

USGA®



# TOURNAMENTS FOR YOUR CLUB

Courtesy of the United States Golf Association



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*Just as a steady diet of meat and potatoes loses its appeal over time, an endless routine of stroke-play rounds can dull a player's sense of competition and enjoyment. While the Rules of Golf cannot be applied to some of these games, especially when match play and stroke play are contested simultaneously, they can provide a diversion from a schedule of club championships and interclub and intraclub team matches. (For more standard forms of play and their recommended handicap allowances, please see Rules 29–32 and Appendix I in "The Rules of Golf" or Section 9–4 of "The USGA Handicap System").*

## Early-Season Events

### Get-Acquainted Tournament

Excellent for early in the season and for groups where new members are being introduced. Each player selects a partner with whom he has never played.

Four-ball stroke-play (better ball of partners) scoring; gross and net prizes may be awarded (Men — 90% of Course Handicap™; Women — 95% of Course Handicap).

Note: It is recommended that Committees consider it a condition of four-ball stroke-play competitions that the Course Handicap (after allowance) of the members of a 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 percent reduction be applied to the Course Handicap of the each member of the advantaged side.

### Field Day

Useful for promoting interest in the club among prospective members. Each member invites three guests for the day, usually including dinner. Either best-ball-of-four (Men — 80% of Course Handicap; Women — 90% of Course Handicap) or two best-balls-of-four (Men — 90% of Course Handicap; Women — 95% of Course Handicap), stroke-play scoring; or individual scoring (full Course Handicap) with separate prizes for best guest scores.

# Individual Events

## Nassau Tournament

Handicap stroke play event where handicap strokes are taken hole by hole as they fall on the score card and prizes are awarded for the best front nine, the best back nine and the best 18 holes. The advantage is that a player making a poor start, or tiring at the finish, may still win a prize for better play on the other nine.

## Drop-Out Tournament

A variation on competing against par on a match-play basis. Each player is allowed full Course Handicap, with strokes taken as designated on the score card. (For these games, it is helpful if the handicap strokes are indicated on the score card before the round.) The player then plays "against" par, remaining in the contest only until he loses a hole to par. The winner is the player going farthest around the course.

A variation of this game has each player in a "match" against par, the winner being the player most "up" on par, as if he had played a match-play competition (the winner may "beat" the course 4 and 3, for example). Both formats may be used for individuals or teams.

## Flag Tournament

Each player is given a small flag, with the player's name on the flagstick. Using full Course Handicap, each player continues until the number of strokes equaling par plus Course Handicap has been used. For example, a player with a Course Handicap of 14 playing a par-72 course would be allowed 86 strokes. When the player has used the allotment of strokes, the player plants the assigned flag beside the ball. Prizes can be awarded to the players who plant their flags farthest around the course — playing extra holes beyond the 18th, if necessary — or to every player who holes out at the 18th green within the allotted number of strokes.

## Kickers' Tournament

Good when accurate handicap information for a large percentage of players is not available. The Committee draws a number, advising players that the number is, for example, between 60 and 70. Players select their own "handicaps" without knowing the number drawn. The player whose "net score" equals, or is closest to, the number drawn, is the winner.

## Throw-Out Tournament

Before returning their score cards, players are allowed to cross out a designated number of worst holes (for example, three holes). Each player's Course Handicap should be reduced in proportion to the number of holes rejected. The winner has the lowest score for the remaining holes.

## Blind-Holes Tournament

Rewards steady play — and those with a little luck. After all players have left the first tee, a blind draw determines which nine holes of the 18 played will count toward

everyone's total score — the other holes will be crossed out — so the players have no knowledge of which holes will count until they complete their rounds. Fifty percent (50%) of Course Handicap should be used to compile net totals.

### **Most 3s, 4s and 5s**

Players use full Course Handicap, taking strokes as designated on the score card. Prizes are awarded to the players scoring the most 3s, 4s and 5s (net scores if player receives strokes on a hole).

### **Fewest Putts**

Only strokes taken once the ball is on the putting green are counted. The winner is the player using the fewest number of "putts" for the round. No handicap is used.

### **Syndicate Tournament**

The field is divided into classes according to Course Handicap: Class A may be players with a Course Handicap of 7 and under; Class B, 8 to 15; Class C, 16 to 24, etc. (The Committee should determine these classes or use already-established handicap classes as there is no set recommendation on classes.) The player who makes the lowest score each class on a hole wins a syndicate. Syndicates may be cumulative; in the event that one or more holes are tied, those syndicates go to the player next winning a hole. Each player pays an entry fee of one golf ball; the total balls in each class are divided by 18 to determine the value of a single syndicate, and each player's prize is determined by the number of syndicates he has won.

