

Clarifications of the 2020 Rules of Handicapping

Updated January 2023

Additional clarifications will be included in this document as required, and date referenced.

New Clarification

Rule 7.2: Committee Actions

Rule 7.2a states that “The Committee in charge of a competition may set a maximum limit for play within the Terms of the Competition. For example, the Committee can set:

- A maximum Handicap Index for entry or use in the competition.
- A maximum Playing Handicap.”

Rule 7.2b goes on to state that “The Committee in charge of a competition may reserve the right to:

- Adjust the Playing Handicap of an entrant within the Terms of the Competition where there is evidence that the player’s Handicap Index does not reflect their demonstrated ability.”

Competition Committees in charge of elite level amateur events may also consider setting more detailed entry/eligibility criteria, for example:

- a. The requirement for the player to submit a copy of the most recent 20 scores in their scoring record, allowing the Committee to determine whether the player’s Handicap Index reflects their demonstrated ability. This could involve assessing the player’s performance in:
 - general play rounds;
 - competition rounds;
 - 9-hole rounds;
 - general play rounds compared to competition rounds; and
 - 9-hole rounds compared to 18-hole rounds.
- b. The right to consider the number of acceptable scores posted on a regular basis and performance in unauthorized formats of play, and/or
- c. Use of a player ranking, order of merit or some other indicator of ability based on performances in other competitions of equal stature.

General

Treatment of Plus (+) Handicaps (Added 25 July 2022)

The Rules of Handicapping contain a number of references to ‘Plus Handicap’ players, which is the terminology traditionally used for a golfer that has achieved a Handicap Index better than Scratch (0.0).

However, when calculating a net score, the correct denotation of a ‘plus’ handicap is a negative, and this mathematical contradiction can lead to a lack of consistency in the way players denote their Handicap Index on entry forms and how software providers code their calculators.

In an effort to achieve consistency across all jurisdictions, the following guidance is provided:

- Players with a 'Plus Handicap' should be encouraged to always prefix their Handicap Index with a 'Plus' sign (+)
- All other players should be encouraged to refrain from using any prefix
- The default assumption for competition organisers should be that a Handicap Index pre-fixed with a Plus (+) sign is a Plus Handicap. Any Handicap Index pre-fixed with a negative (-) sign should be queried.

Application of Discretionary Items in Different Jurisdictions (Added 1 April 2021)

The Rules of Handicapping contain a number of areas where the Authorized Association has discretion to choose between two or more options, to accommodate the way that golf is played and administered within that jurisdiction. These 'discretionary items' are mandatory within the jurisdiction to which they apply, but when travelling to a different jurisdiction, where different options may have been selected, it is the player's responsibility to find out which option applies to their round.

The following table sets out the position for each discretionary item that is available to Authorized Associations:

Rule #	Discretionary Item	When Round is Played 'Away'
1.4b	Designating a Home Club	N/A
2.1a	Acceptability of Scores - Played in an Authorized Format of Play	As per Rule 2.1a(ii), Diagram 2.1 a
2.1a(iii)	Pre-registration of Intent to Submit a Score in General Play	As per 'Home' and in a manner determined by Home Club
2.2a	Minimum Number of Holes Played for Score to be Acceptable For an 18-hole Score - when <u>lower</u> than home jurisdiction	As per 'Away' - to be consistent with Rule 2.1a(ii)
2.2a	Minimum Number of Holes Played for Score to be Acceptable For an 18-hole Score - when <u>higher</u> than home jurisdiction	As per 'Home' - to be consistent with Rule 2.1a(ii)
2.2b	Minimum Number of Holes Played for Score to be Acceptable For a 9-hole Score - when <u>lower</u> than home jurisdiction	As per 'Away' - to be consistent with Rule 2.1a(ii)
2.2b	Minimum Number of Holes Played for Score to be Acceptable For a 9-hole Score - when <u>higher</u> than home jurisdiction	As per 'Home' - to be consistent with Rule 2.1a(ii)
3.3	When a Hole is Started but Player Does Not Hole Out	As per 'Away' - to be consistent with Rule 2.1a(ii)
4.1b	Information Required for Scoring Record: For Scores Prior to Establishing a Handicap Index	As per 'Home'
4.4	Certification of Score	As per 'Home'

