



ENGLAND  
GOLF

**KNOW**  
— THE —  
**SCORE**



# WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

VERSION 1.0

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# OVERVIEW

# What is the WHS?

## What is the new World Handicap System?

The new World Handicap System (WHS) is designed to:

- Attract more players to the game
- Make handicapping easier to understand
- Give all golfers a Handicap Index that can be transferable from club to club

Developed by The R&A and USGA in collaboration with existing handicap authorities, the benefit of the WHS over the current system is it combines the Rules of Handicapping and the Course Rating System.

The key timings to be aware of in the build up to the new system going live are as follows:

- **14<sup>th</sup> July 2020:** WHS Toolkit 1.0 from England Golf is made available to all golf clubs in England
- **15<sup>th</sup> July 2020:** England Golf launches 'Know the Score' WHS campaign
- **2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020:** WHS adopted at all golf clubs across England



## IMPORTANT

WHS comes into play on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 in Great Britain and Ireland and will replace the current CONGU handicapping system. It will be part of a system used by over 15 million golfers in 80 countries worldwide.

# Why has the WHS been created?

To allow as many golfers as possible the opportunity to:

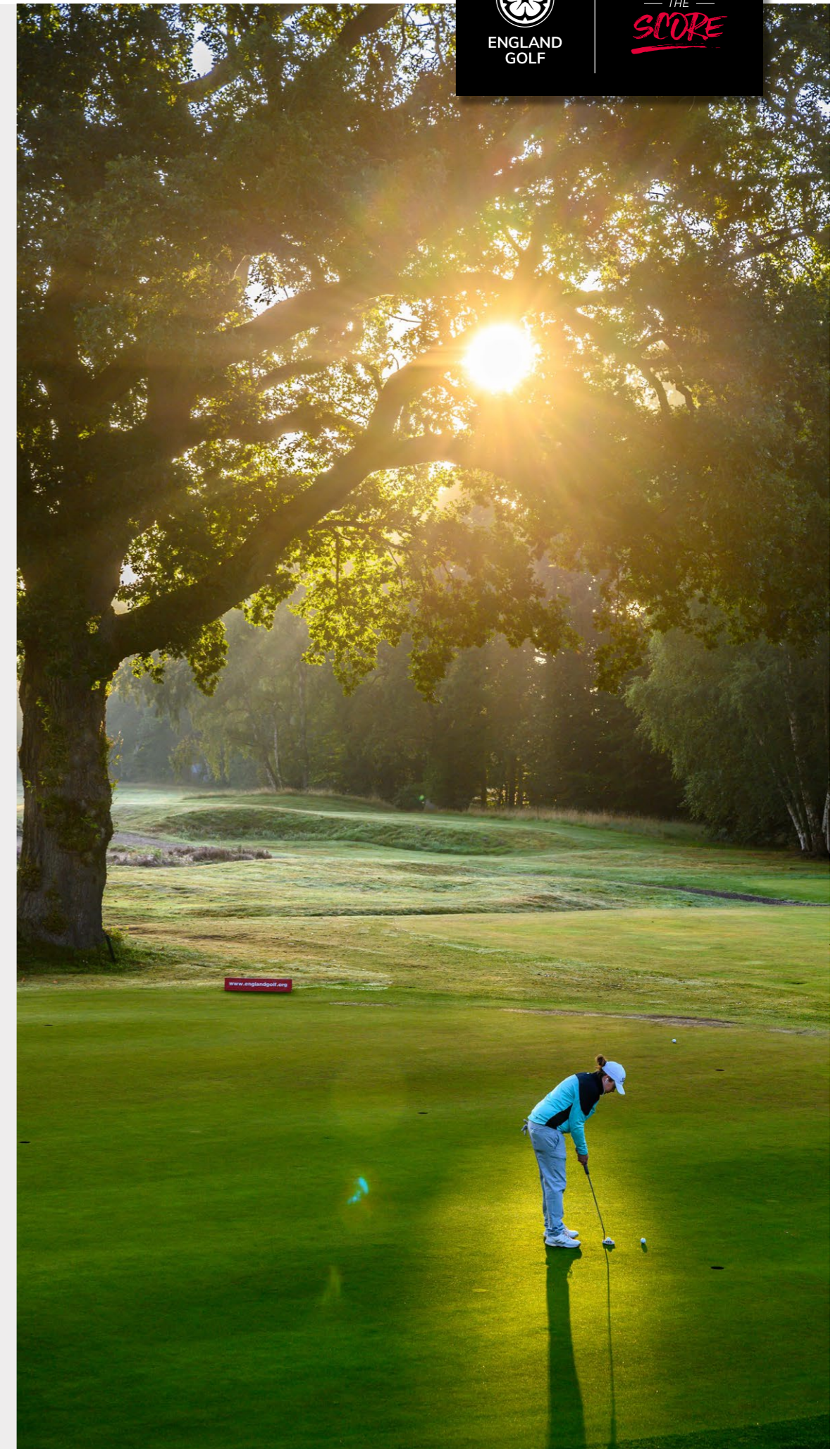
- Obtain and maintain a Handicap Index and reduce barriers of entry
- Use their Handicap Index on any golf course around the world
- Compete, or play recreationally, fairly regardless of where they play

With golf being centred around one standard set of rules governed by The R&A and USGA, it makes sense to unify the previous six different Handicapping systems, making for a more inclusive and equitable sport.