### **String Tournament**

Each player or team is given a length of string, instead of handicap strokes. The string is measured out to allow one foot for each handicap stroke. The player (or team) may move the ball by hand to a more favorable spot at any time, at any place on the course (including on the putting green and into the hole), measuring with the string the distance the ball was moved and then cutting off the equivalent length of string. When the string is used up, the player (or team) is on their own.

### **Eclectic (Selected Score)**

Each player plays 36 holes. From the player's two score cards, the player selects the better score on each hole. The winner is the player with the lowest total score for the selected 18 holes. If net prizes are awarded, full Course Handicap should be used. This event may be completed in a day or extended over a weekend.

### **No Alibi Tournament**

Instead of deducting handicap strokes where they are designated on the score card, each player is allowed to replay during the round the number of shots equal to 75% of Course Handicap. A stroke replayed must be used even if it is worse than the original, and cannot be replayed a second time. The converse format (Replay Tournament) is also entertaining: each player has an opponent who can recall a given number of a player's best shots and ask that they be replayed.

## Consolation Tournament

This event is held at the end of the season using any desired format. The only players eligible to compete, however, are those who did not win a tournament prize during the season. If desired, prizes may be given to every competitor.

## Shoot-Out

Determine the number of holes involved, then assemble a group of players that is one higher (nine holes, 10 players; 18 holes, 19 players). Everyone plays the first hole, as a group, with the player making the highest score eliminated. Ties for the highest score are broken by "closest-to-the-hole" contests from around the putting green, including chip shots, pitch shots and bunker shots. Play continues on subsequent holes until only a survivor remains. Use a percentage of Course Handicap relative to the number of holes played.

## Chicago System

Each player is given a point-quota, based on Course Handicap. Points are scored: bogey-1; par-2; birdie-4; eagle-8. The player whose point total for 18 holes most exceeds the point-quota below (or comes closest to it if no one exceeds it), wins. Find the point-quota opposite the Course Handicap in the table below.

Crse. Hcp.	Crse. Qta.	Crse. Hcp.	Crse. Qta.	Crse. Hcp.	Crse. Qta.	Hcp.	Qta.	Hcp.	Qta.	Hcp.	Qta.
1	38	7	32	13	26	19	20	25	14	31	8
2	37	8	31	14	25	20	19	26	13	32	7
3	36	9	30	15	24	21	18	27	12	33	6
4	35	10	29	16	23	22	17	28	11	34	5
5	34	11	28	17	22	23	16	29	10	35	4
6	33	12	27	18	21	24	15	30	9	36	3

## Nutshell Championship

Sometimes called a "Miniature Championship" since it squeezes a single-elimination tournament into 36 holes. A nine-hole stroke-play qualifying round is held early in the morning. Qualifiers are divided into flights of eight, with the match-play draw based on qualifying scores as follows: 1 vs. 8; 4 vs. 5; 2 vs. 7; 3 vs. 6. All matches are then nine holes, first round before lunch, and last two rounds in the afternoon.

## Approach and Putting Contest

Each contestant approaches and holes out three balls from 25, 50 and 100 yards off the putting green. Each ball should be played from a different direction. The winner is the one holing out all three balls in the fewest number of strokes.

## Cross-Country

The course is not played in its usual order; instead, tournament directions supplied to each player read something like this:

1st Hole: From 1st tee to 3rd green;

2nd Hole: From 4th tee to 10th green;

3rd Hole: From 11th tee to 7th green; etc.

The teeing ground for each hole should be near the putting green of the hole last played, to avoid long walks from green to tee. This type of event is often played once the season has ended.

## Team Events

### Scratch and Scramble Tournament

Play is four-ball stroke play. On each hole, partners' scores are added and divided by two to obtain the team's score (do not round). Play is more interesting if players with a high and low Course Handicap are paired together. The team handicap is determined by taking a percentage of each partners' Course Handicap (Men — 90%; Women — 95%), adding them together and dividing by two.

### Dot Tournament

Players are teamed as in four-ball match play. Each team is credited on each hole with one dot (a) for the longest drive in the fairway, (b) for hitting the first ball onto the putting green, (c) for having the closest ball to the hole on the approach shot, (d) for one-putting and (e) for the lowest score on the hole. The team having the most dots at the end of the 18 holes wins an appropriate token, usually in golf balls from the team with which it is paired.

