holes and Conceded Strokes, Holes Not Played or Not Played Under the Rules of Golf and Equitable Stroke Control) a player must adjust their hole scores for handicapping purposes:

Q: If a Handicap Committee has modified a member’s USGA Handicap Index, how long should the modification remain in effect?

A: As long as the Handicap Committee determines is fair and necessary. At each revision, the Committee should compare the modified Handicap Index to the Handicap Index the player would have received had they not been subject to an adjustment.

Q: What is the effect of a tournament score on a player’s Handicap Index?

A: A player whose scoring record includes two or more eligible tournament scores posted within the last 12 months that are exceptionally (three or more strokes) lower than the player’s current Handicap Index will be subject to a possible reduction in their Handicap Index. The calculation is automatically done by any computational service, including GHIN, calculating USGA Handicap Indexes. A Handicap Index reduction for exceptional tournament scores is calculated at each handicap revision and may vary from revision to revision based on factors outlined in Section 10-3.
Q: What qualifies as a ‘Tournament Score’?

A: The Committee in charge of a competition must announce or publish before play whether the competition will result in a “tournament score” being posted. Tournament scores should be reserved for competitions that, in the judgment of the Committee, are significant in the traditions, schedules, formats and membership of the club. Daily, Weekley, or Monthly play days should not be designated as tournament scores.

Q: Should the Handicap Committee make recommendations to the Tournament Committee about a Handicap Index in competition?

A: Yes. It should follow USGA guidelines in recommending that:

• A current, active Handicap Index be used in order to enter competitions.

• When a Handicap Index is required for entering a competition, the player must submit the Handicap Index in effect on the date of entry

• A Handicap Index in effect on the date the competition begins should be used at the start of competition

• When a competition spans a handicap revision period, each competitor should use the Handicap Index in effect at the time the round is played. Players with more than one Handicap Index must use the lower Handicap Index.
Section 8-4 (Penalty Scores, Handicap Index Adjustment, and Withdrawal)

Occasionally a Handicap Committee may be faced with a tough situation when one of it’s members is carrying a USGA Handicap Index that does not accurately reflect their potential scoring ability. Perhaps fellow members have registered complaints, or the golfer repeatedly has unrealistic finishes at area tournaments. What action is appropriate by the Committee?

First, call a meeting of the club’s Handicap Committee, and include interested parties such as the club golf professional and club president. Bring written documentation regarding complaints received, the player’s current score history, his/her tournament scores, and your USGA Handicap System Manual. A pertinent and thought-provoking document to consider is the Probability Table from Appendix E of the USGA Handicap System Manual, 2016-2019, page 121. This will point out the odds of shooting exceptional scores.

Carefully review all materials. Have a fair, open-minded, but honest discussion about this golfer’s game, how he may affect other golfers’ games, and his scoring history. Consider the following:

- Does this player observe the spirit of the Handicap System?
- Does he post all rounds played under the Rules of Golf during, the active season, or does he pick and choose which scores to post?
- Have you attached penalty scores to his record for failure to post and he still avoids posting?
- Does he post erroneous scores? Stop play after 6 or 12 holes to avoid posting a 9 or 18 hole score, respectively?
- Does he repeatedly play more than one ball and say he’s just practicing? Deliberately take extra strokes to inflate a score?
- Does he refuse to adjust scores (for Equitable Stroke Control or for not finishing a hole or a round?)
- Does he say he doesn’t need to post because he doesn’t play in tournaments?
- Does he play a markedly different game with different players? Are you hearing reports of this player shooting miraculous rounds at tournaments, scores that seem beyond the ability as recorded in his scoring history?
At this time, especially, please remember that “a player must earn a USGA Handicap Index. No player has an inherent right to a USGA Handicap Index without providing full evidence of ability to the golf club’s Handicap Committee. Two basic premises underlie the USGA Handicap System, namely that every player will try to make the best score at every hole in every round, regardless of where the round is played, and that the player will post every acceptable round for peer review. The player and the player’s Handicap Committee have joint responsibility for adhering to these premises. Fair handicapping depends upon full, accurate information regarding a player’s potential ability as reflected by a complete scoring record.” (USGA Handicap System Manual, Sections 1,5,8)

Another important point to consider is that this golfer is carrying the name of your club with them when they play away, in tournaments or otherwise. Your club’s reputation may be adversely affected by this player. If a player is not observing the proper procedures of the Handicap System, he may also be undermining club tournaments as reflected by unfair results, or by minimizing your field size due to other players’ reluctance to participate.

The USGA Handicap System and the WSGA gives you the tools in which to enact the proper course of action. As stated in Section 8-4, “... The Handicap Committee has the ultimate authority to adjust a Handicap Index under any circumstance that it feels necessary to do so.” If the Handicap Committee makes a decision to modify this golfer’s USGA Handicap Index, two points must be determined: what new Handicap Index seems fair, and how long will the modification last? Once those have been decided upon, a letter to the golfer must be drafted and mailed. See Appendix B Sample Letter Applying Section 8-4 (USGA Handicap System Manual, page 117). The letter both describes the modification and gives the golfer a chance to appeal that decision prior to the new handicap becoming effective.

Please do not hesitate to call the WSGA Handicap Department to discuss this process, and please send us a copy of your letter. Once the modification is put into the system, it becomes the golfer’s official USGA Handicap Index; if the golfer is a member at more than one club, each of the golfer’s clubs should be notified to honor the modification. Of course, the golfer must continue to post scores and the Handicap Committee must continue to monitor the situation.

Do not hesitate to take carefully considered action if a golfer is compromising the integrity of your club and the USGA Handicap System. Please help us maintain accuracy and fairness in handicapping for the good of golf!
Tips for Auditing Member Score Postings

How does the Club Handicap Committee know if their golfers are actually posting scores or not? How can you best defend a member’s handicap? Only by performing an AUDIT!

Score posting audits are necessary for the Handicap Chairperson to take on, but certainly not take on alone. You need support and assistance to accomplish this important job.

The first thing you need is buy-in from your Golf Professional and your Board. They’ll need to understand how crucial auditing is to maintaining handicap integrity for the club. Handicap Indexes of the members directly reflect upon the reputation of the club. Once everyone is on the same page, you’ll need to communicate with the members that auditing will occur. This is best inserted into your Handicapping Policy and distributed to the members.

As the pro shop is in command of the Tee Sheet, you’ll need to work with them on gaining access to this information. Some electronic systems are integrated with GHIN, which makes this task much easier. When all is said and done, you need a process of cross-checking by which you can see who is playing and when, and if there is a corresponding score posted. You’ll have to decide how often during the season audits can reasonably be performed. Is this once a month? Once every revision period? Will you check all rounds of all players or will it be a random cross-section?

What can the Club Handicap Committee do if golfers have failed to post scores? The main responsibility of the Handicap Committee is to make certain that a player’s USGA Handicap Index reflects his potential ability. This is why taking the above steps to check score posting is imperative. As stated in the Handicap System Manual, “Fair handicapping depends upon full, accurate information regarding a player’s potential scoring ability as reflected by a complete scoring record.” (Section 5-1)
Handicap Essentials

Posting Scores - Time is of the Essence

We all know how important it is that our members are posting all acceptable rounds to their scoring records. But, isn’t the timing of the posting important, too? After all, if a member holds on to their scorecards for the length of a revision period, for example, their Handicap Index is probably incorrect. Of course, backdating a score is better than not posting it at all, but in the interest of fairness scores need to be posted immediately following the round.

Because the Handicap Committee is already increasing awareness of handicapping procedures and raising the expectation for the members to post all scores, it makes sense to decide what a reasonable time period is (for your own club) to return a score. Is three days practical? Should it be one week? We know some Committees insist that scores be posted within 24 hours of the round!

The USGA Handicap System supports the concept of attaching a time frame to the return of a score: Decision 5-2a/1. Requiring Return of Scores Within a Prescribed Period

Q: Since some members of a club have been posting scores up to two months after they were made, would it be proper for the Handicap Committee to require that scores be posted within two weeks of the date on which they were made?

A: Yes. Normally, scores should be posted immediately after the round or as soon as practicable. The Handicap Committee may set a reasonable limit within which scores must be posted, taking into account extenuating circumstances.

