

WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM

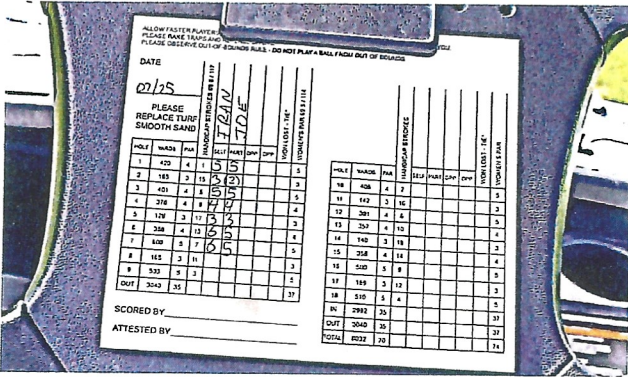


# 5 Things to Know About the World Handicap System™

In January 2020, the new Rules of Handicapping were introduced in the United States.

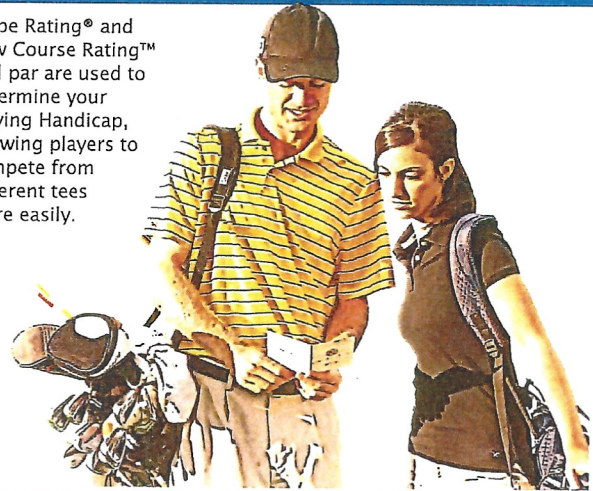
## The Handicap Index® calculation has changed

Your number is now based off your 8 best scores out of the past 20. For most U.S. golfers, the change was minor, but you may have seen that your Handicap Index was different in early 2020 despite not having played!



## You will now have a Playing Handicap™

Slope Rating® and now Course Rating™ and par are used to determine your Playing Handicap, allowing players to compete from different tees more easily.



## Net Double Bogey has replaced ESC

The maximum hole score for handicap purposes is limited to net double bogey (par + 2 + any handicap strokes you receive.)



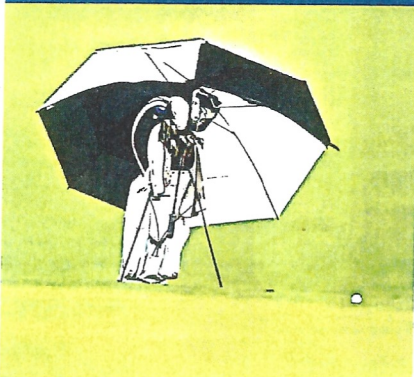
## You will receive responsive Handicap Index updates



Your Handicap Index updates the day after you post a score.

On days you don't post a score, no update will take place.

## Safeguards have been added to protect your Handicap Index



The system accounts for abnormal playing conditions, limits extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index, and reduces a Handicap Index when an exceptional score is posted.

For more information on the World Handicap System, please visit [usga.org/whs](https://usga.org/whs)

# 10 Things for Golfers to Know After Signing Up for a Handicap Index®

## 1 A Handicap Index represents...

your demonstrated playing ability. Your number is based on your scores relative to the course and tees played during those rounds.

[Learn more](#)

## 2 After you post a score, it is converted into...

a Score Differential™ - which accounts for the Course Rating™ and Slope Rating® of the tees played.

[Learn more](#)

- 9-hole scores are combined in the order they are received to form 18-hole Score Differentials.

## 3 A Handicap Index is calculated by...

averaging your 8 best Score Differentials from your most recent 20 scores. There are also built-in safeguards applied when:

[Learn more](#)

- you post an exceptional score, or
- there is extreme upward movement in your Handicap Index.

A Handicap Index can be calculated with as few as three 18-hole scores. When less than 20 scores are in your scoring record, a fewer number of scores are used to calculate your Handicap Index.

