

WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM

Current Handicap System

At the moment, you have a handicap which is attached to your home club e.g. you have a handicap of 18 at Chartridge Park. However, this has two weaknesses.

- If your handicap is 18 and you put in a couple of good rounds, then your handicap might go down to 14 or less but you may then never play to your new handicap. You can only go up 0.1 at a time.
- You have that handicap of 18 on every course, no matter how difficult that course is.

The new World Handicap System, which is due to start on 2 November 2020, seeks to address this through the following key features:

- Handicaps to be based on the rolling average of the best 8 of your last 20 scorecards entered, hence better reflecting your playing form
- Every course being assigned ratings to reflect degree of difficulty, enabling everyone to adjust handicaps to reflect that course and specific set of tees being used

The new World Handicap System (“WHS”)

The important elements of the new system are explained below. First are the important definitions, which are shown in bold, followed by examples of how they are calculated.

Definitions:-

- You will no longer have a handicap at a specific course. You will instead have a “**Handicap Index**” which is portable from course to course and is calculated to 1 decimal place.
- Your Handicap Index is based on the rolling average of the best 8 out of your last 20 “**Score Differentials**” i.e. your score adjusted for the course you are playing..
- Every course in the world has been assessed for its degree of difficulty. This is called its “**Slope Rating**” and is measured on a scale between 55 for the easiest course and 155 for the most difficult. Each set of tees has its own slope rating and the neutral value is 113.
- Courses no longer have a Standard Scratch. Instead they have a “**Course Rating**” which is the number of strokes a scratch golfer would take to get round the course. Again, each set of tees has its own course rating.
- “**Course Handicap**” is the handicap that applies to you on a specific course.
- “**Playing Handicap**” is the handicap that applies to you in competitions on a specific course

Slope Rating

Chartidge Park has been assessed for its slope rating and course index. These are shown below and compared to tThe Buckinghamshire, a much more difficult course, location for last year’s Captain’s Awayday

	Chartridge Park		Buckinghamshire	
	Slope Rating	Course Rating	Slope Rating	Course Rating
White Tees	116	67.1	138	72.9
Yellow Tees	113	66.1	127	70.5
Red Tees	115	67.7	129	72.6

You can look up the ratings for other courses anywhere in the world on the USGA course rating and slope database (<https://ncrdb.usga.org>).

Score Differential and Handicap Index

How do you work out your Score Differential (the score you use to calculate your Handicap Index)

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Score differential} & = & (113 / \text{Slope Rating of the course you are playing}) \\ & \times & (\text{Adjusted Gross Score} - \text{Course Rating}) \end{array}$$

Let's say you go round in 95 shots from the white tees at Chartridge, 95 from the yellow tees at Chartridge and 95 from the yellow tees at the Buckinghamshire. Your Score Differentials would be

Chartridge Park Yellow Tees (Slope Rating 113, Course Rating 66.1)

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (113 / 113) & \times & (95 - 66.1) \\ 1 & \times & 28.9 & = & 28.9 \end{array}$$

Chartridge Park White Tees (Slope Rating is 116, Course Rating 67.1))

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (113 / 116) & \times & (95 - 67.1) \\ 0.974 & \times & 27.9 & = & 27.2 \end{array}$$

Buckinghamshire Yellow Tees (Slope Rating is 127, Course Rating 70.5)

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (113 / 127) & \times & (95 - 70.5) \\ 0.890 & \times & 24.5 & = & 21.8 \end{array}$$

Each of these three score differentials would form part of the 20 scores from which the average of the lowest 8 would be calculated for the purposes of your Handicap Index.

Don't worry, all you need to do is put your gross scores into the computer at whatever course you are playing and the system will calculate the rest for you. Your handicap Index will be recalculated overnight and you will be able to see what it is the following morning before you go out and play. You may find that, even though you may have played exactly to your Handicap Index, it may change if a good past round becomes your 21st most recent and therefore is no longer included in your best 8. There will be charts at every course telling you what the Slope Ratings are.

When the new system is introduced, it will use the most recent 20 of your scores going back as far as 1 January 2018 if necessary in order to calculate your opening Handicap Index. There are provisions in place if you have played less than 20 rounds in that time.

What scores should count towards your Handicap Index? All individual competitions plus regular roll-ups and swindles should be included. You can also include social scores as long as you inform the course you are playing prior to starting your round

Course and Playing Handicap

The previous section dealt with how your Handicap Index is calculated. This section shows how it is applied to the round of golf you are playing.

Course Handicap – this is the number of strokes received on a specific course as determined by the Slope Rating.

$$\text{Course Handicap} = \text{Handicap Index} \times \frac{\text{Slope Rating of course}}{113 \text{ (Neutral Slope Rating)}}$$

So if you had a current Handicap Index of, say, 18.2, your Course Handicap for the next round you play would be:-

Chartridge Park Yellow Tees	18.2	x	(113/113)	=	18.2
Chartridge Park White Tees	18.2	x	(116/113)	=	18.7
Buckinghamshire Yellow Tees	18.2	x	(127/113)	=	20.5

Therefore, if you play a roll-up off the yellow tees at Chartridge, your course handicap for that round would be 18.2, rounded down to 18. If you play off the white tees, your course handicap would be 18.7, rounded up to 19. So you would have a different course handicap on the same course, depending on what set of tees was being used. If you played at the Buckinghamshire, your course handicap for that day would be 20.5, rounded up to 21.

This Course Handicap will apply to the round you are playing for the purposes of comparison to other players. So if you go on a golf tour (anywhere in the world), each individual's course handicap would vary daily

- firstly, depending on the Slope Rating of whichever course was being played and
- secondly, depending on whether your Handicap Index had changed overnight as a result of your Score Differential from the previous day forming one of your lowest 8 rounds out of the last 20 played.

There will be tables at every course where you can look up your Course Handicap so you don't have to calculate it on each different course you play.

Playing Handicap – In some counting competitions, you will not receive your full handicap. For example, in Stablefords, the **Handicap Allowance** is only 95% of your Course Handicap. So if you are playing in a Stableford off the white tees at Chartridge, your Course Handicap is 18.7 (as shown above) but your Playing Handicap for that competition would be $18.7 \times 95\% = 17.8$, rounded up to 18 and it is that is what is used to determine the Competition Result.

Further detailed information is available on the England Golf website.