We encourage Handicap Committees to insert into their Handicapping Policy a time frame in which scores must be returned so that the message is clear to the membership. Get together with your club officers and decide what is reasonable for the playing habits and size of your club. The point is to raise the expectation to post quickly and often, which in turn increases the likelihood that handicaps at your club will be accurate. Accurate handicaps create fair games and quality tournaments.

Once you have an appropriate time frame in which to expect a score to be returned, the Committee will need to decide on an audit procedure - checking rounds played (tee sheet) against scores posted (GHIN reports). Spot checking at every revision (at least during the summer) is a good idea to arrive at a percentage of scores posted vs. rounds played. How can the Committee improve the accuracy of handicaps if they don’t know where the club currently stands? What action to take if you discover members are not posting is the subject of another item called “Penalty Scores”! Please refer to Section 8-4b of the USGA Handicap System for more information.

Scores have a shelf life! With so many convenient methods of posting, including GHIN’s updated mobile app for smartphones, excuses not to post right after playing no longer exist.
Why We Have an Inactive Score Posting Season

We are often asked why we have an inactive score posting season. It is our opinion that, due to changing seasonal weather and course conditions, posting scores to the ratings issued by the WSGA during our inactive score posting season would likely result in inaccurate handicaps. When a club is issued a USGA Course and Slope Rating, the ratings are based upon how that course plays during the peak playing season (When the most number of scores are posted) and for the WSGA that period is around July 4th.

Every state and regional golf association is charged by the USGA, the authors of the USGA Handicap and Course Rating Systems, to set their own season date parameters. Every golf association adheres to these same rules, and has to do their best to judge how weather patterns affect course conditions in their region of the country.

Because we live in the Northwest, it’s not possible to maintain mid-season conditions during the winter. Many times, Western Washington courses are saturated due to prolonged rains. Those in Eastern Washington and Idaho have extended periods of ice/and or snow while those in the southern part of the state from Yakima to Walla Walla are sometimes all of the above. Regardless, both have the effect of compromising the effective playing length of the golf course, a primary factor in establishing a Course Rating.

While no date parameter we choose is perfect (no one can accurately predict what Mother Nature is going to do from year to year!), we do the best we can with these dates, and there is no question that this makes us a “seasonal” golf association.

With that in mind, we are evaluating scores of clubs using our off-season score posting program to see if there is evidence that leads us to believe that we should modify the current score posting season, March 1st to November 14th, or go year-round all together.

A member who resides in Palm Springs during the winter recently made the following comment to me: “My fellow WSGA members aren’t posting scores while they are still playing in Washington. I shouldn’t have to post either.”

Unfortunately, this member was forgetting that course conditions in Palm Springs are ideal during the winter – and conditions in Washington are not. Southern California and Arizona (and other Sunbelt states) have made the determination that their weather conditions do not adversely affect their course ratings during the winter. So, they are “year-round” - not “seasonal” - golf associations, and rounds played in those regions must be posted, no matter where you keep that Handicap Index.

What is the Right Score to Post?

There’s a lot for you to think about when playing golf: from understanding the layout of the hole, pondering which club to use, taking the proper grip and stance -you might even be bemoaning all those bunkers you need to navigate around the green! We’re sure, also, that the Rules of Golf are uppermost on your mind especially when considering the format of the game you’re playing.

But once you carry a USGA Handicap Index, you also must consider what will make your score acceptable for handicap purposes. The USGA Handicap System has solutions to everyday situations that may not adhere exactly to the Rules of Golf, but where the basic principles are followed.
Remember - the Handicap System is compiling data as a predictor of your scoring habits. If all scores not made in 100% compliance with the Rules of Golf were tossed out, there would be far fewer scores to post - and thereby little evidence to support a Handicap Index. So, we need to be able to post scores even when we don’t finish a hole, or, for that matter, when we don’t finish a round.

While most golfers are familiar with the USGA Handicap System’s Equitable Stroke Control (ESC) procedure indicating what maximum score they are allowed on any given hole, and also are aware of the “Par Plus” method of deriving a hole score, fewer seem to be knowledgeable about the third way to adjust.

In conversations with golfers, I find that most are either using their ESC maximum number, or par plus any handicap strokes allowed as all-inclusive methods of adjusting scores for handicap purposes. The little-known (or perhaps little understood!) “Most Likely Score” adjustment is the only type that brings the golfer’s own good judgment into the end result. It’s also a type of adjustment that uses the golfer’s actual strokes taken.

Any time a player starts, but does not complete a hole or is conceded a stroke, they must record for handicap purposes their most likely score. Most likely score is a judgment that the player must make based on their own game. It consists of the number of strokes already taken, plus the number of strokes needed to complete the hole from that position more than half the time. Your playing partner cannot help you to come up with this number! You must assess each situation in which you do not finish the hole based on what you can reasonably expect to score. (Section 4-1, USGA Handicap System Manual 2016-2019).

A good example of this is in match play. While the Rules of Golf do not insist that you keep a scorecard in match play, your Handicap Index is a good reason to carry a card - if only to help you keep track of your strokes and so that you can calculate the proper score to post.

Let’s say you are playing a par 4-hole where you do not get any strokes. Your competitor sinks their double-bogey putt from 30 feet for a six. You are on the green in 3 but are still 25 feet from the hole. Your competitor unwisely concedes the hole allowing you to pick up. You won the hole in the competition, but what score do you record for handicapping purposes? That’s where you must assess the situation. What is the likelihood that you’d sink that 25-footer for a par? Most likely you would at least take two strokes to get the ball into the hole so you should record a five. But, what if it was a severe downhill putt and there was little likelihood that you could get the ball to stop within 3-feet? You are assessing the situation and thinking that you have a 1-100 chance of keeping it close and that you’d be thrilled if you could walk away with a 2-putt. In this case 3-putts would be more likely, so then you’d record a 6. And in the case that you were only 2 feet from the hole when it was conceded; well then you might record a 4.

From match play to stroke play, every situation is different. You must use your judgment to determine which rules of the Handicap system apply. In this instance, the rules regarding ESC would NEVER apply when you start a hole and don’t finish it (unless your most likely score happens to exceed your ESC score).

Two important points about Most Likely Score: 1) there is no limit to the number of unfinished holes a player may have in a round, and 2) your Most Likely Score cannot exceed your ESC limit. If you find your Most Likely Score is higher, you must make a downward adjustment and record your ESC maximum number of strokes for that hole.

The USGA is allowing the player a judgment call whenever you start a hole but don’t complete it, so let’s exercise that right!
Peer Review is More Than Just a Definition in the Handicap System

Let’s start with the official definition of Peer Review from the USGA Handicap System Manual, 2016-2019:

Peer review is the ability of players to gain an understanding of a player’s potential ability and to form a reasonable basis for supporting or disputing a score that has been posted.

There are two essential elements of peer review:

1. Members of a golf club must have a reasonable and regular opportunity to play together,

2. Access must be provided to scoring records, as well as to a Handicap Index list, for inspection by others, including but not limited to, fellow club members.

Most golfers would imagine that peer review means their club’s Handicap Chairpersons and/or Committee is performing some sort of score posting auditing behind the scenes. It should be an accepted fact that a dedicated Chairpersons, who is great at crossing t’s and dotting i’s, is busy at the club doing administrative tasks. Of course, a club’s Handicap Committee regularly examining the postings of the membership is a crucial component of compliance with the Handicap System. But peer review really involves each and every golfer. Are you doing your part? Notice that the first essential element listed in the peer review definition above says that members must be able to play together - this means regular play as well as engaging in some healthy competition.

But what do the players need to provide? We’re all very busy concentrating on our own game, but what about your partners’ game? Can you support their scores? Members must be actively involved in observing the play of fellow members and even take it further - to let their Handicap Chair know if they witness behavior contrary to the Rules of Golf or the spirit of the Handicap System. Peer review can happen on the golf course while you’re playing and in the clubhouse while you’re posting.

Many times during the season we get phone calls from members asking us what we’re going to do about Joe Golfer’s handicap: it’s too high, it’s too low, they use a foot wedge, they aren’t posting. They’ve complained in the locker room and now they’re complaining to the WSGA. We are compelled to tell them something they just don’t want to hear - the WSGA can’t do anything about an individual’s Handicap Index or scoring record. We just don’t have the power.