## 4 Your first Handicap Index will be issued...

the day after you have posted scores from 54-holes to your scoring record. These scores can be made up of any combination of 9- or 18-hole rounds.

[Learn more](#)

## 5 A Handicap Index is updated...

at midnight local time the day after you post a score.

[Learn more](#)

- As a result, it's important to post your scores on the same day of play.

## 6 A Course Handicap™ is...

the number of strokes needed to play to par of the tees being played.

[Learn more](#)

- You will have a Course Handicap once a Handicap Index has been established (see #4).

## 7 The max hole score for handicap purposes is...

a net double bogey, equal to double bogey + any handicap strokes received based on your Course Handicap.

[Learn more](#)

- Until a Handicap Index is established, the max hole score is 5 over par.
- If using the hole-by-hole option, the adjustment for max hole score is made automatically.

## 8 If you don't play a hole...

for instance, due to darkness - the score recorded is net par, equal to par + any handicap strokes received based on your Course Handicap.

[Learn more](#)

- You must play at least 7 holes to post a 9-hole score and 14 holes to post an 18-hole score.

## 9 If you start but don't finish a hole...

for instance, because a putt is conceded during match play - the score recorded for handicap purposes is your most likely score.

[Learn more](#)

## 10 It's important to post all acceptable scores so...

your Handicap Index continues to accurately reflect your game.

[Learn more](#)

A popular method for posting scores is through a mobile app. For additional ways to post a score, or for help with correcting a score posted in error, contact a member of the Handicap Committee at your club or your local Allied Golf Association.

# Why your Course Handicap™ changed under the World Handicap System™

## Why did it change?

The simple answer: You are now playing to a **new benchmark**.

- In 2019, before the WHS™ your Course Handicap was the number of strokes needed to play to the **Course Rating™** of the tees being played.
- Under the WHS, your Course Handicap is the number of strokes needed to play to the **par** of the tees being played.

$$\text{Handicap Index}^{\circ} \times \text{Slope Rating}^{\circ} / 113 + (\text{Course Rating} - \text{Par})$$

## What does this mean for me?

Your Course Handicap now depends on how much higher or lower the Course Rating is than par.

If the Course Rating is **higher** than par, your Course Handicap will go **up**



If the Course Rating is **lower** than par, your Course Handicap will go **down**

## Can I see an example?

Course Info			
Tee	Course Rating	Slope Rating	Par
Green	72.0	128	70
White	70.0	125	70
Silver	68.0	119	70

Impact on 15.0 Handicap Index		
2019 Course Handicap	2020 Course Handicap	Target Score
17	19	89
17	17	87
16	14	84

Here, a 15.0 Handicap Index player's Course Handicap has increased from the green tees, decreased from the silver tees, and stayed the same as it was in 2019 from the white tees (since the Course Rating and par are the same).

**Important: Your target score (the score needed to play to your handicap) has not changed.**

- In 2019, it was equal to your Course Handicap + the Course Rating.
- Under the WHS, it is equal to your **Course Handicap + par**.

## Why is this good for handicapping?

- Par is a familiar term. Shifting the benchmark for Course Handicap from Course Rating to par simplifies handicapping.
- The new calculation enables players to compete from different tees without any adjustments unless par is different.

# Net double bogey is the maximum hole score under the **World Handicap System™**

## What is Net Double Bogey?

**Net double bogey** is the maximum allowable hole score for handicap purposes.

The procedure is typically applied after the round and before a score is posted. However, when the format of play allows, or when playing a recreational round, you can pick up once you've reached your net double bogey limit.

Net double bogey prevents the occasional bad hole from impacting your Handicap Index® too severely.

## How is Net Double Bogey calculated?

**Net double bogey =**

Double bogey +/- any handicap strokes received on a hole (minus applies to plus-handicap players)

If you post hole-by-hole scores, the net double bogey adjustment should be applied automatically.

## Can I see an example?

A player with a Course Handicap™ of 10 can post a maximum hole score of **double bogey +1** on holes allocated 1 through 10 on the scorecard (denoted with red ●). The max score on all other holes is double bogey.

