

USGA Handicap System

FROM THE USGA HANDICAP SYSTEM MANUAL

www.usga.org

1-1. Purpose

The purpose of the *USGA Handicap System* is to make the game of golf more enjoyable by enabling players of differing abilities to compete on an equitable basis. The System provides a fair *Course Handicap* for each player, regardless of ability, and adjusts a player's *Handicap Index* up or down as the player's game changes. At the same time, the System disregards high scores that bear little relation to the player's potential ability and promotes continuity by making a *Handicap Index* continuous from one playing season or year to the next. A *Handicap Index* is useful for all forms of play, and is issued only to individuals who are members of a *golf club*.

Two basic premises underlie the *USGA Handicap System*, namely 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.

A *Handicap Index*, issued by a *golf club* or *authorized golf association* (through its member clubs), indicates a player's skill and is a number taken to one decimal place, e.g., 10.4.

A *Handicap Index* compares a player's scoring ability to the scoring ability of a *scratch golfer* on a course of standard difficulty. A player posts scores along with the appropriate *USGA Course Rating* and *Slope Rating* to make up the *scoring record*. A *Handicap Index* is computed from no more than 20 scores plus any *eligible tournament scores*. It reflects the player's potential because it is based upon the best *handicap differentials* posted for a given number of rounds, ideally the best 10 of the last 20 rounds.

A *Handicap Index* is portable from course to course, as well as from one set of tees to another set of tees on the same course. A player converts a *Handicap Index* to a *Course Handicap* based on the *Slope Rating* of the tees played.

A *USGA Course Rating* is the USGA's mark that indicates the evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for a *scratch golfer* under normal conditions based on yardage and other obstacles that affect scoring ability. A *Slope Rating* is a measurement of the relative difficulty of a course for players who are not *scratch golfers*. Each course is rated from each set of tees for both the *scratch golfer* and the *bogey golfer*. The *USGA Course Rating* reflects the difficulty of the course for the *scratch golfer*. The *USGA Course Rating* and *Slope Rating* together reflect the difficulty of the course for a player who is not a *scratch golfer*. The greater the difference between the scores of the *scratch* and *bogey golfers* on a certain course, the higher the *Slope Rating* will be and the more strokes players will receive. Conversely, the less the difference, the lower the *Slope Rating* will be and the fewer strokes players will receive.

Each player locates the *Handicap Index* on the appropriate *Course Handicap Table* and finds the corresponding *Course Handicap*. A *Course Handicap Table* can be found in the clubhouse or near the first tee of a golf course. There will be a *Course Handicap Table* for each set of tees used by men and by women. The number of strokes a player receives (*Course Handicap*) is based upon the relative difficulty (*Slope Rating*) of the course.