

World Handicap System (WHS)

Purpose

Although golf is now played based on a single set of rules (governed by the R&A and USGA), there are currently six different handicap systems around the world. The World Handicap System (WHS) will unify all of these six existing systems into a single system to enable golfers of different abilities to play and compete on a fair and equal basis, in any format, on any course, anywhere around the world.

England Golf have advised that the WHS will come into force in Great Britain on 2nd November 2020.

Summary of Main Points

The new handicap system will include:

- **Course Rating** and **Slope Rating** for each set of tees
- Your **Handicap Index** will be based on average of best 8 from last 20 qualifying scores
- Maximum handicap Index will be 54
- Abnormal course and weather conditions adjustments on a daily basis
- Your **Course Handicap** will depend on the slope rating of the course/tees being used
- Your **Playing Handicap** will depend on the format of play (i.e. individual medal or stableford or 4BBB etc.) in competitions
- A Soft Cap (+ 3 shots) and Hard Cap (+5 shots) will ensure that your handicap index does not increase excessively in a rolling year.

Highlights of the World Handicap System

These are some of the key features of the new system, supporting enjoyment of the game for golfers everywhere.



Course rating and Slope

Course Rating replaces Standard Scratch (SSS) for each set of tees and represents the score that a scratch golfer is expected to achieve on the course under normal course and weather conditions. It is based on such things as yardage, roll, doglegs, topography, obstacles, penalty areas, trees etc. and is expressed to one decimal place.

In addition to the Course Rating, the Bogey Rating is also assessed which represents score a Bogey golfer would achieve under the same conditions.

The Slope Rating represents the relative difficulty of a course for a bogey golfer compared to a scratch golf. A golf course of standard relative playing difficulty has a Slope Rating of 113, which is the figure that the Handicap Index (see later) is based on.

Course Rating and Slope Rating have been performed by DCGU for the following tees at Sherborne GC:

Tee	18 Holes		9 Holes (Holes 1-9)	
	Course rating	Slope Rating	Course rating	Slope Rating
Men's White	71.5	134	35.7	131
Men's Yellow	70.4	128	34.9	124
Men's Blue	66.9	117	33.4	113
Ladies Red	74.5	136	37.0	129
Ladies Blue	72.0	130	35.9	127

Handicap Index

This is a player's personal handicap based on a "nominal" course with a Slope Rating of 113.

Your Handicap Index (HI) will be based on the average of the your best eight (8) scores from your last twenty (20) rounds, initially based on qualifying scores since 1st January 2018. If you have not submitted 20 qualifying scores (i.e. from competitions or supplementary cards) in this period, then the following table will be used to calculate your Handicap Index.

New golfers, who don't have a handicap, must complete 54 holes made up of any combination of 9- or 18-hole rounds.

Calculation of a New Handicap Index

For Fewer Than 20 Scores

Number of score differentials in scoring record	Score differential(s) to be used in calculation of Handicap Index	Adjustment
3	Lowest 1	-2.0
4	Lowest 1	-1.0
5	Lowest 1	0
6	Average of lowest 2	-1.0
7 or 8	Average of lowest 2	0
9 to 11	Average of lowest 3	0
12 to 14	Average of lowest 4	0
15 or 16	Average of lowest 5	0
17 or 18	Average of lowest 6	0
19	Average of lowest 7	0
20	Average of lowest 8	0

In order to calculate your Handicap Index, once a score is posted, the software will calculate the Score Differential to one decimal place. Firstly, any score on a hole over net double bogey is reduced to net double bogey and this then results in an Adjusted Gross Score. Then,

Score Differential = $(113 \div \text{Slope Rating}) \times (\text{Adjusted Gross Score} - \text{Course rating-PCC adjustment})$

Where PCC adjustment is the Playing Conditions Calculation (see below for more detail)

e.g. a player with an adjusted gross score of 95 on Sherborne White Tees with no PCC adjustment would have:

$$\text{Score Differential} = (113 \div 134) \times (95 - 71.5 - 0) = 19.8$$

The Score Differentials are then used to calculate the Handicap Index depending on the number of scores posted (as shown in the table above.)

