



USGA Handicap System Changes, 2012-2015

Reference Document for Authorized Golf Association Administrators

Sections and Appendices

Section 2

- Amended definition of an authorized golf association. The revised definition is more specific.

An "authorized golf association" is a not-for-profit entity that is recognized as having exempt status under Section 501 (c) of the United States Internal Revenue Code and has been licensed by the USGA to utilize the USGA Handicap System and/or the USGA Course Rating System within a certain state or region. It is an organization comprised of golf clubs or golfers, operated under bylaws, and in existence for the purpose of supporting USGA core programs and services for amateur golfers, and otherwise promoting the best interests and preserving the true spirit of the game of golf. See minimum requirements to be licensed by the USGA in the United States as an authorized golf association, which can be viewed on the USGA website at www.usga.org.

- Amended definition of Trend Handicap to denote that it must be identified with an "L."

Clarification in the definition to be consistent with Section 8-3a, indicating that a handicap updated every time a score is posted must be identified with the letter "L" to show it is a local handicap.

Section 4-2

- Change heading to: "Holes Not Played or Not Played Under The Principles of The Rules of Golf."

This is to be consistent with other references to "the Principles of the Rules of Golf" throughout the manual.

Section 5-1a

- Amended for consistency to require minimum holes played in accordance with "the principles of the Rules of Golf" and added note to indicate a "Most Likely Score" is considered to be played under "the principles of the Rules of Golf."

Amended 5-1a to clarify that holes must be played under the principles of the Rules of Golf to count toward the minimum requirement (7 holes played to post a 9-hole score, and 13 holes played to post an 18-hole score).

Section 7-1

- Changed Section title to: "Preferred Lies (Winter Rules) and Adverse Course Conditions."

This provides additional guidance as to when suspension of score posting is a more reasonable option than posting scores using preferred lies based on adverse course conditions.

Section 8-3

- Adoption of National Revision Schedule (domestic golf associations only).

Every Handicap Index will be revised on the same dates (1st and 15th) of each month for the entire year, regardless of inactive season, allowing for consistent updating of every Handicap Index throughout the country.

Section 8-4b

- New heading change to: "Penalty Score for Failure to Post."

Clarified that penalty scores are affiliated with failure to post and removed from Section 8-4c(iv) accordingly as it is not an adjustment made to the player's Handicap Index (not a modification, "M").

Section 8-4c (iv) (a) and (g)

- Changed (a) from "Posting Erroneous scores" to "Posting Erroneous information to the scoring record."

This was done to include other information such as date posted, or Rating information.

- Added (g) "Not observing either or both of the two basic premises that underlie the USGA Handicap System."

This is to emphasize that the Committee can modify a player's Handicap Index when the Handicap Committee feels the player is not trying to make the best scores possible and not posting every acceptable round for peer review.

Section 9-4

To make proper use of handicap allowances a fourth step was added, which became Step 3, for four-ball stroke play competitions.

- Step 1: Players must first determine Course Handicap (from tees played).
- Step 2: Players should then apply the handicap allowances for the appropriate format.
- **Step 3: It is recommended that in four-ball stroke play competitions, if the Course Handicaps of the side differ by more than eight strokes, each is reduced by 10 percent. (See Note in Section 9-4b(ii).)**
- Step 4: If players are competing from different tees or men and women are competing from the same tees (See Sections 3-5 and 9-3c), players must apply the adjustment for the difference in USGA Course Rating from the tees played.

This will help clarify the steps are being applied in the correct order.

Section 9-4

- Added **note** to explain the goal of getting the lowest Course Handicap player to zero for a four-ball match play format. For example, players with a Course Handicap of 5, 10, 15, and 20 are reduced by 5, playing off the low, to 0, 5, 10, and 15 in Step 2 above. If the low Course Handicap player (0) is playing a USGA Course Rating that is 2 strokes higher than others (Step 4), the zero (0) in this case would remain a zero; however, to compensate for the USGA Course Rating difference of 2 in Step 4, and keep the lowest Course Handicap player a zero per the note, the other players would be reduced by 2 (0, 3, 8, and 13, respectfully).