That power lies solely with the club. The club must create transparency with handicapping. And the players must take advantage of the amiable environment by approaching the Committee with concerns. Only then can the Committee can take appropriate action. We certainly aren’t advocating turning our clubs into mini police-states, or taking the fun out of the game, but this is golf - it isn’t basketball. We don’t have referees while we play! We must become our own referees. That’s peer review.
Taking a “mulligan” does not negate your score for Handicap purposes!

Sure, “mulligans” do occur, but they are not recognized under the Rules of Golf. However, the USGA Handicap System doesn’t want to eliminate a round that contains seventeen holes of valid scores if a “mulligan” was taken on a single hole. So, for handicap purposes, the hole score made with the mulligan is tossed out and replaced with a hole score that is not considered out of the ordinary for the player, based on his Course Handicap. The adjustment for that hole becomes par, plus any handicap strokes the player should receive, as per Section 4-2 of the USGA Handicap System Manual (‘Holes Not Played or in this case Not Played Under the Principles of the Rules of Golf’).

For example, a player with a Course Handicap of eighteen receives a stroke on every hole, so the hole in which a mulligan was used would be par plus the one stroke, or a bogey.

There Are Only 7 Legitimate Reasons Not To Post Your Score

Most golfers would be surprised to learn that there are only seven (yes, 7!) legitimate conditions under which a score should not be posted to their scoring record. 99% of the time, their score needs to be posted - in fact if they don’t post, something could occur that also might surprise them. They could be risking a penalty score, a modification to their Handicap Index, or worse - it could be withdrawn completely.

The rules of the USGA Handicap System are updated every four years, just like the Rules of Golf.

So the next time you find yourself with a handy excuse at the ready, or you hear someone else trying to justify why they don’t need to post their score, make sure it’s one of the reasons listed here and not something unwarranted like “the clubhouse was closed,” or “I used a mulligan,” or even sillier, “I was playing Winter Rules.”

From the new USGA Handicap System Manual, 2016-2019 - Section 5-1e “Unacceptable Scores.” Don’t post your score:

- When fewer than seven holes are played (if you played seven to twelve holes, you have a nine-hole score; if you played thirteen or more holes, you have an 18-hole score! Post par plus any handicap strokes allowed on the remaining holes).
- When made on a golf course that is in an area in which an inactive season established by the golf association is in effect (like November 15th through the end of February in the area within the boundaries of the WSGA).
- When scores are made on a golf course with no USGA Course Rating or Slope Rating.
- When, as a condition of the competition, the maximum number of clubs allowed is less than 14, or the types of clubs are limited, as for example, a competition that allows only iron clubs.
- When a player plays alone.
- When a player uses non-conforming clubs, non-conforming balls, or non-conforming tees or when a player incurs a second breach of Rule 14-3.
- When an artificial device or piece of unusual equipment is used during the execution of a stroke or when equipment is used in an unusual manner during the execution of a stroke (Rule 14-3, The Rules of Golf).
WSGA Benefits

The WSGA offers many benefits to its members and member clubs/facilities.

**WSGA Member Benefits:**

- USGA Handicap Index
- Washington Golf Pass - exclusive access to great opportunities and savings at golf courses throughout the state, Northern Idaho, and beyond. Not available for juniors “J” or YOC Members.
- Exclusive WSGA Deals and Discounts
- WSGA non-competitive Casual Golf Days and other outings at premier golf courses
- WSGA/GHIN Mobile App
- Access to online score posting, as well as score posting stations located a golf courses throughout Washington and Northern Idaho
- First-class WSGA amateur championships and WSGA Winter Series at top courses throughout Washington and Northern Idaho.
- Access to PNGA All-Access Calendar – a comprehensive schedule of tournaments across the PNW
- Automatic membership and access to all benefits with the Pacific Northwest Golf Association (PNGA)
- Subscription to *Pacific Northwest Golfer* magazine
- WSGA Multi-Member Rebate Program

*For more information on WSGA Member Benefits, visit the “Membership” tab on www.thewsga.org, or call Torrin Westwood at (253) 214-2919*

**WSGA Facility Benefits (hosting a WSGA Club through the facility):**

- Course Rating – as necessary per WSGA Course Rating schedule
- Listed on the online WSGA Member Club Directory
- WSGA Handicap Computer Hardware – available onsite for score posting
- WSGA Support (Rules of Golf and Amateur Status, Handicapping, Tournaments)
- Eligibility to advertise tournaments on PNGA All-Access Calendar (Tournaments open to the general public – not simply your facilities club members)

*For more information on WSGA Facility Benefits, visit the “Membership” tab on www.thewsga.org, or call Torrin Westwood at (253) 214-2919*

**WSGA Club Benefits (for those clubs that are eligible):**

- WSGA Handicap Computer Hardware – available onsite for score posting
- WSGA Support (Rules of Golf and Amateur Status, Handicapping, Tournaments)
- Free Online Club Signups through the WSGA website – An easy way to grow club membership
- Eligibility to the Club Representative Program
- Support and Access to USGA Tournament Management Software (Powered by Golf Genius)
- Free personalized website available to each club though Clubsite Pro
- Access to WSGA GHP Online – web-based tool to manage club data
- Ability to participate in WSGA Join Now program, offering club membership sign-ups for your club through WSGA website

*For more information on WSGA Club Benefits, visit the “Membership” tab on www.thewsga.org, or call Torrin Westwood at (253) 214-2919*
Club Representative Program

The purpose of the Club Representative Program is to provide a direct line of communication between the WSGA and our members. Having a Club Representative at your club is a major benefit entitled to our Member Clubs, and it is free!

Club Representatives operate as a liaison between our member-clubs and the WSGA. Club Representatives receive monthly newsletters, and emails sharing association information including details regarding benefits and opportunities available only to our members. We are always hopeful that the Club Representative will take time to share our information with their club. Additionally, Club Representatives are always invited to our Annual Meeting, which is a fabulous opportunity to hear first-hand about new opportunities available to WSGA members.

We encourage every club to consider electing someone to participate in this program. Appointing a Club Representative is easy!

For more information on what Club Representatives do, and how to get involved, head to www.thewsga.org, then click on “Club Representatives” underneath the “Volunteering” tab at the top of the page, or call Torrin Westwood at (253) 214-2919.
Allocation of Handicap Strokes

What Does the Handicap on the Scorecard Mean as it relates to Holes on a Golf Course? The #1 Handicap hole on your golf course should NOT be confused as being the “hardest hole.” The hole where there exists the largest gap between low and high handicapped golfers’ average scores should be the #1 hole. You need the scores of your own golfers, applied in a mathematical method, in order to reach meaningful conclusions to rank the holes on your course.

After all, golfers of varying abilities may have different opinions on what the hardest hole would be! A handicap stroke should be an equalizer rather than a winning stroke and should be available on a hole where it most likely will be needed by the higher handicapped player to obtain a half in singles or four-ball match play.

Although there isn’t a clear cut recommendation on how often you should re-allocate your handicap holes, it’s a good idea to review them every five years or so. You would certainly want to complete an analysis after major changes to the course.

- Stroke allocation is neither a function of - nor a result derived from - the USGA Course Rating System. Analyzing your course’s rating will not give you the necessary data in which to make true judgments regarding allocation.

- Difficulty in making par is not an effective indicator of the need for a stroke.

- The point of stroke allocation is to equalize the abilities of golfers at different handicap levels. Men’s and women’s stroke allocations will usually not be the same because their need to equalize holes may come on different holes.

- A proper analysis of allocation can only begin by collecting a number (Ideally about 200 scorecards from lower handicapped and 200 from higher handicapped golfers) of scorecards from players with varying abilities. The cards can then be sent to the WSGA for analysis, or clubs may take on this project on their own by following Section 17 of the USGA Handicap System Manual and using the Stroke Allocation Utility in your GHIN software.

- The Handicap Committee should review the course hole-by-hole, and use unbiased, good judgment in reviewing the data. No formula can cover conditions on every golf course. All parties in on the discussion need to first understand that personal opinions will carry little weight and decisions should be based on what will produce fair results.