An example of a scoring record using the average of the best 8 of 20 is shown below:

Example of 8 of 20 Calculation

Score No.	Date Played	Course	Course Rating	Slope Rating	Adjusted Gross Score	Score Differential
1	22/9/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	91	18.5
2	5/9/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	92	19.4
3	1/9/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	99	25.8
4	28/8/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	89	16.7
5	23/8/20	River GC	71.3	127	92	18.4
6	26/7/20	Meadow GC	72.2	131	87	12.8
7	14/7/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	97	24.0
8	4/7/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	88	15.8
9	19/6/20	River GC	71.3	127	87	13.5
10	16/6/20	Valley GC	69.9	118	95	24.0
11	12/6/20	Forest GC	70.1	115	86	15.6
12	5/6/20	Meadow GC	72.2	131	85	11.0
13	2/6/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	82	10.4
14	30/5/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	94	21.2
15	25/5/20	Valley GC	69.9	118	89	18.3
16	22/5/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	97	24.0
17	29/4/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	85	13.1
18	14/4/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	93	20.3
19	10/4/20	Hill GC	70.5	125	94	21.2
20	3/4/20	Meadow GC	72.2	131	86	12.1
21						

• Adding together the best 8 differentials out of the last 20:

12.8	
+ 15.8	
+ 13.5	
+ 15.6	
+ 11.0	
+ 10.4	
+ 13.1	
+ 12.1	

And averaging the total: = 104.3 / 8

Handicap Index of 13.0

When the next score is posted, the oldest score drops off the list and the calculation is repeated.

Therefore, a couple of things that are different from the current CONGU system:

- A 0.1 increase for a poor round no longer exists – the calculation will be based on your best 8 from last 20 scores, as shown above
- The 'c' (i.e. Competition Handicap) will no longer exist – once you have a Handicap Index, you have a Handicap.

Low handicap Index + soft and hard caps

In order to ensure that a player's current Handicap Index cannot stray too far from their demonstrated ability, in too short a space of time, a player's Low Handicap Index is calculated within the software. This Low handicap Index is the player's lowest Handicap Index in the last year, calculated on a rolling basis.

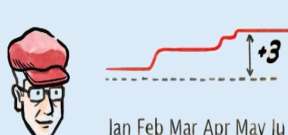
If a score is posted and a new Handicap Index is calculated to be more than a certain number of strokes above the Low Handicap Index, then either a Soft or Hard Cap is triggered to limit the increase. There is no limit on how far a player's Handicap Index can decrease.

Note that the Soft and Hard Cap procedures only start to take effect once a player has at least 20 acceptable scores in their scoring record.

The Soft Cap suppresses upward movement when the difference between the newly calculated Handicap Index and the Low Handicap Index is greater than 3. The increase is suppressed by 50% of any value over 3.

The Hard Cap prevents further upward movement by placing a hard ceiling at 5 above the Low Handicap Index.

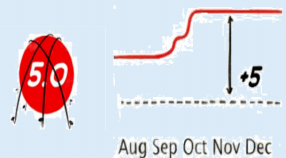
Soft Cap Examples



Player submits a new score:

New calculated HI (8 / 20)	Low Index (LI)	Consider Soft Cap					Consider Hard Cap		
		8/20 - LI	≤ 3.0	> 3.0	50% of value > 3.0 (Suppression)	≤ 3 + Suppression	Movement compared to LI	> 5	New HI
14.0	12.0	2.0	2.0	0	0	2.0 + 0	2.0	0	14.0
15.0	12.0	3.0	3.0	0	0	3.0 + 0	3.0	0	15.0
19.0	12.0	7.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	3.0 + 2.0	5.0	0	17.0

Hard Cap Example



Player submits a new score:

New calculated HI (8 / 20)	Low Index (LI)	Consider Soft Cap					Consider Hard Cap		
		8/20 - LI	≤ 3.0	> 3.0	50% of value > 3.0 (Suppression)	≤ 3 + Suppression	Movement compared to LI	> 5	New HI
14.0	12.0	2.0	2.0	0	0	2.0 + 0	2.0	0	14.0
15.0	12.0	3.0	3.0	0	0	3.0 + 0	3.0	0	15.0
19.0	12.0	7.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	3.0 + 2.0	5.0	0	17.0
20.0	12.0	8.0	3.0	5.0	2.5	3.0 + 2.5	5.5	0.5	17.0

Exceptional Scoring Reduction

If a player submits a score which is 7 strokes or more better than their Handicap Index at the time the round was played, then an Exceptional Score Reduction of 1 stroke is applied. If the score is 10 strokes or more better, then an exceptional score reduction of 2 strokes is applied.

Course Handicap

For a Handicap Index to be portable across different courses, it must be converted into a Course Handicap to determine the number of strokes a player receives for the golf course being played.

A Course Handicap look-up table will be available for each set of tees or if you are playing in a competition then the handicap software will provide the information when you sign in, where:

$$\text{Course Handicap} = \text{Handicap Index} \times (\text{Slope rating} \div 113)$$

e.g.