The WHS was therefore developed with consideration given to club golfers who play both sporadically and more regularly.

With all golfers only initially required to submit scorecards for 54 holes to acquire a Handicap Index, the new WHS is less formidable for new players.

On the next page you will find a set of valuable resources that are available to download and help educate your members on the WHS



# How does the WHS work?

For golfers in England, calculating a new Handicap Index will be front of mind when adopting the WHS. The process will begin in the same way throughout the world – by accurately measuring a player’s golfing ability.

For regular golfers, this will be done by:

- The WHS Software calculating the average of the eight best scores from the previous 20 rounds

For new golfers, they will have to:

- Submit scorecards of 54 holes (3x 18 holes, 6x 9 holes or any combination of 9 and 18 holes) to their golf club’s Handicap Committee

From this they will be provided an initial Handicap Index. After a player has achieved 20 scores, a ‘fully developed’ Handicap Index can be calculated to provide the most accurate representation of a player’s ability.

To ensure a player has only one Handicap Index, the golfer will nominate a home club. The home club is determined by the player, but for practicality it is recommended this is where the player typically submits the most of their scores.

On the next page you will find a set of valuable resources that are available to download and help educate your members on the WHS



## IMPORTANT

Golf club’s will manage the WHS through a Handicap Committee. The main roles and responsibilities of each club are to conduct and manage handicap reviews and communicate to the club’s members. There is further detail on roles and responsibilities later in this toolkit for complete clarity.

# Course Rating & Bogey Rating

## What is Course Rating?

Golf Course Rating will be used to measure the playing difficulty of a golf course. It measures how many strokes a Scratch Golfer (a player who can play to a Course Handicap of zero on all rated golf courses) should take on any given course.

The rating does this by assessing two main types of challenges which, when combined, result in a common base from which to compare players' abilities:

- The playing length of the course
- The obstacles that a player will encounter (e.g. size of green and hazards)

A Bogey Rating is the measure of playing difficulty from a set of tees when played by a Bogey Golfer (a player who has a Course Handicap of approximately 20 for a male and 24 for a female).

Knowing the Course Rating and Bogey Rating allows the WHS to assess and rationalise the relationship between the two. From this, the difficulty of the course for all other levels of ability can be deduced.

You can find out more about how Course Rating is calculated within the resources available for download on the following page.

On the next page you will find a set of valuable resources that are available to download and help educate your members on the WHS



## IMPORTANT

All Course Ratings have been determined by highly trained teams, with all findings checked and verified prior to being published to ensure consistency and equity across England.

# Slope Rating

## What is Slope Rating?

Slope Rating is the number which indicates the relative playing difficulty of a course for Bogey Golfers, compared to Scratch Golfers. It is the difficulty comparison between a Bogey Golfer and a Scratch Golfer from the same set of tees.

$$\text{Bogey Rating} - \text{Course Rating} \times \text{Factor} = \text{Slope Rating}$$

*(In simple terms it is the combination of the Course Rating and the Bogey Rating, which allows us to calculate the Slope Rating of a set of tees)*

The use of Slope allows a player's Handicap Index to be portable from course to course and country to country. It also enables acceptable scores from any rated golf course in the world to be submitted for a player's handicap purposes.

**The Slope Rating is a key component in calculating the number of strokes each player receives to play a particular golf course. Each set of tees will have a Slope Rating value between 55 and 155.**

The higher the Slope Rating, the more additional strokes a Bogey Golfer will need to be able to play it. The lower the Slope Rating, the less strokes a Bogey Golfer will require.

### NOTE

**The Slope Ratings are gender specific and the tee which a golfer plays from must have a Slope Rating for each gender.**

You can find an example of a Course & Slope Rating table within the resources available for download on the following page.

### IMPORTANT

113 is the Slope Rating value where all players play from their Handicap Index (i.e. the course is as equally hard for both Scratch and Bogey players).

# Handicap Index

## What is a Handicap Index?

Golfers will consider the Handicap Index to be the most important element of the WHS.

