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## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

FAQs



### What is a Handicap Index?

The Handicap Index is the value that represents the players demonstrated ability, relative to a golf course with standard playing difficulty.

### Where can I check the updated Handicap Index?

Each player is responsible for knowing their Handicap Index. You can find your Handicap Index in [myFPG](#), where you also have access to your scoring record, so that you can check if all acceptable scores are properly recorded.

The Handicap Index of each player can also be found by [searching](#) by federation number.

### What is a Course Handicap?

The Course Handicap is the number of strokes a player receives for a specific set of tees taking into account the Handicap Index and the difficulty of the course, i.e., as determined by the Slope Rating and the difference between the Course Rating and Par.

This value is used to adjust the score of each hole for handicap purposes and equals a Playing Handicap of 100%.

The Course Handicap represents the number of strokes a player needs to play to Par on that course.

### What is a Playing Handicap?

The Playing Handicap is the Course Handicap adjusted for any handicap allowances or the Terms of the Competition. It represents the number of strokes the player gives or receives for the round being played.

It is the handicap the player uses for playing purposes.

For equity purposes, handicap allowances are recommended according to the playing format. For example, in an individual Stableford competition a handicap percentage of 95% applies.



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## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

### FAQs



## Where can I check the Course Handicap and the Playing Handicap?

The values for Course Handicap (100%) and for a Playing Handicap with a handicap allowance of 95% can be found in Handicap Tables available for each rated golf course, searching by tees, gender, and player's Handicap Index.

These values, and other handicap allowance options, are also available [online](#).

In organized competitions, the Committee may provide scorecards with handicap information, applying the handicap allowance and other possible limits determined by the Terms of Competition.

## How are handicaps calculated?

The calculations are made digitally on the central handicap computation system of the Portuguese Golf Federation (FPG). On a general basis, handicaps are updated at the end of the day, with the scores of that day.

## What is it expected from a player with handicap?

Under the World Handicap System, a player is expected to:

- Know their current Handicap Index and report to the Committee any outstanding scores or discrepancies in the Handicap Index.
- Play according to the Rules of Golf.
- Attempt to make the best score possible at each hole.
- Certify the scores of fellow players and have each of their scores certified.
- Play on rated courses, using the Course Handicap (100%), knowing the applicable Playing Handicap and the holes where handicap strokes are to be given or received.
- Submit scores in a timely manner so that the handicap is updated at the end of the day and ready for the next day.
- Submit acceptable scores to provide reasonable evidence of their demonstrated ability.
- Submit all acceptable scores, including scores from another jurisdiction.
- Act with integrity by following the Rules of Handicapping and refrain from using, or circumventing, the Rules of Handicapping for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage.



www.fpg.pt



## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

FAQs



### Which scores are acceptable for handicap purposes?

Acceptable scores for handicap purposes are played:

- In authorized formats: Stroke Play, Stableford, Maximum Score and Par/Bogey.
- In organized Competitions or in general play.
- For 9-hole or 18-hole scores.
- By the Rules of Golf.
- With the score being certified.
- On a rated course.
- Using the Course Handicap, knowing the applicable Playing Handicap and the holes where handicap strokes are to be given or received.

The World Handicap System provides plenty opportunity for players to submit acceptable scores for handicap purposes and promotes the frequent submission of scores, to provide evidence of demonstrated ability.

### How are acceptable scores submitted for handicap purposes?

Acceptable scores for handicap purposes are recorded in the player's scoring record located in the central handicap computation system of the Portuguese Golf Federation (FPG):

- Scores played in organized competitions, by entities approved by the FPG, are submitted through the Committee, at the end of the round.
- Scores played in general play are pre-registered and submitted, by the player, via [myFPG](#), following the instructions available [here](#). They can be checked by the player's Handicap Committee.

### How is the Handicap Index calculated?

The main feature of the calculation is the average of the best 8 of the last 20 scores. The calculation uses the score differentials.

There are also additional mechanisms:

- Caps, which control extreme increases.



# WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

## FAQs



www.fpg.pt

- Exceptional adjustments, which lower the handicap due to exceptional scores.

A player's Handicap Committee can adjust the Handicap Index, to better reflect the ability demonstrated by the player.

The evolution of the handicap happens as scores come in and out of the set of 20 and depending on which of those scores are the best.

### What is a Score Differential?

The Score Differential is displayed on the scoring record for each round acceptable for handicap purposes and it is used on the Handicap Index calculations.

It is calculated from the gross score, adjusted to the maximum hole score, and taking into account the course difficulty and the playing conditions calculated for the day.

In practice, it represents to which Handicap Index the player played to on that round.

### How many scores are used for the average of the best scores?

In scoring records with at least 20 scores, the average of the best scores is calculated with 8 scores.

If the player has less than 20 acceptable scores, the average is calculated based on the following table:

Number of Score Differentials in scoring record	Score Differential(s) to be used in calculation of Handicap Index	Adjustment
1	Lowest 1	-2.0
2	Lowest 1	-2.0
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 to 16	Average of lowest 5	0
17 to 18	Average of lowest 6	0
19	Average of lowest 7	0



## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

### FAQs

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20	Average of lowest 8	0
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### How to get an initial Handicap Index?

To obtain a Handicap Index the player needs to:

- Be affiliated in the Portuguese Golf Federation (FPG).
- Submit a minimum of one 9-hole score acceptable for handicap. A player may submit more scores over 9 or 18 holes.
- Have adequate knowledge of the Rules of Golf.

Each player should contact the entity through which they are registered for handicap purposes in the FPG, requesting the allocation of the handicap.