For a Man with a Handicap Index of 15.6 playing the Sherborne GC White Tees:

$$\text{Course Handicap} = 15.6 \times (134 \div 113)$$

$$\text{Course Handicap} = 18.5$$

Note that a 9 hole Course Handicap is calculated as follows:

$$9 \text{ Hole Course Handicap} = (\text{Handicap Index} \div 2) \times (9 \text{ Hole Slope Rating} \div 113)$$

To avoid players having to calculate their own Course Handicap, boards will be posted by the club so that your Course Handicap can be looked up based on your Handicap Index, on a table, depending on which tees you are playing from.

An example of a Course Rating and Slope Rating Table is shown below:

Course Handicap Table		England Golf	
Peninsula Golf Club (2008/2022)		Tee Box	
Handicap Index	Course Handicap	White	Red
1.0	1	1	1
2.0	2	2	2
3.0	3	3	3
4.0	4	4	4
5.0	5	5	5
6.0	6	6	6
7.0	7	7	7
8.0	8	8	8
9.0	9	9	9
10.0	10	10	10
11.0	11	11	11
12.0	12	12	12
13.0	13	13	13
14.0	14	14	14
15.0	15	15	15
16.0	16	16	16
17.0	17	17	17
18.0	18	18	18
19.0	19	19	19
20.0	20	20	20
21.0	21	21	21
22.0	22	22	22
23.0	23	23	23
24.0	24	24	24
25.0	25	25	25
26.0	26	26	26
27.0	27	27	27
28.0	28	28	28
29.0	29	29	29
30.0	30	30	30
31.0	31	31	31
32.0	32	32	32
33.0	33	33	33
34.0	34	34	34
35.0	35	35	35
36.0	36	36	36
37.0	37	37	37
38.0	38	38	38
39.0	39	39	39
40.0	40	40	40
41.0	41	41	41
42.0	42	42	42
43.0	43	43	43
44.0	44	44	44
45.0	45	45	45
46.0	46	46	46
47.0	47	47	47
48.0	48	48	48
49.0	49	49	49
50.0	50	50	50
51.0	51	51	51
52.0	52	52	52
53.0	53	53	53
54.0	54	54	54
55.0	55	55	55
56.0	56	56	56
57.0	57	57	57
58.0	58	58	58
59.0	59	59	59
60.0	60	60	60
61.0	61	61	61
62.0	62	62	62
63.0	63	63	63
64.0	64	64	64
65.0	65	65	65
66.0	66	66	66
67.0	67	67	67
68.0	68	68	68
69.0	69	69	69
70.0	70	70	70
71.0	71	71	71
72.0	72	72	72
73.0	73	73	73
74.0	74	74	74
75.0	75	75	75
76.0	76	76	76
77.0	77	77	77
78.0	78	78	78
79.0	79	79	79
80.0	80	80	80
81.0	81	81	81
82.0	82	82	82
83.0	83	83	83
84.0	84	84	84
85.0	85	85	85
86.0	86	86	86
87.0	87	87	87
88.0	88	88	88
89.0	89	89	89
90.0	90	90	90
91.0	91	91	91
92.0	92	92	92
93.0	93	93	93
94.0	94	94	94
95.0	95	95	95
96.0	96	96	96
97.0	97	97	97
98.0	98	98	98
99.0	99	99	99
100.0	100	100	100

Playing Handicap

For equity to be achieved amongst two or more players **in a competition**, a player's Course Handicap must be converted into a Playing Handicap which is determined by the format of play and the applicable Handicap Allowances.

The table of applicable Handicap Allowances is shown below:

Format of Play	Type of Round	Recommended <i>Handicap Allowance</i>
Stroke play	Individual	95%
	Individual Stableford	95%
	Individual Par/Bogey	95%
	Individual Maximum Score	95%
	Four-Ball	85%
	Four-Ball Stableford	85%
	Four-Ball Par/Bogey	90%
Match Play	Individual	100%
	Four-Ball	90%
Other	Foursomes	50% of combined team handicap
	Greensomes	60% low handicap + 40% high handicap
	Pinehurst/Chapman	60% low handicap + 40% high handicap
	Best 1 of 4 stroke play	75%
	Best 2 of 4 stroke play	85%
	Best 3 of 4 stroke play	100%
	All 4 of 4 stroke play	100%
	Scramble (4 players)	25%/20%/15%/10% from lowest to highest handicap
	Scramble (2 players)	35% low/15% high
	Total score of 2 match play	100%
	Best 1 of 4 Par/Bogey	75%
	Best 2 of 4 Par/Bogey	80%
	Best 3 of 4 Par/Bogey	90%
	4 of 4 Par/Bogey	100%

The calculation of Playing Handicap is an adjustment to the Course Handicap by any handicap allowances in operation for the format of play i.e.

$$\text{Playing Handicap} = \text{Course Handicap} \times \text{Handicap Allowance}$$

e.g. for a singles stroke play competition

$$\text{Playing Handicap} = 18.5 \times 95\% = 17.6, \text{ therefore, } 18.$$

A Player's Playing Handicap will be calculated by the software used to run the competition.