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
Yardage	393	133	375	490	333	378	155	416	357	3030
Par	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	35
Stroke Index	5 ●	17	9 ●	1 ●	11	7 ●	15	3 ●	13	
Player A	4	4	5	6	4	5	3	4	4	39

Front 9	39
Back 9	44
Total	83

-1

Adjusted Score	82
----------------	----

Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN
Yardage	341	152	360	131	471	323	314	375	340	2807
Par	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	35
Stroke Index	8 ●	16	6 ●	18	2 ●	10 ●	14	4 ●	12	
Player A	4	4	8	4	6	4	4	5	5	44

The player's score of 8 on the 12th hole would be reduced to a 7 for handicap purposes. This is because their net double bogey maximum was **double bogey +1**, which on a par 4 = 7. The score for the competition is 83, but the score for handicap purposes is 82.

## What if my Course Handicap is above 18?

If your Course Handicap is between 19 and 36:

Triple bogey is your baseline – post up to **triple bogey +1** on holes with stroke index values less than or equal to your **Course Handicap – 18**.

If your Course Handicap is between 37 and 54:

Quadruple bogey is your baseline – post up to **quadruple bogey +1** on holes with stroke index values less than or equal to your **Course Handicap – 36**.

For more information or to learn more about the WHS, visit [usga.org/whs](https://usga.org/whs)

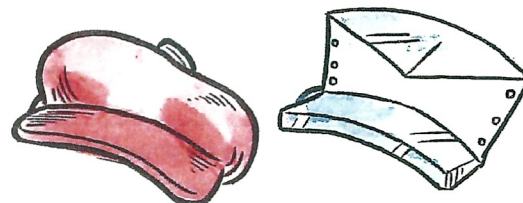
WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM  
R&A USGA

# Understanding the soft cap and hard cap under the World Handicap System™

## Why does the soft cap and hard cap exist?

The soft cap and hard cap are part of the Handicap Index® calculation. They ensure that a temporary loss of form does not cause a player's handicap to increase to a level inconsistent with their recently demonstrated ability.

The caps also ensure equity – as players who have experienced significant upward movement would, without the caps, be more likely to score at or below their Handicap Index compared to more consistent players.



## How do the caps work?

Each time a new Handicap Index is calculated, the player's newly calculated 8 of 20 average is compared to their Low Handicap Index™. If their 8 of 20 average is more than 3.0 strokes higher than their Low Handicap Index, the soft cap slows upward movement beyond 3.0 strokes by 50%. The hard cap prevents any additional upward movement from taking place beyond 5.0 strokes after the soft cap has been applied.

In the following example, the player's Handicap Index was reduced by 0.5 strokes as a result of the soft cap.

Low Handicap Index	New 8 of 20 average	Amount of increase beyond 3.0 strokes	Impact of soft cap (50% of 1.0)	Handicap Index (after soft cap)
10.0	14.0	1.0	0.5	13.5

**Note:** Once a new Handicap Index is calculated, a new Low Handicap Index is determined from within the last 365 days and displayed in the player's scoring record.

## What are the key messages for players?

- The caps are part of the Handicap Index calculation and applied automatically. A player will be impacted by a cap until their 8 of 20 average is no longer more than 3.0 strokes above their Low Handicap Index.
- The caps do not prevent a Handicap Index from increasing, just the amount that it can increase.
  - » The purpose of the caps is not to punish the player, but to provide equity and ensure their chance of playing to their handicap is consistent with others.
- Research suggests that most players who experience a cap will return to their "normal" demonstrated ability.
- In many cases, the impact of a soft cap is only a few tenths of a stroke and may not result in a change in their Course Handicap™. For these players, it only takes one or two good scores to "play out of it."
- It is important for players to apply net par, net double bogey, and most likely score guidelines correctly. Failure to do so could be a contributing factor in a cap taking place.
- **A cap should only be overridden by the Handicap Committee if special circumstances such as injury or illness exist.**

For more information or to learn more about the WHS, visit [usga.org/whs](https://usga.org/whs)

# Safeguards included under the World Handicap System™

## Safeguard #1 – Playing Conditions Calculation

A daily playing conditions calculation compares actual scores made at each course to the expected scores of the players who made them. If the scores are significantly higher or lower than expected, an automatic adjustment is applied to the Score Differential™ calculation of those who played that day.