### Foursome (Alternate Shot)

This is a standard Sunday afternoon feature at many clubs, and can be played in three ways. The "official way" is for the partners to alternate driving from each tee and then to play alternate shots until the ball is holed (Rule 29). If the competition is held on a net basis, allow 50% of the partners' combined Course Handicap. The game is perhaps more enjoyable for average golfers if both partners drive from each tee and select which ball to play thereafter. (If this format is used, allow 40% of the partners' combined Course Handicap.) A third method was introduced by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Chapman with interesting results. The partners both drive from each tee, and then each plays a second shot with the other's ball. After the second shots, a choice is made regarding the ball with which the hole will be completed, alternate shots being continued until the ball is holed. (Allow 60% of the lower Course Handicap and 40% of the higher Course Handicap for team handicap.)

## **Blind Partners**

This is an 18-hole stroke play event using a percentage of Course Handicap (Men – 90% of Course Handicap; Women – 95% of Course Handicap). Players may play with anyone of their choice. Partners are not drawn until the last group has teed off. Players don't know their partner until they have finished. The winner is the team with the lowest better-ball score.

## **Scramble**

Each team consists of four players. On each hole, each team member drives and the best drive is selected by the team captain. Each team member then plays a second shot from the spot where the selected drive lay and the best second shot is selected. This process is repeated until the hole is completed. There are variations on this event and often times certain restrictions imposed (e.g., each team members' drive must be used at least 3 times). For handicap purposes, it is fairest if each team consists of an A, B, C & D player (based on established handicap classes). The following percentages of Course Handicap are used: A— 20%; B— 15%; C — 10%; D — 5%. If teams consist of just two players, the following percentages of Course Handicap are used: A— 35%; B — 15%.

## **Ringer Tournament**

A player builds an 18-hole total over the season by posting the lowest score on each hole. Scoring is on a gross basis.

## **Round Robin Tournament**

Each entrant plays a handicap match against every other entrant during the season; allowing the full difference in Course Handicap between the two players in each match. A time limit should be set for completion of each round; a player who cannot meet an opponent within the time limit forfeits the match, but may continue in the tournament. The winner is the player winning the most matches. (This season-long tournament could also be conducted in a team format at four-ball match play.)

## **Ladder Tournament**

The names of all players are listed in order, according to either Course Handicap or Handicap Index®, at the start of the season. (Those players with the same Course Handicap are listed according to their Handicap Index. Players with the same Handicap Index are listed by the total of every Handicap Differential™). A player may challenge any one of the three players immediately above to an 18-hole match. If the challenger wins, the players exchange places. If the challenger loses, that player may not challenge again until defending the player's own position against a challenger from below. Play can be without handicaps (gross).

## **Goat Tournament**

Each member of the club is given an inexpensive token in the form of a goat, with the player's name on the reverse side. Any player may then challenge another to a handicap match, the winner to get the loser's "goat." After a player has lost a "goat,"

the player may continue to challenge in an attempt to get another player's "goat." However, if the player should lose and not have a "goat" with which to pay, the player must purchase a "kid" for a nominal amount from the golf professional and give up the "kid." The "kid" is convertible into merchandise in the golf professional's shop. Only players with "goats" in their possession may be challenged, and players should not be required to accept a challenge more often than once a week. Records of "goat" play and the current location of each "goat" should be posted so that a player may know who has each "goat" and who has the most "goats." The winner is the player holding the most "goats" at the end of the season.

## Pro vs. Members

The golf professional agrees to play a handicap match against each member as he is challenged, making a nominal charge for each round. The professional should play at scratch in absence of a Handicap Index. The member making the best showing in a match receives a prize from the golf professional at the end of the season.

## Skins

The USGA does not have any recommendations for using handicaps and allocating strokes in a skins competition. The Committee in charge of the competition would decide how to allocate strokes during a net skins competition. The USGA hasn't found a mathematically fair way to assign handicaps in skins. If there are only two players, it's fair for the low handicapper to play at scratch and the higher handicapper to receive 100% of the difference between their handicaps. This is essentially individual match play. But as players are added to the field, and play with full Course Handicap, it puts the lower handicap players at a disadvantage. Players are playing for every stroke out there. The larger the field grows, the more of a disadvantage for the lower handicaps. Each club may wish to come up with some percentage to use for net skins. The club may want to experiment with their data and try different percentages for a group with the makeup and size of the competition. The USGA has done a lot of research on this, but we haven't been able to come up with a blanket recommendation or formula for net skins that is fair for all.

## The USGA and You

### "The USGA Handicap System" manual

- Complimentary viewing on USGA.org — Handicapping
- To purchase the manual and other USGA Publications, visit USGA.org — Shop or call 800-336-4446

For additional handicap allowances that pertain to the USGA Handicap System, visit Section 9-4 of "The USGA Handicap System."

Questions? Contact the USGA, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET at 908-234-2300.