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Golfer FAQs

World Handicap System

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WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM

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FAQs

World Handicap System

Below are a series of World Handicap System (WHS) Frequently Answered Questions (FAQ's) to help your understanding of the new World Handicap System which will be launched on 2 November 2020.

These are split into four sections:

1. General Questions on WHS

2. Your Handicap Index and How it Works

3. Competition and General Play

These will be part of a working document which will be regularly updated and available via our website www.Englandgolf.org/whs.



Section 1

General Questions on WHS

Q: Why is the new World Handicap System being introduced?

A: 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

Q: Where can I get a copy of the WHS rules?

A: The Rules of Handicapping will be produced in the same format as the current Rules of Golf. Golf clubs will have printed and digital copies available. These will be available in the first half of 2020

Q: How do I find out more about WHS?

A: First point of reference should be our website – www.Englandgolf.com/whs and then via workshops, club resource packs and social media

Q: When will handicap's switch over to WHS?

A: The WHS launch date has been set as Monday, 2nd November 2020

Q: How will WHS prevent handicap manipulation?

A: Event organisers still have responsibilities to manage and administer events which are fair to all competitors. Under WHS, if a player fails to submit a score the handicap committee will investigate and take appropriate action. The committee has the option to apply penalty scores, reset a Handicap Index, consider disciplinary procedures, or withdraw a Handicap Index for an agreed period (following relevant processes and procedures)

Q: What is a Slope Rating?

A: The Slope Rating indicates the difficulty of a golf course for the 'Bogey Golfer' relative to the Scratch Golfer. The Course Rating indicates the number of strokes the Scratch Golfer is expected to take from a set of tees under normal playing conditions. The course is also rated for a 'Bogey Golfer' and it is the relationship between the two ratings which indicates the slope rating

Q: What is the range of the Slope Rating values?

A: Slope Rating values range from 55 through to 155



Section 2

Your Handicap Index

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

A: 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.

Q: How do I calculate my Course Handicap?

A: Golf Clubs will either provide a relevant calculation table, or golfers can use a free online calculator or app. Alternatively, golfers can calculate this manually using the equation formula below:

Handicap Index X (slope rating ÷ 113) = Course Handicap

Q: Can I use my Handicap Index abroad?

A: Yes – you will be able to convert your handicap index to a course handicap for the tees you play from overseas. If pre-registered, these scores can be returned to your home club for handicap purposes

Q: If my Handicap Index is calculated to one decimal point, what will be my exact Handicap?

A: A player's Handicap Index is calculated to one decimal place. When the Course Handicap is calculated it will be rounded to the nearest integer.

Q: My current handicap is 11.6. What will be my new Handicap Index?

A: Your transition Handicap will be dependent on your 'best eight from last 20' scores returned from the previous two years. During the late summer of 2020, golfers will be able to see their Handicap Index displayed alongside their current handicap and see how it varies with each score entry. A transition calculation is available for those with less than 20 scores in their handicap record.

Q: What is the maximum Course Handicap if the maximum Handicap Index is 54?

A: 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.

Q: If I think my Handicap Index is wrong what should I do?

A: First of all, speak with your club as they have the option to complete a handicap review if an index is not representative of playing ability.

Q: Do I enter competitions using my Handicap Index or my Course Handicap?

A: Competition entry should be based on your handicap index. This will be clarified in the terms of competition.



Section 2

Your Handicap Index

Q: As a golfer who plays a very small number of competitions, I suspect I will not have 20 scores recorded over the last two years. Can I still have a Handicap Index?

A: Those players who do not have the full 20 scores at transition will have a Handicap Index allocated by the same process as an initial Handicap Index would be allocated and developed. Moving forward you will be able to submit both social and competitive scores to build up a fully developed handicap record.

Players are encouraged to return sufficient scores during 2020, either in competitions or by supplementary scores, to reach the magic 20 scores. This will create a Handicap Index indicative of current playing ability.

Q: I'm a member of an overseas club – where will my Handicap Index be based/managed?

A: You will nominate a home club to administrate your Handicap Index as you do now. We recommend this is in the country of your main residence and where you play most golf.

Q: For how long are my last 20 scores valid? And what happens if I have a break in membership?

A: Scores will not expire. Your Handicap Index will only be valid if you are a member of an affiliated golf club.