Note: If after following the steps above in Section 9-4, the player with the lowest Course Handicap is not at scratch, then apply Step 2 again.

Section 9-4b (ii)

- Amended the example and note by changing Player A's Course Handicap to 5 to illustrate the correct allocation is to apply the initial allowance independently from the note and not add the percentages together and take as one deduction. Thus, a 5 Course Handicap remains a 5 after 90 percent is applied and also remains a 5 after the note is then applied, as merely taking 80 percent of 5 is 4, which is not the correct application.

Example 1: On men's side A-B, Player A has a Course Handicap of **5** and Player B has a Course Handicap of 20. At 90 percent of Course Handicap, Player A receives 5 strokes ($5 \times 90\% = 4.5$, rounded to 5) and Player B receives 18 strokes ($20 \times 90\% = 18$).

Example 3: In Example 1, there is more than an eight stroke difference between partners (after allowance, $18 - 5 = 13$). Therefore, both players would then be reduced an additional 10 percent based on the rounded Course Handicap. Player A receives **5** strokes ($5 \times 10\% = .5$; $5 - .5 = 4.5$, rounded to **5**) and Player B receives 16 strokes ($18 \times 10\% = 1.8$; $18 - 1.8 = 16.2$, rounded to 16). Strokes are taken as assigned on the players' respective stroke allocation table.

Section 14-2

- Changed recommendation and mandatory re-rating of a newly rated golf course to 5 years.

This is to match the change approved by the Course Rating Committee, to ensure a newly-rated course is re-rated within 5 years of the initial rating, instead of the previous recommendation to re-rate within 3 years.

Appendix A

- Clarified adjusting hole score procedure for short course scores.

Clarified that short course scores are subject to the application of Section 4 for adjusting hole scores, except ESC does not apply.

Decisions

Decision 2/1 and 2/7 (REVISED)

- To denote an increase for Type 2 club to **75 miles** (from 50 miles). A Member of a Type 2 club must be from within a 75-mile radius of the principal location of the Type 2 club.

Decision 4-2/1 (NEW)

- Explaining the phrase “Principles of the Rules of Golf” in accordance with The USGA Handicap System.

Q: What is meant by the phrase “in accordance with The Principles of the Rules of Golf” in “The USGA Handicap System” manual?

A: The phrase “in accordance with the principles of the Rules of Golf” refers to situations where the player has played a hole in such a manner that the score would be sufficiently accurate to be used for handicap computation purposes. Occasionally, holes are not played strictly in accordance with the Rules of Golf. Thus, flexibility has been provided in the USGA Handicap System for a score to remain acceptable for handicap posting purposes in certain situations. This policy better ascertains the player’s potential ability by attempting to capture more scores for handicap purposes than just those made in accordance with the Rules of Golf. For example, a player starting but not finishing a hole in stroke play (e.g., picking up before holing out) records the “most likely score” for handicap purposes (see Section 4-1). If a player uses a Distance (only) Measuring Device or plays a round under preferred lies, regardless of the Local Rule established, the score remains acceptable for handicap purposes. (See Decision 5-1e/2 and Section 7.) This policy also includes situations that are generally out of the player’s control, such as incorrectly installed hole liners or an incorrectly marked golf course. (See Section 15-5.)

Added to clarify the flexibility that has been provided in the USGA Handicap System for certain scores to remain acceptable for handicap-posting purposes when played under the principles of the Rules of Golf.

Decision 5-1a/3 (REVISED)

- Minor revision: Includes guidance for an authorized golf association to provide to a club to use “par plus any handicap strokes” (Section 4-2) when playing a temporary green (not an alternate permanent green).

Decision 5-2a/7 (REVISED)

- Revised decision answer to add: “To post in any other manner would be at odds with the basic premise that contends that each player will try to make the best score at every hole in every round.” This gives additional explanation of why the actual scores must count on holes played after the conclusion of a match.

Decision 8-2m/1 (REVISED)

- Minor revision: Expanded to cover when a player who has fulfilled the seminar/quiz requirement of the Club Compliance Checklist and joins a new club that needs it that it will be considered to be met for the new club.

Decision 8-3a/1 (REVISED)

- Minor revision: Updated to reflect the National Revision Schedule.