- The USGA recommends that the odd-numbered strokes be assigned to the holes on the first nine and the even numbered strokes to the holes on the second nine, unless the second nine is decidedly more difficult.

- Allocating low-numbered strokes near the end of each nine should be avoided so that players receiving strokes will have the opportunity to use these strokes before either nine or 18-hole matches are decided. Lower-numbered strokes should not be allocated to the first and second holes of a course in the event that a hole-by-hole playoff is necessary.
Handicap allowances are designed to make all forms of play equitable. In some forms of play it is equitable for players to use their full Course Handicap. In some team competitions, using full Course Handicaps would give a higher-handicapped side (team) an advantage over lower-handicapped side, thus less than a full Course Handicap is recommended in some team competitions. Handicap Allowances have no effect in determining a Handicap Index. A Handicap Index relates to 18 holes. Each allowance in Section 9-4 applies to an 18-hole round, even though the competition may consist of more than one round. For a more complete list of recommended handicap allowances, please review Pages 60-69 in the USGA Handicap System.

To make proper use of handicap allowances, please follow the following steps in order:

Step 1: Players must determine their Course Handicap by applying their USGA Handicap Index to the USGA Slope Rating for the set of tees to be played.

Step 2: Players should then apply the handicap allowances for the appropriate format of play.

Step 3: It is recommended that in four-ball stroke play (More commonly referred to as 2-man Best-Ball) competitions, if the Course Handicaps of the side (team) differ by more than eight strokes each member of the side is reduced by 10%.

Step 4: If players are competing from different tees or men and women from the same tees players must apply the adjustment for the difference in USGA Course Rating from the tees played. Please see how to properly apply this procedure in the next document in this guide.

It is vitally important that the proper order listed above and use of Handicap Allowances as recommended by the USGA Handicap System be followed to provide fair and equitable competitions.

Since using full Course Handicaps would be favoring the higher-handicapped sides, we encourage you to follow the USGA recommendations found in Section 9-4 on pages 60-69 of the 2016-2019 USGA Handicap System Manual. These are backed by years of solid research to facilitate fair play. Below, you will find recommended Handicap Allowances for more commonly played competitions.

MATCH PLAY

Singles

In singles match play, a match is won by the player who is leading by a number of holes greater than the number of holes remaining to be played. After handicap allowances are determined, Section 9-3c must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees. The higher-handicapped player receives the full difference in Course Handicap between the two players; the lower-handicapped player plays from scratch.
Team events

Four Ball (Better Ball of Two): The Course Handicap of all four players is reduced by the Course Handicap of the player with the lowest handicap, who then plays from scratch. Each of the three other players is allowed 100 percent of the difference.

Chapman or Pinehurst Match Play: The partner with the lower Course Handicap receives 60% of their Course Handicap. The partner with the higher Course Handicap receives 40% of their Course Handicap. Add the percentage allowances together before rounding, then round off the total with .5 or more rounded upward. The side with the higher Course Handicap receives the difference between the Course Handicaps of the sides. The lower-handicapped side shall play from scratch.

STROKE PLAY

Individual events

The competitor with the lowest net score for the stipulated round or rounds is the winner. After handicap allowances are determined, Section 9-3c must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees.

Individual Stroke Play: Each competitor receives their full Course Handicap.

Stableford:

The scoring in Stableford competitions is made by points awarded in relation to a fixed score (usually “par” or net “par”) at each hole.

The winner is the competitor who scores the highest number of points (See “The Rules of Golf,” Rule 32-1b). After “handicap allowances” are determined, Section “9-3c” must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees.

Allowance: Players use full “Course Handicap”, and strokes are taken as they are allocated on the stroke allocation table.
Team events

Four-Ball Stroke Play (More Commonly Referred to as 2-Man Best-Ball): In Four-Ball Stroke Play, two competitors play as partners, each playing their own ball. The lower score of the partners is the score for the hole. After handicap allowances are determined, Section 9-3c must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees. Men receive 90% of Course Handicap; Women receive 95% of Course Handicap.

In mixed four-ball stroke play, strokes are taken as assigned on the player’s respective stroke allocation table, and players must play from the sets of tees designated by the Committee in charge of the competition.

It is a recommendation that the Committee considers it a condition in Four Ball Stroke Play Only that the “Course Handicaps” (After allowances) of the members of the side may not differ by more than eight strokes. A side with a large difference has an advantage over a side with a small Course Handicap difference. If a difference of more than eight strokes cannot be avoided, it is suggested that an additional 10% reduction be applied to the Course Handicap of each member of the advantaged side.

Best Ball of Four: Four players play as a side (team), each playing their own ball. The lowest score of the side (team) is the score for the hole. After handicap allowances are determined, Section 9-3c must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees. Men receive 80% of Course Handicap; Women receive 90% of Course Handicap.

Two Best Balls of Four: Four players each play their own ball and the two best balls on each hole is the score for the hole. After handicap allowances are determined, Section 9-3c must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees. Men receive 90% of Course Handicap; Women receive 95% of Course Handicap.

Chapman or Pinehurst Stroke Play: In Chapman or Pinehurst stroke play, two players play as partners, each partner plays from the teeing ground and then plays the partner’s ball for the second shot. After the second shot, partner’s select the ball with which they wish to score and play the ball alternately to complete the hole. After handicap allowances are determined, Section 9-3c must be applied in competitions from different tees, or in competitions between men and women from the same tees.

The partner with the lower Course Handicap receives 60% of their Course Handicap. The partner with the higher Course Handicap receives 40% of their Course Handicap. Add the percentage allowances together before rounding, then round off the total with .5 or more rounded upward. The side with the higher Course Handicap receives the difference between the Course Handicaps of the sides. The lower-handicapped side shall play from scratch.
Players Competing from Different Tees or Men and Women from the Same Set of Tees

When players are competing against each other and they are playing the same set of tees, converting your USGA Handicap Index to a Course Handicap and heading to the first tee will suffice. If, however, you are playing from different tees or Men and Women are competing from the same set of tees, an adjustment must be made to the Course Handicap of the player(s). Normally, the player(s) playing the set of tees with the higher USGA Course Rating would receive the difference, if the difference is 0.5 or greater in USGA Course Rating. It would also be acceptable to reduce the Course Handicap of the player playing the set of tees with the lower USGA Course Rating the same amount. If an adjustment must be made, it is advised that you adjust the Course Handicap of the least amount of players possible.

As mentioned in the Handicap Allowances document in this packet, arriving at the proper Course Handicap for all golfers is normally, and this applies in every form of competition, a two-step process. Steps 1 and 2 apply to all golfers in any competition:

Step 1-Determine the Course Handicap by applying the USGA Handicap Index to the USGA Slope Rating of the tee to be played.

Step 2-Apply the appropriate handicap allowance for the format of play.

Step 3-And this is for four-ball stroke play only (More commonly known as 2-Man Best-Ball). It is recommended that, if the Course Handicaps of the side (Team) differ by more than eight strokes each member of the side is reduced by 10%.

Step 4-If players are competing from different sets of tees or men and women are playing from the same tees players must apply the adjustment for the difference, if more than .5, in USGA Course Ratings.

Example on how to apply adjustment:

Two players are playing a match. Each has a USGA Handicap Index of 10.4. Player A will play the Blue Tees which has a USGA Course Rating of 72.0 and a USGA Slope Rating of 130. Player B will play the White Tees which has a USGA Course Rating of 70.0 and a USGA Slope Rating of 125. Based upon the USGA Slope Ratings of the two sets of tees, each golfer will have a Course Handicap of 12.

If both golfers play exactly to their handicap Player A will shoot 84 (USGA Course Rating of 72.0 + Course Handicap of 12) and Player B will shoot 82 (USGA Course Rating of 70.0 + Course Handicap of 12). If no adjustment is made for Player A playing the more difficult golf course, Player B’s score of 70 beats Player A’s 74. However, if we “give” Player A their additional 2 strokes, each golfer would then shoot a Net Score of 70.

It is quite possible that an individual may have the same Course Handicap from more than one set of tees at a course. A Course Handicap is the measurement of how many strokes a player would need to play to the level of the USGA Course Rating.
On the first Wednesday of the month, every Handicap Chairperson should receive, by e-mail, a copy of our monthly newsletter, Preferred Lies.