Q: Do I have to be a member of a golf club to have WHS handicap?

A: Yes – a recognised Handicap Index is a benefit of being an affiliated member.

Q: What will happen to my Handicap Index if I have a good round?

A: The score will very probably become part of the 'best eight calculation and you will likely see a reduction in your Handicap Index.

An additional 'exceptional score' reduction maybe applied depending on how good your score was compared to your current Handicap Index.

Q: As a plus handicap golfer, how do I calculate my Course Handicap?

A: Your Handicap Index will have a minus value and the same calculations will be applied using the tables or other resources to find your Course Handicap.

Q: Who is my best contact if I have a WHS or Handicap Index query?

A: The first point of contact will be your home club. They should be able to assist as they have been educated and provided with various WHS resources. They will have access to the county handicap adviser for further advice if needed.



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Section 2

Your Handicap Index

Q: How do I find out who sits on my club's Handicap Committee and what role they fulfil?

A: A Handicap Committee must consist of at least three people, and the majority of the committee must be club members. It is their job to ensure WHS rules are followed and accurate Handicap Indexes are issued. A club secretary/manager can advise on names.

Q: Will I use my full Course Handicap or are there allowances for different formats of play?

A: There will still be allowances for events which have been revised and are based on historical playing data. These revised allowances will provide for equity across all formats of play giving all participants the opportunity of success and are, within GB&I, mandatory for event organisers to follow.

Q: I'm struggling to play to my current handicap from white tees. Will the new system make things even more difficult for me?

A: Not at all. With an averaging system, your Handicap Index will be responsive to your current ability. You should also be encouraged to play from a shorter tee set (providing it has a rating value), as the system will calculate a Course Handicap from your Handicap Index for that set of tees.



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Section 3

Competition & General Play

Q: What formats of play are defined as acceptable for Handicap purposes?

A: Competition or social scores from Medal, Stableford, Par/Bogey and Max Score – as a single golfer. Team and pairs formats are currently not acceptable. If other formats are played outside GB&I and are acceptable in the jurisdiction in which they were played, then they will also be acceptable for your handicap record.

Please note: additional playing history from other formats/events may be used during annual reviews by the Handicap Committee.

Q: What do I need to do when I arrive to play golf?

A: Register/sign in as normal. Utilise the resources available to determine your Course Handicap for the set of tees being used. Check the Handicap allowance according to the terms of competition or format of play (i.e. full handicap, percentage of handicap) and calculate your Playing Handicap for that event. Once play is complete, return your score for processing in the system.

Q: Do I have to record all scores?

A: Players should submit all singles competition scores and have the ability to pre-register and submit scores from social games played in accordance with the rules of golf. Accuracy of a player's Handicap Index will be improved the greater the number of scorecards submitted.

Q: What happens if I do not complete my round?

A: If you are playing a nine-hole round – then all 9 holes must be played for the score to be included in your record. If playing an 18-hole round you must complete at least 10 holes for the score to be returned. Any holes not played will be allocated a net par or net par plus one, before the score is processed.

Q: For multi-round events such as a club championship, would a player use their initial Handicap Index for each round?

A: It is recommended that the Handicap Index at the start of the competition is used for each round of the event. This must be stated in the terms of competition. The final decision rests with the committee.

Q: Will buffer zones still exist?

A: No - buffer zones will not be part of the World Handicap System.

Q: Can players still N/R and gain a 0.1 increase?

A: There are no 0.1 increases under WHS. A hole that is started but not completed will be recorded as a net double bogey. Any holes not played will be allocated as a net par. The adjusted score is added to the player's record.



Section 3

Competition & General Play

Q: Can we continue to use Winter Handicaps outside our playing season?

A: No. From 2 November 2020 WHS will be the Handicap Index used by all golfers at all times.

Q: Our club only offer qualifying events during the summer months. Will this still apply?

A: After the introduction of WHS, clubs may still have a recognised playing season. However, as long as the course is playing to its measured length and the rules of golf are followed, players will be able to return scores throughout the year from authorised formats.

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

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

Q: How can my work/pub golf society access and use the WHS calculations?

A: In short, they can't. WHS Handicap Indexes will only be available to affiliated golf club members. However, if an individual playing in a society outing is also a member of a golf club that person can pre-register with his club an intent to hand in a card from an event played according to the rules of golf.

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