The Handicap Index will:

- Measure the ability of a player
- Be portable from course to course
- Allow players to compete fairly and therefore promote inclusivity within the game

## A Handicap Index is calculated from the best eight scores from the last 20 rounds.

As a new score is submitted, a player's Handicap Index will automatically update to the most recent 20 scores. A player's Handicap Index will update promptly overnight after the submission of an acceptable score and be ready before the next time they play.

## How to obtain a Handicap Index?

When the new system comes into play most golfers can have a Handicap Index generated, based on their existing records.

For new golfers to gain their Handicap Index they will have to submit a minimum of 54 holes (using any combination of 9 and 18 holes). Their Handicap Index will be the lowest of their three rounds minus two strokes and continue to be built until the 20 scores are achieved.



## IMPORTANT

**The maximum Handicap Index for any player is 54.**

To obtain a recognised Handicap Index a player must be an affiliated member of a golf club.



# Handicap Index

## How to safeguard a Handicap Index?

A Soft Cap and Hard Cap will be implemented to limit any extreme upward movement of a player's Handicap Index within a 365-day period. This has been introduced to act as a safeguard to prevent any handicap manipulation.

**The Soft Cap will suppress movement by 50% after a 3.0 stroke increase over a player's Low Handicap Index (see glossary of terms later in this toolkit). For clarity in this instance, a Low Handicap Index is the lowest Handicap Index a player has had during the previous 12-month period.**

**The Hard Cap will restrict upward movement on 5.0 strokes over the Low Handicap Index.**

Restricting the extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index will ensure that a player's temporary loss of form does not cause the Handicap Index to move too far away from their actual ability.



Resources available on the next page introduce a secondary campaign called Bring Your 8 Game. This has been devised so golfers can easily remember that their Handicap Index is simply their best 8 scores from their last 20 rounds.



# Course Handicap

## What is Course Handicap?

Before any player starts their round they must convert their Handicap Index into a Course Handicap.

The Course Handicap will determine the number of strokes a player will receive for any set of tees on a course.

An easy way for a player to remember the WHS, is to think HCP!

**H** - Handicap Index

**C** - Course Handicap

**P** - Play

It's as easy as HCP! On page 24 of this toolkit we introduce our final secondary campaign, Easy As HCP. This will help reinforce the key aspects of the WHS to golfers:

- 1 Handicap Index
- 2 Course Handicap
- 3 Go out and Play

## How to work out a Course Handicap?

England Golf will provide Course & Slope Rating tables to all golf clubs (as per the example on page 18). Tables should be positioned in conspicuous locations around the club to make it simple for golfers to find prior to beginning their round.

Golfers simply have to choose the tees they are playing off that day and cross reference their Handicap Index on the Course & Slope Rating table to ascertain their Course Handicap. It really is as simple as that - they're then ready to get out on the course and play!



In time, Course Handicap Tables will be available via an App and club handicap software so golfers can view their Course Handicap remotely prior to a round. Should any golfer wish to calculate their Course Handicap manually the formula is as follows:

**NEW RULE**

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Handicap Index} \\
 \text{---} \times \text{---} \\
 \text{(Slope Rating / 113)} \\
 \text{---} = \text{---} \\
 \text{Course Handicap (rounded)}
 \end{array}$$

# Playing Handicap

## What is Playing Handicap?

Playing Handicap is a stroke allowance that is implemented in order to maintain the integrity of the WHS when used in competition. It allows golfers to compete on a level playing field, regardless of their Handicap Index.

The Course Handicap converts to a Playing Handicap for competition purposes and changes depending on the format of play.

The four most important aspects of Playing Handicap to remember are:

- It is only used for competition purposes
- It ensures equity to calculate competition results (via Handicap Allowances)
- Golfers do not need to calculate it (it is generated before their round)
- Golfers should continue to play in the mindset of their Course Handicap in competition rounds

Whilst Playing Handicap is important, Handicap Committees do not need to labour the point to golfers regarding this aspect of the WHS.

On the following page a table is available for download which shows handicap allowances for all competition formats.

**The WHS has been designed with the enjoyment of recreational golf at the forefront. The WHS will allow golfers to play with freedom, therefore changing the nature in which they play the game. The focus for golfers should not be on their Playing Handicap.**

On the next page you will find a set of valuable resources that are available to download and help educate your members on the WHS



The Playing Handicap is calculated as follows:

**NEW RULE**

**Course Handicap**

\_\_\_\_\_ **x** \_\_\_\_\_

**Handicap Allowance**

\_\_\_\_\_ **=** \_\_\_\_\_

**Playing Handicap**

# General Play & Competition Rounds

## How to submit a score?

After the completion of a competition round, a player has to submit their scorecard as soon as possible in order for their Handicap Index to be updated. Preferably, scores should be posted at the venue being played and on the same day, as this will be when a player's Handicap Index will be updated.

Posting of scores is possible by players utilising the technology available at their golf club.