In this newsletter you will find pertinent information about the USGA Handicap System, GHIN, and current happenings at the WSGA. Many times, this newsletter is where you will first learn of something new, such as schedules, new WSGA programs, and GHIN updates, so please take the time to read through it.

If you have something you would like to contribute, we would love to hear from you - and so would your fellow Handicap Chairpersons!

If you have not received the newsletter, contact us so we can make sure we have your correct email address so you will get future installments. We are also happy to add other club officers to our email list so they may get the newsletter - we just need names, titles, and email addresses.

Issues will include GHIN tips, updates to GHIN Handicap Program Online, and of course - more information about the USGA Handicap System and Course Rating Systems.
“Join Now” Feature

“Join Now” is a free membership benefit afforded to all WSGA member clubs. We are always working to strengthen our membership, and we want to help potential members join the right club for them. Through our marketing efforts, we direct these potential members to our Online Join webpage, and we want them to find your club there! Visitors to the site find an alphabetical listing of clubs, along with each club’s price and unique membership benefits.

This function can also be a convenient way for your membership to renew each year. Just send your members a link in an email and avoid the hassle of hundreds of paper forms and checks to deposit.

In 2018 we have had over 50,000 transactions for membership on this site. That is up from just over 3,000 transactions in 2017, a significant increase with the additional functionality built into the site such as the auto-renew function.

All we need to set-up your club for 2019 is your club membership rate, your club membership benefits, and some contact information! Please never hesitate reaching out for more information or if you have any questions!

Please contact Torrin Westwood, Manager of Membership and Club Relations at torrin.westwood@thewsga.org for more information.
In addition to Regular Members (19 years old and older), the Washington State Golf Association does offer Junior Memberships (Under the age of 19). Junior Members of the Washington State Golf Association are entitled to many of the same benefits as Regular Members, minus the Golf Pass (which is an adult membership benefit only).

In order to be a Junior Member at GHIN you must be below the age of 19 on January 1st of a given year. If a golfer begins the year as a Junior Member, they will continue to hold that status for the entire year. If a Junior Member turns 19 any day after January 1st, do not change their membership status or your club will be billed for both the Junior and Regular Memberships. If a Junior Member turns 19 during a year, their membership type will change to “R” on January 1st the year after they turn 19.

In order to identify a player as a Junior Member, the club must enter both the birthdate in that field in the player’s membership record at GHIN and the Type of Membership must be changed to “J”. The WSGA Junior Membership Fee is $5 per year.

Have you thought about forming a Junior Club at your club? What better way to get juniors introduced to golf, the USGA Handicap System and the Washington State Golf Association? What better way to grow the game?

Please contact Torrin Westwood, Manager of Membership and Club Relations at torrin.westwood@thewsga.org for more information.
The USGA Course Rating System is an enhancement of the USGA Handicap System and affects all WSGA Members in the calculation of their Handicap Indexes. Although it can seem a bit complicated, the net result of the Course Rating System is that it allows a player to move from golf course to golf course and get a fair indication of their level of play, regardless of where they play, the set of tees or their ability level.

Let’s review the essential elements that make up Course Rating:

- **Scratch Golfer**: Is a player who can play to a Course Handicap of zero on any and all rated golf courses. For rating purposes, the male scratch golfer hits a 250-yard tee shot and can reach a 470-yard hole in two shots at sea level. The female scratch hits a 210 yard tee shot and can reach a 400 yard hole in two shots.

- **Bogey Golfer**: A male bogey golfer has a Course Handicap of about 20 and can hit a 200 tee shot and can reach a 370-yard hole in 2 shots. A female bogey golfer has a Course Handicap of about 22 and can hit a 150 tee shot and can reach a 280 yard hole in 2 shots.

- **USGA Course Rating**: The evaluation of the overall difficulty of the golf course under normal course and weather conditions for the scratch golfer and is expressed in strokes taken to one decimal point (i.e. 72.6)

- **Bogey Rating**: The evaluation of the overall difficulty of the golf course under normal course and weather conditions for the bogey golfer and is also expressed in strokes taken to one decimal point (i.e. 102.4)

- **USGA Slope Rating**: The USGA’s mark that indicates the measurement of relative difficulty of a course for players who are NOT scratch golfers as compared to the Course Rating. Slope is derived from the difference between the Course and Bogey Ratings multiplied by a factor of 5.381 for Men and 4.24 for Women.

The Process: Correct and accurate yardage (Both measured and any of the four yardage corrections defined in the Effective Playing Length section of the USGA Course Rating System) is imperative to Course Rating. It is so imperative because it makes up 95% of the Course Rating and about 90-95% of the Bogey Rating. Once the correct measured yardage is known, trained Course Raters assess the golf course, one hole at a time. We then proceed to the landing zones (As defined above), where the ball lands and rolls, for each of four players: Scratch and Bogey, Male and Female.

In each of the landing zones we assess the effect of 10 obstacles on the scoring potential of the Scratch and Bogey golfers. The obstacles are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being low and 10 being high. The closer obstacles are to the center of fairway landing zones or the green the higher obstacle rating.
The Effective Playing Length (EPL) Corrections: While most of the rating is derived directly from the officially measured yardage, there are certain features of the course that can effectively change the length of a course. These include Elevation, Roll, Dogleg/Forced Lay-up, Wind and Altitude.

The Obstacles: Are a numerical evaluation of all obstacles on a golf course. Generally, the nearer the obstacles are to the center of the landing zone, the higher the rating values.

- Topography: The impact of terrain on stance, lie and the player’s ability to hit the next shot
- Fairway: The evaluation of the difficulty of landing and keeping a ball in the fairway from tee to green.
- Green Target: The probability of hitting and holding the green from a fairway landing zone or tee. The length of the shot as well as the effective diameter of the green determines these values.
- Recovery and Rough: If a player misses the green or fairway landing zone, how difficult will it be to recover.
- Bunkers: The measurement of the effect bunkers will have on play based upon their proximity to target areas and difficulty of recovery
- Lateral: How near or far the lateral obstacle from the center of the landing zone or at the green?
- Crossing: How long of a crossing (penalty area/OB) does the player have to carry.
- Trees: How difficult it is for the player to recover from the trees.
- Green Surface: Is a measurement of the actual difficulty of putting on a green. Stimpmeter speed, slope and contouring are all factors
- Psychological: The system automatically calculates this factor based on the cumulative effect of multiple Obstacles and also gives an extra “bump” for the stresses of the first and last hole.
TEMPORARY GREENS AND/OR TEES

A golf club’s Handicap Committee must notify the Washington State Golf Association (WSGA, 1-800-643-6410) when temporary tees and/or greens are utilized. (See Decision 5-1a/3 of “The USGA Handicap System.”)

The WSGA offers guidance if scores made in those situations are accepted for handicap purposes, and whether the USGA Course Rating™ and Slope Rating® should be modified temporarily. The Handicap Committee has a responsibility to notify its members that when a hole is not played due to construction, the score for that hole must be par plus any handicap strokes to which the player is entitled. (See Section 4-2.)

- Temporary Tees - If temporary tees are used, scores should be posted for handicap purposes to the issued USGA Course and Slope Rating provided the overall effective playing length of the course can be maintained. Typically tee markers on the non-affected holes could be moved to offset the change in length. Or the temporary tees may be offsetting a change in length due to extreme conditions, i.e., extremely dry or wet conditions. For a temporary overall yardage change see Section 5-2g.
- Temporary Alternate Permanent Greens - If temporary alternate permanent greens are created, essentially built to the specs of the original green, contact the WSGA.
- Temporary Non-Permanent Greens - Normally a mowed-out area in front or near the normal green can change its position from time to time, and doesn’t reflect normal green conditions (e.g., the “green” is created by simply mowing a circle in the fairway and placing a hole location in the center). The score posted for these holes is the normal par for the hole plus any handicap strokes to be received.

Q&A: Most common questions around temporary greens and/or tees

Q: May a club accept scores for handicap purposes if temporary greens or tees are being used?