Under the World Handicap System, the maximum Handicap Index that can be issued to a player is 54.0.

It is recommended that players receive their handicap from the beginning, within the set conditions, so that they can track their progress.

Specific conditions apply to affiliated players who also have a handicap under another jurisdiction.

### How to get/update a Handicap Index if the player is also affiliated in another National Association?

Where a player who is affiliated in the FPG is also affiliated in another National Association, in a different jurisdiction, and holds there a handicap, the player is required to return all acceptable scores to both jurisdictions.

In Portugal, the player must submit the scoring record from outside Portugal to the Home Club in Portugal for scrutiny and update of the scoring record, integrating the scores in a condensed method. The Handicap Committee may recommend the submission of one or more scores.

The Handicap Index used in Portugal is the Handicap Index registered on the national central handicap computation system, which is updated with all acceptable scores and applicable adjustments.



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# WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

## FAQs



### What is the Cap procedure and how do they affect the Handicap Index calculation?

The cap procedure is an automatic mechanism that can reduce or limit the amount by which a player's Handicap Index can increase.

It works by comparing the calculated Handicap Index with the player's Low Handicap Index. There are two trigger points within the cap procedure.

- i) Soft Cap – It is triggered when the difference between a player's newly calculated Handicap Index and their Low Handicap Index is greater than 3.0. The value above 3.0 strokes is restricted to 50% of the increase.
- ii) Hard Cap – It triggers to restrict the value by which a player's Handicap Index can increase, after application of the soft cap, to a maximum of 5.0 strokes above the player's Low Handicap Index.

The cap procedure takes effect after the Lower Handicap Index has been established.

### What is the Low Handicap Index?

The Low Handicap Index represents the demonstrated ability of a player over the 365-day period preceding the day on which the most recent score on their scoring record was played and provides a reference point against which the current Handicap Index can be compared.

It is established once the player has at least 20 acceptable scores on their scoring record.

### What is an adjustment due to an Exceptional Score?

The adjustment due to an Exceptional Score is an automatic mechanism that applies a reduction to a player's Handicap Index.

When an exceptional score is posted to a player's scoring record, the Handicap Index will be reduced in accordance with the following adjustment table:

Number of strokes the Score Differential is lower than a player's Handicap Index in effect when the round was played	Exceptional score reduction
7.0 – 9.9	-1.0
10.0 or more	-2.0



www.fpg.pt



## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

FAQs



### What is the PCC and how is it used on the handicap calculations?

The statistical calculation that determines if conditions on a day of play differed from normal playing conditions to the extent that they significantly impacted players' performance. Examples of conditions that could impact players' performance include course conditions, weather conditions, and course set-up.

It can determine an adjustment of -1.0, 0.0, +1.0, +2.0 or +3.0.

The PCC for each golf course is calculated at the end of the day and it is automatically applied to the player's score differentials.

### What is the maximum hole score for handicap purposes?

For handicap purposes, a maximum hole score of double bogey net applies. It is equal to par plus two strokes and any handicap strokes the player received or given on the hole.

It equals to the lowest score on a hole for which the player would achieve zero Stableford points.

### What happens if a player does not promptly submit a score?

It is the player's responsibility to promptly submit acceptable scores.

Where scores are not submitted in a timely manner, the reasons should be investigated, and appropriate action taken by the Committee of an organized Competition and the player's Handicap Committee.

Whenever it is possible to reconstruct an acceptable score for handicap purposes, the score will be submitted.

### Is it possible to convert a score played on 10 to 17 holes into an 18-hole score?

Under certain circumstances, a score from a round where not all holes were played can be converted into an 18-hole acceptable score.

- If a minimum of 10 to 13 holes have been played, net par plus one additional stroke for the first hole not played is applied to the holes not played.



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## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

### FAQs



- If a minimum of 14 holes have been played, Par net applies to all the holes not played.

### How do calculations work for a Handicap Index above 36,0?

The calculations are identical for all handicaps, but a simplified scheme applies for handicaps between 36.0 and 54.0. For these handicaps, the automatic Handicap Index variations are only applied downwards.

### What mechanisms apply to a Handicap Index lower than 2.0 or to a general play round with a Score Differential lower than 2.0?

In these cases, additional control mechanisms apply and approval by the Handicap and Course Rating Committee of the FPG is required:

- To an acceptable score in general play submitted by a player with a Handicap Index than 2.0;
- To an acceptable score in general play with a Score Differential lower than 2.0 and when the Differential Score is lower than the player's Handicap Index;
- For the allotment, reinstatement, or adjustment of a Handicap Index of lower than 2.0.

### What is the role of the Handicap Committee in the Club?

The Handicap Committee plays an important role in handicapping by:

- Managing the implementation of the Rules of Handicap at Club level.
- Monitoring and ensuring compliance with the World Handicap System.
- Assigning, reviewing, and adjusting the handicap of their players.
- Educating and informing players about handicap matters.

### What are the main objectives and principles of the WHS?

The elements of the World Handicap System were developed to promote, in golf, the following guiding principles and for the system to be:

- Inclusive and Accessible: to welcome players from different backgrounds.
- Consistent and Portable: to be fair and robust, have the confidence of all, with clear concepts, and enabling consistency and portability of handicaps.





## WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM (WHS)

FAQs

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- Modern and Adaptable: to be suited to the conditions of modern society and adaptable to different golfing cultures and different player profiles.

### Where to get more information?

Check the [Handicap](#) section of the FPG's portal for published information and videos.

**Handicap and Course Rating Department**

[handicaps@fpg.pt](mailto:handicaps@fpg.pt)