## How to verify a score?

In order to verify a score and for it to count towards a player's WHS, it must be played:

- In accordance with The Rules of Golf
- In an authorised format of play
- Over a minimum number of 10 holes
- With at least one other person
- On a course with a current Course Rating and Slope Rating



# General Play & Competition Rounds

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## How your score counts towards the WHS?

Acceptable formats of play for submitting a score towards a player's Handicap Index include:

- Pre-registered general play 'social' scores
- All individual competition rounds, both 9 and 18 holes, whether played at home or away

Non-Acceptable formats of play for submitting a score towards a player's Handicap Index include:

- Scores from fourball better ball
- Other matchplay events

**For golfers playing in recreational rounds with friends, either in teams or pairs, even when there is no intention of submitting a score for handicap purposes, they will need to calculate their Course Handicap prior to their round.**

The following page in this toolkit includes a table of authorised formats of play.

On the next page you will find a set of valuable resources that are available to download and help educate your members on the WHS



# The Handicap Committee Role

Every golf club is required to have a Handicap Committee. They play a vital role in maintaining the integrity of the WHS.

Handicap Committee members should have a good working knowledge of the new WHS.

The Handicap Committee role can be summarised as follows:

- Record, maintain and update Handicap Index of their members
- Notify members of any changes to their Index
- Ensure all acceptable scores are uploaded
- Responsible for reviewing the Handicap Record

Handicap Committees should also ensure tables to convert a Handicap Index into a Course Handicap are located in appropriate locations throughout the club.

**The roles and responsibilities of a Handicap Committee are listed in the WHS rules and available for download on page 32.**



## IMPORTANT

Every club must employ a system that allows golfers to register their round before they play and return scores. Ideally this should be done digitally.

# The Handicap Committee Role

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## Handicap Reviews

Results from a competition should be processed promptly, on the same day, to ensure scores have been entered correctly. However, the WHS does not rely on a competition being closed to update handicap records.

## Terms of Competition

Prior to events, it is advised that every Handicap Committee must publish their own terms of competition. This will include dates, frequency, entry process, format of play, handicap allowance, tees used, process of deciding ties and other information. Full details are available in the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf, Committee Section 1B and 5A.

### Did you know?

The Handicap Committee can set entry criteria to competitions based on the Handicap Index - for example, the Club Championship is only open to players with a handicap of 10 or less.

### Did you know?

The committee also has the discretion to create segments of their members based on their Handicap Index in order to award prizes to players of different standards.



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Following all of the presentation and seminar feedback provided by golf club representatives, we have created a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, which will be essential for golf clubs to have access to and will prove extremely useful in the education of all golfers.

Golf clubs will be able to circulate this document to all their members via electronic communications, or place hard copies around the golf club.

Here are some of the most important FAQs:



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## Why is the new WHS being introduced?

There is one standard set of rules in golf, so it makes sense to unify the six different handicapping systems currently in operation. This will make the game more inclusive and equitable across the world.

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## When will current handicaps switch over to the WHS?

The WHS launch date has been set as Monday 2nd November 2020.

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## I'm new to golf: How do I obtain a Handicap Index?

Score cards totalling 54 holes need to be returned to the Handicap Committee (3x18 holes, 6x9 holes or a combination of both) before an initial Handicap Index can be awarded.

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## What is the maximum Course Handicap if the maximum Handicap Index is 54?

The Course Handicap will likely exceed 54.0 if playing a course with a slope rating of 114 or higher. There is no maximum Course Handicap.

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## Do I enter competitions using my Handicap Index or my Course Handicap?

Competition entry should be based on your Handicap Index. This will be clarified in the Terms of Competition.

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## When playing other courses can I submit a score card to my home club?

Yes – you can record all pre-registered scores that follow the rules of golf and are authorised formats of play.



# Glossary of Terms

A glossary of all key terms about the WHS is available for golf clubs to download.

The glossary will act as a useful way of educating golfers on terminology. Golf clubs will be able to circulate this document to all their members electronically and by placing hard copies around the club.



For example, some of the key terms to know about the WHS are:

## Handicap Index

A Handicap Index is a number that represents a player's ability and can be taken and played with on any golf course around the world. It is calculated from the best eight rounds from a player's last 20 scores.

## Course Handicap

A Course Handicap is the number of strokes a player will receive for a specific set of tees on the golf course being played.

## Playing Handicap

A Playing Handicap represents the total number of strokes a player will receive when they play with or against other players, depending on the format of play and the handicap allowance.

## Course Rating

The Course Rating is the measure of playing difficulty from a set of tees when played by a scratch golfer.

## Slope Rating

The Slope Rating is the number which indicates the relative playing difficulty of a course for bogey golfers, compared to scratch golfers. It is the difficulty comparison between a bogey player and a scratch player from the same set of tees.