A: Yes. If the Rules of Golf can be followed during the reconstruction period, scores should be posted. The club must contact its authorized golf association (WSGA) for advice regarding its specific situation. If a temporary green (not an alternate permanent green) is played, the recommendation of the authorized golf association may be for the club to advise players to post par plus any handicap strokes the player is entitled to receive on that hole. (See Section 4-2 and 14-5.)

Q: How many holes with temporary tees can I play before I do not post a score?

A: There is no limit to the number of holes played with temporary tees that would keep a player from posting a score. If the overall playing length of the golf course cannot be maintained a representative of the club should contact the WSGA and discuss the club’s score posting alternatives. Also see Section 5-2g.

Q: How many temporary non-permanent greens can there be before I cannot post a score?

A: Temporary non-permanent greens are treated as holes not played under the Rules of Golf as they don’t reflect normal green conditions and USGA Ratings of the course. According to Section 5-1, a player must play a minimum of seven holes for a nine-hole score, and 13 for an 18-hole score to be posted. Thus, a maximum of two holes for a nine-hole score, or five holes for an 18-hole score, could be temporary non-permanent greens, within the nine or 18 holes, to maintain the score to be posted, provided all other aspects of the score are acceptable.
Figuring out a Course Handicap is necessary in order to make use of your Handicap Index. Don’t ever just drop the “tenths” from your Index and use it to play. You may not like the result!

Applying your USGA Handicap Index to the USGA Slope Rating, through the slope (or conversion) chart is what makes your handicap “portable” from course to course and lets you know how many strokes you will receive from the set of tees you are playing. The purpose of this procedure is to give you enough strokes to “play down to the course rating” on that particular set of tees.

**How to arrive at your Course Handicap:**

Multiply your Handicap Index by the Slope Rating of the tees played, then divide by 113. The resulting figure is rounded off to the nearest whole number (.5 or more is rounded upward).

Example: 11.4 (Handicap Index) x 128 (Slope Rating of tees) = 1459.2

1459.2 divided by 113 = 12.913274; round to 13 (resulting Course Handicap)

If the slope is above 113, you’ll most likely get more strokes than your Index. If it is below 113, you’ll most likely get fewer strokes.

You can’t play with an Index - you must convert it in order to actually use it. Otherwise you could be cheating yourself out of strokes that should have received.

Converting it to a whole number also leads you to what your maximum strokes per hole is using Equitable Stroke Control (check an ESC Chart for your maximum).

Here are the steps you need to take to make proper use of a handicap:

1. **KNOW YOUR CURRENT USGA HANDICAP INDEX**  
   - Indexes are updated on the 1st & the 15th of each month

2. **CHECK THE CONVERSION CHART FOR THE SET OF TEES YOU ARE PLAYING TO DETERMINE HOW MANY STROKES YOU WILL RECEIVE**

3. **CHECK THE ESC CHART TO SEE WHAT YOUR MAXIMUM STROKES PER HOLE IS**
**Target Score**

Target score is all about determining what you would need to shoot to play to your handicap. Your target score is the result of adding your Course Handicap for that particular set of tees to the USGA Course Rating for that set of tees. There are many misconceptions about this and the biggest one is shooting net par means you shoot your handicap. While this could potentially be correct, it is often not the case.

A Course Handicap is derived from applying your USGA Handicap Index to the USGA Slope Rating of the particular tees you are playing for a particular round. Also, you should shoot your target score about 20-25% of the time. Remember, the USGA Handicap System is a measurement of your scoring potential and not your average score.

An example of a target score would be:

USGA Course Rating of 70.0 plus your Course Handicap of 15 = A target score of 85.

Keep in mind that par has no bearing on this equation. Every set of tees has a USGA Course Rating that determines what the scratch golfer should shoot to arrive at a Course Handicap of 0. The idea is that your Net score should return to that USGA Course Rating if you play to your handicap.

In the example above, an average score would be between 87 and 89, since this will usually be 2 to 4 strokes higher than the player’s target score.

The Target Score illustrates:

- The importance of posting all rounds to get an accurate USGA Handicap Index (potential ability)
- The purpose of Slope: to give the player enough Course Handicap to “play down” to the Course Rating
Adjusting Hole Scores

There comes a time when all golfers must make adjustments to the score that they will post because they have either not completed a hole (Your opponent gives you a putt in Match Play, etc.), not played the hole at all or played it other than under the Rules of Golf (They skipped a hole that was under construction, took a mulligan on the first tee, etc.) or their score for a hole exceeded the maximum that they were allowed to take under Equitable Stroke Control. The proper procedures for adjusting hole scores is explained in Section 4 of the USGA Handicap System.

4-1 Unfinished Holes & Conceded Strokes

A most likely score is the score a player must post for handicap purposes if a hole is started but not completed or if the player is conceded a stroke. The most likely score consists of the number of strokes already taken, plus, in the player’s best judgment, the number of strokes the player would take to complete the hole from that position more than half the time. This number may not exceed the player’s Equitable Stroke Control limit. This most likely score should be preceded by an “X”.

4-2 Holes Not Played or Not Played Under the Rules of Golf

If a player begins a round but does not play a hole or plays it other than under the Rules of Golf (Except Preferred Lies) the score recorded for that hole for handicap purposes must be the normal par for the hole plus any handicap strokes the player is entitled to receive on the hole. (They stop a match play round because one competitor has already won the match or they are playing a stroke play round which they do not complete, record par plus any strokes they are entitled to on the un-played holes. They must, however, play at least 13 holes in order for an 18-hole round to be posted, and at least 7 holes for a 9-hole round to be posted for handicap purposes. This hole score, when recorded, should be preceded by an “X”.

4-3 Equitable Stroke Control

All scores for handicap purposes, including tournament scores, are subject to the application of Equitable Stroke Control (ESC). This procedure reduces high hole scores for handicap purposes in order to make handicaps more representative of a player’s potential ability. A handicap determined from scores to which ESC has not been applied may not be termed a Handicap Index. ESC is used when a player’s actual or most likely score (As defined above in Section 4-1) exceeds a maximum number, based on the table below, for the player’s Course Handicap from the tees played. (For nine-hole Equitable Stroke Control table, See Section 10-5c.)

### EQUITABLE STROKE CONTROL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Handicap</th>
<th>Maximum Number on any Hole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 or less</td>
<td>Double Bogey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 through 19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 through 29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 through 39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
BECOME A WSGA VOLUNTEER

Here are the areas where we most need dedicated volunteer assistance from those who would like to give back to the game.

WSGA Course Rating Team

Each year, teams of trained course rating volunteers assist the WSGA in measuring, compiling and analyzing the physical attributes of approximately 40 Washington and Northern Idaho golf courses including (but not limited to) roll, elevation changes, doglegs and forced lay-ups, prevailing winds, altitude, topography, fairway width, green target size, recoverability and rough, bunkers, lateral, crossing and other hazards. These evaluations provide each course with accurate measurements for each set of tees including yardages, and Course and Slope Rating. The USGA Course Rating System is an enhancement of the Handicap System, ensuring that players of differing abilities are able to participate in enjoyable and competitive games. We are always eager to build up our Course Rating team and look forward to bringing new contributors into the WSGA family. Please email Kevin Jones, Director of Handicapping and Course Rating, at kevin.jones@thewsga.org for more information.

WSGA/PNGA Championship Committee

Each year the WSGA/PNGA Championship Department needs volunteers to help with conducting our Championships of excellence. Volunteers may be asked to be starters, marshals, pace of play timers, forecaddies, live scoring recorders, score posting, etc. We are always eager to build up our Championship Department volunteer team. Please email Scotty Crouthamel, Sr. Director of Rules and Competition at scotty.crouthamel@thewsga.org for more information.
## DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

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### HANDICAPPING/IT/GHIN/COURSE RATING

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Frequently Asked Questions

WSGA Membership:

Q: How do I become a WSGA member?
A: The WSGA does not offer individual memberships. In order to become a member of the WSGA an individual must either join a WSGA Member Club or form a club of their own. A club must have at least 10 members, a set of By-Laws, Committees, Officers, etc. There are three types of clubs:

1. Type 1- A club located at a golf course with a USGA Course and USGA Slope Rating.
2. Type 2- A group of ten or more interested members (friends, family, co-workers, etc.) who play golf together regularly, have an established set of by-laws, and proper committees to ensure compliance with the USGA Handicap System.
3. Type 3- A group of ten or more members where the members had no prior affiliation and a majority of the recruiting and sign up of the membership is done by solicitation to the public (e.g. newspaper, Internet).