Acceptable Scores

Similar to the current handicap rules, acceptable scores for handicap purposes need to be:

- In an authorized format of play
- All singles competition rounds are Mandatory (9 or 18 holes)
- Any social/general play scores need to be pre-registered (i.e. the same as Supplementary scores in the current system)

The formats of play currently authorized by England Golf are shown in the table below. The formats not ticked are currently not authorized but this may well change in the future.

Authorized Formats of Play

Format of Play	Type of Round	Number of Holes			
Individual Stroke play	Organized competition	9	✓	18	✓
	General play	9	✓	18	✓
	Stableford - organized competition	9	✓	18	✓
	Stableford - general play	9	✓	18	✓
	Par / bogey - organized competition	9	✓	18	✓
	Par / bogey - general play	9	✓	18	✓
	Maximum Score - organized competition	9	✓	18	✓
	Maximum Score - general play	9	✓	18	✓
Four-Ball Stroke play	Organized competition	9		18	
	General play	9		18	
	Stableford - organized competition	9		18	
	Stableford - general play	9		18	
	Par / bogey - organized competition	9		18	
	Par / bogey - general play	9		18	
Individual Match play	Organized competition	9		18	
	General play	9		18	
Four-Ball Match play	Organized competition	9		18	
	General play	9		18	

Examples of scores that cannot be used for handicap purposes are:

- Foursomes
- Scrambles
- When practicing or being coached
- When using non-conforming equipment
- When the minimum number of holes have not been played

Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)

Abnormal playing conditions can be caused by weather and/or course set-up and, based on the scores submitted on any particular day, the software will assess whether playing conditions on the day were 'normal' or significantly harder or easier than normal. This is the equivalent of the old Competition Standard Scratch (CSS) but will apply to all acceptable scores on that day, not just a single competition.

The PCC:

- Is performed only once for a day
- Considers all acceptable scores submitted on a golf course (all formats, competitive & recreational, 9 & 18 holes)
- Requires at least eight acceptable scores submitted by players with a Handicap Index of 36.0 or below
- Is automatically applied with the software calculation of score gross score differentials for all players
- Is designed to be simple and conservative in nature, adjusting score differentials in integer values ranging from -1 to +3.

Submitting a score

A score must be submitted by entering it using the Touch Screen Terminal either in the foyer or Pro shop, as soon as possible on the day of play, after completion of the round and before midnight. The gross scores must be submitted as a hole by hole score, marking the holes not played.

The handicap software will then analyse the scores recorded for that day, calculate and apply any Playing Conditions Calculation, and update the player's Handicap Index overnight.

When to Submit Score

	Format Authorized at Home	Format Unauthorized at Home
Round Played Away in Authorized Format	Submit score	Submit score
Round Played Away in Unauthorized Format	Submit score	Not acceptable

As a rule, a score should be submitted if the format being played is acceptable either within GB&I or if acceptable in the country where the round is being played.

For example: use of 4BBB/Matchplay scores from Ireland.

SUMMARY



TRANSITION

The transition from the present CONGU handicap system to the new WHS will take place throughout 2020 leading up to the World Handicap System coming into force on 2nd November 2020.

It is anticipated that for a short period leading up to the November start date, that players will be able to see their new WHS Handicap Index alongside their current CONGU handicap in the handicap software, for information only.

England Golf have advised that they will only be using historical data from 1st January 2018 to determine a player's new WHS Handicap Index and a "fully formed" handicap is based on the average of the best 8 from the last 20 scores. For players with less than 20 qualifying scores, then the table on Page 4 will be used to calculate their Handicap Index.

Therefore, it is imperative that players submit as many acceptable (i.e. competition or supplementary card) scores in order to ensure that their new Handicap Index is an accurate reflection of their current playing ability.

USEFUL EXTERNAL LINKS

More information, including short videos explaining various aspects of the system, can be found at the following links:

World Handicap System website - <https://www.whs.com/>

England Golf website. - <https://www.englandgolf.org/handicaps-rules/whs-2020/>

CONGU WHS Manual - Rules of Handicapping –
<https://www.englandgolf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/England-Golf-Rules-of-Handicapping.pdf>

CONGU WHS Rules of Handicapping – Player Reference Guide -
<https://www.englandgolf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Rules-of-Handicapping-Player-Reference-Guide.pdf>

England Golf FAQs - https://www.englandgolf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/WHs-FAQs_FINAL_SSC.pdf

Dorset County Golf Union website. - https://www.dcg.u.org.uk/whs_2020