5.1 a	Calculation of a Score Differential: For an 18-hole Score	As per 'Home'
5.1 b	Calculation of a Score Differential: For a 9-hole Score	As per 'Home'
5.2a	Handicap Committee: Assignment of Handicap Index Below Threshold Must be Approved	N/A
6.1	Course Handicap Calculation	See Note*
7.1 a	Handicap Committee: Handicap Index Adjustments from Handicap Review Must be Sanctioned or Ratified	N/A
7.1 a	Handicap Committee: Upward Adjustments of Handicap Index Exceeding Number of Strokes Must be Sanctioned or Ratified	N/A

*NOTE:

When playing in a different jurisdiction, the formula used to calculate a players' Course Handicap will depend on the format of play and the other participating players. For example:

In general play, either the 'Home' or 'Away' formula can be applied, depending on who is participating, such that:

- If 4 players from the same jurisdiction have travelled to a different jurisdiction to play a round together, they should calculate their Course Handicaps in the same way as they do at 'Home'.
- If a single player has travelled to a different jurisdiction to play a round with 3 players from the 'Away' jurisdiction, the single player should calculate their Course Handicap in the same way as the 'Away' players.

In competition play, the player should always use the 'Away' formula and Committees are encouraged to include this requirement within their Terms of the Competition.

Definitions

Low Handicap Index (Added 1 April 2021)

"The lowest Handicap Index achieved by the player during the 365-day period (one year) preceding the day on which the most recent score on their scoring record was played (see Rule 5.7)".

Lowest Handicap Index achieved should be interpreted to mean the lowest Handicap Index calculated during the 365-day period and should not include a Handicap Index calculated earlier, that was carried into the 365-day period.

Rules

Rule 6.2: Playing Handicap Calculation (Added 20 September 2021)

Handicap allowances are applied to a player's Course Handicap as the final step in the calculation of their Playing Handicap. Handicap allowances are designed to provide equity for players of all levels of ability in each format of play (see Appendix C) and should be applied to the unrounded Course Handicap to avoid any undue effect of double rounding.

Approximately 23% of the time, double rounding can produce Playing Handicaps that are significantly different and counter intuitive to players. For example, two players with a Handicap Index up to 2 strokes apart could both receive the same calculated Playing Handicap, see below:

Course Rating = 71.0

Slope Rating = 125

Par = 71

Format = Four-Ball Stroke Play (Handicap Allowance 85%)

Playing Handicap Calculation (using rounded Course Handicap)		
	Player A	Player B
Handicap Index	8.6	10.3
Course Handicap (Rounded)	10	11
Playing Handicap (85%)	9	9

Playing Handicap Calculation (using unrounded Course Handicap)		
	Player A	Player B
Handicap Index	8.6	10.3
Course Handicap (Unrounded)	9.5132...	11.3938...
Playing Handicap (85%)	8	10

For the other 77% of the time, there would be no difference in the result.

As players do not always have easy access to their unrounded Course Handicap, for practical purposes, handicap allowances may be applied to the rounded Course Handicap. It is the responsibility of the Authorized Association to establish the appropriate procedures within its jurisdiction for the calculation of the Playing Handicap, using either the unrounded or rounded Course Handicap.

Note: Where no handicap allowance is applied or it is set at 100%, the Playing Handicap is always the same as the rounded Course Handicap.

Interpretations

2.1/1 Score is Acceptable for Handicap Purposes Even If Holes Have Not Been Played in the Order Set by the Committee (Added 1 April 2021)

Insertion of additional language, highlighted in red:

Rule 5.1 of the Rules of Golf requires holes in a round to be played in the order set by either the Committee in charge of the competition or the Committee in charge of the golf course. However, **provided the player has not been disqualified**, a score is acceptable for handicap purposes even if the holes in a round have not been played in the order set by the Committee.

For example:

- When the golf course is busy and starting at an alternative hole will allow a quicker pace of play.
- When playing holes in a different order will allow more players to complete their rounds, particularly during periods when daylight is limited.

If the player has been disqualified, see Rule 2.1b.