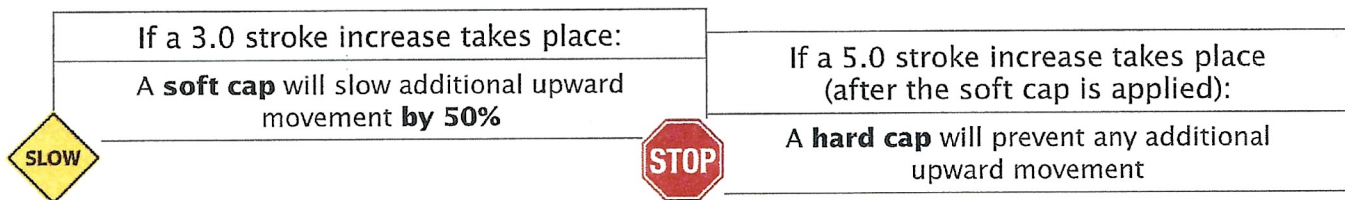
The range of the PCC is <b>-1.0 to +3.0</b>		
A <b>0.0</b> adjustment means the course played as expected	A <b>-1.0</b> adjustment means the course played easier	A <b>+1.0, +2.0, or +3.0</b> adjustment means the course played more difficult

Notes: The PCC is conservative and will result in **0.0** on most days.

If an adjustment is made, it will be clearly identified in the player's scoring record.

## Safeguard #2 – Limit on Extreme Upward Movement

Each time a player's Handicap Index® updates, the new value is compared to the player's Low Handicap Index™ from the past year and:



## Safeguard #3 – Exceptional Score Reduction

An Exceptional Score Reduction (ESR) will be applied automatically when a player submits a score that produces a score differential **7.0** strokes or better than their Handicap Index at the time the round was played:

If the score is <b>7.0 – 9.9</b> strokes better: A <b>-1.0</b> Handicap Index adjustment will be applied	If the score is <b>10.0 or more</b> strokes better: A <b>-2.0</b> Handicap Index adjustment will be applied
---	--

Notes: The **-1.0 or -2.0** adjustment is applied to each of the most recent 20 score differentials in the player's scoring record.

Future scores will not contain the **-1.0 or -2.0** adjustment, allowing the reduction to play itself out of the scoring record.

# Breaking down the Playing Conditions Calculation in the World Handicap System™

## What is the Playing Conditions Calculation?

The Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC) is a daily calculation that compares actual scores made at each course to the expected scores of the players who made them. If the composite of scores are significantly higher or lower than what's expected, an adjustment will be **applied automatically** to the score differential™ calculation of those who played that day.

The PCC can result in an adjustment of **-1.0, 0.0, +1.0, +2.0, or +3.0**.

- A 0.0 adjustment means the course played as expected.
- A -1.0 adjustment means the course played easier than normal.
- A +1.0, +2.0 or +3.0 adjustment means the course played more difficult than normal.

Note: The calculation is designed to be conservative and will result in no adjustment (0.0) on most days.

## What are the requirements for PCC?

The PCC considers 9 and 18-hole scores from all rated sets of tees, however:

- Only scores made by players with a Handicap Index® of 36.0 or below are considered, and
- At least 8 acceptable scores must be posted for a PCC to be calculated.

## How is the PCC applied?

The PCC is applied at midnight, so the morning after a score is posted, the final score differential from the round will be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Score Differential} = (113 / \text{Slope Rating}^{\text{TM}}) \times (\text{adjusted gross score} - \text{Course Rating}^{\text{TM}} - \text{PCC adjustment})$$

To ensure that all scores are included in the PCC data pool, players are expected to post their scores on the same day of play. However, if a player is late in posting their score, the resulting PCC will still be applied to their score differential.

If a PCC results in an adjustment, it will be clearly identified within the player's scoring record.

## Why is this good for handicapping?

- The PCC is an automatic calculation - so players and golf staff don't have to do additional work.
- The PCC will allow a higher score made in difficult playing conditions to be recognized as such.
- If a PCC adjustment is being applied at a course more than expected, the golf association can provide assistance and confirm that there is consistency between the course set-up and ratings.