Please visit a golf course near you or go to our website, www.thewsga.org, and click on the Join WSGA button to join online.

Q: I belong to a group of golfers that gets together weekly and plays different courses around the area. We would like to issue USGA Handicap Indexes. How do we go about this?
A: As stated above, you would be referred to as a Type 2 club. Please contact the Membership Department at the WSGA office, (800) 643-6410, and ask for information regarding forming a club so your group can be officially recognized.

Q: What is a multi-member?
A: A multi-member is a golfer who has membership at more than one club, whether private, semi-private, public or associate. A golfer may be a member at more than one club in the WSGA, or may be a member at more than one golf association. Either way, that golfer must carry just one GHIN number (unless the second association uses a different handicap vendor than GHIN, then they would have a separate number relational to that vendor as well). If the multiple clubs each use GHIN, all scores will be contained in that one record on GHIN, no matter where that golfer plays. If the multiple clubs use different handicap vendors, all scores must be recorded with each handicap vendor. The only exception to the “one GHIN number rule” would be if a golfer were carrying both an 18-hole handicap and a 9-hole handicap. An WSGA multi-member must pay dues at each club to which they belong.
Handicap Index:

Q: Why should I have a handicap?
A: It’s the way players of varying abilities can compete with one another on equal basis, whether you are involved in serious competition or casual play. Golf is one of the few sports that allows such an opportunity.

Q: Can I calculate my own handicap, using software on my home or office computer?
A: You can, but only for fun. It would not be a USGA Handicap Index. To have a USGA Handicap Index, the USGA requires that you belong to a golf club, and that the golf club procures a license from the local golf association or from the USGA directly. Within the confines of a golf club, a process is at work called “peer review”, by which the club polices its own members’ scores.

Q: Why does my USGA Handicap Index rarely seem to reflect how I play?
A: A USGA Handicap Index is based on your potential ability, not your scoring average. You will probably only play to your Handicap Index about 20-25% of the time, or one out of every four or five rounds. It is when an individual is regularly “playing to their handicap” that the local handicap committee should investigate that golfer’s score posting habits, because something clearly is amiss. In a competition, as well as in a casual game, it becomes very important to know the very best that players can be. If your USGA Handicap Index goes down, be proud! You’re improving.

Q: What does it mean when I have an “R” next to my USGA Handicap Index?
A: It means that your Handicap Index has been reduced due to “exceptional” tournament performance. Section 10-3 of the USGA Handicap System specifically uses an additional step to calculate the USGA Handicap Index of a golfer who has a minimum of two eligible tournament scores that are at least three strokes better than the player’s currently calculated USGA Handicap Index. While many believe that the “R” next to your USGA Handicap Index indicates that a player is a “sandbagger” it actually means that you are currently not playing up to the potential of those two low Tournament Scores. Remember the “R” stands for REDUCED.

Q: If my Handicap Index has been reduced, when can I expect it to revert back to “normal”?
A: At every revision date, your USGA Handicap Index is recalculated and it may vary based on several factors: have you posted more “T” scores? Do you have “T” scores that have now expired? Is your regular level of play fluctuating? An Exceptional Tournament Score Reduction is only relevant in comparison to what your current USGA Handicap Index is and how your Index might be changing up or down due to your current scores. If you find you are posting higher scores than your tournament performance, there is a greater chance for a reduction or the reduction could get larger. As always, a USGA Handicap Index will reflect your scoring potential. If you need a detailed explanation, please request one from your Handicap Chairman or call the WSGA Handicap Department. Once you review the facts, you may decide to further appeal to the Committee for an override of your reduction. Only they are in the position to make that decision.

Q: Why do I have a Handicap Index and a Course Handicap?
A: A Handicap Index represents the potential playing ability on a course of standard playing difficulty (A USGA Slope Rating of 113 is standard, and this number is built into the Handicap Index formula). A Course Handicap represents a whole number of strokes needed on a specific set of tees to play to that tee’s USGA Course Rating. You need a Handicap Index in order to convert to a Course Handicap; you never actually play with your Index. A Course Handicap conversion takes into account the USGA Slope Rating of the set of tees you’re playing, without it, you are more than likely giving up strokes! So, take your Handicap Index, go to a Conversion (Slope) Chart for the pertinent set of tees posted at the course, and find your whole number Course Handicap.
Equitable Stroke Control:

Q. What is the purpose of Equitable Stroke Control and how is it to be used?
A. The purpose of ESC is to downward adjust an individual hole score to make handicaps more representative of a player’s potential scoring ability. Using ESC sets a maximum number of strokes that a golfer can post on any hole depending on the golfer’s Course Handicap. Think of it this way: We all have outlier (Bad) holes in a given round, this removes those from the equation when calculating your Handicap Index. First, start with your USGA Handicap Index. Next, go to the Slope (Conversion) Chart of the set of tees that you are playing that day. Go down the chart to find your current Handicap Index, and read across to discover your whole number Course Handicap. Take that Course Handicap against an ESC chart. If you’re a 15, the most you can take is a seven on any hole. Remember that ESC is for handicapping purposes only. You must apply ESC before posting any score (even Tournament scores!).

Q. How is Equitable Stroke Control used if a golfer does not have a enough scores to have a USGA Handicap Index and Course Handicap?
A. A beginning golfer is allowed, under the USGA Handicap System, to use the maximum Handicap Index of 36.4 for men and 40.4 for women, converted to a Course Handicap to determine their maximum number. It is important for everyone to remember that a score posted for handicap purposes MUST have ESC applied, if indeed that golfer needs to make a downward adjustment due to shooting higher than their allowable maximum on any given hole. Once the golfer has posted five rounds, they will have an established USGA Handicap Index returned to them on the next revision and thus may convert to a Course Handicap. It is also noteworthy that Equitable Stroke Control does not tell you when to stop play on a hole! ESC is only used for the purpose of keeping an exceptionally bad hole from changing your Handicap Index too much. There is also no limit to how many holes you can apply ESC to.

Score Posting:

Q. Since the Handicap System formula only takes up to 10 out of 20 of my best scores, should I bother to post scores when I play badly?
A. YES! The accuracy of handicapping relies on full reporting of all eligible scores. A score history is continual (but only considers the current twenty rounds, in addition to a Tournament score file, if you have one) and is intended to reflect the profile of the player from year to year. The Handicap System will adjust a player’s Handicap Index up or down as their game changes. You may play completely differently as you age, as you travel, or whether you are playing a brand new course without benefit of local knowledge. Perhaps they improve after taking lessons, for example, or find they concentrate better getting ready for an event (or during the event) and shoot lower scores. The System allows for this fluctuation, but only when the golfer acts responsibly in returning all acceptable scores.

Q. May I post my rounds over the Internet?
A. Yes, if your golf club has elected to use this feature, or if they are a “Type 3” golf club that is internet-based.

Q: How often are scores and Handicap Indexes updated on ghin.com?
A: Scores are displayed on ghin.com in real time; in other words, once a score reaches the GHIN server, it is also shown on ghin.com. Handicap Indexes, however, are updated only as per the USGA’s National Revision Schedule, which is the 1st and 15th of every month.
Q: Whom do I contact to correct an erroneous score that has been posted to my GHIN record?
A: Please make a request directly to your club Handicap Chairperson so that they may take the necessary steps to remove the score. Only they can perform maintenance on your scoring record. It is the policy of the WSGA that we will not change anything in a players’ scoring record except for the date of the round.

Q: Are scores made in best ball and match play rounds to be posted to my handicap?
A: Yes, all rounds which meet the definition of “Acceptable Scores”, as defined in the USGA Handicap System, are to be posted. Here’s how: FOR MATCH PLAY: For holes played and completed, record the actual score. A player who starts, but does not complete a hole or is conceded a stroke must record the most likely score for handicap purposes. A “Most likely” score includes the number of strokes already taken plus, in the estimation of the player, the number of strokes that it would take to complete the hole from that place more than half the time. If you end the match because one competitor has already won, record par plus any strokes you have coming on the remaining holes. You must play at least 13 holes in order for the score to be posted as an 18-hole round and at least 7 holes to post a nine-hole score. The Most Likely Score may not exceed the player’s Equitable Stroke Control limit.

Q: What about posting nine-hole scores if I am carrying an 18-hole handicap?
A: The GHIN Handicap Program software and using numerous Internet Score Posting Options, allows you to post nine-hole scores. Individual nine-hole scores must be posted, by the same procedure used to post eighteen-hole scores, with the corresponding nine-hole Course and Slope Rating. The software will transmit nine-hole scores for combination with other nine-hole scores as they are posted onto the GHIN server. Scores that are the product of combination will be reflected in your score history by the letter “C”. At least 7 holes must be played in order to post a nine-hole score.

Q. I was playing at a course recently and I noticed that the set of tees I chose didn’t have a Course Rating or Slope Rating, but the other tees did. How do I post that score?
A. Let’s say that you are a woman playing from the middle tees, which does not have a USGA Course and Slope Rating. The USGA Course Rating from the forward tees is 71.6 with a Slope Rating of 119. You notice that the middle tees are 396 yards longer than the forward tees. Using the chart in Section 5-2g (Pages 32 and 33) of the USGA Handicap System manual, you will post your score with a Course Rating of 73.8 (71.6 + 2.2 adjustment) and a Slope Rating of 124 (119 + 5 adjustment). The adjustment in the USGA Course and Slope Rating only serves as a temporary adjustment so you can post your score; it is not a formal USGA Course and Slope Rating. For a permanent rating for these tees, club officers would need to contact the WSGA.
FAQ

Q. How do I post a score made on a foreign golf course for handicap posting purposes?
A. The USGA licenses many foreign golf associations to utilize the USGA Course Rating system. A listing of these associations may be found on www.usga.org. Contact the club where you will be playing (or have played) and request the USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating. If this is not feasible, the foreign golf association’s web site may have this information. If the foreign golf course has a USGA Course Rating and Slope Rating, then this score can be posted for handicap purposes, if made in the “away” association’s active season. If no ratings are available (or if there is not a foreign golf association authorized by the USGA in the country), then this score is not acceptable for handicap posting purposes. Section 5-1 of the USGA Handicap System manual states that a course must have a Course Rating and Slope Rating in order for rounds played on it to be allowable for handicap purposes. Unfortunately, there is not a way to convert another rating system to the USGA Course Rating System.

Preferred Lies:

Q: When should “Preferred Lies” (Winter Rules) be used?
A: Preferred Lies/Winter Rules conflict with the fundamental principle of playing the ball as it lies. However, it is our recommendation that if poor course conditions are pervasive and the club’s Handicap Committee has determined that adopting a local “preferred lies” rule would “promote fair play or help protect the course” (USGA Handicap System Manual), the correct Preferred Lie rule should be in a detailed written form. A sign simply stating “Winter Rules Today” will not suffice! It is important to note that Preferred Lies, if used during the regular season, tends generally to lower scores and Handicap Indexes, thus penalizing players in competition with players whose scores are made without preferred lies. The WSGA believes that preferred lies is often overused and misunderstood. Remember that using preferred lies in a round does not negate the score for handicap purposes! Please contact the WSGA for more information about proper use of Preferred Lies.
FAQ

Course Rating:

Q: Is there an easy explanation for USGA Course and USGA Slope Rating?
A: Although there are many factors involved in the USGA Rating System, here’s a relatively simple interpretation. USGA COURSE RATING: This is an indication of the playing difficulty of a course for scratch golfers under normal course and weather conditions, based on yardage and other obstacles. It is denoted as strokes taken to one decimal place. USGA SLOPE RATING: This is an indication of the relative difficulty of a course for golfers above a scratch handicap. The higher the USGA Slope Rating, the more strokes the high-handicapper receives. On a course with a USGA Slope Rating of 110, the Course Handicap of both the high and low-handicapper will be relatively close to their USGA Handicap Indexes, but as a USGA Slope Rating reaches the 130’s, the low-handicapper’s Course Handicap will be a stroke or so above his Index, while the Course Handicap of the high-handicapper may be as much as five strokes higher than his Index. On courses with higher USGA Slope Ratings, the high-handicapper needs more strokes to compete. High-handicap players should look closely at USGA Slope Ratings when determining which set of tees to play. While Slope may also be of interest to the scratch player, the course rating is the best place to look to determine the degree of difficulty. A course of standard difficulty has a USGA Slope Rating of 113.

Q: Which course is more difficult: Course A with a USGA Course Rating of 72.0 and a USGA Slope Rating of 120 or Course B with a USGA Course Rating of 70.0 and a USGA Slope Rating of 130?
A: The answer to this question depends entirely on the ability of the person asking the question. For a high handicapper, Course B is probably more difficult. Its higher USGA Slope Rating probably means there are a number of long carries, perhaps over water, and a number of difficult bunkers. The low-handicapper has much less trouble with forced carries or trouble shots. The low-handicapper will have a harder time with Course A. Course A is probably long, and possibly tight. It presents difficulty for the high-handicapper as well, but without significant water or forced carries, does not pose as great a threat as Course A. As it turns out in this example the “bogey golfer” (approximately a Course Handicap of a 20 for men and a 24 for women) will have very nearly the same score on both courses, but as either the player’s USGA Handicap Index or the USGA Slope Rating increases, Course B will prove harder for the high-handicapper. The USGA Course Rating issued to a course is the definitive indicator of difficulty for the scratch player and USGA Slope Rating similarly so for all players above a scratch handicap.
Stroke Allocation (Application of Stroke Holes):

Q: If I have a Course Handicap greater than 18, where do I get my 19th stroke?
A: Each hole is assigned an allocated handicap stroke number, 1 through 18. One stroke is assigned per hole for 18 strokes, so you would get your 19th stroke starting again on the number one handicapped hole.

Q: The #1 handicap hole on our scorecard is not the hardest hole on the course. How do we re-handicap our holes?
A: Hardest for whom? It seems impossible that any one hole could be labeled “the hardest” on any course given the varying abilities of a club’s members. The #1 handicap hole on any golf course, assuming a proper stroke allocation study has been done, is the hole on which the higher handicapped golfer most needs extra strokes in competition with a lower handicapped golfer, such as in Match Play. This is generally not the most difficult hole on the course for the low-handicapper. With this type of allocation, you are comparing hole by hole scores from players of different skill levels to each other, looking for the largest gap in strokes between them to determine a ‘ranking’. A separate allocation table can be developed for Stroke Play as well, where the focus of the comparison is scores against the golf course - in other words, relativity to par.

The club can perform their own analysis using a free utility provided with the GHIN Software Suite. The club should collect scorecards over the course of a season or two, preferably from all handicap ranges. Men and Women’s tees will each have their own handicap stroke tables, as their need for strokes will likely come on different holes. Read more in Section 17 of the USGA Handicap System Manual, and contact the WSGA Handicapping Department for more details.

Adjustments For Fair Play:

Q: How are strokes given for two golfers playing in a match from different sets of tees, or for a man and a woman playing from the same set of tees?
A: This question references Section 3-5 of the USGA Handicap System Manual, and is essential for equitable play when two sets of tees are being used. Start with determining the Course Handicaps of each player. Then take the difference between the Course Ratings, with .5 or greater rounded upward (e.g., 73.5 - 70.9 = 2.6, rounded to 3). This figure is added to the Course Handicap of the golfer playing from the higher-rated set of tees because, of course, that is the more difficult set. The same principle is applied if the golfers involved in a match are different genders, because, even though they might be playing from the same set of tees, the Course and Slope Ratings will differ. Generally, when Men and Women play the same set of tees, the Women’s USGA Course Ratings will be around five shots higher than the Men’s. Remember that this is not only just simple arithmetic, it’s what is fair, and is a must do in the USGA Handicap System. While most players may think that simple conversion of a USGA Handicap Index to a Course Handicap is all that is necessary, this is not the case. You must turn to the Course Rating for an additional adjustment.
Contact the WSGA

thewsga.org | 206.526.1238

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